

SECURITY CHALLENGES AND GLOBAL RISKS

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Review article

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CORRELATIONS BETWEEN GLOBAL PROBLEMS AND SECURITY

Abstract

The fact that there are regions of prolonged conflicts, that is, states engaged in continuous armed conflicts, served as the basis for defining the problem addressed in this paper. The question arises as to what causes these conflicts, namely, whether there are common characteristics among states that are not resilient to contemporary security threats? Which global changes have contributed to the development of conflicts, and which states are prone to conflict? The aim of the research is to identify, through an analysis of the major global problems faced by states at war, the common characteristics (common denominators) that place

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these states in conditions of prolonged conflict. The research is based on the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School of Security Studies, which examines threats to security through different sectors (military, political, economic, environmental, and societal).

Keywords: armed conflicts, protracted conflicts, global problems, security threats

INTRODUCTION

According to data from World Population Review: Countries Currently at War, there were 36 active armed conflicts in the world during 2025, in which 38 states were directly involved (World Population Review [WPR], 2025).¹ The Global Peace Index emphasizes that conflicts are also becoming increasingly internationalized, with 92 countries now indirectly or directly involved in conflicts beyond their own borders (Institute for Economics & Peace [IEP] 2024). This means that more than 60% of existing countries are involved in wars or conflicts. Countries exposed to prolonged conflicts can become war-torn states that require many decades to rebuild their infrastructure, economies, and other essential functions (WPR, 2025). Due to war devastation, these so-called collapsed states are characterized by large-scale migration, especially of young, working-age populations. Such countries remain for decades “occupied” by various military, police, and political missions, which most often fail to establish a high level of democracy, economic development, or stable social cohesion.

Representatives of the Copenhagen School argue that the logic of security should be expanded beyond the defense of territory, national interests, and nuclear deterrence to include “universal problems” and conflict prevention, as well as, crucially, joint global efforts to eradicate poverty and underdevelopment (Mišev 2022, 49). In recent decades, there has been an increasing number of scientific contributions mapping all security challenges, risks, and threats at the global level, whose harmful impacts are expected to leave major consequences for humanity. Today, security threats cannot be interpreted solely through military dimensions,

¹ The presented data include estimates from two prominent sources: the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), used for analysis and comparison (WPR, 2025).

but rather as multiple, asymmetric, and transnational threats, ranging from biological and chemical weapons, environmental degradation, and information-technology threats, to nuclear catastrophes (Mišev 2022, 49). All of these security threats have the same ultimate consequence: armed conflict. War as a method of projecting power beyond national borders, achieving specific goals, and pursuing economic and political interests has not been eliminated. The causes of conflicts have to some extent changed, security threats have multiplied and become more complex, uncertain, and unpredictable, but the outcome of these threats has not changed, as they still tend to culminate in armed conflicts. Therefore, conflict prevention and the resolution of disputes in their latent phase are of crucial importance for maintaining peace. In this sense, it is necessary to map both contemporary security threats and the states themselves, along with their military, political, economic, and social structures, in order to objectively assess security conditions and the potential for destabilization and escalation of conflicts.

During the period after World War II, from 1945 to 2018, 162 wars were recorded. Out of these, 93 conflicts occurred during the Cold War period (1945-1990), and 69 conflicts took place from 1990 to 2018 (Jeftić i dr. 2018, 27). With the end of the Cold War, armed conflicts have partially decreased worldwide. However, since 2003, armed conflicts have sharply increased, especially in countries with Muslim-majority populations (Mišev 2022, 53). With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Western countries achieved global dominance, which led to an increase in civil wars, the emergence of non-conventional forms of warfare (such as terrorism and cyberattacks), and numerous unresolved conflicts. When viewed in terms of conflict resolution since the fall of the Berlin Wall, out of a total of 69 conflicts, 30 remain unresolved (including Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Yemen, Nigeria, Chad, etc.), which is approximately 45% (Jeftić i dr. 2018, 45).

CORRELATION BETWEEN GLOBAL PROBLEMS AND SECURITY

Professor Richard Smalley, a Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, identified the 10 greatest problems facing the world (Mišev 2022, 50):

1. energy,
2. water,
3. food,

4. environment,
5. poverty,
6. diseases,
7. terrorism and war,
8. education,
9. democracy and
10. population (Smalley 2005, 414).

When viewed through the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School, all ten global problems fit into the military sector (terrorism and war), the political sector (democracy), the environmental sector (environment, water, food, energy), the economic sector (poverty and diseases), and the societal sector (population and education) (Mišev 2022, 50). To these globalized threats, the challenges of the fourth digital revolution should also be added, namely, internet-based threats (Diagram 1). Of course, global threats cannot be viewed in isolation; conflicts are generally not caused by a single specific security threat (for example, climate change), but rather by an interplay of different factors (such as the inability of institutional responses to environmental degradation, as a consequence of unstable political authority, poor economic development, and/or extreme religious and ethnic phenomena within society).

Diagram 1. Global Problems through a Sectoral Approach



Source: Mišev 2022, 51.

