

## NATIONAL DOCTRINE AND STRATEGY – BASIS FOR THE NATION'S SUCCESS –

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*This article sheds light on the importance of both national doctrine and national (grand) strategy for increasing the national power of the state, and their significant role for the development of the country. It depicts the importance of setting up the national ideal, national interests and goals, as well as the accomplishment of the planned task with the dedicated means. National identity, national unity and participation in organizations such as EU and NATO are important for the development of the country's strategic agenda.*

*The national doctrine and strategy are long-term documents, enabling the society to have a good foundation for developing its strategic documents concerning the governance of the state and ensuring the prosperity of the nation. On the other hand, both strategic documents also have their restraining effect regarding the deterrence of desires for a sharp change of strategic interests and objectives of the nation.*

*Keywords: national; strategy; doctrine; interests; goals;*

## INTRODUCTION

Since 1989, the Bulgarian society has been looking for determining its national identity. Bulgarian politicians, despite leading the nation toward prosperity and democracy, have been arguing with each other to achieve their political goals. Throughout this period, we have witnessed political conversations that are not based on the consensus in favour of the individual citizen of this society. Furthermore, the citizens have witnessed the use of hate language leading to the disunity of the nation. All these years of wandering in search of democratic values, copying different models of the state's behaviour and experimenting with different political projects in search of the "messiah" who would lead the country out of the constant crisis (mostly political) in which it is fallen, we dare not look at ourselves.

In years of crises, pandemics and a war that has led to a crisis of global proportions, it is more than ever necessary to turn to the roots of our history to draw knowledge, wisdom and learn the lessons we need for the progress of the nation. It is also necessary to analyse the doctrines and strategies, especially grand strategies, of our neighbours, allies and partners, as well as the changes taking place in Europe and the world. It is necessary to get into the essence of their national policies and the means they use to achieve their national interests. A large number of these countries owe their success and prosperity to the consistent pursuit, achievement and defence of their national interests as enshrined in their national doctrines.

On the other hand, since the beginning of the 21st century, we have witnessed a number of conflicts, the latest of which is on the territory of Europe. The reasons for the emergence of these conflicts and the subsequent armed clashes (wars) bring us back to Clausewitz's definition that "war is simply a continuation of political relations with the addition of other means." (Clausewitz, 1976, p. 605). Later in the same chapter, Clausewitz goes on to note that "we deliberately use the phrase <with the addition of other means> because we also want to make it clear that war does not in itself stop political communication or change it into something entirely different." (ib.). The conclusion that can be drawn from these two quotes is that wars arise as a result of the pursuit of political goals framed in a strategy where national interests are clearly formulated, national goals are defined and the state's resources are determined to achieve them.

Historically, national power has generally been associated with the presence of military capabilities. In general, power has various functions, the main of which being the provision of conditions for achieving the goals and interests of the individuals and groups of people. One of the most important functions of the national power of each individual state is the achievement (satisfaction) of national interests, their maintenance and expansion.

National goals and interests are also active and constantly changing. National power and security can also be related to national goals. Therefore, it can be said that power is both an end and a means of achieving national interests. The objective form and the main manifestation of the application of national power is represented by the national doctrine or national (grand) strategy.

When considering any national doctrine, one must note the fact that *“the creation and affirmation of national doctrine as an official document presuppose national consent.”* (Velev, 1997, p. 7). When emphasizing the need for national agreement, the following aspects are taken into account: the achievement of a unified understanding of all the political parties represented in parliament regarding the definition of the national ideal, national interests (mod.bg, 2018) (listed in the updated National Security Strategy) and goals, the ways for their realization, and also the means for their achievement. The doctrine, on the other hand, sets a kind of framework for the political subjects, in order to avoid future drastic changes in the already accepted and established ways of the state development. The doctrine and national strategy are to be established to overcome the excessive politicization of society and to direct its energy solely to the prosperity of the individual citizen of the state and the well-being of the nation.

In the chapter *“National interests, goals and priorities”*, Valeri Rachev and Georgi Bakhchevanov compare national interests with those of an individual, writing that *“Nations, like individuals, have certain interests based on their internal values, recognized goals, means and motivating actions.”* (Rachev, 2005, p. 64).

