

**Vassil Prodanov**

## **CHANGING NATURE OF GLOBAL SECURITY AND ARMED FORCES TRANSFORMATION**

After 1989, with Bulgaria turning into part of a system under collapse and facing the challenge to provide alone its own security in an entirely new geopolitical environment, two teams for drafting a national security concept were formed – one led by General Stoyan Andreev and the other – by me. Our concepts were ready by 1991 and handed over to President Zhelyo Zhelev with the sole purpose to help the reorientation of the Bulgarian military and society as a whole towards a new model for granting security. Recently I went over this concept on Bulgaria's National Security under Global Structural Changes, a 380-page volume, containing a thorough analysis of the newly emerged situation along with scenarios for possible developments and feasible solutions for granting security. I also glanced over the other team's work titled Scientific Prerequisites for Building up a National Security System in the Republic of Bulgaria (Theses).

Thirteen years have elapsed since then, years of enormous changes, during which an entirely different situation had evolved. For this reason these concepts seemed to be rather outdated, in need of significant amendments, new accents, new priorities. I do not envisage here the facts that the USSR no longer exists and that we have joined NATO. The issue concerns significant changes in the array of possible threats on which a national security concept, strategy, and policy should focus in order to be feasible in the long term and to be consistent with real life. Perhaps the most important among these changes is globalization and the whole interrelated variety of security issues.

## **1. Changes in Security**

Back in 1991 we could not have possibly taken into account globalization and its consequences in relation to security. Even the US National Security Agency in its analytical forecast “Global Trends 2010”, created with the efforts of the entire Intelligence analytical staff and leading university professors and published in 1997, does not contemplate enough on the role of globalization and IT in regard to security. This lapse has been corrected in the 2000 forecast Global Trends 2015.

Globalization has four principle features leading to substantial changes in threats and the nature of security risks.

The first feature comprises the phenomena of space compression, the loss or sharp decline of the role of distance as a factor for undergoing various processes, which creates preconditions for major increase of security risks, since they can originate not only from the neighbouring countries, but practically from any place in the world. Deployment of soldiers to border areas where threats could possibly arise no longer is a decisive factor since threats can come from practically anywhere.

The second aspect of globalization, causing changes in the very nature of global security, is the world’s blurring borders related to the sharp decline of regulatory and monitoring resources of the national state, since information, culture, finances and many other processes cannot be confined to certain boundaries. This just about makes restricting the bringing in of any kind of threats inside the country more and more difficult, distorts these threats and leads to the vanishing of the typical for modern era distinction between frontline and rear.

The third feature consists of the multiplication and tightening of the links, of the dependencies among various processes within the state or any other process, thus making society much more vulnerable, complex, dynamic, complicated, crisis-prone, susceptible to sudden changes, which could not have possibly been predicted in the past. This substantially increases the role of the analytical and information

endeavours in the field of national security, which should try to embrace as many potential risk factors as possible. It is not simply the army of one or another nation but a variety of threats posed by certain non-state actors that plays a major role. The previous distinction between the functions of the internal and external forces begins to fade away.

The fourth characteristic is time compression, relevant to the acceleration of all processes – from the speed of computers and transport communications to the rate of innovations, of implementing new components in the technological processes and societies as a whole. The response to this acceleration in an environment of hi-tech development presumes a transformation of armed forces which involves a substantial increase in the professionalism, intellectual level and implementation of modern technologies in the armed forces.

Hence the emerging of the following trends, influencing the nature of global security:

1. In the years preceding the First Industrial Revolution, wars were fought mainly on a territorial basis, for protecting and for conquest of territories, this being the cornerstone of national security. Industrial revolutions lead to the idea that industrial power, big manufacturing plants and heavy industry play a vital role as far as a nation's security and defence are concerned. As a result of the Third Industrial Revolution, information became not only the principal resource for social development, but also the basic instrument and target of subversion or increasing national security. Informatization gives impetus and new magnitude to such a traditional tool for waging war as is psychological warfare. A great deal of contemporary conflicts seek to acquire, exploit, and protect knowledge and information in their capacity as resources. The new type of warfare is based on advanced information technologies with computers and communications being crucial factors for enhancing war fighting capabilities. This creates preconditions for employing high-precision and hi-tech weapons, for conducting contact less wars based on the achievements of the Third Industrial Revolution. Very often these types of wars are referred to as information warfare or cyber wars because of the crucial role of

information. Such warfare involves global satellite communication and intelligence system which monitor the whole infrastructural system of the enemy. The enemy is no longer regarded as a physical system but as an information system which must be corrupted or destroyed. A crucial factor is the impact not so much on a system's hardware but on its software. This does not mean that physical weapons cease to exist; it is their software and other non-material factors that are becoming more substantial.