Correlation between population size, number of states, and conflicts

Contemporary statistics indicate a growing population over a 50-year period, during which the global population increased from less than 3.5 billion in 1960 to almost 6.5 billion in 2010, nearly doubling (Kovačević i Kovačević 2016, 66). According to estimates by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), demographic projections indicate that the global population will increase from the current seven billion to 8.6 billion by 2030, 9.8 billion by 2050, and 11.2 billion by 2100, with the largest growth expected in underdeveloped, low-income countries in Asia and Africa (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division [DESAPD], 2017). It is expected that half of the world's population growth will be concentrated in nine countries: India, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Tanzania, the United States, Uganda, and Indonesia (DESAPD, 2017). It is precisely these countries, including the United States with its internal issues, that are characterized by political and social instability as well as frequent and prolonged conflicts.

Looking at history, it is clear that the previous population growth coincided with an increase in the number of modern states, a process known as state fragmentation. According to data from the Global Report on Conflict, Governance, and State Fragility 2017, published by the *Center for Systemic Peace*, “the number of independent states with more than 500,000 inhabitants increased from 22 in 1800 to 54 in 1900, and then tripled during the 20th century, reaching 167 states in 2017” (Marshall and Elzinga-Marshall 2017, 2). With the collapse of the socialist state system and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (USSR), the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and Czechoslovakia, the number of states increased by 22. Today, the world has 193 states that are members of the United Nations (Mišev 2022, 53).

“During the Cold War period (1946–1991), the number and scale of armed conflicts in the global system were relatively evenly distributed across the world, although they were concentrated in six ‘prolonged conflict regions’ (Central America, Southern Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Korean Peninsula)” (Marshall and Elzinga-Marshall 2017, 11). The creation of independent states from former colonial territories in Asia, Africa, and Central and

South America has led to decades-long conflicts over various forms of independence or power struggles, resulting in nearly 20% of unresolved conflicts from the period before the fall of the Berlin Wall. A similar pattern can be observed in the fragmentation of former socialist states (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), which can be described as “frozen” (rather than resolved) conflicts. “Before the collapse of socialism, internal wars accounted for 59% of conflicts, whereas after the collapse of socialism and the end of bipolarity, this share increased to as much as 88%” (Jeftić i dr. 2018, 27). These wars are characterized by the engagement of the entire international community, that is, external interference in internal conflicts. The interaction between internal tensions and external pressures partly explains the inability of many new autocracies to effectively manage internal conflicts (Marshall and Elzinga-Marshall 2017, 14). The changes brought by globalization require a new approach to security (Mišev 2022, 6). Geopolitical competition among global centers of power has become part of a complex, systemic, and contradictory process of globalization that shapes the contemporary international system. On the one hand, globalization is a process of creating a unified global identity (a transnational liberal system), while on the other hand, it is a process of state fragmentation. In this sense, what is today referred to as globalization is a contradictory process (Mišev 2025, 20).

Correlation between democracy and conflict

The Democracy Index is based on five categories: (1) electoral process and pluralism, (2) functioning of government, (3) political participation, (4) political culture, and (5) civil liberties. Based on their scores across a range of indicators within these categories, each country is classified into one of four regime types: “full democracy,” “flawed democracy,” “hybrid regime,” or “authoritarian regime” (Economist Intelligence Unit [EIU], 2025). The fragmentation of states and the creation of new independent countries, which emerged during “the second and third waves of decolonization,” were almost always authoritarian or quickly fell under authoritarian rule (within ten years) (Marshall and Elzinga-Marshall 2017, 5). The emergence of new states during this period showed that these regimes were not sufficiently integrated to sustain and consolidate democratic procedures, which is why autocracies developed as inherently unstable regimes. “This helps

explain the near doubling of authoritarian regimes with the end of the Cold War and their apparent persistence during the first two decades of the 21st century” (Marshall and Elzinga-Marshall 2017, 6).

According to data from the *The Economist Intelligence Unit: What’s wrong with representative democracy?* presented in the Democracy Index, as shown in Table 1, out of 167 countries in 2024, 35.9% are authoritarian regimes (60 countries), 27.5% are flawed democracies (46 countries), 21.6% are hybrid regimes (36 countries), while full democracies are the least numerous (25 countries, or 15%). This overview is presented in Table 1 (EIU, 2025). It is also important that approximately 39.2% of the world’s population lives in authoritarian states. More precisely, less than half (45%) of the global population lives in some form of democracy, while a much smaller share (6.6%) lives in “full democracies,” which represents a decline compared to 12.5% in 2014 (EIU, 2025). The number of countries classified as some form of democracy has decreased by eight, from 79 in 2006 to 71 today. Consequently, the number of “authoritarian regimes” has increased from 55 in 2006 to 60 (EIU, 2025).

Table 1. Distribution of Countries by Regime Type

REGIME TYPE	NUMBER OF STATES	% STATE	% POPULATION
Full democracies	25	15	6,6
Flawed democracies	46	27,5	38,4
Hybrid regimes	36	21,6	15,7
Authoritarian regimes	60	35,9	39,2

Source: EIU, 2025.

Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa have no full democracies, unlike most countries in Western Europe. The most concerning situation is in Sub-Saharan Africa, where out of 44 countries, more than half (23) are authoritarian regimes, as well as in the *Middle East and North Africa* (MENA), where out of 20 countries, as many as 17 are authoritarian states, and there are no full democracies at all (EIU, 2025). On the other hand, Eastern Europe and Latin America, with a large number of flawed democratic regimes, are still in a transitional period in which they have not managed to reach the level of full democracy seen in developed Western countries, nor their level of security. Even

some Eastern European states (Bulgaria, Romania) have joined both the NATO alliance and the European Union, despite not being “full democracies” (Mišev 2022, 57).

This indicates that the strengthening of a political oligarchy leads to the weakening of institutions, which are unable to ensure the proper functioning of the system, including security. As a result, such states become weak, that is, destabilized by civil discontent and political protests, which often escalate into armed conflicts. The problem arises when the political elite is focused on preserving power rather than the state itself. In this regard, Collins distinguishes between two types of security in weak states:

- Regime security – a condition in which ruling elites are safe from violent challenges and threats to their rule.

- State security – a condition in which state institutions, processes, and structures are able to continue functioning effectively regardless of changes in the ruling elite (Collins 2010, 166). A large number of leaders in weak states have successfully carried out a transition to multi-party democracy while maintaining control over the state (Collins 2010, 177). In this sense, an authoritarian party oligarchy is a major obstacle to strengthening the democratic institutions of the state system, which are the foundation not only of the functioning of the state as a political, social, and economic community, but also of the entire security system.

Correlation of Natural Resources (Water and Food), Environmental Degradation, Energy and Conflicts

The industrial, followed by the technological, and today the digital revolution, together with globalization, have improved the quality of life in industrialized countries, but have also left enormous damage to the environment and natural resources. Unfortunately, the greatest consequences of environmental disasters are borne by developing and underdeveloped countries, which lack the capacity to address environmental problems that they, in fact, did not cause (Mišev 2022, 58). The Middle East and North Africa region, which includes over 355 million people, has been the subject of numerous studies on the effects of climate change (Grossman 2017, 1). What is concerning is that these are regions comprising countries with low levels of economic development (so-called poor countries), which lack sufficient resources to effectively combat environmental degradation and are additionally destabilized by

political conflicts (Mišev 2019, 305). According to UNDP data, as many as 887 million people worldwide are directly exposed to climate hazards such as extreme heat, floods, droughts, or air pollution. "Individually, the most widespread hazards affecting poor people globally are high temperatures (608 million) and air pollution (577 million). Flood-prone regions are home to 465 million poor people, while 207 million live in areas affected by drought" (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2025). Professor Smalley spoke about billions of people around the world who live without reliable access to clean water for drinking and agriculture. He expressed concern that, as population growth continues and existing natural resources are depleted, the biggest problem will be water scarcity. According to a United Nations report, more than 780 million people worldwide do not have access to safe drinking water. By 2030, 47% of the world's population is expected to live in water-stressed areas, according to a report by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (Jeftić i dr. 2018, 26). Canadian scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon argues that environmental degradation "is already contributing to violent conflicts in many parts of the developing world." Poor societies are particularly affected because they are less capable of defending themselves against environmental degradation and its resulting social crises (Homer-Dixon 1994, 6). Numerous studies also indicate that countries affected by conflict and already exposed to environmental degradation (such as water scarcity and a lack of fertile land) are at the highest risk of experiencing an increase in conflicts and violence due to global climate change (Mišev 2022). Some domestic authors argue that there are also other factors that can negatively influence the spread of environmental problems and even generate them, including population growth, poverty, hunger, and pandemic diseases (Jovanović Popović i Milinčić 2016, 69–82).

Environmental degradation, strongly influenced by the exploitation of energy resources (fossil fuels), has serious consequences for human health, poverty, and economic development, as well as strategic importance for states whose power is based on natural resources such as coal, oil, and gas, and can therefore become a source of conflict. These changes are often accompanied by dangerous or harmful (external and/or internal) economic and political events or circumstances that, by their occurrence, can escalate into crises, such as oil shocks, gas crises, etc. (Mišev 2020, 149). The importance of this topic lies precisely in the fact that the energy security of every state is an extremely important

