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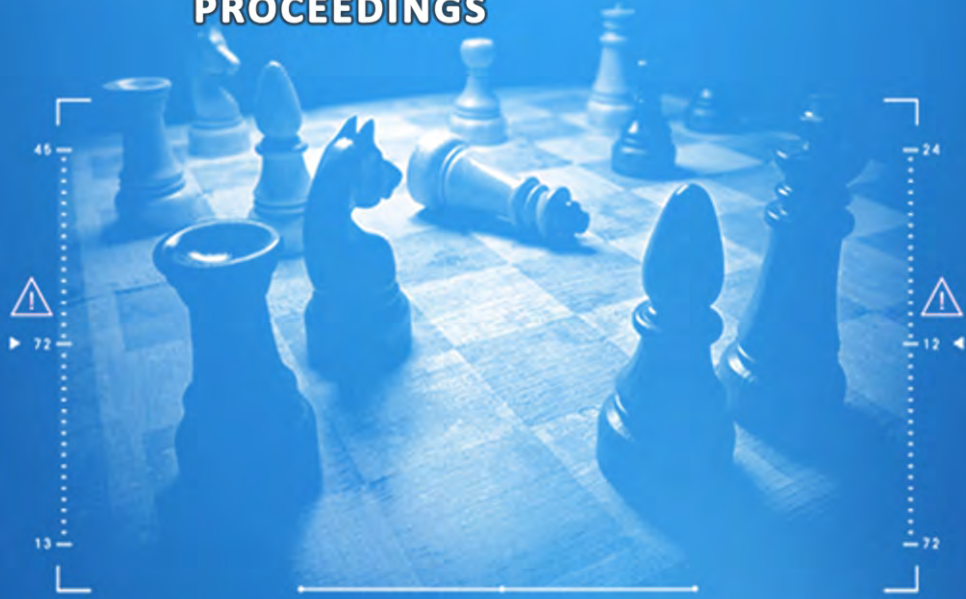
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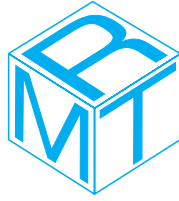
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INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS**

***NATO-EU RESILIENCE,
MILITARY CAPABILITY ENHANCEMENT
AND COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A BLACK SEA SECURITY STRATEGY***

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ROMANIAN MILITARY THINKING
CONFERENCE

**NATO-EU RESILIENCE,
MILITARY CAPABILITY ENHANCEMENT
AND COOPERATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A BLACK SEA SECURITY STRATEGY**
EDITORIAL

Lieutenant General Corneliu POSTU
Director of Defence Staff



First of all, I would like to thank all the participants for the way in which each has contributed to both the panel discussions and the scientific sections scheduled in the conference program. We are convinced that the exchanges of ideas advanced in such an institutional framework will add value to the process of development and promotion of the security culture, necessary for the Romanian society, especially in the increasingly complicated context of current risks and challenges to security.

A general conclusion at the end of this conference is that the security culture development requires an interagency approach. It is necessary to explain the new types of threats, risks and vulnerabilities that may have an impact at the individual, group, societal, national, regional or global level. The construction of a modern society is based on ensuring individual and collective security, which is the point of convergence for national and international institutions, professional associations and non-governmental organisations.

No nation is safe in a world where one country can violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of another, where crimes against humanity are committed with impunity; where a country with imperialist ambitions can go unrestricted.

The NATO Allies response to this kind of threats should be a demonstration of our collective commitment to uphold international rules and norms. Rules and norms which, since the end of the second World War, have provided unprecedented security and prosperity for the people around the world.

Regarding the Black Sea region and the needs for developing a security strategy for this area, which has been the general topic of the conference... we can state that Black Sea represents an area of maximum strategic interest for Romania, for the littoral states, as well as for all their partners and allies.

The Black Sea region was and remains an area with strong disparities and different levels of political, economic and social development, with impact on the level of cooperation and integration. Russia's open and unprovoked war in Ukraine, the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia, Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh

and Transnistria, alongside the economic, environmental, migration and illegal trafficking issues are obstacles that prevent the littoral countries as well as those in their near vicinity from capitalizing on their potential for cooperation.

As an organization, NATO is inherently interested in the sovereignty and defence of the Alliance members in the Black Sea region. This is the Alliance's fundamental *raison d'être*, which must be taken into account in developing a transatlantic strategy for the region. The Russia-Ukraine war has revealed a high degree of cohesion among NATO member and partner states, whose visions of what the Alliance is and how it should respond to threats are largely shared. In the longer term, however, NATO's cohesion will depend on the Allies' success in bringing together their different strategic cultures and threat assessments into a vision that has even greater cohesion, synergy and interoperability.

NATO, the EU and the wider transatlantic community have an interest in deterring or resolving as quickly as possible the security challenges affecting the sovereign rights of non-NATO countries in the region. To ensure that the Black Sea region contributes to the overall goal of a free, whole and peaceful Europe, the transatlantic community should have in mind four very clearly defined objectives in developing a security strategy for the Black Sea region, namely:

- effective deterrence and credible collective defence;
- resilience;
- stability and security within NATO partner states in the region;
- regional economic security, so that no state has the power to use economic and energy resources to coerce other states.

In this context, resilience is of paramount importance to the Alliance's systemic preparedness. Actions are needed to improve societal and regional resilience. At the same time, our armed forces must adapt and modernize to respond to complex threats. Another element to consider is the concept of integrated deterrence, recently introduced in the US latest national security strategy. Like our adversaries, we must use new domains and emerging technologies, develop our cyber capabilities, and equip our armed forces with state-of-the-art technologies.

A security strategy for the Black Sea region will be feasible if it also addresses, in the same framework, the long-standing problems of the Eastern Balkans, the Caucasus, as well as the conflict in Ukraine.

Conceptually, no security strategy for the Black Sea region could pass the test of feasibility unless it integrates the relevant diplomatic, economic and intelligence instruments of power along with the multiple aspects of the military instrument of power. It should address deterrence, resilience, hybrid threats, energy security.

Moreover, it should be underpinned by a strong economic component and bilateral and multilateral diplomatic commitments. The resources needed for its implementation should be provided by the countries involved as well through the involvement of international institutions.

To conclude, I express once again our gratitude to our institutional partners that have agreed to support the organisation of the event – New Strategy Center, Center for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning, Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience, the “Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions” Association, University of Bucharest, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu. Their effort is visible only by looking at the conference agenda.

I also thank the delegates representing various NATO, EU structures and NATO or partner countries that have been represented to this event with high level delegates: Türkiye, Greece, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria, NATO Defense College, Supreme Allied Command Transformation, MARCOM, Joint Air Power Competence Centre, European Defence Agency, researchers and professors from important European universities, experts from major security Think-Tanks.

Last but not least, I greatly appreciate the help provided by our main sponsor – TNT to run such an event!

CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

The international *Romanian Military Thinking Conference*, having the theme *NATO-EU Resilience, Military Capabilities Enhancement and Cooperation for the Development of a Black Sea Security Strategy*, was held at the Palace of National Military Circle, between 14 and 16 November 2023, by the Defence Staff, in the context of the anniversary of 164 years since the Defence Staff was established.

PARTICIPANTS:

The conference was attended by over 50 national and international experts in the field of security studies. Among them we can mention:

- international experts in security studies;
- personalities from Romania having acknowledged expertise in the field of security, diplomacy and international relations;
- university professors within the military and civilian higher education system;
- Romanian military leaders from the Defence Staff and the armed forces services;
- specialists and experts from institutions belonging to the National System of Defence, Public Order and National Security;
- officers and experts within the Defence Staff structures as well as within subordinate ones.

CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENT:

The conference focused on expert-level discussions and was organized in the format of 7 panels and 3 round tables, part of them being coordinated by the following institutional partners: New Strategy Center, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning, I2DS2 – Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions, University of Bucharest, E-ARC. The discussion topics were as follows:

- *NATO's defence and deterrence posture on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. Romania, a provider of security and stability in the region;*
- *Romania's role in the Ukraine, NATO and Black Sea equation – a security perspective and lessons identified from the conflict in Ukraine;*
- *The influence of the conflict in Ukraine on the security environment in the Black Sea Region – evolution and perspectives;*
- *NATO-EU Naval Cooperation: Strengthening Euro-Atlantic maritime posture in response to Russia's war in Ukraine by achieving allied technological superiority in the Black Sea;*
- *Integrated Air and Missile Defence in the Allied Context and the national perspective in the current and future Black Sea security environment;*

- *Transforming Euro-Atlantic Defence: Empowering common defence capabilities and resources in the evolving security landscape;*
- *A security perspective regarding enhancing readiness, availability, and resilience in Romania and the Black Sea area;*
- *The impact of emerging and disruptive technologies on future military actions – national implications for ensuring a security strategy in the Black Sea;*
- *The power of information in the process of building resilience in the current security environment in the Black Sea Region;*
- *Maritime resilience in the age of hybrid threats;*
- *The straits question. Conflict and cooperation at the Black Sea.*

MAIN MESSAGES PROMOTED DURING THE DISCUSSIONS:

- In the current security context, there are multiple challenges, including of technological nature. That is why, at NATO level, cohesion, cooperation (with member and partner states in the region) and interoperability are very important elements;
- The United States of America has a vision regarding the Black Sea security strategy, focused on five main directions:
 1. increasing political and diplomatic commitments in the region;
 2. strengthening regional security and cooperation by supporting a significant NATO presence in the area and defending freedom of navigation in the Black Sea;
 3. supporting regional economic cooperation to increase resilience and ensure an effective framework for business development;
 4. promoting the principle of energy security;
 5. supporting democratic principles by fighting corruption and disinformation.
- NATO operations in the Black Sea region are conducted in compliance with international norms in the field;
- NATO desires neither to have a confrontation with Russia, nor to become a threat to Russia. NATO is strengthening its posture in the Black Sea region to anticipate possible crises and to be able to respond to them adequately, in the context of the strategic initiative importance;
- As a NATO member state and a Black Sea littoral state, Romania has increased its investments in the military field, confirming the fact that it is a security provider in the region;

- Regarding the relationship between the EU and the security situation in the Black Sea region, the EU involvement becomes obvious, especially through the Strategic Compass;
- The addition of some *hard power* elements to the already existing *soft power* ones and the strengthening of crisis management missions in the region, in the context of the Common Security and Defence Policy, would represent desirable ways forward;
- At the cognitive level, there may be actors that try to (re)define the physical space, so that it can meet their own interests, the role of military diplomacy becoming very important in this context;
- Security investments in the eastern flank of the Alliance contribute to protecting the transatlantic core;
- The security agenda in the region should be developed jointly, despite the challenges related to the development of an active multidimensional security posture, defence diplomacy thus playing a key role.

The event was attended by the Chair of the Committee on Defence, Public Order and National Security within the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, Laurențiu-Dan Leoreanu, as well as by the ambassadors of Bulgaria, Georgia, the USA and Türkiye in Bucharest.



General Daniel PETRESCU emphasized that security in the region is a priority for our country and for the allied countries. *“It is important to assess our understanding of resilience. (...) NATO is interested in the sovereignty and defence of the Alliance members in the Black Sea region. The war between Russia and Ukraine has revealed a high degree of cohesion among member states, as well as a vision of how it should be responded. (...) Security in the region is a priority for our country and the Allied forces. (...) Actions are needed for strengthening the resilience of society. The Armed Forces must be modernized to respond to complex threats. (...) New domains and technologies must be used”*, said General Petrescu.

Deputy Laurențiu LOREANU, for his part, drew attention to the threats and security risks of the past decades. *“The Russian Federation is an undisciplined actor at the international level, a country that does not belong to any established value*

system. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, which began on 24 February 2022, is part of the praxis of territorial conquests, based on two constants – fear and insecurity. (...) Our country, as a country with a triple border – national, NATO and EU – has established and strengthened, through concerted efforts, its status as a security provider in the area, but these efforts must be intensified in the future as well, especially in the context of a security strategy for the Black Sea”, declared the parliamentarian. According to him, “in the current security context, NATO and the EU can no longer afford to have an area of insecurity in their immediate vicinity”. “We are aware that, without regional stability, the economic and geostrategic potential of the Black Sea cannot be exploited. (...) From a legislative point of view, the Parliament of Romania has supported the objectives of our country. (...) The need to have a security strategy in the Black Sea, as a tangible result of our joint efforts, must be aimed, first of all, at redefining its dimension, and the idea of a bridge versus a border could be replaced with a new more comprehensive and more appropriate conceptualization. The Black Sea could become a strategic platform for the spread of democracy and stability, an emerging centre of sustainable development”, emphasized Laurențiu Leoreanu.



The ambassador of Bulgaria to Bucharest, Radko Todorov VLAYKOV, showed that the current period is one of crisis and challenges. “It is difficult to talk about our mission as ambassadors considering the ongoing aggression in the vicinity of our territory, considering that the international security rules have been in danger lately. It is of international importance, considering that the international security has been endangered by the invasion of Ukraine. First of all, it is about the invasion of Georgia and the continued occupation of territories. (...) We must accept our common interest in this area. The Black Sea is a key concept within NATO and it represents the responsibility of the wider region and must be seen as a responsibility for the Alliance as a whole, given NATO involvement, there is intense cooperation between NATO and the EU in this area. (...) We must promote unity and security in the area”, said the ambassador of Bulgaria.



Georgia and Romania are partners in a close cooperation, and the security of the Black Sea is a guarantee of peace and stability, said the **ambassador of Georgia to Bucharest, Tamar BERUCHASHVILI**. “We share common values and interests and I consider that building sustainable resilience is our common goal to face the current challenges. I express my appreciation to the Government of Romania for supporting the sovereignty and integrity of Georgia, as well as our integration into the European Union. Georgia is responsible, it is a responsible partner of the European Union and it is also a partner for the security of the region. The security of the region is closely related to the security of Georgia. Georgia is ready to contribute to the European Union security and to NATO security through missions that counter the Russian occupation. (...) In many ways, Georgia already acts as an ally. In addition, Georgia participates in the NATO exercises in the Black Sea, we are part of all regional and bilateral initiatives, (...) it is necessary to develop measures with our partners, with our neighbours, to ensure security in the Black Sea in all areas”, stated Beruchashvili.

The ambassador of the USA to Romania, Kathleen KVALEC, mentioned that, as the US President, Joe Biden, also stated, the current period is a turning point in international history. “We are facing a defining moment (...) – challenges, the situation in Ukraine, the Hamas attack, global climate changes must also be mentioned. (...) The invasion of Ukraine represents an attack on international security, as we should also see the situation in the Black Sea. (...) The US interest is to work with global partners (...) with a view to a period of peace and prosperity. The United States of America has a vision regarding the security strategy for the Black Sea, focused on five main directions:



1. increasing political and diplomatic commitments in the region;
2. strengthening regional security and cooperation by supporting a significant NATO presence in the area and defending freedom of navigation in the Black Sea;
3. supporting regional economic cooperation to increase resilience and ensure an effective framework for business development;
4. promoting the principle of energy security;
5. supporting democratic principles by fighting corruption and disinformation”, said the ambassador.

Kathleen Kavalec added that the current situation will reshape the international future and create new partnerships, while existing ones will strengthen, such as the partnership between Romania and the USA. *“We must demonstrate that our partnership envisions a strong world for future generations. A strategy must be developed regarding the Black Sea countries. (...) Cooperation is crucial, not only for Romania, but also for international security”*, emphasized the US ambassador to Bucharest.

According to the **ambassador of Türkiye to Romania, Ozgur Kivanc ALTAN**, actions to conquer territories are inappropriate in this century. *“We had such actions in the past. (...) Türkiye has supported Ukraine’s independence, even before the invasion, since the conquest of Crimea. (...) We have closed the corridors for Russian ships. We have closed our airspace for Russian planes and we are in favour of the sanctions imposed in this conflict. We have supported Ukraine through both technical and humanitarian assistance. (...) Russia’s invasion has led to a food crisis at global level. The global food market has been affected because of this conflict. Türkiye is trying to contribute to potential negotiations and we want to revitalize this process together with the United Nations. (...) Diplomacy must be restored to ensure peace in the area and the integrity and sovereignty of an attacked country. We will maintain our support for Ukraine to win not only the war, but also peace. Türkiye has an important role in the stability and security of the Black Sea area. The security of the Black Sea must be a priority”*, emphasized the ambassador of Türkiye.



In a video message, **NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea GEOANĂ**, reaffirmed the importance of partnerships between Romania and international allies. *“We can learn so much from each other. Building stronger societies and more critical infrastructure is a team effort. We have now agreed on infrastructure coordination. NATO represents a deep commitment to defend each other from attack and to stand by each other. We are doing everything necessary to protect our nations, our values and our peoples, and this is what we will continue to do for the protection of Ukraine, the Black Sea region and the entire Alliance”* said Mircea Geoană.

PANEL 1
NATO’S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE POSTURE
ON THE EASTERN FLANK OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE
– ROMANIA, A PROVIDER OF SECURITY AND STABILITY
IN THE REGION
 (COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE STAFF)

Guest speaker

- **MG Konstantinos KOLOKOTRONIS** – Director, Military Intelligence & Security Branch, Hellenic National Defence General Staff

Moderators:

- **MG Remus-Hadrian BONDOR** – Chief, Strategic Planning Directorate
- **NAVY CAPT (ret.) Cristian BOGDAN** – Scientific Advisor, *Romanian Military Thinking Journal*

Speakers:

- **RADM UH Alper YENIEL** – Chief of Strategy Plan and Policy Division, Turkish Armed Forces
- **Antonia COLIBĂȘANU** – Senior Geopolitical Analyst & COO, Geopolitical Futures Lecturer, SNSPA, Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center
- **Mark OZAWA** – Senior Researcher, NATO Defense College
- **Tengiz PKHALADZE** – Senior Fellow, European Centre for International Political Economy

NATO Response following Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine

Immediately after the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the North Atlantic Council decided, for the first time, to activate the allied defence plans, thus being deployed on the allied eastern flank, including in Romania, elements of the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). In Romania, the precursor land element of the battalion-level VJTF was deployed, provided by France as the framework nation.

During the extraordinary NATO Summit in Brussels, on 24.03.2022, the Heads of State and Government decided to establish four new battle groups in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, to safeguard the security of the allies, as part

of a wider set of measures to strengthen the allied deterrence and defence posture in the medium and long term.

In Romania, France took over the role of the battle group's framework nation and, in July 2022, started the deployment of the troops of the Battle Group format, which have gradually increased, simultaneously with the completion of the infrastructure works in the National Joint Training Centre Cincu.

Deterrence and defence measures also include air defence systems, airspace reconnaissance assets, and multi-role aircraft for air policing and enhanced vigilance missions. At the same time, the USA has focused its attention on the Black Sea. Washington decided to deploy a divisional command and a brigade of approximately 3,000 troops to Romania. In addition to these reassurance measures, US Congress members advanced a bipartisan legislative proposal – the Black Sea Security Act –, that called on Washington to increase its commitments to regional countries, increase military assistance and improve coordination with NATO and the EU. If passed, the bill would lay the foundations for a first-of-its-kind US strategy for the Black Sea region.

PANEL 2

ROMANIA'S ROLE IN THE UKRAINE, NATO AND BLACK SEA EQUATION. A SECURITY PERSPECTIVE AND LESSONS IDENTIFIED FROM THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE (COORDINATED BY THE CENTER FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION & EARLY WARNING)

Guest speaker

- **Simona COJOCARU** – State Secretary and Head of the Department for Defence Policy, Planning and International Relations, Ministry of National Defence

Moderator:

- **Narciz BĂLĂȘOIU** – Director, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning

Speakers:

- **Iulian CHIFU** – President, Center for Conflict Prevention & Early Warning

- **Vira KONSTANTYNOVA** – Independent Analyst, former Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament (2019-2021)
- **Greg SIMONS** – Lecturer, Department of Communication Science, Turiba University
- **James SHEER** – Senior Fellow, International Center for Defence and Security, Tallin
- **Andrei SOLDATOV** – Senior Fellow, Center for European Policy Analysis
- **Mustafa AYDIN** – Professor, Kadir Has University, Istanbul
- **BG (r.) Ion COROPCEAN** – Director, Agency for Military Science and Memory, the Republic of Moldova

24 February 2022 will remain a watershed date in European history; that day, the Russian regime led by President Vladimir Putin launched a military invasion of Ukraine, marking the return of war in Europe for the first time in decades.

Much of what has transpired since the war's onset has come as a surprise, whether in its political and strategic dimensions or operational and tactical terms. The war was not an impossibility before 24 February, but it was certainly viewed in the West as improbable from the perspective of a rational cost-benefit analysis. This is especially so when one considers Putin's attempt to swallow the entirety of Ukrainian territory. The means with which Russia attempted its conquest also raised several questions as to its armed forces' level of preparedness, organisation, and operational ability. Today, it is clear that Russia's military capacity was overestimated while Ukraine's capacity to resist was underestimated.

For its part, the Atlantic Alliance has displayed a political unity that was admittedly lacking in recent years. The United States has demonstrated unequivocal commitment to the defence of Europe, while European Allies have shown both political resolve and a will to take defence spending seriously. Very little dissent or freeriding has occurred in the West. Solidarity with Ukraine has been optimal, both politically and through the delivery of weapons.

The European Union (EU) too has acted swiftly, most notably through the imposition of sanctions on Russia in lockstep with US and UK sanctions. The EU has also decided to finance the delivery of weapons to Ukraine.

This debate examined some identified lessons that NATO, its allies, and its partners could draw from the war in Ukraine while the Alliance released its new

Strategic Concept and, once again, has demonstrated its ability to adapt to a new environment.

Discussion Topics

- (Policy / Diplomacy) NATO's response to Russia's aggression and implications for both the EU and for NATO's new Strategic Concept;
- (Policy / Diplomacy) Diplomacy in conflict;
- (Military) Ukraine's military performance on the battlefield;
- (Military) Russia's military performance on the battlefield;
- (Economy) Economy supporting the participants in conflict;
- (Social) The human factor in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict;
- (Info) the role of STRATCOM before and during military operation in Ukraine;
- (Infrastructure) the role of infrastructure in military operations.

PANEL 3

THE INFLUENCE OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE ON THE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION – EVOLUTION AND PERSPECTIVES (COORDINATED BY NEW STRATEGY CENTER)

Moderator:

- **MG (r.) Paul HURMUZ** – Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center

Speakers:

- **MG Cristian-Daniel DAN** – Deputy Chief, Land Forces Staff
- **Yordan BOZHILOV** – Director, Sofia Security Forum
- **Tacan ILDEM** – Chairman, Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies
- **MG (r.) Vakhtang KAPANADZE** – Director on Defence and Security Policy, GEOCASE

NATO identified the Black Sea Region as an area of strategic importance in the 2022 Strategic Concept (NATO, 2022c). Now, it must develop a strategy outlining its approach to regional security – this entails the development of a tailored and structured approach, including an Action Plan, to address threats and challenges emanating from the Black Sea region; it should also include a comprehensive

approach to broader challenges such as food and energy security and should align with the European Union for maximum effect.

Furthermore, NATO allies should draft their own, national Black Sea Strategies highlighting their interests in the region and detailing how they will support the broader NATO Strategy. The United States is moving in this direction, with strong bipartisan legislation seeking to drive the development of an American Black Sea Strategy moving through Congress. Other allies should follow suit.

Such actions would demonstrate the commitment of NATO allies to ensuring the security of the BSR while also highlighting the region's importance to their own security and economy.

PANEL 4

NATO-EU NAVAL COOPERATION: STRENGTHENING EURO-ATLANTIC MARITIME POSTURE IN RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE BY ACHIEVING ALLIED TECHNOLOGICAL SUPERIORITY IN THE BLACK SEA (COORDINATED BY THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST)

Guest speaker

- **H.E. Dorin DUCARU** – Director, European Union Satellite Centre

Moderator:

- **Olga R. CHIRIAC** – Visiting Professor, University of Bucharest / Project Europe Director, Irregular Warfare Initiative, Modern War Institute, West Point

Speakers:

- **VAM Mihai PANAIT** – Chief, Naval Forces Staff
- **COL Sönke MARAHRENS** – Director, Community of Interest on Strategy & Defence, Hybrid Center of Excellence
- **James H. BERGERON** – Political Advisor, NATO Allied Maritime Command
- **Robert KOCH** – General Staff Officer, Allied Command Transformation

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has mobilised international efforts to coordinate the support given to Ukraine, not only at the national level but also at that of NATO

member states. The support took the form of humanitarian, economic and military aid.

In this context, NATO moved from reassurance to deterrence and defence measures, including the deployment of response forces, to strengthen its posture and presence in the eastern flank. Considering the geographical location of Ukraine, the Wider Black Sea Area has acquired an even greater importance than before the invasion, with maritime security being mentioned, in the new NATO Strategic Concept adopted in Madrid, in June 2022, as a major element of peace and prosperity.

Ensuring the NATO standing naval presence to deter potential threats to the Alliance is a constant concern for the Romanian Armed Forces, which participate every year in the missions of the Standing NATO Maritime Group 2/SNMG 2 and the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2/SNMCMG 2, with frigate-type ships (having a helicopter on board and a SOF team) and sea dredgers.

Moreover, Romania maintains its contribution to Operation Sea Guardian, with the T22 frigate. Because of the conflict in Ukraine and its consequences for the free passage of military ships through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, the missions have been successively cancelled.

To ensure maritime security in the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea, the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, the Romanian Armed Forces contribute to the missions of the NATO Standing Naval Forces with staff personnel in the embarked commands.

Technological progress can have significant military implications, changing the nature of war and the character of conflicts. As a result, future Alliance operations are expected to occur in a different setting. Thus, to adequately respond to technological threats, security and defence decision-makers must focus on capability development activities and operations planning, at the three levels – strategic, operational and tactical, in the medium and long term. Therefore, Romania, alongside the other member states of the Alliance, is implementing the appropriate measures, to contribute to the collective defence effort, as well as to NATO's defence and deterrence posture, especially in the eastern flank, where the Wider Black Sea Region is located, considering its particularities, mainly generated by its geostrategic position, while being aware of the technological impact on armed confrontations.

PANEL 5
INTEGRATED AIR AND MISSILE DEFENCE IN THE ALLIED CONTEXT
AND THE NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE IN THE CURRENT AND FUTURE
BLACK SEA SECURITY ENVIRONMENT
 (COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE STAFF)

Moderators:

- **BG Florin-Marian BARBU** – Chief, Operations Directorate, Defence Staff
- **COL Daniel ROMAN** – Associate Professor, “Carol I” National Defence University

Speakers:

- **MG Remus-Hadrian BONDOR** – Chief, Strategic Planning Directorate, Defence Staff
- **BG (r.) Dan CAVALERU** – Former Deputy Chief, Air Force Staff
- **CMDR Vică ILEA** – NATO Integrated Air & Missile Defence, Centre of Excellence
- **Aaron SHIFFER** – Maritime and Carrier Operations, Joint Air Power Competence Centre
- **COL Eugen CĂLIN** – Commander, 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **COL Bogdan DUMITRESCU** – Commander, 61st Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **COL Valentin-Eugen PETRESCU** – Commander, 50th Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment
- **MAJ Andrei NISTOR** – Chief, Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Missile Office, Land Forces
- **COL Bogdan BORGILĂ** – Chief of Staff, 1st Surface to Air Missiles Brigade

Russia's air and missile attacks on Ukraine underscored the importance of Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) and, more specifically, Surface-Based Air and Missile Defence (SBAMD) as an essential part of NATO's Defensive Counter-Air (DCA) capability. As the military conflict continues, the looming question hangs heavily on NATO's eastern border: are NATO SBAMD forces ready for action at a moment's notice?

It is vital to the security of NATO that Air Defence (AD) operators are NATO mission qualified now because they must be ready to act and fight with little or no warning, as a crisis can quickly turn to conflict. After experiencing thirty years

of air superiority in NATO operations, the change in threat perspective urges NATO nations to reconsider defence against air threats.

Panel Topics:

- GBAD in the context of electronic warfare;
- Impact of drones on GBAD;
- Lessons identified regarding GBAD in the context of the conflict in Ukraine;
- Defense and deterrence measures on NATO's eastern flank: air defense organization in response to Air shielding operations;
- Hypersonic missile challenges for GBAD;
- Integration of IAMD national control elements into NATINAMD;
- NATO IAMD Education and Training;
- Integration of GBAD in multi-domain operations;
- Changing the GBAD philosophy in the "*Patriot Context*".

PANEL 6

**TRANSFORMING EURO-ATLANTIC DEFENCE:
EMPOWERING COMMON DEFENCE CAPABILITIES AND RESOURCES
IN THE EVOLVING SECURITY LANDSCAPE
(COORDINATED BY I2DS2)**

Moderator:

- **Niculae IANCU** – President, I2DS2/Integrated Intelligence, Defence and Security Solutions

Speakers:

- **Radu CÎȘLEANU** – Director, Military Intelligence Agency, the Republic of Moldova
- **Thomas-Durell YOUNG** – Senior Academic Advisor, President's Office, Defense Security Cooperation University, Washington, DC
- **MG (r.) Pedro SALVADA** – President & CEO INNOV LEAN, Former Head of the F-16 Programe, Portuguese Air Force
- **Emanuel CERNAT** – Managing Partner, Corporate Affairs Strategies
- **RADM (LH) Ion-Cristian LIȘMAN** – Deputy Chief of Defence Staff for Resources

In an era of dynamic security challenges, this panel aimed to bring into focus the innovative policies and groundbreaking initiatives undertaken by NATO and the EU to strengthen Euro-Atlantic and European defence capabilities while effectively managing defence resources. With a particular emphasis on the Black Sea security context, the panel sought to explore how collaborative efforts within the Euro-Atlantic area could empower collective defence and effectively respond to the rapidly changing security landscape.

Panel Topics:

- **A Comprehensive Approach to Euro-Atlantic Security Challenges.** This topic addressed the evolving nature of conventional and hybrid threats and the need for a comprehensive approach to counter them. Panellists examined how Euro-Atlantic nations could effectively adapt their defence capabilities, leverage intelligence sharing, and strengthen civil-military cooperation to address both conventional and hybrid threats in a rapidly changing security environment.
- **Harnessing Resilience and Technological Advancements for Future-Ready Defence Capabilities.** This topic focused on the critical role of resilience and technology in transforming defence capabilities. Panellists examined how leveraging resilience, embracing emerging technologies, and fostering innovation could enable NATO member states to adapt to evolving security threats, optimise resource management, and enhance their defence preparedness.
- **NATO Capability Initiatives: Driving Defence Excellence and Interoperability.** This topic explored the importance of Euro-Atlantic nations' cooperation and interoperability in developing and sharing common defence capabilities. Panellists discussed partnership models, joint procurement initiatives, and collaborative research and development efforts to enhance defence cooperation, maximise resource sharing, and foster a stronger Euro-Atlantic defence community. The discussion highlighted NATO's capability initiatives, including meeting capability targets, the new Defence Production Action Plan, the Multinational Ammunitions Warehousing Initiative, and the renewed Defence Investment Pledge. Panellists analysed the impact of these initiatives on enhancing collective defence capabilities, fostering interoperability, and promoting efficient resource utilisation within NATO member states.
- **Strengthening European Defence through Collaborative Endeavours: EU Defence Initiatives.** This topic emphasised key European references for capability

development, such as the EU Capability Development Plan and the ensuing cooperation framework for its execution, which includes defence initiatives like the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Panellists discussed the objectives, achievements, and challenges associated with these initiatives, emphasising their role in fostering research and development, promoting defence industrial cooperation, and enhancing European defence capabilities.

By focusing on these key topics, the panel provided valuable insights into the transformative initiatives of NATO and the EU while exploring the broader themes of deterrence and defence through resilience, technology, cooperation, and adaptability. It aimed to foster engaging discussions, identify opportunities for collaboration, and offer actionable recommendations to drive the continued enhancement of Euro-Atlantic defence capabilities and resource management.

PANEL 7

THE POWER OF INFORMATION IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE CURRENT SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION (COORDINATED BY THE DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE TRAINING CENTRE/ GENERAL DIRECTORATE FOR DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE)

Moderator:

- **COL Dorinel MOLDOVAN** – Director, Defence Intelligence Training Centre

Speakers:

- **MG (r.) Paul HURMUZ** – Senior Associate Expert, New Strategy Center
- **MG (r.) Adrieian PĂRLOG** – Professor, Global Studies Center, University of Sibiu
- **Ioan Mircea PAȘCU** – Professor, National School of Political Science and Public Administration, SNSPA
- **Cristian BARNA** – Training Manager, INTELLIGENCE4ALL
- **Silviu NATE** – Director, Global Studies Center, University of Sibiu
- **LTC Răzvan ZAHARIA** – Romanian Intelligence Service

The complexity, dynamics and implications of the current regional and global security environment oblige the Romanian and allied decision-makers, regardless of the actional layer, to get a comprehensive knowledge of reality, request and imperative representing a continuous and permanent challenge, as well as an opportunity for intelligence services.

The challenge comes from the informational immensity of sources, technologies and procedures and their products, which offer, at the same time, liabilities and opportunities for actionable information/intelligence and knowledge.

Therefore, the mandatory integration of these components in a lucrative formula has to represent the unique option for the leading factors of Romania, on immediate, medium and long terms. Moreover, in the spirit and constitution of national resilience, wisdom should be the fundamental feature and optics of strategic choices, considering, at least, opportunity cost and cost-effectiveness approaches.

PANEL 8

ENHANCING READINESS, AVAILABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN ROMANIA AND THE BLACK SEA AREA (COORDINATED BY THE “CAROL I” NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY)

Guest speaker

- **H.E. Cristian DIACONESCU** – Scientific Council Member, New Strategy Center

Moderators:

- **COL Dan-Lucian PETRESCU** – Centre for Defence & Security Strategic Studies, “Carol I” National Defence University
- **Mirela ATANASIU** – Scientific Researcher, Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, “Carol I” National Defence University

Speakers:

- **Adrian DUȚĂ** – Vice-president, Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience
- **COL Ioan MISCHIE** – Deputy Chief of Air Force Staff for Operations and Training

- **BG (r.) Plamen BOGDANOV** – Associate Professor, University of Library Studies and Information Technologies, Sofia
- **Yehven MAHDA** – Executive Director, Institute of World Policy

The Black Sea Region holds a maximum strategic interest for Romania and the other riparian states, but also for NATO, EU and Russia as influence actors in this part of the world. There are many challenges related to the Black Sea Region that need to be approached by the Euro-Atlantic community. Among them, war, maritime security and freedom of navigation, energy and food security, new technologies implemented in military capabilities and fighting disinformation are already on the agenda of this panel. However, the utmost importance is given to Russian recent strategy and actions in the region. From implementing and continuously reinforcing the concept of A2/AD to building up forces and culminating with military aggression against Ukraine, all of these need a high level of readiness and resilience from all the actors involved. The riparian states in the Black Sea Region struggle to build resilience in all sectors, political, economic and social, in the face of Russian attempts to destabilize them and subvert their sovereignty. Therefore, Euro-Atlantic nations must work together as a single community to identify connections and to engage states far beyond the close proximity as equal partners, forging security relations centred on mutually and holistically building up readiness and resilience.

Topics:

1. Black Sea Region– important geopolitical nexus in the global arena. From the global perspective, the Black Sea Region is a geopolitical and geo-economic nexus of strategic importance connecting the Central Asia and Caspian Sea routes to the old European continent. It is a focal point where Russia, Europe, the Middle East, the Balkans and the Caucasus meet and where the forces of democracy, Russian military aggression, Chinese economic influence and the instability in the Middle East converge.

2. Security and defence challenges in the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea is a region of multilayered tension. It is the arena of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and of Russia-NATO competition while serving as a projection area for Russian and Turkish visions regarding regional order. It is also a prolific field for a mixture of information campaigns and state-sponsored and non-state backdoor cyber proxies, due to its unique geopolitical landscape and geostrategic position. This convergence

amplifies the risk of contagion and the potential for adverse consequences, which are challenging to quantify and anticipate accurately.

3. NATO response to Russian-Ukrainian War. This unprovoked aggression compelled the Alliance to rethink the approach to its primary core task – Deterrence and Defence – and focus more on strengthening readiness and identifying resources that are necessary to cope with and operate in the new geopolitical and security environment.

4. Romania – resilient actor in the Black Sea Region. The Black Sea Region has become an area where the interests of great world powers and great civilisations collide. The struggles for expanding spheres of influence bring many risks and threats, which may have a serious impact on our national security when exploiting vulnerabilities. Romania must continuously build resilience to face these security challenges by promoting cooperation within regional cooperation formats and the Euro-Atlantic organisations and by supporting and encouraging the strengthening of the Black Sea Region security architecture.

PANEL 9

MARITIME RESILIENCE IN THE ERA OF HYBRID THREATS (COORDINATED BY THE MARITIME SECURITY FORUM)

Moderator:

- **RADM (r.) Constantin CIOROBEA** – Vicepresident, Clubul Amiralilor, and Editor in Chief, Maritime Security Forum

Speakers:

- **Iulian FOTA** – State Secretary for Strategic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- **NAVY CAPT Cornel TĂNĂȘESCU** – Chief of Staff, Fleet Command
- **BG (r.) Mircea MÎNDRESCU** – Scientific Council Member, New Strategy Center
- **NAVY CAPT Lucian SCIPANOV** – Director, Naval Forces Department, “Carol I” National Defence University
- **Radu TUDOR** – Political and Defence Analyst, Antena 3 News Channel

The Black Sea region, as a geographical location, lies between Southeastern Europe, the Caucasus, the Middle East and the Mediterranean Sea, representing an area of connection but also of division. This position offers some advantages but, at the same time, a series of political, economic and military disadvantages. Here in this region, Europe, the Balkans, Russia, the Middle East and the Caucasus meet, and it is where the forces of democracy in the west, Russian imperial and military aggression in the north, Chinese economic influence in the east, and Middle Eastern instability in the south converge.

The economic importance and exceptional role of transport routes have made the Black Sea a de facto arena for competing and irreconcilable strategic interests over the past decade. Russia has unilaterally changed the architecture and dynamics of security in the region not only through conventional military means but also through highly sophisticated intelligence warfare and hybrid means. On the other hand, Türkiye pursues a policy of promoting its position as a regional power without considering the interests of the countries in the region, NATO or the position of the EU.

All these aspects surprised other countries in the region, NATO and the EU in terms of developing credible means to combat these actions.

In the long run, the Black Sea region will continue to be of particular importance to Moscow, and Russia will continue to improve its military capabilities and position in the region – both through armed conflicts and information warfare actions.

On the other hand, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, and even Bulgaria are interested in a more significant presence of the US, NATO and the EU in the Black Sea in order to achieve a stable security environment in the region favourable to economic development and, in this case, an action to review the limitations that the Montreux Convention. Currently, imposes cannot be excluded. Perhaps even an analysis of the situation regarding the Black Sea State, whether it can remain closed under the provisions of the Montreux Convention or become an open sea by applying Montego Bay.

In addition to these aspects, several trends that can influence maritime security need to be taken into account, such as:

- Significant increase in imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG);
- Increased investment in renewables and expansion of offshore installations;
- Increased cyberattack activity (GPS blocking/jamming);

- Proliferation of unmanned vessels (air, surface, submarine);
- Failure to establish an effective surveillance system to cover long distances of submarine cables and pipelines;
- Legal limitations (Rights and jurisdictions in different maritime areas);
- Protection of critical maritime infrastructure involves several parties/countries involved.

Romania must use its geostrategic position to accelerate the development of its trade relations and beyond. Given the favourable position on the main river transport artery in Europe, through which it manages the lower course of the Danube together with its neighbours, we appreciate that this gives our country a chance to become one of the most considerable river powers. However, only a proper naval policy and strategy can turn Romania's chance into reality.

Romania must establish a credible force in the Black Sea to monitor and defend maritime lines of communication, respond to security challenges in the region, and protect resources and economic objectives in the EEZ. We must realise that NATO is as strong as any member state.

Romania's access to the Black Sea can be an opportunity for economic development. However, it can also become vulnerable if we fail to achieve a stable security environment in the region.

PANEL 10

THE IMPACT OF EMERGING AND DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES ON FUTURE MILITARY ACTIONS – NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ENSURING A SECURITY STRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA (COORDINATED BY THE EURO-ATLANTIC CENTRE FOR RESILIENCE E-ARC)

Moderator:

- **Valentin ENE** – Head of Strategic Analysis, Euro-Atlantic Centre for Resilience

Speakers:

- **Marek KALBARCZYK** – Deputy Director RTI & Head of Unit, EU-Funded Defence Research, European Defence Agency
- **Cristian SFICHI** – Key Account Manager, Defence and Security, THALES Group
- **Tudor CURTIFAN** – Editor-in-Chief, Defense Romania

- **Prof. MarineI-Adi MUSTAȚĂ, PhD Habil** – Director, PhD Interdisciplinary School, “Carol I” National Defence University

The panel discussed the complex and multifaceted topic of how emerging and disruptive technologies are shaping the landscape of future military actions, with a specific focus on the security implications in the Black Sea Region. The conversation, moderated by the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre, brought together, in a whole-of-society approach, perspectives from academia, the private sector, institutions and specialised media, to highlight the impact of technological trends on the security environment in the Black Sea Region.

Key Discussion Points:

Technological Advances in Warfare: The panellists discussed the latest technological developments, mainly artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, autonomous systems and space technologies, and how these are being integrated into modern military strategies. The debates were focused on the current security status in the Black Sea and the trends identified.

Human Factor: Technology will continue to be developed, but the human factor will still be the central element, or not? The panellist delved into the future scenarios of human-machine interaction in the military field.

Implications of Military – Industry relations: How can industry play its part in keeping the technological edge, paramount in a complicated security environment? How investments in emerging technologies are affecting the defence industry and influencing global supply chains?

Ethical and Legal Considerations: How will technological developments impact the rules of engagement? The panel debated the future use of Artificial Intelligence in warfare and the autonomy it will have, touching on the challenges of accountability, the protection of civilians, and the laws of armed conflict.

Strategic Implications: The panellists discussed the strategic implications of these technologies, such as how they influence doctrines, force structures, and the balance of power between nations. They explored how emerging technologies are changing the dynamics of asymmetric warfare, including the challenges posed by non-state actors and irregular warfare. Are these elements reshaping the nature of conflicts and deterrence? How will a conflict look in 20 years?

ROUND TABLE THE STRAITS QUESTION. CONFLICT AND COOPERATION AT THE BLACK SEA (COORDINATED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES OF DEFENCE & MILITARY HISTORY - ISPAIM)

Guest speaker

- **Carmen-Sorina RÎJNOVEANU** – Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History

Moderators:

- **Manuel STĂNESCU** – Deputy Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Șerban CIOCULESCU** – Scientific Researcher II, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History

Speakers:

- **Petre OTU** – Chairperson, Romanian Military History Committee
- **Liliana BOȘCAN** – Assistant Professor, University of Bucharest
- **Șerban PAVELESCU** – Senior Researcher, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Mihai SANDU** – Deputy General Director, Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation
- **Tudor VIȘAN-MIU** – Scientific Researcher, Institute for Political Studies of Defence & Military History
- **Adrian-Vasile POPA** – Assistant Professor, National Intelligence Academy

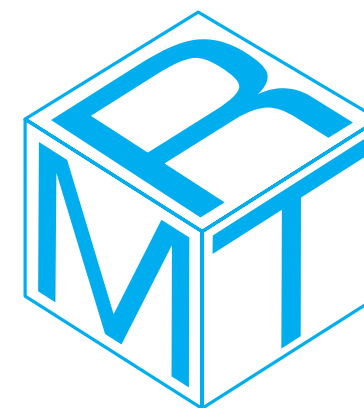
A glance at the map of the Black Sea shows us that the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits have a complex significance for the European continent and implicitly for our country. They ensure the naval commercial connection of South-Eastern Europe with the Mediterranean and the Middle East-North Africa (MENA). Thus, they have become a very important element of any security and defence equation not only for EU states but also for non-EU ones (Russia, Ukraine etc.).

Regardless of the historical period we refer to, the straits have played an extremely significant role for the states of the Balkan Peninsula and, especially,

for Romania. The geographical characteristics of the two straits have decisively influenced the evolution of the positions adopted by Romania regarding the regime of commercial and military traffic. The main premise of any approach to the mentioned topic has been that of preventing the Black Sea from becoming a closed area. That is why the principle of freedom of maritime navigation, which is even more important for the states in the region, has been constantly promoted. On these coordinates, Romania's approach to the question of the straits has been aimed at ensuring the maritime connection, in both peacetime and wartime, with the Mediterranean basin and from there with the Atlantic Ocean as well as with the Indian Ocean, via the Suez Canal.

A country like Romania, a NATO and EU member state, needs to ensure that the surface and underwater vessels of its allies can enter the Black Sea as freely as possible to help deter aggression against Romania, Türkiye or Bulgaria. Moreover, the flow of trade through the straits has to be free, without blockages other than accidental or short-term ones. That is why Romania has always been in the camp of those who support the freedom of passage through the straits and the as unrestricted as possible access to the military vessels of the non-littoral states.

The round table discussion was dedicated to analysing the straits question starting with the Crimean War and up to the Cold War period, while also considering the current challenges to the international security system in the region.



THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR AND ITS IMPACT ON CYBER SECURITY IN NATO AND THE EU

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Since early 2022, before the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, cyberspace has been extensively utilised, with cyber operations playing a pivotal role in information concealment, deception, and attacks on critical infrastructure. Warfare has evolved, growing more intricate, and the amalgamation of cyber actions with hard power effects is progressively causing greater disruption. Cyber actions have extended beyond Ukraine’s borders, influencing neighbouring NATO and EU member states. These incidents are as pertinent as they are perilous for the security of states on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. This article explores the imperative for alliance cooperation and the development of cyber capabilities, doctrines, and strategies to foster a security environment conducive to the region. As a NATO and EU member state situated on the Eastern flank, Romania must remain a bastion of stability and a provider of security in the region. The alliances Romania is part of must adapt to confront these challenges.

Keywords: cyberspace; Russian-Ukrainian war; cyber operations; cyber security;

INTRODUCTION

The Black Sea region has become an area of global concern characterised by a high potential for instability since the outbreak of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The security vision of the states in the region is strongly influenced by the aggressiveness of the Russian Federation, and, as a result, Romania’s role in ensuring the security of both the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union has become very important. The presence of foreign military forces on its territory and joint exercises with the allies aim to reassure the population, which must regain a more positive perception of its security more quickly.

The desire for a stronger military presence is natural, given that the threat stems from a superpower that has historically held influence over this region. From the perspective of an assertive Russia, the additional allied military presence on NATO’s eastern border is not of significant concern. Even though the actions in the conflict are primarily kinetic, there are implications from both sides regarding cyber issues. The latter typically involves covert or deceptive operations aimed at coercing the adversary. More recently, cyber operations serve as both complementary activities in warfare and decisive actions in their own right. Essentially, the Russian Federation is using Ukraine as a shooting range to enhance its cyber capabilities by experimenting with and operationalising various new methods. Additionally, the Russian Federation is employing hybrid methods of attack that have been tested in other conflicts, as cyber attacks continue to evolve in sophistication.

Like other states, Romania has a fundamental role to play in securing the eastern border of NATO and the EU. Romania has agreed with NATO and aims to become a vector of stability, democracy and Euro-Atlantic values in the Black Sea region. Romania has the ambition to become a pillar of regional geopolitical security and has the opportunity to establish itself as an excellent security provider. As an active member of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, it has a long-term commitment to investing in security, promoting peace and stability, expanding the market economy, embracing the values that characterise a society open towards the West, and engaging with strategic partners.

As the war in Ukraine progresses, Russian agencies are focusing their cyber-influence operations on the Ukrainian population to undermine confidence

in the country's will and ability to resist Russian attacks. In addition, the Russian population is targeted by the propaganda because their support is needed to sustain the war effort. Kyiv-supporting states have also been the targets of cyber attacks aimed at warning and deterring. Most of the attention on cyber attacks as a component of war focuses on the potential to disrupt, degrade or destroy targets. However, the Russian Federation has an extensive history of using network intrusions to gather intelligence, and these operations can be much harder to detect.

An important lesson learned from the deployment of multi-domain task forces is the exemplary mobilisation of other states in support of Ukraine. This can certainly lead to better inter-state cooperation within the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union, laying the foundations for a new form of collective defence. Ukraine has also benefited from a great deal of support from private entities: leading companies in the cyber security market, groups of renowned hackers as well as groups of patriotic volunteer hackers. In general, cyber attacks, as components of warfare, can disrupt, degrade or destroy critical infrastructure. Moreover, the Russian Federation has an extensive history of using network intrusions to gather intelligence, spy, degrade or block adversary systems. These actions can have immediate effects or be launched to produce effects over time without detection.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION'S INFORMATION WARFARE BEFORE 2022

To better understand operations in the cyber environment in Russia's military actions in Ukraine in early 2022, one should consider Moscow's unique way of viewing cyber operations and applying doctrines to achieve success on the battlefield. However, in this article, I will not analyse the doctrinal aspects of cyber actions but will focus on how these actions play out in the cyber environment. I will also research the effects that these actions generate, to identify a pattern in the use of these cyber attacks by the Russian Federation.

One of the main results of the rapid development of information technology has been that it has moved traditional confrontations into the virtual environment, creating alternative spaces to reality. Cyberspace has become a new battlefield, characterised by its increased speed and efficiency compared to traditional methods of combat. A significant advantage of this environment is that the risk of loss of life is minimal. This new domain of confrontation was officially recognised as a domain of operations by members of the North Atlantic Alliance at the 2016 Summit in Warsaw, Poland (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2023).

The Russian Federation used this domain of confrontation much earlier, but as we can see even today, its strategy is to use conventional warfare combined with non-kinetic actions such as propaganda, espionage, cyber-terrorism, cyber-operations and the use of malware. These types of attacks used on information and information systems are designed to mislead the population, disrupt economic activities, disable critical national infrastructure, and gather intelligence on military capabilities and vulnerability to the security of the target state. The Russian Federation has been known as an actor capable of carrying out a wide range of cyber espionage and sabotage operations since the 1990s (Aliyev, 2022). It already has extensive experience in the information environment, based on the disinformation campaigns coordinated by the government itself, with which it managed to mobilise the ethnic Russian population in 1999 during the second war with Chechnya, using the media as a means of propaganda.

Another campaign of cyber attacks, this time of greater scale and resonance, was the series of cyber attacks in 2007 against Estonia, amid historical disagreements between the two countries. For several days, cyber attacks were carried out against several Estonian targets such as the websites of ministries, banks, political parties, media and telecommunication services. The effects were surprising, as Estonia was a fairly digitised country at the time (Herzog, 2011, p. 51). Those attacks, which were to block various Estonian targets for a limited period, reconfirmed Russian capabilities in the information environment. Becoming the first country to face a cyber attack of such magnitude, Estonia needed external help from allies and the international community. A year later, the Russian Federation used hybrid methods of action in the Russian-Georgian war. Non-kinetic actions consisted of cyber attacks and psychological intelligence, including propaganda and fake news. Georgia, a country seeking democratic success in the West, moving ever closer to the US and NATO, sparked Russian discontent. It resorted to military action against Georgia after the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, where the allies discussed with the government in Tbilisi the possibility of joining the North Atlantic Alliance. Even if the talks did not lead to a concrete result, the change in ideology and attitude towards the Kremlin and the rapprochement with the Euro-Atlantic area increased Russia's aggression towards this small state.

Since the same year, public support for Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration has grown strongly. According to a recent poll conducted by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in 2021, 80% of Georgians expressed support for Georgia's EU membership (up from 76% in 2020), while 74% of the population supported

NATO integration (up from 69% in 2020) (Seskuria, 2021). At the time, the Russian security services managed to dominate the information domain through techniques and means of information manipulation that included propaganda, information control and disinformation campaigns. Part of the Kremlin's propaganda increasingly focused on changing public opinion, claiming that the Russian Federation was the determining factor in regional security and conflict cessation and that Western states had neither the capacity nor the interest to do so. Spreading anti-Western news through local actors actively cultivated and financially supported pro-Russian parties and spread ultra-nationalist and xenophobic messages (Seskuria). Through television broadcasts and daily interviews with a military spokesman, the Russian Federation controlled the international flow of information and tried to influence local populations by pushing news, disseminating the progress of Russian troops protecting Russian citizens and highlighting Georgian atrocities (Iasiello, 2017, p. 53). Moreover, actions in the cyber environment ran concurrently with physical military operations, so that they led to defacements of websites, denial of service and distributed denial of service attacks against the Georgian government, Georgian media and financial institutions, as well as other public and private actions. The attacks succeeded in denying citizens access to 54 websites related to communications, finance and government (Iasiello, 2017, p. 52).

Later, between 2011 and 2013, the protests caused by the controversial elections in the Russian Federation demonstrated how the media could be used to manipulate the population to generate waves of public discontent. These, along with the Arab Spring, demonstrate the effectiveness of social media in changing regimes. Moreover, they helped the Kremlin government develop information capabilities that facilitated the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In this context, cyber tactics, techniques and actions resulted in the disruption of government information networks, paralysis of the command-and-control system, disruption of communication channels and served as tools to reinforce hybrid warfare strategies. Psychological operations played a crucial role in amplifying the effectiveness of these strategies. Gradually, psychological operations began by trying to gain credibility and persuasion among individuals, then focused on exerting pressure on the population in Crimea and Ukraine. Ultimately, the aim was to create conditions that would minimise the image of the Russian Federation as an aggressor state. Ukraine's response to this hybrid conflict was characterised by inadequate and fragmented reactions, with a dominance in the informational, virtual media and psychological spheres (Stanciu, 2016, p. 74).

In my opinion, the Russian Federation studied previous conflicts, and applied the lessons learned so that they synchronised kinetic and cyber attacks. The latter were considered essential strikes with maximum effectiveness especially on critical infrastructure. These Russian cyber operations were aimed at disabling Ukraine's digital infrastructure, disseminating pro-Russian propaganda and breaking the will to fight among political, military and civilian leaders alike. The cyber actions were also aimed at discouraging Ukrainian allies from intervening in the conflict. Russian state and non-state cyber actors coordinated a series of denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on Ukrainian government websites, targeting, in particular, politicians believed to hold anti-Russian views and election-related websites. Moreover, they aggressively spread various pro-Russian propaganda and fake news on Ukrainian social media platforms (Salt & Sobchuk, 2021, p. 1). We can certainly affirm that the Russian Federation used this conflict as an opportunity to test its new cyber techniques, tactics and procedures and to further improve these capabilities by testing and operationalising various new methods. Cyber attacks against Crimea shut down telecommunications, disabled major Ukrainian websites and blocked the mobile phones of key Ukrainian officials before Russian forces entered the peninsula (Iasiello, p. 54). With this conflict, cyber attacks evolved from propaganda to actual disruption of physical infrastructure, such as destabilising the Ukrainian power grid and causing blackouts across the country. Such cyber attacks occurred on an industrial scale, sometimes reaching several thousand per month. Attacks also mainly targeted private sector companies with malware, further complicating Ukrainian attempts at cyber defence, as many computer systems became infected with Russian malware without detection.

The Russian Federation's cyber operations influenced the fighting on the ground even at the tactical level. The Russians were able to use various technologies to discover and transmit messages on the mobile phones of both soldiers and their families, intending to make them give up fighting. The fact that most personal and even company computers had outdated security systems made them vulnerable. These waves of Russian cyber attacks are more like bombings than precision strikes, designed to overwhelm any Ukrainian defences and countermeasures (Salt & Sobchuk, p. 2).

US military experts said the cyber attacks were undoubtedly carried out to isolate Crimea and facilitate troop movements into Ukrainian territory. However, even after the conflict ended with the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation, state and non-state actors with pro-Russian affinities continued their activities

in cyberspace even in peacetime. These cyber activities were aimed at testing the vulnerabilities of Ukrainian systems, and in this way Russian cyber specialists trained for future cyber attacks.

The Russian Federation also carries out cyber attacks in the absence of planned military action, trying to disrupt the policy of other states by not wanting to provoke an armed war. Elections, in general, can be extremely vulnerable, as they offer external actors the chance not only to support a preferred candidate but also to raise questions about the integrity of candidates and the fairness of the electoral process. The interference in the 2016 US presidential election is the best example of the Russian Federation's use of information-technical and information-psychological techniques. This took the form of collecting and subsequently leaking data from party registers, as well as the personal data of some candidates. There have also been specific data collection operations and cyber incidents related to elections in the European Parliament, Ukraine, Sweden, France and other countries. These are defined by spear-phishing campaigns to access data, hacking operations and information leaks, disruptive attacks on electoral infrastructure, and the use of the online environment to spread false information and manipulation (Hakala, Melnychuk, 2021, p. 27).

Given the above, we can say that the Russian Federation uses numerous cyber attacks to destabilise, disable or hamper critical communications systems and infrastructure. On the propaganda and disinformation side, it has very well developed systems. Actions in the information environment are underpinned by numerous strategies and doctrines, including the controversial "*Gerasimov Doctrine*". Russia's actions in cyberspace are designed to prepare the battlefield before introducing troops or using conventional weapons. Essentially, it uses the most dangerous cyber attacks on the critical systems of the country it is about to attack to cripple it.

RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR 2022 – CYBER ASPECTS

In January 2022, after a large concentration of troops on the border with Ukraine, the Russian Federation demanded legal guarantees from the United States and NATO member countries that Ukraine would not be accepted to join the North Atlantic Alliance. After the demands were refused, a month later satellite images showed an impressive deployment of Russian ground forces and helicopters on the Ukrainian border. The next move was to withdraw all diplomatic personnel

from Ukrainian territory, indicating preparations for a military operation against the neighbouring state. Thus, the Russian military crossed the Ukrainian border on 24 February 2022 in a combined offensive of troops, tanks, planes and cruise missiles in what the Kremlin called a "*special military operation*", demonstrating that it would not allow Ukraine to be outside the Russian sphere of influence.

Ukraine's eventual accession to the Western military alliance would represent a change in the regional geostrategic and security situation and would be seen as a threat to Russia's interests and security, practically bordering directly on NATO. This Russian military offensive led to the largest mobilisation of military personnel, weapons and equipment in Europe on the battlefields since the Second World War (Guchua, Zedelashvili, Giorgadze, 2022, p. 30).

However, the first "*missiles*" were launched on 23 February, hours before the rockets were launched or the tanks moved. This was a new round of offensive and destructive cyber attacks directed against Ukraine's digital infrastructure. Microsoft has detected and notified Ukrainian officials about this new malware package it has named "*Fox Blade*" (Orenstein, 2022). The Russian Federation has extensive experience in cyber warfare and the Russian cyber infrastructure and equipment have continuously developed in such a way that they have favoured the implementation of hybrid actions. The dynamics of cyber attacks have shown that they are used as a precursor to any form of action, and can continue at a higher intensity or be the opening for a new stage of military operation to achieve their goals. Russia's *modus operandi* was based on experiences from past conflicts with Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine, which came as no surprise to many experts. In the new international context, in which the global security situation is volatile, bellicose statements cause unease and fear even for state actors not directly involved in the conflict.

Amid escalating tensions between the two countries, Russia's military intelligence agency (GRU) launched a series of DDoS attacks against Ukrainian banking, government and defence websites in early February. According to a Microsoft report, two other Russian entities such as the Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) and the Federal Security Service (FSB) "*conducted destructive attacks, espionage operations, or both, while Russian military forces attacked the country on land, in the air and at sea*" with the aim of "*disrupting or degrading Ukrainian government and military functions and undermining public confidence in the same institutions*" (Orenstein, 2022).

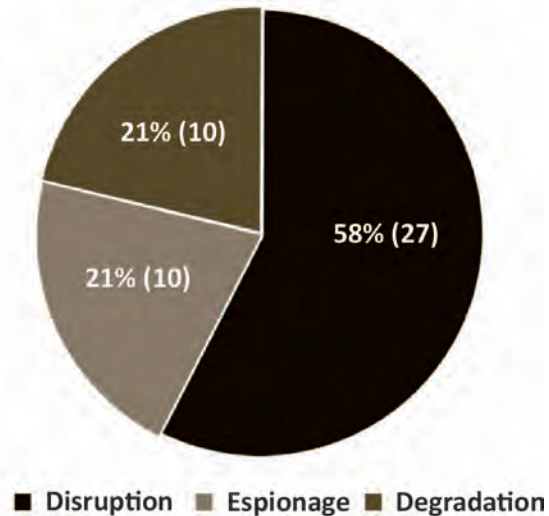


Figure 1: Russian cyber targets

(CSIS, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/cyber-operations-during-russo-ukrainian-war>)

After analysing Russia’s cyber activity at the beginning of the conflict, it was found that its cyber objectives focused more on disruptive than degrading actions, which is highlighted in *figure 1*. According to the same sources, Russian cyber activities after 2000 targeted non-state private actors (57%), non-military government actors (32%) and government military actors (11%) (Mueller, Jensen, Valeriano&Mane, 2023). Actions in the cyber environment have become more dangerous with the coordination of conventional military actions in an attempt to create imbalance, panic and confusion among the population. The Russian Federation began preparing for these non-kinetic actions as early as March 2021, while troops were stationed on the border with Ukraine.

Ukrainian government officials reported in January 2022 that, in the first 10 months of 2021, approximately 288,000 cyber attacks were recorded, in addition to the 397,000 attacks recorded in 2020 (Office for Budget Responsibility, 2022). In an interview, Oleksandr Potii, deputy chairman of Ukraine’s State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection (SSSCIP), claimed that more than 1,500 cyber attacks against Ukraine were detected in the first six months of the war (Beecroft, 2022). Concurrent with the preparation and conduct of military exercises on the Ukrainian border, these attacks were aimed at gathering foreign policy and military intelligence and gaining access to critical Ukrainian infrastructure. Many of these were launched after various diplomatic talks between the Russian Federation,

Ukraine, NATO and the EU failed. Moscow has used these cyber attacks either as a warning or as a threat to make diplomatic actions more serious (Orenstein).

Officials in the Kremlin have said that countries that help Ukraine in this confrontation will face consequences. Indeed, Russian intelligence agencies have stepped up espionage and penetration of communications networks targeting governments sympathetic to Ukraine. Microsoft has detected Russian network intrusion actions against 128 organisations in 42 countries. The top country targeted by these attacks worldwide is the US, while in Europe the priority target has become Poland, Ukraine’s neighbouring country that coordinates much of the military and humanitarian logistical support. Russian teams used the Prestige ransomware in this malicious campaign against logistics and transport organisations in Poland, a tactic not commonly used against Ukrainian targets. In addition, the attacks appear to follow a similar pattern to previous hacking activities supported by the Russian Federation (Constantinescu, 2022, p. 23). Other countries that have experienced an increasing number of cyber incidents on computer networks were the Baltic countries, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden and even Turkey.

Particular attention should be paid to Romania, a neighbouring country of Ukraine, on the eastern border of NATO and the EU. It has been the target of such DDoS cyber attacks targeting several institutions, including the Government, the Ministry of National Defence, the Border Police, the Romanian Railways website, banks and other public and private organisations. According to a release from the National Cyber Security Directorate, the websites of these institutions were unavailable for some time and no significant damage was reported (<https://dnsc.ro/citeste/comunicat-site-uri-ro-afectate-de-un-atact-de-tip-ddos>). Moreover, these incidents were more of a warning and deterrent and were taken over by pro-Russian Killnet hackers. The attacks were motivated by statements of support for Ukraine by leaders in Bucharest, in the context of the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Romania was among the first countries to provide humanitarian aid to Ukrainian migrants fleeing the war and has continued to help the neighbouring state in various ways despite the escalation of cyber security incidents.

Briefly analysing Russian actions in the cyber environment, we can make an analogy with the ideas of military theorists starting from Sun Tzu, and continuing with Clausewitz and others who pointed out the need to defeat the enemy even without his physical destruction. Using psychological warfare, disinformation and propaganda spread in the virtual environment, the Russian Federation wanted to shape and incapacitate the essential physical or moral components of the adversary

by conquering him without physical combat. Those elements that Clausewitz later called centres of gravity in an adversary were later struck by the Air Force. This Clausewitzian concept of the enemy's centre of gravity lay at the heart of the theories of J.F.C. Fuller, Liddell Hart, John Boyd and John Warden. According to these theories, hitting the centres of gravity could achieve strategic paralysis, thus causing the opponent to give up the fight. Winning the battle was not achieved by physically destroying the fighting forces but by lowering morale through surgical strikes. Moreover, air power had the attribute of striking command and control centres, communications, industrial centres and key elements deep in enemy territory quickly and effectively with maximum efficiency and minimum cost. Therefore, it can be seen that the Russian Federation through its *"cyber paralysis"* aimed at the same effects through its extensive cyber attacks.

On the other hand, the resilience of Ukrainian networks was partly related to actions taken before the conflict to support the development and implementation of a national cyber strategy. Both states have military forces specialising in cyber warfare but have also been supported by patriotic hacker groups who have intervened in support of these institutions either to launch cyber attacks or for cyber defence purposes. In addition, this new way of fighting has attracted the attention of other countries who have readily offered support to these countries, making it an opportunity to test their cyber warfare capabilities for real. Russia's large-scale cyber attacks on Ukraine provide an insight into how it conducts cyber attacks in armed conflict and its hybrid war against the West. More than a year and a half into the war, we can conclude that the Russian Federation is using an amalgam of military techniques and tactics, a combination of the latest tactics and those used in world wars, while also using obsolete weapons simultaneously with sophisticated cyber attacks or attacks using drones, hypersonic missiles or satellite intelligence.

THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR ON CYBER SECURITY IN NATO AND THE EU

It should be stressed that the Russian Federation is vehemently opposed to Ukraine's accession to NATO, as this step would increase Ukraine's military potential and create a regional situation. It is indisputable that the Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine has reshaped the threat situation in NATO and the EU, so that the cyber security of the alliances, a component of collective security, has been put to the test. As the conflict has escalated, NATO and non-NATO states have become targets or collateral victims of cyber attacks

by Russian state and non-state actors. Moscow has great potential in cyber warfare, and due to its geopolitical situation, it has been successfully adapted to expand its interests. The cyber attacks launched are mostly used in the context of asymmetric conflict (Guchua, Zedelashvili, Giorgadze, 2022, p. 33). According to a Mandiant report, 2022 saw a 250% increase in Russian phishing attempts against Ukraine and a 300% increase in the same attacks against NATO countries (DeCloquement, 2023). All NATO or EU member states that have actively provided political, humanitarian or military support to Ukraine have faced waves of cyber attacks. These operations have been aimed at disrupting national infrastructures, but also at creating a deterrent against intervention in the war. Through social media and attacks on news websites and radio stations, disinformation and fake news, operations were carried out against the Ukrainian government and NATO. The Russians also carried out offensive operations against the US, Poland, the UK, Germany, Latvia, Romania and other countries.

Before the ground invasion began, the Russian Federation deployed malware that disrupted the Viasat satellite system and led to the temporary disruption of more than 30,000 internet connections in Europe, including 5,000 wind turbines. SpaceX claims that the Starlink network has withstood multiple Russian cyber attacks since it was deployed in Ukraine. The European Union has activated its rapid response teams for cyber security incidents to help Ukraine fend off Russian cyber attacks (Mueller, Jensen, Valeriano&Mane, 2023). This new challenge faced by European and NATO states is a new one in which malicious actors aim to degrade critical infrastructure, extract information, steal intellectual property, and disrupt military activities. The Alliance has adopted a comprehensive cyber defence policy and reaffirmed the validity of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in cyberspace. In addition, the issue of cyberspace has been high on the agenda of heads of state and government at recent summits. Military support for Ukraine is also becoming a European security imperative. Although only NATO can offer Ukraine protection against Russian attacks, member countries failed to agree on a concrete prospect of membership at the July 2023 summit in Lithuania, a sign that no one wants a direct and open confrontation with the Russian Federation. The door to Ukraine's membership of the military alliance remains open, as evidenced by the framework treaty on *"long-term and comprehensive security guarantees"* for Ukraine, to help the country *"defend itself now"*, with bilateral agreements to follow (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2023). NATO has gone so far as to accept Ukraine as a contributing participant in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE).

In terms of relations with the European Union, Ukraine has been and is considered an important ally. EU leaders have called for the strengthening of cyber threat protection capabilities for both Ukraine and its member states since 2014. Additionally, in 2020, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called for greater “*technology sovereignty*”, referencing Asia’s technology reliance. Moreover, the EU’s dependence on Russian oil and gas has prompted transitional plans to reduce reliance on Russian natural gas and enhance the EU’s economic resilience. The economic costs of malicious activities place strain on the resilience of democratic states and institutions, directly threatening the peace and security of the European Union. The focus lies on diplomatic action to support cybersecurity through information sharing and interoperability among member states or between the EU and non-EU states.

In terms of external support, Ukraine has benefited from a substantial increase in cyber support from governments or the services of well-known digital companies such as Microsoft and Amazon. These private companies have far greater analytical capabilities than most Western countries (DeCloquement, 2023).

The Russian-Ukrainian war offers some lessons for future cybersecurity conflicts. Cyber attacks are inevitable and can occur both before and during a conflict. States must be proactive in anticipating these attacks and be prepared to assess, manage, and respond to them quickly. Key partnerships must be established in advance between armed forces, allies, industry, and cybersecurity agencies engaging in proactive defensive cyber operations. These partnerships are a fundamental element in this equation. To be resilient in future conflicts, NATO and EU member states should understand that defensive cyber operations are crucial. Thus, member states’ militaries must continue to study Ukraine’s past and present experiences to help develop future military capabilities. Moreover, a coordinated and comprehensive strategy is needed to strengthen defences against the full range of destructive cyber operations, espionage, and propaganda. Defensive strategies must take into account the coordination of these cyber operations with kinetic military operations.

Another lesson identified in this conflict is the need to train more cybersecurity incident response teams or utilise artificial intelligence for more effective detection and rapid response to cyber incidents. Additionally, raising awareness among the populations of NATO and EU member states about cybersecurity risks should be done by promoting cyber hygiene to prevent vulnerabilities in information systems, especially during crisis or wartime situations. Furthermore, there is a need to update cyber legislation and invest in innovative technologies to enhance cyber resilience.

Drawing from Ukraine’s experience, moving data to the cloud has proven to be a solution for more effective data protection. As governments cannot independently develop cyber technologies, software, and expertise, cooperation between public and private services should be fostered in the future, particularly as cyber security firms can aid in cyber defence against large-scale cyber attacks, as witnessed in Ukraine. Moreover, there is a case for increasing interoperability within alliances and beyond by conducting more exercises, crisis simulations, and cyber games to foster a common understanding of the best ways to respond to incidents and mitigate their consequences (Smith, 2022).

The EU Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) pays increased attention to cybersecurity in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and promotes cooperation between Member States to implement the Union’s cybersecurity policies. Cyberspace can only be effectively defended through strong collaboration. Closer cooperation between NATO and EU cyber initiatives contributes to improving the well-being and security of citizens, protecting critical infrastructure, and strengthening cyber defence. NATO and EU officials recently discussed developments in cyber policy and agreed to continue working closely together to improve common understanding, strengthen cyber capabilities, and prevent, deter, and respond to cyber threats (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2023).

At the Vilnius Summit, allies made significant decisions to strengthen cyber defence as part of NATO’s overall deterrence and defence strategy. This includes a commitment to strengthen national cyber defences through the Enhanced NATO Cyber Defence Pledge. In addition, the allies launched NATO’s new Virtual Cyber Incident Support Capability to support national efforts to mitigate the effects of significant malicious cyber actions. This tool provides Allies with an additional resource for assistance (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 2023). By managing cyber defence through multilateral structures within NATO, member states can communicate effectively and share experiences to benefit from best practices and collaboration in the effective use of available expertise and resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Under the paradigm of future warfare, cyberspace attacks are likely to be widely used in large-scale operations attempting to bring about the strategic paralysis of the adversary. The use of cyber forces in the future amplifies and enhances the effects of actions in other areas of military operations, a vital element in the multi-domain actions that are increasingly talked about. Cyber actions are used in a complementary or stand-alone manner.

When all advanced systems depend on high-performance sensors, rapid transmission of massive amounts of data, the accuracy of target detection, implementation of targeting, the realisation of satellite communications and development of power projection capabilities through space-based means of surveillance, reconnaissance and communication, all become vulnerable to cyber attacks. However, these systems may not be as vulnerable as any computer network if not secured in time and correctly. The biggest challenge is to succeed in securing command and control systems that can become centres of gravity at different levels of armed combat (strategic, operational, and tactical).

The trend is to move armed combat into cyberspace to reduce the loss of life but to produce the desired political and military effects in a short time and at minimal cost. Responsible authorities can, therefore, provide the answer to adapting the policies governing cyberspace to offensive technological and procedural developments. At the same time, the most valuable resource is people. Educating them on cyber hygiene is an infinite resource, whether they are experts or simple users of digital space. The more educated they are, the better they will know how to identify, dodge, and act promptly to the waves of cyber incidents that the world experiences daily.

This conflict has created an opportunity for the Russian Federation to use cyber attacks in wartime. It also allows analysts to better understand Russia's strategy for cyber attacks. It also provides defence experts with lessons for the future. While no one can predict how long this war will last, the potential for future Russian aggression remains a concern for the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance.

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THE IMPACT OF THE RUSSIAN WAR ON ITS ABILITY TO PROJECT POWER GEOPOLITICALLY

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In recent years, Russia has gradually lost influence in peripheral states that traditionally used to gravitate around Moscow. China's significant investments in infrastructure development and trade with Central Asian states have isolated Russia, causing it to lose its importance and guiding role in the region. At the same time, Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has led to a complete breakdown in Russian-European relations and increased cohesion among Western nations. Although Russia has lost its role as the world's second-largest power to China, Sino-Russian relations remain a vital issue in regional and international dynamics due to the conjunctural alliance designed to shake the leading role of the US in the global security architecture. The struggle between the West and Russia creates imbalances throughout the international system, and the current World Order seems more disrupted than ever in the last 30 years.

Keywords: NATO; Russia; regional powers; China; Ukraine;

INTRODUCTION

Nearly two years after the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the predictability of the global security environment has diminished, and a wave of simultaneous crises in different geographic regions has taken its place. The transition from the Cold War bipolarism is over. Even though there are still two global players, the USA and China, due to globalisation, they are becoming irrelevant on their own and need other states to create strong alliances to counterbalance strategic adversaries. After the first 20 years of the 21st century, two camps can be distinguished: the Western states, which want to maintain the current security system, and the Moscow-Beijing-Tehran axis, which advocates the creation of a new world order. We thus see how states with undemocratic forms of government are rallying to counterbalance the geopolitical influence of the United States of America, the economic strength of the US-EU tandem and the military power of the North Atlantic Alliance. Although NATO comprises only European and North American states, it has begun to develop cooperation formats with global partners that share the same principles and values (Japan, South Korea, Australia etc.). Thus, the ideological confrontation takes on global dimensions.

The Chinese mediation of peace between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the signing of the strategic partnership between China and Palestine, the enlargement of BRICS with three Arab states and Iran, the repression of Syria in the Arab League, the increase in air incursions by Chinese forces around Taiwan and Chinese interference in the territorial waters of other sovereign states, the multitude of strikes against democratic regimes in the Sub-Saharan region, all represent significant events that have powerful implications in world geopolitics and highlight the strengthening of relations along the Beijing-Moscow-Tehran axis.

Although the increasing violation of the world order based on laws, rules, and order is taking place worldwide, the author considers that a possible disastrous outcome of the Russian army in Eastern Europe may significantly impact the world, disregarding the regional character of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. A potential positive Russian outcome in Ukraine will deal a heavy blow to Western states and reintroduce force diplomacy into international relations, and the possibility of invasions and wars will skyrocket. A possible negative outcome for Russia

in Ukraine could weaken it to an unprecedented degree, thus creating dramatic geopolitical changes, especially in the Caucasus and the Far East. If Russia's war effort is ultimately irrelevant because it cannot achieve its goals, Russia will become militarily and financially decimated. Victory for Ukraine and the West, or Russia's defeat, is the only way to achieve peace in the long term and deter other states from seeking justice by force. A Russian defeat would also resolve the frozen conflicts around the Black Sea and perhaps even a Euro-Atlantic positioning for Belarus, Serbia and Republika Srpska. If Russia wins the war in Ukraine, the force will gradually re-establish itself in international relations and regain its status as the world's third-largest power. China can invade Taiwan, banking on the West's accumulated fatigue.

The world is becoming increasingly multipolar as more and more states seek the status of regional powers and want a greater sphere of influence to give them strategic depth. Russia has declined as a world power but is still the world's most potent regional power. Annexing half of Ukraine will cement that status, while failure would consign it to radical changes produced by its neighbours or originating from within the multi-ethnic federation¹. To change the political regime in Russia, society would have to change. Vladimir Putin's political leadership of the Russian Federation for more than 20 years now seems to be perfectly in line with the consciousness and ideals of the Russian people.

Given the dynamics of the security environment and Russia's desire at all costs to reassert itself globally, a paper is needed that highlights the main geopolitical consequences for Moscow in the course of waging its war of aggression. The scholarly approach to the subject focuses on qualitative data to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena underlying Russia's essence, Russia's external desires and Russia's dynamics in relation to its neighbours. I have used journalistic material from various sources to draw objective conclusions in preparing the article. In what follows, I will make a historical and anthropological analysis of Russian society and highlight the main characteristics of Putinism exercised internally and the way it manifests itself externally. I will then analyse Russia's "good neighbourhood" relations with the states in its former sphere of influence and with the main actors in its vicinity (Turkey, China, and the European Union). At the end of the article, I will highlight how Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine impacts the whole world,

¹ I think this option is much more possible, since Russia still remains a nuclear power, having the largest nuclear arsenal.

not only economically or energetically, but by increasing other states' neo-imperial and revanchist appetite. "The tripolar system is the most unstable, as two powers will soon join forces to eliminate the third one" (Mussetti, 2023, p. 49).

WHO IS RUSSIA?

"Who is Russia?" is a question that has a complex answer. The good thing is that we must only give this answer once, as Russia has remained the same country with imperial and confrontational attitudes. The mentality of Russian leaders and the people's obedience to the anti-democratic character promoted from the top of the state is contrary to the modern security architecture.

To understand the psychology of the Russian people, we must analyse their history and extract, as objectively as possible, those habits that form the existential pattern of their being. Mongol domination for almost three centuries significantly impacted the Russians' historical, cultural, and social development. The pressure exerted by the Mongols poured a lot of paranoia and autocracy into medieval Russian society. With time, the Russians became tolerant of tyranny and obedient to their oppressors. Although they managed to liberate themselves, the Russians were left with the fear of never being invaded again. "Insecurity is the quintessence of Russian national subjectivity" (Kaplan, 2020, p. 292). It was Ivan the Terrible, Russia's first tsar, who initiated the strategy of attack as defence, and since then, this philosophy has become increasingly entrenched in Russian foreign policy. In order not to go through the humiliation of conquest again, the Russians felt the need to sit on the protection of geography, so they expanded to where the seas and oceans met. Through time, the Russian Empire expanded to the Arctic Ocean, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. After the Mongol Empire, the greatest threats to Russia came from the west. In the early 17th century, the Polish-Lithuanian State Union conquered Moscow. Three centuries later, Napoleon set fire to Moscow, and in the last century, Hitler reached the outskirts of the Russian capital. The Great Plain of Northern Europe stretches from northwest France to the Ural Mountains (which separate European and Asian Russia). This geographical area's lack of natural barriers has made it easy to invade from east to west and vice versa. Russians are now watching with concern as the North Atlantic Alliance moves closer to Moscow step by step. Latvia, a NATO member, is only 800 km from Moscow, while Estonia is not even 200 km from the old imperial capital, St Petersburg.

Russia's most significant expansion came after the Second World War. Between 1945 and 1989, Russian influence stretched from Berlin to the Pacific Ocean and from the Arctic Ocean to the border with Afghanistan. In 1991, the Soviet Union broke up into 15 "independent" countries, and Russia was reduced to the size it was before Tsarina Catherine the Great. Despite the territorial loss of the two key former Soviet Union republics (Belarus and Ukraine), the Baltic states, the Caucasus and Central Asia, Russia's territory far exceeds the size of any other nation in the world. The Russian Federation stretches over 170 degrees of longitude, almost half the circumference of our planet. It is the country with the largest area, more than 17 million km², covers 11 time zones, and yet it wants even more territory. Paradoxically, although Russia's territory is almost twice the size of the USA, five times the size of India and 25 times the size of the UK, Russia's population is smaller than that of Bangladesh.

Russia is suffering an acute demographic decline, caused mainly by an ageing population, a declining standard of living, an underperforming medical system, chronic pessimism, and alcoholism. More and more studies predict that most Russian army recruits will soon be non-Slavs but Muslims. Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine has caused the exodus of many Russians with high skills to other countries. By the time Putin signed the partial mobilisation decree in September 2022, some 700,000 highly educated Russians had left the motherland. Russians are a nation that has always been at war. For the 21st century, they had no choice but to adopt a revisionist stance to reclaim its bordering areas where some 26 million ethnic Russians still live.

IS THERE A PACT BETWEEN A BEAR AND A DRAGON?

The most important state that, although it does not show it, certainly does not want the victory of the Collective West is the **People's Republic of China**. On 4 February, Putin arrived in Beijing for a bilateral meeting with China's president. A few hours later, they attended the Winter Olympics opening ceremony. During the meeting, the two heads of state signed the Joint Statement on "Entering a New Era of International Relations and Global Sustainable Development" (Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, 4 February 2022). Chinese support for the non-enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe in exchange for recognition of the One China policy and Taiwan's membership of the Chinese mainland is noted. Many international relations experts have called this joint statement a "no-holds-barred pact" between two states with a shared philosophy

of redesigning the current World Order and fighting common enemies (US, NATO, AUKUS, Japan). Unlike Russia, which is the loser of the geopolitical machinery since the fall of the Berlin Wall, China is the winner of globalisation.

Due to rapid economic growth and global influence, the Trump and Biden administrations have planned to resolve Russian-American differences to create an alliance to counterbalance China. To be sure, Beijing is Washington's most competent adversary, powerful enough to undermine its global hegemony. At first glance, the People's Republic of China appears neutral in this war, but it certainly has a long-term strategy. It is probably watching Russia's battle in Ukraine closely to understand what it needs or it does not need to do in a possible war to invade Taiwan. It is unclear whether China wants the war to last as long as possible so that Russia and the West become as weakened as possible or to end as soon as possible because of trade and global welfare. "China can quietly contemplate Russia's effort to reclaim its sphere of influence, knowing that this will not make it stronger, nor give it the resources to rebuild what it is destroying today, nor increase its already precarious economic strength, and will expose it more to its pressures in the resource rich Far East and Siberia" (Chifu, 2023, p. 217). The tactical alliance against US hegemony is more important now, and the rift between the two remains hidden for now. Still, Russia and China are natural enemies. The border between Russia and China is one of the longest in the world. It stretches for 4,209 km. Both are land powers and want to control Mackinder's Heartland. China has a much larger and more powerful army than Russia. In addition, only 22% of Russia's population is in its Asian part, which paradoxically comprises 75% of all Russian territory and concentrates most of its natural resources. Russia seems to be "slipping" Siberia if it accepts Chinese support for the war it is waging in the West, but also because it is hard to focus on the Far East if you have a war to fight in the West (Asia Times, 2023). Most towns have Chinese restaurants and businesses between the Ural Mountains and the Yenisei River. Many Russians from the Asian area holiday and shop on Chinese soil. For the first time in history, from 1 June 2023, Vladivostok, Russia's main port on the Pacific, will be used by China for its export goods. This is dramatic for Russia as it seems to be losing out in the west and east. The population of Vladivostok, one of the most important cities in the Asian part of Russia, is just over 600,000. Harbin, the most important Chinese city near Vladivostok, has a population of almost 10 million people. "It was a scenario Russia tried to avoid for over a century. During this time, Russia apparently believed that the key to controlling Vladivostok long-term was to isolate the city from the neighboring overwhelming Chinese environment. Now Moscow is breaking its century-old vows" (Ib.).

Former Russian Chief of the General Staff, General Nikolai Makarov, said that the most dangerous geopolitical enemies of the Russian Federation are NATO and China. It seems Putin took the former too seriously and forgot about the dangerous one. In addition to China's economic and demographic takeover of Asia, Russia, Beijing's increasingly active involvement in Central Asia is also noteworthy. On 17 May 2023, the China-Central Asia summit took place where Xi Jinping promised economic prosperity, infrastructure development and security guarantees for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (former Soviet republics). The lesson for Putin's Russia is simple: *"Empires die when they cannot revitalise or adjust their geo-economic, geo-strategic and geo-cultural orientations"* (Mussetti, p. 130).

Being busy with the destructive war in Ukraine, *"Russia has already missed delivery deadlines for equipment and maintenance services to Cameroon and India – a key customer – and Russia may even be buying back its own exports to use in Ukraine"* (Defence News, 2023). In the top 15 companies producing military technology there are six Chinese companies. Like Russia, China offers cheap but high-quality weapons. Serbia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates are not thinking twice when choosing between Russia and China. The Sino-Russian partnership benefits China on all fronts. In addition, at the Xi-Biden or Xi-Schulz meetings, the Chinese President, stated loud and clear that he does not tolerate Russia using nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

FRACTURE OF RUSSIA'S ARC OF INFLUENCE IN EUROPE

If we were to make a top three list of Russia's most significant geopolitical fears, it would look like this: Ukraine in NATO, a united Europe, and China. Russia has always benefited from the differences between the major European powers. It has been opportunistic enough to enter into alliances with other European states to maximise its influence over the old continent.

Russia's inability to declare war on a European NATO member state has led it to develop other strategies to divide and conquer Europe. The primary tool used by the Russian Federation is the *Gerasimov Doctrine*. It emphasises using a broad spectrum of means, both military and non-military, to achieve strategic objectives in conflict. It includes disinformation, propaganda, cyber operations, political campaigns and, in extreme cases, military action. An essential component of this approach is that these means are synchronised to create confusion and instability in the target society. Through the Gerasimov Doctrine, Russia can pursue strategic

objectives without launching an open war. Russia has become a specialist in 5D warfare (disinformation, deception, destabilisation, destruction, and disruption). Underlying this idea, we see Russia's involvement in: BREXIT, the election of Donald Trump, secessionist movements in Europe, Europe's energy policy and the funding of far-right populist parties claiming the mirage of sovereignty.

The European Union was created as an antidote to the nationalism and competitiveness that has constantly generated conflict on the European continent, from which Russia has benefited. With the naked eye, one can see how Europe is becoming stronger and more prosperous thanks to unity under the EU umbrella, yet there are Eurosceptics. The feeling is that, in recent years, far-right parties have gained more and more momentum, and the war in Ukraine has helped them incredibly because of the economic problems in every country. So, the upcoming elections in major European countries are creating chills. The free and democratic world has to make its financial contributions to the war effort by arming Ukraine, inflation, supporting refugees, and increasing energy or heating bills. It may not be fair, but it is correct. Maybe that's what Putin is counting on and why he didn't want to defeat Ukraine quickly. Perhaps the ultimate goal is not to conquer all of Ukraine but to wage war long enough until the West splits and the US turns its back on Europe. Putin's strategy is simple but effective: chaos to get people out on the streets and generate political change with pseudo-sovereignist governments. Three months before it took over the EU Council presidency (1 July 2022), the Czech Republic saw large-scale protests. Around 70 thousand people took to the streets to protest against NATO and for Czech neutrality in the war in Ukraine. Militarily, the USA and its European allies are helping to turn Russia's war in Ukraine into a significant strategic failure. The West has pursued an *"anything but Article 5"* support strategy for Ukraine. NATO states will not send soldiers from their professional armed forces to fight in Ukraine. Still, they will help the Ukrainian people with humanitarian assistance, economic support, and military support with weapons according to the needs of the Ukrainian armed forces, the goal being to weaken Russia as much as possible and deter other belligerent states.

It is fascinating the change of strategy among European states. Sweden and Finland expressed their intention to join NATO, which became a fact in the case of Finland, Moldova and Ukraine are EU candidates, Denmark and Norway have sent Ukraine lethal weapons and material support, and Switzerland has imposed sanctions on Russia. Perhaps the most critical development is that of Germany, which, before the war, was dependent on and subjugated by Putin's energy caliphate

but has now abandoned Nord Stream 2, delivered heavy weapons to Ukraine and, most importantly, will invest massively in the Bundeswehr. Paradoxically, along with Germany, Japan plans to invest some \$52bn in defence by 2023. According to the Ukraine Support Tracker, Germany is the European state that has invested the most in Ukraine's security, followed by the UK's contributions. France ranks 15th in this regard. Between 24 February 2022 and 31 May 2023, France provided about half a billion dollars for Ukraine, almost as much as Estonia and less than Lithuania. Turkey is also ranked 26th globally, contributing less than Luxembourg, and Romania does not appear in the top 30. One of the lessons the Europeans should learn from this war is the need to revitalise and materialise the discussion about the European Union Army: *"Europeans have been extremely lucky to have President Joe Biden's consensual transatlantic leadership. Just imagine the mess if Donald Trump had been in the White House when Putin's tanks barged into Ukraine"* (The Guardian, 2023). The rift between Europe and Russia seems total at the moment, and the confidence of the major European chancelleries in Putin ended when the Russian President promised the President of France and the Chancellor of Germany that he would not start any military invasion of Ukraine. The near future seems to follow this trajectory. Only a complete regime change could bring a historic reconciliation between post-Putin Russia and Europe.

THE BLACK SEA CHESSBOARD

A real *game-changer* in the security architecture of Southeast Europe is the calibration of Russian interests with Turkish interests in the Black Sea region. Turkish-Russian relations are complex, characterised by cooperation and rivalry in equal measure. Turkey is where East meets West, European Christianity meets Islam, and many distinct cultures and civilisations intersect. In geopolitical terms, **Turkey** is the easternmost point of NATO and the only remaining open communication channel between the West and Russia. Turkey is a very atypical NATO member because Erdogan puts Turkey's interests first and then those of its allies. Thus, over the last 20 years, Turkey has adopted a transactionalist attitude, being with the West and the rest, due to its geographical position, which gives it an overwhelming strategic importance.

Turkey is the only state in the Black Sea region that can compete on equal terms with Russia. However, Turkey and Russia have the same strategy for the Black Sea. They both advocate regionalisation of the sea and do not want the presence of the US or the EU. Given the interdependencies between the two, a diplomatic conflict

would come with a multitude of consequences, both economic and geopolitical. Russia has been blessed with the largest natural gas reserves in the world, the second-largest coal reserves, and the eighth largest oil reserves. This is perfect, considering that Turkey depends on oil, energy, and raw materials imports.

Since the beginning of the war, Turkey has accused Russia of violating international law and does not recognise the annexation of the people's republics in eastern Ukraine or the Crimean Peninsula. Erdogan knows that whoever controls the Crimean Peninsula controls the Black Sea. If you add South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Ukraine's Pontic littoral to Russia's territory, it becomes obvious who is the biggest threat to Turkey's existence. Before the NATO summit in Vilnius, Turkey gave Russia the coup de grace and accepted the transformation of the Baltic Sea into a NATO lake by accepting Sweden's membership. In response, not two weeks later, Russia unilaterally withdrew from the Black Sea Grains Pact, causing much instability in the Black Sea and the African continent. The Wider Black Sea Region is the most unpredictable area in Europe because of Russia and the frozen conflicts that can flare up at any time. During the Vilnius summit, the Black Sea was recognised for the first time as an area of strategic importance. *"The communiqué dedicates a paragraph to the Black Sea region for the first time in the history of NATO summits. However, it consigns the Black Sea region to paragraph 79 in a total of 90 paragraphs"* (The Jamestown Foundation-1, 2023). It seems that NATO is self-investigating the imminent risks in the Black Sea, but even so, it does not want to get so involved in Russia's "yard", or it cannot because of the Montreux Convention.

General Ben Hodges, former commander of US ground troops in Europe and author of the US strategy for the Black Sea region, visited Romania in August 2023 and proposed a trilateral alliance of NATO Black Sea states to deter Russia. Erdogan plays neither for NATO, Russia, nor China. He only plays for Turkey. In the 100 years of the Turkish Republic's existence, Erdogan is considered the second most important Turk after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Turkey's current President would do whatever it takes to enter the history books and restore the influence of the Ottoman Empire. The war in Ukraine gives him the perfect opportunity. It is possible that Erdogan, strategic and challenging as he is, will wait quietly until Russia's forces become weak enough, just before the Ukrainians enter the Crimean Peninsula. If Ukraine wins the war, Zelensky may allow Turkey, under the NATO banner, to build a military base in Crimea on the ruins of the old Sevastopol base. Turkey will then clear the Caucasus of Russian troops stationed there, transitioning from the *Blue Homeland doctrine*

to influence and strategic depth in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and the Black Sea. This is how Erdogan wants to be remembered. Interestingly, NATO is nowhere to be found in this scenario. It is simply the individual intentions of NATO states. The Mine Countermeasures Group in the Black Sea was recently set up under Turkish leadership, with Romania and Bulgaria as crucial members.

On 4 September 2023, Erdogan travelled to Sochi, Russia, for bilateral talks with Putin. The topics on the Turkish President's list for discussion included the naval blockade of Ukraine, restrictions on freedom of navigation in the Black Sea, hostile actions targeting the Sukru Okran ship sailing to the Ukrainian port of Ismail, drone attacks at the mouth of the Danube, and Moscow's refusal to allow 12 merchant ships, which were stationed in the ports of Mykolaiv and Kherson, to return to Turkey. There are not many times when Erdogan can be bullied and left without a response, but Russia's President managed to do it. *"Putin told Erdogan publicly that Russian warships have been deployed to protect the South Stream and Blue Stream pipelines that carry Russian gas to Turkey. It was a slight to Erdogan, implying that Turkey's own navy was not up to the task. It was also a reminder that Russian warships feel free to patrol relatively close to Turkish waters"* (Socor-1, 2023). Erdogan did not return to Turkey empty-handed but secured several major economic projects to further increase Turkey's dependence on the EU, among Putin's promises: the natural gas hub that will make Turkey the most prominent regional distributor, as well as faster progress on the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant (which will generate 10% of Turkey's electricity consumption).

According to the national interest, Erdogan's Turkey can be characterised as a flexible, adaptable, and changeable actor. It can renounce its status as a NATO ally if the situation requires it and can create new alliances depending on the moment's circumstances. It seems normal considering Turkey's peripheral geographic location compared to its Euro-Atlantic allies. Turkey is the only country within the North Atlantic Alliance that maintains an open dialogue with Putin and has not imposed economic sanctions on Russia, and in fact, continues to do business with the aggressor state. On the other hand, Turkey seems to support Ukraine militarily by supplying it with Bayraktar drones while refusing to sell them to Russia. The Turkish company has invested over \$100 million in a factory that will produce Bayraktar drones and one that will facilitate the maintenance of these UAVs, both located on Ukrainian soil. A possible sale of Bayraktar Akinci UAVs is currently being negotiated. If this scenario becomes reality, it will be the first time that one of the warring

parties sends HALE (High Altitude Long Endurance) class drones into combat. With the delivery of F-16s, Ukraine will begin to have air capabilities comparable to Russia's, and the fate of the war may change in the West's favour.

CONCLUSIONS

The whole world is wondering how long Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine will last, as it has enormous implications everywhere. The world is a living organism, like a human being, it has its ups and downs. It has upward periods of prosperity and wealth and downward periods in which more and more regions are engulfed in chaos and war. Russia's war in Ukraine is creating a humanitarian disaster, economic stagnation and collapse, widespread armament and the risk of nuclear war, a food crisis, an energy crisis, and a deteriorating security situation in other parts of the world.

It is tough to analyse a war that is in full swing and shows no sign of stopping any time soon, but in this article, I wanted to bring to the fore the main coordinates that may suggest the beginning of a new World Order. Russia cannot be easily defeated on the battlefield, but it cannot win the war in Ukraine, and the world will undoubtedly look different at the end of this conflict. Some 80 weeks of military confrontation have passed at the time of writing. In the chess game on the front, the armed forces seem to be in continuous expectation, with no apparent prospect of ending Russian aggression.

At the end of the war, whatever the outcome, Ukraine will need reconstruction, security guarantees and EU membership. International law seems irrelevant in the face of powerful, nuclear-capable states constantly undermining it and aggressing against their neighbours, and the UN Security Council is increasingly proving its insignificant role in resolving the planet's major geopolitical crises. Perhaps a change in the World Order should start by reforming the UN and the machinery of the Security Council.

It is imperative that in the event of a Ukrainian victory, when Russia will be perceived as a pariah state and seen as easy prey by the Chinese dragon, the European Union and the USA intervene to support Russia's democratisation and resilience-building efforts so as not to leave a power vacuum to be filled by Communist China. Following the Treaty of Versailles (1919), France humiliated Germany, and in precisely 21 years, Nazi Germany invaded France. We must learn the lessons of history and not let Russia fall into the arms of China.

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"TRUTH" DECAY IN THE DIGITAL AGE. POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE

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In today's interconnected world, the phenomenon of truth decay has become a significant social concern. Truth decay refers to the gradual erosion of the concept of truth and the gradual decrease of respect for objective facts, evidence and experts' opinions, based on specialized knowledge. Facilitated by the rapid advancement of technology and the rise of social media platforms, this phenomenon has profound implications for social processes and interactions, public discourse and overall trust within modern democratic societies.

This article explores the causes and consequences of truth degradation in modern society (as a broader societal phenomenon) and examines its implications for security and defence. It also explores the ways in which the truth decay can be maliciously exploited in the context of hybrid warfare, as a tool for manipulating public opinion, spreading confusion and undermining societal cohesion, and highlights the importance of addressing this issue.

Keywords: truth decay; hybrid warfare; security and defence; opinion and fact; polarization and division;

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of *truth degradation* can be viewed from a temporal perspective as inevitable, in the sense that much of what we consider to be unquestionable (ideas, knowledge etc.) has an expiration date. Scientific progress involves a continual transformation of knowledge which has been accepted over time as true, and portions of what we assume to be true will eventually be invalidated. There are even studies (Arbesman, 2012) that address the way in which change occurs and even identify the speed (differentiated by areas of study) in which knowledge once considered certain scientific truths will over time lose this quality and "degrade".

It does not mean that we should be puzzled (in a world where information loses its truth value and changes), because this process is relatively slow in time (on the order of decades), but the awareness that there are patterns within this process of "truth degradation" can help us identify truths that are about to expire.

This paper does not aim to address this facet of the phenomenon of truth decay, but that of deliberate denial of events, ideas, knowledge and the creation of a new reality, a phenomenon identified in the literature by the expressions "post-truth", "alternative facts" or "failure of the notion of objective truth" (Simina, 2017).

THEORETICAL ASPECTS AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES

Truth decay is a term invented by researchers at the RAND Corporation that describes the gradual erosion of the concept of truth in the modern contemporary society (Kavanagh, Rich, 2017, p. 199). It refers to the declining confidence in facts, data and evidence in public discourse, policy-making as well as in social interactions.

Truth decay is characterized by a combination of four **tendencies**:

- a. *Growing disagreement about facts*: People are increasingly polarized and have divergent views on basic facts, such as scientific evidence or historical events. This leads to a fracture in the common perception of reality and makes it difficult to have a constructive discussion and find any common ground.
- b. *The distinction between opinion and fact is increasingly blurred*: The distinction between subjective opinions and objective facts is becoming more and more unclear. With the rise of social media and online platforms,

individuals can easily present personal beliefs or misinformation as “*alternative facts*”, thus blurring the line between truth and fallacy.

- c. *Declining trust in institutions and in the expertise of specialists*: There is a notable decline of public trust in traditional institutions such as the mass-media, government and academia. Scepticism towards the experts and professionals has increased, making it difficult to establish a common understanding of reality based on reliable sources of information.
- d. *Increased interpretation of reality through the lens of personal experience and emotions*: Personal narratives and emotional appeals often carry more weight in public debates than rational arguments and empirical evidence. Emotionally charged narratives and stories spread rapidly through social media, regardless of their factual accuracy, as the algorithms running them are programmed to make “*viral*” these types of posts.

These trends have been amplified in the digital age, in which rapid dissemination of information and the prevalence of social media platforms as sources of information have amplified the spread of misinformation and created “*echo chambers*” (or “*information bubbles*”) that reinforce existing beliefs and biases. In this context, “*An echo chamber emerges when a group of participants choose to preferentially connect with each other, to the exclusion of outsiders. The more this network is formed [...] they would actively have to both seek out engagement with like-minded others, and stay away from those who might introduce them to alternative views*” (Bruns, 2017).

Analysing the phenomenon of truth decay from a causal perspective, we can identify some of the **sources** of its present escalation:

1. *The rise of social media*: The proliferation of social media platforms has revolutionized the way we consume and share information. However, the lack of moderation of posts and the ease with which controversial information can be spread for the purpose of misinformation contributes to the degradation of truth. False or misleading narratives can quickly gain popularity and go viral, often due to their emotional appeal rather than their factual accuracy.
2. *Information overload*: The digital age we live in has created the conditions for our daily exposure to an overwhelming amount of information. As a result, individuals often resort (unconsciously) to the mechanism of confirmation bias, seeking out information that is consistent with and confirms their pre-existing beliefs, ignoring or rejecting contradictory evidence.

Permanently reinforced, this selective exposure to only one type of information leads to the formation of “*echo chambers*”, which contribute to the consolidation of existing biases and hinder an objective search for truth.

3. *The decline of media literacy*: With the increasing availability of information, media literacy has become more important than ever. However, some studies indicate that a significant portion of the population lacks the skills to critically evaluate the information they encounter online (Wineburg, McGrew, Breakstone, Ortega, 2016). The inability to distinguish reliable from unreliable sources contributes to the spread of misinformation and the erosion of trust in traditional institutions.

The **consequences** of truth decay are profound and should not be neglected. It can contribute to undermining the foundations of democratic societies, impede informed decision-making, weaken social cohesion and can lead to separate realities where individuals live in information bubbles that reinforce their existing beliefs, further polarizing society.

We will now examine each of these consequences individually, as follows:

- a. *Polarization and division*: Degradation of truth favours polarization within society as individuals become voluntary captives of their own echo chambers. This division weakens social cohesion and prevents meaningful dialogue, making it increasingly difficult to find common ground on important societal issues. The erosion of shared understanding of reality undermines the foundations of democratic discourse and decision-making.
- b. *Erosion of trust*: Assuming that trust in institutions and the expertise of specialists is essential for the proper functioning of society, the degradation of truth undermines this trust by feeding scepticism and conspiracy mindset. When objective facts are questioned, public confidence in scientific research, journalism/mass media and democratic institutions declines. Among the (second-degree) derivative consequences identified are a decreased willingness to engage in collective problem-solving and an erosion of faith in democratic processes.
- c. *Misinformation and manipulation*: The spread of misinformation poses a significant threat to democracy. Malicious entities can exploit the existing phenomenon of truth decay to manipulate public opinion and achieve tangible results in society (e.g., influencing election results). False narratives, conspiracy theories and “*deep fakes*” can be used to spread confusion, distrust and division as part of disinformation campaigns, jeopardizing the integrity of democratic systems.

From the perspective of studying the truth decay phenomenon, it requires a multidisciplinary approach that must combine perspectives from various fields such as psychology, sociology, communication studies and political science. Currently there is no specific scientific tool designed exclusively for studying this phenomenon. However, by extension, we can suggest that a number of existing research methods and tools can be used to investigate the underlying causes, consequences and its dynamics, such as:

- Surveys and questionnaires – to collect data on public attitudes, beliefs and perceptions about the notion of truth, trends in information consumption and trust in institutions, as these can help measure and quantify developments, opinions and changes over time.
- Content analysis – involves the systematic analysis of different types of media content (news articles, social media posts and public speeches) to examine the existence and frequency of misinformation, how facts are described, sources of information in the media and the level of bias present in their content.
- Experimental studies – to explore causal relationships and test hypotheses related to truth degradation by exposing study participants to manipulated information and analysing responses, to understand the impact of misinformation on belief formation and behaviour.
- Network analysis – to study the spread of information and the formation of echo chambers within social networks; network structure can be analysed, influential nodes identified and information diffusion tracked to better understand how truth decay manifests itself in online communities.
- Cognitive and behavioural experiments – to study how individuals process information, make judgments and form beliefs, with the aim of identifying cognitive biases and psychological factors that contribute to truth degradation, such as confirmation bias or motivated reasoning.
- Qualitative research methods – interviews, focus groups and case studies can be used to gain an in-depth insight into perspectives, experiences and decision-making processes based on the perception of truth and related information.

The selection of specific tools depends on the research questions, available resources and the nature of the study. What is important is to adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, to gain a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon of truth decay.

We observe the existence in the specialized literature of studies that analyse through the lens of the truth decay phenomenon some of its consequences in society. Thus, in terms of *declining trust in institutions*, studies have shown a decline of public trust in institutions such as the mass-media, government and academia. For example, the Edelman Trust Barometer (<https://www.edelman.com/trust/trust-barometer>), which measures global trust levels annually, reported a significant decline of trust in media and government in many countries. In 2023, global trust in institutions was at a record minimum, with only 56% of respondents reporting that they trust government, business, media and NGO institutions (Global Report 2023).

With regard to *misinformation and disinformation*, we see that they have become more prevalent in the digital age. A Pew Research Center survey found that Americans are increasingly polarized in their news consumption, with liberals and conservatives relying on different news providers and having fewer overlaps in terms of which news sources they trust, and 64% of Americans said that made-up news caused them a great deal of confusion about the factual unfolding of current events (Mitchell, Gottfried, Stocking, Walker&Fedeli, 2019).

In terms of *polarization and confirmation bias*, it has been found that these social tendencies have become prevalent. Research indicates that people are increasingly seeking information that aligns with their existing beliefs and are less likely to consider opposing views (Pennycook, Rand, 2021, pp. 388-402).

Regarding the *influence of social media and the role of social media platforms in spreading misinformation*, a study conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) found that false information spreads faster and more widely than true information on social platforms, with estimates that false information reaches people six times faster than accurate information (on Twitter/X) (Vosoughi, Roy, Aral, 2018, pp. 1146-1151).

In terms of *trust in the media*, confidence in both traditional and modern media sources has declined. The Reuters Institute report from Oxford University found an overall decline of trust in the media, with only 40% of respondents saying they trust news in general (Reuters Institute Digital News Report, 2023).

Finally, on the *impact of truth decay on democratic processes*, a Freedom House study found that leaders in many countries are increasingly using disinformation to suppress dissent, manipulate elections and consolidate their power. The study noted that 32 out of 65 countries assessed have seen a decline in Internet freedom due to increased online manipulation and disinformation campaigns, and that *"Artificial intelligence can serve as an amplifier of digital repression, making*

ensorship, surveillance, and the creation and spread of disinformation easier, faster, cheaper, and more effective" (Freedom on the Net, 2023).

It should be noted that the field of studying truth decay is a relatively new one, and further research is needed to highlight other aspects of it.

HYBRID WARFARE IN THE CONTEXT OF TRUTH DECAY

There is a link between *truth decay and hybrid warfare*, particularly in the context of information warfare and manipulation. It is important to note that truth decay itself is a broader societal phenomenon, while hybrid warfare refers to a specific strategy used by state or non-state actors in conflict situations.

Hybrid warfare refers to the use of a combination of conventional and unconventional tactics, including informational and psychological operations, to achieve strategic objectives, often with the line between military and non-military actions being extremely blurred.

In the context of hybrid warfare, the decay of truth can be exploited and amplified as a tool for manipulating public opinion, spreading confusion and discord in order to undermine democratic processes and the cohesion of the society as a whole. We can identify several key connections in different areas between truth decay and hybrid warfare, which are detailed below:

- *Disinformation and propaganda* – The decay of truth provides fertile ground for the spread of disinformation and propaganda, which are key elements of hybrid warfare. State and non-state actors can deliberately disseminate false or misleading information to bend the truth, create confusion and manipulate public feelings. By exploiting the decay of the truth, these actors can erode trust in institutions, encourage divisions within societies and promote their strategic goals.
- *Psychological Operations (PsyOps)* – Hybrid warfare often involves psychological operations designed to influence the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of individuals and target groups. Truth decay can increase the effectiveness of these operations by the adversary exploiting the weakened trust in traditional sources of information and the prevalence of echo chambers. Manipulative narratives, conspiracy theories and fabricated evidence can be used to shape public opinion, exacerbate social divisions and undermine societal resilience.
- *Transforming social media* – Social media platforms have become key "battlegrounds" in hybrid warfare, facilitating the dissemination of false

or misleading information to target audiences. The degradation of truth, with its associated challenges of misinformation and erosion of trust, can be exploited in this context. Coordinated influence campaigns (using automated tools – bots or human tools – trolls) can exploit echo chambers created by truth decay (where individuals are more likely to believe and share information that aligns with their existing beliefs and biases), amplify divisive narratives, target specific demographics, and spread false information to create or exacerbate social tensions. This manipulation of discourse online can have real-world consequences, affecting political processes, public opinion and even the stability of nations.

- *Undermining democratic processes* – Hybrid warfare seeks to undermine democratic processes and institutions. Truth decay can contribute to this by eroding trust in electoral systems, spreading false information about candidates or election results, and encouraging scepticism about democratic principles of transparency and accountability. By exploiting the degradation of truth, hybrid war actors can weaken democratic leadership and create opportunities for future manipulation and increased "mind control".

The consequences of the connections between truth decay and hybrid warfare can be significant. In order to prevent or minimize the effects of possible exploitation of truth degradation in hybrid warfare, it is essential to develop robust strategies to promote societal information resilience.

This includes strengthening of media literacy and critical thinking among the population, investing time and effort in fact-checking initiatives and verification mechanisms, and promoting transparency and accountability within the online platforms. Governments, civil society, media organizations and technology companies need to collaborate and coordinate their efforts to be better able to detect and counter information manipulation, to promote accurate information, to protect democratic processes and to preserve the integrity of public discourse.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD OF SECURITY AND DEFENCE

Truth decay has significant security and defence implications as it can have an impact on the effectiveness of military operations, undermine the integrity of information and intelligence gathering process, erode public confidence in state defence and security institutions and impact the decision-making processes. We present below a checklist with a brief description of the ways in which this phenomenon can influence the above-mentioned areas.

❖ *Disinformation and hybrid warfare*

Degradation of truth fuels the spread of disinformation, which is often used as a tactic in hybrid warfare. State and non-state actors can disseminate false information or propaganda to manipulate public opinion, create discord and confusion, and undermine efforts to ensure national security. Disinformation campaigns can target military operations, intelligence activities and public opinion, hampering decision-making processes and eroding confidence in security and defence institutions. False narratives and fabricated information can be disseminated to destabilize society, influence the natural course of elections or provoke conflicts of various types and intensities.

❖ *Perception and influence*

Perception is crucial in security and defence. Degradation of truth undermines the ability to accurately assess and perceive security threats, since, when objective facts are distorted or ignored, decision-makers may base their judgments on biased or incomplete information.

This can lead to inaccurate allocation of defence resources, flawed strategic planning, inadequate responses to emerging threats and ineffective public information about security concerns. In the field of national security, accurate threat perception and credible intelligence institutions' assessments (accurate and reliable intelligence) are essential for informed decision-making, and not least to ensure the safety and well-being of the population.

❖ *Impact on decision-making*

Truth decay can have a negative impact on the effectiveness of decision-making processes within security and defence institutions. When accurate information is scarce or viewed with scepticism, it becomes difficult to develop well-informed strategies, allocate resources appropriately and respond effectively to emerging threats. Lack of trust in expert knowledge and institutions can hinder timely and effective decision-making.

❖ *Confidence in defence, public order and national security institutions*

Degradation of truth erodes trust in state institutions, including the military, intelligence agencies and law enforcement. Explicit scepticism towards the views of experts and professionals can hinder cooperation with security agencies, impede information sharing and undermine public support for national security initiatives. Erosion of trust weakens the resilience of society as a whole, making it more difficult to mobilize public support and collaboration in times of crisis or conflict.

❖ *Weakening alliances and partnerships*

Trust is a cornerstone of international alliances and partnerships. Degradation of truth can erode trust between nations, affecting security and defence cooperation.

When there is scepticism about the accuracy of information and a decline in trust about the intentions of allies, collaboration and coordination become more difficult, which can undermine collective defence efforts.

❖ *Cyber security challenges*

Degradation of truth intersects with cyber security challenges, as disinformation campaigns can be used to exploit vulnerabilities in digital systems that operate critical infrastructure elements. The spread of false information can be used to manipulate the general public's affective state about alleged vulnerabilities or weaknesses in defence infrastructure, to deceive individuals or organizations by exploiting security gaps, and to compromise the reliability of digital critical systems and infrastructures.

Ensuring cyber security requires addressing the impact of truth degradation in addition to purely technical issues, as misinformation and manipulation can undermine efforts to secure critical computer network-based systems.

❖ *Vulnerabilities in critical information infrastructures*

Misinformation and disinformation can pose risks to critical information infrastructures, including defence systems. False information or manipulated narratives about vulnerabilities or weaknesses in defence infrastructure can exploit security gaps and compromise the reliability of systems. This can have serious implications for national security and defence preparedness.

❖ *Social cohesion and radicalization*

Truth decay can contribute to social divisions, polarization and radicalization, which can have implications for national security. When society becomes fragmented and trust erodes, it becomes easier for radical ideologies to gain traction, leading to social disorder, violence and threats to public safety. Efforts to counter radicalization and maintain social cohesion require active measures to address the factors that underpin the degradation of truth, including misinformation, echo chambers and the erosion of trust.

To address the influence of truth decay on defence and security, it is essential to promote media literacy (Huguet, Baker, Hamilton, Pane, 2021) and encourage critical thinking as preconditions for achieving resilience to disinformation. Strengthening information sharing and collaboration between security agencies and the public, investing in robust cyber security measures, promoting greater transparency and accountability in security operations can also help mitigate the impact of truth degradation on defence and security efforts.

We also believe that addressing the influence of truth decay on defence and security requires a number of proactive measures:

- Building resilience – Building resilience against disinformation and misinformation is essential. It involves promoting media literacy, critical

thinking skills and providing education and training to enhance people's ability to discern reliable sources of information.

- Information sharing and collaboration – Encouraging transparent information sharing and collaboration between defence and security institutions (both domestic and international) can help counter the spread of disinformation and improve situational awareness.
- Additional investment in intelligence and counter-intelligence capabilities – It is essential to strengthen intelligence assets to identify and counter disinformation campaigns by creating and developing robust monitoring, analysis and response mechanisms to identify and mitigate threats in real time (particularly in the online environment).
- Strengthening cyber security – Strengthening cyber security measures is vital to protect critical defence infrastructures and information systems against cyber-attacks and manipulation. It must include the implementation of strong authentication, encryption and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the integrity and reliability of information.
- Involvement of society – Promoting transparency, accountability and effective communication with the public is crucial to promoting trust and countering the truth decay phenomenon. Engaging citizens in dialogues, providing accurate information and addressing their concerns can help mitigate the impact of misinformation.

By recognizing the influence of truth decay on defence and security and implementing appropriate strategies, it is possible to mitigate risks, strengthen resilience and ensure more effective defence and security measures.

CONCLUSIONS

Truth decay is a significant challenge to democratic societies as a whole, to public discourse and to the well-being of the society. Without a common set of facts, data and statistical analysis, it becomes almost impossible to have a meaningful debate about important policies and topics (e.g., immigration, health care or the national economy). Addressing this phenomenon requires a multi-dimensional approach and a concerted effort involving media education, collaboration between technology companies and researchers.

Cultivating critical thinking skills, promoting media literacy, fact-checking initiatives, and encouraging a culture that values evidence-based reasoning are essential steps towards mitigating the impact of truth degradation and restoring trust in facts and expertise. Through coordinated collective action, we can counter the erosion of truth and ensure a more informed, inclusive and resilient future society.

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COMPLEXITY, VISION AND POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE WIDER BLACK SEA AREA SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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The present article is based on the hypothesis that Russian destructiveness is not only manifested through military aggression and does not have effects only on the imbalance zones created by the Russian Federation, in order to fulfil the strategic objectives in the Wider Black Sea Area.

Being the most contested by the great global powers, since the Cold War period, when the space was divided between the military blocs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, the Wider Black Sea Area currently has a role of strategic importance regarding the reconfiguration of power poles at global level, being the point of intersection of the geopolitical and economic interests of South-Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caucasus, a space with considerable natural resources and an energy transit area with a major impact on European countries.

Keywords: Wider Black Sea Area; Russian Federation; frozen conflicts; strategic objectives; NATO;

Motto:

"We are thus located in this region, in a triple complex, where the influences from Central Europe; from the South, from the Balkans; from the East, from the Russian and Asian steppes intersect".

Gheorghe I. Brătianu

INTRODUCTION

In the century of paradigms, of non-transparent challenges, caused by multiple and constantly evolving factors, while at the international level the visions of the ongoing events in regions of strategic importance for certain global actors move from one concept to another, the global security environment is characterized by dynamism, change, unpredictability, unconventional tactics and operations, with fluctuations from one region to another.

Although after 2014, the Russian Federation seemed to focus more on the South-West, Africa, the Middle East, the South-East, and on Asia-Pacific, the year 2022, I would say, was not a peaceful year, given that the offensive operation led by the Russian military against Ukraine (starting on 24 February 2022) and, by implication, Ukraine, as the epicentre of international discussions, was only one of the 56 countries that experienced violence and war last year.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the outbreak of which has been discussed since 2021, being then only a time horizon for its outbreak, has played, since it was only a hypothesis, a significant role in straining the already unstable relations between the great powers, fuelling growing disagreements at the level of global politics, with a major impact on its ability to manage and resolve local and regional conflicts, disputes.

After decades, as the first interstate conflict that involved permanent mobilization of forces and means throughout 2022, the countries involved being part of the Black Sea littoral states, the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) returns, again, to international attention, being shaded in the last period of large-scale intrastate events from other areas of the world.

Being the most contested area by the great global powers, since the Cold War period, marked by political-strategic antagonism, when the Soviets could not accept the American or any other non-European power's participation in European affairs,

when the space was divided between the political-military blocs military, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact (WP), the WBSA currently has a role of strategic importance in terms of the reconfiguration of power poles at the global level, being the point of intersection of Europe's geopolitical and economic interests of the Southeast, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Caucasus, a space with considerable natural resources and an energy transit area with a major impact on European countries.

Since ancient times, the region has been characterized by continuous security instability, based on an enormity of diverse challenges represented by ethnic, ideological, religious, commercial and other interests and differences, which, including in the 21st century, have not been able to reach a point of convergence. In fact, the instability in the area is becoming more and more accentuated, against the background of *"the biggest armed conflict after the Second World War"* (Dumitrescu, 2023), the Russian-Ukrainian conflict that started more than a year ago.

The tendencies of great and small actors on the geopolitical scene to consolidate their independence and influence in Europe make the WBSA an important ring in which there is a *"struggle for supremacy"* between them, a complex space characterized by a multitude of variables, the scene of *"competition between state and non-state entities"* (Bogzeanu, 2012, p. 7). The complexity is generated by a mix of the diversity of entities in this area, regardless of their nature, *"connected to distinct mechanisms and phenomena"* (ib.).

CONFLUENCE OF INSTABILITY AND INTERESTS OF WBSA STATES

"Historical analysis demonstrates the iron link between European security and balance in the Black Sea basin". (Cropsey, Scutaru, Halem, Colibășanu, 2023, p. 36).

The position of the Russian Federation regarding the Black Sea represents a serious threat to European security in a military, commercial and energy context. Since the period before the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula (2014) by the Russian Federation, the security environment in the WBSA has gone through numerous imbalances, consequences of the objectives and strategic actions of the Black Sea littoral countries and their neighbours, located in an area built on an amalgam of beliefs, ideologies, religions and more or less conservative and dictatorial tendencies.

From east to west and from north to south, the countries of the WBSA have gone through long periods of conflict and influence, most of them expressing their intentions to get closer to NATO and to the West, an aspect strongly disapproved

by the great power on the Black Sea, the Russian Federation, and the areas under its influence and control, which are maintained in the form of frozen conflicts. The purpose of unbalancing these areas is to keep NATO away from the borders of the Russian state.

If in the west and south of the Black Sea there are NATO member states, some of them being also members of the European Union, the littoral states in the north and east are entities from the ex-Soviet space, over which the Moscow administration wants to have control, u that, according to Putin's strategy, are border provinces, areas that must be militarized or demilitarized according to own interests.

I appreciate that the most important state bordering the Black Sea is the Republic of Turkiye, a NATO member state having an imperial past, whose leadership maintains a conservative-Islamic regime, conducting a foreign policy that is seen by experts as one in an imperial form.



Figure no. 1: Inherent expansionism according to Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine¹ (Eurocontinent, 2021)

"Turkey is very important by its simple positioning at the intersection of east-west, north-south, and the war in Ukraine benefitted it, because it had faded into obscurity, which does not suit it" (Constantin-Bercean, Blănaru, 2023). Turkey is also favoured in the region by the Montreux Convention, which gives it the power to *"own"* the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. Although a NATO member, Turkey

¹ *Blue Homeland doctrine* expresses the holistic integration of the Turkish land and maritime claims, being part of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan neo-Ottoman agenda. It refers to modern Turkey's return to a larger geographical area where the Ottoman Empire used to be a hegemon.

uses this convention to keep NATO countries at a distance from the Black Sea in order not to undermine its control in the area. Moreover, the administration in Ankara plays the role of peacemaker in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and at the same time tries to maintain good relations with the Russian Federation, with which it is in agreement regarding the reconfiguration of a new world order and with which it has even cooperated in military terms, against its responsibilities as a NATO member state, contrary to the fact that in certain areas of operations the two states play on different sides of the Line of Contact (e.g., Nagorno-Karabakh). *“Both great powers of the Black Sea – Russia and Turkey – tend to oppose (each in its own way) the penetration of security and development infrastructure by the West in the region, which has been – at least for the past five centuries – the domain of bilateral competition and balance of power between the two states”* (Minchev, 2006, p. 12).

Moreover, *“the relationship between Russia and Turkey is a dual one, characterized, on the one hand, by a historical rivalry regarding the manifestation of influence in the Black Sea region and, on the other hand, by episodes of cooperation to maintain the balance of forces and reject some political or military interference of some non-littoral states, sometimes even to the detriment of the commitments that Turkey assumed as a NATO member state”*. (Matache-Zaharia, 2015, p. 248).

Bulgaria, an EU and NATO member state, a former satellite of the Soviet administration, is trying to remove communist reminiscences from the collective mentality, following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, this process being accelerated.

However, a number of high-ranking politicians, admirers of the Putin’s regime, a pro-Russian information network, still active on Bulgarian territory, and a vast process of disinformation and propaganda, act to promote the interests of the Russian Federation in the Bulgarian state, relying on pressure mechanisms from the economic sphere, especially energy, as well as on some sympathizers of the former repressive indigenous security service.

The response of the authorities in Sofia to the Russian invasion of Ukraine involved a series of difficult decisions, as it had to identify a delicate balance in acting (or appearing to act) according to the responsibilities assumed with the Western partners, by belonging to the political-military alliances of which it is a party, and to respond, among other things, to requests for support addressed by the administration in Kiev or to avoid getting involved, according to the desire of most compatriots, who see in the Putin’s regime the same *“big brother from the East”*.

On the other hand, the fragmentation of the political class in Sofia as well as of the electorate, which generated and continues to generate (even if it is not recognized) instability not only at the political-economic-military level but also at the social level, combined with the intensification of the phenomenon of right-wing extremist political movement, which is attracting more and more followers, shows that the Bulgarian state will not be able, at least in the short term, to identify the levers necessary for the functioning of the constitutional norms.

Georgia, a republic that is part of the Caucasus region and located at the intersection between the extreme east of Europe and the west of Asia, presented and continues to present an increased interest, both for the USSR and its de facto successor, the Russian Federation, and for Western states, including the USA.

Although it was the first non-Baltic Soviet republic that proclaimed (April 1991) its independence from the USSR, the Georgian state did not achieve a real detachment from the administrations in Moscow, the causes of failure being numerous, among them the lack of real political will, the high percentage of pro-Russian citizens (following the rotation policy of the indigenous populations carried out by the USSR), the lack of an industrial base that would generate progress, but also the passivity of the authorities, as well as of the civil society towards the Russian actions of keeping it in its sphere of influence.

The sum of political, economic, social factors, as well as the maintenance of the security forces in a precarious state, after the proclamation of independence, combined with the desire of the Shaakashvili administration to get out of the *de jure* tutelage exercised by the Kremlin, culminated in the Russian armed intervention (August), which resulted in the loss of Georgian control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The situation of coercion of the Georgian state, exercised by the Russian Federation, continued after 2008, acquiring radical accents in recent years, Russian interference in socio-political-economic life being notorious. Currently, the authorities in Tbilisi have understood (or have been led to understand), interested or not, that a loyal partnership with the Western states must begin with the political condemnation of the Russian aggression since 2008, especially against the background of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

However, although the political class in Tbilisi chooses (probably interested) to get closer to the values of the EU and NATO, a real approach to joining the two organizations remains a wish, which will not be fulfilled anytime soon.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are two states with different interests and visions, if only because they are “*caught*” in the war of civilizations, the Armenian population being predominantly Christian, while the Azeri population is predominantly Muslim. On the other hand, Armenia is a landlocked state and generally lacks mineral resources, while Azerbaijan, heavily supported by Turkey and tolerated by the EU, has acquired new opportunities for economic development and new military capabilities.

In another note, the two former Soviet republics had a similar path during the USSR, both experiencing violence towards the end of the Gorbachev administration and both declaring independence in the early 1990s.

The Armenian-Azeri conflict is not a new one, and, as always, the initial cause was the area called Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), an autonomous republic (during the Soviet period) within the former Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) of Azerbaijan, but with a majority Armenian population. Thus, in February 1988, the majority Armenian population of NK requested separation from the SSR Azerbaijan and union with the SSR Armenia, but the central Soviet authorities maintained the status for NK, which generated, throughout 1988, but also later, inter-ethnic conflicts with numerous victims (Armenians and Azerbaijanis), purges and exodus on both sides. The Armenian-Azeri conflict degenerated after the early 1990s and continued with intensity until 1994, when a ceasefire was brokered by the Russian Federation. However, following the conflict, the Armenians managed to conquer an important percentage of the internationally recognized Azeri territory, the status being maintained until 2020, when the Azeri forces recaptured most of the territories.

In the current geopolitical context, Armenia is facing significant economic difficulties, while support from the Russian Federation has seen a significant drop amid its involvement in Ukraine. On the other hand, Azerbaijan, although it is roughly a totalitarian state, manages to sequentially improve its economic situation, especially thanks to the oil industry.

Thus, in the short term, the two states will very likely have different paths, and it is not excluded that Azerbaijan will restore (not in the next period) its authority over NK.

RUSSIAN STRATEGY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION – A BITTER TASTE FOR THE KREMLIN

The grand strategy of the Russian Federation has been focused on the control of the Black Sea since the imperialist and Soviet periods, given that this control is a prerequisite for any large-scale aggression against the West.

One year after the launch of the offensive of the Russian armed forces against Ukraine, the Russian Federation adopted, on 31 March 2023, a new foreign policy strategy in which it explicitly refers to the “*aggressive policy of the European states towards Russia*” (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, 2023), for which the Black Sea is crucial in the long term for defence.

It is imperative to remember that, even this time, part of the strategy almost completely contradicts the actions of the Russian Federation in the last 17 months, bringing to the fore principles such as “*sovereign equality of states, the freedom of their right to choose development models and social, political and economic order*” and the need to adopt some “*political and diplomatic measures to counter interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, aimed primarily at complicating the internal political situation, unconstitutional regime change or violating the territorial integrity of states*” (Ib.).

However, the anti-European rhetoric, presented in the strategy by the Kremlin authorities as the intention of “*defending national interests from threats to security, territorial integrity, sovereignty, traditional Russian spiritual and moral values, and the socio-economic development of the Russian Federation*” (Ib.), somewhat introduces the “*imperialist policy and strategy of indefinite expansion*” of President Vladimir Putin, who three days before the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict (21 February 2022) declared that “*the disintegration of our united country was determined by the historical, strategic mistakes of the Bolshevik leaders and the leadership of the Communist Party*” (Putin, 2022).

Relying on nuclear and energy deterrence and arguing the actions of the Russian armed forces as necessary to *save the Russian people*, now “*Tsar Putin*” and presumably the Kremlin authorities want to achieve a basic strategic objective, namely “*the formation of a new model of coexistence by the European states, in order to ensure a safe, sovereign and progressive development of the Russian Federation, its allies and partners*” (The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation). In other words, they are trying to shape a new world order, which involves Russian expansion at the level of an empire, including obtaining hegemony in the Black Sea area as a strategic objective.

Moreover, we cannot overlook the goal of the “*State Union of the Russian Federation-Republic of Belarus*”, formed in 1996, for the creation of a unique political, economic, military and cultural space, brought back to the fore countless times in the year 2022. Moreover, even the press secretary of the Kremlin, Dmitro Peskov, announced that the annexed territories of Ukraine will become part of Russia and the State Union. Thus, a new step was taken in the “*reformation of the new Soviet Empire*” and in the concept of aggression against the independent ex-Soviet states, which do not want to be close to this union.

It is possible that WBSA will be further unbalanced by the actions of the Russian Federation with the aim of reuniting the “*Soviet empire*”, given its spheres of influence in various regions of the littoral states and in the immediate vicinity of the Black Sea.

The assumptions of the annexation to the Union State of the territories occupied by the Russians and held captive by the actions of the Russian Federation in the form of frozen conflicts, such as the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, the Autonomous Republic of South Ossetia, the Moldavian Republic of Dniester and Găgăuzia, could generate even greater tensions, on the one hand interstate, and on the other hand intrastate, with effects on the regional to global security environment.

Therefore, estimates that in 2023 Vladimir Putin will give up the position of President of the Russian Federation and will become Secretary General of the State Union are circulated in the analysis environment, but the recent developments of the events, presented below, do not seem to be heading towards this outcome.

Thus, known as the world’s largest nuclear power, the Russian Federation, dissatisfied with the manner of meeting the objectives of the conventional armed forces in Ukraine, and with the failure of the hybrid tactics applied to achieve the quick and long-awaited victory, constantly resorts to deterrence methods that, in other situations, would have had the desired effect. In the last 17 months the international community was very often reminded of the possession of nuclear means and the impact of their use in battle. Moreover, disapproving of the support given to Ukraine, the Russian Federation suspended, in February 2023, the participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (NEW START²).

Although there is a precedent for carrying out nuclear attacks, the use of nuclear weapons would, in my view, have represented the collapse of the Russian Federation,

² An agreement signed (Prague) by the United States and the Russian Federation limiting the strategic nuclear arsenals of the two sides, entered into force in 2011 and extended in 2021 for another five-year period.

which the Kremlin probably knows, and which has kept the nuclear option at the level of a threat. Sergei Karaganov, honorary chairman of the Russian Foreign and Defence Policy Council, argues that victory requires the Russian Federation to use nuclear deterrence by clearly expressing its willingness to use nuclear means to achieve its goal, and even by striking some “*targets from numerous countries to make them come to their senses*” (Baklitskiy, 2023).

Experts in this field have attacked Karaganov’s opinion and argued in various papers that it is not the optimal method to achieve a victory, while Vladimir Putin himself, at the plenary session of the International Economic Forum in St. Petersburg (14-17 June 2023) somewhat confirms this aspect by claiming that he sees no need to use nuclear weapons.