2. Globalization of risks and their multiplication, the acceleration of the social processes and the problem of containing them within the national boundaries *lead to the increase in the non-linear character of all processes, risk effects included*. This means that little efforts can cause great devastations, that unexpected small threats can have lethal consequences. This nonlinearity is displayed in the unexpectedness and asymmetry of both threats and wars. They are closely related to the fact that exerting power, investing huge amounts of money and designing high-tech weapons cannot guarantee enough the security of a nation. This becomes evident in Iraq, where the most powerful and technologically advanced forces in the history of mankind are facing unforeseen difficulties. Actually in the 20<sup>th</sup> century's late 80s and early 90s the collapse of the Soviet Union illustrated the fact that in spite of being one of the two super powers and possessing armaments enough to destroy this planet, it can still collapse like a card house due to circumstances unforeseen in any defence doctrine.

3. *Society's increased technological vulnerability* as a result of the distribution and low cost of advanced technologies, which could easily be acquired by various groups and individuals. On one hand, millions of people depend on modern infrastructures which could be rendered useless by a small group of people. On the other hand, small-scale nuclear, biological and chemical weapons could also be acquired by small groups and individuals and inflict huge casualties.

4. The state is facing difficulties in controlling the processes within the country, this being one of the major factors for *rising corruption and crime on a global basis*. Globalization facilitates the formation of

transnational criminal networks with huge profits which threaten the very existence of entire states. Starting from the 60s, the total number of crimes worldwide doubles with each decade thus creating preconditions for the military to get mixed up in various corruption schemes which affects their ability to deal with the new threats. The situation in Chechnya, North Ossetia and Ingushetia is a typical example of this.

5. Under these circumstances wars become *globalised, not in the sense of a global nuclear war between the USA and the Soviet Union which seemed imminent between the 60s and 80s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but as globally interrelated local and civil wars*. Formally speaking, most of the wars are local and not between states, but practically things are much more complicated because civil wars are not simply an internal issue nor have they evolved as a result of purely internal problems, but are more or less part of the process of globalization.

6. The information revolution favours horizontal and network forms of organizational relationships at the expense of hierarchical and pyramidal forms. This affects the nature of social conflicts and the organization of the actors involved. According to John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, analysts from RAND Corporation, there is a trend of transition from today's typical conflicts, contradictions and wars amongst various hierarchical organizations, such as nation-states, corporations, political parties, trade unions, armies, etc. towards conflicts among networks. "Power is migrating to small, non-state actors who can organize into sprawling networks more readily than can traditionally hierarchical nation-state actors."<sup>1</sup> Wars are and will increasingly be waged not by armies, but by groups. Various ethnic, national, religious, ideological groups can be situated a great distance apart, in different countries, but they can still keep in touch by means of advanced communication technologies, Internet in particular. Al-Qaeda has turned Internet into its major instrument and is urging Muslims worldwide to unite into a single nation. Some of the netwar actors can

---

<sup>1</sup> Arquilla, John and David Ronfeldt. A New Epoch and Spectrum of Conflict, In: *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age*, Eds. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1997, p. 5.

represent a nation-state, while others can try to use the nation-state for their own purposes. In this case no formal, stable, hierarchical interrelations and strategies exist. Decision making is decentralized. Relationships among the actors are unfolding in the form of fragmented polycentric network. Practically there is no leader issuing orders to all participants; leading are those interactions in which actors along with their resources get organized into easily forming or disintegrating networks which consist of individuals and groups with different status, of representatives of a new type of civil society without boundaries, spreading into the global network like a spider web, with no centre and periphery. Actually globalization renders meaningless the role of boundaries and the border line between frontline and rear as far as warfare is concerned.

7. Emerging of the phenomena *post-modern terrorism*. This reflects the real problem concerning the changes in the nature of violence, in the actions of forces, movements and individuals who confront one state or another. What makes this type of terrorism different is that its very existence depends on the global media to provide a broad audience. It is also the result of the decline of the nation state's role and the increased migration of people and information all around the world. It is also related to the capabilities of the even more destructive high-tech weapons. Today's terrorist is well-educated and familiar with IT innovations, lives in an urban environment and can easily travel from one continent to another, to take part in the life of the community he is preparing to attack, and has enough financial resources to do this. His war theatre are big cities and infrastructures, which are becoming more susceptible to terrorist attacks, because this type of wars aims at civil rather than military targets, trying to demonstrate that the authorities are incompetent and incapable to protect the population.

