THE DEFENCE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NEW EUROPEAN SECURITY OBJECTIVES

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The present evolution of economic, social, and military phenomena has strained the existence of individual nations and the sustainability of existing alliances, making stability in these domains a challenging objective to attain in the foreseeable future. But whether at the local, regional, or global level, the problem of guaranteeing the resources required for the operation of a security-providing organization continues to be a major concern for all decision-makers. The European Union, confronted with emerging security problems, deemed it essential to realign European military strategies and outlined new courses of action regarding defense resources by the end of the decade. National defense resource management must swiftly respond to emerging opportunities to maintain strong and sustainable military capabilities.

Keywords: geostrategy; resources; management; collective defense; national security;

INTRODUCTION

In the period 2020-2025, the geostrategic landscape of South-Eastern Europe (EEA) was marked by a pronounced transformation, driven by the complex interconditioning between substantial internal vulnerabilities, global geopolitical tensions and shifts in the European Union's policies. The region, which consists of both EU Member States and Western Balkan countries aspiring to accession, has experienced major external influences that have exacerbated existing threats, risks and vulnerabilities. Domestic factors such as democratic decline and endemic corruption also undermine the capacity for internal resilience, jeopardising the implementation of EU initiatives for the region's economic integration. It is obvious that the success of these efforts will overwhelmingly depend on domestic political will and the state's ability to implement the necessary reforms.

Currently, we believe that the following best describe the primary phenomena and traits of regional security in the Balkans:

❖ *Perpetuating relative political instability and frozen conflicts*. Despite a lot of stability efforts, the region still has *"frozen conflicts"* due to a number of unsolved ethnic and territorial tensions. The relations between Serbia and Kosovo, but also the political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are relevant examples. Delays in solving these issues or the absence of long-term remedies will keep things unsettled and could lead to escalation.

❖ *Sustaining ongoing external actors' influences*. Throughout its history, as well as today, the Balkans have been at the crossroads of geostrategic rivalry between global and regional powers. Through interconditioning and historical, economic and cultural ties, great powers seek to preserve or increase their influence in the region. These influences have the potential to undermine the Euro-Atlantic integration process of the countries in the region and can fuel internal instability by supporting political forces that are opposed the European path.

❖ *Increasing pressures from hybrid threats*. Current operations, such as information warfare, deception and cyberattacks, generate diversified and complex threats, with growing challenges at the level of each country. They aim to disorganize the functioning of societies, erode trust in democratic institutions or polarize and segment public opinion.

❖ *Increasing dangers generated by the "professionalization" of organized crime*. Most of the countries in the Balkan region with exits/borders to the seas (Black Sea, Aegean Sea, Adriatic Sea or Ionian Sea) were the main geographical feature that led to the transformation of the region into a "turntable" for drug, arms or human trafficking. Countries with developing or stabilizing economies are an environment in which cross-border organized crime groups can easily to organize their illegal activities, undermining the rule of law, corrupting institutions of all kinds, and directly endangering the security and prosperity of nations, in the region and beyond.

Figure 1: Map of South-Eastern Europe
(https://share.google/images/cFNpjNfKBedzkQ1bB)

❖ *Increasing economic and energy issues*: The majority of the Balkan nations have relatively low levels of economic investments, inadequate modern infrastructure development, and a high reliance on specific energy sources, elements that make the functioning of local markets vulnerable, as well as the economy of the countries as a whole. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that energy security is an important social milestone; if energy transport projects are blocked or implemented slowly, this leads to a greater reliance on specific suppliers and the hazards that go along with it.

❖ *Slowing down the process of EU enlargement in the area*. The process of accession of the Balkan states to the European Union and NATO has had an increasingly slow pace in recent years. Naturally, neither side can be "blamed" for this, but the prolonged postponement of the integration of these countries can create widespread social frustrations, weaken the strength of pro-European structures in the region and open the way for influence from other state or non-state actors.

