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CONTEMPORARY SECURITY FROM THE URBAN STANDPOINT: CITIES IN THE FACE OF RISKS AND THREATS

The following article aims to explore the emerging research agenda in the field of urban security in relation to contemporary threats. In line with a two-fold interpretation of urbanised security, the first part will focus on the growing militarisation of urban spaces. Here, we will look at a number of concepts used by urban geographers and political scientists whose critical stance towards state authorities has dominated the debate. The second part, focusing on urban security, will adopt a more pragmatic position: which elements and functions are vulnerable to natural forces or human activity. A brief analysis of the main risks and threats, as recognised by recent Spanish strategic documents, will also be presented.

Security, cities, urban militarisation, threats, risks, Spanish Security Strategy, National Security Strategy

CONTEMPORARY SECURITY FROM THE URBAN STANDPOINT: CITIES IN THE FACE OF RISKS AND THREATS

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the concept of security was linked to the challenge of defending the state and the whole of its territory through the use of military instruments. Security depended, above all, on the state's capacity to maintain, increase and use military power. Following the end of the Cold War, the dimensions of the analysis of security (economic, social, cultural, and environmental security; cybersecurity, etc.) were multiplied. An alternative point of view should not simply be based on these security dimensions or "sectors", but rather should also focus on their geographical analysis. In other words, it is necessary to examine *urban security*, as well as national and international security. Contemporary risks and threats have an international nature, but there are other more important implications at the local level – particularly in urbanised areas.

The concept of urban security is usually examined in relation to programmes for the prevention of and response to crimes committed in cities, initiatives represented at the global level by the UN-HABITAT 'Safer Cities' programme. In this article, however, I aim to adopt a much broader approach. By leaving out "daily" crime, I have decided to focus on global risks and threats from the perspective of our dependency on life in cities. In order to do this, I distinguish between two interpretations of urban security:

- a) security of the inhabitants of cities in their entirety or the individual security of the inhabitants in relation to the growing militarisation of urban spaces, particularly under extraordinary circumstances
- b) security of cities as a whole; the ensemble of its elements and functions that are affected by natural disasters or other situations attributable to human action

I.1. Structure of the article

The structure of this article reflects the distinction that is outlined above. In the first section I will go over the use of military instruments and new technologies in different types of conflicts taking place in cities all over the world. In addition to inter-state conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism, I will mainly analyse events of a civil nature: conferences, international summits or sporting events of global relevance and impact.

Violence associated with public demonstrations in cities and its impact for security should also be considered as an event of special topical relevance. At the same time, we should bear in mind the growing interconnection between cities and the role that non-traditional actors have adopted in them.

In the second part I will focus my analysis on certain specific sections of the Spanish Security Strategy¹ of 2011 and the National Security Strategy² of 2013, starting from an urban standpoint when analysing the security of contemporary society. For the purposes of this article I will analyse the risks and threats that are *relevant for cities* and which appear in the two documents mentioned above. Specifically, I am referring to risk enhancers that already appear in the 2011 Strategy and the urban implications of armed conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, organised crime, energy vulnerability, cyber threats, uncontrolled migratory flows, and emergencies and disasters. This article will not allow for detailed comparison of the strategies, nor for the inclusion of all the risks and threats outlined in the documents. The objective of this paper, however, is to analyse the dangers that are particularly relevant for areas with high population and infrastructure density.

2. MILITARISATION OF URBANISED SPACES

Modern cities are important hubs for the concentration of citizens and their activities; centres of infrastructure, investment and innovation; as well as centres of political and economic power. As a consequence, they are extremely complex systems: interconnected and at the same time vulnerable to disruption and to the emergence of all types of conflicts. Technological progress in the military sector has changed the patterns of war, mainly at the tactical and operational level. What has remained as a characterising factor, however, is the role that cities play in armed conflicts – being both the theatre and the target of war in all their forms. In addition, according to many experts, we are witnessing the militarisation of urban spaces, even under circumstances that have very little to do with war. In other words, cities are affected by demonstrations of political violence of all types: from “traditional” conflicts motivated by economic resources, battles to take control of political power, terrorism, insurgent

