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EUROPE'S DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES AS DETERMINANTS OF SECURITY

INTRODUCTION

Many different processes or phenomena in the modern world influence security. A key determinant, though often overlooked in political and scientific debates, affecting both military and non-military security in Europe is the demographic factor. Studying the interrelationship between demography and security is difficult. Firstly, because of the complex and multidimensional nature of security. Secondly, because of the features of modern societies, such as the rapid proliferation (and growth) of social systems (including security systems!), which are characterised by an unprecedented number, density and dynamics of interconnections, interdependencies and interactions − making them highly complex and mutually dependent. Thirdly, due to the very nature of demographic change, the analysis of which should take a long-term perspective, following the tradition and methodological approach of the *longue durée* (long duration) (Braudel, 1999).

Looking at the past and future demographic development of Europe and the European Union (hereafter: EU), one can see that in terms of size, population growth dynamics, and changes in the population structure by age (proportions of economic age groups), the demographic potential of this continent is weakening. The demographic future of Europe and the EU is characterised by 1) the lowest population growth dynamics on a global scale and a decline in the world population, 2) the fastest population ageing process, 3) a reduction in the working-age population (potential labour resources), 4) the lowest generation replacement model on a global scale, 5) the highest mortality rate (Eurostat, 2024). There is no doubt that progressive demographic regression is today a fundamental determinant of Europe's socio-economic development and a factor shaping the continent's military capabilities. Demography is one of the most certain determinants because what happens today results from citizens' procreative decisions and demographic policies of 15–20 previous years. What will happen in the area in question in 15–20 years is shaped today. At the same time, it has a primary character to all other factors, being a *sine qua non* for socio-economic development in its broadest sense.

The cognitive objective of the article is to assess the scale and nature of contemporary demographic trends that determine the security of Europe and to identify the main threats to the continent's military and non-military security resulting from them. It represents an attempt to tackle a research problem whose meaning is related to the question: How are contemporary demographic trends in Europe shaping up, and on what security levels can we expect their implications? Specific problems: What are the dynamics of the European population and changes in the population structure in view of economic age? How does demography affect Europe's defensive potential? How do demographic changes in Europe affect NATO's operational capabilities and transatlantic relations? How do we reconcile the mismatch between the increasing demands on future soldiers and the quantitative and qualitative availability of security personnel? How does demographic regression affect the different security planes? The main research hypothesis is: population processes, due to their dynamics, complexity and duration, represent a key challenge for European security in the 21st century.

The article uses desk research. The analysis is based on documents of official statistics (UN, Eurostat), reports, and scientific publications. It involves a) content analysis (already at the source search stage), b) analysis of existing statistical data, and c) cross-sectional analyses and comparisons of historical data – which made it possible to show changes over time and identify key demographic trends in Europe and the security challenges they pose.

CURRENT AND FUTURE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES IN EUROPE

Many elements that influence population potential as a determinant of security as well as social and economic development in Europe can be identified. In this article, the dynamics of population change assessed against the world and other continents is taken as a starting factor. At present, the population development of the European Union, like that of Europe as a whole, is by far the slowest both in modern history and in comparison with other continents. This has resulted in a lowering of the continent's position on the world's demographic map. While in 1960, Europe's population accounted for 20% of the world's population, in 2022, its share was limited to 9.3% (UN, 2022). The population of the European Union in 2022 was 446.7 million, or 60.1% of the European population but only 5.6% of the world population (Eurostat, 2023a). Unfortunately, the demographic outlook for the Old Continent is even more pessimistic (see Table 1).

Table 1

World population development 2023–2100 (millions, %)

Year	REGION													
	Africa		America South and Central.		America Mon.		Australia and Oceania		Asia		Europe		World	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2023	1,460	18	620	8	378	5	45	1	4,753	59	742	9	**8,045**	**100**
2030	1,710	20	651	8	393	5	49	1	4,958	58	736	9	**8,546**	**100**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2040	2,093	23	684	7	410	5	53	1	5,176	56	722	8	**9,188**	**100**
2050	2,485	26	701	7	421	4	57	1	5,292	54	703	7	**9,709**	**100**
2060	2,861	28	703	7	428	4	61	1	5,289	52	676	7	**10,067**	**100**
2070	3,205	31	692	7	436	4	63	1	5,204	50	648	6	**10,297**	**100**
2080	3,746	33	669	6	442	4	66	1	5,063	49	624	6	**10,414**	**100**
2090	4,078	36	640	6	445	4	67	1	4,877	47	604	6	**10,423**	**100**
2100	4,924	38	607	6	448	4	68	1	4,674	45	586	6	**10,349**	**100**

Source: Own work based on UN (2022).

