

SECURITY AND CONTEMPORARY THREATS – RECONFIGURATION OF PARADIGMS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECURITY

Wojciech Pac
State Academy of Applied Sciences in Przemyśl
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7799-1071>
wojciechpac@wp.pl

Hubert Cyran
Independent Researcher
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4558-5458>
hubertcyran@gmail.com

Abstract. *The aim of this article is to analyse the evolution of security paradigms and their reconfiguration in the face of multidimensional threats of the third decade of the 21st century. The authors juxtapose Thomas Hobbes' classical theory of contractualism with modern concepts of the risk society proposed by Ulrich Beck and Yuval Noah Harari, and with empirical material from 2023–2026. The article addresses the problem of the insufficiency of a state-centric model of security in the face of contemporary transnational, ecosystemic and algorithmic risks. The method applied combines a critical review of the literature with secondary data analysis based on reports of key national institutions (CBOS, GUS, ZUS, NASK, WIB) and international organisations (Eurostat, WEF, EIB). The study reveals a pronounced “bipolarity” in the perception of security: high stability at the local level is accompanied by an escalation of existential fears. The key vectors of uncertainty are identified as: geopolitical (63% fear for sovereignty), technological (the phenomenon of “domesticated uncertainty”), ecosystemic (68% indicating climate threat) and an institutional trust crisis (57% lack of trust in the justice system). The article argues that in 2026 security becomes a process of continuous reconfiguration, and the traditional Leviathan model gives way to the “e-Sovereign” and algorithmic management of existence. The conclusions point to the need to move from Hobbesian territorial realism toward building systemic resilience and strengthening the autonomous agency of the individual in an asymmetric international environment.*

Keywords: National security, Philosophy of security, Human security, Cybersecurity, Climate change, Geopolitics, Security governance, Hybrid threats.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, individuals confront diverse experiences. Some are positive and developmental, while others are destabilising and threatening. Faced with such experiences, people interpret them through their relation to themselves, framing them within the commonly understood category of security. The accelerating technological development of the 21st century has brought changes not only in the perception of the world, but also in the military, economic, relational, social and even climatic spheres. Ubiquitous prosperity and rising living standards have produced a noticeable shift in how security is understood. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the impact of consumerism on human life as well as changes in psychology and the sense of security (Gorynia & Kuczewska, 2023; Ministerstwo Zdrowia, 2022; Ptak-Chmielewska, Baszniak & Kurpanik, 2022; Samuk & Sidorowicz, 2023; Sosnowska, 2020). The ongoing war in Ukraine, in Poland's immediate vicinity, has likewise left its mark on the perception of peace (Kancik-Kołtun, 2024; Maciejewska-Mieszkowska, 2023). Among the principal threats, experts of the World

Economic Forum also indicate short-term risks (armed conflicts between states resulting from intensified geopolitical tensions and the risk of escalation; disinformation and misinformation, often linked to AI; and extreme weather events in the form of more intense hurricanes, droughts, floods and fires) as well as long-term risks (the persistence of extreme weather threats due to climate change; irreversible environmental changes such as glacier melting and changes in ocean currents; the loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation threatening food production and water resources) (World Economic Forum, 2025). The above analysis shows that these threats go beyond the framework of individual states, acquiring an international—often unsustainable and asymmetric—character, which weakens the effectiveness of traditional, centralised defence mechanisms.

Given the dynamic development of contemporary dangers, the prevailing philosophical security paradigms (Krupa, 2020) require reconsideration and appropriate adaptation to today's world. Classical political philosophy in the realist approach proposed by Thomas Hobbes assumes that the security of the individual—understood as avoiding chaos and war—lies within the competence of the state. The state, established through rational calculation and the social contract, wields indivisible and absolute power to ensure order and security (Hobbes, 2009). Nevertheless, contemporary threats necessitate a shift in perspective: the focus should move from state security (state security), present in Hobbes, toward human security (human security) (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994). This is essential because, as Ulrich Beck demonstrates with the concept of the “risk society,” humanity itself generates threats it cannot address with standard and familiar methods (Beck, 2002). As this implies, the Hobbesian state remains necessary but insufficient; we must protect ourselves not only from other people but also from the consequences of our own actions—an emphasis strongly present in Yuval Noah Harari (Harari, 2014). Harari notes that we live in the most peaceful times, largely as a result of international cooperation, yet he also points to new threats—including those listed in GRR 2025: AI, genetic engineering and the “hacking” of the human body and mind, data manipulation and surveillance—indicating the need for global solutions and thus a departure from the purely sovereign state (Harari, 2018).

Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to present the evolution of the concept of security in relation to new, multidimensional challenges faced by humanity, while advancing the thesis that productive responses to threats require an interdisciplinary approach combining realism toward military threats, institutionalism assuming the necessity of global cooperation (North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO], 2022), and a constructivist approach allowing particular phenomena to be recognised as threats. This will be achieved through a review of major philosophical currents in thinking about security (realism, institutionalism, constructivism) and applying them to the assessment of selected threats: geopolitical instability, climate threats, and cybersecurity. Theoretical assumptions will be verified through a critical analysis of secondary data and institutional reports (including CBOS, GUS, NASK, WEF) published from 2023 to early 2026. This time frame makes it possible to capture the most recent dynamics in threat perceptions in an era of advanced algorithmisation and geopolitical instability.

