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Review article

## CONTEMPORARY SECURITY RISKS AND THREATS DURING GLOBAL CRISES

### *Abstract*

*The security paradigm associated with challenges, risks and threats has acquired significantly new features at the threshold of the third decade of the 21st century. In that context, the geopolitical, military, economic and environmental factors that determine the security reality in the international community and countries have changed. The forces that spurred change emerged from the dynamics of the processes of internationalization and globalization, and they were a trigger for a deeper and broader analysis of security in the modern interdependent world.*

*The complexity stems from the fact that modern security risks and dangers in many respects differ from the former risks which were unpredictable, difficult to control and determine their causes, origins and the effects they can cause. Risks and threats today vary in the form and intensity of manifestations from global pandemic to war on European soil, possible confrontation between superpowers, arms race, inequality, refugee, migrant, financial and energy crises, global climate change and cyber-attacks. It is obvious that we have created risks and dangers that no previous generation has faced. This changed security environment has increased the feeling of helplessness and the endless search for security and protection from new multimodal risks and threats. Therefore, we will analyse the classification of global risks, as well as the types of security risks faced by certain countries.*

**Keywords:** *Risks, Threats, Global Crises, Security Index.*

### **Introduction**

In the current stage of social and civilizational development, security is a very important element for the survival and action of the individual, the state and the international system. These three subjects strive for protection from potential threats and risks and for a state of secure mutual survival viewed in a narrower and broader context. Therefore, the key questions in the scientific, professional and political public are how to eliminate the sources of threat to security and peace, how to create a safer world, what threats are a potential danger to countries and the world itself? Today, people and countries feel more threatened and insecure, than in the past, and this has contributed

to an increasing need for protection and security. Several global events have highlighted the fragility and instability of a world that has proven to be a more dangerous and risky place to live in full of unpredictable threats that vary in form and intensity of manifestation. The global coronavirus pandemic has triggered a new global economic crisis and is in danger of escalating into one of the greatest crises of poverty, hunger, inequality and authoritarian rule (Eisentraut, Miede, Hartmann & Kabus, 2020: 16). In addition to the global health and economic crisis, the world is facing an environmental and energy crisis that complement and reinforce each other. These successive crises lead to the creation of a permanent multidimensional and existential crisis that threatens the survival of human civilization.

The coronavirus pandemic marked the beginning of a new era of security threats and risks. As a result of the pandemic, the economic development stagnates, repression increases, and democratic principles and values are challenged, stimulating the causes of conflicts and wars (Bunde et al., 2022). The current Russian-Ukrainian war has also served as a trigger for cascading risks and dangers on a global scale. The consequences of the military invasion have had a negative impact on global resource supplies (such as energy, food, and industry), while increasing the risks to states and nations around the world (Benton, Froggatt & Wellesley, 2022).

In the next decades, the world will face intense cascading global challenges, risks and dangers from disease to climate change, financial and information technology crises that will affect the security of nations and the international order (National Intelligence Council, 2021). Key global challenges that could produce new security risks and threats, and cause catastrophic consequences for humanity are: **Demographic change** - the world population is expected to increase to 8.5 billion people by 2030, and by 2050 to be 9.7 billion people. Population growth will shake the "tectonic plates" in politics, economics, security and the environment and lead to poverty, unemployment, hunger, social unrest and conflicts; **Climate change and environmental degradation** are catalysts for cascading risks and threats, which can cause extreme weather conditions, forced migration, endanger human health, biodiversity, energy, food and water supply worldwide. Today, about 70% of nations around the world classify climate change as a threat to national security, and it is estimated that more than 200 million people will be in need of humanitarian assistance each year (by 2050) due to climate change disasters (European Commission, 2021: 2); **Information-technological innovations** (in the form of sophisticated technology, computerization, digitalization, Internet, hyperconnection, genetic technology, satellite communications and nanotechnology) will lead to fundamental changes in the field of security. There is a possibility that modern technologies can generate new forms of security risks and threats, such as anthropomorphic risks that include uncontrolled artificial intelligence, manufactured pandemics, nanotechnology weapons, nuclear war, etc. Also, with the increase in the number of Internet devices that will reach 64 billion