### CORE OF NATIONAL DOCTRINE AND NATIONAL (GRAND) STRATEGY

The concept of *“national doctrine”* has failed to establish itself over the years in Bulgarian society, and instead of developing and adopting a national doctrine, which defines the national ideal and provokes the unity and development of the nation, Bulgaria's political elite has avoided talks on the development of a national doctrine and prefers to develop and adopt a National Security Strategy, in 2011, which was later updated in 2018 and the term of operation was set until 2025.

The situation regarding the so-called *“Grand Strategy”* or national strategy that could replace the national doctrine to some extent is the same. There is a lack of will amongst politicians, for such a strategy to be developed and endorsed by the politicians. There are more than two hundred and forty-seven strategic documents issued by the Bulgarian Parliament and Ministerial Council just to meet current requirements of the political situation.

In 1997, a few years after the change of the totalitarian regime of the Bulgarian Communist Party, a group of Bulgarian scientists and intellectuals developed a national doctrine: *Bulgaria in the twenty-first century, Bulgarian National Doctrine* (Velev, 1997). It did not reach acceptance by parliament regardless of the fact that for the first time a conceptualization of basic concepts such as doctrine, ethnicity, nationality, nation etc. was made.

When the question of national doctrine is raised, it is necessary to delve into the semantics of the words or what they represent. In the *“Bulgarian National Doctrine”* (ib.) it is written that the national doctrine represents a theoretically grounded system of officially accepted views and principles about the historical aspirations, perspectives and goals of the nation, which point the way to the realization of the national ideal (ib.). Furthermore, the implementation of such a doctrine through developed and adopted programmes (strategies and policies) makes it possible to determine the behaviour of the institutions in forming the internal and external policies of the state for a long period. It is clear from the definition that the national doctrine focuses mainly on the development and functioning of the state over a considerably long period comprising at least fifty years, why not more. Examples in this regard are our neighbours: Greece, Serbia and Turkey with their doctrines. The Greek national doctrine *“Megali Idea”* (Great Idea) was developed more than one hundred and ninety years ago. *“The Blueprint”* – the Serbian National Doctrine was created in 1844 and subsequently updated in 1985. The doctrine was developed by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and was announced as a *“Memorandum”* issued by the academy. As far as Turkey is concerned, its national doctrine – *“Peace in the Country, Peace with the World”* was announced by Kemal Atatürk in 1925 and it is currently being updated based on the rapidly changing security environment and changes in Turkey's political life in recent years.

The national doctrine lays the foundations for the preservation and development of the nation, on the one hand, and creates confidence in the future of the nation, on the other hand. This confidence in the future can be achieved by:

- Precise and clear formulation of a national ideal, uniting all strata of the nation regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, education, culture, social status etc. The same should unite the nation and lead to its unity;

- Determination of adequate national interests, which should not be divided into “*vitaly important and other national interests*”, but should determine the behaviour of the entire nation and not allow for their interpretation in order to extract short-term political dividends;
- Formulation of national goals and determination of ways to achieve them in the long term;
- Development of policies and programmes to fulfil the set goals;
- Determining the means (resources) to achieve the goals in pursuit of national interests;
- Assessment of available resources and their prioritization for the fulfilment of national goals and interests.

Reviewing the essence and content of the national doctrine, the question should be asked: *How does the doctrine differ from the strategy?*

Strategy (from Greek: στρατηγία, *stratēgia*, “*art of military leadership, office of military commander, command etc.*”) is a high-level plan to achieve one or more goals under specific conditions of uncertainty. It is important because resources to achieve these goals are usually limited. Strategy usually involves setting goals, determining actions to achieve the goals, and mobilizing resources to accomplish those goals. The strategy describes how to achieve the final goals through the available means (resources), as the organizational studies management is usually charged with the task of defining the strategy, and the strategy itself can arise as a template/model of activity. Strategy includes activities such as strategic planning and strategic thinking.

According to a joint publication of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, strategy is the art and science of developing and using the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated manner to achieve national and/or multinational objectives (Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 2004, p. 509).

Both definitions are relatively correct, but none of them gives a clear and complete picture of the role and complexity of strategic thought at high levels of government. At these levels, strategy is the art and science of developing and using a state’s political, economic, socio-psychological and military capabilities in accordance with political directives to produce effects that protect or advance national interests in relation to other states, non-state actors, or circumstances.