1 Kingdom of Spain. Spanish Security Strategy: Everyone’s Responsibility. Madrid: Government of Spain, 2011.

2 Kingdom of Spain. National Security Strategy: A Shared Project. Madrid: Government of Spain, 2013.

activity, through to other conflicts that could be classed as civil or civic³, – public demonstrations and state reactions to them. Bearing in mind the level of urbanisation that we are witnessing, these phenomena directly affect a large part of the world's population. The United Nations estimated that in 2050 6.4 billion people will be living in cities around the world. The repercussions of this spectacular growth will be most visible in developing cities, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia⁴. The possible conflicts that could occur in these regions over the course of the 21st century would be attributable purely to urbanisation. However, the role that cities play in conflicts is becoming more and more relevant.

2.1. Wars in cities

A large number of concepts in the field of security at the urban level have emerged in recent times. One of the most distinctive concepts is related to the technology and military means employed in 'civilian' areas with high population and infrastructure densities. The phenomenon that is now known as *urban militarisation* is actually nothing new. We have already explained that cities have always been the targets and theatres of military operations. Despite (or as a consequence of) the technological supremacy of the "western" countries in open terrain, conflicts increasingly tend to be played out in urbanised areas. At this point it is worth mentioning the example of Iraq, among others. Urban conflict results in limitations as regards observation, mobility, communication and logistics in general⁵. As asymmetrical conflicts become more frequent and the number of conventional wars decrease, so cities become havens and support bases for the activities of different insurgent groups. Recent civil wars (Syria, Egypt) can be seen as very clear examples of this. In conflicts of this nature, low-profile means and familiarity with the surroundings are essential.

Over the past twenty years, states with the most sophisticated Armed Forces from a technological point of view, (in particular the United States, followed by Israel and others) have invested in specialised military technologies and facilities for combat in

3 BEALL, Jo; Tom Goodfellow, Dennis Rodgers. Policy Directions: Cities and Conflict, Crisis States Research Centre, June 2010. Available under:

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/40414/1/Policy_directionsCities_and_Conflict%28author%29.pdf

Consulted: 19.01.2014.

4 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. Estimates from 2008. Available under: <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm> Consulted: 28.02.2014

5 HILLS, Alice. Continuity and Discontinuity: The Grammar of Urban Military Operations en GRAHAM, Stephen (ed.), *Cities, War, and Terrorism: towards an urban geopolitics*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 235.

cities⁶, in order to adapt their capabilities to the challenges that develop in these types of conflicts. Two of the most complex facilities in the United States are Fort Carson in Colorado and the Joint Readiness Training Centre in Fort Polk, Louisiana. Dozens of other similar facilities have also been built in the United States alone⁷. In practice, collateral damage affects the inhabitants of cities involved in conflicts in a very direct way: not just due to the destruction of infrastructure and vital services, but also because of the very high numbers of civilian victims. Statistics on civilian victims tend to vary greatly – by thousands – depending on the information source. The campaign launched for the control of Fallujah, Iraq, in 2004 is a perfect example of this⁸.

2.2. Civilian events and civic conflicts

At the same time, militarisation is considered as a necessary element to prevent civilian disobedience and terrorism in cities in the developed world⁹. In the case of civilian events (like the IMF, G8 or World Bank summits) and protests instigated by antiglobalisation movements, states deploy various security corps around urban areas. Where the functions of the police mix with those of the military, rights to movement and assembly become limited and violent means are often used to break up demonstrators¹⁰. In addition to this, the distinction between demonstrators and terrorists becomes somewhat blurred at times. The recent concept of *military urbanism* shows how new technologies, originally developed for military use, are used to monitor and control the behaviour and movements of civilians in any location, obviously under the pretext of guaranteeing their safety. This situation is characteristic of large urbanised centres in industrialised nations¹¹.

The militarisation of cities has also been evident in the security measures adopted for certain recent sporting events, like the controversial 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, and Rio de Janeiro¹². Similar situations were seen during the Olympic Games

6 GRAHAM, Stephen. *Cities Under Siege: New Military Urbanism*. London: Verso Books, 2011, p. 181.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

8 CHANG, Tao-Hung. *The Battle of Fallujah: Lessons Learned on Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT) in the 21st Century*, *Journal of Undergraduate Research*, Rochester: University of Rochester, vol. 6, n° 1, 2007, p. 33.