devices by 2025, that is, several trillion devices by 2040, cyber threats will increase in parallel (National Intelligence Council, 2021: 2); **Changes in the democratic model of governance** - for fifteen years in a row, political rights and civil liberties in the world are declining, and about 34% of the world's population lives in countries where democratic governance is declining. According to some data, the world population living in autocratic regimes has increased from 48% in 2010 to 68% in 2020 (Alizada et al., 2021). If this negative trend continues, it is expected to intensify geopolitical rivalries, polarization and tension between countries with different systemic arrangements.

### Classification of security threats and risks

Security challenges, threats and risks can be classified according to several criteria. According to the security sectors, we can distinguish between military, political, societal, economic and environmental challenges, risks and threats. Internal and external challenges, risks and threats are distinguished by origin. However, in the modern conditions of globalization there is no boundary between internal and external security, so the threats should be considered in the context of internal-external affairs. Due to the dynamics of globalization, the threats take on a transnational character, which contributes to the overlapping and intersection of security functions of different institutions such as the police (in charge of dealing with internal threats) and the military (in charge of dealing with external threats). Regarding the source, risks and threats can be caused by human and natural factors, while according to the bearers there are risks and threats whose bearers are actors and those who are the result of certain processes. Actors can be classified into state and non-state actors, such as terrorist or criminal groups. However, certain processes can also be carriers. For example, globalization is seen as an ambivalent and asymmetric process that does not benefit everyone on the planet. For many, globalization is a challenge and a threat. There are nations, states and groups that are satisfied with the processes of globalization and those that are affected by its manifestation, i.e. recognize globalization as a threat to national and international security. Furthermore, according to the relationship of forces between security subjects and threat carriers, they are divided into asymmetric and symmetrical threats, and more recently the combination of these two types of threats has been called hybrid threats. Also, challenges, risks and threats can be classified according to the time required for their manifestation, short-term, medium-term and long-term, while according to the degree of intensity they are divided into risks and threats with low, medium and high intensity (Ђукић, 2017).

This classification has no practical justification, so most theorists focus on a more general criterion, which is according to the intensity of destructiveness and the probability of occurrence. Therefore, we can categorize them into: security challenges, security risks and security threats (Мијалковић, 2009).

- *Security challenges* have emerged whose harmfulness and certainty of occurrence are real, but less likely. These are natural phenomena, social relations and technical-technological processes whose existence is destructive, but within the limits of tolerable acceptability, because they do not endanger vital interests, although they are likely to endanger security and cause huge consequences. Security challenges are threatening phenomena with the highest degree of generality and the lowest intensity of immediate destructiveness;
- *Security risks* are specific security phenomena whose reality and probability of occurrence is high. They are a set of natural, social and technical-technological factors, circumstances, processes and relationships that alone or in interaction can (but do not have to) lead to security threats. Risks are seen as the possibility or likelihood of injury, damage or loss. Security risks are threatening phenomena with a low degree of generality and a greater degree of destructiveness than security challenges;
- *Security threats* are specific phenomena that are highly likely to occur and cause consequences for security and the opportunity to jeopardize the values and interests of the reference object of security. They refer to an unwanted, intentional or unintentional event that can cause injury to a certain subject (Георгиева, 2009: 80). It is a wide range of threatening phenomena with the lowest degree of generality and the highest degree of destructiveness.