The article will show that combining hard defence measures (realism), global and institutional cooperation (the cooperative paradigm, institutionalism), and attention to socially constructed priorities (constructivism) is the only route to ensuring holistic security in an age of uncertainty.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed methodology combining a critical literature review with secondary data analysis. The critical literature review reconstructs the evolution of security paradigms from classical political philosophy (Hobbes, Plato, Aristotle) through modern risk-society theory (Beck, Harari), establishing the theoretical framework against which empirical findings are assessed. The secondary data analysis draws on publicly available institutional reports from national and international research bodies published between January 2023 and March 2026. This time frame was selected to capture the most recent dynamics in threat perception during a period defined by the ongoing war in Ukraine, accelerating digitalisation, and escalating climate concerns — thereby enabling verification of whether classical and contemporary security paradigms correspond to measurable societal experience.

The empirical sources were selected according to three criteria: institutional authority (data produced by government agencies, established polling organisations, or international bodies); methodological transparency (reports with documented sampling procedures and margin-of-error data); and thematic relevance to the security vectors identified in the theoretical framework. Primary sources include: CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research, Poland) for longitudinal survey data on security perception and institutional trust; CERT Polska and the Warsaw Institute of Banking (WIB) for cybersecurity indicators; Eurostat for comparative European data; the World Economic Forum Global Risks Report for global risk mapping; and EIB climate surveys for ecological security dimensions. The data are used to operationalise the theoretical constructs: CBOS local-security data test the Hobbesian model of sovereign protection; cybersecurity incident data from CERT Polska verify Beck’s “domesticated uncertainty”; geopolitical fear indices test the adequacy of state-centric security governance; and biometric adoption rates provide empirical grounding for Harari’s algorithmic-sovereignty thesis. Renumbering of subsequent sections reflects the insertion of this new section: the original “2. Theoretical Foundations” becomes Section 4, and subsequent headings are renumbered accordingly.

3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: PHILOSOPHY OF SECURITY – EVOLUTION OF PARADIGMS FROM ANTIQUITY TO MODERNITY

The philosophy of security evolved from the classical division of sciences formulated by Aristotle, becoming a field that studies the essence of threats and methods of their elimination (Tatarkiewicz, 2003; Pokruszyński, 2013). As a universal value, its understanding changed together with civilisation—from the ancient harmony of the Greek polis and medieval thought, through Machiavelli’s pragmatism, to Hobbes’s modern social contract. Contemporary perspectives on this evolution are completed by Ulrich Beck’s concept of the risk society and Yuval Noah Harari’s civilisational diagnoses.

3.1 Antiquity: Security Within The Paradigm Of The Polis And Eudaimonia

Ancient reflection on security was inseparably linked with ethics, a virtuous way of life, and the proper functioning of the city-state (*polis*). Greek philosophers regarded it as a primary condition of individual well-being and happiness (*eudaimonia*). In one of his most important works, *The Republic*, Plato defined security through the vision of an ideal state based on social harmony corresponding to the structure of the human soul. Society is divided into three classes: rulers (philosophers), guardians (warriors), and producers (craftsmen and farmers). Plato also believed that justice (*dikajosyne*) is the foundation of state stability and protection against threats, whether internal (injustice, chaos) or external (Plato, 2003). Aristotle, in *Politics* (Aristotle, 2004) and *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1982), links individual security with the aspiration to be happy within a law-governed state ultimately guaranteeing peace (*eirene*) and citizens’ freedom, emphasising the role of a political system that prevents internal conflicts.

3.2 The Middle Ages: Pax Terrena As The Foundation Of The Eschatological Order

The Middle Ages were dominated by a theological perspective (Tatarkiewicz, 2003). Security was understood within the framework of divine order and the pursuit of salvation in the temporal realm. In *The City of God*, St Augustine regarded earthly peace as imperfect yet indispensable on the path to eternity, imposing on the state the duty to protect order and safeguard pilgrims against the chaos stemming from human sinfulness (St. Augustine, 2002).

According to St Thomas Aquinas, the state and law (arising from divine and natural order) exist to serve the common good. Their fundamental function is to ensure security and stability, protecting citizens from internal and external threats. In this view, security constitutes an element of the objective moral order, and authority is justified insofar as it realises the common good and protects peace. (St. Thomas Aquinas, 1967, II-II, q. 40, a. 1; 1984; 1986, I-II, q. 90, a. 1–4, q. 91, a. 1–4, q. 95, a. 1).