According to a projection made by the UN, the world population will increase by almost a quarter (about 2.3 billion) to 10.349 billion by the year 2100 (probably reaching 10 billion in 2059). Currently, the world population is growing at a rate of about 82.4 million people per year, but projections show that the world population growth rate will slow down over the next decades (the expected peak of the global population, according to the UN, will be in 2086 when it reaches 10.431 billion people). This slowdown will be almost imperceptible in the case of Africa, which will populate the most and reach nearly 2.5 billion in 2050 (a population increase of approximately 1.0 billion or 7.4% compared to 2023). In contrast, the population of Europe and the European Union will decrease the most, to 703.0 million and 447.9 million in 2050, or by 4.2% and 1.6% respectively. Europe's population will then represent about 7.2% and the EU's population about 4.6% of the world's population (UN, 2022).

At the same time, the inhabitants of Europe are ageing, which, regardless of how the process is described or measured, is expressed by an increase in the proportion of old (senile) people in the population. Hence, social scientists write about the "greying population" (Giddens, 2004: 185) or "greying generations" (Stuart-Hamilton, 2006: 14). The population of no other continent could be described as aged as that of Europe. According to Eurostat, 446.7 million people were living in the EU-27 countries in 2022, of whom more than 94 million were aged 65 and over, and more than half of the continent's population was over 44. Older people accounted for the highest share of the population in Italy (23.8 per cent), Portugal (23.7 per cent), and Finland (23.1 per cent) (Eurostat, 2023a). Marek Okólski and Agnieszka Fihel (Okólski, Fihel, 2012: 233) point out that the variation in the phenomenon of demographic old age between European countries is so small that almost every European population is older than the population of each of the other continents (exceptions to this rule include 6–8 countries). Perceived in this way, the internal similarity of the European population is its striking feature. Europe's ageing is marked not only by its high level but also by the strong dynamics of this process, especially compared to other parts of the world. As mentioned above, one measure of the advancement of the population's demographic ageing is the share of people in the so-called old age (65+) and double old age (80+). The dynamics of the process of ageing of the European population is very well illustrated by the partial results of the UN projections in Table 2, which clearly show that the increase in the number of people in the 65+ and 80+ age categories will be higher in Europe than in other parts of the world and has an upward trend.

Table 2

Changes in the percentage of population aged 65+ and 80+ in 1950–2050 (%)

Region	Age Group	1950	2000	2025	2050	2075	2100
Africa	**65+**	3.3	3.2	3.6	5.7	9.2	14.5
	80+	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.9	1.7	3.4
South and Central America	65+	3.2	5.9	10.6	19.8	28.2	32.0
	80+	0.4	0.9	2.1	5.4	9.2	13.3
North America	**65+**	8.1	12.3	18.8	23.8	28.7	30.6
	80+	1.1	3.0	4.4	9.2	11.8	14.3
Australia and Oceania	**65+**	7.2	9.7	13.7	18.5	23.4	26.6
	80+	1.0	2.2	3.4	6.3	9.1	11.3
Asia	**65+**	4.2	5.8	10.4	19.0	25.6	29.2
	80+	0.5	0.9	1.9	5.3	9.2	12.4
Europe	**65+**	7.9	14.7	20.8	28.9	31.2	32.9
	80+	1.0	2.9	5.4	10.5	13.8	15.9
World	65+	5.1	6.9	10.5	16.5	20.9	24.0
	80+	0.6	1.2	2.1	4.7	7.2	9.3

Source: Own work based on UN (2022).