In the 21st century, security is facing a profound transformation, the focus shifts from threats to risks, and this leads to a different perception of security. The complexity stems from the fact that modern risks in many aspects differ from the previous, they are unpredictable and it is difficult to determine their causes, origins and the effects they can cause. They come without warning, they have their own pace, (they do not wait), and they do not have a specific timing or location. Hence, the concept of global security is considered to be closely related to the concept of a global risk society. These concepts contribute to a broader consideration of the security aspects associated with the new circumstances arising from the modified risks, which can easily lead to global chaos and disorder. In this context, Giddens says today we face two types of risks, "external risks", such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, storm winds that arise from nature and are not related to human action and "manufactured risks", which are product of human knowledge, activity and technology. Such are, for example, environmental (global warming), economic (consumerism, hyperproduction, exploitation of natural resources), health (genetically modified food - GMOs, diseases, etc.) and social risks (poverty, inequality, unemployment) (Giddens, 2007). As there are no concrete answers to the causes and consequences of such unpredictable threats, they are considered to contribute to the creation of a global risk society. The author Ulrich Beck points out that as scientific-technological

progress advances or evolves, new forms of risk are born, which we must continually adjust to, in the context of change. What worries us is Beck's view that the theory of risk society and its risks are neither spatially nor temporally or socially limited. Modern modified risks are not selective, on the contrary, they affect all countries and social classes and have global consequences, not just personal or national consequences (Beck, 2006). Zygmunt Bauman also classifies dangers as "natural" and "social / moral" that are conceived and / or committed by humans (Bauman, 2006). The global coronavirus pandemic is a glaring example of the social / moral risks that come from human misconduct, negligence, or deliberate activity.

### **Types of threats and risks to national and international security**

Contemporary threats and risks are interrelated and cannot be analysed and considered separately (for example, terrorism being considered outside of poverty or armed conflict issues). With the help of globalization processes, threats and risks have multiplied and gained planetary proportions. This is due to the high level of interdependence, with events in one country or part of the world affecting other countries and people. Today, there is no country or region in the world that is immune to modern threats (for example, terrorism does not only occur in fragile states, or climate change does not only affect developed countries and vice versa), although in practice different nations have different views of security threats and risks (Зенделовски и Нацев, 2014).

Due to the unpredictable trajectory of the threats, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish or separate the so-called "soft" threats posed by neoliberals (climate change, disease, natural disasters, economic prosperity, poverty, the spread of ideas and cultures such as a tool in foreign policy) from the "hard" threats related to high politics, whose representatives are mainly neorealists (threats and dangers to national and international security, military interventions, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, etc.). Due to the changed security environment, "soft" threats can turn into "hard" ones, because the damage from climate change or disease can exceed the damage caused by a war or armed conflict by several times. For example, the consequences of the tsunami in Asia, the earthquake in Haiti, the nuclear disaster in Japan, the recent SARS, bird flu (H5N1), swine flu, Ebola, and the coronavirus pandemic (SARS-CoV-2) were larger from an armed conflict. According to the World Health Organization, in 2016, about 1.35 million people died annually in road accidents, or twice as many as deaths from war, crime and terrorism combined (World Health Organization, 2018). Cyber-threats are also more dangerous to security and stability than conventional warfare.

Hence, these issues, in the context of security, are no less important than terrorism or military intervention, which means that they are given a

special place in national security documents. New types of threats are not purely military or non-military, they are multiplied and transnational and require a wide range of tools to deal with. In the past decade, the greatest threat to world peace and security has been the so-called "multimodal threats", also known as hybrid threats, which are „a combination of military and non-military means, as well as covert and open means, which together form a more complex and multidimensional threat, including disinformation, cyber-attacks, economic pressure, deployment of irregular armed groups and regular armed forces, organized crime, terrorism and resource struggle" (Hoffman, 2007: 78).

The threats we have elaborated point to a strong link with the processes of globalization because they have planetary dimensions and great consequences for our future. At the same time, globalization is the driver and creator of new modified risks, so it is difficult to draw a line between threats and security risks. In this context, we will elaborate on the classification of global risks according to the Report of the World Economic Forum where risks are divided into five general categories: economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal and technological risks. This categorization coincides with the security sectors such as economic, societal, political, environmental and military security sectors.