8. Spreading out of *asymmetric threats and asymmetric wars*. A new type of war is emerging – asymmetric war rather than war between armies. Asymmetric threats and asymmetric wars are gaining impetus as one of the key developments in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With the increase of social complexity and number of interrelations, whose severing might have huge destructive consequences, asymmetric threats

are becoming more and more important. A key feature here is the fact that advanced IT innovations make it possible for an individual or a small group to cause immense damages to a much more powerful adversary. Asymmetric threats can be characterized with unexpectedness, irregularity, incompatibility of counteracting measures. They involve unconventional methods for waging wars which render traditional military or police counter steps useless. From where and from whom will these threats come cannot be foreseen. The winning strategy is to behave in a way which the enemy least expects. Usually states collapse due to unexpected rather than expected threats. They can inflict large-scale damages affecting the physical and military power or the legitimacy of a nation. A country with an enormous military power can easily collapse as did the Soviet Union. The new type of war is based on the presumption that each system has an Achilles heel and the best way to success is through asymmetric threats, which although at a given moment might seem unrealistic or minor can still cause severe damage. Therefore, the issue lies in countering asymmetric threats while at the same time posing such threats to the adversary.

9. Stockpiling and preserving credibility capital and destroying the credibility capital of possible adversaries are yet another aspect of the changing nature of global security. This includes the reputation, the image, the social credibility of a given state, community or company. As we know, the price tag of a company, especially in the field of advanced technologies, is based not only on its material assets, but also on a myriad of invisible elements including its trade-mark, reputation, and advertising products. Foreign investments depend greatly on the image of the country. This explains the severe struggle for creating credibility capital and ruining the rivals' credibility capital. Publicity, commercial and political marketing, PR techniques are all elements of the struggle for establishing and destroying credibility capital. In a number of cases Bulgaria suffered severe blows in this aspect due to negative publicity and black PR. A recent example of this is the negative image in the West in regard to the safety of the Kozludui Nuclear Power Plant insisting on shutting down costly but reliable reactors. The competition in regard to the Bulgarian military export is even more severe, with continuous

efforts to discredit Bulgarian companies. The significance of these factors is still underestimated and no counter strategies are available.

10. The globalization process at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century based on faster and easier communications led to a *qualitative leap in regard to the possibilities for conflict internationalization*. The reason is that all local conflicts involving local population turned out to be supported and encouraged by a global network of actors, which might include nation states not necessarily having the leading role. According to world media and politicians, threats are becoming more and more localized and linked to a specific person, like Osama Bin Laden, implying that the elimination of these people will solve the problem. The truth, however, is that threats are getting de-concentrated, they are organized in a network on the basis of common ideology and hatred rather than a common command post. Organizations engaged in a political struggle against the state no longer have the traditional hierarchical structure – they are trans-national and amorphous, much more mobile and much less vulnerable. Globalization has greatly facilitated their actions – they are no longer confined to one country and can freely travel around the world. They do not need centralized leadership and underground books and materials since they are available on the Internet. Thus they can keep in touch with active terrorist structures or recruit followers, as well as obtain weapons and technologies. The plans of many public works and infrastructures are available on the Internet which makes planning and preparation of attacks easier. As a result, any local political opposition can easily become global and turn into a large-scale phenomenon. This resulted for instance in Al Qaeda's presence in 68 countries in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

11. The traditional perception of victory as a territorial conquest is no longer valid in the globalised world, neither in Palestine, nor in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Iraq, since as a result of the globalization local and territorial conflicts quickly turn into global ones. Any ineffective solution of territorial issues makes them global and destabilizes security in the world as a whole. Local wars unlock global

---

<sup>2</sup> Иванов, Вл. и Мухин, Вл. Такие разные войны с терроризмом, в. *Независимое военное обозрение*, 25 декабря 2003



“boxes of Pandora” and need serious reconsideration and a much more complex response rather than merely a military one.

## **2. The Counteractions**

The changing nature of global security calls for changes in the national security concept and policy, the key ones being the following:

1. The challenges modern nation-states are now facing make large conscript armies seem outdated and archaic. The trend in recent years is to downsize existing armies at the expense of boosting soldiers’ professionalism and ability to engage in modern warfare. Our epoch was the time of mass national conscript army, which every young man could join to fulfill his duty of protecting his homeland; nowadays this army is being replaced with a smaller but professional army of mercenaries.
2. With the existence of global security challenges response can by no means be on a national level – this would be meaningless. The transformation of the armed forces should be directed towards sharply increasing the interaction among national and multinational actors, jointly responding to various threats either by being part of permanent organizations like NATO, or, when need arises, in ad hoc coalitions.
3. The transformation of the armed forces should be directed towards adaptation to an environment of risk fragmentation, in which the enemy is not confined to a specific territory but carries out most of its activities in virtual space using different types of networks. This makes radical changes in the strategies and ideas of warfare crucial.
4. As clearly defined frontline and rear cease to exist, the army should be trained to be able to function also as a police force. As the chief adversary is no longer another country’s national army but a network of difficult to track down non-state actors, the army should find the right way to respond to such an adversary. We are facing the challenge posed by asymmetric wars which mass conscript armies are not trained to deal with. These wars should be fought in a new manner.

