



## STRATEGIC RESILIENCE: FROM STABILITY AND PREVENTION TOWARDS PRO-ACTIVE ACTION AND DYNAMIC ADAPTABILITY

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*Strategic resilience is achievable at different stages and with different instruments. The most used ones in normal times of equilibrium are related to the capacity of regaining stability and maintaining the continuity of institutions, relations and expected objectives, at a strategic level. The new pandemic and the turbulent world with tectonic level of changes makes resilience enter in a new era where dynamic adaptability and pro-active action should be the needed instruments in order to acquire the suitable level of resilience at a strategic level. This could mean, however, to maintain just the core tasks and basic objectives of the defence and security systems and to have the ability to give up institutional physical premises as well as to adapt details, nuances, doctrines, embracing creativity, welcoming inventive solutions and building the capacity to reform during crises at the same time with the effort to meet public requirements and to fulfil current normal day by day missions.*

*Keywords: strategic resilience; dynamic adaptability; prevention; pro-active action; crisis management*



## INTRODUCTION. PREVENTION AND STABILITY. STRATEGIC RESILIENCE 1.0

The world as we know it and the *capacity to deal with crises* have been related to several concepts over time. The most important ones are linked to the *capacity of prevention* and the *stability of the systems* – especially in defence and security. *Strategic resilience 1.0* is achievable, in those terms, as long as we protect the stability of existing institutions, the viability and effectiveness of existing relations and the *status quo*.

If we consider the existence of *crises* – sudden changes perceived by the decision-maker that induce the *threat to basic values, a sense of urgency and uncertainty* (Stern, 2014) and require intervention in order to bring back the system to a situation comparative to the one before the crises emerge (Chifu, 2019) –, *resilience 1.0* is related to the *possibility to prevent crises, to avoid their occurrence. Resilience* is also linked to the *possibility to manage crises, to raise the capacity of dealing with them and avoiding dramatic or irreversible, or even hard to recuperate effects and consequences* (Chifu, Ramberg, 2007) of the crisis on the existing defence and security system at the strategic level. This means, first and foremost, *preparedness and training, at the strategic level, experience and knowledge, instruments and resources to act, once the crisis is installed. It means normative instruments* (Sundelius, Bach, 2015) in place way before the crisis, reserves and capacities available in order to produce the necessary means in order to *cope with the crisis* (Chifu, Ramberg, Ibid.). Be it masks, ventilators or explosives and cartridges or bombs. We cannot forget the fact that, once a military crisis is declared, *rules of the war apply* (Durch, 2000) and embargo on *military or double use means* (SIPRI, 2020) are in place. However, *fighting for stability* and preventing shocks are not always considered the best ways to manage crises (Stern, Ibid.). We need

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*Prevention and stability are the two most common reactions and trials in order to achieve resilience in the first place. But when moving ahead in time, this proves not to be enough, and we have to let go and move on with adaptability and controlled or managed changes. It is better to do that in an orderly way, planning, calculating the impact, and paying attention to the consequence management.*

to learn and adapt to the *evolution of the security environment and the mood of the societies*. We need to maintain the support of the public and their contributions to the security of each state as well as to the budgets and activities of the military and the security institutions. And this requires a level of *flexibility and adaptability*, not the stubborn and conservative approach of those stunned in the project.

The thin line between defending the basic criteria and skills of an institution or an instrument and the need for moving to something more effective and adapted to the existing societies and security environment entails a decision of first importance, hard to take and difficult to establish (Boin, t'Hart, Stern, Sundelius, 2005). Therefore, we need both *courage and vision* from the decision-makers, *creativity and skills* from the planning divisions in order to realise when it is time to move on as well as pure and thorough knowledge in order to avoid *changes for the sake of changes* (Sundelius, Hansen, 2007) or prompt reforms without envisaging the real consequences and impact.

## **PROACTIVE ACTION AND EARLY WARNING. RESILIENCE 2.0**

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There are times when the *pressure is too high* and the *need for reaction* does not have the required time in order to have a *well-conceived reform*. Crises are about *time pressure, time constraints* and *emotions* (Olson, 2008), linked to the impact, so there is no time for the well thought changes. *Side effects* can be hard to manage (Chifu, Ibid.) and they can even create secondary crises (Ibid.), some even more important than the original ones that we hope to manage. Under such circumstances, the best way is to act when needed, even during the crisis, but to make a thorough analysis of the *effects and consequences* (Svedin, 2011) after the crisis is over. The reaction



to 9/11 events with the *Patriot Act* in the USA created a lot of side effects, public mistrust and fear of surveillance and breaches in the human rights (US Congress, 2001). The impact is perceived, even today, with the *decrease in support for security and defence institutions* and a lot of support and trust in figures like Snowden (Greenwald, 2014) or Assange (Assange, 2014) or even a high level of exposure of the public to information warfare and *conspiracy theories* (Simons, Chifu, 2017). But the best way to deal with the crisis that require *action, changes, revisions and maybe institutional reforms* (Boin, McConnell, t'Hart, 2008) on the spot, during the hot period of such an event, is to never arrive there or to be prepared to take action in the spirit of abandoning stability *per se* but to safeguard the most *important characteristics of the security and defence system* in order to fulfil its responsibilities even in harsh times. For this purpose, Resilience 2.0 refers to *pro-active action and early warning*.