3.3 MODERNITY: THE EMANCIPATION OF POLITICS AND THE PARADIGM OF RAISON D'ÉTAT

In the modern era, security was secularised, separating politics from theological ethics in favour of a mechanistic concept of the state. Niccolò Machiavelli recognised *raison d'état* (state security) as a supreme value, superior to morality, because the survival of the state depends solely on the ruler's strength—captured in the principle that the end justifies the means (Machiavelli, 2021).

3.4 Modernity: The Emancipation Of Politics And The Paradigm Of Raison D'état

The 17th century brought a revolutionary shift in the philosophy of security through Thomas Hobbes (1588–1677). This key modern thinker redefined the role of the state, making security its paramount goal and sole *raison d'être*. In his opus magnum *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes articulated the concept of the state of nature as a sphere of anarchy devoid of authority and law. Within this theoretical construct, a permanent “war of all against all” prevails and human existence is depicted as “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” Fear of violent death becomes the key impulse for constructing political frameworks that guarantee survival.

3.4.1. *Pessimistic Anthropology: The Vision Of The State Of Nature*

Hobbes grounded his theory in an extremely pessimistic vision of human nature. He portrayed the human being as a creature ruled by the instinct of self-preservation, passions, and the desire for power. He considered people naturally equal, especially in their capacity to inflict harm, which manifests in the possibility that a weaker person can kill a stronger one. When this fundamental equality combines with egoism, it turns another person into a potential threat—what Hobbes calls the “war of all against all” (Hobbes, 2009).

3.4.2. *The State Of Nature As A Paradigm Of Permanent Uncertainty*

For Hobbes, the state of nature is not a historical fact but a logical assumption concerning life without a supreme authority. It is grounded in lawlessness, injustice, and the absence of property. Effectiveness in defending one's life becomes the only measure of action. This generates absolute freedom which ultimately becomes destructive, leading to existential dread. In this condition, the highest law is the law of nature—an injunction of reason directing human beings to seek peace; if peace is not possible, they must use all available means to defend their own life (Hobbes, 2009).

3.4.3. *Contractualism: The Transition To State Order Through The Alienation Of Freedom*

The only strategy for escaping permanent uncertainty is to abandon natural, absolute freedom. Driven by fear, people enter into a social contract combining the pact of union with the pact of subjection. The mechanism consists in transferring the natural right to use force to a superior instance. The aim is to guarantee the security of life and protect the community against both internal and external violence (Hobbes, 2009).

3.4.4. *The Leviathan As The Sovereign Guarantor Of Security*

The consequence of the contract is the emergence of the State—the mythical Leviathan. This biblical figure symbolises the absolute character of power necessary to overcome human aggression. The sovereign, as the sole beneficiary of the contract, is not a party to it; therefore, the sovereign enjoys full discretion in defining the means of security. Authority rests on indivisible absolutism, the monopoly on the legitimate use of coercion, and the primacy of positive law, which neutralises the uncertainty of the state of nature by making systemic stability the highest value (Hobbes, 2009).

In Hobbes's axiology, security is a *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of culture, science, and commerce. A strong state appears as the only remedy against self-destruction, even at the cost of freedom. Ulrich Beck's contemporary approach illustrates the deterritorialisation of threats, confronting the Hobbesian state-centric model with new, global challenges (Beck, 2002; Hobbes, 2009).

3.5. The Risk-Society Paradigm: Security In Ulrich Beck's Perspective

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck presented a concept of security that constitutes a radical break with classical, state-centric paradigms such as Hobbesian realism. Beck argued that the contemporary world

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has entered a “second modernity,” whose inseparable feature is the risk society. In this perspective, the vectors of threats undergo a fundamental qualitative transformation.

2.5.1. The Transition To A Risk Society: The Mechanism Of The “Boomerang Effect”

In the classical industrial society, the security paradigm was inseparably linked to the logic of distributing wealth (material goods and economic growth). State protection focused on neutralising traditional threats (wars, crime, natural disasters). According to Beck, late modernity produces a “boomerang effect,” meaning unintended side-effects of modernisation processes—rapid industrialisation and technological progress—that begin to dominate the accumulated capital. As a result, the primary task of society ceases to be the allocation of goods and becomes the management of the distribution of global threats and the mitigation of civilisational risk (Beck, 2002).

2.5.2. Taxonomy And Characteristics Of Risks In Ulrich Beck’s Account

The risks that constitute contemporaneity differ qualitatively from the dangers of the industrial era. Their first feature is transnationality. Phenomena such as climate degradation, financial crises or pandemics ignore state borders, affecting communities regardless of socio-economic status. This leads to a “democratisation of threats” and forces responses of a global nature. Another aspect is the subjectivisation and abstract character of these risks. Many of them (e.g., chemical contamination, cyber threats) remain imperceptible to the senses, which makes their reception entirely dependent on expert scientific discourse. This dependence on mediated knowledge often undermines social trust. The final pillar of this characteristics is irreversibility and the temporal accumulation of effects—contemporary catastrophes generate burdens for future generations, creating long-term existential threats (Beck, 2002).

