“From symmetry to chaos”
– a new type of armed conflict in the 20th century

The great powers, rich as far as their economy, military and culture are concerned, and which have at their disposal armed forces equipped with technical ‘novelties’ and able to operate in all conditions, from the Antarctic to the Sahara are, in early 20th century, immersed in a recession and threatened with catastrophe. There are numerous wars and conflicts which we may follow on the front pages of newspapers, while others remain unreported. There are no borders to contemporary conflicts, small domestic skirmishes may spread across an entire region. With a 20th century war, we face a problem even when attempting to define the state which we will acknowledge to be that of a war.

The conflicts of today have undergone ‘privatisation’. In view of the disintegration of state structures, private entities have become involved in exercising violence, in order to attain their own interests. Non-state, armed formations, dubbed private military companies (PMCs), have emerged among the new war-waging actors. The 20th century reality will thus be much more complex than it may seem to us. It is these ‘other actors’ who will cause asymmetry. In the war-waging arena, mutinous military will emerge, aside from the states, as will rebels, insurgents, organised crime and international terrorist networks. Their organisations become ever more fluid and, simultaneously, ever stronger. It is as difficult to attribute any specific time and space to the war operations of today as it is to attribute any ‘active role’ and ‘immediacy’ to the entities participating in it. It is not infrequent that a conflict becomes dormant for a time, only to re-awaken with even greater force. Until recently, wars were waged in order to inflict a lasting damage on the opponent, so as to make them sign the peace treaty as soon as possible. The wars of today are aimed at inflicting damage on the opponent, but not in order to end the war as soon as possible at all. Will the 20th century be time of chaos and asymmetry? We shall know the answer. We shall have an answer to this question soon.