The strategy itself is neither simple nor easy to understand. The very word “*strategy*” has become a cliché in our daily lives. It is present both in every conversation that two people have on the street and in the news broadcasts. We tend to use the word “*strategy*” as a general term for a plan, concept, course of action,

or vision for a direction to proceed at a personal, organizational, and governmental level. Moreover, it does not give a clear idea and does not describe when and under what conditions the strategy development process is initiated, on what basis the analyses are made regarding the security environment and the effects they have on the determination of national interests, policies, national goals, paths, and the means to achieve them.

Generally speaking, strategy at all levels is a set of goals, concepts and resources within acceptable limits of risk to create more favourable conditions and/or results that would otherwise exist by chance or could be exploited by a third party. One of the definitions states that “*strategy*” is the art and science of developing and using the instruments of national power to synchronize and integrate ways to achieve national and multinational goals. Both definitions are useful, but neither fully captures the role and complexity of strategic thought at the highest levels of state. Strategy seeks synergy and symmetry of goals, concepts and resources, to increase the possibility of success of government policies and to increase the effects of that success.

The strategy also provides a coherent plan to bridge the gap between today and the desired future. In the context of the state, strategy is the use of specific instruments of power (political, diplomatic, economic, military and information) to achieve the political goals in cooperation or in competition with other actors pursuing their own – possibly conflicting – goals. In other words, strategy is the application of the state power, with its inherent natural and public resources, to achieve political goals in an emerging, dynamic and competitive strategic environment.

The basic assumption of national perspective strategy is that all nation-states and non-governmental organizations have interests, which they pursue in the best ways for them. Interests represent a desired end state, categorized in terms such as survival, economic well-being, a favourable world order, and enduring national or group values. Interests are drawn from these broad categories as reflected in the strategic environment and can be defined more specifically in the context of the issues at hand. The elements of national power are the resources used to promote or advance national interests.

When we talk about strategy, we can say that, in general, it is defined by the art of the political leaders of a country to consider the capabilities, opportunities and level of national power, on the one hand, and the achievement of its national interests and goals, on the other hand. As a next step, they must define and adopt policies to achieve national goals and interests using the level of national power achieved.

Based upon the scientific books in economics: *“strategy is a long term (five-year) plan for development”* (Tanev, 2016, p. 8). Contrary to economic science books, political strategies meanwhile are developed for a period of at 20-30 years. On the other hand, they are *“dedicated to taking and keeping the power”* (Ib.) National strategies entail even much longer periods, being focused on: the direction for the country to develop its economy, education etc. In the long term, national strategy means that it has to cover a period ahead between 50 and 70 or 100 years. Therefore, there is a need for the national strategists' mindset to change. The strategy is to form the thinking today, in the vision of the achievements.

However, when it comes to developing a national strategy, it is absolutely and uncompromisingly necessary to analyse the security environment and clearly assess and define the risks and threats to the country's security, and subsequently to formulate national interests and goals.

Comparing the definitions of doctrine and strategy, it is evident that the strategy contains some of the attributes of the doctrine such as goals, determining ways to achieve these goals and resources, but in a defined period with a short time horizon. On the other hand, strategies are the ways and the means to fulfil national interests and goals. An example in this regard is the *“Updated National Security Strategy”* adopted in 2018. The national ideal of the Republic of Bulgaria is not defined in the strategy, and the national interests are divided into *“vital interests”* (mod.bg, 2018) and *“other important interests”* (ib.). National objectives are limited, committed to the national security protection system and correspond to sectoral policies relating to the security of the state etc.

## THE NATIONAL DOCTRINE AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE STATE

*What is the national doctrine? Why is the national doctrine the basis (foundation) for the functioning of the state?*

To answer these questions, it is necessary to look at the doctrine through the lens of time and realize that it *“reflects the experience, maturity and purposefulness of the nation”* (Velev, ib). National doctrine makes the connection between generations, preserving the history, experience and knowledge of generations; it analyses current events and plans the nation's future. The national doctrine determines the behaviour of the state and its institutions in the formulation and implementation of the country's internal and external policy for a long period.

On the other hand, the main objectives of the national doctrine are:

- Assisting Bulgarian politicians and public officials in the implementation of the Bulgarian national ideal (after its formulation) and the protection of national interests;

- Mobilization of the nation's energy and will for the development of national unity for the achievement of the national ideal;
- Ensuring primacy in deciding and protecting national interests regardless of the changes in the political life of the state and the goals of individual political parties and movements;
- Serving the Bulgarian national ideal and Bulgarian national interests.