2.5.3. The Paradigm Of “Organised Irresponsibility” As An Institutional Crisis

A key element of Beck’s critique is his demonstration of the anachronism of traditional institutions when confronted with a new ontology of threats. Nation-states operating within rigid territorial jurisdictions show structural inefficiency in the face of cross-border risks. The consequence is the phenomenon of “organised irresponsibility” (Beck, 2002). It manifests through the dispersion of agency and the weakening of cause-and-effect mechanisms in legal systems. In the face of global cataclysms, attempts to adjudicate responsibility solely within national frameworks become archaic.

2.5.4. Methodological Cosmopolitanism As A New Security Paradigm

In response to these challenges, Beck proposed the idea of methodological cosmopolitanism (Beck, 2016). The new philosophy of security requires action beyond state divisions and is based on: reflexivity (correcting the trajectory of technological development), global cooperation (supranational governance systems), and individualisation (autonomous decisions about lifestyle) (Beck, 2002).

In Beck’s paradigm, security becomes systemic control over abstract risks, which forces strategies that go beyond national sovereignty. While Beck emphasises global governance, Harari specifies that the contemporary instrument of such control is advanced algorithms and surveillance technology.

3.6. Yuval Noah Harari’s Technological Paradigm: Security In An Age Of Posthumanism And Algorithmisation

Contemporary reflection on security is completed by the thought of Yuval Noah Harari, an Israeli historian and philosopher. He revises existing security concepts by situating them in the context of radical technological acceleration and shifting the centre of gravity from traditional political disputes to technological and biotechnological challenges. His approach constitutes a new research perspective that goes beyond Hobbesian state-centrism and Beck’s sociology of risk. Harari focuses on existential threats resulting from the synergy of biotechnology and artificial intelligence, arguing that in the 21st century the lack of global cooperation in these domains is the greatest challenge to the species’ stability. Revising classical realism, he contends that contemporary times require redefining sovereignty in terms of the technological and algorithmic dimension of power. In his view, the security of the digital era is based not so much on states’ military strength as on the ability to manage data and mitigate risks stemming from the potential “hacking of the human organism” (Harari, 2018).

3.6.1. *The Decline Of Traditional Wars And The Transformation Of The Ontology Of Threats*

Harari points to a paradox: despite a widespread sense of danger, the global community functions under the historically lowest level of direct violence. Classical vectors of threat—such as armed conflicts or famine—have been significantly marginalised due to technological development and international cooperation. He analyses the reorientation of existential threats, arguing that civilisational risks (e.g., obesity and lifestyle diseases) dominate mortality statistics. This apparent overcoming of classical paradigms has produced a behavioural demobilisation of political elites, who underestimate slow-burn, systemic risks (Harari, 2018).

3.6.2. *A Taxonomy Of Existential Risks In The 21st Century: Harari's Perspective*

Harari's philosophy of security centres on three global vectors of threat. The first is the permanent risk of nuclear conflict which, despite a decline in conventional wars, remains the greatest immediate threat to the biological continuity of the species. The second pillar is irreversible climate change (Harari, 2018). Ecosystem destabilisation, in the long-term perspective, shows a level of lethality analogous to nuclear threat. Harari emphasises that the particularism of nation-states and their inertia in transferring competences to the supranational level are key barriers to building an effective security architecture. The third pillar involves breakthroughs in AI and bioengineering. The development of artificial intelligence generates the risk of the emergence of a "useless class" of people who lose existential purpose after being pushed out of the labour market. Symmetrically, progress in genetic engineering implies a risk of dichotomising humanity into groups of enhanced Homo sapiens and post-human cognitive elites, invalidating the existing category of shared humanity (Harari, 2018).

3.6.3. *The Crisis Of The Nation-State In The Face Of The Deteritorialisation Of Threats*

Harari criticises the anachronism of the nation-state as the principal guarantor of security. Concepts based on territorial sovereignty prove inadequate when confronted with transnational challenges (pandemics, climate processes, uncontrolled AI development). In an era of deterritorialised threats, classical decision-making mechanisms are insufficient. The Israeli thinker calls for the formation of a global identity, arguing that nationalism becomes a barrier preventing genuine species-level security (Harari, 2018).

3.6.4. *The Personal-Security Paradigm: Algorithmisation and Biometric Surveillance*

At the individual level, Harari warns against a new form of striving for security at the cost of voluntarily relinquishing freedom and privacy. States and corporations, through the aggregation of biometric and behavioural data, move toward a condition of full transparency of the individual. This process generates the risk of losing subjectivity. The classical concept of the Leviathan evolves toward a digital sovereign that acquires the capacity for algorithmic penetration and control ("hacking") of neurobiological processes that determine individual choices (Harari, 2018).

Harari's philosophy thus calls for rejecting the 19th-century logic of geopolitics and reorienting attention toward supranational cooperation in the face of threats that may end human history or fundamentally transform it in a posthumanist direction. Security is defined here through global governance and ethical control over technology (Harari, 2018).