I believe that a real imbalance was created by the Russian Federation by applying the well-known Falin-Kvitsinsky method³, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict being also a confrontation between the largest producer of natural gas and its consumers, in response to Western sanctions against it, in the early phase of the conflict, by using energy resources to put pressure on the states in the region and beyond. Used as an opportunity to negotiate with European states, by creating a real gas crisis to discourage Europe, NATO and their partner states, in their efforts to support Ukraine in the defence operation. The method did not facilitate the achievement of the desired objective, but, on the contrary, highlighted the unity of the Western states in solving the energy and economic challenges generated by the coercive measures against the Russian Federation, managing to significantly decrease the amount of imported natural gas.

The fierce desire of the Russian Federation to achieve its goals in Ukraine and the strategic goal of the West that it does not know victory constantly generates crisis situations that affect the security of the WBSA states and not only. The imbalance generated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, in a post-pandemic crisis period, has extended its tentacles to the global level, bringing challenges and instability to states, from the smallest to the largest.

³ After the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation, in order to balance the impossibility of applying military intervention, developed the Falin-Kvitsinsky doctrine with the aim of maintaining the neutrality of the ex-Soviet states vis-à-vis NATO, through economic pressure.

CHALLENGES, UNCERTAINTY AND IMBALANCE – HIS WAY OR THE INCORRECT WAY

The most recent events show a setback in the achievement of the strategic goal of Vladimir Putin, who, 12 July 2021 stated: *“I am confident that the true sovereignty of Ukraine is possible only in partnership with Russia”* (Putin, 2021).

The recent evolution of the security environment at the Line of Contact shows a Russian Federation weakened from a military point of view even by occasional attacks executed by the Ukrainian military, while, domestically, the imbalance caused by Yevgeny Prigozhin with the occupation of the headquarters of the Joint Strategic Command South in Rostov-on-Don generated more insecurity and instability in the Kremlin by triggering a crisis in political management, contradiction among the armed forces and shaking the pillars⁴ of the regime of the Russian president.

The imbalance and, I would say, the desperation of the Russian president in the face of the unforeseen course of the *“special operation”* and the European opposition, have directed his attention again in the direction of a vulnerable area, on which the Ukrainian state is heavily dependent, namely exports of cereals. The Russian Federation’s suspension⁵ of participation in the Black Sea Grain Initiative, amid the failure to fulfil promises to restore the Russian state’s access to the SWIFT code and reduce sanctions, further exacerbated the impact on regional food security and beyond.

Moreover, the Kremlin’s determination to destroy the Ukrainian grain export infrastructure was materialized in systematic attacks on the ports of Odesa and Mykolaiv, as well as in the Iranian Shahed drone attack⁶ against the installations in the Ukrainian port of Reni, located in the immediate vicinity of the NATO eastern flank, and against Port Ismail⁷. These actions are likely part of Putin’s strategy to test the limits and patience of the West and NATO.

The Russian Federation also sought to win support among African leaders, arguing that the grain initiative prioritized *“well-fed European markets”*. These actions of Putin are not only to influence the ability of the Ukrainian state to resist his armed forces, but also to strengthen the position of the Russian Federation in Africa, by supplying grain to the states affected by the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. Let us remember the day of 27 July, when he promised,

during the Russian Federation-Africa Summit⁸, to replace Ukrainian grain intended for the states of Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Eritrea, with 25,000-50,000 tons of grain in free mode.

However, despite Russian diplomatic efforts in Africa, there are clear signs that discontent and frustration on the continent is growing after the decision to suspend the grain transport agreement amid fears of a food supply crisis (Sauer, 2023).

Probably, the Russians want more than the containment of Ukraine, considering that the destruction of its maritime and river transport infrastructure, as a direct action, has indirect effects on the maritime and river transport infrastructures of Romania, a NATO member state, and the Republic of Moldova in the Black Sea area, which could act as a deterrent to Western support for Ukraine.

Of course, the idea that the Russians want to destroy the Ukrainian grain export infrastructure, vital to them, is the most publicized. However, the analysis environment also speaks of the weakening of Ukraine’s ability to supply itself with petroleum products in the coming cold season.

Certainly the objectives of these actions are multiple, but the question that arises is whether the Kremlin has a vision regarding the future of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, because the present only indicates uncertainty, incompetence and instability at the internal level, unrecognized by the Russian authorities, in the military operations it executes in Ukraine and in the hybrid actions in achieving the goals, which do not boil down to conquering Ukraine, but involve the complete destabilization of the WBSA and the West, which would give the Russian state the opportunity to re-occupy its place as a great world power.

I believe that the apparent certainty in the statements of Russian officials most likely hides a great deal of uncertainty, based on the new level of collective defence and deterrence achieved on the eastern flank of NATO, achieved with the accession of Finland as a member of the organization. Thus, Vladimir Putin’s fear of being defeated in Ukraine was probably induced, an aspect that, on the one hand, forced his hand to conscious risky and provocative actions in the proximity of the NATO border, and on the other hand, brought into his attention the Eastern vulnerabilities of the Euro-Atlantic defence. In this regard, he pays more attention to the Suwalki Corridor⁹, considered a key strategic point for the Russians, signalling

⁴ Propaganda and the security services are known to be the mainstays of Vladimir Putin’s regime.

⁵ 18 July 2023.

⁶ 24 July 2023.

⁷ The night of 31 July/1 August 2023.

⁸ The Russian Federation hosted (27-28 July 2023, St. Petersburg) a two-day summit with the African continent, designed to portray Moscow as a great power, despite the Western sanctions and the unrest in the southern hemisphere heightened by the destabilizing war in Ukraine.

⁹ It refers to the strip of land of cca. 100 km, which follows the Polish-Lithuanian border, between the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad and the Republic of Belarus, seen as one of the most sensitive areas in Europe, separating the Baltic States from the rest of NATO countries.

a regrouping of the Wagner Group's military in the Republic of Belarus, in order to take over its control, if necessary. Thus, Russia acts through numerous provocations and intrigues to destabilize the border of NATO's eastern flank, without taking into account the fact that this aspect would represent a major aggression against some NATO member countries.

The support that Putin was counting on from China has also not been up to expectations, even if it "feels" that it has more to gain than to lose from being with the Russian Federation, its "junior" partner. However, Beijing maintains its attitude of not provoking the West very much, showing reluctance to enter into a conflict with a major nuclear power.

No one can say for sure what the outcome will be or how the situation will evolve in the WBSA and how much the situation will be affected at the global level. The only thing that is certain is that the fulfilment of the concept of the Kantian world, namely a world of peace, collaboration and cooperation, is impossible as long as the personality at the head of one of the world's great powers, namely the Russian Federation, does not accept compromise situations, and even tends towards the "my way or no way" principle.

CONCLUSIONS

Security environment in the WBSA will continue to remain fragile in the short and medium term, at certain moments its radicalization is even possible, depending on the actions of certain actors or the possible situations that could arise.

Thus, a defeat of the Russian Federation in the conflict with Ukraine could destabilize the administration in Moscow, which would encourage, on the one hand, certain republics in the composition of the Russian state to act to obtain independence and, on the other hand, Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, to carry out decisive armed operations against Armenia, for the definitive, possibly even long-term settlement, of the secular dispute between the two states, and Georgia to try to regain control over the territories occupied by the Russian Federation.

In another note, maintaining the current status of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict will most likely lead to the "freezing" of the conflict, which will further generate substantial economic losses for Ukraine, the state being threatened with a permanent economic recession, which favours endemic corruption and strengthens the role of oligarchs in political life.

On the other hand, the maintenance, at least for the time being, of the conservative-Islamic regime in Turkey could generate new claims, if not territorial, at least to influence the Syrian and Iraqi societies, as well as the radical intensification

of the fight against organizations considered extremist-terrorists by the Ankara regime. At the same time, the possible loss of influence in the Black Sea, by the Russian Federation, would favour the Turkish Republic, which is increasingly less secular, to assume and consolidate a dominant role (somehow also mentioned in the Blue Homeland doctrine) in this maritime basin, and in conjunction with maintaining the current provisions of the Montreux Convention, could give the Turkish administration total long-term control in the Black Sea.

As far as Bulgaria is concerned, the lack of political stability, the maintenance of the parallel structures of the state in the grey area, as well as the continuation of the state of "balance" between East and West will determine the significant limitation of the role that the Bulgarian state could have in the WBSA.

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MANAGEMENT OF RISKS AND THREATS IN THE BLACK SEA: FUTURE SCENARIOS AND ROMANIA'S INVOLVEMENT

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Given the plasticity of the current geopolitical environment and the increasingly visible concern of NATO and the EU related to security in the Black Sea region in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the present article adopts a multidimensional approach to assess regional risks and threats. The paper begins by providing a comprehensive overview of the current security situation, focusing on diverse challenges that include both conventional and hybrid threats. Drawing on a diverse range of academic sources, policy documents and security analyses, and employing an empirical qualitative research approach, this study examines the factors that contribute to regional instability, such as territorial disputes, military buildup and hybrid threats.

An essential point of this article is Romania's role in addressing the identified risks and threats. The analysis investigates Romania's position as a NATO and EU member state and its contributions to regional security initiatives. In addition, it highlights the importance of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination for strengthening Romania's resilience in the face of complex security challenges. Overall, this article provides not only a comprehensive analysis of the security landscape in the Black Sea region, but also valuable insights into the potential paths that future developments could take.

Keywords: Black Sea security; risk assessment; threat analysis; regional cooperation; future security;

INTRODUCTION

In one of his works, the Prussian general and military thinker, Carl von Clausewitz, stated that *"the first, supreme and most comprehensive act of judgment that the statesman and commander must perform is to determine [...] the type of war they are embarking on"* (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 88). This act of judgment is actually the fundamental principle of defence planning. However, there is a lack of available empirical evidence, especially when dealing with a multi-faceted phenomenon like hybrid warfare. The same Clausewitz is of the opinion that, *"taking into account the countless dimensions of strategy, including those involving adversaries, forecasting future strategic developments inevitably remains a theoretical exercise"* (Gray, 2016, p. 61).

Consequently, the defence planning process must be guided by a combination of strategically plausible imagination that is shaped by strategic theory while remaining firmly grounded in historical lessons and the tangible realities of the physical world.

The irony makes this Clausewitzian judgment have the same meaning for the aggressors. An aggressor would be inclined to take action only if he were assured that he could exercise some level of influence over the nature of the war. This assurance depends on the belief that his strategy will be successful in shaping the character of any future conflict and the course of military operations (Wylie, 1989, pp. 76-77). This aspect is also of paramount importance to defence planners as they assess potential scenarios: Does the hypothetical adversary have the ability to effectively control the situation using specific methods and resources? And as a result, what are the implications for defence strategies? A variant that we propose to find out the answer to these questions, which also represents the purpose of the present article, is to explore the domain of the *"unimaginable"* in the most objective and rational way possible, taking into account what we already know, through sketching some scenarios on the future security of NATO's eastern region, with an emphasis on the Black Sea region.

WHY SCENARIOS? MOTIVATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION

The explanation can be formulated in the following way: scenarios represent the only method of managing the uncertainty regarding the future evolution. The inability to accurately anticipate technological progress and its implications, changes in social dynamics, and political developments have led to numerous incorrect forecasts in the past that have become notorious.

For example, in 1899, the readers of the American publication *“Literary Digest”* were assured that the automobile, called the *“ordinary horseless carriage”*, was a luxury only available to the rich and that *“no doubt it would never become as common as the Bicycle”*. David Starr Jordan, the founding president of Stanford University in the USA, wrote the following in 1913 with reference to the First World War: *“What can we say about the Great War in Europe? (...) We can say that it will never happen. (...) The bankers will not be able to find the necessary financing for such a conflict; European industry will not support it, and state leaders will not have the means to trigger it”*. As for Margaret Thatcher, she is supposed to have said in 1969: *“It will be years before a woman becomes Prime Minister, but not in my lifetime”*. Ten years later, she became Prime Minister (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014, p. 9). Obviously, all of the above have known the opposite over time.

The unfortunate events for the peace and stability of the Euro-Atlantic space in the last ten years were unexpected for the vast majority of observers of the international scene and demonstrated the importance of being prepared to imagine scenarios that seem inconceivable. The evolution of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has reconfirmed the fact that we must remain vigilant and understand that in the future more unexpected things than we are used to may happen.

As there is no official and commonly accepted definition by the specialized literature, we considered relevant for our study a collaborative article published in 2003 regarding the typology of scenarios (van Notten, Rotmans, van Asselt, Rothman, 2003, p. 424). The authors examined approximately 70 scenarios from various fields, such as management, economics, political science and environmental science, with the premise that, following the analysis of the case studies, they would identify and synthesize the predominant features of the scenario development processes. Furthermore, these characteristics, when combined, constitute the foundation of the scenario typology. According to analysts, *“scenarios are descriptions of possible futures that reflect different perspectives on the past, present and future”* (Ib.).

The design of alternative scenarios is a method based on the principle of developing some types of potential future, based on predetermined factors. The technique of alternative scenarios, also known as *multiple scenarios*, is a systematic procedure used to create several possible explanations for the direction of development of a situation. It is particularly useful when there are significant levels of uncertainty and a wide range of critical factors to consider. This technique involves selecting the factors with the greatest degree of impact on the problem under analysis, which by intersecting them form a matrix with four quadrants (Surdu, 2022, p. 115).

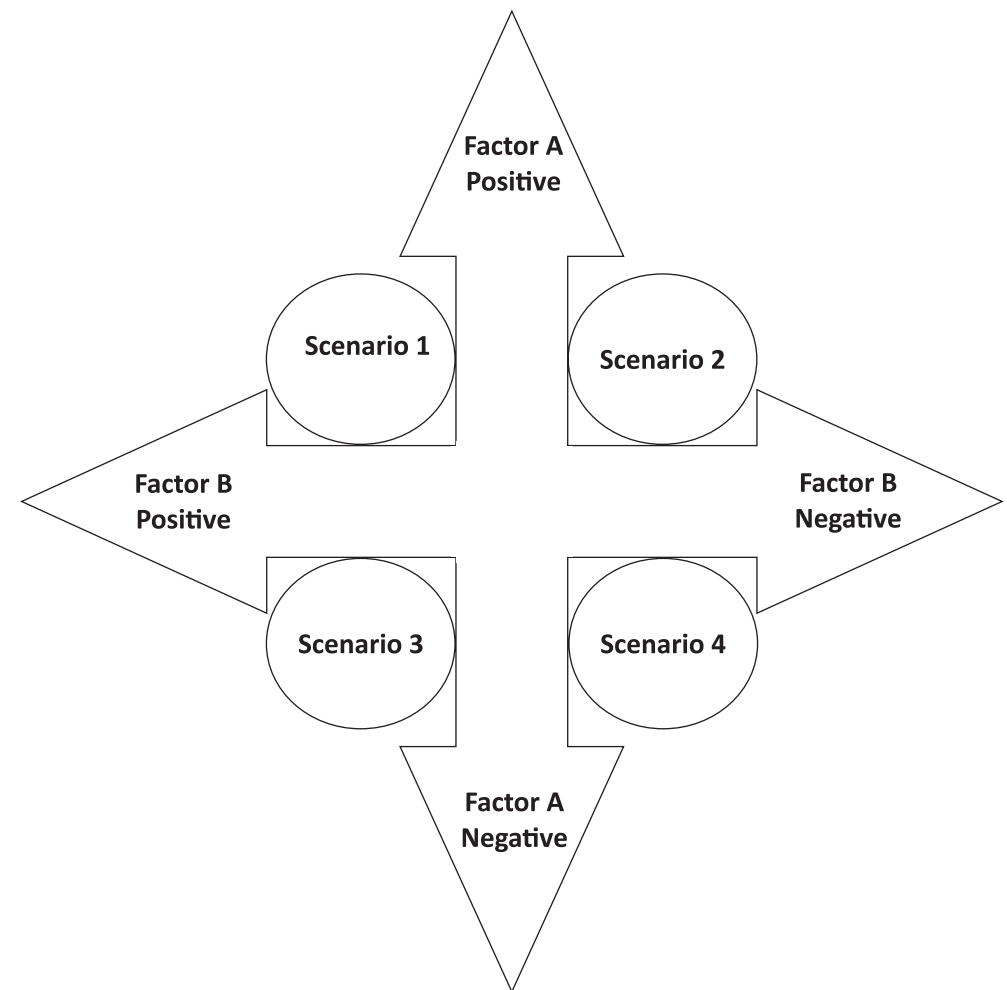


Figure no. 1: Matrix of alternative scenarios (Surdu, p. 116)

Alternative scenarios have demonstrated their success in various fields, either as a stand-alone analysis tool or as part of a broader methodology that integrates complementary techniques (Kuosa, 2014, p. 45). This success was attributed to adherence to fundamental principles: exploring multiple possible futures, maintaining consistency across scenarios, grounding them in rigorous data, and building them in a compelling manner (Global Centre for Public Service Excellence, 2014, p. 25).

Alternative scenarios are considered to prove their effectiveness by providing information and guidance in decision-making, planning and action selection (Surdu, p. 118).

Concretely, the process of developing alternative scenarios follows a set of steps:

- a. identification of a group of critical factors;
- b. defining the range of variability for each factor;
- c. grouping factors in 2x2 matrices, thus creating possible combinations;
- d. elaboration of narratives or stories for each quadrant of the matrix;
- e. the selection of narratives that are considered relevant and significant;
- f. detailing and refining the list of indicators that will describe the anticipated developments in each scenario (Black Sea Region Strategic Foresight, 2017).

Therefore, the elaboration of the scenarios proposed in this work knows three stages, namely: *orientation*, *elaboration* and *affirmation*. Orientation involves defining the problem, analysing the current situation and capturing the most relevant factors that describe the evolution of events in the Eastern Flank of the Alliance, more specifically the Black Sea region. In the elaboration stage, two essential factors will be selected for the trajectory of the proposed scenarios, and in the last stage, the confirmation stage, we will select the scenario that seem most likely for the established time horizon.

ORIENTATION

We consider it essential that, in order to outline a picture as clear and coherent as possible of the actual situation and to get closer to the topic discussed in this article, we make a brief foray into the evolution of events regarding the situation of the consolidation of the Eastern Flank of the Alliance from 2014 to present, with subsequent focus on the Black Sea region.

The Evolution of the Consolidation of the Eastern Flank of the Alliance

The year 2014 meant an awareness at the level of NATO and at that of all international actors that each state needs, first of all, a certainty that it can defend its territory by its own means, and then that it is able to support NATO's efforts to the extent which fulfils the Alliance membership status. The *"trigger"* of this fact was Russia's aggressive expansionist attitude which, using hybrid means, strengthened its military presence in the eastern region of the Alliance by illegally annexing the Crimean Peninsula in February 2014. For the affected region and for the states in the immediate vicinity, as well as for the transatlantic community as a whole, the behaviour of the Russian Federation represented a model of a confirmed threat to security. Among the hybrid tools used by Russia, we can identify the coercive use of political, economic, energy, informational etc. tactics. For an exhaustive picture of Russia's hybrid behaviour, we consider relevant a recent study carried out by the New Strategy Center. In the content of the work, the authors point out that *"energy represents Russia's most effective hybrid weapon"*, combined with commercial influence (blocking the market, economic pressure, smuggling) and political influence, through pro-Russian parties and cooperation in acts of corruption. In addition, the study shows that *"another lever of influence is the oligarchs because they have financial and political power to undermine the targeted authorities and sabotage Europeanization and reform"*, along with cyber attacks, propaganda, disinformation, but also the role of the Church, canonically subordinated to the Russian Federation (Scutaru, Solomon, Dadiverin, 2023, pp. 20-45).

A first solution identified at that time, during the NATO Summit in Wales in September 2014, was the implementation of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), with the aim of quickly responding to the fundamental changes in the military environment security, both at NATO borders and outside them (NATO's Military Presence in the East of the Alliance, 2023).

Later, at the 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw, Alliance members adopted additional decisions based on the RAP. These decisions were taken to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture and to help promote stability and strengthen security outside the Alliance's territory. They included the deployment of a Consolidated Forward Presence in the North-Eastern region of the Alliance and the adaptation of the Temporary Forward Presence in the South-Eastern region. Taken as a whole, these measures represented the most significant strengthening of NATO's collective defence capability in the last generation. This approach, along with the resources and ability to quickly bring in additional forces, has helped to increase the security of all Alliance members (Ib.).

Another measure taken by NATO on the Russian threat was established by the resolutions following the NATO Summit in Warsaw in July 2016. Thus, from that time until July 2017, four multinational battle groups were deployed in the member countries of the Alliance: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. NATO members have also stepped up activities in the Southeast region by deploying a tailored land, sea and air presence to improve situational awareness, interoperability and response capabilities (Ib.).

Following Russia's incursions in the Black Sea region since November 2018, NATO has taken the decision to expand its presence in this area to be able to closely monitor and understand the actions of the Kremlin. In addition, Allies provided concerted support to Georgia and Ukraine by conducting additional naval and coast guard exercises and training, as well as by conducting relevant port visits (Ib.).

After the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February 2022, Alliance members mobilized additional resources in eastern and southeastern Europe, on NATO territory. This action further strengthened NATO's deterrence and defence posture. The effort was substantial and included: sending thousands of additional troops to reinforce NATO battle groups; fighter jets to support NATO air patrol missions; strengthening the naval presence in the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean Sea; increasing the general training of the troops; and, for the first time, the deployment of the highest training element of the NATO Reaction Force in Romania (Ib.).

On 1 March 2022, immediately after the European security *status quo* was shaken, Turkey issued a decision to indefinitely close the passage between the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea to Russian and Ukrainian ships, unless they return to their ports of origin. The measure was based on the provisions of Article 19 of the 1936 Montreux Convention, which gives Turkey the authority to close the straits to countries in conflict (Convention Regarding the Régime of the Straits, art. 19, 1936). This decision significantly influenced Russian naval activity in the eastern Mediterranean. Being unable to use the naval bases in the Black Sea, Russian military ships had to transit from the bases of the Northern Fleet to the eastern Mediterranean area, being carefully monitored by NATO member states (British Royal Navy, 2022).

At the extraordinary NATO Summit held in Brussels on 24 March 2022, the leaders of the Alliance member states decided to establish four new multinational battle groups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The decision extended NATO's forward presence along the Alliance's Eastern Flank, starting from the Baltic

Sea in the north and reaching the Black Sea in the south. Moreover, this measure effectively doubled the number of ground troops available for deterrence and defence in this region (NATO's Military Presence ..., 2023).

The 2022 NATO summit in Madrid meant, among other things, the Allies agreeing to expand the size of multinational battle groups from battalion to brigade level when and where necessary. NATO members also agreed on a new force model for the Alliance, which will replace the NATO Response Force (NRF) and which will involve an increased presence of well-trained troops and additional measures aimed at strengthening NATO's capability to support the member states of Eastern Europe (Ib.).

Under the current NRF, allies can mobilize approximately 40,000 troops in less than 15 days of training. Once fully implemented, NATO's new force model will have more than 300,000 highly trained soldiers. The precise details of this NATO force model, including its size and composition, are still being developed.

For the first time, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and New Zealand participated in the 2022 NATO Summit. The Strategic Concept (SC) adopted at the end of the summit emphasizes the importance of developing dialogue and cooperation with both existing and new partners in the Indo-Pacific region to address trans-regional challenges and common security interests, such as freedom of navigation issues (NATO Strategic Concept, 2022, p. 11). In other words, the allies recognized the existence of "*systemic challenges*" from China and, as a result, strengthened relations with partners in Asia and Oceania (Ib., p. 5).

For the first time in NATO history, the Black Sea region is mentioned in the content of the Alliance's current strategic concept. Part of the spectrum of strengthening NATO's position in the area of the Eastern Flank, reference is made to the implementation of a significant and robust ground presence, the strengthening of air and anti-missile defence capacity, the advanced placement of military equipment and the improvement of logistical support infrastructure. These aspects are of particular importance for Romania. Both the northern and southern regions of the Eastern Flank adopt a similar structure, based on the presence of American troops and battle groups, thus ensuring the cohesion and consistency of the position on the entire flank (Ib., pp. 4, 11).

The importance of resources is emphasized from the beginning of the allied strategic document. Based on this idea, the ratification of a new SC was aimed at ensuring that the Alliance will maintain an adequate level of readiness and have the essential resources to successfully face the challenges of the future (Ib., p. 1).

It is undeniable that today we are witnessing the double valence of a decisive factor in the nature of the conflict, namely, emerging and disruptive technologies. They bring with them both significant opportunities and risks and are transforming the character of war, gaining increasing strategic relevance and becoming focal points of global competition. Technological dominance increasingly influences success in the context of military operations.

In these terms, NATO supports and promotes innovation, allocating significant resources towards emerging and disruptive technologies with the aim of maintaining interoperability and continuous military advantage. In addition, the Alliance has committed to making available, individually and collectively, all the resources, capabilities, plans, means and infrastructure essential to support deterrence and defence efforts. Also, NATO's new attitude also refers to the ability to manage the conflict in high-intensity conditions, in various contexts, even in the face of adversaries that have nuclear arsenals.

Therefore, as American military strategist Bernard Brodie cogently argued in an early Cold War context regarding the concept of nuclear war, *"...so long as there is the possibility of limited conflict, we must be concerned with the consequences; and although almost all the consequences would be negative, some might be considered much more serious than others"* (Brodie, 1959, p. 178)

With reference to the disruptive factors to the security, peace and prosperity of the transatlantic space, the SC mentions: *"the most significant and direct threat"* is the Russian Federation because it uses conventional, cyber and hybrid tactics (NATO Strategic Concept, 2022, p. 4); terrorism, seen as *"the most direct asymmetric threat"* (Ib.); pervasive instability in general and conflict, fragility and instability in Africa and the Middle East, in particular the stated ambitions and coercive policies of the People's Republic of China (PRC); increasing strategic competition; rising authoritarianism – challenge to NATO interests and values; contesting cyberspace; hybrid means and tactics of authoritarian actors; misinformation; migration; proliferation of nuclear weapons, emerging and disruptive technologies; climate change (Ib.). Under these conditions, part of the Alliance's solution to proportionately respond to security challenges, and mentioned at the end of the SC, is the increase in defence investments and the common financing of NATO. (Ib., p. 12).

At the Vilnius Summit in 2023, NATO leaders reiterated their belief that Russia is an imminent threat to the security of allies, which is why they gave the green light to a new generation of regional defence plans. One of these plans focuses on the Far North and the Atlantic, under the command of Joint Forces Command in Norfolk,

USA. A second plan with regional coverage focuses on the central area and is under the coordination of the Allied Forces Command in Brunssum, the Netherlands, thus covering the Baltic countries and the Alpine area. The third plan has as its area of coverage the southeast of the Alliance, including the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, with the central command located in Naples, Italy (NATO responds to Russia's threat and announces the three Regional Military Plans. Romania, part of the Regional Plan *"South-East"*, 2023). These plans will represent a significant step in the coordination and coherence of NATO's collective defence planning with the national planning of member states, taking into account aspects related to military forces, geographic position, capabilities, command and control (NATO's Military Presence ..., 2023).

A crucial aspect that was also discussed during this summit was the threshold of 2% of GDP allocated to the defence budget, which is intended to be *"a minimum level, not a ceiling"* (Stoltenberg: Seven NATO member states allocated at least 2% of GDP for defence in 2022, 2023). Félix Arteaga, a researcher at the Real Instituto Elcano in Madrid, believes that this percentage is controversial because this figure is not relevant to the assessment in absolute terms of the military contribution. Moreover, the researcher points out that there are countries that exceed the threshold of 2% of GDP for military spending, but whose contribution to NATO's military capabilities is limited (NATO: Why 2% of GDP for military spending is so controversial, 2023). Practically, the equivalent in absolute, concrete terms depends on the size of the respective state's GDP. For example, 2% of Romania's GDP will be a much smaller amount than 2% of Germany's GDP.

Therefore, we can say without a doubt that as long as no armed conflict or war economy is identified among NATO member states, which would impose the prioritization of defence resources, it will be extremely difficult for all allies to reach the minimum threshold of 2% of GDP allocated to the field of defence. The proof lies in the fact that, no later than last year, only 7 out of 30 allied member states met the established financial requirements, with one less compared to 2021, given that, in 2022, on NATO's eastern border was carrying out a Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict of significant intensity (NATO chief urges members to boost defence spending as only 7 hit target, 2023).

Black Sea Region

Considered a region of *"significant strategic importance"* (Opening speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Aspen – GMF Bucharest Forum, 2022) in the current geopolitical context, the Black Sea has been characterized

by a constant series of tensions in various forms. Until 2014, we were talking about the preponderance of “soft power”, especially through the policies implemented by the EU and NATO in the region, which tried to stabilize the states here. In 2008, the spectre of conventional conflict was brought back by Russia’s war against Georgia, and later in 2014, Russia came and brought the spectre of hybrid conflict by acting against Ukraine for its illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. After 2014, the Black Sea region has indeed evolved into the characteristics of a hot spot, where “soft power” politics has become as important as the conventional conflict, with strong hybrid accents, triggered by the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

The conflict generated by Russia gained momentum starting on 24 February 2022, through the invasion of Ukrainian territory. As Ukraine considers the Crimean Peninsula part of its national territory, the strategic interest attached to this area is implicitly major. Recently, Ukraine carried out the largest drone attack to date against Russian infrastructure in the Black Sea and Crimea regions (Ukraine launches biggest drone attack yet inside Russian territory, 2023).



Figure no. 2: Ukraine drone strike destroys Russian military aircraft (Ukraine launches biggest drone attack yet inside Russian territory, 2023)

In response, on 28 September 2023, Russia launched a series of massive airstrikes on three regions of Ukraine, and Ukrainian officials said that some of the attack drones were able to hit targets, but did not provide details on the damage.

Ukraine’s air defence forces managed to intercept and shoot down 34 of the 44 *Shahed* drones that were sent (Russia launches big wave of drone strikes on Ukraine, 2023). According to a Reuters analysis, the recent incidents related to the fall of drone waste on the territory of Romania underline the risk of a misunderstanding between Russia and NATO, which led the Romanian armed forces to intensify security measures in this region, in order to protect the civilian population. As a result, Romania will strengthen the defence in this area by deploying military observation posts and patrols. These actions come in the context of the additional deployment of F-16 fighter jets by the US and the extension of the no-fly zone in the Danube Delta area, signalling a growing concern on the part of both Romania and NATO regarding the development of the conflict in Ukraine (Dumitrache, 2023).

The Black Sea became the subject of the main discussions focused on managing security challenges with the aim of reducing tensions in the eastern region.

During the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum entitled “*Resilience at Sea and Its Impact on Land*”, organized in Bucharest by the Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum (E-ARC) on 28-29 September 2023, Romanian officials initiated a debate on the existing geopolitical situation at the level of the Black Sea. According to them, the Pontic region has become the scene of an increased number of military actions, with maritime incidents and behaviours that restrict the freedom of navigation of ships. Both the anti-aircraft alarms in the Ukrainian cities bordering Romania and the alert messages sent to the inhabitants of the Danube Delta are more and more frequent. Imminent missile attacks, sea mines and the possibility of objects falling from the airspace, most likely drone debris, are the “*new normal*” of the Russian-Ukrainian confrontation, a permanent risk that finds its correspondence in the increasing probability of incidents on the infrastructure or territorial commercial vessels of Romania. GPS communications also periodically face intentional interference from Russia, impairing the navigational ability of ships and increasing the risk of collisions in the maritime environment (Romanian Armed Forces Chief: Russia interferes in the GPS communications in the Romanian territorial waters. “*Let us be prepared for a long-term confrontation*”, 2023).

The E-ARC event aims to support the affirmation of Romania as a pole of reference in global discussions on resilience, with an emphasis on the importance of the ingenious use of modern technology to facilitate global connectivity and bring together all relevant factors in the effort to find solutions to current challenges (Euro-Atlantic Resilience Forum, 2023).

The fact that the Black Sea was not included in the process of delimiting the zones of influence after the end of the Second World War led to the blocking of trade routes in regions where there are persistent tensions, regions affected by conflicts and which have now become increased points of interest in the competition between the orientation towards Western democracy and the authoritarian options proposed by Russia.

Consequently, the current situation in the transatlantic area is marked by dissensions, hybrid actions, intensified strategic competition, generalized instability and unforeseen events, which have a complex impact on the Black Sea region. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the ability to make predictions about imminent threats, to guarantee secure and rigorous access to strategic infrastructure and to provide protection to citizens. Russia's hostile actions that began in 2014 with the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula disrupted the stability and security in the transatlantic space and caused major international actors to reconsider their priorities regarding their own security and defence. Much of NATO, and especially the countries of Western Europe, now have the conviction that Russia can no longer be considered a strategic partner, but a danger in the true sense of the word to their security.

ELABORATION

To identify possible security threats and risks in the eastern region of the North Atlantic Alliance, especially in the Black Sea area, we will construct alternative scenarios using the four-quadrant model based on a two-factor matrix. Taking into account the volatility and unpredictability of the contemporary security context, the time limit will be a 5-year horizon. The result will be the outline of four scenarios with specific characteristics and implications for the security of NATO's Eastern Flank. We will also establish a representative title for each individual scenario.

Following the orientation directions regarding the evolution of events in NATO's eastern region over the past 10 years, with an emphasis on the Black Sea area, the matrix will be created by intersecting the following factors: the level of defence investments and common NATO funding and the number of hybrid actions held at the Black Sea.

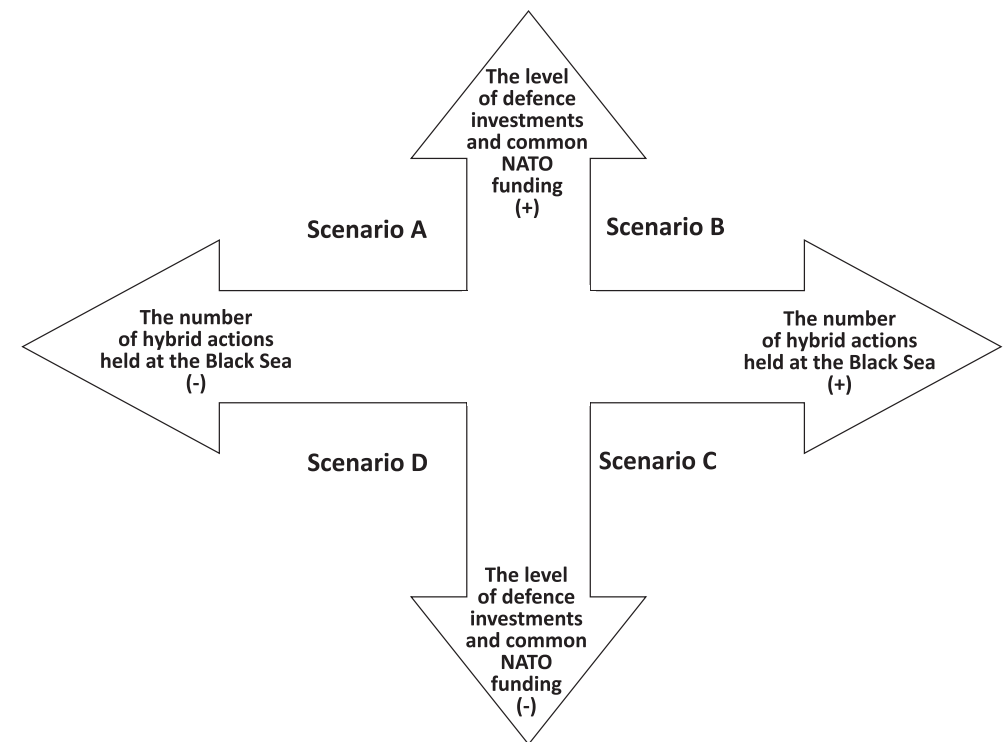


Figure no. 3: Alternative scenarios regarding risks and threats in the Black Sea (Author's conception)

Scenario A: "Achieving new dimensions of transatlantic cooperation"

In the next five years, a significant transformation is taking place on NATO's eastern border, especially in the Black Sea region, under the influence of a reduced number of hybrid actions and an increased level of NATO joint funding and financial investments exceeding the minimum ceiling of 2% of GDP for the defence budget agreed by the allies. As hybrid threats are reduced, increased investment in military capabilities by the US and European states may be seen as an overreaction, with the potential to leave behind a legacy of increased military spending, escalating weapons arsenals and possible power rivalries and instability. Instead, less expensive and less challenging military doctrines should be explored and promoted. A less conflictual outcome could be achieved through arms control and the implementation of confidence-building mechanisms.

This alternative scenario paints an optimistic picture of security in the region. The strategic approach will be based on bold and intelligent diplomacy, which includes recognizing the interests of rivals and providing assurances about the Alliance's intentions in ways that do not harm the core interests of its members.

The goal will be to identify more selective, targeted, and innovative methods to support military capabilities in key regions without resorting to a large buildup of military resources or adopting a dangerous new doctrine. This is the essence of the concept of “*defence without dominance*” that will become the common vision of the Allied strategic field: providing adequate military capabilities to achieve significant military objectives without attempting to dominate every aspect, domain or theatre of operations in a possible conflict. NATO member states in the Black Sea region are reassessing their defence doctrine to focus on preventing and deterring hybrid threats. Common strategies are being developed to counter disinformation and political destabilization. With a low level of hybrid actions and significant financial resources, the Black Sea region becomes a place of enhanced security. The military capabilities of Romania and its allies are modernized and strengthened.

Collaboration between NATO member states and partners in the Black Sea region continues to develop. A joint naval force is being established to ensure security in the Black Sea and to respond quickly to any challenges. Romania's maritime defence industry is being revitalized, with Romanian shipyards producing most of the ships and allied equipment. Also, their maintenance is also carried out through the defence industry in Romania. NATO member states in the region are allocating significant resources to modernize their military infrastructure, including advanced radar systems, anti-ship missiles, submarine detection technology, and nuclear-powered submarine technology. It increases surveillance and rapid reaction capacity.

NATO is engaged in constructive dialogue with non-Alliance states in the region to reduce tensions and promote mutual understanding, including with Russia, which has since withdrawn its armed forces from Ukraine, with its military capability severely weakened by sanctions imposed over time that no longer allowed it to invest in the armed conflict. Also, the hybrid tactics have not yielded any results. By modernizing military capabilities, NATO has managed to minimize the hybrid threat. In addition, confidentiality agreements regarding military activities are becoming more transparent. NATO investments in the region contribute to economic growth and political stabilization. Black Sea states are becoming more resilient to negative external influence and hybrid threats.

This alternative scenario, based on the reduced level of hybrid actions and the significant investments in defence and security, shows that a solid cooperation between NATO member states and regional partners can lead to strengthening security in the Black Sea region and redefining NATO's eastern border in a more stable and safer mode.

Scenario B: “*Confrontation continues: fragile security in the Black Sea*”

Over the next five years, a scenario characterized by an increased number of hybrid actions deployed in the Black Sea and an increased level of joint NATO funding, with financial investments above the 2% GDP limit for the defence budget at the level of the Allies, unfolds. Therefore, the PRC Navy is likely to make more frequent visits to Europe, including participating in joint exercises with the Russian Navy, which has fleets in both the Asian and European regions. All these developments indicate that the impact of maritime incidents will no longer be limited to just one region, but will expand to Europe, East Asia and Southeast Asia.

In light of these aspects, threats and risks on NATO's eastern border, especially in the Black Sea area, remain persistently present. As hostilities in Ukraine continue, the link between geopolitics and hybrid attacks has become increasingly clear. Russia's close collaborative relationship with states in Europe (Belarus) and the Middle East (PRC, North Korea, Chechnya, South Ossetia, the Republic of Abkhazia), which reject NATO policy, is turning into a military-specific alliance, in which NATO nuclear intimidation programs and strategies are being developed. In addition, Turkey's involvement in this partnership contributes to the fulfilment of one of the goals of the alliance: weakening confidence in NATO, developing dissensions within it and dissolving its existence. Disinformation, subversion and political-military influence are used to undermine Euro-Atlantic stability. These actions are becoming more sophisticated, and tensions in the Pontic region are intensifying. Naval incidents are recorded and a maximization of the number of aircraft is observed in the Black Sea area. Diplomacy is becoming increasingly difficult.

Massive defence spending and security measures are beginning to put pressure on the economies of NATO member states. It leads to concerns about long-term financial sustainability. Initiatives to increase defence spending and develop coherent, mutually reinforcing capabilities while avoiding unnecessary duplication are essential to the Allies' joint efforts to make the Euro-Atlantic area more secure. So, NATO reacts by strengthening its military presence in the Black Sea area, with increased naval forces and surveillance activities. Defence spending is reaching historic levels, but risks remain high.

In this turbulent scenario, there is an increasing emphasis on naval plans and operations, where military assets play an important role in resolving political disagreements. This raises questions about how the maritime security environment can be influenced at a time when protecting sea lines of communication becomes vital to commercial activities and the global economy remains uncertain.

For example, Russia continues to block access to Ukrainian ports and restrict military assistance to Ukraine, while denying it the economic benefits of Black Sea exports.

Scenario C: “The Black Sea swims in the ether, without a lifeline”

In the next five years, a scenario is developing characterized by an increased number of hybrid actions conducted in the Black Sea and a low level of NATO joint funding and financial investment, below the limit of 2% of GDP for the defence budget allocated by the Allies. We are witnessing an era of digital geopolitics, where malicious cyber activity has become a recurring tactic used by certain state actors to exert influence to disrupt the security of adversaries and achieve their geopolitical goals.

Threats and risks on NATO's eastern border, especially in the Black Sea area, are increasing. States that do not share the same values as Allies exploit vulnerabilities and intensify hybrid actions in the Black Sea area, undermining regional stability and creating tensions with NATO member states. Russia considers Turkey a significant partner in military and technological cooperation. Thus, the two states will conclude partnerships in areas of common interest, namely military, nuclear and technological, a fact that will develop dissensions within NATO and weaken trust in the Turkish ally. Therefore, being accused of undermining the principles and values of NATO, Turkey will decide to leave the Alliance and start a large-scale initiative with Russia, China and North Korea, a partnership that promises to militarize the Middle East in order to maintain regional order. Moreover, this partnership will be based on the exchange of information and the strengthening of economic cooperation, including technical military collaboration. Thus, the alliance between the four state actors will serve as a deterrent to NATO, reduce its hegemonic influence and encourage the Alliance to adopt cautious decisions in the formulation of political-military policies. Diplomacy therefore becomes increasingly difficult.

The low defence budgets of NATO member states are putting pressure on available military resources. Military capabilities are reduced and military modernization, interoperability and training are slowed, increasing the Alliance's vulnerability. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict persists, and China, North Korea and Turkey are supporting the Kremlin. China's support involves state-of-the-art military equipment and technology, North Korea is helping Russia develop a new nuclear program, and Turkey is banning allied warships from passing through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. This situation indicates to the Allies that the war of attrition is turning into a battle of logistics.

Hybrid actions, such as disinformation, political influence and subversion, know new dimensions, become more complex and difficult to detect, and Romania is among their targets. The use of cyber threats has become a significant tool for states to influence events without triggering open conflict. The motivations behind these attacks can include stealing intellectual property, cyber espionage, destabilizing critical infrastructure, and promoting digital influence campaigns to undermine public trust in government. It becomes likely that cyber activity will persist as a means used to achieve economic, social, geopolitical and military objectives.

Regional cooperation between NATO member states and Black Sea partners is deteriorating. The loss of the Turkish ally is felt significantly. The increased pressure on security and resources is giving rise to significant dissent within NATO. At the end of five years, NATO faces the need for a major strategic shift to counter continuing threats on its eastern border. A reassessment of financial commitments is necessary. This alternative scenario highlights the need for a proactive approach to dealing with risks and threats on NATO's eastern border.

Scenario D: “Low threats but limited resources: the Black Sea region in transition”

In the next five years, a scenario characterized by a low number of hybrid actions conducted in the Black Sea and a low level of NATO joint funding and financial investments, well below the limit of 2% of GDP allocated to the defence budget by the Allies, is taking shape. Threats and risks on NATO's eastern border, especially in the Black Sea region, remain low, and Romania plays a special role in promoting stability and cooperation, being the initiator of annual conferences in which all Pontic states are convened. These conferences aim to discuss the problems of the Black Sea region and to offer alternatives for their solution. With reduced hybrid threats and limited defence budgets, the Black Sea region enjoys relative stability. Military activities are reduced and the states of the Black Sea region focus their resources on regional cooperation, economic development and investment in infrastructure.

Therefore, regional economic cooperation becomes a priority. States in the Black Sea region continue to resolve disputes peacefully. Romania and other states in the region are strengthening their diplomatic dialogue with their non-NATO neighbours. The states of the Black Sea region are intensifying cooperation in the energy field, reducing dependence on external suppliers, exploiting potential renewable energy sources. Therefore, the energy security of the region is strengthened. NATO member states in the region maintain close surveillance of risks but do not invest significantly in military capabilities. Crisis management remains a major concern.

At the end of the five years, NATO and the states of the Black Sea region evaluate strategies to ensure a better balance between security and economic development under conditions of limited resources. Romania and its allies in the region, despite limited resources, are intensifying their involvement in NATO structures, contributing to the promotion of collective security.

This alternative scenario emphasizes that, in a context of reduced threats and limited financial resources, the Black Sea region can develop towards greater stability and economic cooperation. However, maintaining surveillance and risk management capacity remain a priority, and diplomatic and regional dialogue efforts play a key role in maintaining peace and security on NATO's eastern border. Romania plays an important role in this dynamic, promoting regional dialogue and economic development. However, it is important to maintain adequate vigilance and continue to work with both NATO and non-NATO member states to maintain peace and stability on the Alliance's eastern border.

AFFIRMATION

Determining the most likely scenario for the next five years in the eastern flank of the Alliance, especially in the Black Sea region, is a complex assessment and depends on several factors, including geopolitical developments, political decisions and international cooperation. However, we can make some considerations: Scenario A: *"Achieving new dimensions of transatlantic cooperation"* seems to be the most optimistic and would ideally represent a desired direction for the region, with significant investment in security and regional cooperation.

However, it is important to emphasize that the most likely scenario is not always the desired one or the one that actually happens. Geopolitics can be unpredictable, and unforeseen events can influence the evolution of the situation. Therefore, it is essential to consider and plan for several possible scenarios and regularly monitor the developments in the Black Sea region to remain flexible and adaptable in defence resource management.

In conclusion, scenario A might be the most desirable and optimistic, but we cannot predict with certainty which scenario will be realized in the next five years.

CONCLUSIONS

The current security context is marked by intensified strategic competition, generalized instability and unforeseen events, which have a complex impact on it. The threats, as presented in the mentioned strategic documents as well as

in the scenarios, have a complex character and are closely related to each other, transcending national boundaries. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen the ability to make predictions about imminent threats, to guarantee secure and rigorous access to strategic infrastructure and to provide protection to citizens.

The present article therefore emphasizes the plasticity and unpredictability of the current geopolitical environment and the growing concern of NATO and the EU regarding security in the Black Sea region. This fact suggests that the changes in the region are significant and require special attention. In the first stage of developing the proposed scenarios, orientation, we identified various threats in the Black Sea region, including conventional and hybrid threats. It underlines the complexity of the security situation and the need for a multifaceted approach of actors involved in maintaining a stable and prosperous environment. The resulting paper draws on a diverse range of academic sources, policy documents and security analysis, using an empirical qualitative research approach. In other words, this robust methodology enhances the credibility of the conclusions.

In conclusion, the aim of the article has been achieved by exploring future scenarios in the Black Sea region, taking into account geopolitical changes, military developments and emerging technologies. These scenarios can provide useful insights for regional security decision-making. Through the four scenarios presented in this article, we want to stimulate a deeper debate about the future of NATO and the eastern region, as well as promote an objective, forward-looking attitude in this area. In addition, the paper highlights the important role of Romania as a NATO member state in addressing risks and threats. This aspect underlines Romania's contributions to regional security initiatives.

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“PHYGITAL” SECURITY – A FUSION OF EMERGING PHYSICAL AND CYBER-DIGITAL SPACE EFFECTS – A COMPELLING CALL FOR A NOVEL COMPREHENSIVE CYBERSECURITY THEORY FOR DIGITALIZED SOCIETIES –

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As technology continues to advance rapidly, it is crucial for society’s key stakeholders – policymakers, governmental organizations, business professionals, researchers, academics, and non-governmental organizations – to provide in-depth specialized awareness regarding security-related issues. To effectively address the impact of digitalization and develop tailored public policies, stakeholders must first fully comprehend novel technological challenges and the “Phygital” space. Nations need to recognize that this digital process involves society as a whole. As the digital evolution and revolution continue to expand, it has become synonymous with economic proficiency and digital disruption. The technological advancements and the emergence of disruptive technologies and digital ecosystems, like social media, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, Metaverse etc. present opportunities and challenges unlike any we have faced before in human history. Given these circumstances, it is important to reconsider whether cybersecurity fully encompasses digital changes and disruptions or if further research on “Phygital” security is necessary.

Keywords: “Phygital” security; digital space; digitalization of society, cybersecurity; information technology;

RESEARCH AGENDA

Are societies currently being digitalized?

Over 50 years ago, the concept of “digitalization of society” was first used by Robert Wachal. In 1971, in an essay published in the “North American Review” magazine (Brennen, 2014), Wachal referred to digitalization to describe the debate on the social implications of the use of information technology in the context of objections that were taking shape at the level of American society regarding the development of research activities in human activities assisted by computers.

However, despite opposition, information and communication technology (ICT) systems have continued to develop worldwide from 1971 to the present day. As a result, the debate within societies surrounding digitalization has persisted and even intensified.

Therefore, our article aims to contribute constructively to the ongoing debate regarding the impact of digitalization on societies (see Figure 1). After extensive

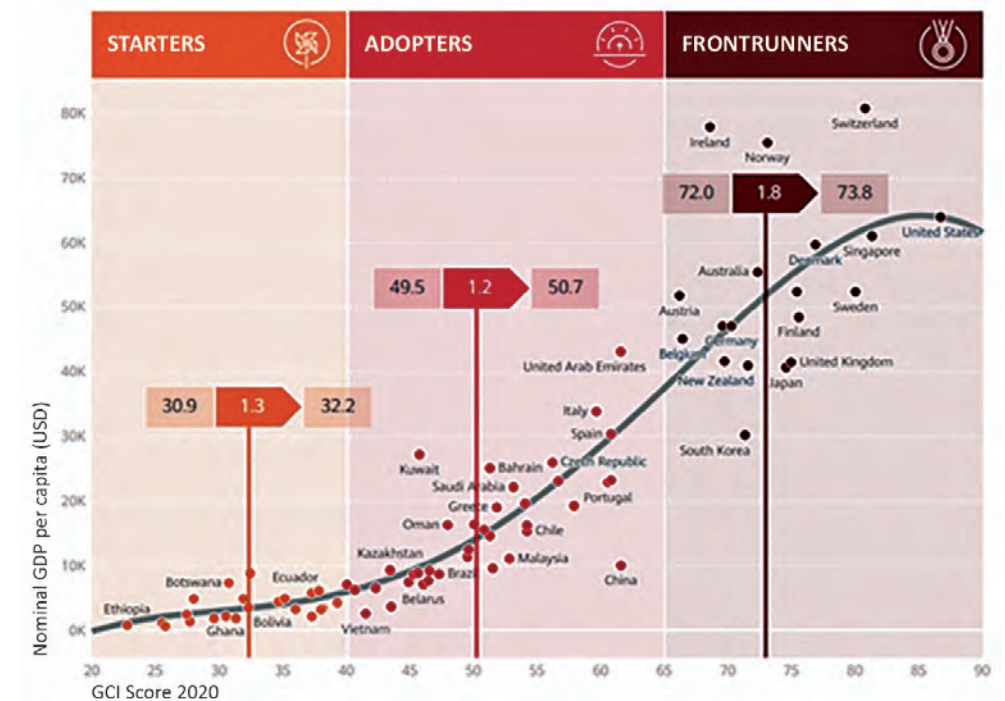


Figure 1: Global Connectivity Index (GCI) versus Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
(Huawei Technologies Co., Ltd., 2020, p. 11)

research, we firmly believe that digital integration is a current global trend that disrupts societies at all levels due to the fusion of physical and cyber-digital spaces that has given rise to a new concept of “*phygital*” space.

Hence, is it required to re-evaluate the cybersecurity concept due to the emergence of novel digitalization of societies?

Throughout this article, we affirmatively answer these two research questions and further provide the necessary arguments, taking into consideration that a novel comprehensive cybersecurity theory that considers the unique challenges posed by this fusion of the physical and digital realms is necessary.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AS A BRIDGE THAT UNITES THE GAP BETWEEN DIGITIZATION AND DIGITALIZATION OF SOCIETIES

The role of ICT in bridging the gap between digitization and digitalization is crucial. Therefore, it is important to understand the difference between *digitization* and *digitalization* terms and how technology sustains the empowerment of the latter.

Without proper implementation of ICT, the digitization process may fall short of achieving the full potential of digitalization. As a consequence, it is essential to understand how technology enables digitalization and ensures its successful implementation.

From a technical point of view, one of the definitions we consider to be comprehensive regards ICT as the *technology that underlies the development, maintenance, and use of computer systems, software applications, and computer networks for processing and distributing digital data* (Merriam-Webster).

Thus, it is worth noting that ICT encompasses both computer and telecommunications technology (Castagna, Bigelow, 2021), and it has three primary functions that impact the digital infrastructure, applications, and services (like computers, servers, networks, or external storage capacities), as follows:

1. *Implementation and maintenance;*
2. *Monitoring, optimizing, and troubleshooting the performance;* as well as
3. *Cyber security oversight and governance.*

Consequently, we consider that *ICT encompasses those physical devices equipped with software programs that can compute, store, and network; as well as the infrastructure and procedures for creating, processing, storing, securing, and exchanging all forms of electronic data* (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Information Technology Components and Functions (Castagna, Bigelow, 2021)

Furthermore, to avoid confusion, we suggest distinguishing between *digitization* and *digitalization*, which are sometimes used interchangeably in literature. Hence, *digitization* is the process through which data and information represented in physical or analogue format are converted into data and information represented in cybernetic or digital format (Digitization vs. digitalization: Differences, definitions and examples, n.d.), resulting in a transformation from physical to cybernetic objects.

From our perspective, *digitization is a transformational process through which physical space data and information change form into cybernetic data and information*. For instance, digitization can be achieved by photographing a physical document to create an electronic document.

Accordingly, digitization is a crucial process that involves converting hard copies of data into digital form. This approach significantly reduces the physical storage space required for documents and enhances their sharing and accessibility. Furthermore, digitization provides protection against physical damage and natural disasters, as digital copies can be remotely backed up and stored to ensure that crucial information is not lost.

On the other hand, *digitalization* is a much more complex process than *digitization*, and from our perspective, *digitalization includes digitization*, the latter representing the first phase of digitalization, the collection of cyber data and information. From a more comprehensive perspective, we state that *digitalization includes three major dimensions*, respectively *digitization*, the *ICT processes* as previously described, and last but not least, the *human activity within cyberspace*.

Although there is a diverse variety of definitions of *digitalization* (Reis, Amorim, Melão, Cohen, Rodrigues, 2020, pp. 447-448), we agree that *digitalization is a process of using digital technologies to change the economic model of an organization in order to capitalize on opportunities to generate new monetary income and increase added value* (Information Technology, n.d.).

Nevertheless, we emphasize the fact that *digitalization* is currently the most significant trend of change affecting individuals, societies, states, and businesses. This means that organizations of all types – whether they are economic, military, political, social, non-governmental, or governmental operating at national, regional, or international levels – are constantly facing pressure to incorporate digital technologies into their operations and adjust their strategies accordingly in order to remain competitive.

Through *digitalization, industrial societies are rapidly transforming at a global scale into informational societies* (Mândraș, 2022, p. 59).

However, even if we agree that *digitalization* has mainly an economic influence, we cannot help but notice that such an approach is limiting, precisely because the impact of *digitalization* is all-encompassing, with repercussions throughout society – individuals, government organizations, non-governmental or economic ones – and its domains – military, political, economic, social and environmental (European Defence Agency, 2023, p. 2). Therefore, limiting our understanding of digitization only to its economic influence is inadequate, precisely because *digitization is socially inclusive, exhaustive, and holistic* (Mândraș, 2020, pp. 78-95).

From a scientific perspective, the debate around the definition of digitalization remains incomplete, in our opinion. The effects of digitalization on societies are increasingly evident and are still not fully known and understood. We have seen that digitalization has been increasingly intense not only economically – as more and more businesses adopt digital processes –, but also among governments around the world. In order to maintain or increase competitiveness, government organizations and the private sector are increasingly incorporating information technologies into their public services and policies. (Reis et al., pp. 443-456).

After careful consideration of the various aspects previously detailed, we believe it is important to critique the focus on economic influence in defining the digitalization of societies.

Consequently, we emphasize that instead, it is crucial to take a holistic approach that takes into consideration the main focus of digitalization: *novel types of cyber technologies generate novel types of human interactions that arise from the newly formed digital ecosystems*.

Digitalization encompasses technology that disrupts all levels of society – macro, micro, and nano.

Hence, we consider that *digitalization is a whole society process through which digital technologies modify, transform, disrupt, or destroy societal processes, models, and strategies in all human domains – economic, military, political, social, and environmental, in order to capitalize on the opportunities, and increase society’s efficiency*.

TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION: EXPANSION OF THE PHYSICAL SOCIAL SPACE

The development of digital technologies is closely related to the invention of cyber information, computers, the Internet, artificial intelligence and process automation, bio-materials, and so on. Cumulatively, these technologies have disrupted societies and generated new innovative mechanisms for reconfiguring and streamlining the systems of production of goods and delivery of services, mainly for economic purposes.

Due to the appearance of cyberspace, human activity has expanded the physical realm and a new type of virtual social space has emerged. Hence, according to the latest research, the social space can be either physical or virtual, and it is where people interact with each other for work, leisure, socializing, or other purposes. It has a significant impact on human behaviour, but its nature and complexity, as well as its relationship to context and spatial scale, are not yet fully understood (Balsa-Barreiro, Morales, 2022, p. 1).

Hence, it is reasonable to ask how the expansion of physical social spaces affects security, and to provide an answer to such a question we further explain the Digital and “Phygital” space.

Digital space as a new dimension for human activities in the “world” of cyberspace

Is there confusion among specialists and the general public regarding the difference between physical, cyber, and digital space?

We believe so (see Fayard, 2012), and precisely for this reason, we provide a clarifying perspective.

Cyberspace represents a *global domain* composed of the interconnection of all ICTs, networks, and digital data, including independent and isolated ones that process, store, or transmit data. From a military perspective, *cyberspace* is being

assimilated in importance to other operational environments in which military actions take place – land, naval, air, and space (NATO, 2020, p. 4).

In terms of cyberspace components, NATO identifies three, respectively: *physical* – which includes the physical components (ICTs devices and networks), located in a delimited geographical space; *logical* – which includes software elements and digital data; and *cyber-persona* – which consists of virtual representations of the identity of physical and real persons or institutions.

It is worth mentioning that the *cyber-persona*, which can exist independently without being connected to a physical or real person or organization, still needs to be closely linked to its physical counterpart in order to function effectively in cyberspace. When we refer to operating in cyberspace, we are emphasizing the actions, behaviours, and activities that individuals or organizations perform in this virtual realm.

Obviously, there is a clear difference between physical and cyberspace, but we argue that cyberspace needs to be further differentiated regarding its components that include human activities and non-human activities.

Precisely for this reason, we consider that *cyberspace must not be confused entirely with digital space*.

Cyberspace and digital space are both virtual. Cyberspace is represented by non-human components (ICT devices, software, procedures, digital data etc.), whilst digital space is represented by a virtual space within cyberspace where human actions, activities, and behaviours occur, at an individual or organizational level.

Hence, due to cyber-persona and human activities in virtual space, *digital space links cyberspace to physical space and vice versa*.

Moreover, we argue that there is great interdependency between cyber, digital, and physical spaces, as human or automated operations in cyber, and digital space produce effects in the physical realm concerning four key dimensions, as follows: *physical, informational, psychological, and bio-technological*.

Our perspective completes NATO's one, which argues that cyberspace produces effects at *physical, informational, and cognitive* levels (NATO, 2020, p. 1).

Regarding the *physical dimension*, it includes all ICT devices located in the physical space that process digital information, whether they work independently or in a network, with or without an Internet connection.

The *informational dimension* is dubbed by some specialists as the *informational environment* (Kuehl, 2009, apud. Schreier, 2015, p. 11). It includes the *virtual*

information contained in the systems arranged in the physical space, which can be subject to processes of dissemination, processing, storage, exploitation, transformation, manipulation, extraction, destruction etc.

In terms of both *psychological* and *bio-technological dimensions*, our argument is that physical entities such as individuals or organizations, along with their digital counterparts – cyber-personas, interact with digital information and generate digital human activities. These digital interactions and activities result in societal effects that occur not only at the cognitive level, as NATO suggests, but also at *individual (psychological), social (sociological), and biological* levels¹.

As a consequence, we argue that digital relationships between humans occur not just on a simple cognitive level, but on a three-dimensional level. It includes the impact of digitalization on the *psychological level* when *individual behaviours are affected by digital activities*; on the *sociological level* when *social groups are affected by virtual activities*; and last but not least on the *biological level* when *digitalization affects the biological and informational system of living beings*.

All three dimensions – psychological, social, and biological – have physical effects on individuals and society. They influence human behaviour and shape the identity and culture of societies.

Intrinsically, we believe that the *main characteristic of the digital space is its duality*. It is at the same time a physical and cybernetic network that facilitates the exchange of digital information, as well as a global phenomenon that influences people and societies. This influence is constantly growing, due in part to the development of virtual social networks and the ability of virtual space to expand beyond physical boundaries.

Considering human activities in cyberspace, digital space represents a virtual domain where people discover information, educate themselves, work, socialize and, last but not least, play and have fun (Le Merle, Davis, 2017, p. 42).

Moreover, from a societal standpoint, digital relationships between physical entities mirror those in the physical space and fall into three main categories: *cooperation, neutral, or confrontational* (see Figure 3).

¹ Cognitive processes (sensations, perceptions, representations, thinking, memory, imagination, and language), together with affective processes (emotions, feelings, and passions), regulatory (will and motivation), and conditional (attention and skills) form the totality of psychic processes. The latter, combined with mental activities (playing, learning, working, creating, and communication) and mental attributes (temperament, skills, and character), are integrated into the human psychic system.

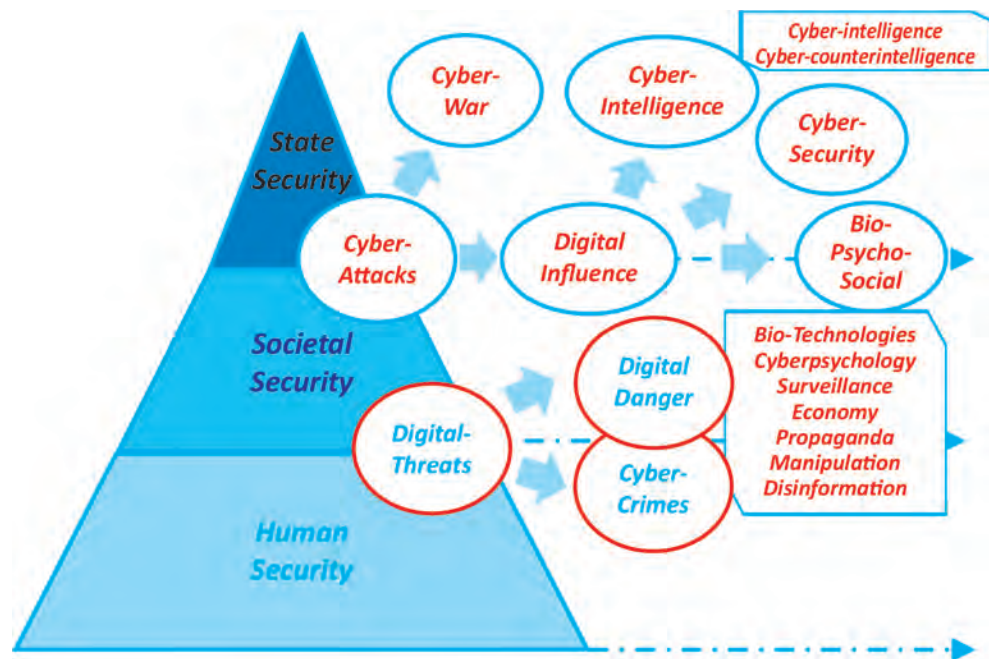


Figure 3: Types of digital conflicts (Mândraș, 2022, p. 63)

“Phygital” space as a conceptual fusion of the physical and cyberspace

Obviously, an expansion of the physical social space where human activities and inter-relationships take place has repercussions on all types of social domains, including security.

But what are these repercussions?

We further provide an answer. Firstly, we note that, when referring to the human experience that transcends these three types of spaces previously mentioned – physical, cyber, and digital, different specialists have observed the emergence of a symbiosis between the physical and cyber-digital space. Secondly, even when disparate, *human experiences in physical and digital space are not independent but interdependent.*

Precisely in order to characterize this mix of human experiences we emphasize that they occur both in a real and palpable world and another virtual “world” that cannot be perceived in geographical space. Accordingly, we need to describe and define the complementarity of human experiences in real and virtual environments, and such a physical-digital synergy requires a conceptual redefinition of the social space, which takes into account the transcendence of the physical limits.

Consequently, we believe that such a redefinition finds its form in the “Phygital” space concept (see Figure 4).