Structural changes in the demography of Europe's (including the EU's) population are largely due to low birth rates (1.53 children per woman aged 15–49 in the European Union by 2021) and increasing life expectancy. Female EU residents aged 65 can expect to live another 18.2 years on average, while men can expect to live 12.5 years (Eurostat, 2023a). The main risks arising from this process are the scale of the ageing of European populations, the adverse changes in the population structure in terms of economic age (a decrease in the labour force), an increase in the median age and an increase in the old-age dependency ratio, and the socio-economic consequences that follow. The projected demographic changes in the European population by 2100 are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Changes in the age structure of the European population 2030–2100 (millions, %)

Changes in the age structure of the European population 2030–2100 (millions, %)															
Year	**2030**		**2040**		**2050**		**2060**		**2070**		**2080**		**2090**		**2100**	
Age (years)	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
0–14	63	14	61	14	60.9	14	58	13	57.0	17	56	13	56	13	55	13
15–64	281	62	268	60	257	57	247	57	243	56	235	55	231	55	228	54
65+	107	24	121	27	129	29	132	30	131	31	134	32	135	32	136	33
80+	31	7	39	9	48	11	53	12	56	13	57	13	60	14	64	15
European population dynamics 2030–2050 (million)																
Year	**20230**		**2040**		**2050**		**2060**		**2070**		**2080**		**2090**		**2100**	
Total population	452		451		447		440		432		426		422		419	
Median age (years)																
Year	**2030**		**2040**		**2050**		**2060**		**2070**		**2080**		**2090**		**2100**	
Median	45.8		47.4		48.0		48.8		49.4		49.5		49.8		50.2	
Older person dependency ratio																
Year	**2030**		**2040**		**2050**		**2060**		**2070**		**2080**		**2090**		**2100**	
Load factor 65/15–64	38.0		45.4		50.4		53.0		54.1		57.0		58.7		59.7	

Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat (2023a).

To conclude this section of the discussion, it is important to note that although demographic regression will affect all European societies, its pace will depend on each country's specific socioeconomic development.

THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE ON EUROPEAN SECURITY

This article pays particular attention to the structural nature of security (Choucri, North, 1993: 230–231) and defines it as the real balance or relationship between the size and characteristics of the European population and the needs of that population necessary to maintain an adequate 1) military 2) economic, 3) social, 4) health, and 5) political capacity to ensure security.

1. Military security refers primarily to threats that can significantly affect the survival of a territory: it mainly concerns its defence against external aggression of a military nature and is related to categories such as the defensive and offensive potential of individual states – which are actors in international relations.

The demographic regression that Europe is currently experiencing is a factor shaping the size of the continent's armed forces in the coming years. The base of potential recruits is proportional to the cohort size of young people, especially men. All available demographic projections show a shrinkage of the European population of young people entering the labour market (age group 15–24) – according to Eurostat (2023a), this will decrease from 4,832,147 in 2023 to 4,190,699 in 2050; as for the cohort of young men, it will decrease from 2,483,803 in 2023 to 2,153,985 in 2050. This process in some European countries calls into question the possibility of fielding troops that constitute a viable force.

Due to shrinking human resources, European armies, in order to maintain their military potential, will be forced to deploy a greater number of new, advanced technologies that can compensate to some extent for the lack of human resources. Classically, armies were strong in direct proportion to their size as measured by the number of soldiers, with the industrial revolution the quality of equipment became a critical factor. As the military entered the information age, the ability to integrate software and information (communication) systems and the technical experts who take part in battles began to become an independent factor in assessing the strength of an army. Due to the development of new technologies, an increasing proportion of military personnel will need specialised knowledge and skills (Kasprzyk, 2020a; Kasprzyk, 2020b). Recruiting people with such skills, given the shrinking cohort of young people in Europe, will be a challenge.

With an ageing population, exacerbating staff shortages can have a negative impact on aspects such as the combat prowess of the army, the fulfilment of allied commitments, and the engagement in peacekeeping activities. These facts are recognised by non-European NATO members, who are conducting extensive analyses of the impact of global demographic trends on security. Current demographic trends, different in Europe and the United States, both in terms of birth rates and migration flows, paint a less than optimistic picture of meeting the Alliance's future manpower needs (Libicki, Shatz, Taylor, 2011: 149). Europe's population is shrinking and is projected to

decline as a proportion of the world's total population (see Tables 1 and 3). As for the US population, it is projected to increase from 339,997,000 in 2023 to 375,392,000 in 2050. Over the same period, the median age in the US of 38.1 in 2023 is projected to rise to 43.1, while in Europe, it will rise from 42.2 in 2023 to 47.3 in 2050 (Eurostat, 2023a). European allies have smaller and smaller armies at their disposal, and they are increasingly difficult to maintain in terms of financial and personnel costs. In addition, migration processes are leading to increasing cultural differences between the US and Europe, posing a real threat to NATO cohesion.