component of its economic situation, since energy is the foundation for the necessary and continuous functioning of all branches of industry and services in the modern world (Chernyak, Kharlamova, and Stavvytskyy 2018, 5). Ownership and transit of energy resources can be a source of social and economic development, but also of systemic imbalance, leading to tensions in international relations (Mišev 2020, 149). Due to “large reserves of natural gas and oil, the regions of Central Asia and the Middle East have become geopolitically important areas, where the interests of major powers collide over the control of energy resources.” As a result, countries in the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Syria, Israel), former Soviet Union states (Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, etc.), as well as parts of Africa (Libya, Nigeria, South Sudan) and South America (Venezuela) have been drawn into energy-related conflicts. “The conflict between Israel and Iran represents one of the most persistent confrontations in the Middle East. Over the past decade, its dynamics have increasingly become multidimensional, reflected in the spillover of conflict beyond traditional military-political frameworks” (Bogićević 2026, 171). Eurasia is home to 75% of the world’s population, accounts for 60% of global gross national product, and contains 75% of global energy resources as well as half of the world’s nuclear power (Mišev 2020, 156). The issue of nuclear weapons proliferation represents a significant challenge to international and regional security. This is particularly evident in the Middle East, one of the key regions in world politics (Pajić 2025, 350). Smalley argues that democracy declines without an educated population, which, together with resource scarcity and rising poverty, often leads to conflicts and terrorism as increasingly transnational and asymmetric threats to security. Although addressing these security challenges will not immediately bring peace to the Earth, it helps remove some of the factors that contribute to the development of global conflicts and unrest (Smalley 2005, 414–417).

Correlation between Poverty, Diseases, Education, and Conflicts

Conflicts between states are becoming less frequent, while conflicts among social groups within states are becoming more common. Differences in social and educational status are increasingly becoming a barrier to social cohesion and integration (Mišev 2022, 267). Estimates suggest that the number of people living in absolute

poverty is 887 million in 2025 (UNDP, 2025). This means that a huge number of people still suffer from poverty and hunger. The World Food Programme currently estimates that “as many as 343 million people are facing acute levels of food insecurity” (World Food Programme [WFP], n.d.). Conflicts increase the number of hungry people, while climate shocks – droughts, floods, and storms – worsen the crisis. As many as 69% of people with acute food insecurity, 219 million, live in fragile or conflict-affected countries (WFP, n.d.). There is clear empirical evidence of a vicious cycle in which underdevelopment is a key driver of conflict, and in turn, conflict generates enormous development costs. In other words, conflict helps sustain poverty due to the destructive nature of war, creating a vicious poverty-conflict-poverty cycle (Murshed and Tadjoeeddin 2009, 88). Poverty is fertile ground for the emergence of religious fanatics and extremist groups that do not hesitate to use all means of intimidation and fear, which creates favorable conditions for the development of terrorism. In this sense, poverty represents a greater threat to security than any other category of security challenges, risks, and threats (Mišev 2022, 267).

Education plays a key role in alleviating poverty, while poverty and hunger simultaneously represent major obstacles to effectively utilizing educational opportunities. Every fourth person on the planet, more than 1.5 billion people, lives in fragile states affected by conflict or in countries with very high levels of crime (violence) (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] 2014, 332). Around 40% of children who do not attend school live in conflict-affected countries, and armed conflict is a major obstacle to achieving global peace goals. At the same time, education plays a key role in „promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavioral change that can enable children, young people, and adults to avoid and prevent conflict and violence“ (UNESCO 2014, 332). The mildest form of social dissatisfaction results in population migration in search of better living conditions, which is why it is not surprising that, according to a report by the *International Organization for Migration*, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa were the regions with the highest increase in the number of refugees worldwide (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 65–78). Social stratification deepens the gap that culminates first in social, and then in political dissatisfaction and unrest, from which social conflicts emerge. The “global economy has created a phenomenon that can accurately be

described as the globalization of insecurity,” first by generating conflict and thereby destabilizing peoples and communities, and second by escalating poverty, disease, and deprivation (Ahmed 2004, 113).

According to data from the *World Health Organization*, half of all deaths are caused by non-communicable diseases, while the other half is made up of infectious diseases, which are typical of poor countries. The risk of dying from infectious diseases (HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis, and tropical diseases) is highest in the African region and Southeast Asia, as well as in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Poor air quality “is associated with an increased risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and chronic and acute respiratory diseases,” and is linked to developed urban environments. It is estimated that globally, 9 out of 10 people living in urban areas are exposed to PM_{2.5} air pollution (i.e., particles with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers) above the annual average level. “Household and ambient air pollution together were responsible for 7 million deaths in 2016” (World Health Organization [WHO] 2021, 1). “In 2017, 71% of the global population (5.3 billion people) used safely managed drinking water services, while only 45% (3.4 billion people) had access to safely managed sanitation services.” Globally, in 2016, unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, and poor hygiene caused nearly 0.9 million deaths, including over 470,000 deaths of children under the age of five due to diarrhea (WHO 2021, 43). This means that more than “2 billion people do not have reliable access to safe drinking water, and 3 billion lack basic sanitation” and hygiene services. Water scarcity leads to food shortages, higher rates of disease, and the development of extremist social groups. A concerning estimate suggests that between 2.3 and 3.5 billion people lack full access to basic health and sanitation services. This implies that roughly half of the world’s “7.3 billion population does not receive the basic healthcare services they need.” According to the World Health Organization, in 2019, one-quarter of health facilities lacked basic water services, meaning that 1.8 billion people, including healthcare workers and patients, were exposed to a higher risk of infections (WHO 2021, 43).