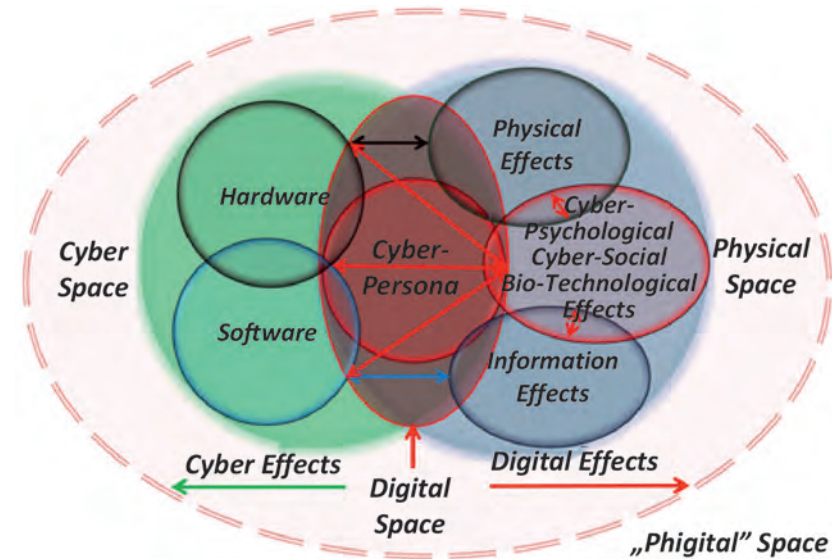


Figure 4: “Phygital” space and digital inter-relationships (Ib.)

The term “Phygital” was first used by Chris Weil, CEO of Momentum Worldwide, in 2007, to describe the integration of physical and digital experiences (White-Gomez, 2022). Obviously, Weil used the term because he wanted to set himself apart from competitors in the marketing industry. Since its patent in 2013, the term has gained global popularity, even in academic circles (see LUMSA Universita, 2022).

In our opinion, “Phygital” is the most comprehensive concept for human activity in both physical and virtual environments in modern societies (see Welsh, 2023).

As a consequence, we believe that this concept must also be expanded to modern security studies, with reference mainly to those of cyber and digital security (Dow, 2021). Given this context, we aim to act as promoters of the “Phygital” security concept and we emphasize that our research within the specialized Romanian security literature has not identified the usage of this term until now.

Therefore, from a security perspective of modern digital societies, we define the “Phygital” space as representing the space or environment where security behaviours are being manifested, resulting from human and non-human, real and virtual interactions, which occur complementary, simultaneously, or disparately in physical, digital and cyberspace, and generate sources of insecurity or resilience actions.

Consequently, we believe that the study of “Phygital” space, security behaviours, sources of insecurity, or securitization actions in physical, digital, and cyberspace represents a domain of security for digitalized societies.

“PHYGITAL” SECURITY: A COMPELLING CALL FOR A NOVEL COMPREHENSIVE CYBERSECURITY THEORY FOR DIGITALIZED SOCIETIES

As specialized literature does not provide a unitary approach to the concept of security, we join those who believe that it is almost impossible to establish a generally valid definition of security (Miller, 2001, pp. 13-42), arguing that security needs differ for each security actor – individuals, societies, and states.

Nevertheless, the concept of security’s complexity must take into account at least four essential elements and provide an answer to the inherent questions, as follows:

Who is the subject of security? Respectively, whose security are we referring to?

What are the sources of insecurity? Respectively, what actions generate them?

Who are the security actors? Respectively, who must ensure the subject’s security by countering threats, removing vulnerabilities, and increasing resilience?

Who are the actors that generate insecurity? Respectively, who or what generates the sources of insecurity or actions that manifest in threats and dangers to the subject’s security?

As the literature addresses at least 15 types of security, we have previously argued that security has four main dimensions (see Figure 5), as follows: (1) security subjects, classified according to the main security actors – the state, society, and the individual; (2) domains of insecurity, classified according to the main sources of insecurity, which simultaneously represent resilience assurance areas – military, political, economy, societal, environment, and digital; (3) security sources, which mainly refers to state security, classified according to the behaviour of states in achieving their own security within international relations – joint, collective, and cooperation; and (4) security environment, which mainly refers to state security, classified according to the geopolitical and cyberpolitical depth of the security environment at national, regional and international level (see Mândraș, 2021).

Moreover, digitalization represents a new security domain, and a wide variety of digital insecurity sources disrupts the security of all actors (Mândraș, 2020, pp. 86-92).

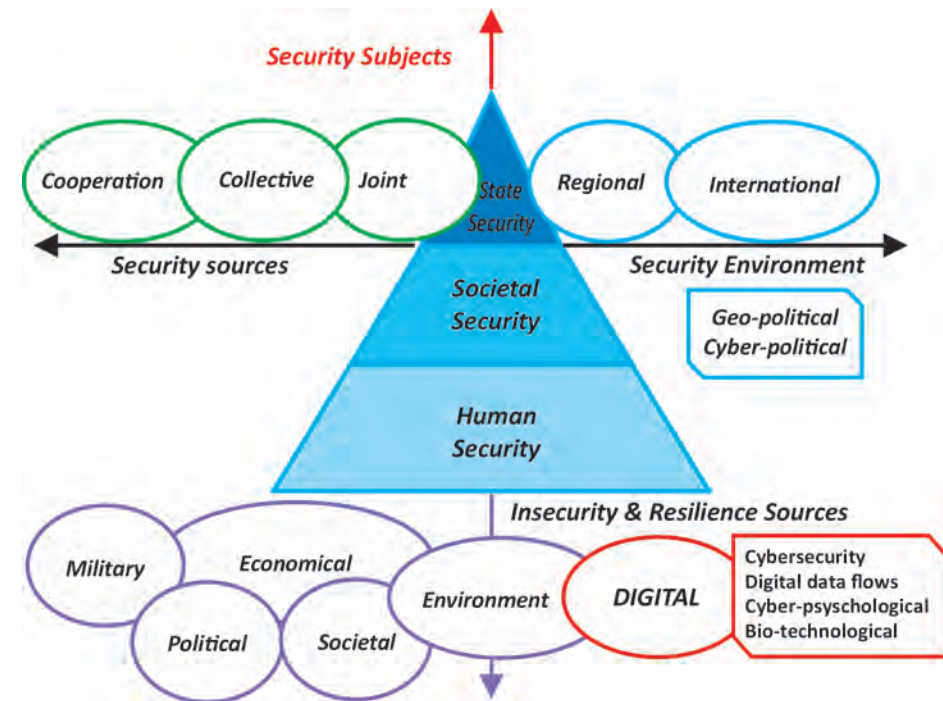


Figure 5: Dimensions of security (Mândraș, 2022, p. 70)

Given these circumstances, is the current theoretical cybersecurity framework inclusive enough?

Prior to providing a comprehensive answer, we note that the security literature provides significance almost exclusively to cybersecurity, which is treated solely from the state security’s perspective. Hence, cybersecurity refers to the state’s need to ensure security of three main components, respectively: the hardware and software that contain digital information; the flows of digital data, and its digital informational environment. More specifically, security literature details two concepts: cybersecurity and security of digital data flows.

Referring to cybersecurity, one cannot identify a universally accepted definition, similar to many other concepts in the field of social and security studies.

For example, NATO regards cybersecurity to consist mainly of defending its own cyber networks, missions, and operations, as well as increasing the organization’s resilience, including through the development of capabilities for cyber education, training, and exercises (NATO, 2023; see also NATO, 2016).

From a US perspective, the White House Cyberspace Policy Review regards cybersecurity as an “activity or process, ability or capability or state by which computer

and communication systems, as well as the information contained therein, are protected/defended against destruction or access, modification, or unauthorized exploitation". Moreover, cyber defence includes a whole range of actions, strategies, policies and standards to reduce threats, vulnerabilities and destruction of cyberspace and its operations, through "international engagement, incident response, resiliency, and recovery policies and activities, including computer network operations, information assurance, law enforcement, diplomacy, military, and intelligence missions as they relate to the security and stability of the global information and communications infrastructure" (Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, 2023).

Even if the security of digital data flows can be easily confused with cybersecurity, it has a distinctive character given by the existence of a dual perspective of digital information. Firstly, it belongs to a specific digital system located within a certain geographical territory. Secondly, the digital information networks digital systems that are located on the territory of several states and are subject to different legal jurisdictions and regulations.

On the other hand, the security of digital data flows lays the foundation of digitalization and refers to ensuring the national, regional and international digital security of financial data and ideas exchanges, and not only to ensure the security of digital economic exchanges – energy, products and services (Verhagen, Chavannes, Bekkers, 2020, p. 7).

Considering the above-mentioned arguments, we emphasize that, currently, the security literature regards cybersecurity almost exclusively from the perspective of entailing the security of a single security actor, the state.

Hence, we call for an inclusive cybersecurity perspective that regards individual and societal security issues that arise from cyber and digital space threats. We criticize the approach to cyber security only from the state perspective and consider that the approach must be extended to a new concept of "phygital" security in order to include the perspective of the other two security actors – individuals and societies, and all types of sources of digital insecurity.

Consequently, we advocate for a comprehensive cybersecurity approach, which addresses both individual and societal security concerns that result from cyber and digital threats and conflicts. We believe that the traditional state-centric approach to cybersecurity is inadequate and does not entail the full magnitude of digitalization as previously depicted.

More specifically, we call for an expansion of the security of cyberspace to encompass "phygital" security, taking into account the perspectives of all three security actors – individuals, societies, and states, as well as all sources of digital insecurity, and types of digital effects in physical space.

Considering that cyber and digital space is an environment of insecurity not only for states, but also for individuals and communities that are part of societies, we believe that such an expansion positively answers Robert Reardon and Nazli Choucri's call for giving greater importance to individual rights within the objectives of the cyber agenda (Reardon, Choucri, 2012, p. 7).

Consequently, we define "phygital" security as an activity, process, skill, or capability to identify, defend, and build resiliency against any disruptive effect of cyber and digital space in the physical realm, embodied in sources of cyber and digital insecurity (see Figure 6).

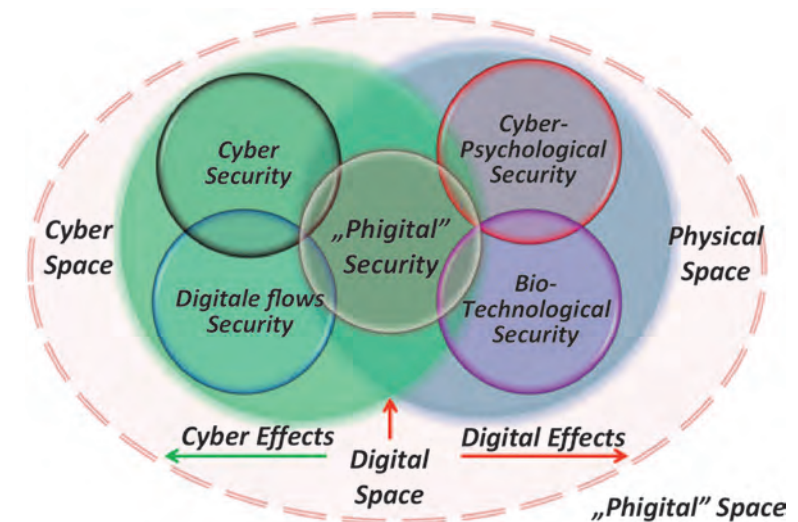


Figure 6: "Phygital" security (1b.)

As previously detailed, we refer to *physical effects* – cyber protection and defence of ICT; *informational effects* – defence of the informational environment and protection against hostile digital influences; *cyber-psychological effects* – protection against undermining psyche and behaviour (see Harley, Frith, Morgan, 2018, pp. 6-7); and *bio-technological effects* – protection against hostile biological manipulations and hacking (see US National Science Foundation, 2007).

FURTHER RESEARCH AGENDA

We embarked on this research article with two fundamental questions in mind that we believe are critical for the contemporary reality. Firstly, we wanted to determine whether we are currently witnessing a digital transformation of societies and whether this process demands a reassessment of the concept of cybersecurity.

Through literature review and analytical research methods, we discovered that digitalization has a global impact, primarily due to the development of information and communication technologies, as well as the exponential growth of digitization, and human activities within cyberspace. As such, we examined the concept of digitization and distinguished it from digitalization, which we believe is a process that affects all security actors by improving the efficiency of digital technologies in societal activities.

Furthermore, we provided a differentiated perspective of cyberspace from digital space, detailing the effects that automated and human activities have on the physical environment. We also described how security literature approaches cybersecurity and digital data flows almost entirely from a state perspective.

Therefore, our answers to the two questions are affirmative, and this article calls for a re-evaluation of the concept of cybersecurity, considering both the effects of digitization on society and the "phygital" effects generated by the fusion of physical space with the cyber-digital environment.

Instead of concluding, we emphasize that we offer a new theoretical approach to cyberspace security, which we call "phygital" security, and which addresses four types of digital disruptions with effects in physical space: Cyber, Digital data flow, Cyber-psychological, and Bio-technological security.

As theoretical models correspond to practical needs, our conceptualization aims to serve as a model for the development of appropriate and differentiated public policies that address all sources of cyber and digital insecurity.

We propose continuing research and encourage debates on the opportunities and risks generated by digitization and cyber-digital effects in physical space.

Moreover, we urge the entire society, but especially academia, government decision-makers, businesses, IT and media professionals, as well as non-governmental organizations to identify and promote good practices, procedures and regulations that foster the development of individual, societal and state resilience.

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THE RISKS TO GERMANY'S PEACE AND SECURITY GENERATED BY THE REICHSBÜRGER MOVEMENT OR "CITIZENS OF THE REICH" BASED ON POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONVICTIONS

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In recent years, the extreme right in Germany has expanded, the phenomenon gaining momentum. The far-right groups and organisations in Germany were, are and will be dominated by an ideology that amalgamates religious or non-religious ideas but that defends German culture and spirituality according to its visions and objectives.

Adherents of far-right ideology combine these ideas with conspiracy theories, and on such a background, some of them change their attitude towards society and become violent. For example, right-wing extremists attacked the Parliament, the symbol of democracy, for the first time in Germany, namely on 29 August 2020, and later on 6 January 2021, protesters, including right-wing extremists, attacked the Congress of the United States of America.

One of the organisations, such as the Reichsbürger Movement, which means Citizens of the Reich, who reject the current borders of Germany and want the return to those established in 1871, set up cells and planned activities recently catalogued as terrorists by German prosecutors, in December 2022 and May 2023.

For the Citizens of the Reich, there is no Federal Republic of Germany because this country is part of a conspiracy and part of a satanic state system, and they recognise only Imperial Germany. According to the religious beliefs of some of them, the imperial constitution was received from God and must be respected, and they are in an apocalyptic battle between good and evil. The model invoked by some of them is that of Jesus Christ who changed society, erroneously invoking biblical precepts to bolster their claims.

Keywords: far-right extremism; Reichsbürger; conspiracies; Christianity; faith;

INTRODUCTION

The vision of society and its social order have always been the objectives of humans, and since humans are unique, those perspectives have been different, from small differences to opposed and antagonistic ones. Usually, beliefs in opposed political ideologies have generated violence from followers or sympathisers of groups, organisations or state or non-state political systems. One such case is that of the Citizens of the Reich or the Reichsbürger Movement, a far-right organisation without an established leadership of the entire movement.

Reichsbürger means "literally citizens of the empire" in German. In non-Germanic languages, they are known as "citizens of the Reich" (Campbell, 2023). The Citizens of the Reich Movement consists of "individuals who share common logic and belief that allows them to deny and disobey existing state authority and establish their own "ego-centred sovereignty" (Atamuradova & Zeiger, 2021, pp. 16-17). According to Niklas Herrberg, a researcher of the religious foundations of the Citizens of the Reich Movement, "belief in a conspiracy against Germany in the Reich Citizens' scene is linked to various religious motives" (Herrberg, 2021, p. 505).

"Sovereign Citizens, Freemen on the Land, Reichsbürger" are different ideological-political movements with different names but with the same conceptions, namely that people have "a distinctive kind of 'ego-centred' sovereignty that, in its logic, permits them to disobey social conventions as well as any kind of state authority" (Walkenhorst & Ruf, 2021, p. 223).

Therefore, the Reichsbürger Movement or Citizens of the Reich is an extreme right-wing movement that refuses the state authority of Germany. At the basis of its beliefs, there are also religious beliefs in addition to political ones.

THE POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE CITIZENS OF THE REICH

Adherents of the Reichsbürger Movement have a system of beliefs and values formed by the amalgamation of far-right political ideology with religious beliefs and perceptions of the superiority of the Germanic race. For most followers of the movement, Reichsbürger represents "the 19th century Kaiser Reich, the German empire led by the Kaiser (emperor) until Germany lost World War I and became a republic" (Campbell, 2023).

The followers of this movement don't recognise the borders of the Federal Republic of Germany, rejecting *"the current German state and its democratic structure"* (Fürstenau, 2023), instead recognising the borders of the German Empire from 1871. Although entitled Citizens of the Reich, the movement is not an organised one but consists of *"small groups and individuals scattered across the country who are united in that shared belief"* (Hill, 2022). Some Citizens of the Reich *"print their own currency and identity cards and dream of creating their autonomous state"* (Hill, 2022).

"Reichsbürger" (*"Citizens of the Reich"*) and *"Selbstverwalter"* (*"self-administrators"*), although they ideologically have different conceptions, are united by a central element consisting of the *"fundamental rejection of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and its legal system"*, according to a material published by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Germany (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 6). The movement consists of people *"without structural connections, but also from small and very small groups, virtual networks and supra-regional associations of people"*, individuals who use social networks a lot (ib.).

In early 2022, the Citizens of the Reich group entitled *"The Königreich Deutschland (Kingdom Germany) bought two pieces of land in Saxony upon which they intended to create their own self-administered state"* (Hill, 2022). In addition to this group, entitled *"The Kingdom of Germany"*, there is another one called *"Confederation of the German Reich"*, both of which are part of the Reichsbürger Movement (Fiyaz Mughal OBE, 2022).

Ideologically, *"Reichsbürger"* appeared in 1985, when Wolfgang Günter Ebel established the *"Kommissarische Reichsregierung"* (KRR), translated as *"Government of the Reich Commissioner"*, and called himself *"Chancellor of the Reich"*, one of the objectives of which was to restore *"the German Reich"* (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 7). Some of the Citizens of the Reich do not pay the taxes and duties due to the state, intentionally blocking the activity of the town halls by sending many letters (Hill, 2022).

In an article entitled *"The Religion of the Reich Citizens – Theocracy Germany"*, published on 12 July 2019, Christian Röther drew attention to the danger represented by the Citizens of the Reich against the background of the distorted appropriation of some religious concepts. They do not recognise the Federal Republic of Germany based on *"religious ideas far beyond the mainstream"*. For example, some Citizens of the Reich *"assume that they received their imperial constitution directly from God and imagine themselves in an apocalyptic final battle"* (Röther, 2019).

The fundamental ideological elements of the Reichsbürger Movement are *"the use of far-right historical and regional revisionism, ethnic beliefs and anti-Semitic narratives"* (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 9). Racism is part of the ideology of the movement and in most situations, the intolerant attitude is adopted *"not against a certain ethnic or religious group, but against everything that is perceived as non-German"* (Juling, 2023).

According to a manifesto of the Deutsches Kolleg, a neo-Nazi organization close to the Reichsbürger Movement, the German Empire is an instrument of divinity: *"The Reich as the sword of God, as the catechist and protector of the cosmic order in Europe and on Earth. From the starry cloaks of the German emperors to the starry sky above Kant's Königsberg, the German faith has always been cosmocentric and therefore the object of hatred by all anthropocentric cults, including Christianity"* (Deutsches Kolleg, 2019 apud Herrberg, 2021, p. 515).

One of the leading exponents of the Reich Citizen movement, Peter Fitzek, stated in an interview with Christian Röther that he was *"a messenger of God"*. *"I have come so far in my awareness that I know exactly: who am I? What do I want here? Why was I sent here by the Creator? Where am I from? And I come from a world that has nothing to do with this. And I am fully aware of that"*, says Peter Fitzek (Röther, 2019).

Peter Fitzek established in 2012 in Wittenberg the *"Kingdom of Germany"* and called himself the king of this state, issuing *"Reich driving licenses, Reich trade permits and Reich passports"* without legal value (MDR SAXONIA-ANHALT, 2023). Eric Campbell says that *"Reichsbürger are the German equivalent but in a very German way"* of *"Sovereign Citizens in the US"* or Australia, the two movements being similar in that they refuse the authority of the state and do not recognise the governments of the countries they are from part (Campbell, 2023).

For the Reichsbürger, *"the old world is synonymous with law and order, strength and national pride, industriousness and tradition, a traditional role for women, the higher value placed on religion and community, and a more homogeneous society"* (Juling, 2023). At the same time, the followers of this movement refuse to accept society as it currently functions and want *"a simpler life, as opposed to the complexity of today's world"*, an attitude that *"is expressed in a vehement rejection of state bureaucracy or a left-leaning, more progressive image of a pluralistic society"* (Juling, 2023).

Peter Fitzek, the self-proclaimed King of Germany, states that the system of social order in Germany must be changed, considering that he has a divine mission

to fulfil and is like Jesus Christ: *"How can we get rid of this satanic system and basically do what was first initiated 2000 years ago? And that's why I say to myself I'm just someone doing the same thing now. I question the whole system. And this was done 2000 years ago by Jesus Christ. I'm not going to do anything else now"* (Röther, 2019).

Groups of adherents to the ideology of the Citizens of the Reich Movement have been studied by researchers of the phenomenon who have concluded that, in Germany, these groups *"seem to bear remarkable similarities to smaller cults and sects"* (Walkenhorst & Ruf, 2021, p. 233). In the same way, at world level, *"similarities between Sovereign Citizens and cults or cult-like groups"* could be observed (Walkenhorst & Ruf, 2021, p. 233).

Kilian Knop, a researcher of the Reichsbürger movement, learned from conducting interviews *"that various religious elements are important in the 'Kingdom of Germany'"* (Röther, 2019). *"Esotericism and theosophy, yoga and meditation, UFO belief and Christ worship, natural mysticism and communication with supernatural beings mix here"*, says Kilian Knop: *"On the one hand, nature spirits, but also angels. That plays a role. Contact with the deceased plays a role"*, quoting Peter Fitzek in the interview, in which he points out that *"a theocracy will be created"* (Röther, 2019).

On 20 March 2021, a demonstration of Citizens of the Reich took place in Berlin, carrying placards on which they wrote religious messages thus highlighting their religiosity: *"Jesus lives"*, *"Germany should return to God"*, *"Joshua, Light of the Nations"* (Pernot, 2021). Moreover, for the Citizens of the Reich, *"Empire"* means *"a return to a cosmic order – and in this ontological sense, a distinguished and original one – or that it could be defended against a possible apocalyptic fall"* (Herrberg, 2021, p. 515).

Such a return influenced by religious reasons is evidenced by the promoted concept, namely that of the *"Government in exile of the German Reich"*, which, in addition to the promoted imperial social architecture, also reveals the importance of the German language as a *"central point of reference"* (Herrberg, 2021, p. 515). According to Exil-Regierung Deutsches Reich, in translation Exile Government of the German Reich, *"the German language reflects a real and truly great spirit. In this, we find the structures of proximity to nature and the deep knowledge of justice and social coexistence. This language carries within itself the divinity, the divine, the original God. No other language in the world than that of the Germans has managed to preserve its original roots"* (Exil-Regierung Deutsches Reich, 2023).

Religious syncretism is a specific side of the Citizens of the Reich, the followers of the movement amalgamating a number of religious concepts that they take from the doctrines of various religions. For example, *"in some cases, there are fictitious ministries that are supposed to make contact with angels and divine beings"* (Juling, 2023). *"Traditional Christianity or Germanism and Nordic religions are in the foreground among the non-esoteric Reichsbürger"*, says Dominik Juling (Juling, 2023).

The deputy head of the Department for Public Relations and Protection of the Constitution through Education Ministry of the Interior in Germany's Brandenburg, Michael Hülsen, stated in an interview on 29 August 2017 that there is *"a mixture of esoteric content and right-wing extremism"*, and Reichsbürger is no exception (Kassel, 2017). When people are affected by stressors, they look to esotericism as a salutary solution (Kassel, 2017).

The *"social group structure"* of Citizens of the Reich and how the leaders proclaim themselves as leaders is specific to occult religious groups (Walkenhorst, Ruf, 2021, p. 233). The *"New Germany"* organisation also known as the *"Kingdom of Germany"*, led by Peter Fitzek, has a *"sect-like structure"* (Hüllen, Homburg, 2017, p. 42). The *"religious semantics"* used by Citizens of the Reich *"contains a legitimising attribution of one's own position, which, moreover, often sees religion as part of an ahistorically determined identity"* (Herrberg, 2021, p. 514).

Niklas Herrberg says in a study titled *"Legitimated by God to Free the Empire"*, namely *"the Reich"*, that *"religion is used in a non-specific sense"* by amalgamating religious concepts from Christianity with those of political ideology (Herrberg, 2021, p. 516).

"Deutschen Kolleg" writes about the political activist Rudi Dutschke: *"As with Jesus of Nazareth, with Rudi von Luckenwalde his community recognised only some time after his death that they had met an individual from the history of salvation... Hitler and Dutschke were the two charismatic leaders that the German people produced in the 20th century: Hitler – the leader of the great German labour and popular movement in 1933, Dutschke – the leader of the small German student movement in 1968... This resurrection of Dutschke revealed that Providence placed salvation – for the second time in the 20th century – on a saviour of the Germans"* (Deutsches Kolleg, 2019 apud Herrberg, 2021, p. 516).

Thus, the political ideology and religious beliefs of the Citizens of the Reich are a mixture of syncretistic religious beliefs and conspiracy theories and ideas about returning to an antebellum state form and social order with which such individuals agree.

THE DANGER TO SOCIETY REPRESENTED BY THE CITIZENS OF THE REICH

Followers of the Reichsbürger Movement have a system of beliefs and values that lead and motivate them to reject the current German state and the authority represented by it, which makes them a danger to society in general and to the people who stand in the way of their plans, in particular.

On 29 August 2020, the Reichstag, the German parliament, was stormed by a mob due to restrictions imposed by the authorities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, among them anti-vaxxers, followers of QAnon conspiracy theories, neo-Nazis, right-wing extremists and *"a sovereign citizens movement known as Reichsbürger"* (Campbell, 2023). The action is similar to the assault on the United States Congress on 6 January 2021, because it inspired it, just as it inspired the assault on the Brazilian Congress (Campbell, 2023).

In addition to refusing to pay taxes and fees to the state and issuing documents in the name of a non-existent state entity, the worst thing is that these *"citizens"* are increasingly resorting to violence against those who do not share their beliefs, especially against representatives of state authorities such as the police and this trend will be increasing, according to Dennis Walkenhorst and Maximilian Ruf as early as 2019 (Walkenhorst, Ruf, 2021, p. 223).

"The conspiratorial semantics of the citizens of the Reich", says Niklas Herrberg, *"absorb elements and motifs of various religious semantics, interpret them in their own sense and use them to legitimize their own actions"* (Herrberg, 2021, p. 506).

Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution warns that among the approximately 23,000 followers of the Citizens of the Reich Movement, there are also *"violent people and right-wing extremists"*, and some of them *"are in possession of weapons"* (MDR SAXONIA-ANHALT, 2023). It was estimated that, at the end of 2021, there were around 21,000 Citizens of Reich (Kirby, 2022) and in just one year the number of followers increased by approximately 10%, while at the end of 2016, the number of Citizens of the Reich was estimated at approximately 10,000 people (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 17).

But in reality, according to the Global Network on Extremism & Technology, it appears that the number of supporters of the Citizens of the Reich Movement is much higher, as evidenced by the fact that *"content posted in openly marked 'Reichsbürger' channels on Telegram can reach up to 60,000 members"* (Kupper & Dittrich, 2023).

German government authorities have stated that the trend of crimes and violent actions committed by Citizens of the Reich, together with the like-minded

Selbstverwalter group, is increasing and at the same time worrying as *"they have committed more than 1,000 extremist criminal acts in 2021, double the number in 2020"* (Hill, 2022).

The head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Thomas Haldenwang, stated that the Citizens of the Reich *"pose a high level of danger"* because a percentage of 10% of the estimated number of followers are prone to commit acts of violence (Kirby, 2022), i.e. an approximate number of 2,300 people according to estimates made on 31 December 2022 (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 18).

The German Federal Prosecutor's Office has publicly stated that a group of 50 Citizens of the Reich, men and women, *"had been plotting a violent coup since November 2021"* with *"plans to rule Germany with departments covering health, justice and foreign affairs"* (Kirby, 2022). The Citizens of the Reich, who were part of that group, intended to seize political power through *"military means and violence against state representatives, which included carrying out killings"*, which is why the German prosecutor's office also considered it a terrorist threat (Kirby, 2022). German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser called those who planned the coup a *"terrorist group ... driven by fantasies of violent overthrow and conspiracy ideologies"* (Ib.).

German prosecutors described the coup plotting organization as *"a far-right terrorist group that was plotting to overthrow the government"* (Smith, 2023). According to allegations in a German Federal Court filing, three Citizens of the Reich photographed the interior of the German parliament in September 2022 to prepare *"a violent attack"* (Smith, 2023). They intended to create *"civil war conditions to bring about an end to Germany's democracy"* (Kirby, 2022). The 25 Citizens of the Reich, or followers of the Reichsbürger Movement were arrested *"after police discovered details of a planned armed coup in the advanced stages of planning, including a government structure to replace Germany's federal republic"* (Smith, 2023). Among the 25 members of the group arrested was a female judge named Birgit Malsack-Winkemann, who, however, was reinstated as a magistrate by a court (Kirby, 2022).

The plotters also established paramilitary groups made up of active or reservist German special forces whose specific aim was to *"eliminate democratic bodies at the local level"* (Ib.). *"Everyone involved in this operation knew that it could only be carried out by using deadly force of arms against the police and security forces of the German Bundestag"*, the indictment filed in the case pending in Germany's Federal Court states. (Smith, 2023). According to the plan, a number of 16 Citizens

of the Reich, members of the group planning the attack, were to force their way into the parliament building, in which they acquired weapons with lethal ammunition (Smith, 2023).

In 2016, a Citizen of the Reich killed a policeman (Kirby, 2022), but the problem is that many of the Citizens of the Reich *"have guns"*, owned legally or illegally, and the German police cancelled the permits to carry weapons for over a thousand followers of the movement in 2016, from the time of the shooting of the policeman, until 2021, but with all this more than 500 Citizens of the Reich still possessed lethal weapons legally (Hill, 2022).

Some of the Reichsbürger followers believe that *"the state has no authority over them, which is why police now take lots of backup when they have to visit Reichsbürger properties to enforce laws"* because of an unfortunate event that happened in 2016, when a Citizen of the Reich of Romanian origin, by the name of Adrian Ursache, shot a policeman from the law enforcement team that was trying to evacuate him from a property that *"he had declared to be a sovereign state"* (Campbell, 2023). Another case, also in 2016, is that of a follower of the movement who shot 4 policemen, one of whom died shortly from his injuries (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2023, p. 33), his name being Wolfgang Plan, a *"German far-right militant belonging to the shadowy Citizens of the Reich movement"* (AFP, 2017).

BBC Berlin Correspondent Jenny Hill said on 7 December 2022 in the article *"Reichsbürger: Germany's 'crackpot' movement turns radical and dangerous"* that although the Citizens of the Reich were long regarded as a collection of *"lunatics"*, *"they're becoming more radical and more dangerous"* (Hill, 2022). Heinrich XIII – Prince of Reuss, leader of the Citizens of the Reich group, stated that *"Jews are responsible for the end of European kingdoms and believes that the current German state is illegitimate and void because of agreements made with allied forces after World War II"* (Smith, 2023).

Peter Neumann, an extremism expert at King's College London, said the group was influenced by QAnon conspiracy theories and the 6 January 2021, the attack on the US Congress and the occupation of the Brazilian Congress, the three actions sharing *"an inspirational link"* and highlighting *"a very powerful image for how far-right people could take power"* (Smith, 2023).

Therefore, some of the followers of the Reichsbürger Movement generate risks to society as a result of their own beliefs, a conclusion based on the fact that the actions of some of the Citizens of the Reich in the last seven years have been violent, not limited to expressing personal opinions about the system of social order.

CONCLUSIONS

The Reichsbürger or Citizens of the Reich movement is categorised as one of the far-right, without clearly established leadership, whose ideology is based on an amalgam of political, conspiratorial, religious, racial or cultural beliefs, but all of them gravitating around Germany and the Germanic culture and spirituality.

The followers of the Reichsbürger do not recognise the Federal Republic of Germany or its current borders, reason for which they refuse to recognise the authority of the German state, an attitude that often makes them violent towards the representatives of the German state, especially with the police, since they are the ones who ensure public order and compliance with laws.

For Reichsbürger, the only state they recognise is the German Empire or Reich of 1871 and the borders it had at the time. It refuses to recognise the 21st century Germany, because it considers it to still be a country occupied by the allies from the Second World War. It does not accept identity documents legally issued by the German state or driving licenses or other types of documents. As a result, groups that are part of the Reich Citizens Movement issue their own documents.

For them, conspiracy theories are a standard to follow, and not only that, but they have also adapted them to their own visions of German society. These conspiracy theories have been mixed with Christian religious doctrine and political ideologies, generating strong convictions and consequently the adoption of an extremely firm attitude and conduct. These led to violent behaviour in some of the followers of the Reichsbürger Movement, who not only became aggressive towards those who did not share their views or towards the police but also killed people.

Different groups that are part of the Reichsbürger Movement have appeared in the last ten years. They take different names that clearly indicate the rejection of the current political system of Germany, namely by referring to the state of 150 years ago, ruled by an emperor. Exemplary in this sense is the group called *"Kingdom of Germany"* or *"Confederation of the German Reich"*.

This movement is all the more dangerous because some of the followers of the Reichsbürger ideology have the conviction that the said imperial constitution, from 1871, was given by God, who also gave the Tablets of the Law to Moses. Such beliefs make Reich Citizens reject anything that is not Germanic and thus become intolerant.

One of the leaders of a group of Citizens of the Reich, Peter Fitzek, sees himself as an emissary of divinity, and the Reich is a weapon and instrument by which God imposes his will in the midst of cosmic anarchy and disorder.

The existence of approximately 23,000 followers of the movement at the end of 2022 and a significantly larger number of sympathisers will automatically generate a large number of people in whom the violent trigger will occur. Because of the strong convictions of the Citizens of the Reich regarding the sacred mission that some of them have, in the times to come, such individuals will present a danger to those with whom they interact.

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RELEVANT ACTORS AND EXISTING INTERDEPENDENCIES IN SECURITY ASSURANCE AT REGIONAL LEVEL BY ROMANIA

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The weak sense of security that is specific to the region that our country is part of, and also at the international level, renders the membership of an alliance and cooperation a necessity. The collaboration between NATO and the EU, the main actors and guarantors of security in recent years, in Europe, with other states and international organizations is essential to address threats and preserve our security. “Those ready to give up a fundamental right in order to achieve a temporary sense of security deserve neither the right, nor the security” (Popescu 2020), said Benjamin Franklin. Regardless of our opinion about what he said, we can all agree that freedom and security are two very hot topics given the current context.

This paper analyses the main themes of the relevant actors and of the existing interdependencies in ensuring security in the region and the influences that lead to destabilization in the region. The main purpose of this paper is to analyse both the internal and external factors that influence national and regional security strategy. Being given these facts, this paper underlines the risk factors that can influence and endanger peace and security, as well as the international bodies and the relations that place Romania on the regional security providers list.

Keywords: regional security; European security and defence policy; risk factors; security strategies; threat;

ROMANIA – 30 YEARS’ WORTH OF PROGRESS TOWARDS REGIONAL SECURITY

The past 30 years have represented Romania’s progress in regional security, given the significant changes in Eastern Europe, and in the context of the accession to NATO and the EU in 2004. Here are some of the important achievements and developments: participation in international peacekeeping missions, regional cooperation, modernization of the armed forces, cyber security, energy security, anti-terrorism efforts, as well as collaboration with strategic partners.

As a sovereign state, Romania is an essential actor in ensuring regional security. In this context, it needs to defend its interests and to involve in regional security efforts. *“In the past years, Romania strengthened its role as an ally and regional actor that takes part in ensuring security in the Euro-Atlantic region and at an international level”.* (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 22)

Romania is one of the main actors that take part in maintaining regional security. Internal stability, cooperation with other states and organizations render our country as a stability pillar and an efficient partner when taking part in projects and concrete actions that are meant for maintaining regional and international security.

Since the moment that our country filed in a formal manner for joining NATO in 1993, Romania made a remarkable progress in cooperating with partners and allies to ensure its own security and to ensure regional and international security. All at the same time, Romania has succeeded in strengthening its role regarding its foreign policy and it became, all in all, a strong ally and a trusted partner for all the alliances and organizations that it is part of.

The fact that our country became a part of a series of international bodies that have the sole purpose of ensuring peace and security for the nations and in the regions that the member states are part of, partnered with the fact that it strengthened its own security (both internal and external) transformed it into a true pillar for stability and security in the Eastern European region. Nowadays the external policy of expansion, sometimes aggressive, sometimes even violent, promoted by countries like the Russian Federation have created insecurity, chaos, uncertainty, and so the membership of an alliance or of an international body that focuses on security becomes the path most likely to follow by all the states that wish for security and growth.

Analysing furthermore, the violent and unprovoked conflicts that happen nowadays prove the need for any country to have allies. The mere positioning that Romania has on the global map can lead to uncertainty and unrest in society, especially given the history that our country shares with the Russian Federation. A solid military strategy, good resource management and a modern training of the military can bring peace of mind among the people in our country. The guarantee that our country is ready and able to deal with crisis situations anytime is a key factor for mental stability that the society needs in order to properly function.

Romania has strengthened its relations with strategic partners, like the United States of America, contributing to a consolidated presence of these partners in the region. Such developments show that Romania has made significant progress in ensuring regional security in the past three decades, becoming an important actor in the region and in international alliances. However, regional security remains a priority, and Romania should continue to adapt to the new challenges and threats to maintain stability and peace in the region.

Like any other sovereign state, Romania has maintaining security among its objectives, without which any other objective, be it economic, social, environmental, cultural or military, cannot be achieved and maintained. In any situation in fact, security and political stability are very important pillars for a state as without them no other objective could be attained.

The national and regional security of Romania represents a constant subject of concern not only for the states in the region but also for the European and international bodies that focus on maintaining stability and peace. Given the fact that the Russian Federation manifests a growing tendency for expansion and shows a more aggressive behaviour, we can agree that insecurity and danger level in the region are on a rise and that we need to revise, adapt and evolve our partnerships and to strengthen our positions on the list of actors that have direct influence over the regional security and can provide stability.

Overall, the issue of regional security is complex and depends on a variety of context-specific factors. Its approach requires a deep understanding of regional dynamics, interests and interdependencies between the states involved. Addressing regional security issues often requires regional and international cooperation to address common threats and promote stability and peace. Romania represents a pillar of regional stability, as the issue of regional security is a major concern in the context of international relations and refers to the maintenance of stability

and security in a certain geographical area. This issue can be influenced by a number of factors and dynamics, and the specific context in which it plays out can vary by region. Here are some key aspects of the regional security issue and the related context.

The current context shows that the conflicts around our country are on an expansionist tendency, so Romania's stability and its participation in NATO and EU actions grant it the status of pillar of regional stability. As it is also stated in the official document published by the Presidential Administration of Romania, namely the *National Defence Strategy for the 2020-2024 period*, Romania is a "promoter and actor involved in sustainable international partnerships". In addition, "the security and economic developments generated by changes in the power balance abroad require concrete and concerted actions from the Romanian state, which will continue to implement and promote the concept of extended national security" (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 8).

ROMANIA – MEMBER OF NATO, EU, OSCE, UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES

Romania – Member of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization

More publicly known as NATO, the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization is an international body, a political and military alliance that has as purpose to protect the freedom and security of member states. NATO is fulfilling its purposes by engaging in diplomatic talks and military operations, when the first option fails.

According to an official document issued by the Presidential Administration, as part of the national defence strategy of Romania for the 2020-2024 period, the strengthening of the relations that our country has with NATO and the EU is a main objective. The same document also states that "Membership of the European Union and NATO, as well as the Strategic Partnership with the USA, is the foundation of Romania's foreign policy, as well as the path that the Romanian state has committed to follow consciously and irreversibly" (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024, p. 8).

The fact that Romania is part of a series of treaties and international bodies not only means the existence of obligations, but also a lot of advantages that are not specific to some states in the Eastern-European region. The involvement that Romania has in NATO, the loyalty and commitment are perfectly presented using only two adjectives that describe our country's membership in such an organization: "consciously and irreversibly".

By any means, the officials that represent our country both in Bucharest and internationally state the same message regarding our countries relation with NATO: this relationship represents the core of our international foreign policy. This message has been conveyed for the past 18 years, more precisely since 29 March 2004 when our country formally became a NATO member state.

As a fully-fledged member, Romania takes part in a variety of missions and operations under allied command, but also benefits of the most complex security guarantees given by an international body as they are stated in the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (North-Atlantic Treaty, Washington DC, 4 April 1949).

A strong example that proves the strong relation between Romania and NATO is what happened in 2014 when NATO created the *tailored Forward Presence* (tFP) on the eastern flank of the Alliance and on the Black Sea shore. Romania took part in all of this by investing forces and military bodies as a whole for the purpose of defending itself, the Black Sea region and the eastern flank of the Alliance. By converting the military bodies invested by Romania to allied structures, all the other armies that are part in NATO can contribute forces and resources (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

On the Black Sea shore was also created a structure for coordinating the maritime operations and missions under allied flag. Also for the purpose of intensifying the defence capabilities, the Air Military Policing forces were augmented by the allies, on a rotational basis. Also for defence purposes, on the national territory of Romania were created military bodies such as *Headquarters Multinational Division South East* (HQ MND SE) and *NATO Force Integrated Unit* (NFIU) that help coordinating the missions that take place under allied flag. (Ib.). Moreover, in 2020, the Allies created a new structure under the name of *Headquarters Multinational Corps South-East* (HQ MNC-SE) in Sibiu, with the purpose of strengthening the security architecture in the region (Ib.).

Considering the events happening in the neighbouring countries and the new tactics for conducting warfare, we can conclude that it is really important to implement a modern missile defence system. It has also been an important objective on the agenda discussed by the Allies during the last summits, and the conclusion that was reached was that the importance of these systems comes from the need of ensuring security for all the allies. Romania, because of the success that it had in implementing and developing the European component of the US aerial defence system, strengthened its position among the NATO allies.

Romania also took part in *Resolute Support Mission* (RSM) in Afghanistan, *NATO- Kosovo Mission* (KFOR) and other missions under allied flag such as the *Iraqi operations*, and it employed military means and personnel alongside the allies. Also, amongst other tendencies that Romania backed (and in which it was involved) we can mention: the efforts to enhance defence capabilities for the partners in the eastern and southern parts of the Alliance; the active participation in establishing and delivering the aid packages (resources and funds) meant for Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia; the fulfilment of its role as a coordinating nation in enhancing the NATO Fund for Ukrainian Cyber-defence; the active participation in global efforts for countering terrorist organizations and terrorism as a phenomenon. Also, between 2021 and 2022 Romania received the mission of being *Contact Point Embassy* (CPE) for NATO in Finland and Kuwait. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

Romania – Member of the EU

On 1 January 2007, Romania became a full-fledged member of the European Union. Even though the main fields of action for the EU are economy, free trade and environment, a really hot topic discussed in the last years was the need for a new plan for ensuring security amongst de EU states.

In addition, on 21 March 2022, the European Council formally passed a paper, *“Strategic Compass”*, that has as a main focus *“strengthening the European policy for defence and security until 2030”* (A Strategic Compass to Strengthen the Security and Defence of the European Union by 2030).

Another EU project that aims to increase and encourage cooperation between member states on the security and defence topic is the EU cooperation on security and defence plan that was approved by the European Council in 2016. This document states four different measures that aim to increase security for the EU citizens. The four initiatives are: Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) and the *“consolidation of the set of defence instruments for rapid response of EU, including EU tactical battlegroups and civil capabilities”* (EU Cooperation on Security and Defence).

The strategic priorities that represent the main focus of the EU Global Strategy for Defence are: the defence of EU territory and its citizens; strengthening of allied capacities for defence; augmenting the capacity to react to crisis and external conflicts (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>).

Through the European Defence Fund (EDF) for 2021-2027, *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence* (CARD) and *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO) the EU wishes to strengthen its defence capabilities, including the development of the adjacent industry and increasing the funds flow into this segment. As a result, there have been a lot of programs that were implemented with the implication of the member states. Romania takes part in 12 of these projects under PESCO management, even coordinating two of them. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

On the civilian side of things, 2018 saw the implementation of a reform in the management sector, that was aimed as a response to international threats such as: illegal migration, terrorism, naval security, organized crime, cyber-attacks and so on. Also, in the same year, the “*Civil Pact for PSAC*” became a reality, and it came as a strategic guide for human resources management, the legal umbrella that foresaw the whole domain etc. In Romania all these initiatives were made a part of the National Strategy for Implementing the Civil Pact of PSAC that became reality in February 2021 (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

According to the European Council, CARD offers a better representation of the expenses in the defence sector, of the investments in every member state and on the research effort. Among the advantages that it has, we can mention: the ease to identify deficits; better cooperation in the defence field; better execution of plans and expenses on the defence spectrum (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>).

Romania – Defended under NATO and EU

Although the two organizations are strongly built and managed, although they have a series of similarities (common members, common objectives) and their respective programmes intersect, these two organizations complement each other both in action and purpose. According to the *National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024*, a great objective of our country’s foreign policy is “*supporting NATO-EU cooperation, ensuring complementarity between the two organizations in terms of European defence and security; one particular aim will be to ensure the coherence of EU initiatives*” (National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024).

Also, the foreign policy that our country applies is heavily influenced by the European Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that became mandatory through the Treaty on European Union (TEU) of 1993. This treaty states the formation of European Union that is invested with a certain set of powers

by the member states and has the purpose of reaching a common goal for all the members (Treaty on European Union, consolidated version). Regarding security for the whole Union, Article 3 of the treaty states that “*the Union wishes to promote peace, shared values, wealth and the shared interests of its members*”. In addition, Article 18 of the treaty states the existence of a shared policy for security among the member states, but it does not limit the possibilities to just the union’s institutions, maintaining the possibilities for collaboration within governments, on their own: “*Member states, if they decide so, can establish any form of cooperation between them that acts within the competence and objectives of the whole Union, they can call for the help of European institutions and can act according to treaties that they are part of and do not contradict the Union’s purpose and interests*”.

According to the European Council, the main areas within which EU and NATO cooperate are: military mobility, cybersecurity, hybrid threats management, counterterrorism, addressing gender issues and gender equality (or other areas that aim to aid women and their rights and treatment) and, last but not least, security (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>). “*We welcome EU efforts to bolster European security and defence to better protect the Union and its citizens and to contribute to peace and stability in the neighbourhood and beyond. The Permanent Structured Cooperation and the European Defence Fund contribute to these objectives*”. (Joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, 10 July 2018, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/defence-security/>). The main purpose of this statement is to call for an augmentation of defence and security cooperation on the transatlantic axis, as it was previously stated within the objectives of the declaration of 2016.

Romania has a lot to gain from the cooperation between EU and NATO, especially when it comes to its defence and security, both standalone and in regional and allied context.

OSCE – an Organization to Prevent Conflicts

The Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) has 57 member states, Romania being one of them, and has the main focus on preventing conflicts. OSCE is the biggest regional organization for security that has as a role in observing, warning and preventing crises and conflicts as well as implementing high-end political dialogue. The official website of OSCE states that “*The OSCE has a comprehensive approach to security that encompasses politico-military, economic*

and environmental, and human aspects. It therefore addresses a wide range of security-related concerns, including arms control, confidence- and security-building measures, human rights, national minorities, democratization, policing strategies, counter-terrorism and economic and environmental activities” (OSCE.org)

The Romanian White Paper on Defence 2021, the official Romanian Government publication that presents defence policies and objectives, states that the main pillar meant to ensure and enhance internal security are NATO membership, EU membership, strategic partnership with the USA and the continuous collaboration for development that our country has with neighbouring countries and *“countries that represent strategic interest for us”* (White Paper on Defence, 2021, p. 11).

In the same field of interest, the same official paper states the importance of continuing and enhancing the current missions that our country employs under OSCE coordination and also raises awareness about unsportsmanlike behaviour that certain countries show, especially the Russian Federation. About the Russian Federation, OSCE officially states that it repeatedly violated rules and regulations previously adopted on an international level through treaties and it also violated territorial integrity of Ukraine, enhancing the crisis and prolonging conflict in the region (Ib.).

Also, on the 2021 agenda that OSCE has we can find a key objective that interest almost every state at the moment: solving the Ukrainian conflict. Amongst other objectives that OSCE has we can mention: *“solving latent conflicts by establishing a trusting environment for intergovernmental dialogue and enhancing a more profound understanding on security issues that fall under OSCE authority, perfecting arms dealing procedures and countering terrorism”* (OSCE Role).

UN – Stabilization and Mitigation between States

Even though the UN does not have the military means and capacities to involve itself through military action in order to ensure security, the organization has a key role for preserving peace by being an *“observer”*, by facilitating dialogue and surveying the implementation of internationally accepted measures.

As a mediator, the United Nations enhanced its readiness and their people training in order to ensure a proficient effort. A key innovation in this regard was the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) within the Policy and Mediation Division (PMD) of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and, within the unit, the creation of the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers.

With the goal of supporting relevant actors to achieve a just and sustainable peace through the pacific settlement of disputes, the unit engages in and supports a wide range of operational activities and projects and works closely with a number of partners (Mediation Support Unit).

Romania became a full-fledged member of the UN in 1995, in spite of its efforts that started as early as 1946. Between 2004 and 2005, Romania was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and it worked towards promoting the cooperation between the UN and other regional organizations with the main focus of maintaining peace and regional security. This initiative was both the first Romanian-coordinated initiative in the UN Security Council and the first initiative that meant to enhance coordination between the UN and other regional organizations. (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

After that time interval passed, Romania worked towards identifying, perfecting and applying a series of new initiatives meant for reforming the UN completely. At the same time, Romania has the possibility to take part in a series of military missions employing means and personnel aimed for maintaining peace and security worldwide. Through this, the Romanian military proved useful and efficient during international peacekeeping missions. All of these initiatives that Romania had within the UN made it a trustful and efficient country for helping others develop themselves. As a consequence, Romania became a part of a series of partnerships with UN-related institutions in 2017. (Ib.)

OTHER RELEVANT ACTORS FOR MAINTAINING REGIONAL SECURITY

The Western Balkans Countries

The Western Balkans countries essentially mean countries that once were part of former Yugoslavia (except for Slovenia and Croatia) including Albania. After Romania and Bulgaria became members of the EU, these countries represent the next candidates that will be integrated within the Union.

The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that *“the European development of the states from the Western Balkans region is one of the major priorities of Romanian foreign policy. The fact that our country is a full-fledged member of EU and NATO, and the fact that these states are so close to us, almost neighbours, is a reason for the Bucharest administration to have a careful approach to these states”* (Western Balkans).

The summit that took place in Bucharest in 2008 was essentially an invitation for Croatia and Albania to apply for NATO membership.

Regional Cooperation Council

According to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Romania, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) was officially launched during a meeting in which a lot of foreign missions took part, in Sofia, where Bulgaria took the initiative and coordinated the formation of this organization. The year was 2008 and the meeting was called “*The South-East European Cooperation Process*” (SEECP). (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

The involvement that Romania has within RCC is included in the part that our country plays within SEECP and is linked to the country’s external affairs. Also, it has a lot to do with regional security and stability and is a part of a greater objective: helping the states from the western region of the Balkans to make progress toward becoming part of the EU and NATO (Romania and the Regional Cooperation Council).

RCC has the main purpose of creating a friendly environment in which underdeveloped states to try and catch up to their counterparts, and to maintain a European perspective for the Western Balkans region. In order for this organization to fulfil its purpose, it was developed a Strategy and a Working Programme (SWP), that also includes the SEE strategy for the year 2020 (<https://www.mae.ro/node/46982>).

Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS)

The Council of Baltic Sea States is a political organization between governments that has the main purpose of enhancing cooperation between states in the Baltic Sea region. The following states take part in this political structure: Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden and European Union. The Russian Federation was also a part of CBSS, but it was excluded in March 2022 as a result of the illegal invasion in Ukraine. The mission that CBSS has is building trust and ensuring better collaboration between the member states.

The cooperation that this organization brings in the international environment benefits Romania as well, mainly because it facilitates communication on official channels.

CONCLUSIONS

By means of the descriptive analysis, a detailed picture of the context is provided from the point of view of the regional security issue, as well as of the relations, which implies a significant commitment that Romania assumes, in the regional security policies. This descriptive analysis emphasizes the complexity and interdependence of the factors that influence the provision of security at the regional level by Romania. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing security policy and promoting stability in Eastern Europe.

Maintaining national and regional security represents a goal for the fulfilment of which we need to invest resources both nation and region-wide and to implement methods of cooperation between governments. Under the condition that threats are on a rise and are also getting closer, cooperation and partnerships for maintaining stability and security become a must, a number one priority.

Romania is in itself a pole for geostrategic influence both on a regional level and on a continental level. Being a member state in both UE and NATO and also being on the eastern flank, our country plays a key-role for maintaining security in the region.

As a full-fledged member in many international committees and bodies, Romania has a well-established role within all the alliances, maintaining partnerships for collective security on a regional and transatlantic level. The active involvement in strengthening both EU and NATO and other organizations as well, make our country a valuable ally, an active member, capable of maintaining security and of being a security provider at national, regional and international level.

The recent events in Ukraine prove that there is a need for a permanent set of measures and procedures to ensure security and stability and to act anytime if the need arises. Another priority is represented by a good cooperation with allied and neighbouring states. Regardless of the existence of a series of threats to our future such as the climate change, the high pollution rate etc., and regardless of the fact that these problems also require the attention, energy and resources of the Union in order to ensure a better future for its citizens, the ongoing war in Ukraine underlined the importance of a good training on the military side in order to be capable of maintaining social security because peace is not guaranteed even in this century.

Even if within the current context NATO appears to be the most important actor on the international stage for maintaining security in the region, we are sure that we cannot ignore the efforts of other organizations and states on this front.

It is increasingly more evident for everyone that without cooperation, implication, interoperability and loyalty we cannot reach our final goal, that of stability, security in the region and at the international level.

Given the progress in technology and the rapid growth of digitalization in the current century, it is of vital importance that every state has a strategy for countering cyber-attacks, on the same level of competence and efficiency as the military side. The majority of states started a high proficiency digitalization process and this fact led to a rise of the risk of a cyber-attack. Although Romania is not on the level of other countries, the process for rapid digitalization is ongoing, and the need for innovative solutions on how to efficiently counter cyber-attacks is on the rise as well.

The European Union started a series of initiatives regarding the digital sphere, both for introducing the new capabilities that come as a bonus to digitalization and for creating a modern defence against the most advanced of the technologies that aim to interfere and threaten the state's defence and the society's resilience. Furthermore, apart from protecting data, the new technologies were developed with the purpose of enabling the process of defence against the traditional ways of attack.

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NEW TRENDS IN THE USE OF DIFFERENT WEAPONS IN THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

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In the Russian-Ukrainian war, there was a change in the weight of the use of some weapons in military actions. The very intensive use of ground artillery is observed. It is estimated that about 70% of Ukrainian military casualties are caused by Russian artillery fire, which is an extraordinary component of the armed forces. The Institute of Strategic Studies (IRUSI) in London notes the accuracy, but especially the short reaction time (up to three minutes) of this weapon.

For the Ukrainians, the JAVELIN anti-tank missile and the highly accurate HIMARS systems (error of only 10m from the target) were very effective in hitting some infrastructure elements and warehouses of ammunition and logistical materials. As a result, the Russians had to move some of their warehouses deeper.

A significant share is the drones used intensively by both sides, mainly the BAYRAKTAR (Turkish origin) by the Ukrainians and the SHAHED (Iranian origin) by the Russians.

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian war; artillery; JAVELIN; HIMARS; drones;

INTRODUCTION

For the past year and nine months, a war has been raging with no clear end in sight. Both sides have suffered significant human and material losses, yet neither has been able to claim victory.

With great insistence, military analysts and professionals emphasise the concept of modern war, which has distinct features related to the training of fighters, systems and means used in military actions, and the application of laws and principles of armed combat.

“Modern warfare is warfare that differs significantly from previous military concepts, methods, and technology, emphasising how combatants must modernise to ensure their combat worthiness” (Enciclopedia online). There are some considerations, with which we do not fully agree, according to which “the decisive weapons systems in modern total war are: the tank, the heavy bomber and the submarine” (Social Science Open Access Repository).

APPLICATION OF THE LAWS AND PRINCIPLES OF ARMED COMBAT IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE

In analysing the conduct of wars, including the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, it is important to examine how the belligerents understood and applied the laws and principles of armed conflict.

The law is a *“philosophical category that expresses the essential, necessary, general, relatively stable, repeatable relations between the components of an object or phenomenon, between different objects or phenomena or between the successive stages of a process”* (<https://m.dex.ro/legea>). Hegel emphasised that *“Law does not lie beyond the phenomenon, but is directly presented by it; the realm of laws is the calm image of the existent or phenomenal world”* (https://www.armyacademy.ro/reviste/1_2001/g_4.html).

In war, armed combat is an essential element that is governed by objective laws that act independently of the will of men, laws with a pronounced specific character. Failure to apply these laws inevitably leads to failure and therefore to defeat.

Armed combat is the military, violent, main component of war, dominated by its laws, which express the specific relations of direct confrontation in its entirety

or its domains (strategy, operational art and tactics), as well as in the forms of military action (offensive, defence, retreat, encirclement etc.), relationships that manifest on the battlefield. The laws of armed combat express the *“essential, necessary, general, repeatable and relatively stable relations between the internal sides of the phenomenon of war, as well as between them and other areas of social life, which determine the preparation and conduct of military actions”* and are expressed through a statement or a formula, usually by a semantic or logical explanation. As social laws, the laws of armed combat belong to the category of statistical laws, being directly correlated with the statistical population existing at a given time.

The knowledge of the laws of armed combat is essential for political-military decision-makers to lead and manage the preparation and conduct of military actions.

Military theorists distinguish between two categories of laws of armed combat: general laws, which establish the dependence of military actions according and other social fields (economy, politics, science, technology, diplomacy, population, etc.) and particular laws, which relate to specific relationships of armed combat in its entirety or certain areas of it. The first category includes: the law of the dependence of armed combat on economic and social conditions; the law of the role of the masses in war. The particular laws include: the law of concordance between goals, forces and means, the law of the ratio of forces, the law of the dependence of forms and procedures of military actions on the level of development of armaments and combat techniques, the law of the unity of actions.

In many ways, the war launched by Russia in Ukraine on 24 February 2022 no longer resembles the last world conflagration 80 years ago. This conflict has turned overnight into a modern one, in which new weapons equipped with advanced technologies are used, in addition to the means considered classic.

A prime example is the extensive utilisation of UAVs (drones) by both sides. Ukraine has received the latest generation of drones from the West, which are capable of flying at an altitude of 6,000 meters, carrying up to 20 kilograms of explosives and targeting from deep within the disposition. One incident involved a drone hitting a target in Moscow, which is 500 kilometres away.

The war in Ukraine also caused a technological transformation. Both sides sought to identify a weapon innovation that would unlock the battlefield situation and give a decisive advantage. Changes were seen gradually. Drones have become one of the main weapons used in this war by both sides, and their massive introduction

to the battlefield is a first in the history of warfare. The global market for military drones is expected to grow from €13.3 billion in 2023 to €33.4 billion by 2030, according to Fortune Business Insights. Ukraine aims to spend around €1 billion to upgrade its drone fleet.

Although Kyiv refuses to officially claim responsibility for such attacks inside Russia, this course of action is seen as part of a wider offensive aimed at moving the conflict to the Kremlin's doorstep.

Experts say the way Kyiv is looking to do this is by using drones both in the air and at sea – a relatively cheap, consumable technology that has changed modern warfare in recent years, but most notably that between Russia and Ukraine.

Many military experts believe that Ukraine's use of drones could play a decisive role in tipping the balance of power in its favour, although their ability to deliver decisive strikes is less likely.

Ukraine's UJ-22 Airborne drone, which has a range of 800 kilometres, can fly at an altitude of 6,000 meters with a cruising speed of 35 km/h and can carry up to 20 kilograms of explosives, is capable of executing precise attacks, being equipped with artificial intelligence (AI) that can block enemy communications. This new way of striking the opponent by using drones is also widely used by Russian military, through drones, especially those of Iranian manufacture (SHAHED).

It can be seen on both sides that these means of attack are used to hit military objectives (command points, artillery systems, groups of forces of various kinds, armoured vehicles, battleships, warehouses of ammunition and other materials, etc.), but also civil and infrastructure objectives (ports, bridges, power plants, dams, warehouses with various means, administrative centres, towns, etc.).

*“Drones can be deployed quickly, for long periods of time, and to lethal effect at lower financial costs and risk to life for those using them, compared to piloted aircraft or ground forces projected over great distances”*¹, said Professor Stefan Wolff from the University of Birmingham.

“While drones are not as capable as fighter jets, they give war actors access to some airpower. Combined with digital technologies that enable high-definition surveillance and precision strike, drones can be quite lethal to ground forces” (Ib.), said Paul Scharre, an expert at New American Security.

¹ *“Războiul modern transformat peste noapte: Noile arme ale Ucrainei care îl pot învinge pe Putin”*, https://ziare.com/drone-ucraina/razboiul-modern-ucraina-transformat-pest-noapte-noile-drone-ale-ucrainei-il-pot-invinge-pe-putin-video-1818470?utm_source=Ziare.com&utm_medium=copy-paste, retrieved on 7 October 2023.

This reality of the battlefield also led to the need to combat drones, an operation that involves discovering them, destroying them physically, jamming their signals or redirecting them to less harmful areas. Here are some comments. Ground radar stations can help detect drones from a distance, but it is more difficult, but it becomes more challenging when they fly at low altitudes. Destroying them using anti-aircraft guns or missiles is possible, but it comes with high costs and low success rates. Also, trying to destroy them this way can reveal important information about the disposition. Jamming can prevent drones from hitting their intended targets, but it can also result in uncontrolled flight that may hit other targets. Military equipment manufacturers who claim to have 100% success rates in combating drones are unrealistic. It clearly follows that the cost of battling drones is higher for the defender. We don't always have to refer only to the costs, it's also crucial to consider the effects of un-combated drones. Ukrainian sources reported that out of the 30 drones launched by the Russian army on the first night of October, only 16 were combated. The report is inappropriate and, as a result, significant effects have been achieved.

New and interesting elements have emerged in the war between Israel and the Palestinians. We witnessed rockets and projectiles being fired by Hamas at Israel. These numbered in the thousands, according to some sources, many of which were intercepted and destroyed by the IRON DOME system. Sources also estimate that the system has an interception rate of 90-97%. For conventional weaponry, it would be relatively acceptable, but what would it be for nuclear weapon? This war is very expensive. The rockets launched by Israel, according to some sources, cost 40,000-100,000 dollars.

Another reality on the battlefield in the Russian-Ukrainian war is the extraordinary role of artillery and ground missiles which, through the effects produced, led to the so-called artillery genocide. It is estimated that 70% of the losses suffered by the Ukrainians are caused by Russian ground artillery. The Russian army uses both classic artillery pieces and rocket launchers of the "KATYUSHA" type, as well as self-propelled howitzers.

The Russian military has based its strategy and tactics particularly on land-based artillery systems (cannons, howitzers, rocket launchers, reconnaissance elements and ammunition depots). Russian artillery is intensively hitting the enemy troops directly in front of the contact line, but also in the depth of the disposition. The Ukrainians could win the duel with the Russian artillery only by so-called counter-battery fire, effectively using the self-propelled artillery received as support.

The way artillery is allocated to fighting brigades is noteworthy. Each brigade has an artillery group that consists of three battalions – two battalions of self-propelled howitzers and one battalion of "KATYUSHA" type. Each artillery battalion has 18 pieces, divided into three batteries, with six pieces each.

CONCLUSIONS

Due to the use of advanced fire means by the Ukrainians, which can strike at greater distances and with increased accuracy, the Russian ground artillery is able to complete missions in a shorter amount of time. After completing their mission, the Russian artillery leaves the firing positions or moves to a safer location within the combat disposition.

There is also an interesting reality on the battlefield. Since the two armies started the war with the same calibre artillery pieces (122mm, 152mm, and others) from the Soviet era, capturing ammunition deposits was a major advantage.

The lessons learned from the unfolding of the conflict in Ukraine regarding the place and role of artillery and land-based missiles as long-range strike vectors with decisive effects shed some light on the abolition of the Military Artillery School in Sibiu (at the same time with the Research, Development and Arms) which had an impressive didactic base, with modern specialised rooms, laboratories, simulators, fields and sports halls and other facilities that allowed the training of artillery officers at the similar level of many educational institutions abroad.

An interesting conclusion is that the armoured vehicles sent to Ukraine by Western countries have mostly failed because they were not manufactured for a conflict of such intensity. Namely, they were designed for low to medium-intensity conflicts and not for all-out war. Military experts consider that some simpler and cheaper systems would be needed for Ukraine, but in a much larger volume. From the reality of the battlefield, armoured systems are highly vulnerable to artillery and mines, which have proven to be formidable challenges. Statistics show that less than 5% of Ukrainian tanks destroyed since the start of the war were caused by Russian tanks, with the rest knocked out by mines, artillery, anti-tank missiles and drones. This shows that the relative sophistication of a tank is no longer as important as previously thought, and does not justify the huge costs of upgrading it. Ultramodernisation is desirable when there are tank-only matchups, which is unlikely. Although military strategists do not accept it, it seems that in the Russian-Ukrainian war, within certain limits, quantity is over quality.