9 WARREN, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

11 GRAHAM, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

12 SOUZA, Marcelo Lopes de. *Panem et circenses versus the right to the city (centre) in Rio de*

in Beijing in 2008 and in London in 2012, as well as during the football World Cup in Johannesburg in 2010¹³. Coming from a variety of fields such as urban geography or even political sciences, authors like Professor Stephen Graham have been deeply critical of the consequences of this militarisation as regards basic freedoms, as well as the restrictions on movement and the changes in the urban fabric of the cities in question¹⁴.

Another worrying phenomenon, particularly over the past five years, has been the security measures implemented by various governments in order to pacify those demonstrating against public sector management. The initial reasons for these demonstrations often vary, although usually the focus is on the lack of citizen participation or on the proper functioning of democratic institutions. The authorities, however, use the discourse of emergency or exception to justify some extremely violent reactions. Here we should point out recent cases in cities in Turkey, Brazil, Egypt, Thailand, Venezuela and Ukraine, among others. 2013 was a particularly violent year in this sense, with wide media coverage of what was happening in some national capitals – capitals that were turned into true combat zones. Why do cities acquire a leading role in civilian conflicts? As has already been explained, they are hubs of people, infrastructure, resources and ideas. They have the four key characteristics: density, heterogeneity, compressed inequality and the presence of governmental headquarters¹⁵.

2.3. Cities in an interconnected world

In connection with the growing importance that large metropolitan areas have acquired, an alternative to the traditional concept of geopolitics has emerged – an alternative where sovereign states are the only protagonists. One area of analysis stands out in this innovative approach: *urban geopolitics*. Through the process of urbanisation and globalisation, certain cities obtain greater importance in the functioning of the global system than the countries in whose territory they are located. It is said that national borders lose a certain amount of influence and that it is cities with a global vision that are truly important – their agglomerations and flows that are generated

Janeiro: A short report, *City: Analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, vol. 16, nº 5, 2012, p. 563.

13 McMICHAEL, Christopher. *Hosting the World, City: Analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action*, vol. 16, nº 5, 2012, p. 524.

14 GRAHAM, op. cit., p. 16.

15 BEALL et.al., op.cit., p. 2.

by people, technologies, investments and information¹⁶. The power dynamic and the links between “elementary” cities and more global cities is something that is under study¹⁷. Medium-sized cities cannot aspire to the levels of economic and political power that megalopolises have accumulated, and it is true that the role of states continues to be an important one. However, various cooperation mechanisms are being developed between the most important global cities – such as those seen in New York, London, Singapore, Rio de Janeiro or Johannesburg, among others. Those relating to the environment or public sector management are of particular interest. This type of cooperation is often more efficient and effective than the traditional negotiation of international agreements and their gradual implementation.

As regards security inside cities, it is necessary to bear in mind the increasing role of *non-traditional players*, particularly terrorist groups, social movements with different makeups and different aims, multinational companies – sometimes with revenues higher than the GDP of many countries – , and also private security companies that operate in conflict situations in various parts of the planet. All of these players are closely linked to the cities where they have their headquarters, from where they manage their investments, where they carry out their activities, and where they aim to achieve their objectives. In the same way, they are able to influence the social and political dynamics (even the most conflictive dynamics) that are played out in the most urbanised areas nowadays. The capacity to guarantee the development and the security of cities against international threats, however, is an important challenge for governments – both at the national and municipal level.

In the most extreme cases, when state authorities do not manage these areas appropriately, *failed cities*¹⁸ emerge – a concept derived from the idea of *failed states*. What is referred to here is the incapability (or total absence) of state institutions to provide basic services to the inhabitants or to guarantee security and order in a given city. Clearly a state’s weakness will have consequences at the local level. The activities of armed gangs, terrorists and organised crime of all types tend to converge in urbanised areas where they have the infrastructure and resources necessary to carry out their activities. Increasing interconnectivity between cities through new communication and transport technologies allows these threats to expand geographically and for those involved to communicate their aims and intentions with greater ease. In other words, the militarisation of urban spaces can be seen in various countries around the world and has been facilitated by the development of military technology that has been put to civilian use, as well as by the role played by non-traditional players. The recent