Correlation between Security and Terrorism

In recent years, the nature of warfare has no longer been directed toward the direct and exclusive destruction of the enemy, where the primary targets are opposing armed forces, but instead civilians and

civilian infrastructure have increasingly become the main targets rather than military ones (Jeftić i dr. 2018, 36). Some of the greatest threats come from terrorist groups such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, Boko Haram in Nigeria, Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, etc. (Mišev 2022, 279). Weak states, usually governed by authoritarian political elites, have proven incapable of solving ongoing problems and creating conditions for the normal functioning of the state system, and consequently of an economically and politically organized society. When states are weak or underdeveloped, certain groups within them feel compelled to ensure their own defense. "If the state in question is very weak or is expected to weaken over time, incentives increase for groups to undertake independent military preparations" (Keković i Dimitrijević 2017, 319).

Poverty is fertile ground for the development of ideologies promoted by terrorist organizations. Lower social classes often lack access to education, emancipation, and social mobility; healthcare services are largely unavailable to them or are of low quality, as are educational institutions. As a result, social awareness remains at a low level, along with "primitivism" as a cultural enigma. Because of all this, they are often left with only extreme nationalism, religious intolerance, the struggle for a so-called "holy state," and the glorification of a distorted form. The lack of social and political cohesion enables terrorist groups to take on the role not only of the state but also of a supranational organization, whose legitimacy is based on a just struggle for certain, most often religious or ideological goals. The identity of the group is stronger than the identity of the state or nation (Mišev 2022, 280). By promoting the creation of, for example, a "greater Islamic state," terrorist organizations give legitimacy to their struggles as just and necessary for the preservation of religious, ethnic, and national interests, and for the fight against the "evil" brought by the Western world (Mišev 2022, 280).

Internet (cyber) threats and security

The influence that media owners have today, through the internet and television, represents one of the most dangerous tools for spreading political, economic, and cultural paradigms and for shaping social reality, which can be harmful both to society and to the state as a whole (Mišev 2022, 283). The internet, as the most modern form of communication and especially widespread among young people, is one

of the main elements of psychological warfare and the dissemination of various types of information and disinformation. Cyber threats have become part of modern weaponry at all levels.

The focus of cybersecurity is the protection of critical national infrastructure from cyberattacks through information networks. All parts of key infrastructure, transportation, energy production and distribution, water supply, law enforcement, the military, public administration, etc., which form the foundation of the functioning of the state and society, can be endangered, which is why a serious approach to the field of cybersecurity is necessary. The technological capability to connect an increasing number of networks, human networks, and networks of things on the internet, which is (as a network) already burdened with many security issues, raises the question of ensuring the personal and material security of individuals, companies, and the state (Stevanović i Đurđević 2016, 113). Cyberattacks have become a powerful, low-cost warfare option that damages the targeted side simply by clicking a button. A cyberattack serves as an asymmetric weapon, whose attacks are difficult to predict and which enable inferior groups and states to inflict damage on technologically and militarily superior enemies (Mišev 2022, 285). Weak and poor states under the pressure of globalization are conditioned by digitalization and the introduction of technological innovations, for which they do not have the necessary material or human (educational) resources. Such states are particularly vulnerable to cyberattacks because they do not have a developed security IT infrastructure.

STATES IN CONFLICT AND GLOBAL ISSUES

When carefully analyzing these reports and making a comparison of countries that are in conflict, it can be concluded that all of these states, according to the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School of Security, belong to the group of high-risk security states. Out of 38 states, armed conflicts take place in 23 authoritarian states, 12 hybrid regimes, 2 flawed democracies, and 1 full democracy (Israel). Of these, 8 are repressed, and 17 are economically unfree. This means that 25 states do not have free market conditions that enable the development of entrepreneurship. Out of 38 states, 27 are classified as fragile states, and as many as 11 are in some form of crisis (ranging from moderate to high alert). This overview is presented in Table 2.

The above indicates that these states are characterized by both political and social instability, as well as economic and environmental underdevelopment, including in terms of modern technological development.

Table 2. States and Types of Conflict

No	Countries and Types of Conflict	Democ- racy Index 167 states	Eco- nomic Index 175 states	Stability Index 178 states	Environ- mental Index 180 states	Human Deve- lopment Index (HDI) 193 states
1	Terrorist insurgency in Iraq / Political unrest	Author- itarian 126	/	Unstable 148	Very low 172	Medium low 128
2	Terrorist insurgency in Nigeria	Hybrid 106	Mostly unfree 125	Unstable 164	Low 140	Very low 161
3	Terrorist insurgency in DR Congo	Author- itarian 156	Re- pressed 160	Very unstable 174	Low 128	Very low 180
4	Terrorist insurgency in Tanzania	Hybrid 86	Mode- rately free 86	Mod- erately warning 117	Medium 102	Very low 167
5	Terrorist insurgency in Uganda	Hybrid 98	Mostly unfree 140	Unstable 151	Very low 154	Medium low 159
6	Terrorist insurgency in Algeria	Author- itarian 110	Re- pressed 164	Warning 92	Low 114	Deve- loped 93
7	Terrorist insurgency in Morocco	Hybrid 91	Mostly unfree 101	Warning 95	Medium 74	Medium low 120
8	Terrorist insurgency in Ghana	Flawed democ- racy 65	Mostly unfree 104	Warning 73	Low 119	Medium low 145

