

On security in a changing world

An overview of the topics discussed by the participants at the 3rd International Scientific Conference: ‘Contemporary security. Challenges. Opportunities. Threats’ was wide. From the lessons learnt from the experiences of the



Russian-Ukrainian war, through the nature of hybrid war, operations in the cyberspace and the significance of proxy wars for global stability, the role of civil defence in modern armed conflict, to the uncontrolled expansion of artificial

intelligence and climate-related threats. **PROFESSOR MARIAN ŻUBER**, the chairman of the Organising Committee, explains the concept of such a multidimensional approach to the issue of security. He points out that the dynamic development of technology, geopolitical and social changes as well as escalating environmental crises mean that the traditional, narrow understanding of national defence no longer addresses current challenges.

The 3rd International Scientific Conference

'Contemporary security. Challenges. Opportunities. Threats'

Nowy Sącz, 26–28 May 2026

CONFERENCE TOPICS

Contemporary armed conflicts and their impact on global and regional security

- Russia – Ukraine war and its importance for European security – different perspectives,
- Russia – Ukraine war – drone war,
- proxy conflicts in the politics of global powers,
- hybrid warfare and its importance in contemporary politics,
- wars in cyberspace and building resilience to threats.

Civil protection and human security

- issues of population protection in the face of natural hazards,
- civil defence and its role during armed conflicts,
- building system of population protection and civil defence,
- system of individual and collective population protection,
- protection of population against unconventional weapon (CBRN),
- EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM).

Other issues in the area of modern security

- problems of global warming and possibilities of adaptation to climate change,
- renewable energy sources and their role in the fight against climate change,
- problems of environmental safety,
- artificial intelligence (AI) and the threats arising from its uncontrolled development,
- issues of personal safety and human ergonomics.

Daria Olender: Why did the University of Applied Sciences decide to organise a series of academic conferences dedicated to such broadly defined issues of security?

Prof. Marian Żuber, Prof. at the University of Applied Sciences:

In the face of dynamic development of technology and geopolitical changes, traditional approach to the national defence is no longer sufficient. Contemporary security encompasses not only issues relating to armed conflicts, but also environmental crises, global warming, the energy transition and mass migration. This requires interdisciplinary perspective that combines the body of knowledge from security studies with the natural and technical sciences. Today we are dealing with hybrid war, cyber threats, drones and the use of artificial intelligence in destabilising operations. In our view, there was a lack of platform, which would so strongly link the world of scientific theories with the practical experience of professionals from the military, civil defence and internal security services. Our goals also included educating the next generation of staff and raising public awareness regarding civil defence. The conference was intended to serve as a catalyst for developing new procedures and theoretical models, which will help build state resilience at the individual, national and supranational levels. At this point I would like to highlight the opportunities that participation in the project, funded by the Minister of Science and Higher Education as part of the Science Vectors programme, has afforded us. The financial support granted has enabled this project to be carried out on a much larger scale.

I would also like to point out that the conference is an event of great significance for the local community. It enhances the significance of Nowy Sącz as a centre of learning and boosts the prospects for the development of local research initiatives. Meeting participants were encouraged to cooperate with regional enterprises, a move that could lead to new investments.

What issues were the focus of this year's edition?

We divided the discussions into three thematic areas. In the first of these, entitled 'Contemporary armed conflicts and their impact on global and regional security', we focused on analysing lessons learnt from the Russian-Ukrainian war – with particular emphasis on the mass use

of unmanned aerial vehicles – as well as on the mechanisms of hybrid warfare, operations in the cyberspace and the significance of proxy conflicts for stability in Europe and the world. In turn, ‘Civil protection and human security’ panel shifted the focus of the discussion to the operational and formal-legal level. The speakers attempted to redefine the role of civil defence during the armed conflict. The architecture of collective protection systems, procedures for responding to asymmetric threats, the use of unconventional weapons and operational effectiveness of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism were analysed. In the third section, collectively referred to as ‘Other issues in the area of modern security’, we addressed issues that do not result directly from acts of war, but have a direct impact on human life. A key point was the debate on the risks associated with the uncontrolled expansion of artificial intelligence. The analysis of environmental safety, the role of renewable energy sources, and strategies for adapting to climate change and global warming – which is leading to rising temperatures, floods, and droughts that also affect our region – also played a significant role. In proposing this breakdown, we tried to take into account the entire chain of dependencies of modern security: from causes and defence mechanisms to global environmental determinants. The participants of the conference had the opportunity to hear over 60 lectures delivered by distinguished experts from Poland and abroad. The outcome of this year’s meeting was the identification of directions for further scientific research and presentation of innovative organisational and technical solutions improving security in various areas.