The security challenges in the Balkan area are characterised as a complex mix of unresolved historical problems, political-economic vulnerabilities and various threats, and require a clear and convergent approach, based both on concrete Euro-Atlantic integration efforts and on the rapid resolution of internal problems, which are essential actions to ensure the long-term stability of the region.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE KEY GEOSTRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS THAT IMPACT SOUTH-EAST EUROPE BETWEEN 2020 AND 2025

The period 2020-2025 has been characterized by a series of critical moments in international relations, from the unprecedented global disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, to the emergence of major interstate conflicts or to the rapid technological acceleration. Without a doubt, these events have led to a significant restructuring of local, regional and global relations. Next, we include some of the most significant phenomena that took place in the EEA area, with an impact on security and defence, as well as:

❖ *Russia's invasion of Ukraine (2022)*. The war has mainly influenced the supply of energy and derived resources to the countries in the area, causing negative effects on related prices and the overall economic situation in South-Eastern Europe, as many countries in the region are relatively dependent on Russian gas or transit routes for various raw materials. (Chand, Stilwell, 2022). Regional security has been substantially redefined: national defence and border security have become primary targets in domestic politics; NATO has reorganized and reiterated its function and position in the region; hybrid threats and migration have become the main political concerns in local communities' daily-to-day lives.

❖ *EU enlargement in the Western Balkans*. North Macedonia has officially opened EU accession negotiations, but the process itself is challenging due to bilateral disagreements (especially with Bulgaria) over language, history and minority status (Tidey, 2002; Demjanski et al., 2024). It also notes Albania's intention to accelerate the implementation of its reforms in order to conclude

the accession negotiations started in 2020, with priority being investments in military transport/mobility infrastructure as part of a strategic positioning (Semini, 2025). The EU has maintained its *"doors open"* for the countries in the region to join the community by providing them with a range of projects and programs, but it has not compromised on meeting the accession criteria or on the timetable assumed by the candidates, which has not resulted in less internal unrest – two factors that are primarily impending this process.

❖ *Reorganizing defence cooperation in the region.* At the beginning of the year, the trilateral agreement on defence cooperation between Albania (NATO member) - Croatia (NATO and EU member) - Kosovo (non-NATO or EU member) was signed, to improve military interoperability, conduct joint exercises and, potentially share defence capabilities. The agreement is seen as a sign of deeper cooperation in this area between smaller states. (Stojanović, 2025). The initiative was also launched to the other states in the region but generated opposition from Serbia, which considers that previous sub-regional accords on armaments and the risk of the emergence of a new military bloc are affected.

❖ *Maintaining tense relations between Kosovo and Serbia*. The EU has sought and been directly involved in finding constructive solutions to the end of the inter-ethnic disputes in Kosovo – the Ohrid Agreement of December 2022 being the most conclusive example – to create a road to toward normalization (Bytyci, 2023). But local peace is still a long way off, as northern Kosovo is the site of frequent clashes between Serbian protesters and peacekeepers, which has even prompted NATO to increase the military presence in the area (Drăghici, 2023). Both the nations in the region and the EU or NATO will be concerned about regional security as a result of these tensions.

❖ *Societies marked by political instabilities, nationalism and bilateral disputes*. Domestic politics in many EEA states are volatile, with frequent protests, with concerns about the rule of law, corruption and some democratic backsliding. A good example is the case of North Macedonia, where there are specific elements of political instability, with zonal and interethnic dissensions with Bulgaria and Greece and which are corroborated by the rise of right-wing nationalism. (Spasovska, 2024). Additionaly, in election processes in some countries (e.g. Romania) there has been defamatory rhetoric, persistent inauthentic online behaviour and the media has proven biased, limiting voters' ability to make an informed decision and affecting public trust. (OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 2025).

The rhythmicity and dynamics of geostrategic events directly impacted the distribution and intensity of associated risks, highlighting regional and global interdependencies. Also, each geostrategic event can restructure the risk matrix by introducing new variables, which can alter the balance of power, regional stability or the response capacity of state or international actors.