16 TAYLOR, Peter. *The Big Question: How Should Borders Be Drawn?* World Policy Institute, 2013. Available under: <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/spring2013/big-question> Consulted: 20.08.2013

17 SASSEN, Saskia. *An Emergent Urban Geopolitics*. Saskia Sassen website, 2012. Available under: <http://www.saskiasassen.com/PDFs/london/An-Emergent-Urban-Geopolitics.pdf> Consulted: 19.08.2013

18 NORTON, Richard J. *Feral Cities*, *Naval War College Review*, vol. 1, n° 4, 2003, p. 97.

trend of analysing security at the urban level should be boosted considering our deepened dependency on urban life, as well as the need to protect the infrastructure that sustains it. In the next section I will adopt a holistic view of security in urban areas, as is implicit in the Spanish strategic documents.

3. THE VULNERABILITY OF CITIES AND THE STRATEGY

The Spanish Security Strategy of 2011 and the National Security Strategy of 2013 reflect the general trend towards recognising new threats that place the functioning of global society in danger. Since 9/11, governments across the globe have followed the example of the USA in revising old strategies and producing new national documents, recognising the changing reality and the necessary solutions to urgent problems such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, illegal migration, organised crime and cybersecurity, among others.

The new threats that we have to face have an important urban dimension. The two strategies determine the emerging risks for society at the national, European and global level, although they do not make explicit mention of the urban level, which usually fits in to the category of public safety or civil protection. In a globalised world, however, public security in cities is no longer a purely domestic issue. As current risks have become transnational, cities are now also vulnerable to all types of risks and threats, without there being a clear strategy on how to deal with them.

The need for a broad understanding of security is made clear in the titles of the above-mentioned documents. The Spanish Security Strategy – *Everyone's Responsibility* and the National Security Strategy – *A Shared Project*. Those involved are the National State Administration, the Autonomous Communities, Local Administration and society as a whole^{19,20}. The strategies recognise (although only implicitly) that cities are predisposed to political violence due to their very nature; and that they are also vulnerable to natural or industrial disasters. The current level of urbanisation and technical development generates both advantages and disadvantages as regards the security of nations, cities and inhabitants. In order to analyse security at an *interurban* level (interconnected cities in the face of international dangers), I will focus on a number of elements mentioned in the Spanish Security Strategy and the National Security Strategy.

19 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 14.

20 National Security Strategy, 2013, p. 7.

3.1. Risk enhancers and cities²¹

The third chapter of the Spanish Security Strategy names the phenomena that contribute to contemporary threats and risks, one of which is *dysfunctions associated with globalisation* (inequality, political instability, scarcity of resources). These can be clearly seen in areas of high population concentration, particularly in developing countries. As well as the need to build “more flexible, resistant and resilient systems²²” at the national and global level, it is also vital that the abilities of cities to cope with these risks be developed. To this end, *urban resilience*, a concept that will be developed later in the text, should be strengthened.

Urban centres are vulnerable to *demographic imbalances* which lead to social and political conflicts, inequalities or disasters of different types, among other notable effects. The Spanish Security Strategy recognises the multiplication of problems linked to urban life, particularly in large *metropolitan zones* – crime, radicalisation and conflicts²³ – where the inability of governments to guarantee development contributes to the creation of failed cities. Meanwhile, in developed countries, the aging of the population is accompanied by immigration of young people from other countries. In the case of Spain, immigration from the African continent is particularly pronounced. Resources and opportunities attract immigrants, particularly to large cities, as we shall see in the next section.

The geographical view point on *poverty and inequality* is extremely useful when analysing countries with different levels of development but in geographic proximity of each other. In addition to the case of the Mediterranean²⁴, the gap between the USA and Mexico can also be highlighted. Also meriting a mention are the inequities that can be found when comparing various regions of the world, the countries in themselves, the different areas that vary in each country (particularly the urban-rural divide) and also the above-mentioned inequality that is compressed in cities. As is logical, the shortage of opportunities and frustration are at the root of all of the demonstrations of radicalism. In any case, poverty and inequality are contributing factors to economic migration, visible, above all, in the most urbanised zones.