No	Countries and Types of Conflict	Democracy Index 167 states	Economic Index 175 states	Stability Index 178 states	Environmental Index 180 states	Human Development Index (HDI) 193 states
9	Terrorist insurgency in the Ivory Coast	Hybrid 105	Mostly unfree 91	Unstable 140	Medium 104	Very low 166
10	Terrorist insurgency in Cameroon	Authoritarian 136	Mostly unfree 121	Unstable 159	Low 136	Medium low 151
11	Terrorist insurgency in Niger	Authoritarian 141	Mostly unfree 128	Unstable 160	Low 125	Very low 189
12	Terrorist insurgency in Mali	Authoritarian 139	Mostly unfree 127	Unstable 165	Very low 160	Very low 188
13	Terrorist insurgency in Burkina Faso	Authoritarian 137	Mostly unfree 134	Unstable 158	Low 110	Very low 185
14	Terrorist insurgency in Chad	Authoritarian 158	Mostly unfree 136	Very unstable 169	Very low 153	Very low 189
15	Terrorist insurgency in Benin	Hybrid 100	Mostly unfree 95	Mod-erately warning 105	Low 141	Very low 173
16	Terrorist insurgency in Tunisia	Hybrid 93	Re-pressed 150	Warning 87	Medium 91	Deve- loped 101
17	Terrorist insurgency in Togo	Authoritarian 121	Mostly unfree 139	Unstable 128	Very low 155	Very low 163
18	Terrorist insurgency in Libya	Authoritarian 140	/	Unstable 163	Low 126	Deve- loped 92
19	Terrorist insurgency in Mauritania	Hybrid 108	Mostly unfree 110	Highly warning 145	Very low 159	Very low 164

No	Countries and Types of Conflict	Democracy Index 167 states	Economic Index 175 states	Stability Index 178 states	Environmental Index 180 states	Human Development Index (HDI) 193 states
20	Russia – Russo-Ukrainian War	Authoritarian 150	Mostly unfree 131	Unstable 131	Medium 83	Very developed 52
21	Ukraine – Russo-Ukrainian War	Hybrid 92	/	Unstable 157	High 41	Developed 100
22	Israel – Israeli-Palestinian War	Full democracy 31	Modestly free 26	Stable 50	High 52	Very high 25
23	Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian War	Authoritarian 112	/	Unstable 166	/	Developed 111
24	South Sudan – Ethnic violence	Authoritarian 162	/	Very unstable 176	/	Very low 192
25	War on drugs in Mexico	Hybrid 84	Modestly free 68	Warning 96	Medium 97	Developed 77
26	Civil war in Afghanistan / Terrorist insurgency	Authoritarian 167	/	Very unstable 171	Very low 171	Very low 182
27	Civil war in Haiti / Gang war	Authoritarian 131	Repressed 155	Very unstable 170	Low 141	Medium low 158
28	Civil war in Colombia / War on drugs	Flawed democracy 60	Mostly unfree 84	Modestly warning 116	High 63	/
29	Civil war in Bangladesh	Hybrid 100	Mostly unfree 116	Unstable 142	Very low 175	Medium low 129

No	Countries and Types of Conflict	Democracy Index 167 states	Economic Index 175 states	Stability Index 178 states	Environmental Index 180 states	Human Development Index (HDI) 193 states
30	Civil war in Ethiopia	Authoritarian 116	Repressed 156	Unstable 167	Low 140	Very low 176
31	Civil war in Myanmar	Authoritarian 166	/	Unstable 168	Very low 177	Medium low 144
32	Civil war in Sudan	Authoritarian 162	Repressed 173	Very unstable 177	Low 131	Very low 170
33	Civil war in Yemen	Authoritarian 155	/	Very unstable 173	/	Very low 186
34	Civil war in Mozambique	Authoritarian 113	Mostly unfree 141	Unstable 154	Low 132	Very low 183
35	Civil war in Syria	Authoritarian 163	/	Very unstable 175	/	Medium low 157
36	Civil war in Ecuador	Hybrid 85	/	Warning 89	/	/
37	Civil war in the Central African Republic	Authoritarian 164	Repressed 168	Very unstable 172	Low 132	Very low 191
38	Afghanistan–Pakistan border conflict	Authoritarian 124	Repressed 147	Unstable 152	Very low 179	Very low 164

Source: WPR, 2025.