4. RESULTS: THE EMPIRICAL DIMENSION OF SECURITY – A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON STATISTICAL INDICATORS (2023–2026)

The theoretical reconstruction of security paradigms (from Hobbes through Beck and Harari) combined with the analysis of secondary data serves to verify the correlation between theory and the 21st-century reality on the basis of measurements conducted by national and international research institutions.

4.1. *A Sense Of Safety In One's Place Of Residence And The Evaluation Of Police Work In The Light Of Data (2023–2025)*

The analysed material indicates a stabilisation of Poles' subjective sense of security. According to CBOS (CBOS, 2025a; 2025b), the vast majority of respondents consider their neighbourhood safe, which correlates with high evaluations of the Police and the Hobbesian function of pacifying violence. In 2024,

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fear of crime fell to 35% (down by 1 p.p.), and 64% of respondents did not identify threats in their own lives (CBOS, 2024a). These data are validated by Eurostat (Eurostat, 2025a): with a result of 2.8%, Poland recorded the third-lowest share in the EU of reports of violence or vandalism in one's area. This confirms a high level of local and institutional security in relation to state-centric theory.

4.2. New Vectors Of Uncertainty: Managing Global Risk In Social Awareness

The perception of security in Poland displays a bipolar structure: high local stability coupled with an intensification of global fears, primarily geopolitical ones (CBOS, 2024b; 2025c). This dissonance revises the functions of the sovereign under external vectors of destabilisation. It necessitates the analysis of systemic risks: cybersecurity, climate, and economic, health and social anxieties. In 2024–2025 these sectors constitute a new map of threats (World Economic Forum, 2025), shifting the centre of perception from the private sphere to the global one.

4.2.1. *Cyberspace As A New Ontology Of Risk: Perception And Awareness Of Digital Threats*

The contemporary paradigm of digital security is far more complex than traditional physical protection systems. Conclusions from NASK reports and those of the Warsaw Institute of Banking (WIB) from 2024–2025 make it possible to define the current state of users' awareness as the phenomenon of "domesticated uncertainty." Despite a year-on-year rise in the subjective sense of security (62% indications, up 7 p.p. r/r), the analysis shows its conditional character (WIB, 2024; 2025). This optimism does not result from a real decline in threats, but from the belief that users have better "equipment" to fight them. Operational data of CERT Polska for 2024 verify this thesis, indicating a record number of over 600,000 reported incidents (CERT Polska, 2025). In this context, "domesticated uncertainty" means that although internet users feel more confident thanks to safeguards, as many as 95% are aware that completely avoiding a cyberattack in the long run is impossible (Vecto, 2024). The sense of security thus increased through risk compensation. The foundation of this attitude is growing competence in cyber hygiene. According to the study "Postawy Polaków wobec cyberbezpieczeństwa 2025," when securing smartphones Poles most often use a PIN code (56%) and biometrics (56%), which represents a twofold increase in the popularity of the latter compared with 2023. However, 2025 data show that only 19% of respondents use password managers and only 10% use secure generators. The majority (32%) still create passwords themselves based on personal associations, which remains a high-risk practice. Although 30% of Poles now declare very good knowledge of security principles (up 4 p.p. compared with 2024), nearly half (49%) admit only an orientation-level knowledge. This competence gap makes education crucial—31% of respondents advocate introducing compulsory digital-education classes in schools (WIB, 2025).

Poles' main concerns focus on phishing (88%) and identity theft (38%) and the related financial losses. A counterweight to these fears is the growing trust in mobile banking. By the end of 2025, the number of users of banking applications reached nearly 27 million (up 15% r/r), including 19.5 million mobile-only customers. Users consider applications safe, among other reasons, thanks to biometrics, which 80% indicate as their preferred authorisation method (Marciniak, 2024). This confirms the role of modern tools in a country that is a European leader in cashless payments, where in 2025 more than 98% of card transactions were contactless (National Bank of Poland [NBP], 2025). Despite high recognition of phishing (over 85%), cybercriminals' effectiveness remains high: 21% of respondents have fallen victim to phishing, and 17% have experienced telephone spoofing. At the same time, only 31% of respondents independently verify the identity of a calling bank employee. A growing problem is disinformation. Although 51% of citizens declare an ability to recognise deepfake-type materials, actual verification is selective: only 16% check the provenance of images, and 17% report or block suspicious content. In view of these data, systemic digital education becomes a key challenge for social security in 2026 (WIB, 2025).

4.2.2. *Ecosystem Destabilisation As An Existential Vector Of Uncertainty*

In 2024–2025, the ecological sphere became a key area for the reconfiguration of social fears, legitimising the concept of the risk society (Beck, 2002). According to the Polish Chamber of Insurance, natural disasters have become a permanent element of the catalogue of Poles' dominant concerns (PIU, 2025). Climate issues ceased to be distant warnings and became a real foundation for defining security and stability.