Is the presence of prominent international experts the result of cooperation between the University of Applied Sciences and institutions abroad?

Yes. This is the result of years of personal contacts between members of our conference’s scientific committee and scientists from around the world, the university’s implementation of joint ventures with foreign institutions, as well as academic exchanges. The reputation of this year’s co-organisers also played a major role: the Military University of Technology in Warsaw, the Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław and the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław. These institutions have a vast network of global scientific connections. Such a cooperation ensures high academic quality and the practical

value of research findings. Furthermore, the relevance and universality of the topics covered were important – hybrid war, cyber threats, civil protection are burning issues that interest specialists all over the world. This year we hosted experts, from, among others, Norway, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Romania, Croatia, Slovakia and the United States. International cooperation allows for better understanding of common threats and opens the door to the implementation of international research projects in Poland.

It is worth emphasising that also young scientists from various cultural fields – a doctoral student at the University of Science and Technology in Wrocław from Nigeria and a student at the University of Wrocław from India took part in the deliberations. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the work of the simultaneous interpreters. Thanks to their professionalism and dedication, the participants were able to better grasp the specialist content, which was often highly sector-specific.

While taking part in the conference, I noticed how much attention you devote to young people and how well you get on with students.

I am glad that it is noticeable! Didactics is my passion. So I try to spark curiosity about the world in students and show them that security sciences are not just theory, but also real life. In my opinion, a good educator is the one who inspires and knows how to listen. So I try to shorten the distance, build an atmosphere of mutual trust and show young people that their voice matters – also in serious international projects. The relationship based on such pillars enables to create a safety space in which students are not afraid to ask difficult questions and eagerly engage in initiatives that go beyond the standard study programme. It works both way, for that matter. Students' energy and commitment give me the drive to take action.

The Student's Day has become a tradition of our conference, offering young researchers the opportunity to present the results of work carried out within student research groups. This year, the largest group consisted of the members of the 'Bezpiecznik' Students Science Club operating within the Faculty of Environmental Engineering and Geodesy of the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław. The presence of students at the conference and their bold interactions with experts are the best proof that they are the integral part of the academic society.

Do the organisers plan to publish the conference proceedings?

The written record of the event's academic output is one of the key indicators for evaluating the entire project, as highlighted by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in the Science Vectors programme. Following the conference, we published *The Abstract Book* in which we compiled concise descriptions of the presented research results. The publication can be downloaded free of charge from the website of our university in the tab of the university's academic publishing house¹. We have given the authors of the best presentations the opportunity to publish the full versions of their articles in the reviewed collective monograph which will be published in the coming months. Just like *The Abstract Book*, it will be available online. I encourage you to follow our university's website!

Interviewed by: Daria Olender

Marian Żuber, Associate Professor, Eng., Professor at the University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz and the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław

PhD with habilitation in the field of social sciences in the discipline of security sciences. He worked at the Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław where he served as vice-dean of the Faculty of Security Studies and the Faculty of Management. Currently he is a lecturer at the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław and the University of Applied Sciences in Nowy Sącz. He is the author of many monographs, academic textbooks and articles in the field of national and international security. He has organised numerous scientific conferences in the area of security (e.g. from the series: 'Natural and man-made disasters – civilisation threats of the early 21st century'). His research interests include: national and international security, environmental protection, terrorism, weapon of mass destruction and security of critical infrastructure.

¹ <https://wydawnictwo.ans-ns.edu.pl/>; <https://wspolczesnebezpieczenstwo.edu.pl/>.