Cities with higher population density and greater intensity of industrial activity consume a substantial amount of our natural resources and generate considerable

²¹ Unlike the Spanish Security Strategy, the National Security Strategy does not include a chapter on risk enhancers, instead presenting risks and threats in one single chapter (3).

²² Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 34.

²³ Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 35.

²⁴ Ibid, 36.

amounts of waste, thus contributing to the intensification of the effects of *climate change*. The negative consequences, which go hand-in-hand with environmental degradation, are an added risk to sustainability and agricultural production, as well as leading to conflicts in various regions around the world, particularly in developing countries. Initiatives aimed at dealing with these risks should focus on the areas that most suffer from damages caused by climate change. However, negotiations for international agreements in this area tend to centre on establishing quotas at state level, resulting in a slow and inefficient process. One example of where progress has indeed been made in this field is the C40 initiative that has spurred numerous megacities on to set limits for carbon emissions, both at local and global level²⁵.

As regards *technological disasters*²⁶, the Spanish Security Strategy recognises our increasing dependence on technology (even greater for communication technologies), meaning that we are also more vulnerable. Civilian breakthroughs and inventions, as well as the military ones that were dominant in the past, mean that there is a need to establish “a strategic relationship between both sectors²⁷”. Innovation and research in this field, together with the corresponding infrastructure, are centred in urban areas (scientists, public and private innovation centres, business, etc.). Assuring the security of this infrastructure is, therefore, fundamental: a sophisticated attack against the system could disable many vital functions and cause greater damage than any “traditional” type of terrorist attack. There is also no doubt whatsoever that the interconnection of cities in this field makes them more vulnerable to disruption.

3.2. Cities and their response to risks and threats

The increasing importance of cities to contemporary security is once again made implicitly evident in chapter 4 of the Spanish Security Strategy and chapter 3 of the National Security Strategy, where the imminent threats and risks to the functioning of society are correctly identified. The convergence of traditional domains – land, maritime, air – and new ones such as space, cyberspace and IT²⁸, can be clearly seen in cities located along the coastline, both in Spain as well as in other countries. The concentration of inhabitants, national and international traffic (ports, airports, stations), headquarters of institutions, critical infrastructure and industrial activity

25 C40 Cities: Climate Leadership Group. Available under: <http://www.c40.org/about> Consulted: 18.01.2014

26 The definition of dangerous technologies is very broad: the technological element is included in the other risk enhancers, as well as in the threats and risks presented below.

27 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 38.

28 Ibid, pp. 41-3.

poses a real challenge to prevent existing threats from materialising.

3.2.1. Armed conflicts

When analysing *armed conflicts* in all their different dimensions, it is also worth considering them from the urban standpoint, particularly where the possibility of taking or recovering key cities can be seen as a strategic advantage. Recently, we have seen the role that cities (pointed out as targets or transformed into theatres in the military sense) have played in intra-state conflicts in relation to the “Arab Spring” processes. In the same way, the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have shown that technological supremacy does not automatically lead to success in operations that are played out on urban terrain²⁹. Of course, it could be argued that the geographical delimitations of conflicts, as well as the urban-rural distinction, follow the logic of the location of key resources (water, valuable or strategic minerals, fertile land, etc.), as well as being affected by a large number of specific factors in each conflict. However, the characteristics of the cities that we have described previously turn them into theatres for armed conflicts around the world.

The Spanish Armed Forces have Guidelines for Combat in Urbanised Areas (CZURB)³⁰ that acknowledge the limitations and specificities at the operative and tactical level. The document is made up of various sections covering issues specific to the urban environment (density, mobility, tactics, logistics, command and control, and information, among others), and it also differentiates between offensive and defensive operations. Its 10 chapters and 8 annexes go into detail on tactical and technical aspects related to combat in urbanised areas. Here, it resembles similar documents produced by other countries, like the American *Doctrine for Joint Urban Operations*, published in 2002³¹; a document that also focuses on capacities and tasks that are unique to, or significantly conditioned by, the urban environment at the operational combat level.

3.2.2. Transnational terrorism and WMD

29 HILLS, op. cit., p. 245.

30 Training and Doctrine Command. OR7-023, Guidelines. Combat in urbanised areas (non-classified), 2003.

31 Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Doctrine for Joint Urban Operations*, Joint Publication 3-06, Septiembre 2002.