The rising dynamics of these fears are corroborated by statistical data: 68% of citizens regard climate change as a direct threat (CBOS, 2025d). As many as 93% believe that the state's priority should be to increase the country's resilience, including by modernising critical infrastructure (European Investment Bank [EIB], 2024). The greatest challenge remains water management—69% of Poles report periods of drought, and in the Podlaskie voivodeship the problem affects as many as 90% of residents (CBOS, 2024c). Although 81% link weather extremes with climate change, local activity remains insufficient; only 4% of respondents perceive real measures aimed at counteracting drought effects.

A substantive confirmation of these concerns is provided by the report of the Koalicja Klimatyczna, warning that warming by 2°C will drastically worsen cultivation conditions and threaten the stability of food supplies (Koalicja Klimatyczna, 2020). Climate change has thus become a tangible threat to the physical and economic security of individuals and a key vector of contemporary uncertainty.

4.2.3. *Geopolitical Reorientation: War At The Border As The Primary Determinant Of Social Fear*

In the process of reconfiguring social fears, geopolitics dominates, having taken precedence over climate and digital risks. The proximity of warfare in Ukraine and the progressing destabilisation of the global order are currently the main factors shaping an existential sense of threat (CBOS, 2024b; 2025c).

Studies (CBOS, IBRiS, Ipsos) document an unprecedented increase in military fears—the fear of Poland's active involvement in hostilities concerns more than 50% of respondents (CBOS, 2024d). IBRiS data from May 2025 show that as many as 63% of respondents perceive the international situation as a real threat to state sovereignty (Polska Agencja Prasowa [PAP], 2025).

Growing external pressure affects the redefinition of individual strategies: according to an IBRiS survey, 32.6% of Poles would decide to flee their place of residence in the event of war (Kozubal, 2025). A significant vector of uncertainty is also the decline of trust in Polish-Ukrainian relations—65.5% of respondents believe they have worsened, an opinion common regardless of political sympathies (Gurgul, 2025).

Poland's collective awareness on the threshold of 2026 is shaped by the paradigm of global threat. A response to these challenges is the new National Security Strategy of the Republic of Poland, adopted on 25 July 2025 (Council of Ministers [RM], 2025). As Dr hab. Tomasz Pawłuszko notes, its implementation involves challenges in the area of technological sovereignty and building state resilience to contemporary risks (Pawłuszko, 2025). The new architecture of threats forces an evolution of individual attitudes and a strategic reorientation of national actions.

4.2.4. *Economic Vectors Of Uncertainty: A Crisis Of Material Security And Systemic Trust*

Current analyses confirm that the undermining of financial foundations is a primary driver of the erosion of Polish citizens' material security. A temporary slowdown of inflation to 3.6% r/r (Statistics Poland [GUS], 2026) did not bring the expected relief due to the accumulated burden of earlier price increases. Although CBOS analyses from December 2025 indicate record satisfaction with material conditions (67%), the foundations of this calm are systematically eroded by living costs—37% of Poles declare the need to reduce expenditure, and nearly 80% implement saving strategies. The situation is aggravated by the destabilisation of local labour markets: the share of those who consider finding employment in their area difficult rose to 28% (CBOS, 2025e; 2025f; 2025g).

At the same time, Poles express fear about their financial future, identifying the pension system as one of the most unstable pillars of security. An ING Bank Śląski study from October 2025 indicates that although the share of those extremely concerned fell from 42% to 33%, still every second citizen points to insufficient funds as a key threat after ending professional activity (ING Poland, 2025). These concerns are confirmed by official ZUS projections indicating the inevitable erosion of benefits and a low replacement rate (Social Insurance Institution [ZUS], 2025), which motivates people to seek alternative private saving schemes (Business Insider Poland, 2025).

The analysis of financial threats is completed by the specificity of the contemporary labour market. Record-low unemployment at 2.9% does not eliminate fears about employment stability in the era of digital transformation (Eurostat, 2025b). Studies by the Polish Economic Institute show that 33.4% of respondents assess the impact of technology negatively (PIE, 2024). Pessimism is confirmed by Digital Poland Foundation research (2024): 42% of respondents believe AI will eliminate more jobs than it creates

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4.2.5. *Health Threats: Accessibility Crisis And Biological Security*

Systemic weaknesses of the medical sector, revealed during the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to generate a strong sense of threat. The main determinant of anxiety remains the deficit in access to healthcare services: as many as 70% of Poles assess the functioning of healthcare negatively. 82% rate access to specialists poorly, and 65% point to staff shortages in hospitals. As many as 73% believe that treatment in Poland is not free of charge, which—combined with appointment waiting times (63% negative evaluations)—escalates social fears regarding health security (CBOS, 2025h). Publications from January 2026 confirm the increasing chronicity of queues for health services, measurably contributing to the escalation of social anxieties (Fundacja Watch Health Care, 2026).

At the same time, illness of loved ones is perceived as the most critical threat (37.5%), compared with a 33.6% level of fear concerning one's own somatic condition (UCE RESEARCH i ePsychologodzy.pl, 2025). According to Enel-med, 45% of Poles consider physical well-being their greatest concern (Centrum Medyczne Enel-med, 2025). In 2025 health dethroned financial issues in the hierarchy of social risks. A sense of personal threat, stemming from fear of systemic inefficiency, translates into widespread existential anxiety.