5. In the globalised world, crises in nation-states and the downsizing of army personnel find reflection in the privatization of military performance – there is a boom of private companies engaged in typically military activities. The number of private enterprises in the field of warfare and security is rising. We are witnessing the emergence and growth of global companies offering various logistics, intelligence, training and security services to nation-states and trans-national companies. There are such companies in Bosnia and Kosovo, in Iraq and Afghanistan. The existing trend is to privatize peacekeeping operations, the UN commissioning special companies for restoring order in different regions. Since 20<sup>th</sup> century's 90s, the private companies set up private armies for intelligence purposes, as consultants in the field of security, for training soldiers, security guards, secret agents, procuring weapons and providing logistic support, for taking part in operations in high-risk areas, for fighting wars. The greater the chaos and insecurity within a country, the greater is the demand for private security services.

6. The numerous difficulties a nation state is facing in the capacity of the institution holding the legitimate monopoly on violence on a given territory and on warranting security to its population, result in the need to initiate the privatization of police operations, whereas the nation transfers functions of its own to private security, detective, etc. agencies. This trend applies to all countries and security-selling private armies already outnumber the national armies. In the US there are nearly 500 000 federal and state police officers and approximately 800 000 private security officers, whose income is nearly 73%. In Great Britain the police force totals 142 000 people, while the number of private security companies employees is 162 000. In 2003 in Bulgaria's private security sector worked over 130 000 people; this number exceeds the total number of military and police officers (approximately 60 000 in each institution), which possess the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force on behalf of the state structures. In the field of security more than 1500 companies and commercial agents have been granted licenses.

7. The growing processes of informatisation and internetisation of the society and the resulting threats, the rising technological

vulnerability of nuclear, biological, genetic, geological and chemical weapons entail radical changes in the military structures towards achieving a highly professional and well trained armed forces.

8. Dynamic organizational structures, either non-state actors such as Al Qaeda or nation states are becoming key factors in the new type of warfare. These structures comprise of autonomous units, which are organized ad hoc for fighting a specific enemy at a given time. This makes it extremely difficult for the traditional hierarchical structures of the nation state to cope with such dangerous networks. They have to adapt their organization and countering strategies to the new type of “network” adversary, and not to the similar structures of other nation states.<sup>3</sup> Hence the need of coalitions with a “varying geometry”, quickly responding to threats which might require considerably longer time and coordination on behalf of “hard” organizational structures unable to face today’s non-conventional threats. These type of wars disregard the dominating in the years after World War II national sovereignty principle, replacing it with principles based on pre-emptive actions, antiterrorist attacks and humanitarian operations. They are not waged for

---

<sup>3</sup> Arquilla, John, and David Ronfeldt. *The Advent of Netwar*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-789-OSD, 1996; Arquilla, John, and David Ronfeldt. *The Emergence of Noopolitik: Toward an American Information Strategy*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-1033-OSD, 1999; Arquilla, John, and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming and the Future of Conflict*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, DB-311-OSD, 2000.

conquering new territories or driving back enemy forces, but for defying de-concentrated politically motivated violence, internal turmoil, civil wars, drug trafficking, i.e., all factors which might lead to privatization of violence so that the state can safeguard its monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.

9. Preparing an increasing number of people for the future trend of transferring warfare from real time into virtual space with cyberterrorism, cyberwars, cyber counterattacks. We are still in the initial stage of this process which will evolve in the years to come. Virtual space monitoring and the response to national security risks and threats within this space is becoming a key issue to be considered in the process of armed forces transformation. Many military and permanent terrorist groups have their own Internet sites, offering information for their scope of activities, promoting their actions and recruiting followers. Conflicts among networks rather than among hierarchies are becoming more imminent. This characterizes the new type of information warfare with mostly low-intensity conflicts. These conflicts emphasize on procedures such as information operations and perception management, or making efforts to convince or deceive the enemy, to orientate or disorientate him, rather than physically forcing him to do something. The key factor here is psychological coercion and not physical pressure. The Information Revolution gives impetus to setting up a network organization, doctrine, strategy of this type of conflicts.

Prof. Vassil Prodanov, DSc  
Corresponding Member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences  
Sofia