The authors of this paper have identified criteria that could determine the main factors of instability leading to conflict, i.e., that increase the likelihood of conflict occurring. This overview is presented in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, countries in conflict, or those with a higher probability of being drawn into armed conflict, meet the following criterion values:

1. SDI less than 150 billion USD (all states) (World Bank [WB] 2025);
2. Gross domestic product below 250 billion USD (all except 9 states) (International Monetary Fund [IMF] 2025);
3. Income per capita lower than 40,000 USD per capita (all except Israel), and with a much higher likelihood if they have a GDP per capita below the global average of 13,000 USD per capita (all except 3 countries: Israel, Russia, and Mexico) (World Bank Group [WBG] 2025);
4. At least one of the top 50 or top 100 largest companies/banks in the world does not operate in its territory (Fortune, 2026; Global Marketcap Ranking [GMR] 2026);
5. They have significant reserves of oil, gas, or materials that will be needed in the future (28) (Worldometer 2025);
6. They are located on major maritime transport routes (Zahra 2025), along major gas and oil pipeline routes (9 states) (Planete Energies [Energies] 2025);
7. Large or potentially large food producers (11 states) (World Bank Group [WBG] 2024);
8. They have a surplus of water (15 states) (WBG 2024);
9. Weakly developed cyber defense (almost all except 3: Israel, Russia, and Ukraine) (IMD World Competitiveness Center [IMD WCC] 2025).

Table 3. Criteria for the likelihood of conflict outbreak

No.	Countries and Types of Conflict	FDI WB (Million USD)	GDP IMF (Billion USD)	GDP per Capita	Energy & Minerals	Transport & Energy Routes	Food Producers	Water Resources	Cyber Security
1	Terrorist insurgency in Iraq	-7,458.30	278.771	6,073.6	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
2	Terrorist insurgency in Nigeria	1,080.31	252.109	806.9	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
3	Terrorist insurgency in DR Congo	2,915.06	74.498	647.4	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
4	Terrorist insurgency in Tanzania	1,717.58	79.236	1,185.7	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
5	Terrorist insurgency in Uganda	3,304.90	56.232	1,072.7	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
6	Terrorist insurgency in Algeria	1,226.41	269.140	5,631.2	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
7	Terrorist insurgency in Morocco	1,639.00	160.606	3,993.4	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
8	Terrorist insurgency in Ghana	1,765.55	82.825	2,405.8	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
9	Terrorist insurgency in the Ivory Coast	3,802.12	87.096	2,709.9	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
10	Terrorist insurgency in Cameroon	925.28	54.394	1,762.4	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
11	Terrorist insurgency in Niger	526.45	19.866	722.7	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO

No.	Countries and Types of Conflict	FDI WB (Million USD)	GDP IMF (Billion USD)	GDP per Capita	Energy & Minerals	Transport & Energy Routes	Food Producers	Water Resources	Cyber Security
12	Terrorist insurgency in Mali	708.59	22.789	1,086.2	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
13	Terrorist insurgency in Burkina Faso	82.94	23.130	987.3	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
14	Terrorist insurgency in Chad	1,019.49	19.836	1,016.1	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
15	Terrorist insurgency in Benin	543.01	21.487	1,485.4	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
16	Terrorist insurgency in Tunisia	759.60	52.925	4,350.4	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
17	Terrorist insurgency in Togo	83.75	9.776	1,043.1	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
18	Terrorist insurgency in Libya	794.70	48.363	6,318.4	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
19	Terrorist insurgency in Mauritania	1,440.29	11.003	2,082.8	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
20	Russia – Russo-Ukrainian War	-8,102.28	2,173.225	14,889.0	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
21	Ukraine – Russo-Ukrainian War	4,018.00	190.687	5,389.5	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES

No.	Countries and Types of Conflict	FDI WB (Million USD)	GDP IMF (Billion USD)	GDP per Capita	Energy & Minerals	Transport & Energy Routes	Food Producers	Water Resources	Cyber Security
22	Israel – Israeli-Palestinian War	14,777.90	542.285	54,176.7	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES
23	Palestine – Israeli-Palestinian War	/	/	/	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
24	South Sudan – Ethnic violence	83.42	4.648	/	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
25	War on drugs in Mexico	45,334.31	1,856.366	14,157.9	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
26	Civil war in Afghanistan / Terrorist insurgency	20.60	18.080	413.8	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
27	Civil war in Haiti / Gang war	40.87	25.285	/	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
28	Civil war in Colombia / War on drugs	14,269.17	418.818	7,914.0	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
29	Civil war in Bangladesh	1,508.19	450.461	2,593.4	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
30	Civil war in Ethiopia	3,984.42	142.073	1,011.1	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
31	Civil war in Myanmar	1,095.32	61.653	1,359.3	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO

No.	Countries and Types of Conflict	FDI WB (Million USD)	GDP IMF (Billion USD)	GDP per Capita	Ener-gy & Min-erals	Trans-port & Energy Routes	Food Pro-ducers	Water Re-sources	Cy-ber Se-curi-ty
32	Civil war in Sudan	548.20	29.184	989.3	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
33	Civil war in Yemen	-370.98	19.101	633.9	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
34	Civil war in Mozam-bique	3,508.63	22.745	647.3	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
35	Civil war in Syria	804.16	/	847.4	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
36	Civil war in Ecuador	317.70	124.676	6,874.7	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
37	Civil war in the Central African Republic	40.41	2.831	516.2	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
38	Afghani- stan–Paki- stan Border Conflict	2,725.60	371.408	1,484.7	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Source: Authors.