The war in Ukraine is a huge testing ground for AI vehicles. A military expert recently demonstrated to the TheNextWeb publication the level of technology of military robots donated to Ukraine by some states. The THEMIS vehicle has become a special target for the Russian military, with anyone who captures it being offered a reward of 15,000 Euros.

The war in Ukraine is not one happening between machineries. Autonomous or unmanned weapons and vehicles are noted to have no major impact. Almost all autonomous vehicles can operate without human intervention and rely on artificial intelligence, but many unmanned vehicles can be controlled from a distance by humans. Some countries want to send robots and state-of-the-art weapons to the Ukrainian government for two reasons, namely to test their technical capabilities without risking casualties in their military. Expert Alex Stronell shows that several types of autonomous robots are used in Ukraine and that Russia has the Uran-9 robot, which is the most advanced unmanned ground military vehicle in the world, according to him. It shows, however, that there is no indication that the Russians used it in Ukraine, probably also out of fear of being captured, in which case some technological secrets would be lost. Uran-9 is a tracked unmanned combat vehicle developed and produced by JSC 766 UPTK and promoted and offered by Rosoboronexport for the international market (Enciclopedia online).

It turns out that the killer robots are not as useful as believed and hoped by the designers, but also by the military. As much as the world fears the appearance of *“killer robots”* in war, the current technology is not developed enough, says the specialist consulted by TheNextWeb. Stronell predicts the military paradigm of the future as a hybrid one, as a link between artificial and human intelligence. It costs less to train a man to fight on the front than to build massive, very expensive weapons systems, according to the cited publication. The actual current military need for *“killer robots”* is not very great on the battlefield. The war of the future will not be that of robot armies.

There are many conclusions if we analyse how the laws and principles of armed combat are applied in the war in Ukraine. We shall refer especially to the laws of armed combat. We appreciate that either out of unawareness or ignorance, but especially out of exaggerated pride, the Russian army did not consider the law of concordance between goals, forces and means. The Russian political factor proposed major goals, mainly the rapid conquest of Ukraine, and the change of the political-military leadership without having the forces and means consistent with this goal. Russia has a large army with an impressive arsenal of classic weapons,

but it has not allowed itself to radically redeploy troops from various areas for the war in Ukraine, considering some possible external threats, but also some internal tensions. It was mistakenly believed that by the forces and means employed in the so-called special operation the intended purpose would be achieved in a short time.

Nor was the law of the ratio of forces taken into account. There is a unanimous view among military experts that, under normal conditions, the success of an offensive is ensured by an overall force ratio (quantitative and qualitative) of at least 3 to 1. Even if, in some directions, the Russian army had this ratio of forces, at the general level, there was no such situation and this caused failures in important directions including the one leading to the capital Kyiv. It is appreciated that the initial ratio of forces has decreased, over time, also due to the huge losses suffered by the Russian army, but also by the aid received by the Ukrainian armed forces.

And the application of the law of the unity of combat actions was not well enough considered. On both sides, the actions were not properly coordinated between the categories of the armed forces and within them between the types of arms. The land forces' actions were not optimally supported by air and naval strikes. There were situations when armoured columns failed because they were not provided with any protection by infantry or aviation so there was no overall unitary action on the battlefield.

Military commanders also suffered by not correlating the forms and procedures of military actions with the level of development of armaments and combat techniques. There were situations in which, using outdated technology, they attacked positions where there was superior technology, which also determined the failure to fulfil the proposed goals, as well as significant human and material losses. There were also actions in which state-of-the-art technology was used indiscriminately, being annihilated with classical means. It is appreciated by military specialists that the improper use of modern tanks in the front line will lead to their rapid loss.

As a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war, some major consequences resulted, among which we highlight:

- the significant increase in the defence budgets in the two belligerent states, but also in other countries;
- the development, at a high rate, of war production in Russia and Ukraine and in the states that help Kyiv, considering the significant decrease in the stocks of armaments, ammunition and other means of waging war;

- the expansion of NATO as a result of the fears of some states of not ending up in Ukraine's situation;
- increasing importance of the Black Sea area in the current geopolitical equation;
- the increasing deployment of some NATO forces and means in the member countries of Eastern Europe;
- massive losses among both armies, as well as civilians;
- the total, indiscriminate destruction of some localities, administrative, social, and educational objectives, power plants, dams, bridges, communication routes, port infrastructure and others;
- this war calls into question the validity of renouncing larger armies through the so-called demassification, but also of giving up compulsory military service;
- increasing the role of manipulating public opinion through fake news aimed at discrediting the opponent and cultivating confidence in one's forces;
- as a result of inadequate results on the battlefield, many measures were taken by the leadership of the two armed forces; it appears that US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley stepped down from his position because of the failure in Ukraine, despite his previous high performance (www.defense.gov);
- the long duration of the war, with no end in sight, with both sides imposing unacceptable conditions.

In the end, we appreciate that the war between Russia and Ukraine, which was not desired by the people of either state, has led to new approaches and trends. We have only partially analysed this complex phenomenon considering its magnitude and the fact that it is still ongoing. We can only hope that the situation will not deteriorate further and that it will not have an impact on all of Europe or even human civilisation as a whole.

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INFLUENCE OF CYBER DIMENSION ON AIR FORCE ACTIVITIES CASE STUDY: THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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The cyber dimension has played an important part during the conflict in Ukraine, but the cyber activities have not had the span many military experts expected. Nevertheless, it is obvious this dimension is highly used by both sides of the conflict, and, moreover, this dimension has been active not only during the entire length of the conflict begun in 2014, but also before the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. The increase in such activities before the start of the invasion in 2022 has done nothing else but to underline the importance of the cyber domain for future conflicts, air force security being a continuous challenge, considering that these forces are among the first ones to have been used in conflict by both Russia and Ukraine. The conflict in Ukraine has shown once more that the cyber dimension is and must be taken into consideration in each and every stage to ensure national security, before, during and after the conventional conflict, but it must not be overestimated in respect to the desired effects and those that can be achieved.

Keywords: cyber operations; conventional conflict; air force; security; risk; capabilities;

INTRODUCTION

The conflict that began in February 2022 has confirmed that air forces are among the first ones to be used for executing fighting missions against the opponent. Usually, air forces are the spearhead used for showing the military power of one state, especially for those states that do possess strong air forces. Air forces have represented and continue to be the first option with visibility and immediate impact with regards to involving military forces in military conflicts or before them, so that the adversary is forced to follow a certain course of action or to refrain from performing certain hostile actions. The early 2022 evaluations done by military experts of various states foretold a quick defeat of the Ukrainian forces, based on the size of forces and the major inequality with respect to quantity and quality of military material belonging by the two states in conflict. Therefore, more evaluations gave full credit to Russia to obtaining very fast the victory, as compared to those very few that have the courage to believe in the possibility that Ukraine resists the Russian roller for more than two weeks. Very powerful and persistent promotion of Russian armed forces led to the development of a new feeling: the hopelessness of Ukrainian resistance, the never-ending Russian military convoys from the first days of the conflict strengthening this idea.

Compared to the conventional air power where things appear quite clear, in the sense that states which hold modern air forces, with latest aircrafts can impose a certain behaviour to those states that do not hold air forces that are developed enough in number and the quality of fighting aircraft, the cyber dimension of air operations has fewer clear aspects. Therefore, a scientific analysis to further approach this subject is needed, in order to identify improvement methods so that cyber security can be ensured for air forces activities.

Considering this, the research intends to provide an answer to the question of whether cyber domain is important and still topical for the activity of air forces, bearing in mind the evolutions registered during the conflict in Ukraine. In this sense, the purpose of this article is to identify, based on the available open sources found, how the cyber domain has been integrated into the activity of air forces,

considering the evaluations performed before and during the conflict in Ukraine.

The questions posed in the beginning for this analysis were:

- Will we find a cyber dimension to future conflicts?
- Is this dimension going to be important for the activities currently being performed and if yes, how important will it be?
- Should we approach the integration of cyber aspects from ensuring cyber security as a whole, or, rather, it should be centred on solely ensuring the cyber aspects of a mission?

TRANSITION FROM CYBERSECURITY AS A WHOLE TO ENSURING THE MISSION

Unlike other states that are well cyber developed, Russia did not look for publicity with respect to its performed actions, and usually does perform cyber actions as hidden as possible (Caimeanu, 2021), so as not to leave traces or reveal the interest for certain targeted objectives. However, the cyber attacks are not so anonymous as one might think, and Russian links with cyber attacks performed even upon NATO states as well as upon non-NATO ones were identified, such as for example Estonia in 2007, Georgia in 2008, Ukraine beginning with 2014, Montenegro in 2016, France in 2017, to mention only a few from those that were identified.

US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) stated as early as 2018 that cyber actions performed by opponents were done under the threshold of armed conflicts in order to weaken the state institutions and to take the initiative on strategy level (<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/4419681/Command-Vision-for-SCYBERCOM>).

The Ukrainian authorities appear to have taken seriously what the American military forces have said, and, consequently, the following fights within cyberspace have not had the results intended by Russia. For example, the 2015 attack over Ukraine's energy network, allegedly attributed to Russian hackers, attack that also affected air transport facilities, was re-done in 2016, but with less intense effects than the precedent one (Timea, Skopik, 2018, p. 43). From the Russian Federation point of view, Russian armed forces are in two stages – war or preparing for war, and the political ambitions of the leaders have received support by means of new possibilities to fight without officially declaring war, the instruments such as cyber attacks being considered as central elements to performing and winning contemporary conflicts (Lilly, 2022, p. 17).



Source: Command-Vision-for-USCYBERCOM-23-Mar-18

One cannot disregard the influence the cyber dimension has over the activity of the air forces, even if it is rather difficult to measure. Following this line, the lack of accountability for cyber actions may lead for cyber domain to a lesser possibility to being comprehended, as well as its intended purposes or those able to be obtained, from the attacker's and the defender's perspectives.

The most difficult to solve problem with respect to the cyber dimension is the plethora of current challenges, even if progress is being made in some parts, because they are rapidly analysed by the opponent to prevail itself of the advantage of the offensive over defence. In the above-mentioned report, the experts have estimated that the Russian cyber groups have evaluated the result of the cyber activities performed and have made adjustments to the cyber weaponry to obtain the desired effects.

One of the biggest challenges of the cyber domain with regard to aviation operations is the persistence of cyber campaigns performed by a strong opponent that is very well developed in cyber area. These cyber campaigns, which do not have immediate effects to be very visible, pass "under the radar" of the entities that have as responsibility to ensure cyber defence, but, in time, this apparently harmless activity can significantly erode the air force, having generalized effects.

The war in Ukraine has shown that an opponent did not manage to use the cyber dimension to organize the performance of big cyber attacks to such extent to neutralize the air force so that it cannot respond to the conventional attack. What was noticed is that the cyber attacks have not been devastating, not enough to neutralize the forces of the opponent, thus it became obvious that a conjugated intervention was needed – cyber and classic with conventional weapons.

The conflict from Ukraine was not in this respect similar to the Israeli action in Syria. The cyber dimension does not provide us with a universal tool able to neutralize enemy's forces, so as there will be no need for conventional actions being carried out. In the case of Israel, the cyber dimension was used to support and facilitate aerial actions. After the performance of a cyber-attack that disabled the Syrian air defence at right time and place, there followed the conventional action of bombing the targeted objectives. The differences between the two cases are quite important; firstly, between the two states there was no conventional war in progress, and the cyber issue was not so vividly debated, we could say that there was pretty primitive approach to a serious cyber defence.

James Cummins (2022, p. 73) identified the need to consider cyber domain as a big issue for the air force, not only for their IT component, thus raising the relevance of this domain for NATO military commanders. Even for the "simplest" missions carried out during times of peace, ensuring air policing service, cyber domain has a special importance, all interactions being complex, beginning with monitoring the air space, the decision-making process within short notice, decision to take off for aircraft in order to control the situations where there are detected some trespassing of the air space and up to the completion of the mission of the aircraft, namely ensuring continuous control. Cummins justifies the need to consider cyber domain as an overall problem of the mission by two aspects: both the complexity of the mission itself, and the fact that components of the cyber domain from outside NATO cyberspace are being used, here being included national networks, civil infrastructure and information systems from aboard aircraft and their operating bases.

Ensuring cyber security with focus on the mission (Ib.) brings more benefits to the decision-making process when performing a mission, by a better understanding of the operating environment, the cyber threats and risks for the mission. Understanding the way cyber threats and vulnerabilities do contribute to rising the risks when performing a mission, leads to a more effective application of cyber effects, whereas this interaction between the mission and the cyber space introduces the need for cyber operations executed to support the performance of the mission. Understanding the air context as support to perform the mission has traditionally put the focus on the network components that exist physically and less to virtual part, which is more difficult to conceptualize. From cyber domain,

commanders need to be able to predict which of the changes from within cyberspace might jeopardize performing future missions, considering both one's own actions, and those of the opponent.

CASE STUDY: CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

Cyber attacks have been the newest instruments identified as used by Russia. In this case, it was very easy for Russia to consider cyberspace as being an extension to its territorial borders (Caimeanu). From this point of view, one cannot see big differences regarding Russia's cyber policy as compared to how it regards Ukraine physically; in both cases, Russia intends to cross the borders as they have been officially recognized between them and to illegally take over new territories that do not belong to it.

Jakub Przetacznik (2022) has concluded a report for the European Parliament where he analyses the cyber activities performed by Russia over Ukraine. Within the report, it is underlined that although Russia started the war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Russian cyber activities had been continuously performed from 2014 when Crimea was annexed and intensified before the invasion of February 2022. Cyber actions with visible effects targeted different elements of Ukrainian infrastructure, but there were surely performed cyber activities that aimed for unauthorized access to Ukrainian intelligence systems, as well as to gathering data and information.

One hour before the invasion started, a cyber-attack on satellite communication system was executed, attack which led to disruptions in ensuring communications for natural persons, as well as for Ukrainian legal private and public entities. Also, there were carried out attacks that targeted electrical energy networks, attempts to destroy or disturb governmental agencies networks, in some cases performing also rocket attacks on targeted objectives, aiming, most likely, to undermine Ukraine' political will and its fighting ability, while collecting information that may bring tactical or strategical advantages to the Russian forces (Lapienyte, 2022). Approximately 40% of the attacks that caused damages to the inner Ukrainian infrastructure targeted organizations from critical infrastructure, which may have had collateral negative effects on government, army, economy and population, at national, regional or city levels (Microsoft report, 2022, pp. 2-3). According to the data in the said report, Microsoft estimates that the activities of Russian groups,

which prepositioned within cyber area as part of the conflict preparations, began the previous year, the cyber activity aiming to secure access for gathering intel on strategic and operational level as well as to facilitate attacks over Ukrainian infrastructure during the military conflict (Ib., p. 4).

The performed cyber attacks had targets in both Ukraine and abroad, including from within NATO member countries, the activity performed during 2021 being spying at a larger scale. Beginning with 2022, cyber destructive activity intensified and reached a peak of cyber activities before the invasion started, malware specially developed for targeted systems being inserted into Ukrainian systems.

Once the invasion began, identified Russian cyber activity has performed missions to support strategic and tactical military targets, but without being very clear whether there has been some coordination, centralized tasks or a common set of priorities (Grossman, Kaminska, Shires, Smeets, 2023, p. 11). In some cases, the cyber attacks have been executed before a conventional military attack, but these cases appear to be rare. The cyber actions were meant to either destroying, disturbing or discrediting the Ukrainian government, army, companies or critical infrastructure. On 6 March, Russian armed forces launched eight missiles against Vinnytsia airport, whilst prior to this, on 4 March, a cyber-attack had compromised governmental air networks used in Vinnytsia (Microsoft report, p. 7).

Analysing available data turned out that Russian groups acted within the same geographical areas or points where kinetical military strikes were performed, for the first six weeks of the invasion.

Contrary to the expected, in the first stages of the war between Ukraine and Russia, although most of the experts thought cyber actions would be playing a bigger part within fighting action, there were not observed any intense cyber activities. The Microsoft report presents most of these cyber activities, without claiming to be complete. Most of the experts support the evaluation according to which, in order to understand the magnitude of the cyber actions, this war must be brought to an end and a certain period of time to pass to a greater reveal on how the events succeeded. Nevertheless, it is obvious that without consulting both parties currently in conflict, it seems rather unlikely that both the Ukrainian part as well as the Russian one to be willing to share really sensitive elements of the actions that were performed.

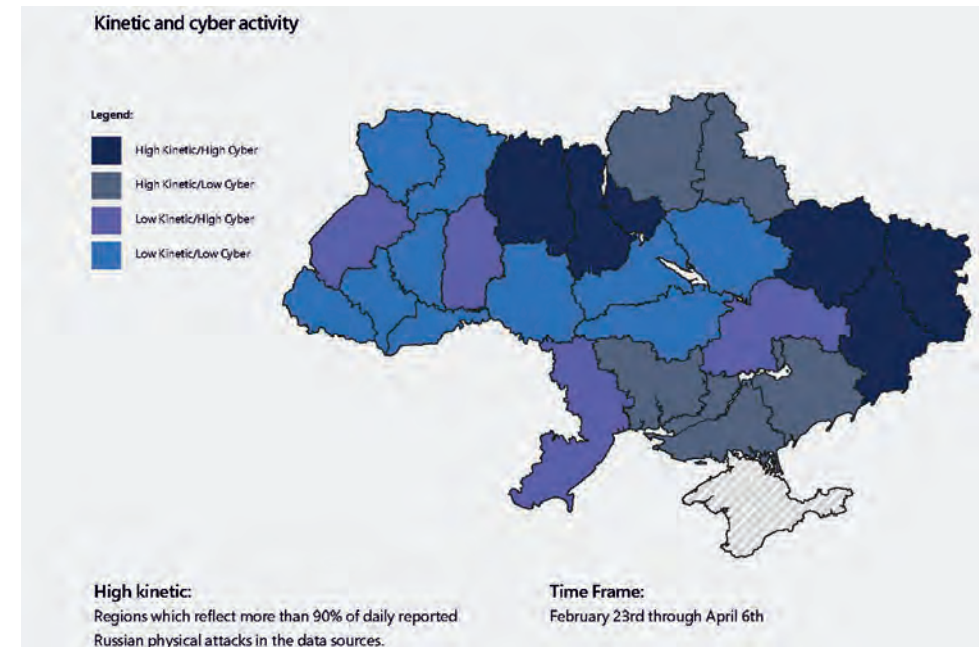


Figure 2: Correlation between cyber activities and conventional military actions (Ib., p. 9)

The development of digital infrastructure has allowed access to top-level technology much easier than in the case of aviation. It is understandable why such access to the top-level technology in aviation is being protected, both in terms of economy and especially statal security, in order to maintain technological advance towards potential opponents. Large-scale use of digital infrastructure in numerous domains, even if in this case there are restrictions to access latest technology, has allowed for a wider spread compared to air force niche one.

Air forces carry out their activities so as to be able to perform the assigned missions, but also to manage future threats associated to operation in contested environments, both conventionally and cyber. It implies a continuous sustained effort, upon all levels, for the fighting forces and mostly for the commanders. Changing the way people think is a difficult lengthy process that is extremely necessary in the context of rapidly developing security environment.

Due to the need to protect the Ukrainian air force, considering the superiority of the Russian air forces the Ukrainian leaders have decided to send off the forces and the means both to the main airfields and to spare locations. Therefore, the need to ensure cyber security differently than the one at the level of the air base, in a centralized manner. In my opinion, moving from ensuring cyber security as a whole to ensuring the mission has been done naturally, following the shortening

of forces and resources from the spare locations. At tactical level, flight missions mean taking decisions extremely fast based upon information that more often than not is incomplete and that can later either prove to have been good or, on the contrary, to have been bad. From this point of view, cyber dimension is very important, at tactical level the commanders can use other options to try solving a situation that usually would require performance of a conventional offensive action.

From a strategic point of view, the cyber dimension is very dynamic and contested, evolutions of the civil cyber domain being used also by the military, the differences from cyber domain being much or easier to cover than in the aviation domain. Putting up conventional air forces requires more time and resources than for cyber domain. The cyber dimension can be used together with other military capabilities, and it determines the increasing attractiveness of this domain, considering the perspective of the results that could be achieved and the lower risk level as compared with classical offensive air operation. Beginning with ensuring the mission and thus the aircraft or the pack of aircrafts used, the Ukrainian air force have built cyber security as a whole, an approach adapted to the strategic available needs, but also adjusted to the tactical realities.

The conflict in Ukraine has clearly proven that future confrontations shall include a cyber dimension. The Microsoft report, even having incomplete data gathered or accessed by the experts during their stay in Ukraine, shows that the cyber dimension was employed before the conventional conflict began. Cyber activities did not stop after the hostile takeover of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, the growth of cyber activity being signalled many months before the conventional attack started in February 2022. The increased attacks did not come as a surprise, both NATO and Ukraine being aware that the cyber dimension shall form an integral part of this conflict. Nations that have weaker conventional military capacities may use the cyber component as a forceful multiplier against nations that are more powerful in military, economic and industrial capacities (Stoddart, 2022, p. 29).

INTEGRATING CYBER DIMENSION INTO THE PLANNING PROCESS DURING THE CONFLICT

A strong cyber force can help small armed forces to resist with success to a stronger power. The serious analysis of threats in the cyber domain by Ukraine, conjugated with the very intense foreign support (Cyber Peace Institute, 2023, pp. 15-17) from EU, NATO and other non-state players, more or less developed, has allowed the creation of a cyber defence comparable to that of the attacker.

This defence was not instantly created, resources and sustained efforts were needed to achieve it. The race to arming had to consider, during all stages of the conflict, from planning, performance, desired effects and achieved effects, the integration of the cyber dimension, from the attacker's perspective and the defender's one.

Planning

Integration of the cyber domain into the planning of aerial operations had to take account both own forces as well as those of the opponent, the intended missions, possible courses of action, support with intel and, last but not least, the conflict dynamics. A simple list of elements to be considered during planning aerial operations show the magnitude of the problems that need to be solved. Both parties in conflict have considered objectives that are strategically very different. By an initial planning, it appeared that the Russians planned a fast conflict and, consequently, the performed cyber activities have focused especially on showing certain capabilities to imprint a certain course of action from the Ukrainians. It is likely that during the initial stage of the conflict, there could not have been properly evaluated the defensive cyber capabilities Ukraine had; similar to conventional military forces, Russia did not believe the Ukrainian cyber forces are comparable to the Russian ones, considering the history of cyber activities between the two forces, the freedom of manoeuvre of the Russian cyber groups operating on Ukrainian systems giving them permission to perform cyber activities quite easily.

Performance

If with respect to aerial domain, neutralizing a target by using conventional means can be evaluated due to the visibility of the damages caused by using kinetical weapons, in cyber area, certifying the fact that an adversary system has been neutralized by using cyber weapons is more difficult. Success in cyber area can be permanent, just like when using conventional weaponry, but it can be only temporary, therefore it would be beneficial if there could be other ways to confirm success for a cyber operation.

In our case, Ukraine has managed to integrate very efficiently the foreign help it received from the international partners, as the conflict unfolded, and it blocked the cyber activities of the opponent. Moreover, whenever this could not have been done, it managed to block its initiatives to confirm the effects of cyber attacks. Later on, as a result of not being able to obtain the intended results by the Russian counterpart by means of the cyber dimension, the Russian air force went on to missions of conventional bombing over targets of the Ukrainian air force.

Intended effects

Considering the intended effects, there should be a very precise coordination to integrate the cyber dimension into air force operations and a coordination with the other areas: ground, maritime, which could simultaneously act and interact for achieving the desired effects. From this point of view, the deconfliction at specialists' level, but also at commanders' level is needed. The issue is of rather complex and difficult nature, the intended effects can be at strategic, operational or tactical level. The higher the level, the more likely is that the cyber dimension within the air force disturb or be disturbed by actions of other domains. From the Ukrainian perspective, coordination regarding the intended effects was easier to be done, the forces command was unitary, unlike the Russian counterpart where different state and non-state cyber entities were involved. At least in the first part of the conflict, Russian entities have acted chaotically, without an efficient coordination achieved considering the intended effects and the way they could be achieved.

Results achieved

The conflict in Ukraine has proven how hard it is to perform a joint operation through many action directions. Moreover, the inclusion of the cyber dimension poses new challenges with respect to the results achieved, considering including the cyber dimension into the joint operation. The cyber dimension must ensure national security from a cyber point of view and perform offensive cyber actions against facilities and infrastructure the adversary possesses.

The intended effect by the Russian part at the beginning of the conflict have not been obtained. Even with little information available, one can notice there was a transition from performance of Russian cyber attacks over Ukrainian facilities to a Ukrainian reply over Russian facilities. It can indicate growth of Ukrainian cyber defence, which now feels more confident to defend from a cyber point of view its infrastructure and performs even offensive action, to support the offensive actions of its military forces. The offensive cyber actions performed by Ukraine can detour Russian forces and means from performing offensive actions to defensive actions, moving the focus on the protection of facilities and infrastructure upon Russian national territory.

As to the results achieved, there has been noticed the tendency to symmetrically react to the actions of the opponent, and also to use the evaluated means as being the proper ones to reply by means of conventional attacks and also cyber attacks, irrespective of the attack method chosen by the adversary.

Ukraine has shown a great deal of skill in using all available means to protect its national territory. The contribution of the cyber dimension to the continuation of mission performance by Ukrainian forces cannot be evaluated at its true value, but it can be easily said that the cyber domain is one of the pillars supporting the security of the Ukrainian air force and, thus, the provision of national security for Ukraine. Even if at international level Ukraine was situated way below Russia as regards cyber area, it managed in the short time available and under pressure of a continuous war, with substantial foreign support, to build a cyber defence able to face the Russian threat.

CONCLUSIONS

Air force is by default using high-end technology which have implemented the latest innovations of various areas very soon form their issuance. Consequently, the air force, as a leader in innovation, has confirmed pretty soon the importance of cyber domain to both their defensive and offensive activities. The cyber domain has brought a number of advantages to air force, at the same time bringing new vulnerabilities and associated risks. Approaching cyber security through military perspective, which starts from the strategic level to the tactical one with respect to ensuring protection of critical infrastructure is slightly different from the private perspective which considers the protection of critical infrastructure from an economic point. Therefore, the influence of cyber domain over air forces cannot be regarded as only military, or only civil, but rather, it needs to be considered that malicious cyber actions are the result of the activities of hostile state(s). In other words, ensuring security for the critical infrastructure of the air force has a direct connection to ensuring national security, by allowing the air force to operate for protecting national air space. In my opinion, cyber domain is important and topical for the activities of air forces, the case study proving it. Moreover, it is necessary an adjustment to the way it is being considered when ensuring the mission as central element of cyber security.

Limited resources, as well as their assignment to solving the problems considered to be urgent, have led constraints for cyber domain, the very existence of a structure meant to cyber defence has been considered good enough.

However, the Ukrainian conflict has shown that, although the importance of the cyber domain has been recognized and there have been initiatives to ensure cyber defence, it was not enough. As being underlined in the Microsoft file, hostile cyber actors/players have exploited much more efficiently the cyber domain, the malware

cyber activity has been at high levels most of time, as proved by the impact of the completed cyber attacks. For a cyber state actor/player such as Russia, a sustained effort for Ukraine was needed, and it has been given a boost by the urgent needs of the war to reach a satisfactory level for cyber security. It becomes obvious that cyber dimension shall be a component of future conflicts, and, I believe that, due to an ever more evolving technological advance, the place and importance of the cyber dimension shall gradually grow within the activities of the air forces, so that air forces survive.

The impossibility to ensure air supremacy for the Russian forces, even if there has been an intense activity in the cyber domain and for longer intervals of time, has proved once again the importance of assuring a strong efficient defence. In other words, we should not overestimate expectations towards the defensive and offensive cyber capacities, the conflict demonstrating that there are some limits related to what can be achieved. Nevertheless, as shown by the war between Ukraine and Russia, the cyber dimension contributes to ensure the security of the Ukrainian air force and nation and will continue to be an important part, even mostly unseen, of the conflict.

It is rather fair to say that the focus the Ukrainian air force had on protecting missions from a cyber point of view, whilst high levels of risk were generally accepted as reasonable, allowed the flight missions to be continued during the conflict between the two states. As it has already, and, still is, being proved by the war between Russia and Ukraine, the influence of cyber dimension over the activity of the Ukrainian air force cannot be neglected, its contribution to ensuring national security for Ukraine being thus implicit.

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THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ARMS MARKET IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MILITARY CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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The military conflict provoked by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has created major imbalances in international security. In this fluid and unpredictable security environment, the defence industry has reacted promptly, increasing production and export of military equipment and modern weapon systems to counterbalance the aggressive actions of the Russian Federation.

The data analysed indicate the Russian Federation's continuing concern to make significant defence investments, including in the defence complex, which reveals its interest in continuing the military conflict in Ukraine. As for the Euro-Atlantic states, they are trying to counter the threat posed by the Russian Federation by supplying Ukraine with high-performance military equipment, while investing in their militaries to supplement the weapons supplied to Ukraine.

After the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine, Romania has managed to increase its exports of arms and ammunition, creating favourable conditions for profitable partnerships with large companies in the Euro-Atlantic area. At the same time, Romania has increased its defence budget allocation to 2.5% of GDP, and there are discussions to further increase this percentage in the coming period. A substantial part of this budget allocation is earmarked for the procurement of modern military equipment to NATO standards for the Romanian armed forces.

Keywords: defence; military conflict; defence industry; military equipment; NATO;

INTRODUCTION

The military conflict triggered by the Russian Federation in Ukraine has led to increased security risks at the regional level, especially in the Black Sea, and at the international level, mainly on the European continent. This security crisis is also, unfortunately, overlapping with other existing crises (climate change, economic crisis, energy crisis, effects of the medical crisis caused by COVID-19, etc.), which influence and reinforce each other, with direct effects on citizens and society as a whole. Crises triggered at the global level have the potential to materialise even in Romania and it is necessary to carry out a relevant analysis of the effects caused by them to prevent, as far as possible, threats and risks to national security.

Crisis management analysis reveals that every crisis creates both risks and opportunities for certain industries. For example, the global crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic has generated considerable profits for the pharmaceutical industry, both for vaccine manufacturers and medical equipment companies.

As for the international crisis generated by the Russian Federation's military intervention in Ukraine, it has led to an accelerated increase in the production of military equipment and ammunition that constantly supplies the theatre of operations in Ukraine as well as NATO member states on the eastern flank of the North Atlantic Alliance. This security crisis will benefit economically in particular from the major global arms companies that have substantially increased production to meet the growing demand on the international market, especially in Europe.

Thus, since the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine (24 February 2022), the Swedish company SAAB has increased its turnover by 170%, the German companies Rheinmetall by 153% and Hensoldt by 131%, the British company BAE Systems by 50% and the American companies Aerojet Rocketdyne by more than 50% and Lockheed Martin by 23% (source: Europa Liberă, 2023).

This trend will also be supported by the unanimous decision taken at the NATO Summit in Vilnius in 2023, where it was decided that the member states of the North Atlantic Alliance should increase defence spending to 2%. As far as Romania is concerned, institutionally agreed measures have been taken at the national level to increase defence spending to 2.5%, and public statements by Romanian officials

indicate that the opportunity to increase this percentage in the coming period is being considered, with most of the additional funds being earmarked for spending on the modernisation of the armed forces. The increase in defence spending may also provide opportunities for the Romanian defence industry, in the sense that cooperation agreements can be concluded with major Western companies for the production of high-performance military equipment in Romania by first carrying out the necessary technology transfer.

For these reasons, defence industry experts believe that this upward international trend will continue at least until the end of the military conflict in Ukraine and beyond. It is expected that the level of armament will continue to increase worldwide, as the allies of both sides are interested in developing the defence sector and will therefore invest considerable sums in the development of high-performance military technology and equipment to replace the stocks delivered to the two combatant states, Ukraine and the Russian Federation respectively. They will also continue to invest in high-performance defence systems to respond effectively to the outbreak of conflict in which they are directly involved or to deter other states from attacking.

From this point of view, the defence industry needs to be able to adapt quickly to the requirements of the defence market to meet today's security challenges. It has recently become apparent that the defence industry worldwide is investing significant resources in the development of new high-tech military equipment. In this context, the Romanian industry will have to follow the current trend and invest in the production of competitive military equipment on the international market, including through profitable partnerships with major companies in the Euro-Atlantic market.

STATE OF WORLD AND NATIONAL ARMS PRODUCTION AND EXPORTS

Analysis of existing global data, publicly provided by SIPRI¹, leads to the conclusion that global arms production has increased significantly in recent times, including in 2022, mainly as a result of the military conflict triggered by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. The steady growth of the arms market follows the trend of active or potential conflicts at the international level, with most states

¹ Stockholm International for Peace Research Institute.

with significant economic potential and financial resources actively investing in their defence industry. In this respect, we would mention the states in the Middle East region which, given their considerable financial resources, are investing large sums in importing state-of-the-art military equipment, with the primary aim of deterring states which are considered potential adversaries.

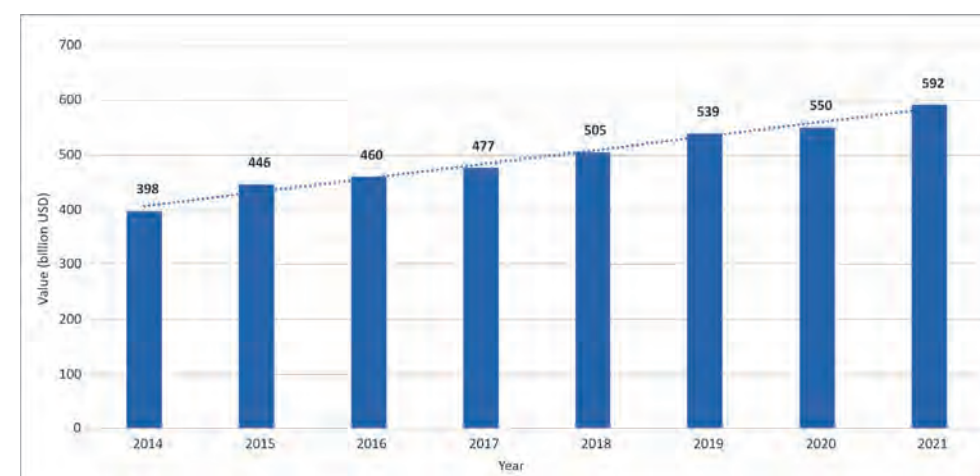


Chart 1: Evolution of exports of the top 100 companies worldwide (www.sipri.org)

Analysis of the data in *Chart 1* shows a linear increase in exports of military products by the world's top 100 companies. This shows the growing interest of countries in equipping themselves with modern weapons and ammunition. Although there is no official data for the year 2022, experts in the field estimate that arms exports have increased amid demand for modern military products, in the wake of the military conflict triggered by the Russian Federation in Ukraine.

From 2018-2021, the United States had a 40% market share of international arms exports. The second largest global arms supplier was the Russian Federation, which had a market share of 16% of global arms exports during the period under review. Data analysis reveals that the United States and the Russian Federation contributed more than half of the world's arms exports between 2017-2021. The next largest international arms exporters are the Cold War superpowers France, Germany and China. (Statista – 1, 2023).

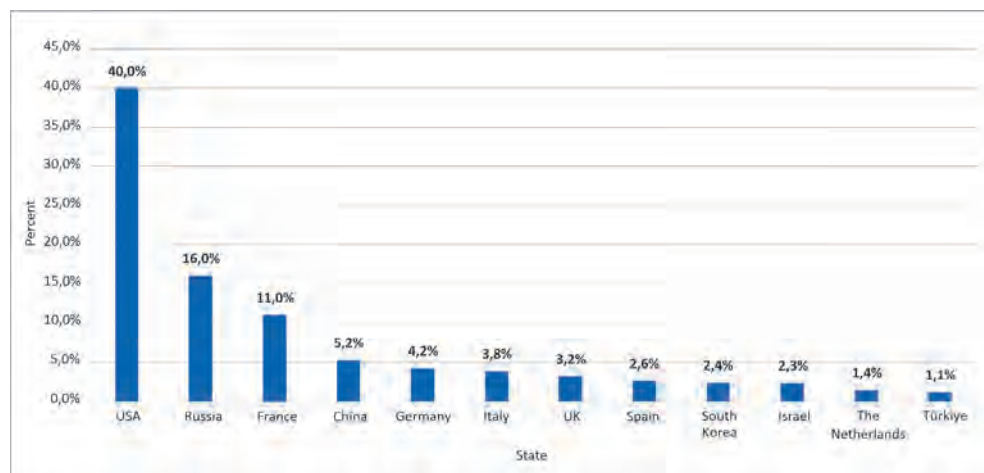


Chart 2: Percentage distribution of arms exporting states (lb.)

In terms of military/defence spending, in the statistics for 2022, the US leads the world's top 15 countries with over \$877 billion, followed at a distance by China (\$292 billion) and the Russian Federation. This ranking shows the growing interest in military spending by states in conflict (e.g. Russian Federation - \$86.4bn, Ukraine - \$44bn), as well as states in areas where open military conflict could erupt at any time (e.g. Russia - \$86.4bn, Ukraine - \$44bn). Saudi Arabia - 75 bn USD South Korea - 46.4 bn. USD, Israel – 23.4 bn. At the same time, analysis of the chart below reveals the growing interest of European countries in making massive defence investments, which are threatened by the aggressive policy of the Russian Federation. Although Romania is not in the top 15 countries in the world in terms of military spending, military spending has increased from 2% of GDP to 2.5% of GDP, and this upward trend is expected to continue in the coming period, given the persistent threat generated by the Russian Federation in the Black Sea region.

From the analysis of the data presented in the chart above, it appears that the hierarchy of countries in terms of military expenditure per capita (per inhabitant) shows that the top 3 countries are the USA, Israel and Saudi Arabia, while Russia is ranked 11th, although in absolute terms it is ranked 3rd. China and India also rank 15th and 16th respectively, although in absolute terms military spending is substantial, and Romania ranks above them in terms of per capita.

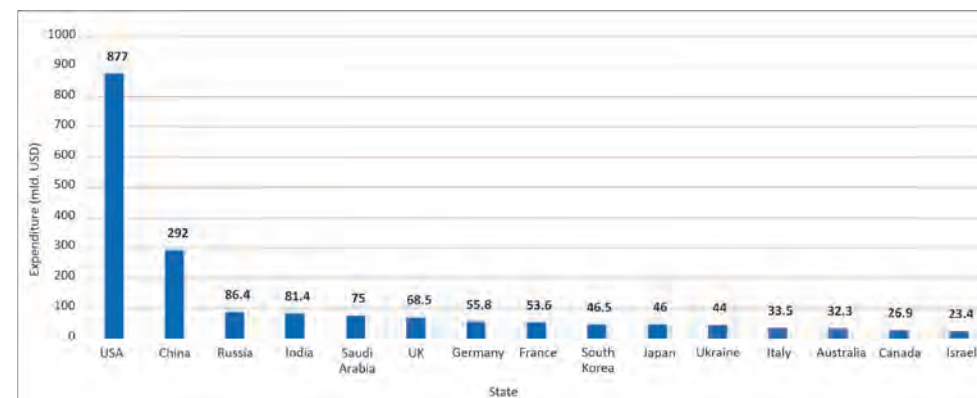


Chart 3: International military expenditure – 2022 (top 15 countries) (Statista-2)

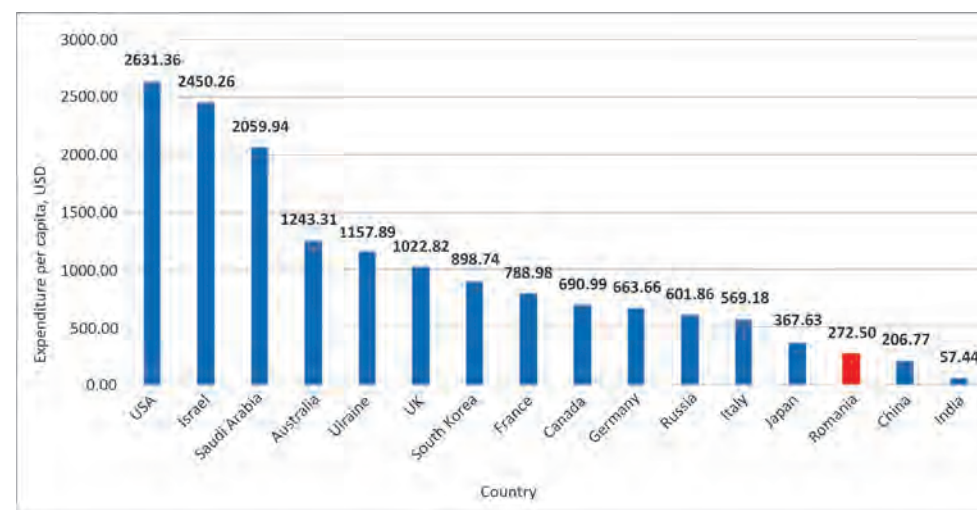


Chart 4: Military spending per capita at international level – 2022 (Statista-2)

Analysis of data on defence spending allocated by the Russian Federation reveals that the level of defence spending has increased significantly since the year of the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine, i.e. 2022, reaching USD 86,373 million, reaching the level of 2012-2014. The Russian Federation's maximum expenditure in 2012-2014 reveals the expansionist interest of the Russian Federation, which was reflected in the illegal occupation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014. The Russian Federation's current interest in supporting the conflict in Ukraine by increasing production in the defence sector and the allocation of funds to the Russian armed forces in combat is also evident.

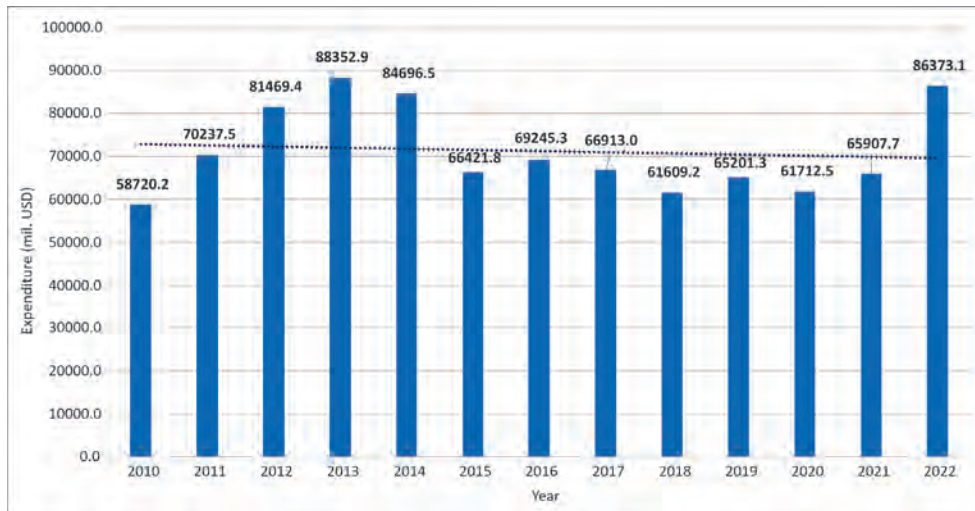


Chart 5: Evolution of defence expenditure of the Russian Federation (www.sipri.org)

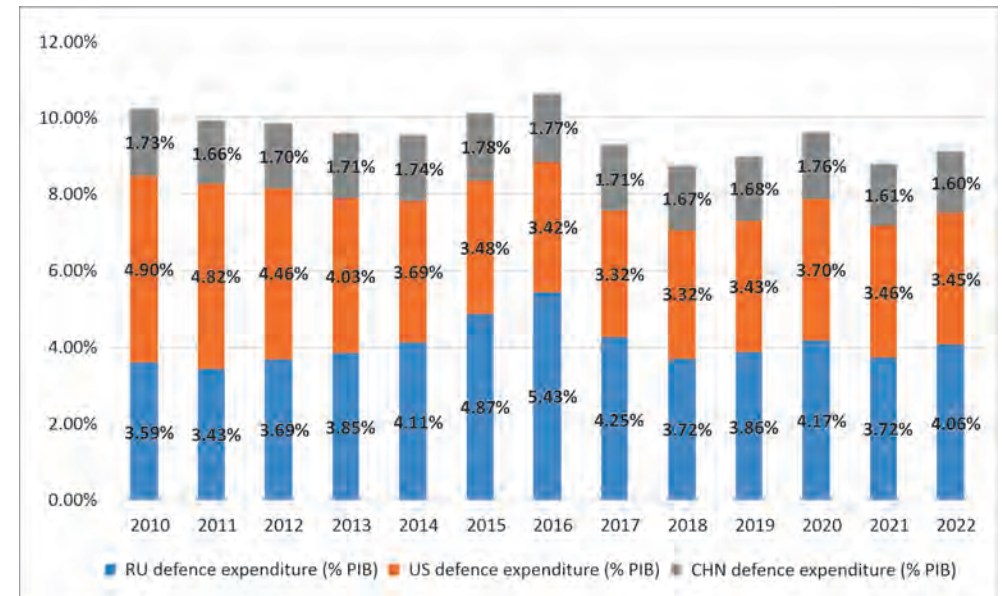


Chart 7: Evolution of defence expenditure of the Russian Federation compared to the US and China - %GDP (www.sipri.org)

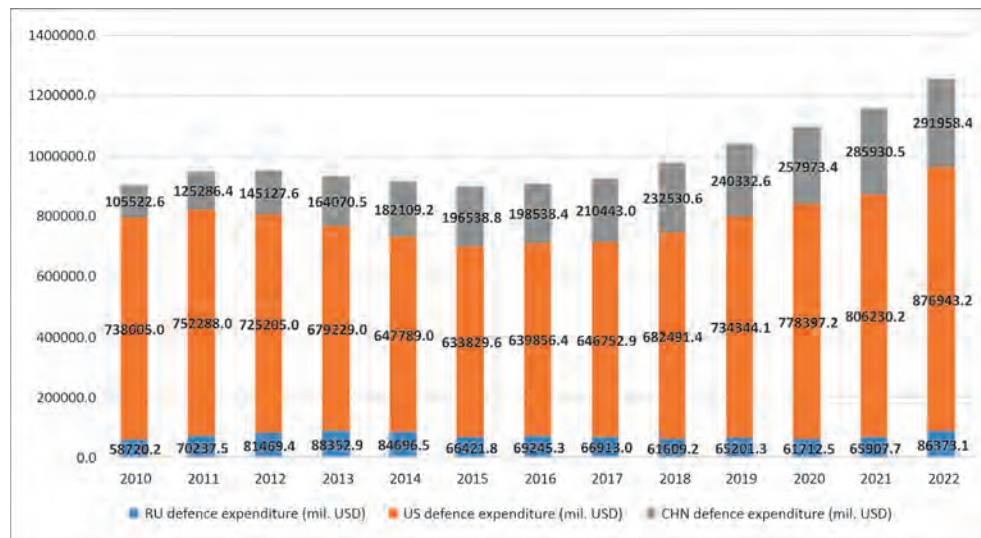


Chart 6: Evolution of the Russian Federation's defence expenditure compared to the US and China (www.sipri.org)

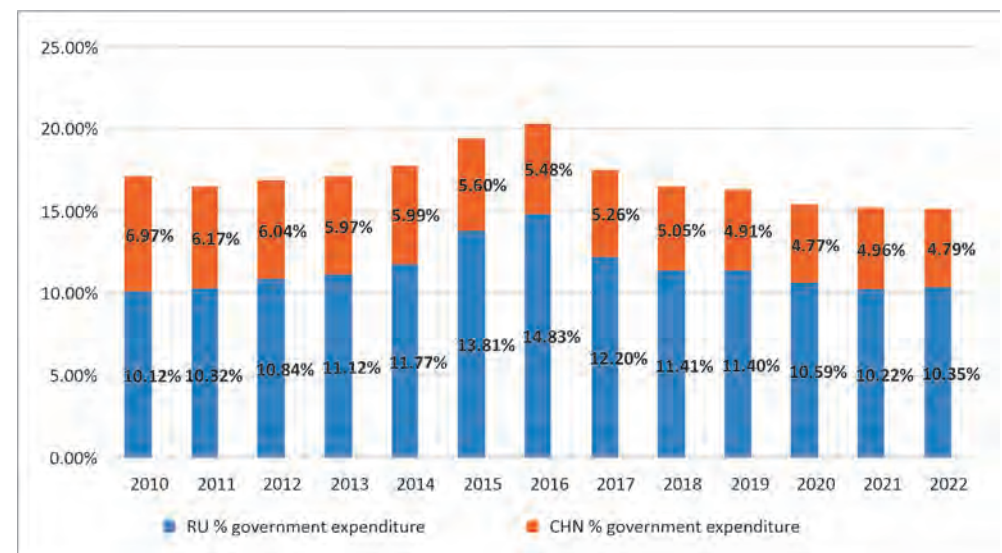


Chart no. 8: Evolution of defence expenditure of the Russian Federation compared to China - % of government expenditure (www.sipri.org)

The charts presented above show the Russian Federation’s constant interest in increasing defence spending, including in the period before the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine, which reveals the preparation for this military conflict. Thus, as a percentage of government expenditure², the Russian Federation allocates about 10% and as a percentage of GDP³ about 4%. However, in terms of the nominal amount invested in the defence sector, the Russian Federation invests 3 times less than China and about 10 times less than the US.

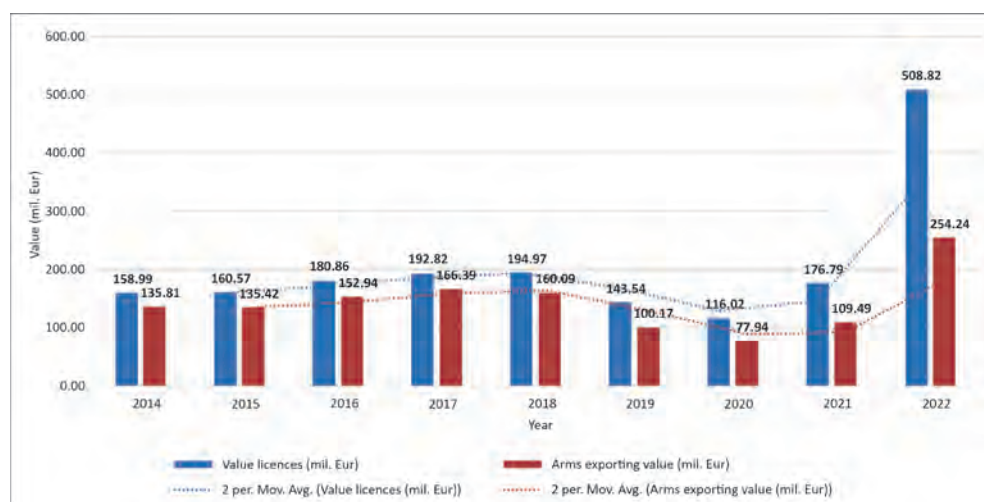


Chart 9: Evolution of Romanian arms exports (www.ancex.ro)

As far as Romania is concerned, the year 2022, which marked the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, was characterised by a major increase in arms exports, i.e. by approximately 123% (+€144.75 million). This increase in arms exports by the Romanian defence industry reveals the potential of the Romanian defence industry, which can be exploited to the full, including through the production and delivery of military equipment and ammunition needed in the current geopolitical context marked by the military conflict in Ukraine. From the point of view of the opportunities for the Romanian defence industry, the main beneficiary of the military equipment produced by the Romanian defence industry must be the Romanian Armed Forces,

² Government expenditure is the total monetary amount that the public sector pays to carry out its activities.

³ Gross domestic product (abbreviated to GDP) is a macroeconomic indicator that reflects the sum of the market value of all goods and services for final consumption produced in all branches of the economy within a country during a year.

which need to purchase as much as possible from the domestic defence market, and the rest of the technologically advanced equipment from foreign markets, mainly from Euro-Atlantic companies.

From this point of view, the increase in the percentage of GDP allocated to the defence sector must be reflected, mainly, in the armament programmes carried out at the level of the Ministry of National Defence, and an important part should be dedicated to the acquisition of military products designed and manufactured by the domestic industry. At the same time, the other component institutions of the National Security System will have to adapt their procurement policy for arms and ammunition and other individual or collective protection equipment to the national industry, in order to support it.

An analysis of Romanian arms exports in terms of the categories of arms exported shows that most exported military products consisted of:

ML4 – Bombs, torpedoes, unguided missiles, guided missiles, other explosive devices and charges and related equipment and accessories, and specially designed components therefor (EUR 83 396 656);

ML10 – Aircraft, lighter-than-air vehicles, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), aircraft engines and related equipment and components, specially designed or modified for military use (EUR 83 108 329);

ML9 – Warships (surface or underwater), special naval equipment, accessories, components and other surface vessels (EUR 77 633 594);

ML3 – Ammunition and warheads and specially designed components therefor (EUR 69 925 761).

The distribution by category of military products shows a diversification in 2022 of exports in the aircraft and naval vessels segment, but there is still a high demand for armaments. The increase in the value of ammunition exports and the diversification of the types of products exported will allow the domestic industry to recover economically and create the necessary conditions for further diversification of the product range, as well as the possibility of establishing economically profitable partnerships with companies in the Euro-Atlantic area.

As regards the defence expenditure allocated by Romania, the statistical data provided by SIPRI shows that it has been maintained at a high level, which is due to the increase in budgetary allocations for defence, as well as to the interest shown in complying with the decisions taken at NATO summits to allocate a minimum of 2% of GDP to defence. In this context, the Romanian authorities have understood and have taken the necessary measures to allocate substantial funds for the Romanian

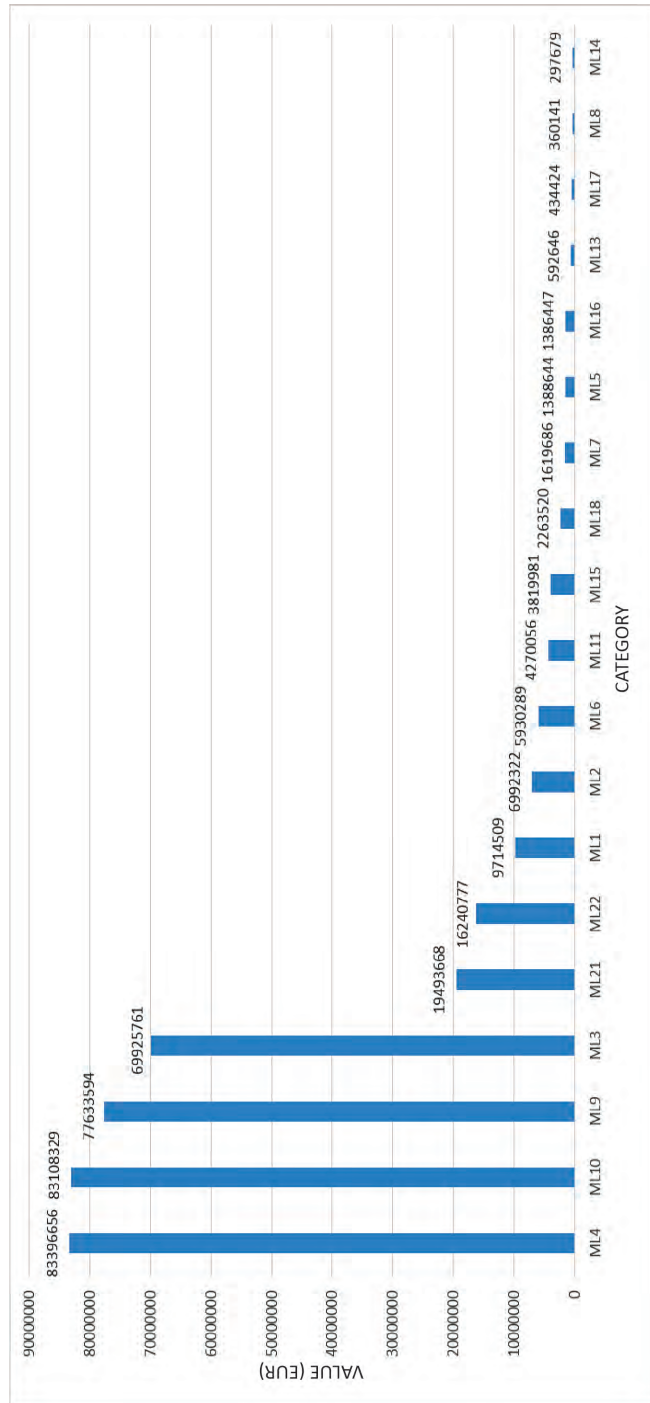


Chart 10: Distribution of arms exports by category of arms (EUR) (www.ancex.ro)

Armed Forces' equipment programmes. The main purpose of this is to reduce the technological gap between the Romanian Armed Forces and the other NATO member states' armed forces while increasing the degree of interoperability with the modern weapons systems used by the North Atlantic Alliance.

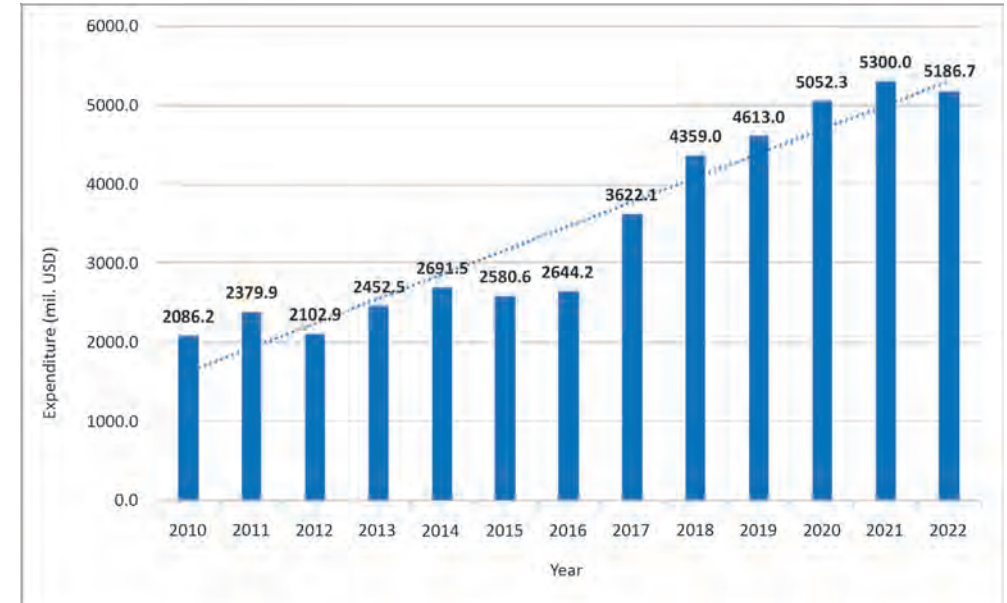


Chart 11: Romania's defence expenditure (www.sipri.org)

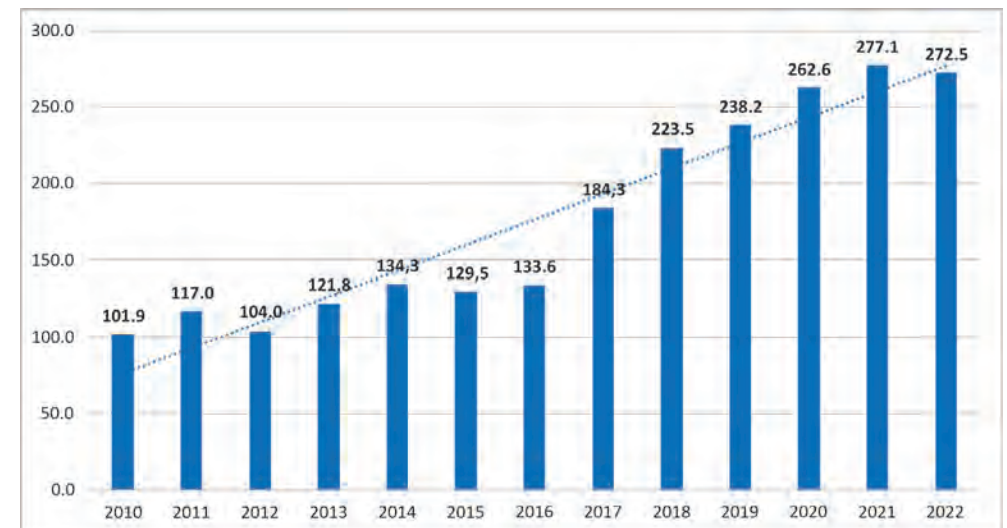


Chart 12: Romania's defence expenditure (USD/capita) (www.sipri.org)

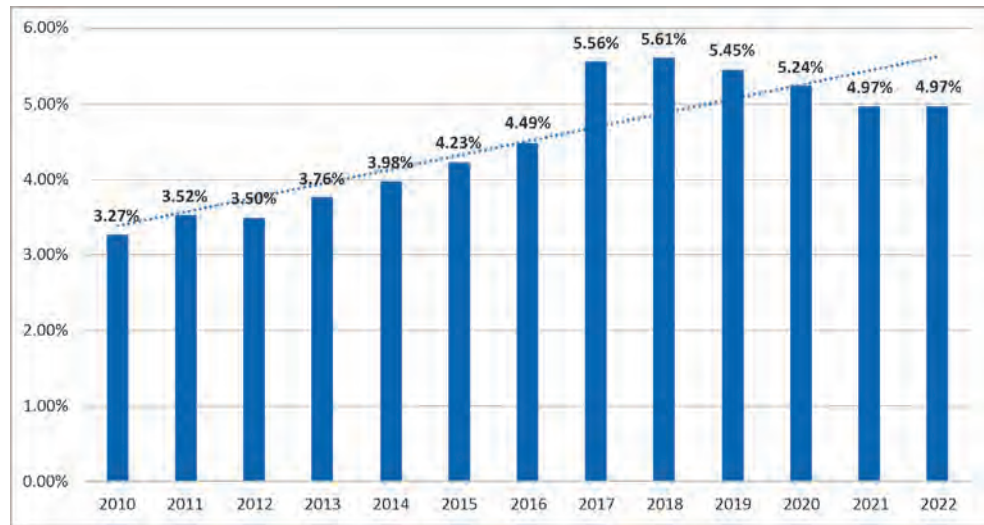


Chart 13: Romania's defence expenditure (% of government expenditure) (www.sipri.org)

The charts above reveal Romania's interest in investing significant amounts in defence, especially after 2017 when it was agreed at the political-military level to allocate a minimum of 2% of GDP to defence. The decision of the Romanian state to allocate at least 2% of GDP to defence was taken following the decision agreed at the level of member states at the NATO Summit held in Warsaw (Poland) in 2016. The substantial budget allocations allowed the purchase of modern military equipment from Euro-Atlantic partners, which enabled the Romanian Armed Forces to achieve a high degree of interoperability with the other forces of NATO member states. The current security situation requires an increase in budget allocations, especially for the existing equipment programmes at the level of the Ministry of National Defence, with a major emphasis to be placed on financing programmes developed by the Romanian defence industry. Currently, the Romanian Armed Forces purchase about 10% of the products produced by the Romanian defence industry. Another very important aspect is the strict application of the offset legislation, which has recently been revised to meet the new challenges of how to carry out the Romanian Armed Forces' acquisition programmes, in terms of substantial investments in the Romanian defence industry.

The development of the Romanian defence industry must be thought in close correlation with NATO and EU developments, and it is necessary to cooperate very

well with the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Economy, which controls ROMARM SA – the largest producer of military equipment and ammunition at the national level.

An analysis of the data published by the ANCEX Control Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (www.ancex.ro) reveals that the top 5 countries of destination for exports of military products are Israel (53,312,766 EUR), Norway (36,872,667 EUR), Bulgaria (33,037,224 EUR), the UK (15,918,846 EUR) and the USA (10,727,719 EUR).

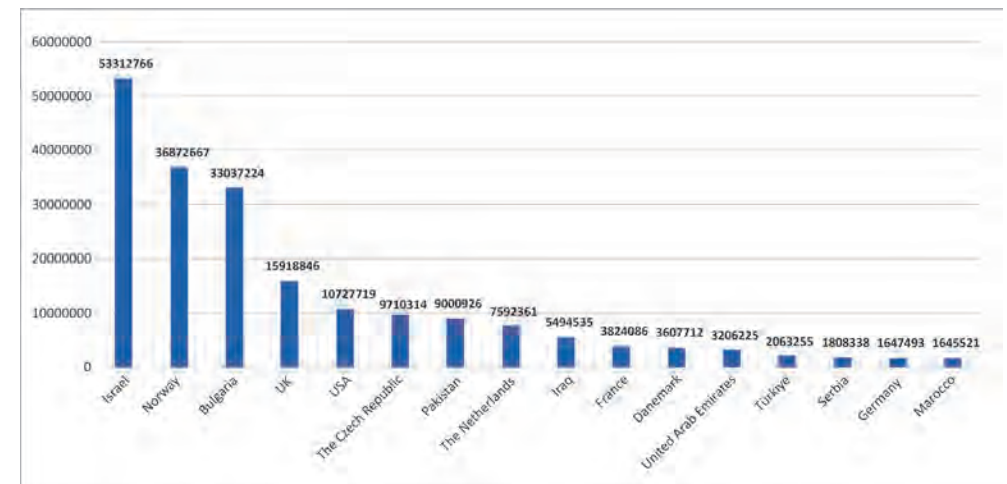


Chart 14: Main export destinations of the Romanian defence industry (1b.)

The domestic defence industry has made significant exports to technologically developed countries such as the US, UK, Norway and Israel. This aspect reveals the increase in terms of the technological level of the products exported by the Romanian arms industry companies.

At the same time, the Romanian armaments industry must be able to cope with the situation of a transition from peace production to war production and concrete measures are needed to make the necessary adaptations, together with measures to upgrade the industrial structures considered critical to sustaining the efforts in the event of the outbreak of a military conflict in which Romania is a party. In this context, an important role is played by the strategic planning process, which will set out the stages to be followed for the modernisation of the domestic armaments

industry and will also cover the tactical level, with particular attention being paid to the specific details of this area.