Transnational terrorism is a fundamental threat to security, and takes advantage of “certain characteristics of the new global society [to] multiply its impact³²”. In order to achieve its objectives, terrorism needs media attention; media that is increasingly powerful thanks to technological advances in new technologies applied to mass communication. It is also true that the vast majority of all terrorist attacks are carried out in cities. The concentration of “citizens, institutions, business, organisations, interests and infrastructure³³” makes urbanised areas priority targets for terrorist attacks. The possible consequences of the abuse of *weapons of mass destruction (WMD)* in metropolitan areas are particularly worrying.

Just as is the case for other threats to Spanish security, a holistic approach must be taken in the fight against terrorism³⁴. While strategic planning is done at the high level of State Administration, prevention and mitigation of terrorist activity involves local administrations, security forces (civilian and military) and, where possible, citizens. Above and beyond the costly state anti-terrorism structures, it is sometimes simply the alertness of citizens that prevents terrorist attacks in urban areas³⁵.

3.2.3. Organised crime

As regards this criminal activity, it is true that, as is the case for other activities, the location of the resources needed to carry out operations is the key factor. Infrastructure and economic activity centres offer powerful incentives to groups involved in the illegal traffic of people, drugs or weapons, or in economic crimes (money laundering). While it is indeed true that these activities are not carried out exclusively in urban areas, cities often serve as the main logistical base.

The Spanish Security Strategy makes reference to the “growing interconnection [between organised crime] and terrorism, violent groups and local crime³⁶”. Local crime is concentrated in urban areas, allowing for a multiplying effect of its impact. According to the National Security Strategy, these illicit activities are becoming increasingly easy to carry out thanks to a whole range of factors inherent to the globalised world: “improvements in communication and an increase in cross-border flows of

32 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 49.

33 Ibid, p. 52.

34 National Security Strategy, 2013, p. 26.

35 On Saturday 1 May 2010, a street vendor alerted the police to a suspicious car parked in Times Square, New York. The authorities confirmed that it was an improvised bomb that luckily didn't explode. The street vendor helped to stave off an attack that could have been deadly, in the words of then mayor Michael Bloomberg.

36 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 53.

goods, people and services³⁷". The very nature of cities, with their numerous resources and infrastructure, offers a wide variety of "opportunities" to those involved in organised crime in its various forms and many levels of action.

3.2.4. Vulnerability of critical infrastructure and essential services³⁸

Both strategies include a series of risks related to our dependence on energy resources and their management systems. *Energy vulnerability*, as well as addressing specific global and regional causes, has other important implications at the local level. "Energy system infrastructure and transport networks [may be damaged by] natural disasters, terrorist attacks or cyber-attacks³⁹". The technological sophistication that our cities are so proud of also creates dependency on resources (particularly electricity) in order for their infrastructure to work. To understand the impact that a prolonged electricity cut would have on the life of a city, it is necessary to consider all the services and installations that rely on uninterrupted provision of electrical current: urban public transport, supply, communication networks and electronic data bases, ports, airports, hospitals, or indeed the equipment necessary for the functioning of civil protection units.

Cyber threats also endanger a whole variety of systems and data bases that have become necessary to our daily lives. The complexity of the risks and threats from cyberspace to citizens is so great that it is not possible to analyse the subject in this paper. When examining security *of* and *in* cities, the main issue to be addressed is, in fact, cyber-attacks with material consequences in urbanised areas; disruption of services and networks essential for the functioning of a city and for the security within the city.

3.2.5. Uncontrolled migration

Migration is an age-old phenomenon that, when managed in a sustainable and

37 National Security Strategy, 2013, p. 28.

38 The National Security Strategy lists three further threats compared to the Spanish Security Strategy: one of them is the vulnerability of critical infrastructure and essential services. This vulnerability is due to different types of dangers that are presented in both strategies. For the purposes of this paper, this section includes energy vulnerability and cyber threats (which are presented separately in both strategies) in relation to cities.