Another implication for the armed forces, stemming from an ageing population, is that defence budgets may be reduced. Currently, when it comes to the share of defence spending in GDP among European NATO members, Poland ranks first (3.9 per cent of GDP), Greece (3.01 per cent of GDP) and Estonia (2.73 per cent of GDP). In contrast, Luxembourg (0.72 per cent of GDP), Belgium (1.13 per cent of GDP) and Spain (1.26 per cent of GDP) are the worst performers (NATO, 2023: 9). Individual governments will face a balancing act between ensuring sufficient national defence capabilities and meeting the care, health and economic needs of ageing populations.

2. Economic security in this article focuses on the importance of the material factor, shaping the standards of quality of life and existence of individuals and entire social groups, individually, locally, and internationally. It consists of the whole potential of labour, production, services, technology, know-how, etc.

Europe's demographic assets are becoming increasingly important from a strategic international point of view, where demographic processes are a type of asset in global economic competition and overlay the map of new civilisational divisions (countries around the Pacific, the so-called arc of uncertainty stretching between Latin America, North and Sub-Saharan America, India and Polynesia). In these divisions, Europe (the EU) has weak, not to say the weakest, demographic assets. The dominance of the old makes the economy lose its dynamism, the natural mechanisms of pressure for change disappear and innovation declines. In a simple thought experiment, Ch. I. Jones (2022: 3489) points out: "Suppose each person can create one idea a year... If the population is constant, more ideas are always coming up and things are getting better; we are getting richer. If the population growth is negative, the contribution to the creation of new ideas decreases, and this naturally leads to a stagnant stock of knowledge."

Changes in the labour market are one of the most important economic effects of the demographic downturn. According to the US Center for Global Development, there will be a shortage of around 44 million workers across Europe, with 95 million fewer people of working age in the labour market by mid-century compared to 2015. The German (7 million fewer), French (3.9 million), and British (3.6 million) economies will be hit hardest by the labour shortage despite a high degree of automation (Spanjaart, 2021; Spanjaart, 2022). The ongoing transformation of the age structure of the European population leads not only to a significant reduction in available labour resources but also to ageing of the working-age population, which may result in changes in the occupational and sectoral structure and a slowdown in economic growth. The severity of these transformations may be mitigated by technological progress, but its scale and effectiveness still remain uncertain. It is also clear that, in the face of these changes, various public policies are and will be introduced to activate people and ex-

tend their working lives by limiting the possibility of early retirement and raising the retirement age.

Public finances will be facing major challenges. One of the most obvious economic consequences of the demographic crisis is the pension system's problems. The lack of generational replacement leads to a situation in which fewer and fewer employed people must work for an increasing number of pensioners. B. Heer, V. Polito and M. R. Wickens (2023: 44–45) note that the vast majority of the countries they studied (11 Western European countries plus the United States) require urgent pension reforms. The authors introduce the original concept of "pension space" to show whether there is still room for manoeuvre in the countries studied to prevent the system from collapsing. The lower the replacement rate and taxes, the larger the "pension space". Unfortunately, in 2030, there will be no such space, for example, in Italy and France. Radical reforms, such as an increase in consumption taxes (labour taxes are already high), an increase in the retirement age or a reduction in the replacement rate (the ratio of the pension to the last salary), will be the only way out there.

Demographic regression will also have an impact on the transformation of the structure of the economy and the change in the structure of market demand. So far, it has been shaped by the young generation entering working age, and in future, it will be determined by the older generation (65+). Demand determinants are, on the one hand, the income of future pensioners and, on the other hand, consumption preferences (Baranowska, 2017: 61). With regard to the first factor, it should be stressed that pension levels vary widely across the EU countries. The highest pensions are currently received by residents of Denmark, Austria and France. Countries such as Sweden and Finland have an average level by European standards. In contrast, the Baltic States and Greece are in the worst situation, where the average pension does not cover the cost of living (KE, 2021: 25–55). This means that the consumption capacity of European seniors varies greatly. The change in consumption preferences will mean a change in market demand in all segments: from food through furnishing and maintenance of the home and leisure time activities to health services (Szukalski, 2011: 412–413). In the latter case, an increase in demand is forecast for products and services related to the functioning of a person in "the autumn of life" related to health care (nursing, caring, palliative, occupational therapy, rehabilitation services), living services (shopping, housekeeping, dealing with matters in institutions on behalf of the client), social services, regardless of whether they will be provided by public institutions or in the system of market services.