Table 1: Matrix for assessing the main geostrategic risks for South-Eastern Europe

Risk	Likelihood	Economic impact	Geostrategic implications
Protracted Russia-Ukraine conflict	High	High (increased energy and food costs, additional defense spending)	Risk of increasing the area of the conflict; restructuring of defence policies at EU and NATO level
Escalation of tensions in the South China Sea/ Taiwan	Medium	High (crisis in the semiconductor market, affecting international trade)	Risk of triggering a new conflict; increasing fragmentation/ disruption of supply chains
Disrupting Rare Mineral Supply Chains	Medium	Medium - high (Increased manufacturing costs, bottlenecks in manufacturing flows)	Risk of increased economic protectionism; geoeconomic/ geostrategic coercion
Cyberattacks on critical infrastructures	High	Medium (interruptions of essential services, financial losses)	Risk of increasing the area of manifestation of hybrid attacks; diminishing the lines of demarcation between the civilian and military domains
Political instability manifested mainly in the great powers	Medium	Medium (increase in customs duties, delays in making major decisions)	Risk of policy incoherence; weakening the power of alliances

SAFE - SECURITY ACTION FOR EUROPE, THE EU'S NEW FINANCIAL INSTRUMENT IN THE FIELD OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE

On March 25 this year, the EU published the new White Paper for European Defence – Readiness 2030 (EDR-2030), in relation to the changes in the strategic environment, it is established that Europe develops a sufficient capacity to deter any military threat, as well as to prevent potential military aggression. The new document explicitly states that *"Member States will always retain responsibility for their own troops, from doctrine to deployment, and for defining the needs of their armed forces. In addition, the EU will always act in a way that does not prejudice the specific nature of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and will take into account the security and defence interests of all Member States"*. (European Union, 2025)

The EU pledges to support and coordinate Member States' efforts to fortify the components of the defence industry and the EU's defence capability, even mentioning European contributions to NATO's deterrence and collective defence. In order to establish a clear predictability for this sector in the long run, it seeks to identify and establish the prerequisite for a significant advance allocation of investments in the defence industry. The ultimate objective of this process is to coherently boost production capacities in the European defence industry.

The EU will pursue the production of added value through:

• facilitating closer collaboration and effective scale for the European defence industry in the development, production and commercialisation of weapons systems;
• facilitating efficiency, interchangeability and interoperability by reducing costs to avoid competitive procurement and improving purchasing power for Member States, while contributing to the generation of stability and predictability of multiannual industrial demand;
• supporting dual-use infrastructure for mobility and communications, navigation and space observation;
• facilitating partnerships.

Figure 2: EU actions for 2030 set out in the White Paper for European Defence
(European Union, 2025)

The creation of an EU Defence Readiness Strategy, which outlines an integrated approach to managing possible conflicts or crises, and an EU Internal Security Strategy, which offers a thorough framework for the efficient prevention, detection, and countering of threats to European security, are also anticipated to supplement this programme document.

Building on the gaps already highlighted by Member States in the area of defence capabilities, this White Paper lays out seven priority areas, which are essential for building a robust European defence. The priority areas are as follows:

❖ *"**Air and missile defence**: an integrated, multi-layered air and missile defence that protects against a full spectrum of air threats (cruise missiles, ballistic and hypersonic missiles, aircraft and UAS).*

❖ ***Artillery systems**: advanced fire systems, including modern artillery and long-range missile systems designed to launch precise, long-range attacks against ground targets (deep precision attack).*

❖ ***Ammunition and missiles**: building on the European External Action Service's 'Ammunition Plan 2.0' initiative, strategic stocks of ammunition, missiles and components, together with sufficient defence industrial production capacity to ensure timely replenishment.*

❖ ***Drones and anti-drone systems**: unmanned systems, including air, land, surface and underwater vehicles, which can be remotely controlled or operate autonomously using advanced software and sensors and improve the capabilities that these technologies enable (e.g. situational awareness, surveillance, etc.).*

❖ ***Military mobility**: an EU-wide network of land corridors, airports, seaports, and support elements and services, facilitating the rapid and smooth transport of troops and military equipment within the EU and partner countries.*

❖ ***Artificial intelligence (AI), quantum, cyber and electronic warfare**: defence applications using military AI and quantum computing; advanced EU-wide electronic systems designed to: protect and ensure the unhindered use of the electromagnetic spectrum for land, air, space and naval forces and operations; suppress, disrupt and prevent the use of the electromagnetic spectrum by an adversary; protect the freedom to operate in space and ensure unfettered access to cyber capabilities. Both defensive and offensive cyber capabilities are necessary to ensure protection and freedom of maneuver in cyberspace. A voluntary support scheme for offensive cyber capabilities needs to be developed together with Member States as a credible deterrent mechanism.*