*Prevention and reaction* are instruments with *limited capacity* of dealing with crises. In an unpredictable environment, with high level of turbulence, prevention becomes very hard to achieve. We need more sophisticated instruments to do that, especially *early warning systems* (European Commission, 2001) in place able to catch the most sensitive and important changes in *critical indicators* that could show the arrival of a crisis (Gaub, 2017). *Early warning systems* concentrate a high level of knowledge and capacity of anticipation (Habegger, 2009) and they help knowing what is in front of us in due time and assist *preparedness* and improve the *capacity of prevention*.

From another point of view, *pro-active action* in itself goes beyond putting in place *early warning systems*. It is also a *philosophy of the resilience 2.0* that refers to the capacity of *acting way before the crisis impact is present*. Once again, it is a tough job for the decision-makers to assume with courage the fact that they need to *act, invest, develop skills and instruments* (Schirch, 2013) and put capabilities in place before the crisis is perceived and acknowledged by everybody, by the public and the decision-makers.

This approach could raise important issues related to legal responsibility. That is why we need *trust* and *laws* that enable our decision-makers at the strategic level in security, defence and foreign

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affairs to *take pro-active action* once they have the required hints and correct data that show the high *possibility of an emerging crisis* (Olson, Xue, 2012). But, without this level of earned and well- deserved trust, resilience 2.0 could not be achieved.

## RESILIENCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES. THE THREE LEVELS OF COOPERATION AND LIMITATIONS

*Terrorism and hybrid warfare* are the type of threats to the security that require a different approach, adapted to our contemporary societies. In neither of those cases state institutions are enough to face those *asymmetric threats and unconventional activities* (Kuosa, 2012). Therefore, we need a *three-level cooperation* in order to create resilience at a due level and in order to cope, prevent and avoid the impact of such threats, as well as to achieve the *liquidation of their consequences*, once the events linked to the crisis emerge (Chifu, 2018, pp. 23-30). In contemporary societies, we need to put together the resources, skills and actions of the *state* and its responsible institutions, in an *intergovernmental coordinated approach*, with a responsible integrator for each type of crises already designated and a fair cooperation from all involved institutions – the *society* – meaning NGO's, academics, private businesses (Simons, 2010) and the *citizens*, the individuals, who, by their awareness, voluntary contribution and civic spirit can support and complement the instruments of the security and defence system of one's country (Chifu, *Ibid.*).

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*The cooperation between these three levels*, in good faith and with *shared responsibility*, can bridge the gaps and limits that a state institutional level has in case of operations planned at an *asymmetrical* and *hybrid* level. This type of approach has already been proved in countries such as *Switzerland* where the contribution of the people and citizens to prevent any action that could have high impact is well known. But there are limits in dealing with the civil society and the citizens. And this cooperation – basically on volunteer bases and involving a high level of trust – entails a *mutual understanding of roles and respect for each other's responsibility*. It also means a *high level*

of trust and legitimacy of the decision-makers, leadership and an extreme professional excellence acknowledged by the population (Rich, 2007).

If there are breaches in the trust between the citizens and the state, the misrepresentation of the roles of some institutions from the security system or even abuses and malfunction related to those institutions, especially related to harming the citizens or breaching the trust in fulfilling the needed responsibility to the best benefit of the public, there will not be any society and citizens' support for the state institutions. A full revision of the institutional system involved in security and defence is needed from this point of view, with the aim of retaining and improving the public support (Chifu, 2017-1, pp. 3-11). Fortunately, in Romania, the military establishment enjoys this high level of public trust and support (Avangarde Poll, 2020), but, even in this case, it should be improved and consolidated. Without this cooperation between the three levels of components of the society and the genuine care for each citizen and its security, there is no possibility to build resilience in contemporary societies. Especially, not against the hybrid threats that are about confronting the whole society with a large panoply of combined unconventional instruments (Chifu, 2017-2, pp. 13-22).

### RESILIENCE 3.0. DYNAMIC ADAPTABILITY AND THE RESILIENCE OF THE FUTURE

We also have to realise the limits in preventing crises, in understanding the processes of the future and in building up the early warning systems. Each of the stages of such an endeavour requires and needs a high level of expertise and experience as well as the development of specific skills of the persons involved in the process. In turbulent times, with a complex international environment that changes dramatically, in short periods of time, surprise is there to stay, and both early warning and pro-active actions could not be enough for an acceptable level of resilience.