4.2.6. *Destabilisation Of The Socio-Legal Order: Polarisation And An Institutional Trust Crisis*

The contemporary panorama of anxieties is completed by the socio-legal sphere, dominated by the decline of citizens' trust in state bodies. The inefficiency of the judiciary undermines a sense of stability: 57% of Poles declare a lack of trust in the justice system, and low ratings concern the Constitutional Tribunal (30.3%) and the prosecution service (37.4%) (Szymaniak, 2025). According to CBOS, only 25% express a positive opinion about courts, while 48% are negative. The lengthiness of procedures destabilises legal security, which is emphasised by more than half of society (CBOS, 2025i).

At the same time, a source of concern remains deep political division and aggression in public communication. Despite improved personal moods, 36% of Poles feel disregarded by those in power, and 42% feel irritation. As many as 66% perceive negative emotions in their surroundings, mainly fear about the future (42%) (CBOS, 2025j). This perspective is complemented by The Global Risks Report 2025, which ranks social polarisation sixth among the most serious global threats (World Economic Forum, 2025). The crisis of institutional authority directly intensifies citizens' uncertainty and forces a redefinition of micro-social relations at the threshold of 2026.

5. DISCUSSION: RECONFIGURATION OF SECURITY IN THE LIGHT OF THEORY AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

Confronting the evolution of philosophical thought with empirical data from 2023–2026 demonstrates that in the face of global crises security loses its status as an immutable value and becomes a process of continuous reconfiguration. It can be understood as a tension between the former hegemony of the state and the contemporary, dispersed ontology of global risk. The transition from the classical paradigms of Machiavelli and Hobbes toward the perspective of global risk in Beck and Harari illustrates a fundamental shift: an evolution from territorial defence toward the ontological safeguarding of the species and the system.

5.1. *The Decline Of The Leviathan: From Sovereignty To Interdependence*

The Hobbesian paradigm assumed that the sovereign derives legitimacy from the social contract in which individuals relinquish freedom to the state in exchange for existential security. Yet today's cross-border threats—such as global pandemics, the climate crisis, or cyberattacks—escape the competencies of individual governments, forcing a redefinition of the traditional understanding of state sovereignty.

Statistics from 2025 (3.2.3) confirm the exhaustion of the previous paradigm—36.7% of respondents choose migration instead of fighting for the homeland. This suggests an evolution toward human security: as the individual loses faith in the state as a guarantor, they implement individual survival strategies. The inefficiency of public services (ZUS, courts, healthcare) generates a “modern state of nature,” compelling reliance on one’s own resources, which is regularly recorded by CBOS.

5.2. From A Visible Antagonist To Invisible Risk: The Paradox Of Cyberspace

Traditional armed conflicts were characterised by the predictability of the scale of attack and the transparency of the opponent’s identity. Contemporary threats—which Beck considers an inherent element of the risk society—are elusive and lead to the phenomenon of “organised irresponsibility,” causing decision-making paralysis and the dilution of responsibility within systemic structures, thereby producing a state of impunity.

Cybersecurity research results (3.2.1) allow the definition of the category of “domesticated uncertainty.” An increase in objective risk—visible in the peak number of incidents recorded by CERT Polska—is accompanied by an asymmetric increase in the subjective sense of security (62%). In constructivist terms, threat has become a permanent aspect of reality. Although many users can recognise various forms of phishing, selectivity in the verification of other content means Harari’s diagnosis of the “hacked human” remains relevant. Traditional state sovereignty yields where algorithmic filters begin to manage mass emotions, as confirmed by cybersecurity research conducted by NASK.

5.3. From Biological Survival To Quality Of Existence: Adaptation And Resilience In The Face Of Challenges

According to Harari, after mastering historical threats, humanity must now confront the risk of losing agency to algorithms and genetic manipulation. The concept of security thus changes: the traditional focus on biological survival gives way to concern for the integrity of identity and standards of life.

Drawing on Ulrich Beck’s concept, it can be observed that although climate threats (3.2.2) and systemic threats (3.2.4) have a global scope, their real impact affects the lives of individuals in an individualised manner. For 85% of society, climate change is already part of everyday life. This signals that security no longer means only the absence of threats, but above all the capacity to adapt and survive in a new reality. In 2026 the role of the state evolves: from a function focused on border defence it shifts toward managing systemic resilience so as to withstand shocks. At the same time, the phenomenon of “crisis fatigue” noted in analyses indicates the exhaustion of society’s adaptive potential. This may result in widespread apathy and increased susceptibility to destabilising factors.

5.4. Synthesis: Toward A New Paradigm

The evolution of security toward a transdisciplinary category requires a holistic approach in 2026. An effective strategy demands the synthesis of components: geopolitical (hard territorial security), systemic (international cooperation), and socio-cognitive (the social reception of threats). This transformation implies the necessity of evolving state structures and revising the status of the individual in an asymmetric international environment.