❖ ***Strategic factors for the facilitation and protection of critical infrastructure*** *including, but not limited to, strategic airlift and air-to-air refueling of aircraft, intelligence and surveillance, maritime domain awareness, use and protection of space and other secure communications assets, and military fuel infrastructure."* (European Union, 2025)

Adopted in May 2025, SAFE (Security Action for Europe) is a new EU financial tool that outlines the distribution of funding to Member States for significant and urgent investments in the European defence sector. This programme aims to revitalize the defence readiness and the development of the European defence industry by providing loans of up to €150 billion through capital markets, under attractive financing conditions, leveraging the EU's positive credit rating. This initiative supports the EU's objective of attaining strategic autonomy in the field of defence.

The purpose of SAFE:

❖ *"**Supporting urgent defence investments**: Enabling swift and meaningful investments to strengthen the defence industry.*

❖ ***Improving defence readiness***: *Funding helps Member States accelerate their defence readiness.*

❖ ***Promoting the European defence industry***: *SAFE encourages innovation and production in the EU defence sector.*

❖ ***Achieving strategic autonomy***: *By strengthening European defence industrial capabilities, SAFE contributes to the EU's ability to act independently in the field of defence."* (European Commission, 2025)

SAFE will follow the following application algorithm:

• The European Commission will attract funds from the capital markets.
• The funds raised will be offered to EU Member States in the form of loans.
• Loans should be under favorable financing conditions.

Each EU member currently receives an initial allocation of cash *(figure 3)*; the real allocation will be determined by a European resolution in January 2026, following the establishment of each state' own defence investment plan.

In another interpretation, EDR-2030 represents the strategic vision, *"what we need to do"*, and SAFE is the financial and operational tool, *"how do we do it".*

EDR-2030 is a strategic document, a long-term vision to modernise Member States' defence capabilities, with a focus on domestic production, interoperability and the reduction of external dependencies. Its fundamental objective is to transform Europein *"security provider"*, credible and autonomous.

🇧🇪	🇧🇬	🇭🇷	🇨🇾
Belgium	Bulgaria	Croatia	Cyprus
€8,340,027,698	€3,261,700,000	€1,700,000,000	€1,181,503,924
🇨🇿	🇩🇰	🇪🇪	🇫🇮
Czechia	Denmark	Estonia	Finland
€2,060,000,000	€46,796,822	€2,660,932,171	€1,000,000,000
🇫🇷	🇬🇷	🇭🇺	🇮🇹
France	Greece	Hungary	Italy
€16,216,720,524	€787,669,283	€16,216,720,524	€14,900,000,000
🇱🇻	🇱🇹	🇵🇱	🇵🇹
Latvia	Lithuania	Poland	Portugal
€5,680,431,322	€6,375,487,840	€43,734,100,805	€5,841,179,332
🇷🇴	🇸🇰	🇪🇸	
Romania	Slovakia	Spain	
€16,680,055,394	€2,316,674,361	€1,000,000,000	

Figure 3: Provisional allocation of amounts provided for in SAFE
(European Commission, 2025)

Through SAFE, the EU implements the EDR-2030 vision in concrete action, directly financing the projects set out as priorities in the Charter: modernization of the defense industry, joint procurement of ammunition and equipment, or development and equipping with new technologies.

With SAFE, EDR-2030 takes a significant step toward a more cohesive and powerful European Union in the area of defence in the current and future geostrategic context.

CONSEQUENCES FOR MANAGING DEFENCE RESOURCES BY 2030

Given the security context described above and the difficulties posed by the SAFE programme's implementation, we believe the following actions should be part of the management of defence resources in the upcoming timeframe:

❖ *Integrated Military Capability Planning*. The next period will be marked by the launch of the new national defense strategic documents: the National Defense Strategy for 2025-2030, the Defense White Paper and the Military Strategy, which will involve a correlation of the common operational requirements, established at NATO and EU level, with national defense objectives. This approach will ensure the establishment of strategic objectives in the field of defence – national and collective, interoperability targets and the level of effectiveness in the use of resources related to this area. Thus, it becomes extremely important to harmonize military procurement schedules with those of European partners, in order to facilitate

the implementation of joint programs and reduce specific costs.Also, another essential step would be to identify and prioritize the provision of critical capabilities in the short and medium term, as they are nominated in EDR-2030, such as air defense, military mobility and joint logistics.