All countries, except Russia, Israel, and Mexico, meet almost all of the listed criteria. The most extreme conditions are found in Palestine, which possesses neither water nor natural resources, energy resources, nor mineral wealth, and by all other parameters also falls into the category of poor and underdeveloped states. Only 10 countries are not rich in minerals or energy resources, nor are they transit countries, but most of these states are rich in water resources and/or are major food producers, while as many as 28 countries possess mineral wealth and energy resources. Thus, poor and underdeveloped states not only lack transport infrastructure but also a developed cybersecurity network. Regarding the regions where conflicts are present, most of the states are located in Africa, but a significant number are also in the Middle East. “Statistical indicators are important for designing and evaluating policies” aimed at

improving societal progress, “as well as for assessing and influencing the functioning of economic markets” (Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi 2008, 7). We are now living through one of the worst financial, economic, and social crises in post-war history (Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi 2008, 8). This is particularly reflected in weak and underdeveloped states, i.e., those that do not have strong institutional systems capable of resisting global challenges and security risks. As this research shows, there is an interconnection between the development of democracy, population size, and number of states, human development (education, health, poverty, social security), and the economy (GDP, natural, mineral, energy, and mining resources, infrastructure) and security.

CONCLUSION

By observing the analyzed reports, in accordance with the Copenhagen School of Security, the following common characteristics of states can be identified. In the military sector, 38 states are directly engaged in armed conflicts, while in the political sector, almost all countries except Israel are non-democratic, featuring 23 authoritarian regimes characterized by instability, elite control over institutions, and the absence of free elections. This means that in these countries, there are no free and democratic elections, political power is unstable and does not inspire public trust, and institutions are controlled by political elites and are prone to corruption.

Economic – from an insufficiently developed democracy also arises a weak economic system, which in as many as 25 states is based on economic unfreedoms and unfair market conditions. This has a particularly negative impact on the social sphere (poverty, education, health, migration). A specific feature of all conflict-affected states except Palestine and Bangladesh is that they are rich in certain natural resources and/or minerals, ores, and energy sources (Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Congo, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Myanmar, etc.). Although they have an underdeveloped transport infrastructure, it is undeniable that many of them are located on existing or potential energy routes (Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Iraq). However, all these states have a very low gross domestic product, lack sufficient foreign investment, and do not host major international companies. Due to weakly developed economies, they have low incomes per capita, i.e., low living standards, which classifies them as poor countries.

Social – in states with underdeveloped democracies, economic stagnation and poverty, social deviation is not uncommon in the form of the emergence of various conflict-prone ideologies (armament, terrorism, crime). This is further intensified by the lack of education, inaccessible healthcare services, and fear for human survival and development. In this sense, these states are highly prone to migration, which further complicates the security architecture, primarily of neighboring states, but also of Europe and the USA.

Environmental – regardless of the fact that most conflict-affected states possess significant natural and energy resources, all these potentials are devastated not only due to climate change, for which these states lack adequate response mechanisms, but also due to ongoing wars. Terrorism, armed groups, and military infrastructure are tools for achieving political goals, regardless of the damage inflicted on the environment.

Information-technology sector – 21st-century wars are inevitably accompanied by hybrid activities involving modern technologies and digitalization. From cyberattacks on critical infrastructure to information warfare and disinformation, increasing dependence of the economy, military, state, and individuals on the internet further deepens the problems of almost all conflict-affected states. Even before armed conflicts themselves, these states lack sufficiently strong instruments to deal with modern security threats of the fourth digital age.

As noted in the introduction, all these factors cannot be observed in isolation; rather, a set of common characteristics can be identified among states prone to conflict. These are primarily a lack of democracy and strong institutions, and an underdeveloped and unfree economy, which particularly enables states rich in natural resources, minerals and energy resources to become susceptible to various forms of instability that lead to conflicts.

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КОРЕЛАЦИЈА ГЛОБАЛНИХ ПРОБЛЕМА И БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ

Резиме

Проблем рада јесте чињеница да постоје региони дуготрајних конфликта, односно држава које су у сталним оружаним сукобима. Поставља се питање шта је њихов узрок, односно да ли постоје заједничке карактеристике држава које нису отпорне на савремене безбедносне претње? Које су глобалне промене допринеле развоју конфликта и које државе су склоне конфликтима? Циљ истраживања јесте да се анализом највећих глобалних проблема са којима се суочавају државе у рату, пронађу заједничке карактеристике (заједнички именитељи) због којих су ове државе у стању дуготрајних конфликта. Као основ овог истраживања послужиће секторски приступ Копенхагенске школе безбедности, који угрожавање безбедности разматра кроз различите секторе (војни, политички, економски, еколошки и социјетални).

Кључне речи: оружани сукоби, дуготрајни конфликти, глобални проблеми, безбедносне претње

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