To maintain credibility abroad and to have access to advanced military technologies, it is necessary to effectively control exports of military products and technologies, as well as the raw materials needed to produce them. Romania has, through the ANCEX Control Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an efficient national authority recognised for its effectiveness by its Euro-Atlantic partners.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE EUROPEAN LEVEL AIMED AT STRENGTHENING THE DEFENCE INDUSTRY

The European Commission's *"Defence Investment Gap Analysis and the Way Forward"*, presented on 18 May 2022, highlighted that the defence sector suffers from a triple deficit: financial, industrial and capabilities. The Communication also notes that recent budget increases by EU member states have come after years of substantial cuts and extremely low investment in the defence sector.

Today, European states rely heavily on the support of the United States for their security. To at least partially overcome this dependence, measures have been taken at the EU level to strengthen the European defence industry, including by allocating substantial funds for the joint procurement of modern armaments and ammunition for such weapons. France is the main promoter of this solution aimed at strengthening the defence industry at the European level.

The main aim of this approach at the EU level is to stimulate EU member states to procure armaments jointly, thus ensuring interoperability, significant savings and ultimately a strong European defence industry. In this way, EU member states will be able to replenish their depleted stocks more effectively through donations to Ukraine.

In this context, on 27 June 2023, the Council concluded a provisional agreement with the European Parliament on an Act on the strengthening of the European defence industry through joint procurement (EDIRPA⁴) (European Council – 2023).

⁴ European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act.

The agreement reached sets out a number of clear conditions for economic entities (contractors, subcontractors) and defence products to be eligible, as well as the conditions that projects must meet to be eligible for funding:

- contractors involved in joint procurement should be established and have their executive management structures in the EU or an associated country (Iceland, Liechtenstein or Norway). They should also not be controlled by a non-associated third country. EDIRPA funds may under no circumstances be used to procure components from countries not respecting good neighbourly relations;
- by default, contractors must use facilities and resources located in the EU or an associated third country. The use of non-EU facilities is only permitted if an EU producer does not have the relevant infrastructure on EU territory;
- member states may only purchase products which are not subject to any restrictions imposed by a non-associated third country which limit their ability to use them. This rule does not apply to urgent and critical defence-related products, provided that they have been used before 24 February 2022 in the majority of the consortium and that the consortium members commit themselves to studying the feasibility of replacing such restricted components with unrestricted components from the EU.

CONCLUSIONS

The global and national defence industry has rapidly adapted to the demands of the defence market by increasing arms and ammunition production in proportion to demand in the wake of the military conflict in Ukraine triggered by the Russian Federation. However, the industry cannot cope with the very high demand for arms and ammunition required by the military conflict in Ukraine and the replenishment of stocks by states that have donated such military equipment to Ukraine.

The data analysed show the trend of the major exporters of military equipment to increase their turnover, a trend which is also reflected in the states purchasing military products. The Romanian industry benefited from the context marked by the military conflict in Ukraine and has exported military products above the average of the last 5 years, which led to an increase in turnover with positive aspects in terms of profitability. Analysis of data available in specialised open sources (SIPRI, ANCEX

Department of the MFA) shows that most countries have increased their defence budget allocations after the outbreak of the military conflict in Ukraine.

In the coming period, given the fact that this conflict in Ukraine will be prolonged, favourable conditions are created for the Romanian defence industry to supply armaments both for the Romanian Armed Forces and for other countries. A viable solution is to develop partnerships with major manufacturers of military equipment for the production in Romania of modern military equipment or sub-assemblies that can be exploited both by beneficiaries in our country and on the international market.

Romania can benefit from its privileged geostrategic position within the Black Sea Region, as well as from its good relations with NATO and EU partners for the development of partnerships with major international companies. As a member state of NATO and the EU, Romania is obliged to maintain a high level of budgetary allocation dedicated to the defence sector, while at the same time making the most of the projects carried out at NATO and EU level, to develop joint military equipment projects.

At the same time, Romania must take advantage of the strategic partnership with the USA, as well as those concluded with the other states in the Euro-Atlantic area to import state-of-the-art military technology and equipment, capable of facing a possible hostile military action by the Russian Federation. In conclusion, to effectively counter hostile action by the Russian Federation, cohesion between the EU and NATO member states is necessary, and the measures taken to modernise the armed forces of the EU and NATO member states must be coherent and complementary, without duplication of investment efforts between the two entities.

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CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING LOGISTIC SUPPORT FOR A EUROPEAN UNION BATTLE GROUP

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The requirements of the current security environment have significant effects not only in all social domains but also at all levels of decision-making. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges caused by the conflict in Ukraine, and the ongoing technological transformations compel the involved actors to identify measures to adapt to current situations and increase their level of resilience. The deadlines for the crisis responses and for the potential military conflicts reactions become vital factors in reducing costs, decreasing consumption, and saving human lives. As the primary actor in region, the European Union is re-evaluating its available tools in order to be capable to anticipate, deter, and provide a rapid response to current security threats and challenges. In this context, this article aims to analyse, from a logistical perspective, one of the military instruments of the European Union – the EU Battle Group. Even if it was conceptualized over two decades ago, it regained relevance in the new security context.

Keywords: logistics; resources; battlegroup; military instrument; logistic support;

INTRODUCTION

The interest in this topic comes from the international attention paid to the military instruments that the European Union could use to support responses to crisis situations or regional conflicts. In this respect, the European Union’s new security and defence plan (Council of the European Union, 2022), contained in the document entitled “*Strategic Compass*”, which has been publicly available since 2022, presents the possibility of re-examining a military instrument that was conceptualised almost two decades ago, namely the “*battlegroup*”. In fact, this ambitious plan has been imposed by the hostile security environment in the vicinity and obliges the EU to assume the role of a credible security provider in the region.

Significant logistical, financial and informational flows are generated from the moment the essential tasks for mission planning, establishment, operationalisation, assumption of command, force planning in the area of operations, deployment of assigned missions and up to the mission transition phase are established. As one of the essential conditions for a battlegroup to be able to carry out its assigned mission, logistic support to the battlegroup is a sensitive point in the planning process. In this respect, in this article we have aimed to highlight some specific features of logistic support specific to European Union-led operations, but also to generate, through analysis and deduction, potential new directions for the development and adaptation of the logistic field, which may be the subject of further research.

ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED

In the context described above, the present article aims to sketch a topical picture of the concept of EU BG and to identify some solutions for the logistic support of a military structure set up in a multinational context, at European level. In order to achieve these two objectives, the research approach has been carried out taking into account the following steps:

- literature study, in order to identify the emergence and development of the battlegroup concept at European Union level;

- analysis of the contemporary political and security context in order to identify the requirements for the establishment and logistical support of EU battlegroup military structures;
- conduct of a cognitive-structural and observational process through which the elements of logistical support and financial support for EU battlegroup structures are extracted, and ways and means to improve them are interpreted and deduced.

The materials used are of an unclassified nature, some of which can be found in scientific articles indexed in various databases or even on the websites of European public institutions.

THE EUROPEAN UNION “BATTLE GROUP” CONCEPT

It can be seen that the European Union has recently been called upon to design, develop or adapt diplomatic, political and military instruments in order to increase its capacity to respond to crisis or conflict situations in its area of interest. The complexity of the forms that the problems of an unstable international context take is increasing. The diversity of causes contributing to increased insecurity is unprecedented. It calls for the full spectrum of threats to be taken into account, involving all levels of decision-making, both national and European supra-state structures.

From the point of view of the literature consulted and analysed, whether the concept of the EU Battlegroup¹ (EU BG), is a central or marginal topic, we consider it essential to highlight the following conclusions:

- The period 2003-2007 represented the emergence and initial development of the concept and was marked by interest in its study and analysis, as evidenced by the multitude of press and scientific articles written on the emergence, definition and development potential of the concept;
- The regional security context has contributed significantly to the way the concept has developed. The absence of real, pressing threats to the security of European Union Member States did not force the supra-state mechanisms responsible for ensuring security to deploy the conceptualized military instruments.

¹ The battle group set up at European Union level.

- The *European Union's battle group* military instrument, being developed mainly at the conceptual level, did not allow for detailed investigation. Moreover, the lack of unanimous agreement at Member State level on how to finance and use this instrument has contributed to a decline in interest in understanding the mechanisms that have emerged and been developed.

At the European Union level, “*enhanced cooperation*” has been established as the main mechanism for security policy. Although it has taken on different nuances over time, it brings to the fore the principle that within the European Union, collaboration is encouraged, but without forcing reluctant states to participate or vote in favour of certain measures (De Witte, 2019). Thus, we are looking at a *permissive framework* that addresses a *significant number of actors* with the potential to be involved in building military structures designed as the main instruments in promoting regional security and defence.

From this point of view, starting from the Status of Forces in Theatre of Operations (SOFA) and continuing with the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between nations and with the Host Nation (HN), the amount and complexity of the type of resources requested by the EU Battlegroup will take into account numerous variables, among which we can mention: type of mission, location, role and need for the establishment of a mission command in the area of responsibility, the assumption of the logistical lead role by one of the participating nations, deployment possibilities and the need for rapid response, the degree of support from the HN and the readiness to provide land and infrastructure in accordance with the SOFA, the expected duration of the mission, the degree of complexity of the capabilities required of the Battlegroup in relation to the mission essential requirements, the type and size of the area of responsibility entrusted to the Battlegroup, the attitude and degree of support of the population in the area for the mission to which the EU is called, the level and type of threats to the force etc.

In this context, the *Battlegroup* is one of the European Union's main military instruments designed to contribute to promoting and ensuring peace and security in Europe. At the same time, it is seen as an effective, credible and coherent military structure consisting of a minimum number of troops, a rapidly deployable force package capable of conducting independent operations or participating in the initial phase of larger operations. It is also described in the literature as “*a multinational military structure composed of approximately 1,500 military personnel, an integral*

part of the EU rapid reaction force capable of responding to crises and conflicts arising worldwide” (Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 2017).

The creation of this type of military structure was initiated in 2004 as a result of the realisation of the need for common defence, as national military instruments were outdated by the demands of the time. The need to jointly provide rapid military responses in different parts of the European continent required solutions to intervene, save lives or prevent the spread of violence. Over the period 2005-2021, 13 state actors (Leruth, 2023), both from EU and non-EU member states, have agreed to participate in various programmes with the potential objective of setting up a battlegroup structure.

The European battlegroup concept was inspired by the success of *Operation Artemis 2003* in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which 12 states participated with forces (around 1,800 troops) for three months (Homan, 2007). It was the first military mission conducted by Europe, independently of NATO, outside European territory, and its objectives focused on providing security in Bunia, the provincial capital of Ituri, and humanitarian support in the area. The findings of the mission highlighted operational limitations due to limited strategic transport capabilities, lack of strategic reserves and difficulties in communication between command and combat forces (Ib.).

In promoting this concept, it has been envisaged that the European Union Battlegroups represent a step forward in the creation of a union, from a military point of view, at the European level. Participation in the composition of such military structures is not limited by membership of the European Union, moreover, the involvement of certain states becomes politically relevant.

The Role and Tasks of a European Union “Battle Group”

The effectiveness in limiting the spread of a conflict or in extinguishing it depends directly and proportionally on the time/stage at which forces are actually deployed. Delayed intervention in a military conflict leads to significantly increased casualties, considerable consumption of additional resources and increased potential for escalation. In an international context characterised by insecurity and unpredictability, rapid response remains the only viable option.

According to Article 43(1) of the *Treaty on European Union* (2012) the missions for which this military instrument can be used fall within the spectrum of conflict

prevention, stability and support, rescue missions and humanitarian intervention, crisis management and peacekeeping. According to the above-mentioned document, the decision on the deployment of an EU battlegroup is a matter for the European Council, which also sets the objectives and general conditions for implementation.

In the context of the missions mentioned above, it is important to highlight the main attributes/benefits that this military instrument can bring. Thus, the establishment of multinational military structures to ensure regional stability and European security requires fewer resources than the promotion of national defence solutions. Setting up a military structure, staffing it with specialised personnel, providing it with the necessary military equipment, maintaining the technical equipment, training and continuous training of military personnel, salaries and other aspects of the operationalisation of such a structure are resource-intensive. On the other hand, contributing forces or detachments to joint military structures at European level implies a limitation of the human, financial and material resources involved.

Another positive aspect is the potential for logistical improvement of the participating structures through joint activities and missions. Given that the logistical effort of contingents, detachments, national structures deployed in theatres of operations is a national responsibility, logistical support formations and units have rarely benefited from joint exercises or other actions with different EU or NATO member states. From this point of view, the experience of logistics personnel is limited to supporting the national structures they serve. However, the assumption of the responsibility of the support sub-unit for an EU multinational command² (European Union Force, 2023; Petrescu, 2023) as well as the joint deployment of the specific elements of Logistic Support Line I serving the EU Battlegroup nations leads to a significant improvement of the work of the specialist staff. The way in which it is achieved is as follows: the EU Battlegroup commander, through the General Staff – i.e. the Logistic Support Command Module – issues support orders involving concrete actions carried out both by the support company/general staff and service company (which may be multinational or assumed by a nation) and by the logistic execution microstructures of the EU Battlegroup organic national

² Romania has assumed a general staff and service company for the Multinational Battalion (MNBN) in the EU mission Eufor Althea.

sub-units. Moreover, for the accomplishment of the missions ordered, both the support/general staff and service company and the logistic support sub-units mentioned may request, if necessary, the support of the ENS to which they belong. In this joint effort, national combat and logistic support elements will have to find joint support solutions, multinational support solutions, as well as support solutions assumed by one of the nations, in which case there may be settlements according to agreed memoranda. In this multinational context, not only national logistics support tactics, techniques and procedures will be developed, but also experience will be exchanged, i.e. best practices will be imported, military logistics culture and thinking will be enriched, and the necessary changes will be created to produce emergent effects, through interoperability, throughout the national logistics ensemble.

In essence, the participation of nations, through their contribution, in EU-led missions and operations strengthens both the strategic profile of the states concerned and their commitment as a member state and the much-needed mutual trust among strategic partners.

Dimensions, Characteristics and Particularities of the EU BG in Military Operations

In terms of the size of this type of military structure, battlegroups of various sizes, structures and configurations have been considered over time. Thus, generically, we find battalion-level structure consisting of approximately 1,500 soldiers, with combined arms, reinforced with combat support elements and service support [Treaty on European Union, 2012, art. 43(1)]. At the European Union level, these structures have become operational since 2007 (Diplomatic Service of the European Union, 2017) proving to be useful tools in promoting defence at international level. The almost 20 years that have passed since the first use of this type of structure have led to their transformation and resizing, but the basic concept and fundamental mission for which they were created remain the same.

In terms of characteristics, the following can be classified as relevant:

- EUBGs are formed taking into account the principles of conducting operations in a multinational context or are developed through the complementarity of multinational structures under an overall national or coalition framework.

It is important to consider interoperability and military effectiveness in the establishment and use of such military structures;

- The size and manner of establishment of an EU BG are directly dependent on the tasks and missions assigned to it and cannot be a fixed, predefined force structure. The need to adapt is constantly present and involves a range of capabilities;
- Conceptually, these military structures were not intended to be permanent in nature, their composition being adaptable to requirements;
- They are highly deployable in a short time, provided they are operationalised in advance and forces from contributing nations are kept “*on standby*”;
- They have the ability to act independently or to adapt and integrate easily into military structures for participation in the initial phases of military operations.

Even if a battle group is intended to be able to act independently it must be in direct contact with a range of military or civilian actors/structures. In terms of subordination, an independent Battle Group is specified by the Operations Order as to the type of subordination and the structure to which it is subordinated. In order to be deployed in the area in which it will operate, the BG will be supported by national structures which will be responsible for its strategic movement. At the same time, a BG is initially provisioned, in principle, to be sustainable for 30 days, thus making it easier to determine the concrete arrangements for re-provisioning.

NEEDS AND OPTIONS FOR LOGISTICAL SUPPORT OF AN EU BG

Like any joint, multinational activity, the deployment of an EU battle group necessarily involves financial resources. One of the main challenges still under consideration is how and through what mechanisms these structures will be funded. The following are recognised as fundamental documents providing the general legal framework for the establishment of these military structures: the Treaty establishing the European Union (European Council, 1992), the decisions taken by the Member States under the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) and, as a model for financial support, the Athena mechanism (Council of the European Union, 2004) for financing military operations. Among the missions financed by this mechanism in which the Romanian state participates with military forces we mention: EUTM MALI, EUTM RCA and EUFOR ALTHEA (Bosnia Herzegovina). The Member States

contribute annually to the establishment of a common fund in relation to the level of gross national income (Council of the European Union, 2004).

The military responses and instruments to which the European Union has recourse are part of the Member States' reinforced approach in terms of security and defence. Guided by the two policies, namely the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the European Union has developed a series of initiatives aimed at strengthening, in a comprehensive and integrated manner, its own territorial, economic, cyber etc. security.

With the exception of Denmark and Malta, which have decided not to contribute to European military efforts, the EU has allocated significant funds to the development of a number of security and defence-specific programs, some of which are also open to third countries and are designed to improve the military status and response capability of nations through partnerships, prevention, research-innovation, capability development and defence investment efficiency, the conduct of civilian missions, engagement in military assistance missions and the enhancement of response capability through military operations. Moreover, since 2000, cooperation between the EU and NATO has made it possible to streamline and improve the way operations are planned, forces are designed and missions are conducted.

In view of the above, but also of the fact that the EU Military Committee's military planning is not aimed at engaging in major combatant-type operations similar to NATO military structures, the strategic and operational level commands of this type of operations are characterized by greater flexibility, volatility and fluidity than NATO. For example, in the theatre of operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the EUFOR ALTHEA Operational Level Command has been operationalized and deployed with personnel from the contributing countries and using common funds through the Athena financial mechanism. It has responsibilities in the assigned area of operations to plan and conduct operations from the unacceptable state of affairs to the desired end state. The way in which operational level effects are achieved, entails mission-specific actions, namely support to the state armed forces in the training process and to progress towards NATO standards, measures to deter any potential enemy with interests contrary to the rule of law on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and direct or indirect contributions to building and maintaining

a secure environment in the area. Whenever these objectives are met beyond the specific acceptability criterion defined as the desired end state, the command may be relocated to fulfil other missions, reorganized or disbanded.

The budget for the operation of an EU mission is, in principle, made up of the two main components:

- common funds used under the Athena mechanism;
- funds from the countries contributing to the mission, according to the principle of *"costs lie where they fall"*.

In terms of operational costs, the establishment of a mission command is jointly funded and, subsequently, the responsibility for the financial management of the whole mission is taken over by the J8-budget and finance module of the mission command. Thus, the posts required to carry out all the logistical and financial flows of the mission are established through clear procedures, with the roles of the responsible officers established at the highest level of the EU Military Committee.

In the early stages of operations, in accordance with the SOFA, taking into account the common framework for participation in the mission and the decisions of the EU Council, the costs associated with the force planning may be incurred and are eligible to be paid from the common funds. This includes all activities from the airport/port of embarkation (APOE/SPOE), as defined in the mission operations plan (OPLAN), to the final destination (FD). Further, the tactical structures, i.e. the battlegroups, are financed and logistically supported as follows:

- with common funds used through the Athena mechanism;
- with funds managed by Mission Command and reimbursed by Troop Contributing Nations (TCNs) through the Nation Born Costs (NBC) mechanism, managed by the J8 mission structure;
- through national responsibility.

Although EU Battlegroup structures are usually multinational structures, with a designated lead nation whose responsibility is to design the conduct of operations and the tasking of missions, they are rarely funded by common funds, and where this mechanism applies it is strictly regulated by the Council and managed by the J8 mission structure. The TCNs that make up the Battlegroup are deployed to the theatre of operations with the sending nation's assets and are equipped and stocked in accordance with the OPLAN. Within a Battlegroup, nations are staffed with logistics structures specific to the 1st logistic support line that carry out flows of all support areas required by the missions and tasks ordered.

At this level, the *modus operandi* respects the level of authority that has been delegated by the nation (generally OPCOM operational command is transferred) and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) are appropriated through joint training and orders issued by the Battlegroup command element and are implemented, most often, in a similar manner to those transferred through NATO interoperability and cooperation.

From a financial point of view, the main characteristic of combat and support forces, in EU operations, is the high consumption of Class I materials (food, water) and Class III materials (fuels, lubricants and other associated lubricants for all purposes, including weapon systems using special fuels) (NTO, 2018) for supply. Thus, Mission Command is responsible for the provision of materials in Classes I, III-fuel, part of Class IV (construction and engineering materials) and a number of contracted services for the periodic resupply of the forces participating in the mission, and contributing nations receive monthly payment documents for reimbursement of the costs of the required supplies and/or services.

The procurement of services and products required by nations participating in EU operations, during their deployment, is carried out centrally through the Athena mechanism, taking into account the application of equal treatment of both candidates/tenderers from the European Union countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Montenegro) as well as those from non-EU countries with close relations with the European Union (United Kingdom, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Albania, Chile, Northern Macedonia, Mexico) and the host state of the operation (HN). Procurement is carried out in a similar way to the familiar national public procurement process, but the thresholds to which the European authority refers in order to ensure open and fair competition are different (€5,000, €30,000 and €300,000 for goods and services, respectively €5,000,000 for infrastructure works). The nation benefits from the goods and services thus contracted by reimbursing their value, a *mechanism known as National Born Costs (NBC)*.

The procurement of goods, services and works at centralized level, both for common benefit, supported by *common funds*, and for those supported by the **NBC mechanism**, is carried out with the same principles and procedures, the ultimate

aim being both to provide opportunely and on time, in a multinational system, with significant savings and avoidance of redundancies, and to avoid competition for resources in theatre of operations.

For the other classes of materiel (Class II, lubricants and associated liquids within Class III materiel, Class IV construction materiel not provided from common funds or through the NBC mechanism, Class V materials – ammunition and medicines), the *responsibility* for supply and re-supply is *national* and is carried out in two ways:

- by in-country assurance, with goods and stocks being deployed under the Logistics Support Line I, by the task of determining, transporting and managing the organic logistics component of the national structures integrated into the Battlegroup;
- by re-supply from the home country, with the support of the National Support Elements (NSE), during the deployment of the mission, if nations decide to deploy in theatre of operations this Voluntary National Contribution (VNC) structure, not included in the European Organization States for the mission, but which will have the same status in the theatre of operations, according to the SOFA agreements concluded, or by in-theatre procurement carried out, in particular, by these National Support Elements;
- through assurance by logistic/medical structures of other nations, with support and subsequent settlements being made through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) bilateral (between the nation that re-supplies/provides/medical insurance and the recipient nation), multilateral (between the nation that re-supplies/provides/assure medically on the one hand and the other nations on the other hand, with the conditions of insurance and settlement being identical) or concluded by mission command, with the support of J8 and the EU Council, similar to the NBC mechanism.

Although to date EU missions have not designated a specific logistic structure for the 3rd logistic support line, such as the Joint Logistic Support Group, similar to NATO procedures, the operational level logistic effort, materialized in logistic, information and financial flows provided through the Athena mechanism and the NBC process, being substantially reduced compared to NATO operations, the lead role is taken by the mission commander, with the support of the multinational command he leads and the major effort of modules J4 – Logistics and J8 – Budget, Finance. The executing component in this case is represented by the contractors

and the inventory acquired through the common fund mechanism is kept, used and accounted for under strict rules and principles of sound financial management.

France, Germany and Poland have created a European military entity under the name of the “Weimar Battle Group”, setting out through clearly expressed technical commitments the responsibilities and involvement of each state. Thus, Germany offered its logistical support and France its medical support (F.A.2011). In the current security context characterized by the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine, this trilateral was reactivated (Dumitrache, 2023) declaring its agreement and intention to support Ukraine in its efforts to defend its national territory.

Since 2007, a total of 19 battle groups have been operationalized at European level (Cristian, 2022), but none of them has been used. Of them, we would like to draw attention to the HELBROC battle group, in which the Romanian military has contributed forces.

No.	Year of initiation of the agreement	Name	Countries involved	Remarks
1	2006	HELBROC BG	Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Romania, Ukraine (2011, non-member state), Serbia (from 2017), North Macedonia (from 2022)	Romania has contributed general staff officers, CBRN defence and military police structures

Table no. 1: Countries involved in HELBROC Battle Group (Source: author contribution)

Designed to be used in crisis situations or armed conflicts, European Union battle groups have never been used in practice (Clapp, 2023). Disagreements between states, due to the differing political will (Kemp, 2023) of nations and the lack of unanimous agreement on the financing of these structures have contributed to the lack of access to this type of military instrument in resolving crisis situations.

In the literature we have identified approaches that bring to attention that these military structures conceptualized under the name of EU BG have in fact been a failure (Reykers, 2017; pp. 41-56, Smith, 2016, pp. 446-460). On the one hand, the main role in the decision not to use such a military structure was directly related

to the political will of those involved, and, on the other hand, the necessary resources were a significant obstacle.

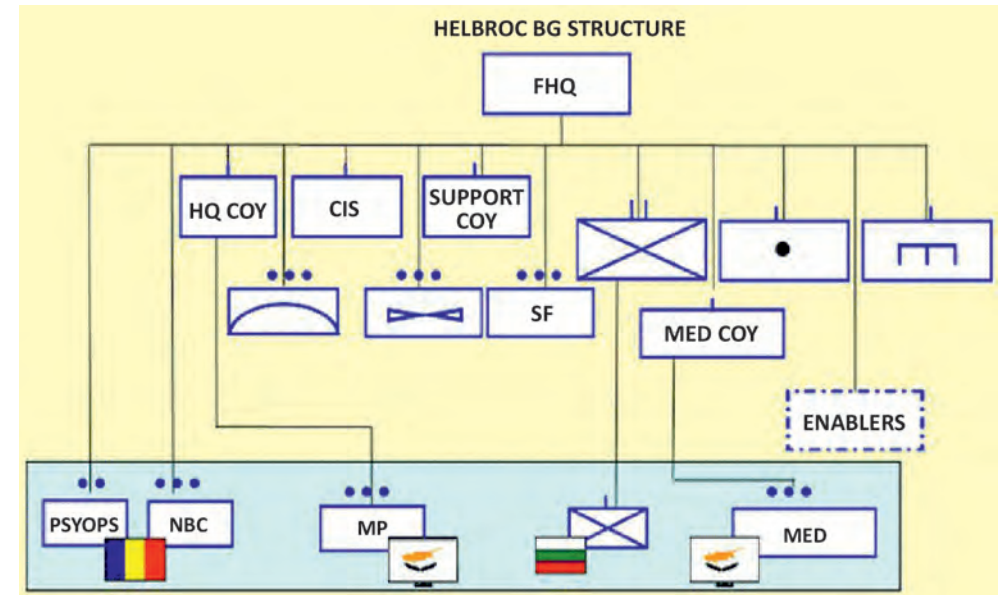


Figure no 1: Structure of the HELBROC Battle Group (Source: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/battlegroup-helbroc.htm>)

At present, on the initiative of 14 European Union Member States, on the basis of the European Union’s security and defence strategy, the idea of operationalising a force capable of being deployed in a very short time has been promoted and accepted. It is referred to in official documents as “RDP – Rapid Deployment Capability” (Clapp, 2023). This type of military structure is conceived as a modular force of 5,000 soldiers and the stated intention of the European Union is to have it operational by 2025 (Ib.). The main building blocks of the force will be the EU battlegroups to which other capabilities or forces identified as necessary from the Member States will be added.

As it has been proven so far, the main problem with military instruments designed at European Union level has been the ownership of their funding and the funding itself. Thus, the present EU strategy aims to use the common funds established and to emphasise solidarity in order to develop the RDP. Also, until unanimous acceptance and development of a concrete funding mechanism, suggestions from experts in the field (Meyer, 2022) have focused on compensating troop contributors

on the basis of a common cost calculation and in relation to the Gross Domestic Product of member states. It should take into account, as a matter of priority, the cost implications for transport/deployment, ammunition and fuel use.

The establishment of European battle groups requires not only a clear concept but also a tailor-made provision. They must have the capacity to fight or respond appropriately to the crisis situations for which they have been requested, to have a coherent command and control system and flexible, adaptable and sufficient logistical support.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

The development of military instruments such as European battle groups is a long process. Viewed through the lens of the regional implications of setting up such structures, we recognise that this is a necessary and essential step for European security and defence policy. Therefore, a number of conclusions can be drawn, summarised along two main lines: relevant aspects of the logistical support of battlegroup structures and the potential benefits of setting up and using this type of military instrument.

Over the past decades, forces participating in international missions have demonstrated that Romania is ready to participate in operations by contributing troops, both in mission commands and in battlegroups. The experience of more than twenty years of participation in missions in Afghanistan and in other theatres of operations has given us the confidence to succeed. However, the logistical support provided, in part, through the “*Lift and Sustain*” programme, operated by the leading partner of the mission in Afghanistan, namely the United States of America, through which the contingents and personnel participating in the mission had access to a large part of the necessary resources, free of charge, created a specific way of thinking, apart from the logistical rules applicable to missions, for the Romanian military, whether logistician or fighter. From this perspective, the challenge to which the Romanian Armed Forces are called, is to create the necessary capabilities for force planning and self-sustainment, for military structures of company level and higher, and training of personnel and logistic sub-units, both on national territory and through exercises and various other projects carried out jointly with partner states, to support their own forces through national and multinational solutions. Thus, particular attention should be paid to understanding, at tactical level,

how to interpret memoranda of understanding, technical agreements, letters of accession etc. Moreover, the tools available for access to goods and services in a multinational context, logistical cooperation, as well as the conduct of procurement, within theatres of operations, are imperatives to be included in mission training plans.

The assumption of a functional legal framework allowing the establishment and use of BG-type military instruments at European level implies a number of responsibilities for the actors involved in the process but also a significant number of benefits. Increasing the European Union’s capacity to manage crises and respond adequately to potential military threats, increasing the potential for cooperation between Member States and between Member States and those outside the European Union, improving joint preparedness, ensuring the potential for the development of joint support procedures, exchange of information, expertise and training are just some of them. Assuming the joint establishment of military instruments with potential for regional use substantially limits the consumption of human and financial resources.

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TARGETING. EVOLUTION THROUGH THE YEARS

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Motto:

“The focus at a given level of war is not on the specific weapons used, or even on the targets attacked, but rather on the desired effects”.

Air Force Doctrine Document 2

Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power

INTRODUCTION

The future operating environment is expected to be more congested and chaotic, hindering freedom of movement, more challenging, more connected and more constrained. It is therefore critical to enhance the adaptability and resilience of formations to operate in these conditions, which would put at stake compliance with the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) in the conduct of operations.

The threat of or the use of deterrence and coercion will remain at the core of military operations in the near future. Therefore, the Armed Forces must be able to coordinate and synchronize, and through targeting, apply a broad spectrum of capabilities to influence different conflict actors as part of a comprehensive approach and in a diverse operational environment.

The term targeting is synonymous with “*target selection*”. The armed conflicts of the past two decades of the 21st century highlight the importance of adapting its structure, doctrine and procedures to the requirements of the international community.

Targeting (FM 3-60, November 2010) is the process of identifying sources of instability within an entity’s area of responsibility and areas of influence. It is the process of selecting targets (https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3-56_9) and matching the appropriate response to them. It considers strategic and operational requirements and capabilities and the threat to friendly forces imposed by the adversary. Targeting is a tool that is applied in every planning phase of an operation (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – CJCS, 28 September 2018).

According to *Joint Publication 3-60*, targeting is the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching an appropriate response to them given operational

Joint targeting is the result of the need to translate the joint force commander’s (JFC) plan into tactical actions. Joint targeting involves the process of selecting and prioritizing targets (classified in NATO as Facility, Individual, Virtual Entity, Equipment, or Organization – FIVE-O), and determining the appropriate means to influence them, taking into account operational requirements and available capabilities, to produce desired effects consistent with the objectives of the operation. It links tactical actions to the strategic desired end state through operational objectives by influencing prioritized impact objectives.

Its practical application began in the early 20th century, the First and the Second World Wars (Japanese Theatre), in the conflict between North Korea and the United States, the Vietnam War, being used during Operation Desert Storm, the Kosovo Conflict, the Iraq War, and continuing to be applied in modern warfare.

Keywords: targeting; effect; specialists; training; operation;

requirements and capabilities. Targeting requires an ongoing analytical process to identify, develop, and influence targets to meet the commander's objectives.

Targeting is part of the military decision-making process to achieve the commander's intent. The methodology used to translate the commander's intent into a plan is to decide, detect, deliver, and evaluate. The functions associated with this methodology assist the commander in deciding what actions to take.

The term "targeting" is synonymous with "target selection" (NATO Standardization Office/NSO; FM 3-60, p. 47). Targeting began its evolution in the Second World War, but the need for its application began to be "felt" as early as the First World War.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TARGETING APPLICATION

The German Zeppelin raids on London in 1917 were probably the first known use of air power outside direct support of ground operations. While the material effects of these raids were minimal, the effects on the conceptual role of air power were enormous. In November 1918, Major Edgar Gorrell (<https://airandspace.si.edu/collection-archive>) developed the first strategic bombing plan for the Air Service. His goal was to "drop aerial bombs on commercial centres and lines of communication" in such quantities as to cut off needed supplies to the formations. To achieve that result, the officials responsible for planning it required predetermined targets. To that end, pilots analysed critical enemy centres to determine which should become targets (between 12 June 1918 and 11 November 1918, US bombers fired 275,000 pounds of bombs on rail yards, factories, bridges, command posts etc.). However, the war ended before the plan was carried out. The lessons of the war show that the greatest criticism that can be levelled against aerial bombing is the lack of a predetermined program carefully calculated to destroy enemy critical infrastructure sites. Achieving this objective requires systematic analysis to determine which targets, if destroyed, would cause the greatest damage. An organization with a sustained focus on air targeting is needed to undertake this type of systematic study.

By 1926, many aviators considered bombing to be the most important role of air power, and the prevalence of bombing led to an increasing emphasis on targeting.

According to Major Donald Wilson "attacking multiple critical targets would disrupt the enemy's economy" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Wilson).

According to then-Lt. Haywood Hansel, one of two officers assigned to assist Major Wilson, "The proper selection of vital targets in the industrial/economic/social structure of a modern industrialized nation and their subsequent destruction by air attack can fatally weaken an industrialized enemy nation and lead to victory by air power" (<https://www.military.com/off-duty/books/>).

Despite the clear lessons of the First World War, participation in the Second World War, without an intelligence organization capable of conducting systematic research on potential enemies and recommending vital targets whose subsequent destruction would lead to victory, did not produce the desired result. Commanders still relied on Army intelligence to maintain sufficient data to conduct air operations.

In July 1941, at the height of the Second World War, there was not yet sufficient intelligence to plan and conduct combat operations because of the lack of a systematic method for selecting targets. The Air Corps did not provide training for aerial reconnaissance. General Eaker (<https://www.military.com/off-duty/books/>), Commander of the Eighth Air Army, reported in March 1942 that "Intelligence represents the part of the activity in which we are weakest" (<https://irp.fas.org/doddir/usaf/afpam14-210/part15.htm>). In the fall of 1942, the Air Requirements Plan (AWPD-42) against Germany was discussed at the highest level, and as the discussion progressed its limitations in the area of target analysis became apparent. General Arnold (Captain John R. Glock, USAF, 2012) established a Committee of Operational Analysts (COA) in December 1942 to address that deficiency. For the first time, the United States of America created an organization to be responsible for gathering and analysing intelligence information for the purpose of selecting air targets. It eventually became the first Joint Targeting Group, with a Deputy Assistant Chief of the Air Staff for Targeting. To find a systematic approach to target selection it was created a database of potential targets. It was called the *Bombing Encyclopedia* (Maxwell Field, Ala., 1946, pp. 13-15), automating the processing of the vast amount of information needed to provide a target recommendation for every country in the world. It is the forerunner of today's *Basic Encyclopedia*.

In order to centralize the planning process, a Joint Task Force was established in Washington, DC, on 2 August 1944, to provide for continuous analysis of objectives and to ensure a high degree of integration and coordination. The Second World War ended before the group could offer recommendations for objectives, which in turn would directly support Army and Marine Corps troops when they came ashore

on the Japanese mainland. The experience of the two World Wars clearly shows that the proper selection of vital targets is critical to the successful application of air power and depends on the systematic study of available intelligence.

Five years after the Second World War, the United States of America still lacked the organization, the necessary and trained personnel, the database, and the target materials needed to support air power on the Korean Peninsula. Prior to the post-war outbreak, the Air Force had no organization maintaining and analysing the North Korean target base. Information existed on only 53 targets in North Korea, the other targets being obsolete. The problem of inadequate numbers of trained personnel to maintain targeting continued during the war. Because of the lack of competent combat intelligence officers, the Korean campaign provided support for the contention that neglecting peacetime training was a serious mistake.

The lack of trained analysts affected two additional areas: combat assessment and weapons recommendations. Had a greater effort been made to evaluate combat operations, a more accurate assessment of the value of targeting plans would have been obtained. Ten days before the armistice, a vulnerabilities unit was established to provide effective weapons recommendations. If it had been established earlier, it would undoubtedly have contributed to more effective execution of tasks during the Korean War.

The experience gained during the Korean Conflict reinforces the lessons learned from the two world wars – *Proper selection of vital targets is critical to the successful application of air power. Selecting these targets requires trained, experienced personnel familiar with both operations planning and intelligence.*

Targeting results from the need to translate the joint force commander's plan into tactical actions. It involves the process of selecting and prioritizing targets (classified in NATO as Facility, Individual, Virtual Entity, Equipment, or Organization – FIVE-O), and determining the appropriate means of influencing them, taking into account operational requirements and available capabilities, to produce desired effects consistent with the objectives of the operation. Targeting links tactical actions to the strategic desired end state through operational objectives by influencing prioritized impact objectives.

Beginning in the 20th century, First and the Second World Wars (the Japanese Theatre of Operations), continuing with the North Korea-US conflict, evolving

through the Vietnam War, used during Operation Desert Storm, the Kosovo conflict, the Iraq War, targeting continues to be applied in modern warfare.

NOWADAYS

Many lessons have been learned since the end of the Gulf War. Most writers look at how precision weapons and stealth platforms changed the nature of war. It masks another more critical lesson – the importance of the application and use of targeting. From the First World War to the end of Operation Desert Storm, command and control issues remained a source of contention between the Services.

Along with the positive benefits of its application in surgical strikes, there are also negative episodes. As an example of misapplication, mention can be made of the bombing of Iraqi nuclear power plants during Operation Desert Storm. Although it had the effect of reducing, in some ways, the command-and-control capabilities of enemy formations, it led to a supply problem for the population. That in turn led to outbreaks of gastroenteritis and cholera with high mortality rates in some local communities (Rizer, Kenneth, 2001, pp. 1-2).

CONCLUSIONS

Targeting has always been and it will always be a critical function in a military operation to achieve victory on the battlefield. Consistent with the commander's intent, its application is increasingly imperative and mandatory in the modern operational environment.

The modern operational environment is constantly evolving, which in turn requires a change in how the adversary is assessed and influenced. Superiority in an operation requires a precise approach to gathering and analysing information.

Targeting is one of the “engines” of war, one of the key drivers of modern warfare.

The brief historical overview presented here does not claim to be exhaustive, but it does, to a large extent, present the close relationship between war and technology. Air operations have dramatically changed the application of targeting (Osinga, Roorda, 2016, pp. 27-76). In the second half of the 20th century, technological advances continued to reshape the use of targeting.

The application of targeting in Western militaries has increasingly come to include pre-developed standardized procedures and verification mechanisms (Bachman, Holland, 2019, pp. 1028-47).

In the US and NATO militaries, targeting consists of various steps unified by a formalized targeting cycle (Publication 3-60, 2013, p. I-6.).

Nowadays, both military and civilians are heavily involved in the whole process, which aims to increase the effectiveness of an operation, but at the same time maintain the legitimacy and legality of its conduct.

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THE CHANGING OF POST-COLD WAR GLOBAL ORDER: NEW CENTERS OF POWER ARE EMERGING – THE SHIFT TOWARDS A MULTIPOLAR PERIOD –

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The post-Cold War period, which began in the early 1990s and was generally considered a unipolar stage, with the United States as the only superpower, has passed into a new phase, largely, due to the global consequences of Russia and China’s actions, marked by the events generated by Russia from 2006 until 2014 and in particular by the triggering, on 24 February 2022, of a new unprovoked war against Ukraine, a country invaded for the first time in 2014 and partially occupied for almost nine years but also by China’s actions in the South and East China Sea. The last decade and, in particular, the recent period is characterised by a global strategic competition between the US, China, and the Russian Federation and the alliances they belong to, accelerated by the Ukraine war and the tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, with consequences, among others, on the aspects regarding international order and defence-related aspects to the global strategy. BRICS has firmly committed to promoting the interests of the Global South, to creating a new more inclusive international order, forcing major structural changes to global and regional security architectures. Thus, a conflict of interests emerges between the actions and the role of the US, as a superpower, in the world arena and the actions of China and the Russian Federation, mainly to create a highly multipolar global situation and to evolve as a regional and global hegemon.

Keywords: international order; China; world superpower; Russia; strategic competition;

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

International order – based on respect and uphold of international law and the United Nations Charter, the equality of the sovereign states and the prohibition of the threat and use of force, as well as on the right of all peoples to self-determination and universal human rights, to ensure a lasting future in security and freedom – has been increasingly challenged lately. (Germany National Security Strategy, 2023, p. 19).

The status quo regarding global and, in particular, regional security was deeply changed after 24 February 2022, when the Russian Federation invaded Ukraine. The event with global consequences has affected peace and severely transformed the security environment, causing generalised instability and amplifying the strategic and systemic competition, involving operational aspects of the defence, largely determined by the actions of Russia and China. In these circumstances, *The NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, adopted on 29 June, at the NATO Summit in Madrid, states that the Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to allies’ security, as well as to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, because it uses conventional, cyber and hybrid means to undermine the rules-based international order and China’s coercive ambitions and policies challenge the Alliance’s interests, security and values. The Alliance must identify the ways to address the systemic challenges posed by China to Euro-Atlantic security (NATO, 2022, pp. 1-5).

China has been taking actions in the South China Sea (SCS) that have raised concerns among the US and its allies. These actions include building a large island with advanced military facilities in the Spratly Islands group, which China has occupied, and militarising the Paracel Island and the Scarborough Shoal. These activities, along with the actions of China’s naval forces in support of its claims against neighbouring countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, and Malaysia, have increased US concerns that China may gain effective control over the SCS, which is a region of strategic, political, military, and economic importance to the US and its allies and partners (O’Rourke, 2023, summary). Thus, the SCS has become an arena of strategic competition between the US and China in the past 10-15 years. The US concern is also amplified by China’s naval forces’ actions

on the Senkaku Islands area in the East China Sea (ECS), administered by Japan. The Chinese domination of the seas and adjacent regions to the SCS, ECS and the Yellow Sea can deeply affect the US strategic, political and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region with consequences on other areas' interests. Details are presented in *Figure 1*.

The last period can be characterised as marked by Russia and China's actions to create a highly multipolar global situation, with three superpowers – the United States, Russia, and China – thus triggering political, ideological, and military competition for influence across multiple geographic regions (Congressional Research Service, 2023, p. 38).

According to John Mearsheimer, scientist and professor of political science at the University of Chicago, the definition of *great power* is “a state having sufficient military assets to put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war against the dominant power – that would be the United States – and possessing a nuclear deterrent that could survive a first strike against it” (Work, 2015, p. 3). Holbraad Carsten, scientist and professor of political science at the Australian National University, asserted that a *superpower* is one “able to wreck half the world, and committed upon conditions to do so. Also, it must command the technology and economy to maintain into the foreseeable future the strategic forces needed for that destructive capacity” (Holbraad, 1971, p. xi). The superpower deploys vast conventional forces worldwide and maintains them for unforeseeable future events. A *hegemon* is “a state so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. No other state has the necessary armed forces to undertake a decisive fight against him. Essentially, a hegemon is the only great power in the prevailing political or social order. A state that is to a great extent, or significantly, stronger than the other great powers in the system is not a hegemon, because it confronts and deals with or accepts other great powers by definition and does not dominate them in a significant way – a situation that implies a lot of effort or ability to obtain or maintain such a state”. Actually, at that time, the great power deemed another great power as a significant threat to the balance of power. Hegemony entails the control or influence of the system, which is usually considered the entire world (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 40, 166).

The international security environment after the Second World War has changed dramatically. To highlight the dispute for global supremacy, the following periodisation, detailed below, was used in the article.

The Cold War period – on the whole, it is considered to have lasted from the late 1940s until the late 1980s, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989

or early 1990s, as a result of the disbanding of the Warsaw Treaty in March 1991 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union into Russia and the former Soviet republics in December 1991, key events marking the end of the Cold War. It is described as a strong bipolar situation, with two superpowers, the United States, supported by the NATO Alliance, and the Soviet Union, supported by the Warsaw Pact Alliance, which were in a political, ideological and military rivalry to promote their interests in several geographical regions of the globe.

The post-Cold War era, on the whole, is considered to last between the late 1980s or early 1990s until 2006-2008 or 2014 or 2022. Since 2006, the number of countries facing net decreases in freedom has increased. In February 2007 Russian President Vladimir Putin criticised and rejected the concept of unipolar power at the *International Security Conference* in Munich. In 2008, Russia invaded and occupied part of the former Soviet Republic of Georgia, triggering a financial crisis and deep recessions in the United States and Europe, combined with China's ability to manage this crisis and successfully conduct the Summer Olympics in 2008 (Götz, 2019, pp. 134-138; Repucci, 2021, p. 2). Another marker was in 2014 when China continued its actions in the SCS and ECS, fully militarising at least seven artificial islands in the Spratly Archipelago, which it built from December 2013 to October 2015, creating 1,295 hectares (3,200 acres) of new land since 2013 – Mischief, Gaven, Subi, Cuarteron, Fiery Cross and Hughes Islands, former reefs – which it raised in a disputed area, these being aspects associated with China's economic growth and military modernisation. The seizure and annexation of Crimea in March 2014 represents the most relevant marker of the transition from the *post-Cold War* to the *Multipolar era*. Compared to the Cold War period, the post-Cold War era is, on the whole, described by a low level of political, ideological and military rivalry between the great powers. This period is also considered a unipolar situation with the United States as the only superpower in the world. In this period Russia, China or another great power has not been considered a relevant challenge for the status of the United States, as the only superpower in the world or for the US-led international order. On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation resumed the invasion of Ukraine. Taiwan's invasion by China would be the last and significant confirmation of the transition to the Multipolar era (Congressional Research Service, 2023, p. 38).

The Multipolar era – the world is undergoing profound changes, we are living in an era that is increasingly multipolar and marked by rising systemic rivalry. The global order is being changed – new centres of power are in progress, and the world of the 21st century seems to be multipolar. Russia's brutal war of aggression

against Ukraine fundamentally challenges the European and global security order, a fact that confirms that we are already in a period of increasing multipolarity. Great powers are trying to undermine and adjust the current international order under their conception of systemic rivalry and their revisionist notions of spheres of influence (Götz, 2019, pp. 134-138). In this international context, China could be a partner – without whom many of the most pressing global challenges cannot be resolved, but it is also a systemic competitor and rival. Today's Russia is, for now, the most significant threat to peace and security in the Euro-Atlantic area. China attempts through different actions to reshape the existing rules-based international order, is adopting with increasing intensity a dominant position in the region, acting in opposition to the US and its allies' interests and values. Russia's aggression war against Ukraine is a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and the European Cooperative Security order. Its purpose is to suppress Ukraine's state sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the political existence of a state and finally the materialization of his imperialist policy of the spheres of influence.

Through the enhancement of conventional and nuclear forces, Russia threatens global strategic stability and pursues its interests in the international arena through a policy that tries to undermine international law, human rights and international order. During its war of aggression against Ukraine, it threatened periodically the West with the use of tactical nuclear weapons and China purposely used its economic influence to attain political objectives. (Germany National Security Strategy, 2023, pp. 5, 13, 23). Among the characteristics that highlight the amplification of the competition between the great powers can be listed: Russia and China denying, disputing, or arguing the key elements of the US-led international order, respectively the inadmissibility of altering international borders by force or coercion and priority for peacefully solving disputes between states, without the use, or threat of use, of force or coercion; systemic employment by Russia and China of new types of information and cyber military operations, or paramilitary, in an aggressive or provocative way, sometimes assimilated to hybrid warfare, gray-zone operations or ambiguous war – in the case of Russia – and tactics of gradually achievement, over a period of time, in small stages of goals, which are less likely to be noticed or gray-zone operations – in the case of China's actions; the renewed competition for new allies and partner states between the three great powers; technological competition, especially in the field of emerging disruptive technologies, between the United States, China and Russia. This new international security situation has led analysts to define it, as a tripolar or multipolar world. (Congressional Research Service, 2023, p. 39).

Signs of passing to the Multipolar world. The most relevant sign, decisive for the transition from the post-Cold War era to the Multipolar era, was Russia's seizure and annexation of Crimea in March 2014, by using force, an act representing the first annexation of a territory belonging to a state by another state in Europe, since World War II. Other signs of transition – but not only limited to them – referring to China were: the increasing economic growth, modernising military capabilities to sustain the so-called high-intensity technologically sophisticated conventional war, development of nuclear weapons technologies, development and deployment of new emerging disrupting weapons systems, and development of mobilisation capacities to carry a large-scale conflict of extended period. All this is associated with China's actions in the SCS and ECS and those regarding the possible invasion of Taiwan – these were phased, gradual, and amplified, crescent in evolution, sophistication, development and, on capacities, by successive additions at time intervals. China's strategy is to use a series of aggressive actions and reduced-extensive challenges to produce a much larger action or result, that would be difficult or illegal to be carried out all at once, also representing a divide-and-conquer tactic used to dominate the adversary's territory, piece by piece. Such military operations are too small to result in a war, creating confusion for the aggressed neighbouring state, as it is not able to decide how and how much should it respond. These small military actions also help to avoid international diplomatic attention and, cumulate over a while, resulting in a significant strategic advantage for the aggressive state.

Since 1494, in the global political system, there have been 6 full systemic cycles regarding the succession of global powers – each period associated with a world power – and now the global system is in a transition phase into the 7th.

THE US'S ACTIONS AND PURPOSE – AS A SUPERPOWER – ON THE WORLD STAGE

To protect its interests a state employs all the means available, including diplomatic, informational, military, and economic tools. Existing international order, based on rules, is usually represented by a group of organizations, institutions, treaties, rules, norms, and procedures or methods that are meant to organize, structure, and regulate the interactions and connections between the sovereign states. The current order is established by the US and its allies.

The traditional mission of the United States in the world, since the end of World War II is clearly defined or identified according to the period of time and is generally based on four essential components: global leadership; the defence and promotion

of the liberal international order; the defence and promotion of human freedom, democracy and rights; and preventing the occurrence of regional hegemony in Eurasia. We are living in a decisive decade, one marked by dramatic changes in geopolitics, technology, economy and environment and the world has to cope with crucial challenges in the coming years. The purpose of the US in the world has changed, but not fundamentally, depending on each administration (Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 1-14).

Global leadership. After the end of World War II, the US played the traditional role of global leadership, so the United States became the most relevant state in notifying, identifying, assessing, or characterising international issues, undertaking actions to deal with these difficult issues or tasks, to establish an example for other countries regarding the path to be followed, organising, coordinating and implementing agreed efforts or with the participation of several countries to tackle international issues and implementing international rules and norms. Unnecessary withdrawal from the global leadership would result in the creation of vacuums in the global leadership, in establishing and maintaining global rules and norms, in settling specific disputes and other issues, and especially in the regional power balance that China and Russia, as well as France, Turkey, Syria, Iran, or other states, would try to complete it, often to the detriment of US interests and values. (Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 1-9).

The defence and promotion of the liberal international order. It represents a crucial importance element for the US in the world, naturally, in close interdependence with the first key element mentioned above. The liberal term used in this context is not used in the conservative-liberal sense that describes contemporary US or other states' policies. It is a previous employment of the term that refers to order based on the rule of law, as opposed to the order based on random selection - respectively on personal whims, rather than on any argument, set of principles, procedures, framework and organised method – of the hereditary monarchs. Among the main features of the rules-based liberal international order can be mentioned the following: respecting international law, international rules and norms, and universal values, including human rights; powerful international institutions for supporting and implementing international law, international rules and norms, and universal values; respect for the territorial integrity of states, and the unacceptability of changing international borders by force or coercion; priority for peaceful settlement of disputes between states – without the use, or threat of use, of force or coercion – in a manner in accordance with international law; the use of liberal rules-based international trading and investment systems to promote

open economic engagement in order to assure development and prosperity; and, the treatment of international waters, international air space, outer space, and more recently cyberspace as domains that belong to, and affect, the entire international community to a significant extent and do not represent domains subject to national sovereignty. In the absence of these rules – as part of an ordinary procedure, rather than a special justification – more powerful states may impose their will arbitrarily on less powerful states, organisations, or individuals, without respecting any norms. Generally, it is considered to be an evolved order, even perfect but like other global orders that preceded it does not have all the necessary or appropriate elements in terms of geographical coverage and methods, approach, or way of implementation; it presents a relatively low level of ambition to put into practice; it is perfectible; sometimes it is not respected by all actors; it does not fully exclude arbitrary behaviour; it is not accepted by certain states or non-state actors; and it is predisposed to be affected by certain pressures, tensions or challenges.

The existing liberal order was established by the United States – the only state that possessed the capability and will to create a new global order – with the support of its allies in the next year after World War II. The main purpose of creating the liberal international order was the desideratum to prevent the trigger of new world wars, strengthen economic exchanges, and avoid worldwide economic dysfunctions, preventing the emergence of undemocratic social systems, increasing the standard of living, and respecting human rights. Supporters of the liberal international order state that establishing and maintaining this order required certain costs and efforts mainly provided by the US. To compensate them, the US would benefit from relevant advantages in the fields of security, politics, economics, and military, and especially in preserving an advantageous balance of power, both globally and regionally, to the detriment of other great powers and also favours the US in holding a leading role in configuring institutions, organisations, system or sets of rules globally in a firm and determined manner in the field of finance and international trade. Some criticisms of the liberal international order claim that it is mainly designed to perform duties or services for the United States and to support the global prominence or hegemony of the US (Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 1-9).

Defending and promoting human freedom, democracy and rights. These are universal values for the liberal order and have contributed to indicating the weaknesses of the authoritarian and illiberal forms of government in a disapproving way and resisting their consequences in certain states. This mission of the US is following Western fundamental political values but is also the result of theory,

according within, the states where there is a functional democracy the actions of governments are the result of their population will and, consequently, the risks of triggering aggression wars against other states or between them are reduced. This task of the US is also considered a soft power component by which pro-Western governments, as well as, organizations, and institutions from other states are determined, persuaded or attracted support to cooperate with the United States in correcting, adapting, and influencing the actions of authoritarian and illiberal governments so that they do not have hostile behaviour towards US interests.

Preventing the emergence of regional hegemon in Eurasia. This role was determined by two key elements: *the first – the influence of the geographical features specific to Eurasia:* the relative sizes and locations of countries or land masses, the locations of the great importance resources, the geographical barriers, and the key transport links but also of the population and economic activity on international relations would lead to a regional hegemon in Eurasia wielding enough power to pose a threat to vital US interests; *the second – it is considered that Eurasia is not able to self-regulate in a trustworthy, predictable, or reliable way,* to impede the emergence of regional hegemon, which highlights the fact that it cannot rely on the efforts of Eurasia states to obstruct the occurrence of a regional hegemon. This assumes that support from other states that do not belong to Eurasia is required to be able to get rid of this option with certainty (O'Rourke, *Defense Primer*, 2023, p. 1). Obstructing the appearance of a regional hegemon in Eurasia is occasionally described in terms that induce the idea of necessity or as an act associated with maintaining peace and security through cooperation, respectively maintaining a balance of power, a separation of power in Eurasia or impeding a great power to dominate several key regions in Eurasia or preventing the appearance of several hegemon each for a certain region belonging to Eurasia.

Assessing the instances in which the American armed forces had carried out potentially hostile military actions outside the borders and which can be associated with the mission to prevent the emergence of regional hegemon in Eurasia, the following types of actions can be identified:

a). *US participation in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.* Given that the goal of preventing the emergence of regional hegemon had not been explicitly formulated until World War II, US participation in World War I can be appreciated in retrospect as a previous US action that is circumscribed to this objective. The involvement of the US in the Vietnam War was argued by the provisions of the so-called domino theory, which claimed that a possible victory of North Vietnam – supported by China and the Soviet Union, led by a communist

regime over South Vietnam – supported by the US, could be accompanied by other countries in the region, as in the domino game, thus reaching under communist control. The U.S. was trying to prevent the spread of communism in the fragile countries of Asia, which had recently become independent. The conflict ended with the defeat of South Vietnam and the unification of the country under communist leadership. The contenders of the domino theory contested its validity and sustained that it was false as the victory of North Vietnam was not followed by other countries in the region. The theory lawyers claim that the theory is valid because the long support of the U.S. offered other countries in the region space to improve their political institutions and economies to discourage and defend against communist movements. The support of the US and its allies for Ukraine in the war with Russia may have as its objective, among others, the prevention of the emergence of a regional hegemon;

b). *establishment of security alliances and partnerships* in all geographical areas to attract support in the area to deter and counter the attempts of any great power to obtain a regional hegemon status: NATO Alliance – to prevent the Soviet Union (now Russia) in Europe; alliances with East Asia and Pacific states to prevent China or Soviet Union (now Russia) in East Asia; security partnerships with states from the Persian Gulf region – to prevent Iran or Soviet Union (now Russia) in the Persian Gulf region;

c). *complex, political, diplomatic, and economic, actions, and other nature* – the Marshall Plan and external assistance programs – to discourage and counter the Soviet Union's similar actions during the Cold War. To fulfil this role, the US has collaborated with or supported nondemocratic regimes that, for their rationales, treat China, Russia, or Iran as adversaries. Therefore, sometimes this objective has been in contradiction to defending and promoting human freedom, democracy, and rights. It may be considered that US relations with authoritarian and illiberal states tacitly facilitate a re-emergence of authoritarian and illiberal forms of governance. (Congressional Research Service, 2021, pp. 1-9).

China's actions – BRICS member – to create a highly multipolar global situation and to evolve as a regional hegemon and superpower

Strategic competition, large-scale instability and sudden and surprising recurrent events define our broader security environment. China is the only competitor that has established an objective but also has the economic, diplomatic, military, means, and technological power to reshape the international order (Theohary, 2023, p. 2).

The most comprehensive challenge, which requires careful analysis or a multilateral approach to US security is China's coercive behaviour, regarding the probability of using or employment force and the intensifying effort to reconfigure the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to favour the implementation of its interests and priorities. To fulfil this goal the People's Republic of China (PRC) acts to undermine US security alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region coerces neighbouring states and threatens their interests by the exertion of force and deterrence, based on developing capabilities, economic influence, and conventional and nuclear military capabilities. The more and more aggressive intimidation actions towards Taiwan become destabilising for security in the region, threatening peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. All these actions are part of a large plan for China to destabilize and impose its will in the ECS, the SCS, and the Taiwan Strait. In the last period, the PRC has developed and modernized all the services of army forces, the capabilities of waging war in all domains, especially emerging technologies that influence strategic stability, pursuing the bridging capability gaps or advantages with the US in these fields or even overcoming it. The pace of development and modernisation of China's military capabilities is a challenge in itself.

The PRC has made remarkable progress in the development of its conventional forces, but also in those of the forces dedicated to the cyber, electronic, informational, space, and spatial defence warfare military actions, as well as, the joint integration of these capabilities. China tries to counteract the joint capacity of the US for force projection and the defence of its or allies' vital interests in a crisis or conflict situation. The RPC also extends the deploying area of its military forces and the necessary infrastructure for force projection in the region or other areas. In parallel, the PRC is accelerating the modernisation and expansion of its nuclear capabilities. (US Department of Defense, 2022, p. 4). In NATO documents it is mentioned that the PRC's coercive ambitions and policies are assumed, to challenge NATO interests, security, and values.

The RPC – a pacing threat – uses a wide range of political, economic and military tools to amplify its global power projection and presence and at the same time continues to act non-transparently in terms of strategy, and intentions and gradually accumulating or increasing the armed forces.

The main actions that contribute to the achievement of the PRC objectives are represented by the hybrid and cyber operations and are supported by coercive rhetoric and broader disinformation that targets to decrease the security of the US and its allies. The PRC also makes efforts to dominate and influence the key

technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure and strategic materials as well as the supply chains, particularly in the military field and emerging technology. It takes advantage of the economic progress to create and maintain strategic political and economic subordination and to create an environment favourable to achieving its long-term goals. It strives to undermine the power and authority of the international order based on rules, especially in the space, cyber and maritime fields.

A feature of China's actions is the lack of transparency that also manifests in terms of its policies, plans, and capabilities of nuclear weapons, extending and diversifying the nuclear arsenal, launching them from all domains, achieving the nuclear triad, respectively, increasing the number of delivery systems technologically sophisticated and warheads. It does not engage in nuclear weapons control agreements, plutonium production for military programs, or risk reduction. The strengthened strategic partnership between the PRC and Russia and their concerted attempts to undermine the existing international order, based on rules, are in contradiction with the US and its allies' interests and values and NATO. (NATO, 2023, pp. 2-5).

Tensions in the SCS have become a situation requiring quick or immediate action or attention for the US in the last period. SCS represents an area with heavy traffic and is the subject of sovereignty disputes between Brunei, the PRC, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Territorial disputes in SCS refer to the locations of the islands groups: Paracel Islands – reclaimed by China and Vietnam, and were seized by China, in 1974 from South Vietnam; Spratly Islands – are claimed entirely by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and in part by the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei, and which are occupied in part by all these countries except Brunei; and Scarborough Shoal – is claimed by China, Taiwan, and the Philippines, and controlled since 2012 by China. The respective regions contain significant undersea resources including coral. Japan has a disagreement with China and Taiwan in the ECS over the Senkaku Islands which are claimed by China, Taiwan, and Japan but are administered by Japan. Maritime territorial disputes in the SCS and ECS are not recent date but have occurred in recent years, starting with 2001, and have periodically led to diplomatic tensions, as well as confrontations and incidents at sea that have involved fishing vessels, oil exploration vessels, and oil rigs, coast guard, naval ships and military aircraft. These represent attempts to claim by using force, intimidation, or coercion but the US demanded that disputes be resolved without constraint and based on international law respecting the freedom of navigation and overflight or other lawful uses of the sea.

The United States and China have a long-term dispute on the right of the foreign military to operate in waters near China, including in the SCS. The dispute resulted in naval and air incidents between Chinese and American ships and aircraft in international waters and, respectively, airspace. Since 2013, the disagreement between the US and China on the freedom of seas for military ships and aircraft has been emphasised by China's actions to build the group of Spratly artificial islands on which military equipment has been deployed. The building of the artificial islands group can be interpreted as an intermediate stage of a plan to dominate the SCS and finally, China to become a regional hegemon that regulates the situation in the region for other regional actors. (O'Rourke, 2023, pp. 1-10, 16-20, 51-59; Kan, 2014, pp. 1, 23).

To strengthen its domination in the MCS, China also claimed the Scarborough Shoal and proclaimed an Air Defense Identification Zone over the MCS's areas. Details are presented in *Figure 1*.



Figure 1: Maritime Territorial Disputes Involving China. (O'Rourke, 2023, p. 52).

**Actions of the Russian Federation – BRICS member –
to create a highly multipolar global situation
and to evolve as a regional hegemon and superpower**

The Russian Federation through its irresponsible behaviour undermined peace in the Euro-Atlantic region and global security and violated international law, the Charter of the United Nations, OSCE commitments and principles and the norms and principles that built a stable and predictable European security environment. Russia – a major power with modern and diverse capabilities – represents for NATO the most significant and direct threat to the allies' security and peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. It triggered an illegal, unjustifiable, and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. NATO will never recognise Russia's illegal and illegitimate annexations, including Crimea. Russia's war has had a profound impact on the international order and global stability, it was arguably a turning point, as they confirmed the latent concerns about an aggressive and revanchist Russia. (NATO, 2023, pp. 1-3). Russia seeks to use force to impose border changes and to reimpose an imperial sphere of influence. Russia has developed its military forces for military actions specific to all forms of battle and in all domains, has modernised its nuclear forces, including long-range stocks of weapons, and diversified its battle equipment based on emerging disruptive technologies for the employment of nuclear and conventional ammunition, increased its military activities in Europe's North, particularly by adding nuclear-capable missiles to Kaliningrad, it has amplified its military presence in the regions of the Baltic, Black, and Mediterranean Sea and maintains significant military capabilities in the Arctic region.

The regional and global security environment and the international order are affected by the increasingly aggressive and provocative attitude of Russia associated with the violation of international law, fueling tensions and instability across all regions, the concern for the build-up of military capabilities and destabilising activities, including near NATO borders and the deployment of forces and equipment in Belarus. (Bowen, 2023, pp. 16, 21, 23). It has forces stationed in Georgia and Moldova without their consent and has militarized those regions. All of Russia's hostile policies and actions are part of a posture of strategic intimidation. Russia presents serious, continuing risks in key areas: nuclear, long-range cruise missiles, cyber and information operations, counter space, chemical, and biological weapons, undersea warfare, and extensive grey zone campaigns targeted against democracies in particular. (US Department of Defense, 2022, p. 5).

