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# The Age of Fear. 20 Years Later: Introduction

This issue is different from all previous ones. Thus, an introduction to it needs to be different from earlier ones. There has to be a place for reflection, which used to be included in an interview preceding academic articles. Clever readers will find out soon why this is so if they only think about the professional path of one of the editors. However, it is not the only reason. A special character of this issue is also due to the anniversary, the 20<sup>th</sup> already, of the September 11, 2001 attacks which have changed the world around us. They led it onto a new path which became the global war on international terrorism, or rather with terrorists and organisations bringing them together. The fight was joined by many states whose governments reached for armed forces, regarding this as the best tool for winning the war. They forgot that this was a way to eliminate only one generation of terrorists, but not the sources of the phenomenon which would motivate a generation after generation. For example, according to the wave theory of terrorism, those who did not participate directly in the struggle watched it carefully, and everybody felt its consequences, both as ongoing wars and their aftermath, changes in internal legislature perceived as limiting civil liberties, and terrorist attacks happening in various places. Attacks which were tragic and spectacular, but not with as many casualties as on September 11.

Twenty years after the event, it is worth considering whether now terrorism is still perceived as the major threat to security. Is it the main generator of fear,

anxiety, and social concerns? Was it used instrumentally? Or, perhaps, other phenomena have taken its place? These problems are worth examining by adopting a regional and national perspective through referring to the knowledge and expertise of specialists from all over the world. This will make it easier to answer the question whether the role of military threats has increased. Or, maybe, we attach greater importance to threats connected with the environment? These and other questions are tackled by the Authors who have joined us in this issue. Traditionally, they include theorists and practitioners whose strong voices can be heard in the *Varia* part. The reader can look at the world through the lens of the results of many scientists' research, and through the knowledge and expertise of those whose work and service for the last 20 years have been fighting terrorist, depriving them of their safe houses, and helping local authorities in providing security in terrorist-ridden areas. This trademark of *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i Praktyka* (BTiP) is impossible to give up. Thanks to it, we can understand what plagues nations all over the world.

It is similarly impossible not to share reflection concerning September 11, and thus, to complete the introduction with what could be written in an interview, as that day has changed not only the fate of individual people, but also the shape of armed forces and security strategies of the most important states of the world.

On 9 September 2001, as a young airborne infantry officer, I started the RANGER school at Fort Benning, Georgia, USA. During an introduction to the course, the instructors mentioned terrorism and other threats to national security. However, only two days later, on September 11, 2001, the training took a wholly different and more practical turn. The instructors' attitudes changed diametrically, and so did the attitudes of Rangers who lost their family members in the attack. Immediately upon completing school, many of my colleagues were directed to units preparing to leave for Afghanistan. All those images came back to me onboard a C-17 transport aircraft when a few years later, I was landing at the airport in Kabul to become the Chief of Staff of the NATO Special Operations Component Command in Afghanistan (NSOCC-A). However, that day, September 11, 2001, has not only changed the life of the single officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Brigade, it has also entirely changed the entire Polish Armed Forces.

From this perspective, the recollections of an academic may be considered trivial. After all, many people remember what they were doing when they found out about the attacks. I was in a meeting just then and, passing by a shop, we heard the news on the radio. As a student of International Relations at the Jagiellonian University, I had a chance to shine with my presumptions about who stood behind that attack. All this can be considered as something everybody has experienced. However, going back to university and the first MA seminar in the last year of studies were utterly original. Our eminent supervisor Prof. Erhard Cziomer, Ph.D., asked us one question: 'How have the September 11 attacks influenced the problems you are examining in your MA theses?'. Each of us, irrespective of whether we were interested in the Kosovo conflict, the foreign policy of Germany, or other detailed issues, needed to analyse and answer the question without preparation. That question, like the research of the late Prof.

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Cziomer, was visionary. This excellent specialist in international relations knew that the events of September 11 would define everything what was going to happen and be important in the coming years.

We have endeavoured to indicate what might be important in the future, in the next 20 years, or rather, we have given our Authors space to do it. We hope that here our readers will find texts attracting their attention and encouraging reflection on that problem. The moment this issue of BTiP comes into the hands of readers, there will be no soldiers of the multinational antiterrorism coalition in Afghanistan. And the National September 11 Memorial and Museum in Ground Zero will host millions of more visitors profoundly pensive over the 11 September 2001 tragedy. Nevertheless, the world is facing new challenges and threats to security.