6. CONCLUSION: RECONFIGURATION OF THE SECURITY PARADIGM IN AN AGE OF GLOBAL RISK

A study of the evolution of the idea of security (from ancient eudaimonia, through Hobbes’s modern realism, to the concepts of Beck and Harari), verified on the basis of the analysis of existing data, leads to the following conclusions:

The secularisation of the sphere of security has led to its contemporary definition through the prism of the efficient operation of state mechanisms. Empirical indicators provided by GUS and law-enforcement

agencies show that at the micro-spatial level the sovereign—whom Hobbes described as a “mortal god”—remains effective in protecting basic goods, generating a sense of security exceeding 90%. However, in line with Ulrich Beck’s concept, traditional state structures become outdated in the face of contemporary global threats. This is due to “organised irresponsibility,” which deprives the state of a monopoly on crisis management and leads to the dispersion of responsibility for mitigating climatic, pandemic or financial risks, as confirmed by CBOS reports from 2024–2025.

A reevaluation of the definition of security has occurred: the classical force-based approach rooted in realist paradigms gives way to analysing the hidden costs of modernisation. Non-military threats arising from global interdependencies and technological progress have become crucial. Today’s existential challenges go beyond traditional state security by directly threatening the continuity of the human species. The main sources of these fears are ecosystem destabilisation and risks related to autonomous AI systems. This situation requires a shift from the paradigm of territorial sovereignty toward “methodological cosmopolitanism.” In practice, this means the need for cross-border risk-mitigation mechanisms, advocated by NASK experts in the field of cybersecurity.

According to Yuval Noah Harari’s forecasts, in 2026 systemic security is often exchanged for compliance with AI mechanisms, which limits our decision-making freedom. Findings concerning biometrics and information control show that, fearing the loss of data integrity and being “hacked,” contemporary individuals increasingly accept biometric surveillance and data-collection systems. In short: oppression shifts from the physical level—where the sovereign protected us from external danger—to the digital level, where power enters “under the skin,” steering health and identity beyond any meaningful control. Thus, traditional citizen protection gives way to algorithmic management of existence, which in practice undermines individual agency.

The contemporary security paradigm departs from the unrealistic vision of completely eliminating threats, evolving toward a pragmatic strategy of risk management. In today’s philosophy of security, the pursuit of an ideal state of protection is replaced by the capacity to adapt and operate effectively under uncertainty. This thesis implies a redefinition of contractualism. The classical model of sovereignty, based on exchanging obedience for protection, gives way to the requirement of autonomous agency. Contemporary civic condition is defined by an imperative of reflexivity and psychological resilience. The contemporary security paradigm is based on the continuity of actions: it shifts the burden of responsibility toward the individual, obliging autonomous decisions regarding digital hygiene, care for physical condition and health, and prudent everyday choices.

Although the empirical material in this study is drawn from Poland, the structural patterns identified are not unique to the Polish context. The “bipolar” security perception documented here — high subjective safety at the local level coexisting with escalating existential fears at the geopolitical, digital, and ecological levels — constitutes a recognisable feature of the post-2022 security environment across Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Countries sharing a direct neighbourhood with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, including the Baltic states, Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, confront analogous tensions between functioning domestic-security institutions and the perceived inadequacy of state-centric models in the face of hybrid, cyber, and climate-related threats. The institutional-trust deficit documented by CBOS — 57% of Polish respondents distrusting the judiciary, widespread scepticism toward the pension system, and weakened confidence in state capacity to manage long-term systemic risks — mirrors patterns recorded by Eurobarometer and regional survey data in neighbouring countries. This convergence suggests that the “functional crisis of the nation-state” identified in the Polish data is not a domestic anomaly but a structural feature of security governance in post-communist democracies under geopolitical pressure.

The theoretical implications are correspondingly regional in scope. Beck’s “organised irresponsibility” — the dispersion of accountability for transnational risks across fragmented national institutions — is acutely visible in the CEE context, where NATO membership and EU integration have shifted significant security competencies to supranational bodies while national governments retain primary responsibility for public communication and domestic resilience-building. Harari’s “e-sovereign” dynamic is likewise observable across the region: rapid digitalisation of public services combined with high cybercrime incidence (CERT data across V4 countries show converging trends) is producing a

generational shift toward biometric-trust models that simultaneously increases systemic vulnerability. The Polish data, therefore, serve as a high-resolution case study of dynamics that security governance researchers and policymakers across the CEE region will recognise as structurally analogous to their own institutional environments. Comparative research extending this framework to other NATO frontline states would constitute a productive direction for future scholarship.

In 2026, security is no longer a stable condition resulting from the inviolability of borders; rather, it is continuous responsiveness to multidimensional global crises requiring the cooperation of many fields of science and technology. A key research problem becomes the redefinition of individual sovereignty in the face of the technicisation of existence. Today, fear of the digital disintegration of identity displaces the classical physical paradigm of threat to life known from Hobbes's philosophy.

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