In the last period, hybrid and hostile actions – interference in democratic processes, interference in US and European elections in 2016, political and economic coercion, large-scale disinformation and manipulation campaigns, cyber activities that cause serious damage, illegal and disruptive activities of intelligence services and revisionist foreign policy – against NATO allies and partners have become characteristic, all these have been combined with an energy crisis intentionally exacerbated by Russia. Russia – an acute threat – makes efforts to undermine the current international order based on rules, NATO values and interests and its partners, deepening and diversifying the strategic partnership with the PRC, North Korea and Iran. Its energy and raw materials policies are a part of this strategy. The deterioration of the international security environment is also amplified by the violations and the selective implementation of obligations and commitments regarding arms control, disarmament and implementation of non-proliferation architecture. (NATO, 2023, pp. 1-5).

Russia and the PRC deploying counter-space capabilities that can target the U.S.'s Global Positioning System and other space-based capabilities that support military power and daily civilian life. Also, could use a wide array of tools in an attempt to hinder the U.S. and its allies' military preparation and response in a conflict. Russia speculates the opportunities and risks offered by emerging and disrupting technologies for alteration, the global and regional strategic balance of power, conflict nature, as well as, accelerating the arms race, exacerbating strategic competition, and obtaining advantages from armament trade - aspects highlighted in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. It also uses them in hybrid actions, to destabilise, increase ambiguity complicate the decision-making process, and slow effective response coordination, aiming at political institutions, critical infrastructure, societies as a whole, democratic systems, economies, and security of citizens to counter what Moscow considers to be conventional military superiority of the USA and NATO. (Bowen, 2023, pp. 6, 22; NATO, 2023, p. 11). The renewal of superpower status competition has led, among other things, to enhance the emphasis on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence, all of which relate to China and/or Russia. (Dibb, 2016, pp. 5, 12-14).

Russia after the invasion of Ukraine, when the conventional assets were not sufficient to achieve the military objectives threatened several times with the use of nuclear weapons – using them as a shield –to intimidate Ukraine, NATO and international organisations. In this context, conventional aggression has the potential to escalate to the employment of nuclear weapons at any scale.

Russia remains the US rival with the most capable and diversified nuclear forces. Russia is a state, structurally militarised, with a colossal military burden, with a non-performing, non-competitive economy, its actions blur the lines between economic and national security and are based on nuclear deterrence in projecting its interests. (Rosefielde, 2004, p. 3).

The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine signs the emergence of a more militaristic Russia that seeks to overturn the post-Cold War European security system and challenge the broader rules-based international order. It also aims to expand its control over regions of the former Soviet empire, which now belong to independent states, to claim what it considers, a correct stance on the world arena. Russia invokes multipolarity as a justification for this war. From Russia's perspective, the *Collective West* behaves as the sole hegemon of the world, without any rights, consequently, the war is justified because the conflict is catalogued as one between Russia and the West, an argument now supported by more states than at the beginning of the war. Russia and China – have a bilateral partnership “*No-Limit*” – are trying to present an alternative worldview to the one offered by the *Collective West*, attracting as many countries as possible alongside their efforts to shift the global power balance (McCarthy, 2023, pp. 1, 6).

BRICS, partnership for mutually accelerated growth, sustainable development, and inclusive multilateralism

BRICS wants to become a unique economic-financial and geopolitical block and aims to generate a large movement to revise the global economic-financial order and international order in general. This order can only be the result of a confrontation with the *Collective West*, its defeating, and the overthrow of the global political system established by the 1944 *Bretton Woods Agreement* and the 1945 *San Francisco Agreement* on the United Nations Charter. But to challenge the *Collective West*, it must become an alliance with multiple dimensions: political, military, and economic-financial. (Felea, 2023, pp. 1-2, 14-17). Obtaining a consensus for this objective is very difficult because it does not yet have clearly defined mechanisms and structures, there are no political, ideological currency, trade, or political ambitions, to bring together these nations. China and India – old political rivals – for example, rarely agree on crucial matters, and the criteria for expanding the organisation are such an example. (Matovic, 2023, pp. 12-14). Most members, including 5 out of the 6 newly admitted to Johannesburg in 2023, are not unfavourable to cooperation with the West and some of them see no reason for denouncing the democratic-liberal order (Felea, 2023, pp. 14-17).

BRICS has been a significant driving force for global growth, trade, and investments over the past few decades. The organisation aims to create a more inclusive world order that provides equal access to opportunities and resources, which is more rightful and equitable. However, BRIC is aware that global financial and payment systems are increasingly being used as instruments of geopolitical contestation. Therefore, the organisation believes that the current economic, political, social, and technological realities require a fundamental reshaping of global governance institutions to make them more representative and capable of addressing the challenges that humanity faces. (Ramaphosa, 2023, pp. 1-2). This collective growth is altering the global balance of power that was once centred on the NATO region and necessitates significant changes to global and regional security architectures. (Walsh, 2013, p. 2).

BRICS advocates for a multipolar global system that is a viable alternative for Asia, African, and Latin American countries as compared to the current system – centred on the *Collective West*. There are concerns that one or more of these emerging powers, BRICS members, may reject the status quo and, consequently, threaten international peace and stability. BRICS aims to bring about changes in the UN and international financial institutions' management structures to address the current situation in the world economy.

Recently, there has been an increasing awareness of whether the global political system will change through conflict or negotiations.

CONCLUSIONS

A superpower – in this case the US – acts to preserve its status, maintaining and amplifying its influence on a global scale, promoting its interests and its allies, knowing in detail the opponents and their potential to become a threat to disrupt the existing balance of power and to limit or deny the adversaries' possibilities to reach such a posture on the short or long term. The great powers – China and Russia – that challenge the current international order have a much more aggressive and coercive behaviour than allowed, dictatorial and belligerent, irresponsible, uses force, hybrid actions, and grey tactics, to achieve claims, destabilise and increase ambiguity, amplify and diversify military capacity, especially with capabilities that use disruptive emerging technologies and violate international norms and treaties in force.

The US acts to: avoid creating any situation that will generate areas not covered in global or regional leadership or in implementing the rules and norms

of the current international order; to prevent a global bipolar situation, as in the Cold War or multipolar situation, as existed before the two world wars, and for the emergence of any regional hegemon. Deterrence also plays a crucial role in preventing potential aggressions in certain regions, especially by exaggerating the magnitude, and ambiguity and materialising the potential response, perceived, by the current world leader, the US for any aggressors. China – a regional power – is the most powerful, multidimensional, and open challenge, for the US role as a world leader and poses military, political, and economic capabilities to become a superpower.

The global strategic intensified competition between the US, China, and the Russian Federation, and the alliances they belong to, has consequences on international order, the aspects regarding defence, nuclear weapons, nuclear deterrence, and nuclear weapons control, the capabilities for waging, so-called, high-intensity technologically sophisticated conventional war, developing and deploying new weapons systems, mobilisation capacities for sustaining a large-scale extended period conflict and on capabilities for countering so-called hybrid warfare and grey-zone tactics. Emerging technologies and multi-domain operations have changed the features of modern conflict.

Territorial disputes between China and Russia – powers seeking to obtain superpower status – with states in the neighbouring regions have intensified in the last decade, these were often accompanied by terrestrial, airspace, or naval incidents as well as political, diplomatic, and economic tensions. The claims of China and Russia not only affect the interests of the neighbouring states involved in the dispute but also affect the US's strategic, economic, political, and military interests as a global leader and also of its allies. These can use the regions claimed as a basis for the projection of force and their interests. The great powers constantly seek to gain an advantage over rivals. Obtaining and maintaining global hegemony is difficult unless a great power has a relevant nuclear superiority over its rivals.

The coercive and assertive actions of Russia and China in the last period in the neighbourhood regions, increasing systemic rivalry, the high levels of open, political, ideological, and military competition with the US and its allies as well as Russia's strategic partnership with China, North Korea and Iran are in disagreement with the international order currently led by the US, representing aspects that favour the emergence of new centres of power, a state of fact characteristic to the presence of a global multipolar situation.

Since 1494, the shift from one global political system – institutions and arrangements for the management of global problems and relations – to another, respectively, passing into a new complete systemic cycle, in the modern world – the last 500 years – has been accomplished through a global war or hegemonic war.

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CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF EXTENDED SECURITY – THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ROMANIA –

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The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new era in the international order. Several theorists have defined this period as a transition from a new international order of bipolarism to multipolarism, from the binomial of two great powers to interconnected and interdependent power centres. A new approach to international theory has gained momentum, namely the in-depth study of security theories, or more precisely the emergence of security studies.

This paper explains the concept of extended security. The objective of this article is to conceptualise a new security model that is specific to our country. The results obtained will be presented in the conclusions of this article.

Keywords: extended security; National Defence Strategy; international relations; security complex; regional cleavages;

INTRODUCTION

After the implosion of the bipolar system, of the bicephalic hegemony, the world became unsafe dominated by insecurity. Insecurity is the presence of threats to the state, but also to its components (Cristian, Cotîrleţ, 2018, p. 70).

What is security? It is a question to which we cannot find a clear and concrete answer. Different schools of international relations have linked security to the state and its sovereignty. But is this the right answer? The new security environment is shaped by *centrifugal and centripetal* forces. The centre gathers around a developed world, the periphery disperses and it appears the globalisation. This axiom greatly complicates the definition of security and its study. In this context, a lapidary definition of security is the absence of a real, concrete danger, but also the absence of an abstract danger. The term comes from the Latin *securitas, securitatis* and can be defined as protection against a danger, it can mean protection and defence.

EXPANSION OF SECURITY STUDIES

Following the latest developments on the international scene, certain theorists of security studies have proposed the expansion of security studies. Traditionalists in this field focused on the army and the state. Wilson, Woever, Lemaitre, Nye Jr. and Crawford were convinced that security evolved and developed on several levels.

Traditionalists have focused on defining security from the perspective of a military conflict, being a state-centred conception. Stephen Walt, a major theorist of neorealism, argued that security studies focused on studying the threat, use, and control of military force (Buzan, Waewer, de Wilde, 2011, p. 14). The same thinker considers economy and security to be military issues. Barry Buzan states that strategic studies focus on military issues and new security studies tend to focus on new levels (Ib., p. 27). Barry Buzan believes that to preserve international security we must secure security complexes. The approach is complete and close to the smallest components of the international system. According to the Copenhagen School, security must be approached from *the bottom up and vice versa*: a total, comprehensive and unitary approach.

The security complex is a group of states whose perceptions and major security concerns are so interconnected that their international security problems cannot be analysed or solved independently (Ib.). The subsystems ensure the stability

of the entire system. The system is fragile from the inside, not from the outside. According to Buzan's concepts, the key to solving security is preserving and keeping the security of security complexes and component subsystems.

Three factors help secure an X security system. The first factor is ensuring unity, differences or discrepancies must disappear, and thus regional cleavages will disappear. The second factor is establishing patterns of friendship or enmity. The third factor is the distribution of power between the main units of the security complex (ib., p. 29).

In the recent period, critical security studies have also appeared, which focus on finding theoretical and practical alternatives in addressing new events at the regional and global levels. Although classical security studies were strongly supported at the military and public order level in the states, lately, importance has also been given to an often hard-to-predict evolution that can thwart the security of a state. Thus, critical security studies were born, with a multispectral approach, at military, political, economic, societal levels.

A security issue appears when the issue in question is more important than others, when it becomes an absolute priority (Buzan, p. 45). Security issues were seriously addressed in our country after 1989 through the adoption of effective measures to increase national security, through the constitutional reform of 2002, and also through the renewal of legislation in the field of defence and national security.

THE CONCEPT OF EXTENDED SECURITY – ROMANIA'S MODEL

The recent uncertain and unpredictable evolution of the international environment has caused Romania to define a new concept of national security based on the evolution of international schools of thought since 2015. The National Defence Strategy from 2015-2019, approved by Decision no. 33 of 2015 of the Romanian Parliament¹, was the first of the strategies adapted to the modernity of security studies. The central pillar it was focused on was the development of national defence but also collective defence.

The concept of *extended national security* is essentially a multidimensional concept of national security. According to the National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024, extended national security can be defined as *“the state of normality of the nation, ensured by protecting and promoting constitutional*

principles, social, economic and political stability, maintaining the rule of law, as well as exercising the rights, freedoms and fundamental duties of citizens. Extended national security is achieved through a set of processes, actions and measures of a political, legislative and administrative nature in the fields of defence, public order, information, counter-intelligence and security, education, health, economics, energy, financial, environment and critical infrastructures” (SNApT, p. 8).

The concept of extended national security is based on respect for constitutional democracy and respect for democratic values. The 2015-2019 Defence Strategy as well as the 2020-2024 Strategy are implemented in compliance with European security principles and development of a direct relationship of proportionality with the European Security Strategy and also with the Internal Security Strategy for the European Union². The convergence of these principles is a desire of both national defence strategies.

The new National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024 is also focused on the development of this concept of extended national security. The strategy proposes an integrated management of risks, threats and vulnerabilities, with two aspects. The first aspect is the internal/national one and the second aspect is the international one, more precisely the external commitments of our country (SNApT, pp. 10, 23).

The integration of national security objectives into a complex of national security management involves perennial national security interests. The National Strategy 2020-2024 defines the national security interest as *“a desirable state of a nation, of an organic and inclusive community, aiming at defending and promoting fundamental national values, ensuring prosperity, guaranteeing the observance of the democratic rights and liberties, as well as safeguard and security of its members”* (pp. 26, 35). Eloquent examples would be state sovereignty, sustainable economic development, the defence and consolidation of constitutional democracy, and the rule of law.

The national security objective is defined by the Strategy as a set of *“objective (land size, resources, population, geographical location) and subjective (values, intentions, expectations) of the practical action taken by the state through the institutions representing it, namely through national strategies and policies for the achievement and affirmation of its fundamental national interests”* (ib., p. 39). The strengthening of national defence capacity, the unimpeded exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms by Romanian citizens, and the better management of internal and external crisis situations are all conclusive examples.

¹ Presidential Administration, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjn_o-6meaCAxVbhPOHHThMA74QFnoECA8QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.presidency.ro%2Ffiles%2Fuserfiles%2Fstrategia_Nationala_de_Aparare_a_Tarii_1.pdf&usq=AOvVaw0Q00SkNHmGD9I2GP2DgXs9&opi=89978449, retrieved on 5 October 2023.

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/01ecea40-3706-443e-8fe4-043ef5a2f438/>, retrieved on 12 September 2023.

The 2020-2024 National Defence Strategy will subsume under the theoretical template of extended national security concept, which was defined in the previous Strategy. In addition to armed defence – understood in dual quality, national defence and collective defence, the Strategy also covers other dimensions, such as foreign policy, public order, intelligence, counterintelligence and security, as well as crisis management, education, culture, health, economy, demography, finances, environment, energy or cyber security, security of critical infrastructure and historical and cultural heritage. We are thus observing how the new strategy operates with a multidimensional concept of security. It is true that our country is a member of the advanced democracies and has effective integrated national security management.

The national strategy also introduces an extremely important concept, namely the concept of **resilience**. Somewhat difficult to translate into Romanian, the 2020-2024 Strategy explains it extensively: *“The concept of resilience of Romania is approached in double-key terms: the inherent capacity of entities – individuals, communities, regions, regions, state – to resist and adapt articulately to violent stress-causing events, shock, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on the one hand, and the ability of these entities to quickly return to a functional state of normality, on the other hand”* (Cîrciumaru, 2021, pp. 11-12).

The essential objective of Romania’s foreign policy is to increase the international profile of our country by strengthening its defence capacity, but also the ability to project in the neighbourhood and beyond democratic values and to provide security. The new multidimensional concept of enhanced national security reinforces this objective. According to the same 2020-2024 National Defence Strategy, *“the current global security environment, the interdependence between the **external levels** of pursuing Romania’s security objectives and the **internal levels**, of national public policies in areas defining extended security, is more emphasised than ever before and is the key to the effective implementation of this Strategy”* (Ib.).

The concept of extended security is proof of the maturity of the national defence system and awareness of its adaptation to new challenges or the emergence of new so-called *“black swans”* or other events impossible to predict. The big problem that will arise in the future is whether this concept of national security is adapted to our country’s real projection capabilities. The current problems of the country can be defined by a single word, namely **the deficit**: an economic deficit, a human resources deficit, and a deficit of efficient management of these resources. Another explanation would be poor management of some of the resources, which will lead to a deficit that will become chronic over time.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the triad of the European Union, the North Atlantic Alliance and the Strategic Partnership with the United States, Romania’s foreign and security policy is stable and predictable. What is not predictable is the evolution of security in the Extended Black Sea Region, which is why this concept of extended security convergent with that of resilience is clear, concise, and applicable in the current context of the international profile of our country.

One question that arises is whether our country is capable of reducing the cleavages with the rest of the Euro-Atlantic countries and of stagnating this deficit.

The 2020-2024 National Defence Strategy is based on the concepts of critical security studies and the main postmodern visions: investigating the power process and discourses in the field of world politics, and the political identity arising from complex processes. Postmodernism studies the essential differences between cultures and multicultural diversity (Cristian, Cotîrleţ, p. 79). In this sense, the strategy must also generate sub-concepts for sectoral strategies to help implement these great concepts but also to reduce the chronic resource deficit through mechanisms to mitigate resource management.

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COGNITIVE WARFARE – BEYOND DOMINANCE, MANOEUVRES AND INFORMATION – THE BATTLE FOR THE IMAGINED FUTURE

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This theoretical paper explores the nascent concept of cognitive warfare in the context of persistently low-intensity forms of confrontation and of an increasingly rich environment in technologies that provide greater opportunities for influence operations. As the hybridity of conflicts has become prevalent, it is of special interest to investigate the relevance of the cognitive warfare concept (CW) in shaping the informational-psychological threats posed by hostile entities. By analysing the current features of CW as presented by various sources, this article aims to contribute to the conceptual development of this notion. The great diversity of definitions suggests a challenge in delineating what is CW, thus the author argues for a threshold between what is a mere, benign influence and what stands as a threat/attack in the cognitive realm, by using a novel approach to cognitive security. Consequently, we will underline what we consider the limits of the current understanding of CW, as presented in current public papers, and make suggestions for a more refined model to think about cognitive warfare based on active inference theory. In conclusion, we will indicate the risks associated with the use of the concept information, and the necessity to integrate CW and cognitive security in a longue durée perspective, one that acknowledges current societal and cultural transformations.

Keywords: hybrid warfare; cognitive warfare; active inference;

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive warfare (CW) has become a new buzzword in the security domain, loosely defined as a confrontation carried on cognitive space to achieve a form of superiority. Along with it, CW brought some other correlated notions, such as cognitive vulnerability, cognitive resilience, or cognitive security. For an adequate treatment of this newcomer in security studies, a careful analysis of the larger context is necessary.

National states and military alliances activate in a geopolitical environment characterised by the interplay between interdependency and strategic competition. As such, governments must operate on a competition continuum in a world where the lines between peace and war are blurred and continuously negotiated. In an ongoing competition held below armed conflict, with hybrid threats tending to become quasi-permanent, authorities must raise awareness of the pervasive, subtle psychosocial effects of the informational-psychological¹ actions carried by hostile actors. More experts and practitioners are concerned with the “*idea of increasing hybridity between different military and non-military means and methods employed by political players to achieve their goals without escalating to an outright open armed confrontation*” (Fridman, Kabernik, Pearce, 2019, p. 2). In this sort of confrontation, the so-called informational dimension, or informational environment is increasingly used to influence various audiences, domestic or foreign, to further promote political and military objectives.

Expanding on the information environment definition, Allen Patrick and Dennis Gilbert introduced the notion of the information sphere, stating that “*cyberspace, cognitive, and information are components of the more encompassing Information Sphere*” (Allen, Gilbert Jr., 2009, p. 5). This assertion is based on the premise that the Information Sphere includes the relationship among these three components that “*define the meaning, context, and value of the Information Sphere, not the three components taken in isolation*” (Ib.). Worth mentioning that through this new concept (information sphere), the gap between classical information operations (IO)

¹ As defined in V. Ryabchuk and V. Nichipor, “*Prognozirovaniye I Predvideniye v Sisteme Planirovaniya Operatsii i Obshchevoyskovogo Boya [Forecasting and Prediction in Operational Planning Systems and Combined Arms Combat]*”, *Armeiskii Sbornik [Army Digest]*, No. 10, October 2012, p. 38.

and cognitive warfare is closing, as the doctrinal limits of IO (to be used only during periods of war, to support kinetic objectives on the battlefield) are extended to include actions during peacetime, and support socio-political objectives.

Information operations have five core capabilities, psychological operations (PSYOPS), electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations, deception, and operational security. In a different approach, information operations are defined as *“a staff function to analyze, plan, assess and integrate information activities to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capabilities of adversaries, potential adversaries, and audiences in support of mission objectives”* (AJP 10.1, 2023, p. 15). As such, one of the key tenets of IO is the behaviour-centric approach, *“a comprehensive and persistent understanding of audiences”* (Ib., p. 7), an audience defined as *“any individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state”* (Ib., p. 8). Setting audiences at the centre of IO activities suggests the importance and relevance of the cognitive dimension for the influence operations and for the non-kinetic dimension of warfare. As we notice, some of the psychological aspects of audiences were already taken in consideration by IO/PSYOPS, through the centrality of the audience analysis process (TAA). This suggests an overlapping between CW with other related concepts of IO, mostly PSYOPS and cyber warfare, raising the question of the validity and usefulness of a new concept, such as cognitive warfare (CW).

The relevance and importance of CW derive at least from the aforementioned definitions, which underscores the doctrinal limitation of IO, operations that aim to achieve objectives during warfare, on the battlefield, and in support of military objectives. As such, is of interest to recognise the existence of influence operations that are carried out by non-military actors, during peacetime, at the scale of the whole society, aiming to achieve political objectives or even long-term cultural changes.

Another limitation that suggests a different approach to CW is determined by the fact that much of the research in CW is based on cognitive-behavioural school, and on the extensive use of the notion information. It is unclear if the whole psychology of influence operations is entirely represented by using only this approach, so the purpose of this study was to contribute to the conceptual development of CW, firstly by highlighting the current limitation of existing definitions and interpretations, furthermore, to propose a more holistic approach on the *“cognition”*. This will

open a new venue for defining cognitive security and cognitive warfare, by using Karl Friston’s free-energy principle applied to the field of neuroscience and consciousness studies, as envisaged by Professor Mark Solms.

As such, as an original contribution, we suggest the use of the expression cognitive security to delineate between benign informational influence and cognitive attacks by using the notion of active inference and *“cognitive”* models of the world, therefore improving the operational usage of the CW concept. Moreover, by using a holistic approach to *“cognition”* and the active inference theory, we will be able to introduce and recognise all factors and influences that might undermine cognitive security. In the first section, I will defend the relevance of this new concept (CW), and summarize some of the definitions of CW. For the second part, I will underscore the limitations of the informational-cognitive approach, and advance a new way approach to cognition, cognitive security, and cognitive warfare. My conclusions will underscore the necessity for a new model of mind in conceptualising CW and the role of subtle, long-term socio-cultural transformations in creating vulnerabilities in the context of CW.

WHAT IS COGNITIVE WARFARE AND WHY DO WE NEED IT

Actions used mostly for their psychological effects have been carried out since the beginning of human confrontation. Recognising that the human mind has always been a space for battle and dominance, a significant level of disagreement persists on the opportunity, whether the adoption of this new concept would mark any relevant advances for security field, regardless of the level (individual, group/community, society), or domain, economic, military, cultural, or social. What may count as a plausible explanation for the current interest in CW could be the recognition of more robust expertise in the field of information-psychological operations conducted by Russia as part of a larger hybrid confrontation. Enjoying larger freedom for action and expression, unbounded by doctrinal, ethical, or legal constraints, Russia’s experts on information-psychological operations have shown a masterclass in deception, disinformation, propaganda, activities conducted over a long period of time with incremental effects. Combining kinetic with information actions, exploiting the blurred limit between war and peace, or transforming the core features of democracies in vulnerabilities, Russia has shown a very intimate knowledge of the human psyche and the dynamics of society.

As most open sources indicate, CW can be situated at the confluence between influence operations and information operations. These two domains are part of the current non-kinetic approach to warfare, so it is important to clarify the nature of influence in the information environment. Different from coercion (use of force), influence is the ability to change, to alter the state of an entity (individual or collective), usually associated with producing effects using immaterial means. This definition inevitably leads us to information operations and information environment, in which the most relevant dimension is the cognitive one. As such, the capacity to influence is reducible to the ability to direct thinking and behaviour, to induce effects, in our case on individual's minds and behaviour, using subtle means. Some voices express the idea that current approaches on influence operations or military specialties (social engineering, propaganda, Information Operations, PSYOPS, StratCom) are enough to cover the field of influence domain. Likewise, the new concept of CW and the subsequent new area (cognitive domain) seems redundant, overloaded, and unnecessary as it can create more confusion and little guidance for practitioners.

Yet, there are reasons that clearly support the idea that influence operations that target how people think, decide, or act tend to become the weapon of choice for political actors and military decision-makers. I will briefly review some of the most relevant and subsequently specify the risks associated with the usage of information notions.

The first feature to be considered regards the level of knowledge accumulated. The advancements made in various fields and disciplines, such as cognitive science, neuroscience, and neurobiology, created the premises for a much more accurate and better understanding of how the brain works, and how the mental processes unfold. The most appealing application of this knowledge is the ability to *predict* the human response (in terms of attitude, emotions, and behaviour) when exposed to specific stimuli and therefore the seductiveness to deliberately exploit specific psychological traits that become targeted "*vulnerabilities*" of the individuals, in order to obtain desired effects. This accurate psychological knowledge combined with AI support made almost ubiquitous the possibility to create well-individualised/ tailored messages that basically can target anyone who has access to a smartphone and the Internet². As such, from derailing a rigorous decision-making process to seeding distrust in the government and social institutions, the psychological mechanisms behind influence have become transparent.

² Probably the most mediated case is Cambridge Analytica.

The second feature regards the evolution of the Internet and mass media, which have massive epistemic and ontological implications. On the one hand, digital technology made it possible for private, intimate psychological processes to become accessible and open to interference. Due to the intrinsic, bidirectional, and close interactions with the virtual environment, it is easier now than ever to collect relevant data for psychological profiling. As Byung-Chul Han (2017) has nicely framed, individuals have become willingly co-participants involved in the act of self-surveillance. Moreover, the predicted fusion and interconnectivity³ between the human brain and various devices will generate more ability to collect data and alter the representation of reality, either physical or social. Permeating the human body with sensors and processors will nonetheless affect individuals' identity and their ability to make clear distinctions between the information coming from biological analysers and technological sensors.

On the other hand, with the advent of mass media, the internet, and information technology (ICT), the relationship of humans with reality has become *mediated*. From J. Baudrillard (1994) onwards, communication studies had picked up the postmodernist notions of simulacra and simulation to acknowledge a fundamental change in human society; the increasingly blurred line between reality itself and the simulation of it, the hyperreality. This transition made conceivable concepts and ideas like negotiation of reality, deep-fake, alternative facts, post-truth, and echo-chambers, elevating the human imaginary to the point of a favourite space for influence.

The third and last one connects the matter of mind with the security domain. Thus, the seduction exerted by the knowledge of human minds connected via the Internet with more digital technology will increasingly be exploited by the so-called revisionist entities (governmental or not) to undermine the current status quo of the international system. Taking advantage of the interconnectedness of information technology and the features of hostile informational actions (cheap, fast, deniable, effective), using (new) mass media, malicious actors can crystallise concealed but resilient negative beliefs and resentments that will imperil the act of governance and raise difficulties for mobilizing citizens to respond to any future attack.

Resuming the arguments, we advance the hypothesis that influence on the cognitive realm will expand and become increasingly opaque and more affordable

³ Process associated with transhumanism. The interpenetration between the human body and sensors or processors will likely affect the identity of individuals and their ability to make a clear distinction between information coming from biological analysers and technological sensors.

to many entities, nonetheless even more efficient, posing challenges for national governments to effectively rule their countries. If hybrid warfare will be the standard form of future confrontation, and the informational-psychological aspects of it will dominate the spectrum of threats, then the study of CW, as a form of psychological influence, technologically mediated, is an urgent necessity to respond to future security menaces.

Considering the large spectrum of conflict and the interconnectedness and interdependence of social, political, cultural, diplomatic, and military levels, we have therefore the image of CW as an omnipotent and independent weapon that can be used permanently, without considering his contribution/support to military objectives. Considering all these details, we consider that the battle to influence the human mind will become a prominent and permanent feature of the future human society, during peace and war, which requires special attention.

In what follows, I will introduce the most relevant and used definitions and interpretations of CW, as founded on open sources, and further make a brief analysis.

At the level of the NATO alliance, the HQ ACT Concept Development Branch (<https://www.act.nato.int>) is currently developing the NATO concept on cognitive warfare. This concept is part of the implementation of the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept (NWCC), the cognitive warfare concept being an outcome under the WDI Cognitive Superiority Initiative. The Cognitive Warfare Concept is a Line of Delivery (LoD), a 'Jump-Starter' in SACT's Warfare Development Agenda (WDA), which further highlights the importance attributed.

The first NATO scientific meeting on Cognitive Warfare was held in 2021 at the initiative of the ACT's Innovation Hub. The declared objective was to gain the initiative in this domain by "establishing a better, shared understanding of the cognitive dimension" (Masakowski, Blatny, 2023, p. 30). In the summary of Cognitive Symposium, it is stated that "cognitive warfare is achieved by integrating cyber, information, psychological, and social engineering capabilities. Exploiting information technology, it seeks to create confusion, false representations, and uncertainty with a deluge of information over-abundance or misinformation" (Cognitive warfare, 2022, p. 21).

Cognitive Warfare is a notion used since the '90s, labelling various understandings of influence operations. In the United States, the notion has been used since 2017 to describe the methods used to "manipulate an enemy or its citizenry's cognition

mechanisms in order to weaken, penetrate, influence or even subjugate or destroy it" (Underwood, 2017). CW represents the convergence of Psychological Operations (PsyOps), Information Operations (INFO OPS), and cyber operations with the advance of AI/ML networks that serve as an enabler for the distribution of the adversary's strategic agenda in exploiting human vulnerabilities and shaping human understanding of events (Masakowski, Blatny, p. 72). Cognitive warfare pursues the objective of undermining trust (public trust in electoral processes, trust in institutions, allies, and politicians), therefore the individual becomes the weapon, while the goal is not to attack what individuals think but rather the way they think (Cognitive warfare, p. 12). Cognitive Warfare has the ability to degrade the capacity to know, produce, or thwart knowledge (Cognitive warfare, 2020, p. 6). Cognitive Warfare is a war of ideologies that strives to erode the trust that underpins every society (Ib., p. 7). "Cognitive Warfare is the most advanced form of manipulation to date, allowing the influence of an individual or a group of individuals on their behavior, with the aim of gaining a tactical or strategic advantage" (NATO Innovation Hub, 2021, p. 3).

CW is a multidisciplinary approach combining social sciences and innovative technologies to directly alter the mechanisms of understanding and decision-making to destabilise or paralyse an adversary (Pappalardo, 2022). This type of warfare aims at influencing the heuristic of the human brain to win the "war before the war" (Takagi, 2022). "Cognitive warfare is the weaponization of public opinion by an external entity, for the purpose of influencing public and/or governmental policy or for the purpose of destabilizing governmental actions and/or institutions" (Bernal et al., 2020, p. 10). Dahl described CW as a strategy that impacts the Observation-Orientation-Decision-Action (OODA) loop in terms of decreasing its speed, decreasing its accuracy, or both (Dahl, 1996). "Cognitive warfare is a strategy that focuses on altering how a target population thinks – and through that how it acts" (Backes, Swab, 2019).

"Current and potential adversaries use Cognitive Warfare to influence the behaviours and beliefs of individuals, groups, and populations in order to fracture Western societies. Cognitive Warfare leverages hyper-connectivity, the pervasiveness of data, psychological warfare, and cognitive sciences to affect what and how people think and act" (NATO Booklet, 2023, p. 26). "Cognitive warfare is thus an unconventional form of warfare that uses cyber tools to alter enemy cognitive processes, exploit mental biases or reflexive thinking, and provoke

thought distortion, influence decision-making and hinder action, with negative effects, both at the individual and collective levels” (Le Guyader, 2022, pp. 3; 1-5). “CW represents the convergence of a wide range of advanced technologies along with human factors and systems, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Information Communication Technologies (ICT), neuroscience, biotechnology, and human enhancement that are being deliberately used by NATO’s adversaries in the 21st-century battlespace” (Masakowski et al., p. 1).

Some conclusions can be drawn from this plethora of definitions. Some authors focus on the dangers for the immediate /battlefield context decision-making process, while others extend the malign influence beyond the operational area, jeopardizing the very possibility of governing during peacetime. Some definitions are centred around cognitive functions and their intrinsic limitations, while others focus on the contextual advantages obtained from disturbing the cognitive process at the individual or even societal level. Some interpretations seem to suggest that only adversaries use CW, as an offensive weapon, while others hint towards a defensive posture. An interesting aspect is that some definitions focus exclusively on the cognitive level, while others, more ambitious, suggest an influence that affects the general perception of life, the world, or even personal identity.

Explicitly or not, from most of the definitions and interpretations analysed, the security referent object that is threatened by CW, beyond the immediate level of cognition, is the state, more accurately, the reliability of the psycho-social and cultural conditions that make possible the functioning of human society. Additionally, from current definitions turns out that the threats are materialised using opaque communicational forms of influence, mostly projected from the “*outside*” of state boundaries.

A NEW MODEL TO THINK ABOUT COGNITIVE WARFARE

In this section, I will suggest a new definition for CW and a new model to think about “*cognition*” and cognitive warfare using a novel approach to cognitive security. We will underline what we consider the limits of the current understanding of CW, limits induced by the notions of information and cognition.

The most startling aspect of using the notion of information is that it indirectly, converts individuals into just another machinery that processes information, as human society has been recently baptized as the information society that thrives

in the information age. Below, I briefly summarise some of the most evident risks associated with the use of the notion *information*.

a) It implicitly encourages the materialistic/physicalism approach centred on the brain and furthermore, the equivalence between the computer and a (computational) brain. Due to the analogy brain-computer, the information notion has become relevant because it is considered that the brain computes data, overlooking that data and information only codify the parameters of a real environment which is vital for satisfying the needs of an embodied human being that experiences reality, not just compute it. However, how people codify their experience with the environment is not a mathematical, logarithmic process, but a very subjective, ambiguous, dynamic, and sometimes paradoxical process.

b) The information experts pretend to adequately describe and model mind functions and consciousness in informational terms using mathematical formulas and statistics when the fundamental traits of the mind (subjectivity, consciousness, intentionality, agency) (Solms, 2021) are beyond any mathematical formula or positivistic treatment/measurement.

c) In the communication discipline/field, the information stays at the bedrock of the cybernetic approach of communications. However, the inadequacy of this informational, mathematical model of communication, and the migration towards a psychological approach is clearly visible in the requirements addressed by the Riga StratCom COE journal (Bolt, Haiden, 2019, p. 43), where the notion of communication is strongly suggested to be associated with the production and exchange of meaning, and not as transmission of messages.

d) It induces the incorrect idea that knowledge derived through information is somehow neutral and objective when, in fact, it is marked by an inherently subjective perspective, and/or by cultural, and historical contexts.

e) Information is mainly used (and trusted) through a subjective process of judgment of the source’s credibility, not by the content itself.

f) By using the analogy of the brain that processes/ computes information, the cognitivist paradigm tends to isolate individuals from their containing environment. Individuals are artificially detached from their cultural and historical context, making “*cognition*” decontextualized, thus absurd.

g) It preserves the focus on the technology, therefore on the physical dimension of the informational warfare, hence disregarding the more refined psychologically centred approach used by the adversary.

Moving to the notion of cognition, the Oxford Dictionary of Psychology defines cognition as “*mental activities involved in acquiring and processing information*” (Collman, 2015, p. 143). Under the rubric of information processing, cognition takes various forms, such as attention, perception, memory, thinking, or decision-making. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the notion of cognitive as “*of, relating to, being, or involving conscious intellectual activity (such as thinking, reasoning, or remembering)*” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cognitive>). Cognitive is an adjective related to the process of cognition by which “*knowledge and understanding are developed in the mind*” (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/cognition). Using the computer analogy, cognition is about information acquisition and evaluation, furthermore about the elaboration, or consumption of knowledge. At the individual level is presented as the ability to understand accurately the environment and make optimal, adaptable decisions, while at the societal level, knowledge is considered an enabler of cooperation and social progress. From these definitions, it becomes obvious that the cognitive process is intrinsically linked with information and information processing, inducing the illusion of a process that can be accurately modelled with information theory models.

In this clear, objective theoretical environment, populated by cybernetic-like notions, a simple question has the potential to cause conceptual collapse.

How is possible for a simple string of alphanumeric signs to become a cognitive threat?

Most of the adepts of the informational-cognitive approach on CW, and of mind in general, consider that what is threatened is the “*integrity*” of the underlying processes (attention, memory, reasoning, perception), the quality of understanding and of knowledge obtained, a position that highlights again the implicit normative stance, as if cognition could follow a flawless trajectory. The champions of the informational-cognitive paradigm often use two concepts/theories to explain the “*faults*” that appear in the computer-like brain, such as cognitive biases, and cognitive dissonance. The very limitations, critiques and revisions proposed for these two theories open the way for our innovative approach to CW.

In the case of dissonance theory, reviews (Vaidis, Bran, 2019, p. 1189), revisions, and critiques show that dissonance effects are not the result of cognitive inconsistency, pointing toward a much more fundamental role of self (affirmation/esteem) (Aronson, 1992, pp. 303-311), feelings and future consequences (Scher, Cooper, 1989, p. 899), and moral integrity (Steele, Spencer, Lynch, 1993, p. 885),

as explanatory resources. Similarly, cognitive biases are vigorously criticised, as they should not be considered errors, as in fact, they have an adaptive role (Gigerenzer, Hoffrage, 1995, p. 684). Moreover, the cognitive bias model is backed by dual process theory, a theory that highlights the role of affects and unconscious levels of the mind, an aspect explicitly stated for implicit bias definition (Noon, 2018, pp. 198-209).

It is obvious that when we try to answer the question of how bits of information become a threat, it is mandatory to acknowledge the active, interpretative stance of the mind, moreover the intricate relation between cognition and other mental processes, and of course the instrumental role of cognition. As we will indicate, the very features which in the “*orthodox*” approach to cognition represent a threat that “*disrupts*”/“*corrupts*” cognitive process “*integrity*”, in our model represents the key to a genuine understanding of “*cognition*” and furthermore the CW. Moreover, we will underline the fundamental role of self-identity and consciousness as essential concepts for an adequate model of the mind.

Related to CW is cognitive security, a notion equally ambiguous that was approached by experts in various fields, from informational warfare to communication and security studies. Cognitive insecurity was interpreted in many ways, from a danger for the military decision-making process (altering the OODA loop), to a pervasive symptom of our current society’s evolution.

Approached from the perspective of security studies, cognitive security might be considered one of the instances of the shift made by non-conventional schools of thought, such as Copenhagen school, critical theory, or human security, towards psychosocial dimensions of security. Thus, cognitive security marks a net departure from the structured violence paradigm, to unstructured, psychological violence.

Security is an ambiguous term and generically means to be safe from something that might harm, from something (material or not) labelled as a threat. Hence, how “*something*” gets the label “*threat*” and further, how these threats are anticipated is essential for a good explanation of cognitive security, opening the debate on who might be responsible for labelling a threat in the cognitive realm, furthermore, what are the resources to deal with such threats.

With this inquiry, we open our own perspective on what should be considered cognition and what cognitive security should be about. We will indicate what could stand as the threshold between malign and benign influence for a better understanding of CW.

Our approach starts with recognising the intrinsic limitations of the standard cognitive paradigm, namely the reductionist character of it. By isolating the so-called “*cognitive*” functions (attention, memory, reasoning, perception) from other processes of the mind, the cognitive approach ignores some salient, mostly unconscious, *underlying* processes, more significant than “*thinking*”, like creating the experience of self-continuity⁴, maintaining the stability of identity, or searching for the meaning of one’s existence. These are all-encompassing psychic processes that encapsulate and subordinate cognition. Moreover, the cognitivist approach ignores the instrumental role of cognition. To understand or to know are not ends in themselves but play an adaptive role for humans in natural contexts, both in terms of usefulness/practicality, and satisfaction.

Departing from this narrow perspective, our interpretation of “*cognition*” and furthermore on cognitive security is shaped by a complex, holistic approach, one that grants the fundamental explanatory role to consciousness as an integrative, super ordinate phenomenon. While recognising the role of perception in creating a model of the real world, we must acknowledge the fundamental role of the body (Damasio, 2006) as well in creating this model of the external world and in the generation of consciousness phenomena. If we want to understand *how* people think, as one of the definitions of CW suggests, we hypothesize that one should look for deeper mental processes.

The obvious, next step is to introduce the role of emotions, not only as a necessary condition for thinking, but as the very essence of consciousness (Solms, 2021). While in the orthodox literature, emotions or affects have a parasitical role for “*cognition*”, as threats to its integrity, we adopt the view that cognition is infused by emotions, determining the “*qualia of consciousness*” (Solms, Friston, 2018, p. 3) and implicitly of thinking. Pertaining to consciousness itself, affect could be defined as the means by which organisms register their own states (Damasio, 2010). As neuroscience has proved, without the subcortical projections coming from the upper brainstem, the neocortex, the seat of cognition, would stop (Solms, 2013, pp. 5-19).

With this new perspective on “*cognition*”, we can develop a more refined model of what might constitute a threat to it. Therefore, we propose to substitute cognition, as the referent object of security, with consciousness which reunites

⁴ The relevance of this process is indirectly underlined by Anthony’s Giddens expression of “*ontological security*”. In Giddens, Anthony. “*Modernity and self-identity*”. *Social Theory Re-Wired*. Routledge, 512-521.

both affective and rational, cognitive aspects of mind. By doing so I hope also to clarify the relevance of the *awareness* notion, described as the panacea in almost all disinformation papers, suggesting that awareness means more than being mindful of something, but rather it contains an anticipatory and predictive mental stance.

Consciousness is the most complex and bewildering phenomenon in the Universe, the object of study for neuroscientists, psychiatrists, and physicists. Some theories claim to solve Chalmers’ “*hard problem of consciousness*” (Chalmers, 2017, pp. 32-42), the leading ones being Global Workspace Theories (GWT) (Baars, 2005, pp. 45-53) or Integrated information theory (IIT) (Tononi, 2012, pp. 56-90). However, the last and most promising theories that best support the aim of this paper are Karl Friston’s active inference theory (Parr, Pezzulo, Friston, 2022) and Mark Solms’ (2021) view on the source of consciousness. These two theories combined have, in my view, the biggest explanatory potential, to date, for what mental states are, and what is the function of consciousness. In what follows, I will present the relevance of these theories for cognitive security, and implicitly for the conceptual development of cognitive warfare.

Any individual needs to survive and adapt to the environment, which is nowadays increasingly complex and unpredictable. To do so, individuals must generate predictive models of the environment, taking actions that are guided by an expected value, or as it is known in statistics, by the Bayesian process of active inference (Friston et al., 2023, pp. 1-29) which further leads to homeostasis and survival, as the most basic human needs. Active inference is the necessary process deployed by any ergodic system (including humans) to minimise free-energy and avoid surprising states (Solms, Friston, 2018, p. 5). The principle of minimizing free energy is to reduce the gap between expectations and sensory inputs (Friston, Kilner, Harrison, 2006, p. 5). As such, the fundamental rule for human “*cognition*” is to minimise prediction error, the incongruity between the expectations that result from internal models of the environment and the real world. Any individual, as a living organism, survives within the environment when they reduce the prediction error, “*either by changing their internal models of the world or through action upon the environment itself*” (Solms, 2021, p. 207).

This theory indicates that the brain has an active role in the construction of reality, explaining the subjective contribution to the perception of the environment. So, active inference might be considered the neuroscientific background for humanistic theories, such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, and constructivism,

models that support the idea that individuals are not passive in their interaction with the world, but actively generate the image of the environment. Moreover, it underpins the hermeneutical, interpretative stance of individuals situated in a communicative situation.

By trying to predict what the sensations are revealing, the brain continuously makes two things, updates/adjusts internal beliefs, and generates inferences and hypotheses. These hypotheses are mental fantasies that best explain the sensorial influx, an aspect that once again indicates the limitation of the “*cognitivist*”, rationalist approach.

Within the active inference theory, precision is an important concept. Precision is a key determinant of free energy minimisation and the enabling – or activation – of prediction errors, it is how the brain represents its degree of confidence in a given source of sensory evidence (Ib., p. 201). Greater precision means minimizing surprise, thus reducing the uncertainty. According to Solms, precision can be also modulated, or optimised by learning from experience (Ib., p. 200), specifically by continuously updating our internal, mental generative model.

Precision optimisation is “*how multiple error signals converging on the PAG were prioritized in the first place, bringing the most salient need to affective awareness, leading to a series of unfolding choices in an expected context, guided by expected precisions*” (Ib., p. 203). Again, underlying the fundamental role of emotions, PAG⁵ is described as “*synencephalic bottleneck where action perception and affect come together, where the choices are made about what to do next*” (Merker, 2007, pp. 63-134).

As theorised by Solms and Friston, precision has two varieties, interoceptive (affective consciousness) and exteroceptive (perceptual consciousness) which are normally conceptualised as goal selection (or motivation) and attention (Solms, Friston, 2018, p. 12). That explains why consciousness itself nothing is more or less than the optimization of precision with respect to free energy (Ib., p. 9). We try to predict the future and this process inevitably induces the feeling of uncertainty.

Returning to the definition of CW, and to our suggested substitution of cognition with consciousness, as the referent object of informational-psychological attacks, we advance a new definition of CW. As such, CW refers to all forms of influence that are purposively designed to alter the precision optimisation mechanism.

⁵ PAG – Periaqueductal gray formation (along with superior colliculi and midbrain locomotor region) is a sub-cortical brain formation, considered at the centre of decision-making.

This entails that through the means of CW the perpetrators aim to increase the amplitude of prediction errors, thus, maximising free energy, a change that pertains to selfhood and identity. This is done by preventing individuals from learning from experience, that is to update their internal generative model. Here’s why individuals are unable to make adaptive predictions of the environment, their best guesses about the environment are imprecise, inadequate, and maladaptive. In the absence of precision, we are in the realm of un-reflected thinking, of automated, repetitive actions. Additionally, elements of lived experience remain unelaborated, unintegrated, and further used in the projective process⁶ toward the societal milieu.

Unable to adequately infer future states of the environment, individuals become prisoners of a perpetual past that cannot find its development into the future, raising the feeling of uncertainty (towards external background), and incompetence on understanding the environment (toward himself). This approach on mind has several implications for CW. First and foremost, clearly suggest abandoning the cognitive fallacy (Solms, 2021, p. 213), the deeply nested belief that the neo-cortex, cognition, rationality should be prevalent in explaining consciousness and human mental functioning. Secondly, it strongly emphasises the essential role of the affect, prior beliefs, and long-term memory in the perception of reality, but also the role of fantasies. More closely to the commonly used language, the imaginary has a role just as important as rational thinking.

Returning to the question of what cognitive security might be, we have the same approach that underlines the role of a subjective, internal milieu, at the expense of physical, and external features. As such, we suggest the use of the notion “*se-curitas*”, which denotes “*a mental state of calm that must be distinguished from salus, which represents safety from physical harm*” (Hamilton, 2013, p. 51), an interpretation that resonates with the Greek notion of *ataraxia*, and clearly suggests the psychological aspect of security. According to these interpretations, *securitas* is obtained through self-care and self-reflection. Through self-knowledge, individuals obtain a form of peacefulness in front of unforeseeable dangers, gaining resilience and tolerance to frustration. “*To secure the self, one must care for the self*” (Ib., p. 54), that is to turn the attention toward the inside, to be aware of our internal model of the world, and how accurately this model predicts future states of the environment.

⁶ Defensive mechanism of attributing negative emotions, and beliefs to someone else in order to protect themselves from inner conflicts and tensions. Blackman, J. *101 Defenses: How the Mind Shields Itself*, Taylor&Francis, USA-UK, 2004, p. 53.

Returning to the challenge of how “something” is labelled as a “threat”, furthermore how these threats are anticipated, it becomes obvious that one should permanently scrutinise what is the precision of his predictions based on his internal model of the world. So, the question “How a piece of information becomes a threat” must turn into “How my mind is moulded by this information”.

As it becomes obvious, the most responsible entity is the individual himself, and the resources involved are self-regulation, self-reflection or critical thinking. Although an individual has the privileged access to his own mind, formal and informal institutions must also cope with educating people for more reflexivity. However, this educational process might fail, as can collide with enduring socio-economic tendencies and forces that encourage narcissism/self-centeredness and inhibit elaborate, complex thinking, self-knowledge, or tolerance to frustration⁷, furthermore tends to desubjectivise the individuals and create mental vulnerabilities to hostile influences.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current contested environment, the hybridity of confrontation has turned informational-psychological actions into the weapon of choice. The increasing power to engage the human psyche through almost unlimited accessibility and greater susceptibility to various forms of messages renders cognitive warfare and cognitive security a national-state priority. Defending the necessity for this new domain, we choose to analyse in this paper the current development of the fresh concept of “cognitive warfare” and offer a new approach to it, starting with the limitations induced using the notion of “information” and the cognitive paradigm. We suggest that notions such as information–cognition implicitly encourage the analogy of brain-computer, which furthermore isolates the individual from his cultural and historical context, and induces the appearance of neat, objective knowledge. As cognition is only a fraction of mental activity, subordinated to other higher psychological processes, all definitions centred around the word cognition are at least partial, if not misleading. Informational, cognitive-based discourse on CW although scientifically rigorous, cannot capture the mind’s main features, agency, intentionality, and subjectivity. So, escaping from the cognitive spell is essential to catch up with the enemy’s refined knowledge and efficiency in informational-psychological warfare.

⁷ For a more elaborated and complex perspective, see Bollas, Christopher. *Meaning and Melancholia: Life in the Age of Bewilderment*. Routledge, 2018.

Departing from the classic cognitivist view, we used Friston’s active inference theory and Solms’ theory on consciousness to develop a more nuanced and complex understanding of mind and CW. Aiming to consider all mental aspects, not just cognition, we introduced active inference theory as applied to the study of mind, therefore taking consciousness as the referent object of security. Underling the subordinate role of cognition to other higher-order mental processes (homeostasis, preserving identity stability, meaning-making) we advanced a more refined model for what the security of mind should be. If the fundamental rule for humans to survive is to minimize prediction error, and the incongruity between the expectations that result from internal models of the environment and the real world, then CW must be defined in relation to this process. As such, as a novel interpretation, CW refers to all forms of influence that are purposively designed to alter the precision optimisation mechanism. This entails that through the means of CW the perpetrators aim to increase the amplitude of prediction errors, thus maximizing free energy, a change that pertains to selfhood and identity. This is achieved by preventing individuals from learning from experience, that is to update their internal generative model. As one of the definitions of CW suggests an influence on how people think (and not what people think), we consider that we formulate an answer to this proposal.

Individuals become unable to make adaptive predictions, their best guesses about the environment are imprecise, inadequate, and maladaptive. Our model strongly emphasises a shift from a theoretical perspective where individuals passively receive external stimuli, to a view that entails that they are involved in the inference process, actively generating hypotheses and predictions based on affects and mental fantasies.

Cognitive security must shift then from truth-telling strategies to an educational process that aims for self-reflection and self-knowledge to understand our internal model of the world, our beliefs, and emotions, and our fantasies. In terms of active inference theory, CW prevents individuals from revising their predictions, admits the error, and further updates their model of the world. Consequently, the cognitive security focus should move from what people know, to how people should inquire what they know in terms of the complexity and plasticity of their own internal model of the environment. Building psychological resilience should aim at developing the ability to tolerate uncertainty, frustration, and contradictions.

Although we find appropriate the initiative for this new domain of CW, we must also recognise a vulnerability. By “weaponising”, as the title of this paper suggests,

and attributing to an eminently military entity (NATO), the research effort on CW is at the risk of being labelled as purposively militaristic, hostile, and aggressive. A language infused with military jargon has little, if any, contribution to an adequate understanding of CW and raises concerns about its legitimacy, as another expression of a “*securitization approach*” (Buzan, Wæver, de Wilde, 1998, p. 25), of a need to use extraordinary means to avoid, apparently, an existential threat for the survival of democratic societies.

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THE DISCURSIVE SUPPORT OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICTS IN KOSOVO: TRANSITION FROM MEDIA TO SOCIAL MEDIA

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In Kosovo, ethnic identity played a central role in sustaining interethnic conflict until the current decade. Despite the efforts of the international community to reconcile the parties and mediate the political dialogue with Serbia, mistrust between ethnicities has been sustained by a history of tensed relations, identity politics, but also, to a significant extent, through the media and after the digitalization of communication – through social media. The paper problematizes on the role that mass media and social media have played in the ethnicization of conflicts and manifestation of ethnic hate speech, arguing that while the former has been subject to regulation and professionalization, the latter remain to a significant extent spaces that support the continuation of conflict and even the mobilization of groups.

In describing the framework of interethnic relations in Kosovo, the history of interethnic relations and the dynamics of post-war events are briefly presented. Subsequently, through the case study and the method of documentary analysis, the paper addresses the role played by the media in amplifying conflicts in the case of the events of March 2004 and the more recent contributions of social networks in the unhindered promotion of ethnic hatred in the case of a political subject – the import of Serbian products into Kosovo.

Finally, an argument is built in favour of the need for a more proactive approach of international organizations and local institutions in Kosovo in combating ethnic hate speech promoted via social networks, which can increase tensions in the fragile security environment of the Western Balkans.

Keywords: ethnic; identity; Kosovo; mass-media; social media;

INTRODUCTION

In the Western Balkans, conflicts based on different ethnic identities have persisted in the current decade. In the context of the war started by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, the unresolved issues of the Western Balkans have returned to the attention of the international public and political decision-makers, given the fragile security situation in the area and recurring tensions between the parties. In Kosovo, the political situation between Belgrade and Pristina remained tense due to the parties' disagreements to implement previously assumed commitments, and the lack of steps to communicate and negotiate in order to find practical solutions. The mediation of dialogue by the European Union has not progressed, as the adoption of unilateral measures by the parties leading to recurrent escalations of hostilities is characteristic. However, the process was also hampered by the lack of a clear vision and consensus at Union level (Clingendael, 2022, p. 9) on potential solutions that could motivate the Belgrade and Pristina to move forward in dialogue.

The current paper problematizes on the role that mass media and social media have as spaces for maintaining interethnic conflicts in Kosovo, by promoting and supporting identity politics, as well as by the possibility of expressing animosities and spreading hate speech. The current research is an attempt to capture the transition of interethnic hate speech from traditional media in Kosovo to the online sphere – especially to the more permissive and unregulated social media. In our research approach, we will contextualize in the first part of the paper, aligning ourselves to a constructivist world view, the conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians in Kosovo, that will be followed by a brief dynamic of post-war events, which have shaped current realities. They are relevant for understanding the functioning framework of the media in the years following the end of the conflict, as well as in problematizing the manifestation of tensions between ethnicities in social media, after the development and regulation of local mass media, and professionalization of practitioners in the field.

In the second part of the paper, we will address the contribution of mass media and later social media in supporting interethnic conflicts in Kosovo, using the case study and the method of documentary analysis to exemplify situations in which

such platforms contributed to the exacerbation of tensions, and the manifestation of interethnic hatred.

The positioning we assume corresponds to critical constructivism, analysing discursive representations of identity – relevant through the way of producing meanings associated with subjects and generating interpretative dispositions (McDonald, 2006, pp. 59-72). Constructivists explained the dynamics of events in the post-Cold War international environment, arguing for the prominence of identity, culture, and norms in the study of security (Katzenstein, 1996). Through constructivist theorists affiliated with the Copenhagen School, the study of security has been extended into several sectors, with large-scale collective identities constituting the reference object of societal security (Buzan, 1997, pp. 15-17). Barry Buzan, a theorist associated with the school of thought, proposed four potential sources of societal threats that affect identities, and for our study we believe that the “*vertical competition*” (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 121-122) threat provides a framework for understanding the interethnic conflict in Kosovo. It implies either the existence of an integrationist project – “*pressure from above*”, or of a regionalist/separatist project – “*pressure from below*”, in the internal environment of the state. A retrospective analysis of interethnic tensions in Kosovo and their escalation into war shows the prominence of identity and the attempt to challenge it as a legitimate source of insecurity for individuals, groups, but also for the state.

For Kosovo Albanians – the project of self-determination and recognition of Kosovo as a state represented the desideratum of an “*imagined political community*” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 5-7), not recognized as a nation within Yugoslavia. The identity of Kosovo Albanians was subject to the threat posed by the majority, through projects of assimilation and homogenization of the majority ethnicity. For Serbs, however, segmenting the state according to nationality was an unacceptable idea, given the ethnic and national mosaic specific to the Balkans, thus shaped by historical realities and years of imperial domination. In the case of the Serbian state, the separatist desires of Kosovo Albanians represented a challenge to the “*idea of society*” which, as Mitzen (2006, p. 352) argued, occupies a central role for the ontological security of the state, motivated to defend not only its physical security, but also its national identity.

Since the end of the Kosovo War, identity politics has served elites to maintain hostilities between groups and support for their own projects. Its use has been permeable in an environment with a history of interethnic conflict, where the parties still consider themselves restricted by the contrasting desires of the “*other*”.

It is rooted in the sense of groups that they have been wronged and oppressed, therefore demanding more rights (Identity Politics, 2002). Recourse to the constitutive myth of ethnicity in Kosovo has had a mobilizing force, legitimizing policies favouring one’s own ethnicity.

We believe that traditional media, new media and social media have played an important role in promoting and legitimizing identity politics in Kosovo, as well as in discursively supporting interethnic tensions. They have contributed to the ethnicization of conflicts by transmitting frameworks of interpretation of reality that have victimized their own community, justifying efforts to obtain rights at the expense of the “*other*” who is blamed and made responsible for hostility and even violence. However, media content would not have been effective without anchoring it in the conflicting past of ethnicities, identity politics and small-scale everyday events with potential for exploitation.

ETHNIC NATIONALISM IN THE KOSOVO CONFLICT

The formation of nation states according to the criteria of ethnicity and nationality was in the Western Balkans, in the 20th century, a determining factor of bloody conflicts in the region. The breakup of the Ottoman Empire allowed the creation of new nation states, motivated by the desire of ethnicities to be recognized as nations and have their own state. The creation of states according to the principle of nationality was a recipe for violence in Eastern Europe (Mazower, 2019, p. 148). The dominance of “*ethnic nations*” – based on ethnicity and linguistics in the Balkans, as opposed to the “*civic nation*” – more common to Western Europe (Schnapper, 1998, pp. 150-153), justifies the substrate that favoured the emergence of ethnically motivated conflicts. Ethnic nations were formed in Eastern Europe, in the context of the existence of ethnic groups who were under the domination of three main ethnicities – Russian, Ottoman and Austrian. The latter, in their struggle for autonomy and independence, implicitly sought ethnic homogenization by transforming other ethnicities (Smith, 1986, pp. 131-145). The formation of Eastern European nations was based on the feeling of inferiority of linguistic groups that lacked their own political organization, and held an idealized and mythologized history (Schnapper, ib.).

The emergence of interethnic conflicts between ethnic Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo must be seen in the broader context of regional trends in the Balkans. Although, in Kosovo, the coexistence of the two ethnicities dates from before the 20th century, we will turn our attention to the dynamics of tensions starting

with this period, marked by the spread of nationalism. According to Smith (1998, p. 1), nationalism helped in cultivating peoples' attachment to the nation, strengthening their desire for self-determination and formation of states according to own will. The theorist further argued that the nation is still an abstract construct, and it is ethnicity that creates the sense of belonging, being rooted in emotion resulting from constitutive myths, symbols, values, and historical memory – foundations of ethnic identity (Smith, 1986, pp. 14-16).

The decade 1912-1922 was marked by violent clashes between the nations of the Balkans. In the former Ottoman province of Kosovo, the Serbs avenged the period of Ottoman-Muslim rule by exterminating the Albanian population. The methods used were consistent with the regional trend of liquidating the Ottoman provinces that remained in Europe, according to the principle of nationality (Mazower, p. 150). The Nazi occupation also exacerbated interethnic conflicts, with escalations of fighting between Albanian and Yugoslav partisans. By 1950, the ethnic composition of the Balkans had changed significantly, and ethnic homogeneity had increased, while in Kosovo, many Serbs had left the region (Ib., p. 158).

Under President Tito, Yugoslavia maintained unity by mediating tensions within the federal state apparatus. The country retained the Habsburg distinction between “*nation*” and “*nationality*”, and Albanians represented the largest nationality in Kosovo – where they made up 85% of the population and a national minority in Macedonia – where Albanians made up 20% of the population. While Macedonians and Bosnian Muslims had been recognized as distinct nations of Yugoslavia, Albanians retained their nationality status. In the period preceding and after the fall of communism, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic pursued a policy of supporting Serbs in Kosovo and Vojvodina, amid rising Serbian nationalism and attempts to increase Serbian influence in Yugoslavia (Ib., pp. 172-175).

Serbian policies meant to ensure ethnic domination – which implicitly through mass expulsions in Bosnia, coupled with limiting rights for the Albanian population in Kosovo, led to escalations of ethnically motivated violence in the Kosovo region. It was driven in part by discriminatory policies, but also by frustrations resulting from the fact that Kosovo Albanians did not suffer the same fate as that of other ethnicities that were recognized as nations and created their own state with the split of Yugoslavia. As early as the 1980s, pro-independence movements had emerged among Kosovo Albanians and received international attention. In 1998, the UN Security Council condemned the activities of the Federal Forces

of Yugoslavia against the Kosovo population, as well as the terrorist actions of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (Orakhelashvili, 2008, p. 3). Interethnic tensions in Kosovo have escalated into the genocide of the Kosovo Albanian population, and the mediation of the conflict by the international community has failed. It led to the bombing of Serbia by the North Atlantic Alliance between March and June 1999, forcing an end to hostilities between ethnicities and Serbia's acceptance of the terms provided by the Kumanovo Agreement and¹ UN resolution 1244².

DYNAMICS OF POST-CONFLICT EVENTS IN KOSOVO

UN resolution 1244 provided for the withdrawal of Serbian military, paramilitary and police forces and the rapid deployment of an international military and civilian security presence in Kosovo. The latter would ensure, in addition to tasks aimed at restoring a security environment in the region, the demilitarization of the KLA – formed by Kosovo Albanians.

The resolution mandated the presence of a UN interim administration mission – UNMIK, aimed at contributing to ensuring conditions for peaceful life for the inhabitants of Kosovo and regional stability (<https://unmik.unmissions.org/mandate>), and a military peacekeeping and security force- Kosovo Force (KFOR), led by NATO. KFOR initially consisted of 50,000 troops, and gradually reduced its troop numbers to several thousands, adapting to improved security conditions in Kosovo. The two international organizations have been joined since 2008 by the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo – EULEX, whose initial responsibilities were to support the Kosovo authorities in the areas of police, justice and customs exchanges, through monitoring, mentoring and advice. The mission initially had extensive tasks in particular in prosecuting and sentencing serious crimes, in addition to supporting the formation of multi-ethnic and independent institutions (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu>).

Interethnic tensions in Kosovo could not be fully mediated by the presence of international organizations, despite efforts to do so. The Serbs – previously as the politically and institutionally dominant nation in Kosovo, have moved into the position of a dominated nation. Kosovo Albanians gradually gained more rights

¹ Military Technical Agreement between the International Security Force Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Serbia, 1999, <https://peacemaker.un.org/kosovoserbia-militarytechnicalagreement99>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.

² UN Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/274488>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.

and freedoms, but also support in forming their own institutions, conditioned on the inclusion of minority members in them.

Just a few years after the establishment of an international presence in Kosovo, a significant episode of interethnic tensions occurred between Kosovo's main ethnic groups. In March 2004, Albanian violence was triggered by reports that three Albanian children had been drowned by Serbs in an act of ethnically motivated hatred. Kosovo Albanians acted by destroying Serbian vestiges, committing acts of violence against both Serbs and other ethnic minorities – Romani and Ashkali. The event remained in the collective mind of the Serbian community as the “*March Pogrom*”, being of great significance for Kosovo Serbs also due to the failure of UNMIK and KFOR to ensure their protection (*Failure to Protect*, 2004). The violence resulted in the deaths of 19 people, 900 injuries, 700 burnt houses belonging to Serbs and Romani people, 30 churches and two monasteries destroyed, as well as the displacement of 4,500 people (Kenneth, 2015, p. 5).

Further efforts to maintain stability and security in Kosovo were marked in 2007 by UN Representative in Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari's proposal to the UN Security Council to recognize Kosovo's independence with international supervision. While the proposal was supported by Pristina, the USA and some EU members, it was rejected by Serbia, Russia, China, India and some EU member states (Orakhelashvili, p. 3). The UN Security Council ultimately did not accept the proposal for independence. On 17 February 2008, Pristina unilaterally declared Kosovo's independence, not recognized by Serbia and several UN member states. Two years later, the International Court of Justice issued an opinion that the statement did not violate international law, nor did it challenge UN resolution 1244 (International Court of Justice, 2010, no. 25). In the context of the unilaterally declared independence, the deployment of the EULEX mission in Kosovo, agreed in 2007, was contested by Serbia and other states, considering that it contravenes resolution 1244, representing part of the transition to internationally supervised independence. The international presence in Kosovo has been challenged in various forms, especially since 2008. For Serbia, the evolution of the situation in Kosovo challenged resolution 1244, while the authorities in Pristina – motivated by the ambition of creating their own institutions, saw another role in terms of the presence of international organizations.