3. Social security is a broader term than the classic one. It does not focus solely on social security issues but is primarily associated with meeting the vital social needs of individuals and groups. It corresponds closely to community safety, which is experienced subjectively and has real resources in the form of social networks.

The risk of isolation, social marginalisation as well as loneliness of older people is a significant threat affecting their quality of life, but also their physical and, above all, mental health (EU, 2023; WHO, 2021). The data shows a huge scale of exclusion of older people from a variety of activities, including, above all, leisure time spent outside the home. The barriers to this participation are manifold: from socio-economic to health and fitness to cultural and mental. Therefore, it is important to create condi-

tions for the integration and activity of seniors in various spheres of social life, such as culture, leisure and recreation, civic participation, consumer activity or the sphere of communication and the digital world.

The untapped social capital of older people is another important issue. Its conception emphasises relationships in society by promoting cooperation. It is interpreted as a collectively created public good created through the actions of communities and social networks. As the next third generation leaves the labour force, they will be increasingly educated, mobile, agile, creative, and aware of their capabilities, needs and rights. They will constitute an increasingly valuable human capital with enormous economic, consumer, caring and self-help, integration and emotional, cultural and educational potential (Trafiałek, Klimczuk, 2017: 105–108). Membership in non-profit organisations, community groups, professional (business) associations, sports clubs, or voting in elections can be taken as indicators of supporting the social capital of older people. Social networks are a major factor supporting participation in society; they provide opportunities for older people to continue learning and share knowledge and experience with younger generations.

As well as being involved in the life of the wider community, older people can also support the family, for example helping children to care for grandchildren so that parents can remain in the labour market, thus increasing intergenerational solidarity. In the Lisbon Treaty (2007), intergenerational solidarity was explicitly mentioned for the first time as an objective of the EU. The European Day of Intergenerational Solidarity, celebrated on the 29th of April each year by a group of civil society organisations, was also intended to draw attention to this objective. Intergenerational solidarity can be promoted through various channels, such as civil society, the media and the scientific community.

A question may be asked: should old age be considered a social problem today? Moreover, does it represent a challenge for state social policy? Issues related to the third and last period of life are a relatively new and intensively developing sphere of social policy interest. It refers to measures that will have a planned and purposeful impact on shaping the optimal existential conditions of older people. P. Błędowski (Błędowski, 2002: 167–177; 2012: 205–206) refers to two aspects of social policy related to the last phase of human existence. The first is social policy towards old people, and the second is social policy towards old age. In both of these complementary aspects, social policy orientates its actions towards their goals. In the first aspect, starting from the diagnosis of the needs of the elderly, it sets itself the following tasks: to satisfy the needs of this community and to shape appropriate relations between the older generation and younger generations by limiting the dependence of older people on younger ones, through the elimination of various forms of social exclusion of old people, fostering their broad social participation and shaping relations of intergenerational solidarity. The subject of interest and influence here becomes the community of old people, while the object is this community's specific needs and problems. These should be dealt with in all specific areas of social policy, e.g., health care, housing, social security, labour market, and educational and cultural policies. On the other hand, the aim of social policy towards old age should be to help individuals cope with the situational and developmental crises that are typical of old age, to shape a positive so-

cial image of old age and ensure that it is on an equal footing with other phases of life, and to prepare younger people for the old age that awaits them.

4. Health security is a key objective pursued by modern societies. The World Health Organisation (hereinafter: WHO) sees health as the basis for achieving security. It emphasises its complex nature, taking into account the physical, mental and social well-being of human beings and not just the absence of disease or disability. An analysis of the WHO definition of health and the term *security* prompts a broader view of the essence of health security. For the purpose of this article, health security will be understood as a continuous effort to diagnose health risks (subjective and objective) as well as access to healthcare services.