The Global Risk Report 2022 lists the risks that will become a potential threat to the world. In short term (up to 2 years), these are the following risks: extreme weather events, existential crises, climate action failure, erosion of social cohesion, infectious diseases, mental health deterioration, cybersecurity failure and others. In medium term (2 to 5 years), risks such as: climate action failure, extreme weather events, erosion of social cohesion, existential crises, debt crises, human environmental damage, geoeconomic confrontations will intensify. And in long term (5 to 10 years), the most worrying will be the risks associated with: climate action failure, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, natural resource crises, human environmental damage, erosion of social cohesion, involuntary migration, etc. (World Economic Forum, 2022: 25). From the above, we can see that in the next five years, societal and environmental risks will prevail, and during the next decade, environmental risks will be most prevalent. As a result, there is great concern for the future of the world and a lack of optimism that could jeopardize national and international security.

Hence, we will compare the different types of risks faced by large and small countries, which have different levels of economic development, different governance models and contributions to world peace and security. The following table shows the top five risks that can threaten the security and stability of countries.

Table 1 - Comparison of risks between large and small countries.

Country	Risk 1	Risk 2	Risk 3	Risk 4	Risk 5
<b>China</b>	Extreme weather events	Asset bubble bursts in large economies	Infectious diseases	Collapse or lack of social security systems	Geopolitization of strategic resources
<b>France</b>	Erosion of social cohesion	Debt crises in large economies ----- Geopolitization / of strategic resources		Climate action failure	Failure of cybersecurity measures
<b>Russian Federation</b>	Interstate conflict	Failure to stabilize price trajectories	Infectious diseases	Employment and livelihood crises	Severe commodity shocks
<b>United Kingdom</b>	Failure of cybersecurity measures	Debt crises in large economies	Prolonged economic stagnation	Infectious diseases	Extreme weather events
<b>United States</b>	Asset bubble bursts in large economies	Climate action failure	Extreme weather events	Debt crises in large economies	Employment and livelihood crises
<b>Albania</b>	Fracture of interstate relations	Human-made environmental damage	Failure of cybersecurity measures	Debt crises in large economies	Infectious diseases
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	Human-made environmental damage ----- Prolonged economic stagnation	/	Employment and livelihood crises	Digital inequality ----- Widespread youth disillusionment	/
<b>Montenegro</b>	Employment and livelihood crises	Fracture of interstate relations	Prolonged economic stagnation	Digital inequality	Human-made environmental damage
<b>N.Macedonia</b>	Human-made environmental damage	Failure of public infrastructure	Debt crises in large economies	Prolonged economic stagnation	Digital inequality

<b>Serbia</b>	Human-made environmental damage	Debt crises in large economies	Employment and livelihood crises	Digital inequality	Geopolitization of strategic resources
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\*In the table where the results are even, the risks are inserted in the same cell. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina two risks share the first and fourth place, therefore the second and fifth place in the table are empty.

The difference between the types of risks faced by large and small countries is obvious, although these are risks that belong to the same category. For example, in large countries (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), environmental risks (extreme weather events and climate action failure), economic risks (debt crises and asset bubble bursts in large economies) and societal risks (such as infectious diseases) are present. In smaller countries (Albania, B&H, Montenegro, N.Macedonia and Serbia) prevail environmental risks related to (environmental damage caused by human activity), economic (debt crises in large economies and prolonged economic stagnation), of the societal risks the most common is the risk of employment and livelihood crises, and of technological risk is the digital inequality.