39 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 60.

legal manner, contributes to the development of the countries involved (origin and destination countries), and to the affected populations. However, uncontrolled migratory flows can have impacts such as an increase in social conflicts, economic exploitation, the appearance of urban ghettos and extremism, among others⁴⁰. Currently the most extreme examples of this type of situation are to be found outside of Europe; however, current demographic dynamics could lead to a drastic change in this situation over the next decades⁴¹.

Migration from developing regions to the developed world is due, among other notable factors, to the poverty and inequality that exists in countries with relatively young populations. Inhabitants suffer from high levels of unemployment, “the absence of aspirations, absence of personal security or the practical absence of their most basic rights⁴²”. Illegal emigration routes to Europe are of particular relevance to Spain due to its geographical location, with particular focus on the cities of Ceuta and Melilla.

As has been previously mentioned, economic emigrants usually end up living on the fringes of metropolitan areas in recipient countries. Resources and opportunities attract them to large urban centres, although in reality immigrants often end up in the outer-most belts with no infrastructure or basic services. The lack of integration can cause well-documented negative phenomena, most noticeable in urbanised areas. The street riots that we have seen in western European cities over recent years are clear examples of civic conflict; among their causes we can highlight ‘compressed inequality’, and among their consequences – worsening of urban security in general.

3.2.6. Emergencies and disasters

Finally, and related to paragraph 3.2.4, *emergencies and disasters* caused by natural forces or human activity continue to occur “despite technological and social advances⁴³”. The causes and the nature of these disruptions are closely linked to other risks and threats that were included in the two strategies – particularly the so-called technological and environmental dangers.

The impact of natural disasters like earthquakes, floods or volcanic eruptions is multiplied in areas with high infrastructure and population concentration. Biological

40 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 71.

41 See section 3.1. Risk enhancers and cities

42 National Security Strategy, 2013, p. 32.

43 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 73.

and chemical agents⁴⁴, as well as “common” diseases, tend to spread much more easily in cities, through the constant movement and interaction of people concentrated in a relatively limited space. Industrial disasters (technical faults that lead to accidents, explosions or pollution of the air or water by dangerous agents) or transport disasters (caused by unlawful acts, accidents or natural disasters⁴⁵) also have more serious consequences if they occur in the urban environment, and therefore need a rapid and efficient response.

Maximising *urban resilience* is absolutely fundamental. Urban resilience is the capacity of a city (the grouping of municipal authorities, elements of the civil protection system, civic organisations and even residents) to anticipate, plan, manage, mitigate and prepare itself for disasters⁴⁶. The 2011 Strategy underlines the importance of spreading a culture of prevention among the inhabitants of metropolitan areas and the need for cooperation between players⁴⁷. The importance of cities and of public entities, and of them coming together in their space, is indisputable to be able to face current risks.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The changing nature of contemporary conflicts obliges us to develop new models when analysing security. In addition to the many dimensions of security that have appeared over recent decades, the tendency to reconsider the geographical level in the analysis has also appeared. It is true that states are losing their earlier monopoly position, while new players relevant to contemporary security are appearing. At the same time, the importance of cities is increasing - cities that are incredibly globalised and interconnected, and therefore increasingly vulnerable. Alongside traditional national and international security, urban security is becoming more and more important in relation to urbanisation, new technologies, new threats and their implications.

This paper offers two fundamentally different interpretations of contemporary security. On the one hand, the criticism of the militarisation of cities and the role of their governments, analysing different types of conflicts that take place in urbanised

44 See section 3.2.2. Transnational terrorism and WMD

45 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 78.

46 COAFFEE, Jon; David Murakami Wood, Peter Rogers. *The Everyday Resilience of the City: How Cities Respond to Terrorism and Disaster*. New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2009, p. 5.

47 Spanish Security Strategy, 2011, p. 76.

areas; on the other hand, the urban dimension of the risks and threats that the 2011 and 2013 Strategies analyse, particularly at the national and international level. Urban security is usually analysed at the tactical level, neglecting the strategic dimension⁴⁸. What is clear, however, is the increasing importance of cities as players, targets and theatres of current conflicts in their varying forms. The impact of factors such as political violence, illegal migration, proliferation of WMD, organised crime and natural disasters is multiplied in areas with high concentrations of people and infrastructure. It appears that the complexity of urban systems and our increasing dependence on them contribute to the vulnerability of modern societies.

48 HILLS, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

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