❖ *Streamlining defence procurement by multinational cooperation*. Objectives such as cutting costs, resolving issues with equipment supply and enhancing interoperability across Member States are central to appropriate action in the field of military procurement. Joint and/or standardised procurement through SAFE will provide the participating nations with the benefits of economies of scale or reduced delivery times of the required capacities. Furthermore, this process must be related to the participation, initiated or later, in the projects coordinated by the European Defence Agency (EDA), on the technical and operational cooperation between nations' directions. In order to develop the technological and industrial basis, another approach might be to provide the framework for the formation of transnational industrial consortia with the goal of merging the defence industries for multiple nations.

❖ *Digitization of defence resources management*. Although this process is undoubtedly new, the structures involved in the management of defiance capabilities have not developed it uniformly. Automating these processes would allow increasing operational effectiveness, reducing decision/reaction times, as well as optimizing the use of available resources. A solution in this regard can be the implementation of a military ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system, which correlates in real time the missions, operational requirements and specific processes for ensuring equipment, stocks and logistical needs. In order to increase the resilience in the field of defence resources and the ability to react quickly in different situations, it is necessary to connect, with the aid of an advanced digital infrastructure, the national *"logistics hubs"* with other *"logistics hubs"* of other European countries.

❖ *Reconfiguration of the strategic reserve and increase the capacity for rapid mobilization*. As a rule, the mobilization capacity and the specific strategic reserve involve the design and prior establishment of possible scenarios for the mobilization of the national defense system, the economy, the population and the territory for defense, as well as the constitution of related logistical reserves, such as materials, ammunition and fuel, etc. These plans must enable all forces involved to act effectively and without delay in the event of a conflict, crisis or natural disaster. In the current geostrategic context, the structural elements of the strategic reserves

must be repositioned in the vicinity of the new areas identified as being a risk to national defense and also must be equipped with modern, secure and digitally managed infrastructure, in order to allow rapid access, traceability and rotation of stocks. From the perspective of EDR-2030, the process of improving defence capabilities at European level will also be based on testing logistics capabilities and improving reaction times, in order to identify possible bottlenecks or deficiencies in the supply chain. Through SAFE, flexible production lines can be created for certain categories of resources, buffer stocks of raw materials, practice the ways of using critical infrastructures specific to European collective defense.

❖ *Training and retention of the human resource specialized in defense*. In defense resource management, this action must be a strategic priority, because only a professional human resource can be able to adequately respond to current and future security challenges. In a context marked by accelerated technologization and increased operational complexity, it is essential that military and civilian personnel in the field of defense resource insurance benefit from continuous and specialized training. Centres of excellence in areas such as logistics or procurement management can contribute substantially to the creation of a shared expertise base at European level. The defense industry is a field in which the human resource must be kept for as long as possible, as the technical and technological requirements related to the operational environment will be in a continuous transformation, so they will not be built from scratch and the experience of the personnel who are already involved in the development of certain production processes already used will overwhelmingly matter. Last but not least, it would be beneficial to develop partnerships between defense institutions, academia and industry, in order to integrate cutting-edge knowledge, innovative or from practice, in the training of personnel.

CONCLUSIONS

The challenges of the current geostrategic context are constantly changing, structurally and in terms of volume, diversity or amplitude. Military conflicts, political and economic tensions, social uprisings, the increase in the area of use of AI, although disparate at first glance, are just some of the landmarks that must be analyzed, monitored and treated from the perspective of national security. Thus, defense resource management is not just a technical process or a specific tool, but must be a modern engine in ensuring resilience and strategic credibility in this field. In an increasingly difficult international environment to forecast,

defense resource management must be characterized by the following features: integrated, collaborative, adapted, fluid and efficient in relation to current geostrategic realities.

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