The number of years lived without activity limitations due to health problems, i.e., disability-free life expectancy, is the main indicator of healthy life years used in the EU. Healthy life expectancy is an important indicator of population health as it indicates whether increased life expectancy is associated with living in good health or with specific health problems and disabilities. A higher number of healthy life years generally means a healthier workforce, fewer early retirements due to health problems, and reduced or postponed long-term care needs. In 2021, the number of healthy life years at birth in the EU was estimated at 64.2 years for women and 63.1 years for men, representing approximately 77.4% and 81.7% of total life expectancy for women and men, respectively (Eurostat, 2023b). The lower proportion of healthy life years among women is because they tend to report more activity limitations due to health problems at a given age and live longer than men. The gender gap in life expectancy at birth is almost six years in the EU countries. The most recent Eurostat figures show life expectancy in the EU countries, with an EU average of 82.9 years for women and 77.2 years for men (Eurostat, 2023b; Eurostat, 2023c).

Access to health services is one of the key aspects of health security in the context of an ageing population. This needs to be improved, for example, by the low number of doctors per 1,000 patients. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (hereinafter: OECD) reports that the EU average of practising doctors per 1,000 people in 2021 is 3.8, with Austria (5.41), Germany (4.53), Spain (4.49) and Lithuania (4.47) ranking first. Hungary (3.0), France (3.18) and Belgium (3.25) were at the end of the list. (OECD, 2023). Currently, as many as 40 per cent of doctors in every third European country are already of pre-retirement age, and this percentage will increase over time. WHO projections show that by 2030, there will be a shortage of at least 54,000 doctors in the USA, and Europe will be short of up to 600,000 doctors and more than 2 million nurses (WHO, 2023). Regarding the latter, the European average per 1,000 inhabitants in 2021 was 9.3, with the highest number of nurses in Ireland (12.73), Germany (12.03) and the Netherlands (11.38) and the lowest in Greece (3.77), Bulgaria (4.19) and Latvia (4.19). In terms of the availability of hospital beds per 1,000 patients, the European average was 4.66 in 2021, with the best situation in Bulgaria (7.92), Germany (7.76), Romania (7.21), Austria (6.91) and Hungary (6.79). In contrast, Sweden (2.0), Denmark (2.51), and Spain (2.96) had the lowest number of hospital beds (OECD, 2023).

It is widely acknowledged that demographic regression is (and will continue to be) affecting the functioning and financing of healthcare systems. This is due to the belief

that the demand for medical care is disproportionately greater for older people than younger age groups. Analyses show that, in the USA and OECD countries, the majority of public spending on health care *per capita* is concentrated in the 60–95 age range (Nyce, Schieber, 2005: 140). Hence, serious concerns exist about the future financial viability of European healthcare systems. In the report entitled "Health at a Glance. Europe 2022", we read that the average European increase in health expenditure *per capita* from 2013 to 2019 was 3 per cent and from 2019 to 2020 as much as 5.5 per cent. This record growth was observed in virtually all European countries except three countries: Belgium, Slovakia and Poland, where a decrease in health expenditure *per capita* was recorded (OECD, EU, 2022). Health expenditure was also analysed in relation to GDP. The years 2013–2017 were a period in which the expenditure growth followed the GDP growth. From 2017 onwards, the opposite proportion of changes in health expenditure was observed in the EU, with health expenditure increasing while the GDP declined. Since the announcement of the pandemic in Europe, this divergence has widened. On average, health expenditure in Europe has increased by 5.5 per cent while GDP has fallen by a median of around 5 per cent. This has been due to a significant increase in direct and indirect healthcare costs while many economic sectors have been cut back. In 2020, an average of as much as 10.9 per cent of GDP was spent on health expenditure in the EU countries (OECD, EU, 2022).

5. Political security, for the purposes of this article, is defined as the process of maintaining the continued readiness of state structures to meet challenges, seize opportunities and reduce risks in political terms.

Europe's demographic regression and the increase in the post-working age population mean significant changes in political thinking related to the growing political power of older people. Political scientists call this process "greying of the electorate." It is a double greying of the electorate, as it means both an increase in the proportion of older people among potential voters (those eligible to vote) and an increase in the proportion of older age groups among actual election participants. This phenomenon is due to the fact that older citizens are more disciplined than younger ones, and voter turnout is higher among them. Therefore, no party or coalition in government wishing to retain power, and no party or coalition in opposition wishing to gain power, can ignore the needs of older people, as they will have an increasing influence on the outcome of elections at local, national or European level.

The ageing of the population not only leads to changes in the programmes of political parties but also contributes to the emergence of new actors on the political scene: associations, trade unions and political parties whose main objective is to speak on behalf of senior citizens. Analyses of their activities, performed in various countries, indicate that the most effective in advancing the interests of senior citizens are the pensioner sections of large, powerful trade unions and associations playing the role of pressure groups. Well-prepared speeches by senior pressure groups on very specific issues (e.g. valorisation of pensions, access to cheap medicines) are often successful. In contrast, there have been no notable successes for pensioner political parties.