For greater reliability of the research, we will take into account the Munich Security Index, which covers a total of 31 global and domestic risks to the security of countries. This security index is based on a combination of five components/parameters - overall risk, potential damage, expected trajectory, perceived imminence and preparedness, and is supported by a survey of 12,000 people globally. It provides a complete picture of how security risks are perceived for each country individually. In this context, we will present the potential risks faced by the leading G7 member states, the BRICS and the UN Security Council. According to the index, the five highest ranked risks in each of these countries are the following:

- **China** - (1) USA; (2) The coronavirus pandemic; (3) Climate change generally; (4) Extreme weather and forest fires; (5) Cyber-attacks on your country;
- **France** - (1) Radical Islamic terrorism; (2) Climate change generally; (3) Extreme weather and forest fires; (4) Destruction of natural habitats; (5) Mass migration as a result of war or climate change;
- **Russian Federation** - (1) Rising inequality; (2) The coronavirus pandemic; (3) Economic or financial crisis in your country; (4) Extreme weather and forest fires; (5) A future pandemic;
- **United Kingdom** - (1) Climate change generally; (2) Destruction of natural habitats; (3) The coronavirus pandemic; (4) A future pandemic; (5) Radical Islamic terrorism;
- **USA** - (1) Cyber-attacks on your country; (2) Political polarization; (3) Economic or financial crisis in your country; (4) Disinformation campaigns from enemies; (5) China (Munich Security Index, 2022).



From the above we can conclude that the most common are environmental risks related to climate change. In France, four out of five risks are related to climate change, while in the United Kingdom two risks are of this kind. About 54% of the British public believe that the risk from climate change is imminent. Following several terrorist attacks in recent years, the risk of radical Islamic terrorism has increased in both countries. Risks of coronavirus pandemic and future pandemic occur in China, Russia and the United Kingdom. The survey shows that 50% of Chinese respondents said that the risk of a future pandemic is imminent in the next five years (ibid.). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the control and supervision over scientific research and to improve the international mechanisms for prevention of future pandemics. In that way, the risks of accidental or intentional misuse of modern technology to cause a global health crisis will be reduced.

Tensed relations between the United States and China have contributed to increasing geopolitical and technological risks (such as the risk of cyber-attacks in these countries). Their relationship deteriorated after the United States accused the Chinese technology company Huawei of being a cover for espionage and a threat to national security, and the knowledge of the coronavirus origin further increased the tension between the two great powers. We believe that the war in Ukraine and the attempt to establish a new world order will contribute to increasing geopolitical risks such as disruption of interstate relations, collapse of a multilateral institutions, interstate conflict, state collapse, geopolitical constellation of strategic resources and the risk of using weapons of mass destruction. The global pandemic has also served as a trigger for the risk of economic or financial crisis in Russia and the United States. According to Russian respondents, the biggest risk in their country is the rising inequality, and about 64% of them said that the economic or financial crisis is an imminent risk. On the other hand, according to American respondents, the second biggest risk in the United States is political polarization. It is the result of a setback in the democratic process and dissatisfaction with the results of the 2020 presidential election, when political rivalry escalated into mass protests across the country.

## Conclusion

*Contemporary* globalization is the main culprit for the increase of security threats and risks, because it continuously produces a series of economic and social inequalities for most of the world's population, but also various forms of geopolitical competition, exploitation of countries and discrimination of nations. As an unpredictable and contradictory process, it causes a series of changes that we can put in the category of risks and dangers. Their avoidance and non-resolution will create great complications in the relations between the states and between the international organizations and institutions. Therefore, many fear that the globalization of risks and threats will endanger most countries in the world. This raises the question of whether the world is becoming a riskier and

more insecure place to live, and how prepared are states and international organizations to deal with new security threats and risks.

From the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, the world is facing a multidimensional and complex globalized crisis consisting of health, economic, environmental and energy crises, interstate armed conflicts and anti-globalization protests that are erupting around the world. This perfect combination of crises has produced new modified and unpredictable security risks and threats on a regional and global scale, and with a very high intensity of manifestation, which can lead to “mutually assured destruction” of humanity.

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