We need more. And this means a high level of capabilities in prospective studies, a high capacity to translate this into actionable



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information for *revising and adapting existing institutions*. Last but not least, it also means a change of vision and a change of doctrine in order to create the *dynamic adaptability* of the institutions from the defence and security system at the strategic level, and even to set the stage for a suitable legal framework allowing even the *perspective of reforming during crisis* (Taleb, 2014).

Let us take each of the three components one by one. *Prospective studies* (Chifu, 2013, pp. 167-186) are a branch of the future studies that is already on the table and in the *National Defence Strategy of Romania*, including the provisions related to the need to prepare in this direction (The National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024, 2020, pp. 6,10). The *Centre for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning* is one of the institutions dealing with prospective studies and even building up a *Romanian methodology* (Chifu, 2013, Ibid.) in this field applied several times in the past seven years: twice in Ukraine crisis (Chifu, 2014; Chifu, Nantoi, Getmanchuck, 2015), once in drafting the future of the Wider Black Sea Region (Chifu, Bălăşoiu, 2018), and once trying to make reason on the *future of the international relations and global security* considering the developments in technology and in *social media* (Chifu, Savu, 2020). I have also developed such a study in the *interagency framework*, at an institutional level, in 2014, during the Ukraine crisis. We need, for sure, an *important support for the prospective studies* and a *capacity building effort* in order to improve those studies and prepare the suitable personal, in order to get better results in prospective studies and more accurate scenarios for the future. The second pillar is about the *actionable information* extracted and drafted from these studies and used in the day-by-day planning activity and support for the decision-makers.

If we add the *need for qualified specialists in decision-making in times of crisis*, that would be counsellors of the decision-makers with responsibilities in the field, as mentioned in the proposals of a law advanced by us to the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Defence, according to an European project developed by the CPCEW with “*Carol I*” National Defence University last year (*Combaterea propagandei externe ca politică publică*, 2020), we have a solid basis in order to make it useful for the day-by-day work of our defence and security

institutions. The *counsellors specialised in decision-making in crisis* can act as integrators for the results and the implementation of the achievements of the prospective studies research.

Maybe the most important part of the effort is a change of vision and a *change of doctrine* in order to create the *dynamic adaptability of the institutions from the defence and security system* at the strategic level. It is not easy and it is the most dramatic element of a *resilience 3.0 strategy* for the future. This time we are not talking only about losing the “*mantra of stability*” of the institutions and relations inside the security and defence system towards *adaptability and prevention, pro-active action and early warning*. It is far more important and dramatic, and maybe a bridge too far...

### REFORMING DURING CRISIS. FROM PHYSICAL INSTITUTIONS TO VIRTUAL ONES ABLE TO FULFIL THE TASKS AND SERVICES TO THE POPULATION

*Dynamic adaptability* is about accepting that *even the institutions themselves are not untouchable* by a solution during a crisis with a high level of dynamic. Our mindset should pass over not only stability but also the *physical existence of some institutions*. It means that, in the *hierarchy of values and principles* (Stern, Ibid.; Chifu, 2019) that we have to defend in times of turbulence, uncertainty and tumult of crisis, in the forefront should be placed *fulfilling the requirements, tasks and responsibilities – security and defence services – for the population and individuals*. Therefore, it is not the *institution and its physical existence, or even its legal one*, that mainly counts. In the *framework of the future*, we should accept that we would be able to have the ability and legal instruments in *reforming during the crisis* (Chifu, Ramberg, 2008). This means that the emphasis is no longer on the physical existence of an institution, but on its *purpose, which has to be defended or securitized* (Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 2010). We have to accept that even an institutional instrument can be dropped and replaced in order to *safeguard the ability of fulfilling the legal tasks and assigned responsibility in security and defence*. This means a sophisticated effort of planning in due time for the *perspective of this institutional dissolution or transfer in the digital space*. Capabilities, knowledge,



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Capabilities, knowledge, instruments, chain of command, accountability, democratic control, all should be adapted and replicated in this new framework or possibility to move and to act in the virtual space. Creativity and capacity to plan in this key is crucial in order to prepare for the resilience 3.0 of the future. And, by the way, this is what the security that puts in the forefront the individual citizen would mean.

instruments, chain of command, accountability, democratic control, all should be *adapted and replicated* in this new framework or possibility to move and to act in the virtual space. Creativity and capacity to plan in this key is crucial in order to *prepare for the resilience 3.0 of the future*. And, by the way, this is what the *security that puts in the forefront the individual citizen* would mean. We already have these provisions in the *National Defence Strategy* (2020, Foreword) and this is the modern liberal approach to security and defence. And our institutions should reflect and propose the *institutional, doctrinal and legal adaptation* of today's reality to this wishful evolution. For sure, a new *culture of security* is required, at the same time. And I am sure that our academic, research and institutional establishment can live up to the expectations in this area.

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