However, the presence on the political scene of parties and organisations representing the interests of the older generation may have undesirable consequences in the form of exacerbating the conflict between generations in the distribution of public

funds and creating the image of old people as a demanding, egoistic group, asserting satisfaction of its needs at the expense of younger generations. The thesis formulated by D. Kingsley and P. van den Oever (1981: 1) states that the ageing of society and the simultaneous emancipation of young people in Western societies may lead to a conflict between young and old along the lines of a "class struggle" is worth pondering. On the one hand, the growing number of old people will increasingly expect the state and society to provide them with care and material support; on the other hand, young people will also expect the state to provide them with benefits: help with starting work, bringing up children, education, obtaining housing. The competition for public resources between the older and the younger generations may, therefore, intensify and take on new dimensions.

CONCLUSIONS

This article contributes to the literature on the security implications of demographic change. It is based on the premise that analysing and forecasting changes in demographic structures can significantly impact Europe's security in both military and non-military terms. Population change largely determines the security of the continent in terms of labour resources, the ability to finance public expenditure (pension provision), innovation, political preferences, health (there is a large increase in the demand for welfare and health sector services), changes in consumption and investment patterns, or human labour productivity. The issue for military staffers is, among other things, whether NATO member states will be able to field sufficient conscription-age recruits in their purely volunteer military formations in the following decades, provided, of course, that governments are willing to allocate adequate resources to defence. Given the above, identifying the spectrum of problems and opportunities arising from changes in the demographic structure is imperative.

Europe's demographic situation is serious enough to necessitate addressing this area of research coherently and holistically. This is also prompted by the construction of modern security systems, which operate on the basis of an interconnected system of vessels. Partial approaches, focused solely on the social or economic dimension, do not exhaust the subject of demography's role in shaping the continent's security. The interdependencies between demographic processes and security are complex, while the strength and area of their influence are subject to constant change; hence, capturing them is increasingly difficult and requires greater scientific community involvement.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to assess the scale and nature of contemporary demographic trends that determine the security of Europe and identify the main threats to the continent's military and non-military security resulting from them. This article constitutes an attempt to face a problem whose essence is associated with a key question: how are contemporary demographic trends in Europe shaping up, and on what security levels can we expect their implications? Population processes, which are the cumulative effects of the demographic phenomena that occurred in the near and distant past, run over the long term and are characterised by a low coefficient of uncertainty. Analyses of the UN and Eurostat demographic data show that Europe has seen an intensification and accumulation of negative demographic trends over recent decades. Demographic regression, as experienced by the Old Continent, is a multidimensional phenomenon which has numerous security implications and poses a threat to Europe's socio-economic development.

Keywords: demographic structure, demographic change, security, Europe

WYZWANIA DEMOGRAFICZNE EUROPY JAKO DETERMINANTY BEZPIECZEŃSTWA

STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest określenie skali i charakteru współczesnych trendów demograficznych determinujących bezpieczeństwo Europy oraz identyfikacja wynikających z nich głów-

nych zagrożeń dla bezpieczeństwa militarnego i pozamilitarnego kontynentu. Artykuł stanowi próbę zmierzenia się z problemem badawczym, którego sens wiąże się z pytaniem: jak kształtują się współczesne trendy demograficzne w Europie i na jakich poziomach bezpieczeństwa można spodziewać się ich konsekwencji? Procesy ludnościowe, stanowiące skomasowany efekt zjawisk demograficznych zachodzących w bliskiej i dalekiej przeszłości, przebiegają długofalowo i cechują się niskim współczynnikiem niepewności. Przeprowadzone analizy danych demograficznych ONZ i Eurostatu pokazują, iż w Europie na przestrzeni ostatnich dekad obserwuje się nasilenie i kumulację negatywnych trendów demograficznych. Regres demograficzny, jakiego doświadcza Stary Kontynent, jest zjawiskiem wielowymiarowym, które niesie z sobą liczne implikacje dla bezpieczeństwa i stanowi zagrożenie dla rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego Europy.

Słowa kluczowe: struktura demograficzna, zmiany demograficzne, bezpieczeństwo, Europa

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