The national doctrine includes the national ideal, national interests and national programmes (policies) to meet them. Moreover, it is subject to updating to meet the challenges of the changing security environment.

As mentioned above, the national ideal is one of the basic attributes of the doctrine and represents the ultimate goal of the nation. It is a dynamic category referring to specific historical goals and objectives. It arises at a given stage of the nation's development to serve certain geopolitical, ethno-demographic, cultural, economic and other interests. The national ideal is the basis for determining national interests, and therefore for the formation and development of national policy.

National interests are other important parts of national doctrine. They are the main driving force of the nation and the state, being the basis of the implemented state policy. Over the years, in different historical periods, Bulgarian national interests have often been clearly formulated and adequately planned, leading to the rise of the Bulgarian state and statehood. Examples in this regard are:

- Conversion of the Bulgarians;
- Expansion of Bulgaria's borders under Khan Krum, Khan Omurtag, Tsar Simeon, Tsar Kaloyan and Tsar Ivan Asen II;
- Achievement of national aspirations for an independent church and own state.

On the other hand, there have been moments when the national interests were unrealistic, incorrectly defined, entailing excessively high expectations, which led to the cessation of the existence of the Bulgarian state for long periods. Examples of the kind are:

- The fall of the Bulgarian state under the Byzantine and Ottoman slavery, respectively;
- The wars in which the Kingdom of Bulgaria participated – Inter-Allied, World War I and World War II;
- Acceptance of the dominance of the *“great powers”* as a result of the decisions of the Berlin Congress and the Paris Treaties of 1919 and 1947;
- The long-term subordination of the Bulgarian internal and external policies of the state to the Comintern and the USSR.

Today, we are witnessing an inadequate use of the term national interest by Bulgarian public officials and police without a clear understanding of its content. National interests “represent the collective need of the nation and are an expression of historically necessary and justified rights and actions” (Velev, p. 37), therefore cannot, and should not be used for political PR and lobbying. The examples in the past two years in the political life of Bulgaria are extremely numerous. A large number of politicians use “national interests” as a means of dealing with their opponents or in their election campaigns without even knowing exactly where they are defined and who they are.

From everything presented so far, it is necessary to conclude that the national ideal and national interests are in a continuous symbiosis and interaction. National interests derive from and are a consequence of the national ideal as they reflect the various manifestations of the national ideal (political, cultural, economic, geopolitical, ethno-demographic etc.).

The processes that create them shape strategies. If designed well, the strategy formulation process allows decision-makers to assess the political, security and budgetary environment, identify opportunities for a country, weigh risks, possible solutions and trade-offs that need to be made and determine the best way to address the challenges of the changed security environment. It is possible to develop a good strategy from a not particularly good process and vice versa. A good strategy development model can lead to a bad strategy.

On the other hand, the doctrines require a precise analysis of the geopolitical environment and a precise assessment of the future geopolitical processes, which will enable a precise determination of national interests, strategic (national) goals and tasks. Using the analysis, assessment and impact of changes in the security environment, the means to achieve these goals and interests will be determined.

By their nature, national interests could be divided into long-term (for a period of at least fifty years) and short-term (for a short period, requiring their rapid achievement).

## CONCLUSIONS

Taking into account everything mentioned above, it could be concluded that the development of national doctrine and/or strategy is a complex and challenging process. The complication stems from the fact that in the process of their development it is necessary to involve a large number of scientists and experts from practice, who possess different knowledge, experience and interests. Moreover, the difficulty is also determined by the need to present the doctrine or strategy in a convincing way to the political forces and the public.

On the other hand, the result of the efforts of a team with different interests is the presentation of a science-based document that presents the national doctrine and strategy as well as the reasons that necessitate their development. When developing these strategic documents, it is necessary to consider the basic concepts and principles that form the system of views for determining the national ideal and the national interests of the nation, as well as the means for their achievement.

Both national doctrine and national strategy are phenomena that can be observed in defining and meeting national interests, therefore representing essential factors in the development of the modern state. They provide an opportunity to overcome political extremes and confrontations between different parties and governments, thus generating continuity in achieving national interests and goals. The national doctrine is a long-term document that will enable continuity and consistency in fulfilling national interests. Therefore, an opportunity will be given for the normal functioning of the state and the development of statehood.

Finally, yet importantly, a vital element of the creation of strategies is the achievement of agreement on its content – agreement between institutions, between rulers and ruled, between politicians and experts, between national and international institutions, between present and future generations.

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