In 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution³ welcoming the EU involvement in facilitating the process of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina,

³ UN General Assembly Resolution No. 64/298 of 2010.

aimed at supporting security and stability in the region and promoting peace and cooperation with a view to advancing towards EU integration (European Union External Action Service). The agreement subsequently signed in Brussels in 2013, facilitated by the EU, represented a breakthrough in mediating relations, marking the establishment of the process called the “*Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue*”. It was followed by a series of agreements on technical issues aimed at leading to the normalization of relations. Technical concessions did not lead to structural political settlements on the conflict as a result of hostile actions by the parties. They included: Kosovo's introduction of tariffs on products imported from Serbia in response to talks on changing “*borders*”, Serbia's international campaign to withdraw recognition of Kosovo's independence, and the vote against accepting the province among Interpol members, but also other international organizations. The dialogue stalled after 2018 and negotiations were reopened for a brief period in 2020.

In 2021, tensions escalated again due to the lack of consensus on license plates recognition at the common border, actually proving broader structural instability between the parties (Clingendael, p. 2). Interim mediation solutions through representatives of the international community were not lasting. Pristina authorities imposed the measure of re-registration of vehicles with Serbian license plates and tried to gain control over Kosovo Serb-dominated North Kosovo. The situation escalated into street battles with the security forces and, later in November 2022, into the mass resignation of political representatives of Serbian municipalities in the North. Amid crises in Serbia in 2023 linked to mass shootings, Pristina authorities held elections in April in northern municipalities, boycotted *en masse* by Serbs, which resulted in the election of Kosovo Albanian mayors following the turnout of less than 5% of voters. In May 2023, Kosovo authorities attempted to establish elected Albanian mayors in the northern municipalities by force. It ultimately resulted in clashes between Kosovo Serbs, security forces, which left wounded implicitly KFOR soldiers. In response to the situation, KFOR increased the number of troops in Kosovo at the end of May, while international partners, imposed sanctions on Kosovo authorities for actions that did not comply with the solutions discussed in order to advance in the dialogue with Serbia (Prelec, 2023).

The disagreements of the Kosovo and Serbian parties on some of the points agreed in 2013 are even more pronounced, with the Kosovo side refusing to establish an Association/Community of Serbian Municipalities in northern Kosovo,

as it had pledged (Clingendael, p. 5), contesting the status it would have. While the prospect of EU integration should serve as a force of attraction in determining the Serbian state to make concessions on Kosovo, identity aspects prove stronger in the impossibility of giving up the province. Kosovo is part of Serbia's identity (Ib., p. 7), of the ontological security of the state. Moreover, despite the benefits that could be brought by European integration, giving up Kosovo would be an unpopular decision among the Serbs.

The developments in the internal political environment of states, as well as the interethnic conflicts between the Serbs and the Albanians have been intensely exploited topics in the local media over time. The framing of events by the media and later by the social media played an important role in how reality was portrayed. We believe that the media have played a central role in institutionally sustaining tensions between ethnic groups, hampering reconciliation efforts. This role of the media must be understood in close connection with the historical past of the region. According to Andersen (p. 8), the media played a binding role for the Yugoslav Federation, but also later in its separation when the transition from "unity and brotherhood" to ethnic nationalism took place. During the Balkan Wars, they were used to foster ethnic hatred, but also as tools of resistance movements.

MEDIA, SOCIAL MEDIA AND ETHNICISATION OF CONFLICTS IN KOSOVO

The power of mass media to influence public opinion has been evaluated differently by mass communication theorists. Media models and theories are grouped according to the intensity of their effects on the public into models and theories of weak, limited and strong effects. Theories of weak effects minimized the influencing power of the media, arguing that the media are used by individuals to satisfy their own needs. The theories of limited effects have recognized the power of individuals to select, while supporting the existence of a media agenda ("agenda model") or a third party that intervenes in the act of reception ("two-step flow model") (Coman, 1999, pp. 109-128). McQuail (1983, p. 183) argued that strong effect theories presented an exaggerated view of effects production, disregarding variables such as the external conditions of media-consuming audiences, or their internal characteristics. The digital age has fostered the diversification of media types and the emergence of social media. They have brought with them the possibility of creating even more diverse realities, in which algorithms themselves

can play the role of gatekeepers. Social media are still largely environments that are not subject to regulation, unlike the media and professionals in the field, who are regulated by bodies that can sanction their work.

In assessing the potential of Kosovo's media to alienate ethnic Serbs and Albanians and encourage the escalation of tense situations into ethnically motivated violence, we support, similar to McQuail, the importance of the context in receiving media messages, or transmitted through social media, and the characteristics of ethnic groups in Kosovo, among whom distrust and even hostility towards each other are justified by the history of an ethnic war.

The contribution of Kosovo media to the escalation of hostilities during the violent events of March 2004, documented by the OSCE⁴ report, provide an eloquent perspective on its power of influence in tensed contexts. Media coverage of the ethnic killing of Albanian children by Serbs, during the evening of 16 March, in a society with a recent history of bloody interethnic conflict, has been an amplifying factor of violence. According to the report, without sensationalist and reckless reporting by some Albanian media outlets – such as the public service RTK⁵, RTV 21 television, and Albanian-language publications *Bota sot* and *Epoka e re*, the violence would not have reached its intensity and brutality at the time. The effervescence of the protests was also enhanced by the context characterized by several interethnic incidents in the same month, which had not reached the same magnitude. Kosovo Albanians had protested on the day of the incident against the conviction of former KLA members for war crimes, youth had organized a demonstration against violence following the throwing of a grenade at the residence of Kosovo politician Ibrahim Rugova⁶, and Kosovo Serbs in Serbian enclaves south of the Ibar River had blocked main roads connecting Pristina with southern and eastern Kosovo – following the wounding of a Serb in Caglavica, shot from a moving car (OSCE, 2004).

Media coverage of the deaths of Albanian children likely tripled the number of protesters engaged in violent demonstrations on 17 March, bringing the number to between 50 and 60,000 – compared to the previous day, when Albanians had protested against the criminalization of KLA militants. Albanian media reported the event without any confirmation of Serbian guilt. Moreover, they favoured the citation of Albanian experts, as well as perspectives supporting Serbian guilt,

⁴ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

⁵ Radio and Television of Kosovo.

⁶ He served as president of Kosovo institutions.

while UNMIK and UN police communiqués either did not make headlines at all or had little presence in the coverage of the event. The media used strong emotions for mobilization and popular outrage, representing a tool for manipulating feelings. They served extremist individuals who wanted to escalate the situation (Ib.). Kosovo journalists have been criticized by international analysts and researchers for the manner of reporting on the event, given that since the end of the war they have been supported by international media to develop their own system by organizing training and professionalization courses. Post-event reports from international organizations (Amnesty International) blamed local media for the escalation of tensions, but also criticized the international community for failing to rebuild Kosovo after the war, including the media field. The journalistic profession has been labelled as unprofessional in crisis situations Andersen, pp. 6-7).

Kosovo's newsrooms contents have prioritized top political topics on Kosovo's future for many years. Despite journalists' frustrations, many topics they deemed important were left out to leave room for news on the Kosovo status issue instead (Ib., p. 113). At the same time, Kosovo's media outlets have historically faced both political pressure and self-censorship in reporting corruption issues against local politicians. Instead, national objectives were prioritized, to help continue dialogue and maintain international support (Ib., p. 124). Kosovo's media has been characterized as highly politicized and politically controlled (Ib., p. 133), media coverage being thus affected over time. Also, post-conflict reconstruction objectives have cancelled journalistic correctness in newsrooms, so as not to affect Kosovo's progress (Ib., p. 125).

In Kosovo, Albanian-language media production dominates, reflecting the ethnic composition of the population. The civil service is obliged to produce materials both in Albanian and in the languages of the Serbian, Bosnian, Turkish and Roma minorities. These contents frequently consist of translations of material produced by Kosovo Albanian journalists (Ib., p. 136). Despite the development of media in Kosovo, journalists are still plagued by political pressure and intimidation (Hoxha, 2020, pp. 4-6).

After the war and especially after the incidents of 2004, Kosovo's media developed, leaving less room for propaganda and ethnic hatred. Formally, the structure of media owners is transparent, but the true owners are not known with certainty (Ib., p. 2). Andersen argued that the media were no longer centred on deepening interethnic conflicts, but on sustaining one's own ethnic and national identities (p. 150).

The media landscape is diverse today in Kosovo, with 20 TV channels operating in 2018 – the medium that continues to be the most popular, 83 radio stations, as well as numerous web portals. Social media is also popular, with Facebook being the most used platform. Since the time of the Mustafa government (2014-2017) the platform has been used as the main medium of communication with the public. While mass media have diminished their role in fostering interethnic conflicts in Kosovo, content disseminated through social media has not followed the same standards. In 2019, Facebook claimed to have deleted 212 pages, groups and accounts in Kosovo and Macedonia, which engaged in inauthentic behaviour, but the social network is not as effective at monitoring and sanctioning ethnic hate speech in the comment sections or stopping propaganda or hate speech (Hoxha, pp. 7-13).

Another feature specific to the use of social media networks in Kosovo is the existence of pages supporting certain political actors, which have the role of accusing the media, criticizing them of propaganda. Such a case was flagged in the report of the South-East European Network for Media Professionalization (Ib., pp. 13-14), which exemplifies pages and groups on Facebook created to support the Prime Minister of Kosovo institutions, Albin Kurti, labelling media content unfavourable to him as disinformation campaigns and war against democracy. One of the reported groups, “#ndaldezinformatat” (#stopdisinformation), was administered from Sweden and Kosovo and used banners labelling media unfavourable to the Kurti government as propaganda.

Hate speech also remains present in social media groups, where offensive terms are used on an ethnic or gender basis without repercussions. In Kosovo, polarization between citizens remains visible on social media, and becomes evident in events of interest to the region (Ib., p. 18).

The current trend in Kosovo lies in a professionalization of the mainstream media, which have learned from reporting experiences characterized by ethnic bias, the consequences of providing discursive support to the tensions between ethnicities. It does not, however, exclude the total lack of media framing in which the “*other ethnicity*” bears the blame for the unfavourable daily experiences of kin members, but this way of reporting is no longer the norm. According to Hoxha (Ib., p. 19), Kosovo's media currently operate on the model of “*national identity building*”, with conflict reporting and substantial international intervention leaving no room for hate speech. Social media, on the other hand, faces a tendency

to promote hate speech and propaganda, often visible in the comment sections and when the issue at hand is a topic of regional interest, as we will exemplify in the last part of the paper.

IMPORTING SERBIAN PRODUCTS INTO KOSOVO: AN ETHNICISED POLITICAL CONFLICT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2018, Pristina authorities took the step of introducing tariffs on imports of products from Serbia and Bosnia of 10%, which they later increased to 100%, in sign of protest after Serbia blocked Kosovo's accession to Interpol. The repressive measures also involved blocking products from states that do not refer to Kosovo according to the name considered constitutional by the authorities – *“Republic of Kosovo”*. The decision was criticized both by the Serbian side – as a step hindering dialogue, but also by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Policy at the time, Federica Mogherini, who characterized the decision as a violation of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), calling for an immediate revocation of the decision (Koleka, 2018).

However, the measure was only cancelled in March 2020, in the context of the pandemic, by the interim prime minister of Kosovo institutions at the time, Albin Kurti, who instead requested a certification of the quality of products exported from Serbia while allowing vehicles with license plates issued by Kosovo to freely enter Serbia⁷. While the decision was appreciated by the EU, it has been challenged by the political opposition ever since its implementation was rumoured, with Ramush Haradinaj – Prime Minister of Kosovo institutions at the time of the introduction of the tariffs, arguing that they should not be lifted without Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's independence⁸.

The announcement of the tax lift was not popular with all Kosovo Albanians. Protest actions against the consumption of goods in Serbia were common, a prominent and active one still belonging to the Facebook group *“Besa Besë”*, which spread under the motto *“Mos bli prodhime serbe”* (*“Do not buy Serbian products”*) contents anchored in ethnic hatred, which equates the purchase of these products with guilt for supporting those who killed the ancestors of Kosovo Albanians. The

⁷ Kosovo lifts all tariffs on Serbian, Bosnian goods, Deutsche Welle, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/kosovo-lifts-all-tariffs-on-serbian-bosnian-goods/a-52975561>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

⁸ Haradinaj once again provoking: *“Abolishing taxes would be a capital political mistake”*, Telegraf, 2019, <https://www.telegraf.rs/english/3119354-haradinaj-once-again-provoking-abolishing-taxes-would-be-a-capital-political-mistake>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

group⁹ has been active on Facebook since September 2021, managing to gather around 112,900 members and expanding on Tik Tok as well. In the description of the web page it is exposed that the money earned by Serbia from selling its own products in Kosovo supports the Serbian army that will return to Kosovo, while not buying these products represents patriotism (Ib.).

Among the types of contents promoted by the group are: messages designed to encourage loyalty to Albanian origin, implicitly manifested in the purchase of products (we exemplify by the slogan *“love yours!”*), contents promoting stores that do not sell Serbian products, images with text in which Serbian soldiers are depicted threatening with weapons Albanians, pictures from shops indicating Serbian products on shelves that are not to be bought, memes appealing to the Internet audience in which it is explicitly requested not to buy Serbian products, video in which a child asks the parent not to buy products of Serbs who killed their family, content praising the export of products from Albania at the expense of those from Serbia. The content and reasons invoked against the purchase of Serbian products are diverse, but the use of ethnic hatred as a mobilizing factor is a constant, which in the permissive environment of social media does not seem to have been sanctioned. Also relevant are the reactions of the group members to these contents, many of which have received hundreds of likes and shares, but also laudatory comments¹⁰. The video contents promoted through the Tik Tok page¹¹ are similar, have thousands of views and alternate messages transmitted by children, with images from wartime, or other urgings in which the idea of not buying Serbian products is conveyed. In such social media contents related to the campaign aimed at discouraging the purchase of Serbian products by Albanians, the ethnic identity of Serbs is represented discursively within the limits of the foreshadowing of the historical enemy, who is not absolved of atrocities against Kosovo Albanians and who still seeks to harm them.

We believe that the example set out above is symptomatic of the potential of social media to spread ethnically based hate speech unhindered. Such pages and groups operate through online platforms without being subject to regulations similar to those imposed on the media. The popularity of the exemplified page

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2281262918681383/>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

¹⁰ The author consulted the contents published on the Facebook group's page open to users, through non-participatory observation, without joining as a member of the group and using the automatic text translation function.

¹¹ <https://www.tiktok.com/@besabese390>, retrieved on 12 September 2023.

is also significant, engaging a number of members amounting to almost 10% of Kosovo Albanians – without being able to be sure that they represent unique users, or that they are indeed inhabitants of Kosovo. Thus, if in the past local media in Kosovo proved their potential to mobilize the masses, we believe that social media have now taken their place, disseminating opinions and ideas almost unhindered, under the guise of freedom of expression in a democratic society. They play a significant role in the transgenerational transmission of interethnic conflict, serving the objectives of political actors, apparently not involved in these processes.

CONCLUSIONS

In our view, in the Kosovo region the interethnic conflict has been sustained since the end of the war through identity politics that found a permissive environment in a society in reconstruction, where the pluralization of the political sphere and the attempt to attract adherents took place simultaneously with the development of mass media.

The media have played an important role in supporting interethnic conflicts in Kosovo, but with their evolution and regulation, and professionalization of journalists with international support, significant progress has taken place, which has limited the discursive support for interethnic tensions. The mistakes of the Kosovo media – evident in the events of March 2004, as well as international pressure, played a significant role in its education and correction, which led to the development of a democratic media system. However, it remains significantly subservient to the “*nation-building*” project and marked by political pressure, as Kosovo continues to push for independence and membership in organizations such as the EU and even NATO.

With the development of social media, their use was early adopted by the Kosovo public¹², and the region’s political representatives quickly understood their potential. If in the past they depended on the media to promote their own policies, the possibilities of social media offered an easier alternative to achieve such goals. They came with the advantage of publishing content almost unhindered. The permissiveness of the platforms has brought about a transition of ethnicization of everyday conflicts and ethnic hate speech from the media to social media.

¹² Kosovo’s demographic structure is made up of a young population, with around 40% of residents aged 0-24 and 43% aged 25-54, according to 2020 data, https://www.indexmundi.com/kosovo/age_structure.html, retrieved on 12 September 2023.

When discussing issues concerning the contrasting desires of ethnic Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, continued animosities and tensions are observable and manifest in these environments.

The capacity of social media to mobilize and spread propaganda and disinformation should be of particular concern in regions such as Kosovo, with a recent history of interethnic conflict and security situation characterized by fragility. We believe that international organizations responsible for maintaining security and stability in Kosovo should be more proactive in matters related to the local information environment, implicitly by supporting local institutions to find an answer to the challenges posed by social networks. While at the physical level local institutions are responsible to engage in direct and constructive dialogue with members of all ethnicities, actions to prevent the ethnicization of conflicts and support for ethnic-based hatred in the local information environment are also necessary, given their proven potential to escalate tensions and violence.

The control and regulation of content, as well as the sanctioning of hate speech, spread via social media, is, in our view, a necessary demarche in Kosovo, which would support the efforts to reconcile the parties. The functioning of pages and groups in social networks that foster interethnic conflict by appealing to the collective memory of war, similar to the one we exemplified in our case study, is contrary to these efforts, given the significance of ethnic identity for the inhabitants of the region. In a society with a recent history of violent interethnic conflict, leaving social media unhindered under the pretext of freedom of expression represents a risk whose mitigation should represent a complementary direction in the effort to reconcile the parties.

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MAPPING RECENT UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR CLAIMS RELATED TO JERUSALEM "AS CAPITAL OF ISRAEL" IN OFFICIAL ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN STATEMENTS

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A few years ago, the United States (US) officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and shortly afterwards the American diplomatic mission was relocated from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem/al-Quds¹, although internationally the decision was heavily criticized and met with protests on several levels. The US initiative was adopted as such by other countries supportive of US policy overseas, while Israeli and Palestinian politicians were given a new subject of confrontation at least at the level of speeches and official statements. The purpose of this research is to map universal and particular claims linked to the historic Jerusalem/al-Quds in official Israeli and Palestinian statements at the beginning of the 21st century in selected speeches or official statements of the following Israeli and Palestinian politicians: Naftali Bennet, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Meshaal by using discourse analysis in order to identify to which type of techniques and arguments the analysed political personalities resorted to in their speeches, in order to convince and influence their audience.

Keywords: Palestine; history; discourse analysis; Hamas; colonization; Israel; self-determination;

¹ It is here with reconfirmed that any data or term used in this research is without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area (A.N.).

INTRODUCTION

The year 1948 from the Gregorian calendar represents a year in which at least two competing developments came to an intersection in history: proclamation of the State of Israel and *an-Nakba*, i.e., the *Palestinian Catastrophe*. Although the Gregorian calendar is the most utilized nowadays, it is not the only timeline used around the globe. In fact, the Hebrew lunar year 5784 *Anno Mundi* (from Latin for the Year of The World) began on 15 September 2023 (Gregorian) and the Muslim lunar year 1445, observed also in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, began on 19 July 2023 (Gregorian). This is just one of the many situations in which simplifying statements based on a "well-known" or "broadly accepted" claim does not encompass the entire meaning of a date, event, or statement.

From this perspective, the first qualitative assumption of current research is that broadly accepted theory, be it popular or scientific (verified through data and/or experiments), may be limited by its background constraints, geographical, temporal span, as well as number and interest level of the addressees, hence not "universally" accepted. And the fact that the size of the universe is not precisely known is another reason to distinguish between absolute/"universal" claims and particular/conditional claims.

It is therefore important to establish which theoretical framework can be used when assessing claims from two parties involved in one of the longest modern conflicts, ongoing since 1948, especially when the claims are dynamic in time and their directions are also evolving. At present, English terminology is "broadly accepted" in scientific research at international level. Its terms have been adopted in many fields like politics, security, law, but their meaning and historical development may relate to events or contexts. The association of existing terms with new developments may be justified and considered legitimate due to various reasons contextually (convenience, particular/temporary needs etc.), while development of new terms to describe existing or recent contexts in another manner may be associated with language innovation.

For example, the relatively known term “*neutrality*” is often encountered in political discourse, and represents “*the position of a state that is not party to a war...*”. At the same time, “*neutralism*” represents “*not the declaration of neutrality, but rather the practice of showing an intention to remain neutral in any eventual conflict...*” (Scruton, 2007, pp. 472-473).

Thus, the second qualitative assumption is that units of language, i.e., words or expressions, are not always representative for all concepts and all implications of adopting a concept. On the contrary, some concepts require thorough studies or a long list of clarifications to utilize them in certain contexts, which is not always practical or feasible. However, reducing concepts and background implications to units of language to communicate efficiently is a typical practice and does not always include all implications or associations. Neither it always excludes them. Argumentative discourses generally aim to convince audiences, mobilize, and motivate at individual level, but their effect may be short or long and secondary effects may be related to supporting or aiming community- or state-level decisions and actions. From a constructive communication setting perspective, the only alternative to a discourse dominated by excessive background clarifications on terms implies clarifications or further communication. Conflictual claims have been nuanced and instrumentalized in many historical periods and places around the globe. It must be noticed that nowadays instruments to influence, propagandize are much more advanced than three millennia ago, and their reach is larger, but at the same time the attention and readiness of societies to digest information has become more fragmented.

The flood of information, often changes to discourse and claims, countless attempts to redefine or weaponize history for political purposes instead of strictly maintaining it as a science that elegantly serves societies and helps to enrich science, may all increase motivation but also determine a decoupling of population segments from informational pressure sources as the words-concepts connections may represent a source of infinite interpretation.

The nowadays confrontation to control territories in *Historical Palestine* (term utilized in the same sense as “*Palestine*” was used in the Balfour Declaration, not subsequent definitions) is not new. The fact that Balfour Declaration utilized the term “*Palestine*” and not other terms like “*Holy Land*”, “*Promised Land*”, represents a historical record that counts as one of the important elements contributing

to the 1948 developments. Whether the term was correctly used or not or whether it was historically just or not do not represent research directions in this article. The nature and scope of conflicts evolved from ancient times of scattered communities to Persian, Roman and Ottoman empires, British and French colonial rule, followed by the two World Wars and the events from 1948. Therefore, history plays a major role and represents an important source of claims related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One of the latest concepts introduced in the conflict was related to the status of Jerusalem, a city related to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interests. The Israeli Knesset enacted a law stating that “*Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel*” (Woolliff, 2018) and immediately afterwards Mahmoud Abbas claimed that “*eternal*” “*Jerusalem shall be the everlasting capital of the State of Palestine*” (Wafa News Agency, 2018).

Given the history and diversity of the population, Jerusalem, a city which may lack completeness and unity from some observation angles five years after laws were enacted and other stances were adopted, such claims must be analysed in detail. The aspects related to relativity of historical claims are multiple. “*History of human civilization*” is sometimes considered to have started with the first humans or their precursors. First known inscriptions date back 30,000 years, which may be another important milestone or criterion to define the beginning of civilization. According to some nowadays religious texts or beliefs, the world may have begun six millennia ago. The Ancient Egyptian early dynastic period started more than five millennia ago, but Mesopotamian/Sumerian civilization preceded it, certainly in another form. The essential statement that all these claims are made based on limited data and that future discoveries may change parts or the entire understanding of a fundamental historical topic may be missing and considered self-evident.

While this is a legitimate assumption in scientific proceeds, extracting parts of scientific information and creating or fuelling popular myths that depart from the initial scientific evidence are problematic developments that cannot be simply addressed. Individual freedoms, the right to associate and share values and thoughts are just a few arguments that demand caution when assessing claims related to general interest topics. Irrespective of the legal status or enforcement at societal level of fundamental conventions like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in various countries, individual perceptions may diverge significantly in the same or different societies.

At the same time, the basic assumptions of the fourth industrial revolution, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), suggest that a winning technology (which is vast but ultimately it delivers a single/standardized/educated solution in a particular case at a precise moment) will replace billions of human perceptions and outcomes with the result of best learning, understanding, reasoning and interaction. These developments hint that opinion generalizations may compromise on diversity and are thus no universal claims, calling an opinion "representative" as well and new technologies may replace the option to diverge in opinions with answers standardized at a certain time. *Two important aspects are further considered with respect to the claims related to Historical Palestine:* a) the sensible relation between perceptions related to this territory and scientific historical data as it was presented by historians and b) historical evolution of claims related to political/administrative control of (not presence in) territory in Historical Palestine. The fact that the crusades organized mainly by European actors to "reclaim" land in Historical Palestine and the Middle East ended with the Ottoman Empire taking over the entire region for many centuries clearly indicates possible side effects of depleting resources in long confrontations.

CLAIMS SPACE AND UNITS OF ANALYSIS

Like the claims on eternity of Jerusalem by one side or the other, the political discourse has reached a strong tone. Besides its Christian theological meaning, "universalism" is defined in literature on political thought also as "the belief in universally valid principles of government and individual rights, usually founded in a theory of universal human nature" (Scruton, 2007, p. 712).

Scruton mentions universalist doctrines like international socialism, human rights, and Kant's moral law, opposed by "national particularism" and some types of conservatism.

Another related concept that may be utilized to characterize claims is that of "absolutes", associated by Scott John Hammond with "universals, objective principles, moral realism" (Hammond, 2009, p. 1).

The definition also refers to terms like "transcendent moral and political principles", "transcendent justice", "eternal and essential reality behind all things", "objective absolute principles", "law that is in itself and exists by nature", "divine wisdom", "right reason" etc., as mentioned in cited literature.

Scruton presents "particularism" (Scruton, 2007, p. 712) as the opposite of universalism. To this research, particularism may represent the characteristic of a claim that is not valid continuously in time although it pretends so by stating or omitting a time span, not valid continuously in the space mentioned and not representative for the entire population represented. Since political decision-making and certain government positions in Westphalian democratic states are determined through majorities, such systems are generally not concerned with universal-particular identification, but representativeness, which may be representative but not universal/absolute representations of political will. Furthermore, recent moves to better consider minorities' rights and dynamics in decentralization within states confirm that majority-based decisions represent a pillar, but not the entire solution to political endeavours.

The classification either as universal or as particular claim of various concepts from units of analysis presented below is not exhaustive, i.e., does not address the entire set of issues related to claims on Historical Palestine, but it aims to identify possible elements of claims that are either not mentioned or not considered. Furthermore, the research will examine whether inconsistencies in messages transmitted are present in the documentary sources analysed. Discourse analysis is employed to identify claims and the analysis of their elements will be essentially comparative.

The units of analysis are presented in *table 1*. All videos, transcripts represent primary sources, while newspaper articles are considered secondary sources, hence a possible bias of authors in representing primary information is considered. These include interviews with former Prime Minister of Israel Naftali Bennet, former and current Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, former Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal and current Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh. The materials selected have been considered sufficient to identify the most relevant and popular claims on Historical Palestine territories and Jerusalem that are mainly competing in similar discourse directions. The selection does not minimize moderate or less confrontational voices, it rather focuses on what has a higher potential to slow down a potential peace process.

Table 1: Selected primary and secondary sources for analysis of recent claims on Historical Palestine/Jerusalem
(units of analysis)

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
V01	Naftali Bennet	Bennett on CNN: "First beat terror and then talk peace"	22.11.2012 (Naftali Bennet)	4 min 11 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2E1dhe_Z5k
V02	Naftali Bennet, Tim Sebastian	Bennett vs. Sebastian - Fighting for Israel in hostile interview	08.11.2015 (Naftali Bennet)	25 min 35 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=heW_JCWMUNG
V03	Naftali Bennet, Mehdi Hassan	Israeli minister: The Bible says West Bank is ours – Up Front	24.02.2017 (Al Jazeera English)	16 min 06 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Png17wB_omA
V04	Naftali Bennet	Bennett on BBC Hard Talk defends Netanyahu & Jerusalem: "Palestine" is a Fake State	18.12.2017 (Naftali Bennet)	22 min 47 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K9uaZd5GX5U
V05	Naftali Bennet, Christiane Amanpour	Bennett to CNN's Amanpour: You're voicing a lie	20.04.2022 (Naftali Bennet)	14 min 48 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zWyGevkGU8
V06	Benjamin Netanyahu	Benjamin Netanyahu: "God bless Jerusalem, the eternal, undivided capital of Israel"	14.05.2018 (France 24 English)	00 min 28 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXvJjsS77C4
V07	Benjamin Netanyahu	Netanyahu says Palestinians should "Abandon the Fantasy that They Will Conquer Jerusalem" (HBO)	15.05.2018 (VICE News)	05 min 08 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whJf2NsC-cc

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
V08	Benjamin Netanyahu, Matt Crouch	Benjamin Netanyahu: Israel's FUTURE and The State of The Middle East Praise on TBN Israel	29.11.2022 (TBN Israel)	55 min 48 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRuzueJyPgU
V09	Benjamin Netanyahu, Jordan B Peterson	Does Israel have the right to exist? PM-Elect Benjamin Netanyahu EP 311	05.12.2022 (Jordan B. Peterson)	1h 28 min 10 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40CaMRLTyGI
V10	Benjamin Netanyahu, Piers Morgan	Piers Morgan vs Benjamin Netanyahu FULL Interview with Israeli Prime Minister	27.02.2023 (Piers Morgan Uncensored)	34 min 54 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O17MP7qE24
V11	Khaled Meshaal, Jamal Elshayyal	Talk to Al Jazeera – Khaled Meshaal: Struggle is against Israel, not Jews	07.05.2017 (Al Jazeera English)	24 min 45 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDf_DvTPQgQ
V12	Khaled Meshaal	Hamas senior leader Khaled Meshaal talks to MEE	25.05.2021 (Middle East Eye)	30 min 31 sec	https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/palestine-hamas-khaled-meshaal-movement-leads-struggle
A13	Khaled Meshaal, BestoonKhalid	Former Hamas leader discusses missile attacks, Middle East with Rudaw (Transcript, English)	07.04.2022	-	https://www.rudaw.net/english/interview/07042022 (secondary source)

Nr.	(Main) Speaker	Title	Posted on (channel)	Length	Youtube link
A14	Ismail Haniyeh	Future of Jerusalem: Hamas leader Ismail Haniya addresses Jerusalem	07.12.2017	30 min 05 sec	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHPrD2dyVE
A15	Ismail Haniyeh, Authors: Dana Khraicheand Gwen Ackerman	Hamas Calls for Intifada Against Israel After Trump's Jerusalem Declaration	07.12.2017	-	https://time.com/5053804/hamas-intifada-jerusalem-israel-trump/ (secondary source)
A16	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Aaron Boxerman	Hamas hails "victory in battle for Jerusalem" after onslaught on central Israel	12.05.2021	-	https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-hails-victory-in-battle-for-jerusalem-after-onslaught-on-central-israel/ (secondary source)
A17	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Sally Ibrahim	Hamas chief says no guarantees to not escalate against Israel	30.05.2022	-	https://www.newarab.com/news/hamas-gives-no-guarantees-not-escalate-against-israel (secondary source)
A18	Ismail Haniyeh / Author: Jack Mukand	Hamas leader threatens Israel over "plans" for Temple Mount	14.12.2022	-	https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-political-chief-issues-warning-against-zionist-plans-for-temple-mount/ (secondary source)

The materials selected focus on public declarations or appearances of Israeli or Palestinian leaders in English language. Some of them are standard interviews from media networks, while V08 or V09 combine biographic elements with positions on subjects of public interest.

MAIN CLAIMS IDENTIFIED AND THEIR MAPPING IN THE UNIVERSAL-PARTICULAR SPACE

Sampling claims has been performed by repeatedly reading and watching the materials from *table 1*. In a primary phase, over 150 separate claims were selected, some of them representing similar instances of the same claim (basically the same claim in terms of context, direction, words, and concepts utilized). In a secondary stage, the claims were consolidated, and the ones that were repeated the most and are considered the basis for action by one camp or the other have been selected and presented below. The order of analysing claims is random.

As a general background for the claims, the terms "conflict" and "war" appear repeatedly and relate to a long situation. The definition provided by Scruton will be utilized to distinguish between "conflict" and "confrontation", the later being "the point of a conflict between two interests, when all conciliation, mediation, arbitration, adjudication and bargaining has been put aside, and where force is mutually recognized as the only remaining course of action" (Scruton, 2007, p. 127). It is considered that throughout the entire conflict, periods of confrontation have alternated with periods of attempts to bargain or seek mediation/arbitration that might have stopped confrontations. Likewise, the confrontational tone adopted in some speeches is specific to conflicts and was probably meant to both motivate own camp and try to discourage the opposite camp. Such a characteristic of (public) speech is admitted for example by Khaled Meshaal in source A13 (*table 1*): "... But some differences are being felt in the ways remarks are made, such remarks sometimes provoke some people, some remarks might be excessive or wrong – we admit that". Both camps, but apparently the Israeli representatives more, utilize terminology related to "terror" and "terrorism" in their public speeches. Given the possible legal implications of such terminology and other aspects, like for example the fact that the International Committee of the Red Cross considers that "from a legal perspective, there is no such thing as WAR AGAINST TERRORISM" (ICRC, 2015), a simple definition is considered: "intentional creation of widespread fear

and dismay by violence of a random and arbitrary kind” (Scruton, 2007, p. 685) (without any legal implication or suggestion whatsoever) as defined by Scruton. This conservative approach does not diminish any fact, be it claimed or confirmed, but allows focusing on the nature of claims rather than interpretation and any possible wrong framings.

CLAIMS RELATED TO HISTORY AND JERUSALEM

The claims related to the region’s history and population appear very often in the selected speeches of Israeli leaders and they can be considered a pillar of the argumentation related to the conflict with Palestinians. These have been identified basically in most of videos (V01, V02, V03, V04, V05, V07, V08, V09, V10).

The (continuous) presence since ancient times of Jews in Historical Palestine, Judea, Samaria is one of the claims associated with the 1948 proclamation of the State of Israel (considered by Palestinians to have determined an-Nakba): *“We have been here for thousands of years”* (V01), *“The land of Israel has always been Jewish for thousands of years, will always be Jewish”*, *“This has been our land for roughly 3800 years, before Islam came to the world”* (V03) etc. There are at least three aspects that require clarification vis-à-vis the presence of Jewish presence on the territory:

a) It is not specified what happened before 3800 years ago. Or before first year Anno Mundi. The claim that the land was barren before the 19th century Zionist Movement may be invoked also in this situation, but given the fact that it is utilized to demand international recognition of sovereignty over a territory, factual evidence must be convincing: some timelines are questioned by the interviewers, especially with Prime Minister Netanyahu and a clarification on why the period chosen is the most relevant may help;

b) Continuity of presence claimed in some statements is confused with political control over the territory, and fails to provide an accurate depiction of the *“presence”*: *“(Living here) roughly continued until 6-7 century after birth of Christ. The loss of our land occurred when the Arab conquests took place, they did something that no other conqueror... they started taking over the land of the Jewish farmer, they brought in military colonies that took over the land...”* (V09). Such a claim hints that the territory was not under continuous control of Jewish political leaders, which does not contradict the claim of continuous presence, but the claim *“The land*

of Israel has always been Jewish...” (V03) may require clarifications if a territory is to be considered as *“belonging”* to the ruling entity: individual, community or nation. If one does not consider a territory to belong to the ruling entity, and Israeli claims over the territory, then it is not clear what the basis for land reclamation is;

c) From a conservative perspective, it is assumed that a continuous presence can be the presence at any time of at least one person considered ancestor of post-1948 Israeli citizens. If this theoretical *“presence”* definition was acceptable, then the claim of presence might eventually be seen as universal. Furthermore, this would allow to claim a continuous presence, but not in a precise manner as to claim a particular cultural and civilizational exclusivity over a precise territory. The historical exclusivity of presence and/or control of the territory (only an entity present, not more), or at least the dominance over this territory would have to be demonstrated to raise a universal claim.

However, statements from the sources analysed clearly indicate that not even the strongest Israeli supporters of the *presence* claim support such a thesis. The speeches appear to encompass a sum of discourse arguments rather than a concise treaty demonstrating a continuous presence and domination of the area as compelling arguments in claiming universal sovereignty over the territory in question.

The rationale presented above *does not dismiss* Israeli claims, it *reiterates* questions about the universalism or particularism of claims on ownership/control, continuity of control that have been already raised also by Israeli leaders themselves. Besides the examples discussed, the fact that crusades took a couple of centuries, and finished with an at least temporary failure of achieving the central goal, is another testimony to the fact that military and political dominance was exerted over this territory by another entity. Likewise, some representatives of this entity may have decided or not to call some of these places their homeland: were there crusaders that became Palestinians, Arabs, Ottomans or joined a Jewish community? Confusions between presence in a territory and its control can be considered normal especially in political motivational speech, but state policies and international relations are generally requiring a more concise framework in order to produce lasting results.

Similarly, the Palestinians also cannot lay a universal claim related to historical control of this region such as to demand continuity and exclusivity on ruling

the territory. This is not necessarily due to the fact that some Israeli claims specify the Palestinians are not the "Philistines from the Bible" or that Greek population was present on this shore of the Mediterranean Sea in ancient times – not Palestinians ("The Jewish tribes are united under King Saul. He is beaten by the Philistines who are not Palestinians, they are a Greek seafaring people on the coast and they choose a new King, David, who establishes the Kingdom of Israel. And it is united for 80 years and then it splits" – V08), but there is clear evidence that other entities exercised control over disputed territories throughout history and either developed their civilizations here or utilized resources from this region to develop their civilizations in other parts of the world, despite Jewish or Palestinian presence.

From a modern society perspective, it is also important to analyse the claim that Palestinians were not present in Palestine in ancient times. Firstly, the question is whether nowadays Palestinians have to be the ones living in Historical Palestine for millennia: nowadays Palestinians may or may not be successors of ancient indigenous populations, Greeks or other sea peoples, of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Roman, Ottoman, European or any other ancestry. Every nation, including the modern Palestinian one, should be able to decide by itself how to utilize identity elements in organizing own population. In a space that prides itself to have hosted for centuries/millennia multi-ethnic and multi-religious populations (at least historic Lebanon, Syria, Iran), pushing the argument of recognizing a nation or its political rights only if ancient ancestry or personal geographic origin are demonstrated may be rather odd. Secondly, a characteristic of the Philistines mentioned in the Bible is that the Jewish population did not have good relations with them all the time. This will not be considered a factual argument, but from a lexical perspective, if somebody was present in Historical Palestine, was called Philistine and did not have good relations with Jewish groups, the possibility of being a Palestinian cannot be simply excluded. There was no significant claim identified in sources presenting Palestinian perspectives that question the presence of Israeli or Jewish ancestors in Historical Palestine. *The objections relate to other arguments, not the historical "presence".*

Another important set of claims of historical nature formulated by Prime Minister Netanyahu imply that the territory of future Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territory was barren land before the Zionist Movement: *"The Arabs who have conquered the land basically left it barren, they never made it their home. It was*

a barren land... practically it was an empty land ... and in the 19th century the idea of coming back next year in Jerusalem became a reality" (V09). Statements of visitors like Mark Twain and Arthur Stanley (Queen Victoria's British Court) are presented to audiences (V09). Such barren land concepts are not clear: there is no standard that specifies the minimum of constructions per unit of area to classify it as inhabited (the unit of area to be analysed is also unclear), some countries encompass large uninhabited deserts and cannot be dispossessed by their sovereignty over large uninhabited areas. Likewise, building skyscrapers is not a standard even nowadays, some countries do not have large cities or high buildings and their populations still call them homelands. There are third party materials that indicate human presence (Palestinian, Arab, Ottoman or other, Muslim, and Christian and Jewish) in the region. The Jewish Voice for Peace (the organization opposes Zionism) mentions in a document (Jewish Voice for Peace, 2017) that as of 1946, there were 29 towns and the three largest cities (Jerusalem, Haifa, and Jaffa) had 70,000 Palestinians and 30,000 Jews. A 2022 GIScience study estimated that at the end of 19th century, from 864 settlements identified, 697 were within the boundaries of Ottoman Palestine and had a population of approx. 335,000 (Zohar, 2022).

The main question of this research is related to the recent claims on "Jerusalem as capital of Israel". The statement was and is connected to Israel's law from 2018 that, among others, proclaimed Jerusalem as capital of Israel, receiving confirmation of the US through American Embassy relocation to Jerusalem in 2018. Countries like Australia followed the US but dropped the recognition in 2022, asking settlement of the dispute on Jerusalem peacefully (NPR, 2022).

The claims that provoked reactions from Palestinians and more representatives of international community can be summarized by Prime Minister Netanyahu's statement at the inauguration of US Embassy in Jerusalem back in 2018: *"May the opening of this Embassy in this city spread the truth far and wide and may the truth advance a lasting peace between Israel and all our neighbours... God bless the United States of America and God bless Jerusalem, the eternal undivided capital of Israel"* (V06).

The "eternity" claim may be derived from or connected to the eternity of Jewish land analysed previously, which in the social imaginary of the nowadays Israeli population may be an absolute conviction. From such a perspective, the interruptions in presence of Jewish kingdoms in Historical Palestine may be viewed

as an exceptional and temporary state. But other entities that governed territory in this region or the entire region may hypothetically claim the same. In all cases, there is no historical data to claim the past part of eternity in a universal manner, and the future part is not assessed in this study.

In the materials analysed, the Palestinians do not appear to mirror Israeli claims by demanding similar "eternity", they focus on mentioning evictions of current generation, parents and grandparents. This does not imply that there are not documentary sources related to their presence, but the fact that claims of this type are not pushed in public speeches.

The "undivided" status of Jerusalem is an argument that requires no analysis: for most of its existence in past two millennia, Jerusalem was divided if one considers at least the multiple religious representations in this city. If the division referred only to physical barriers without consideration on political or administrative control, walls or fences may have also been present. The declarative exclusion of Palestinians from Jerusalem or the opposite, the exclusion of Israelis by Palestinians, can be assessed as confrontational in nowadays conditions. The Israeli claim goes further and renders US recognition as only marginally relevant: *"Recognition (by US) of Jerusalem as capital is not the source of Jerusalem being our capital, that's a given. Jerusalem is the Jewish capital much more than London is for Britain..."* (V04).

The position prompted harsh declarations from Hamas leadership, which, despite their toughness, can be assessed as responses to Israeli pressure (*"It is time to tell the Palestinians: abandon the fantasy of destroying Israel, abandon the fantasy that you will conquer Jerusalem"* V07) rather than own initiatives: *"Our message is very clear...: Jerusalem is one, is united, no East or West Jerusalem. It is Palestinian, Arabic and Muslim and is the capital of the State of Palestine and I say today that Palestine is also united and together from the Sea to the River. It does not accept any splitting up or two states or any other state. Palestine is for us and Jerusalem is all for us"* A14. Despite the universal claims on Jerusalem, both sides seem to maintain a sense of reality and besides absolute claims also acknowledge the existence of the other and a possibility to reach an agreement. For example, Hamas leader acknowledges in 2017 the possibility to reach an agreement based on 1967 borders, if Jerusalem is Palestine's capital and the right to return is accepted (V11). However, a Palestinian state that would encompass the West Bank is constantly rejected by Israeli leaders in the sources analysed, but they also agree that Palestinians are present and a solution has to be found.

In V09 it is mentioned that the 1917 Balfour Declaration declared readiness of the British government to favour the establishment of a "national home", not a state. Prime Minister Netanyahu continues by claiming that the British then stopped migration from Europe and the Zionist Movement had to negotiate further with the US. He holds Theodor Herzl to be a modern Moses and mentions that Herzl tried to negotiate with the Ottomans but failed (V09).

Prime Minister Netanyahu's claim that Zionism begins with Abraham (V08) is confirming what other authors claim: relocation of Jewish population in Historical Palestine did not begin or was not initially considered shortly before 1917 or 1948. A 2011 article hints that Israel being a colonist entity is rather a myth: *"...the Jews were already re-establishing their presence independently in their Land well before the British and French dismantled the Ottoman Empire"* (Gold, 2011, p. 84). Prime Minister Netanyahu also mentions that Israeli employed a socialist economy before relatively recent reforms.

CLAIMS RELATED TO RIGHTS, LEGITIMACY

The notion of state, i.e., Palestinian state, appears relatively often in the videos of Israeli leaders, but not in a unitary manner: sometimes Gaza is presented as a Palestinian State (V01), sometimes it is suggested that Jordan would be a Palestinian State (V03) as well and in many instances the idea of a Palestinian State is dismissed (V04). The claim *"not everybody in the world that wants a state gets one"* (V03) might be a valid claim for a finite period or particular situation, but at the same time nowadays Israel is the proof that some who want a state get one.

Most Hamas leaders' claims are different in both scope and representation of the conflict. The nowadays presence of Israelis or their ancestors is not questioned. Hamas presents itself as a patriotic movement, a liberation movement within an Islamic frame of reference and belonging to the *"School of the Brotherhood"* (V11). The right of (Palestinian State) existence is generally not waved very often. However, the right to resistance is mentioned (V12).

The core Palestinian claims identified in the sources analysed relate to legitimacy: legitimacy of *"occupation, aggression"* (V11). Khaled Meshaal explains that the war is not religious, not directed towards the Jews but the *"Israeli occupier"* (V11), raising questions on the religious character of the conflict. While religious components are present on both sides and may differ in terms of claims related

to or determined by religion, it is certainly not the central component of the conflict. Israeli leaders from analysed interviews mention religion and insist on the role of the Bible especially in the Western Civilization, whereas Palestinian leaders claim, for example, that "Palestine is the cause of the Ummah" (V11).

Both camps claim national aspirations in the conflict, it must be acknowledged that the notion of state has many and various implications through the globe, and that both causes are supported by third parties, be it, only temporary or on long term. The type or volume support are also not unitary or comparable for the two sides.

Related to the concept of "peace", the positions vary. Israeli leaders claim for example: "Gaza does not look for long-term peace" (V01), "there will never be peace based on a divided Jerusalem" (V04), "fight against Iran and achieve peace" (V03), "peace will be achieved by strength" (V03), "the moment they lay down their arms (neighbours), there will be peace" (V03), "you do not make peace with the weak, you make peace with the strong" (Israel) (V08) etc. Palestinian leaders mention repeatedly that multiple religions lived in peace throughout this territory historically (V11, A13). The other type of claims is that both the Oslo Accords (V11) and the 2002 Arab peace initiative (V12) did not lead anywhere: the first is now being rejected by the Palestinians (Israel also appears to signalize discontent with the Oslo Accords – V02) and the second one was "buried" by Israel and the US (V12).

Therefore, it is retained that Israel's conditions for peace gravitate around retaining the West Bank, retaining Jerusalem entirely, disarming of neighbours, Iran's peaceful approach (which is a circular problem as Iran is mainly supporting Palestine and demands a resolution to the conflict among others). On the other hand, Hamas also asks sovereignty over Jerusalem, sovereignty of the West Bank and the recognition of the right to return. The main characteristics of the claims related to Jerusalem are the fact that the city is very important in the social imaginary of both sides and secondly, they can also be analysed from the perspective of "maximalist demands", useful to obtain concessions in possible future negotiations. However, all other conditions appear to be basically not negotiable.

The documentary sources analysed do not appear to mention the issue of damages and claims related to damages. However, this appear to have been considered, at least in some instances, both regionally and internationally (Heller, 2006), (UNGA, 2006), (B'Tselem, 2017). From the opposite perspective, Israel

appears to have prepared a claim for compensation from other Arab countries, like Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, and Iran (The Times of Israel, 2019). The article mentions that the Palestinian Authority would have asked \$ 100 bln. in compensation for assets left behind by Arab population that left nowadays territory of Israel. Further claims are listed in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of universal and particular claims identified in documentary sources

Claim no.	Claim	Universal/particular	Comment
C1	Palestinian presence since ancient times	Possibly universal	Competing claims, not mutually exclusive
C2	Jewish presence since ancient times	Possibly universal	
C3	Jewish or Palestinian exclusive or continuous control over Historical Palestine territory	Particular	Not supported by historic records
C4	"The land of Israel has always been Jewish"	Particular	It depends on the definition of "always", among others
C5	Philistines are not Palestinians	Particular	This is basically for the Palestinians to say in the first place if self-determination principle is considered
C6	Historical Palestine was barren land in 19 th century	Particular	Relative statement, cannot be assessed precisely
C7	Jerusalem eternal undivided capital of Israel	Particular	Competing claims
C8	Jerusalem one, united, capital of Palestine	Particular	
C9	Oslo Accords not relevant for both parties	Possibly universal	Both sides appear to reject their benefits or role
C10	We will find a way to make peace, it's going to happen (V03)	Possibly universal	Not clearly defined

Claim no.	Claim	Universal/particular	Comment
C11	Fight against Iran and achieve peace in the region	Particular	-
C12	Israel surrounded by Hezbollah, Daesh, Hamas, Syria, Iran (V04)	Particular	There is also Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, other countries
C13	Instability in the Middle East has nothing to do with Jerusalem or Israel (V04)	Particular	
C14	What everyone in this area cares about is how to block, how to check Iran from growing into a Shi'a empire from Teheran to the Middle East (V04)	Particular	Not necessarily, Palestinians definitely not
C15	We pulled back to the 1967 lines in Gaza about 15 years ago (V05)	Particular	Conditional, partial, interviewer provided counterarguments. Besides, 1967 lines do not refer only to Gaza
C16	These are not occupied territories; they are territories in dispute (V05)	Particular	Various international organizations and countries, Palestinians, call them occupied territory
C17	Iran is 50 times more dangerous than North Korea (V10)	Particular	-
C18	President Trump has delivered a message to the Palestinian people: the two-state solution is over (Saeb Erekat A18)	Particular	-

FINAL REMARKS AND CONCLUSIONS

The current research analysed a series of claims related to "Jerusalem as capital of Israel", along with a series of historical or related claims. The main purpose of the analysis was to establish the universal/absolute character to identified claims. In some cases, a rationale for establishing the type of claim was provided.

Most of the primary sources selected contain video interviews with either Israeli or Palestinian political leaders. The level of representativeness of statements and claims for various groups has not been analysed. Only the most relevant claims for the subject selected were presented.

There is no reason for analysing Israeli claims first and Hamas claims subsequently. However, it is to be mentioned that Israel's decision to codify in a law the unity and completeness of Jerusalem as Israel's capital generated many media reports even though Israeli and Palestinian stances on this matter were known. The analysis of selected videos' popularity is not conclusive, as it might be influenced by the popularity of the publishing platform and size of its audience. Background events at the time of interviews or declarations may also affect the popularity of media reports on claims related to Jerusalem as capital of one or the other party engaged in the conflict.

The language utilized by both Israeli and Palestinian leaders is specific to a conflictual situation. The stances rarely present systematic approaches to one of the longest and most complex modern conflicts, they generally encompass a sum of arguments, be they related or not, pieces of frameworks, reports, treaties, always meant to underline the central idea selected. Furthermore, transitions between factual representations, myths, wishes, spiritual or moral values, description of perceptions, maximal demand formulations and other types of argumentations are very often. Many claims can eventually be characterized as well-known, broadly accepted but the claims that can be categorized as universal/absolute, in the sense defined in this research, are very few. *A notable aspect is the imprecise use of notions like presence in Historical Palestine and exertion of political power over the territory.*

Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a concept that may be associated to what Prime Minister Netanyahu calls a shift in policy: instead of facing the Palestinians (V09), one could go around them and reach to other Arab nations in the region. This led allegedly to the success of Abraham Accords, among others, and whether it will deliver success or not it remains to be seen. *Palestinians' claims related to Jerusalem are part of their stance in the conflict, but do not resort to historical claims in the same way Israeli do, they focus more on the past century.* In all cases, despite Israeli and Palestinian claims, Jerusalem is not united, has not been for the last two millennia, but in terms of eternity, it can hope to survive this conflict in a way or another.

Israel prides itself of being the fastest growing technological power in the world, and this is extended also to economic throughout. However, despite employment of latest technologies and weapons, Israel also increased the punishment for stone-throwing up to 20 years back in 2015. Many terms can have different meanings depending on the context. Public opinions are generally based on both personal experiences and information sources and our 21st century reality may continue to challenge our understanding of concepts new and old at the same time.

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FIGHTER JETS FOR UKRAINE: A REALITY CHECK

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After several NATO countries agreed to supply Ukraine with tanks after months of wrangling, the Ukrainian government is intensifying its demands for Western-style fighter jets. However, even with a few Western jets, Ukraine would hardly be able to destroy the powerful Russian air defence systems. In addition, and more importantly, Western fighter jets place enormous demands on infrastructure and training. A delivery decision would primarily be a political signal of long-term support for the country. However, it would not have any impact on the battlefield at this point in time.

With the pressure on western states to deliver these weapon systems, the fears of a further escalation of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine are increasing. There is concern that Ukraine would use Western combat aircraft to bomb targets on Russian territory, which, in turn, could push Vladimir Putin to further escalate the conflict. However, even though Ukraine has already attacked targets on Russian territory without resorting to aircraft, this specific risk of escalation is overestimated.

Even if the risk of escalation from Ukrainian airstrikes on Russian territory is low, a number of other factors speak against the delivery of Western combat aircraft to Ukraine in the near future. Although these are primarily of a practical and not political nature, they nevertheless make it difficult to rebuild the Ukrainian air force with modern fourth-generation jets in the near future.

Keywords: fighter jets; escalation; Air Force; NATO; EU;

INTRODUCTION

No sooner has the debate about supplying battle tanks to Ukraine ended, than the next discussion begins: *Should the West supply the most modern combat aircraft?* The Ukrainian government has wanted Western fourth-generation combat aircraft since the start of hostilities. The Ukrainian Air Force, for example, already called for US *F-15 Eagles* and *F-16 Falcons* on Twitter in March 2022, under the statement “*give us the tools, and we will finish the job!*”. Since then, this wish has not been withdrawn: On his trip to Europe in February 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky again asked for additional longer-range missiles’ deliveries and combat aircraft.

With the pressure on western states to deliver these weapon systems, the fears of a further escalation of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine are increasing. There is concern that Ukraine would use Western warplanes to bomb targets on Russian territory, which, in turn, could push Vladimir Putin to further escalate the conflict. However, even though Ukraine has already attacked targets on Russian territory without resorting to aircraft, this specific risk of escalation is overestimated.

WHY ATTACKS ON RUSSIA’S LAND ARE UNLIKELY

Russia has long assumed Western air superiority and has therefore invested significant resources in the development of integrated air defence systems as reported by the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies/ RUSI (Bronk, 2020). Russian systems are among the most powerful in the world and cover large parts of Ukrainian airspace. On the front lines, Ukraine even faces multiple tiers of different anti-aircraft defence systems. To avoid being shot down at long range, Ukrainian fighter jets fly most of their missions just a few meters above the ground (Sabbagh, 2023), which severely limits their performance.

Despite Ukraine’s isolated successes in suppressing Russian air defence systems using US-supplied anti-radar missiles, the threat posed by Russian anti-aircraft defences will continue to be a relevant factor in the Ukraine war. It is because in order to successfully suppress and destroy enemy air defence positions in the long term, large-scale air campaigns are required, as illustrated by Operation Allied Force (Larson, Savych, 2007, pp. 63-124) during the Kosovo War in 1999.

At that time, the Allied air forces had around 80 combat and attack aircraft at their disposal just to suppress the enemy air defence systems. As part of the 78-day military operation, they fired a total of 743 anti-radar missiles at 44 known anti-aircraft batteries to ensure freedom of manoeuvre for subsequent jets. However, such anti-radar missiles rarely achieve direct hits, because the battery crew can simply switch off their radar in the event of an attack and thus usually no longer offers a target for the approaching anti-radar missile. For the destruction of enemy anti-aircraft systems, NATO therefore deployed additional combat aircraft that were to penetrate Serbian airspace when new surface-to-air threats appeared and destroyed them with heavy ammunition. However, it was only with moderate success. Only three of the most modern anti-aircraft batteries in the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a total of 25 SA-6 “Gainful”, were destroyed, even though the systems were already 30 years old at the time.

Despite the use of electronic countermeasures and over 1,500 towed decoys, two coalition aircraft were also shot down and several others damaged. Last but not least, machines and crews were stretched to the limit of man and machine, which prompted the US Air Combat Command after the operation to increase the planned purchases of F-16Cs suitable for suppression missions from 30 to 100 units.

Even with NATO’s capabilities for such complex air campaigns, Ukraine will hardly be able to permanently suppress or even destroy the Russian air defence systems with a few jets. In addition to combat aircraft, additional aircraft would be required for aerial refuelling and reconnaissance, which would be defenceless against enemy air defence systems.

Considering the powerful Russian air defence systems, Western-style combat aircraft would therefore be practically exclusively defensive weapons. Equipped with modern air-to-air guided missiles, they could push back Russian jets from the front lines and also help intercept cruise missiles with their powerful radar systems. Similar to the HIMARS rocket launchers already delivered, they could also be used to attack fixed ground targets such as ammunition depots near the front lines. However, the Ukrainian airforce will hardly be able to fly attacks on Russian territory – neither without nor with western jets. The enormous range of numerous modern long-range weapons is based primarily on the fact that they are dropped from great heights. The situation would only be different if the West also delivered long-range cruise missiles for the new Ukrainian fighter jets. However, even these would be vulnerable to Russian air defence systems for short-range defence.

TRAINING, OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS

Even if the risk of escalation from Ukrainian airstrikes on Russian territory is low, a number of other factors speak against the delivery of Western combat aircraft to Ukraine in the near future. Although these are primarily of a practical and not political nature, they nevertheless make it difficult to rebuild the Ukrainian air force with modern fourth-generation jets in the near future.

First of all, widespread aircraft models such as the US *F-16 Fighting Falcon* or the European *Eurofighter Typhoon* require highly qualified aviation and technical personnel for operation and maintenance. Experienced F-16 instructors estimate that at least between 6 and 12 months of high-intensity training would be required (Hunter, *The War Zone Magazine*, 2022) before Ukrainian pilots could even be sent into combat. Western fighter jets may differ only slightly from Soviet types in terms of flight performance, but technologically the difference is huge, especially in radar systems, electronic warfare systems and other sensors.

WHO COULD TRAIN UKRAINIAN PILOTS TO FLY THOSE F-16S THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE GETTING?

Another interesting point is raised around the question: *Who Could Train Ukrainian Pilots To Fly Those F-16s They’re Not Supposed To Be Getting?* (Tegler, *Forbes Magazine*, 2023)

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (Chuter, *Defence News*, 2023) has committed to train Ukrainian combat jet pilots, according to a statement made ahead of a visit to London by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. Other reports (Tegler, *ib.*, 2023) emerged affirming that a pair of Ukrainian pilots are in the USA for an evaluation of their ability to fly and fight using F-16s. It happens while President Biden and his administration repeatedly downplayed the idea of providing F-16s to Ukraine, as it might be seen as a dry-run for who might train them and where.

Another mentionable help comes from Germany (Siebold, *Reuters*, 2023), where, currently, advanced air defence weapons training is being undergone.

Romania’s air force intervention in Ukraine

While on a BBC show on 30 March 2023, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Bogdan Aurescu, avoided answering on how Romania helps Ukraine, claiming that it is “*more efficient*” (Aurescu, *BBC Interview*, 2023) and “*better for Ukraine*” not to disclose the extent of its military aid.

Supporting MFA's statement, Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis, (Mediafax, 2023) re-affirmed one month later (April 2023) that Ukraine will receive all the support needed, without further details.

MAINTENANCE AND THE TRAINING OF THE TECHNICAL STAFF

An even bigger problem than the training of the flight crew would be the maintenance and the training of the technical staff. Because while artillery pieces or tanks can be transported overland to Poland or another NATO country and serviced there, aircraft usually have to be repaired where they landed after their mission – that is, in Ukraine. Depending on the level of qualification, the training of the technical staff takes several years to decades, and all the manuals would also have to be translated.

At least initially, a considerable number of civilian contractors from the West would therefore probably have to support the Ukrainian ground crew with maintenance – and this at airfields that would immediately become important targets for Russian ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. This does in fact result in risks of escalation: if a large number of Western nationals were to die in a Russian air raid, the political pressure on the respective governments to intervene directly in the conflict could increase.

At the same time, most Western combat aircraft models are anyway only designed to operate on well-equipped airfields with extensive maintenance infrastructure and high-quality asphalt runways, because their low engine inlets are prone to ingestion of foreign objects. Since regular attacks on Ukrainian airfields by Russian rockets and cruise missiles must be expected during the war, the infrastructure required to operate the jets could probably only be built after a ceasefire, even if Ukraine has already started to do so.

“THE FUTURE CANNOT BE PREDICTED, BUT FUTURES CAN BE INVENTED”

(Gabor, 1963)

It is clear that the educational system is facing some existing aggressions pressure to upgrade its level of competency. In the defence area, education of all ranks should be accessible, coordinated, modernized, and cost effective. Less resources need to produce high quality results.

The goal in this introspection is to determine whether the objectives set forth by the governments regarding digitalization, learning, and teaching could be rediscovered in practical study programs in the military education.

According to Elstad and Hafnor (2017), digitalization is the deliberate use of technology in the educational setting to promote learning and develop adaptable learning systems. There is a chance that they might mix up while being spread in the school system. This is intriguing because comprehensive education reform may call for digitalizing communication, teaching strategies, and learning resources.

At European Union (EU) level, the *Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027)* was adopted as a new initiative of the legislative instance to support the process of adapting the entire education and training system of the EU Member States to the challenges of digitalization in a sustainable and efficient manner. This Digital Education Action Plan set out a long-term strategic vision for the *new digital*, in which education must be of high quality, comprehensive and available across Europe. The European Union aimed to address these new challenges and opportunities arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has led to unprecedented use of technology for education and training purposes, calling for greater cooperation at Member State level in the area of digital education, under the internationalization of higher education. At the same time, the plan highlights the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation to bring education into the digital age, with new opportunities to be identified along the way.

One of the major developments in education is the internationalization of higher education (de Wit, Altbach, 2021, pp. 28-46). The goal of security and defence education is to train highly specialized military (officers) and civilian professionals who can work in both domestic and foreign settings with co-workers and individuals of other nationalities, sometimes in very difficult situations. In order to enable students to develop skills, collaborate, and form networks, it is crucial to boost the internationalization process in higher education using both traditional and virtual modalities. By examining and discussing the extensive internationalization experiences of the higher education, this article responds to the research question: *What initiatives and policies of internationalization may be implemented, and how, in order to improve the European Security and Defence Higher Education?*

International aspects have long been a part of university research, but less so in teaching. As a crucial development for improving university graduates' integration into the workforce, the increasing globalization of economies and societies, which began at the end of the previous century, necessitates a Higher Education (HE) with more internationalization programs.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES. IMPLEMENTATION OF DIGITALIZATION IN DEFENCE HIGHER EDUCATION

Although there is no clear answer on what Romania is bringing to the table in terms of air force support in Ukraine, the number of HE achievements boosted the internationalization process with its research and development activities.

The implementation of *Digitalization in Defence Higher Education/DDHE* is a transnational project coordinated by “Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania, in partnership with three other universities from Bulgaria, Poland and Greece. Its aim is to continue the process of standardizing the skills of each specialization at the European level and to uniformize the speed of development of the technical systems used in all fields of activity and their digitalization. Throughout the project, peers from European organizations are mainly involved in the dissemination process at various stages in order to achieve a high impact at the international level as well as a high transferability of the project results.

The project objectives are structured on 5 levels, including: people, technologies and processes. The possible directions drawn for the development of the digital transformation of higher education are as follows:

1. Increasing the level of digital skills of teachers;
2. Increasing the level of digital skills of students;
3. Creating digital educational resources;
4. Creating AR application for courses;
5. Creating a digital library.

FURTHER SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS AS REPORTED BY THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND TECHNOLOGIES RESEARCH AGENCY

According to the Military Equipment and Technologies Research Agency (<https://www.acttm.ro>), the following significant achievements and acquisitions can be mentioned:

Project name: PROTECTION SYSTEM OF VEHICLES AGAINST PG-7 ANTI-TANK GRENADE

The aim of the project was to create a passive protection system against the action of the PG-7 anti-tank grenade, to equip the vehicles that carry out missions in the theatres of operations. Two types of vehicle protection systems

against the action of the PG-7 anti-tank grenade were made – experimental model, in six variants, on which real firings were carried out in the shooting range.

According to the verifications carried out by real firings, in the case of the grid-type protection system, its effectiveness is ≈25% and in the case of the net-type protection system it is greater than 50%.

Project name: THERMAL IMAGING SCOPE – ODIN 100 – APPROVED PROTOTYPE

The project aimed to create a sighting scope based on thermal imaging – ODIN 100. The scope is an optoelectronic system capable of ensuring the engagement of targets in difficult conditions and during day and night up to a distance of 1000 m.

Project name: THERMAL IMAGING SCOPE – ODIN.50 – APPROVED PROTOTYPE

The aim of the project was to create a sighting scope based on thermal imaging – ODIN.50. The scope is an optoelectronic system capable of ensuring the engagement of targets in difficult conditions and during the day and at night up to a distance of 500 m.

Project name: MACHINE GUN. CAL. 7.62 MM. MD. 1963 MODERNIZED

The project aimed to modernize the machine gun. cal. 7.62 mm model 1963 (PM cal. 7.62 mm) regarding the increase in performance by mounting an ambidextrous safety lever and rails according to STANAG 4694 Ed. 1 – “NATO Accessory Rail”, for mounting optical and optoelectronic equipment. The product was approved in 2020.

Project name: TARGET SYSTEM FOR GROUND-AIR, AIR-AIR AND SHIP-AIR FIRING IN THE CAPU MIDIA RANGE – ULTRA-20 V1

The aim of the project was the conception, design and realization within the CCISA of a target system for ground-to-air, air-to-air and ship-to-air firing for the Capu Midia range, intended to diversify the training possibilities of the armed forces services in the framework of real or simulated firing exercises, under conditions of increased protection of human operators.

Starting in 2016, several batches of ATM-1BB/N and ULTRA-20 V2 air targets were executed and tested by real firing in the Capu Midia range. Following the tests, the ATM-1BB/N and ULTRA-20 V2 products were approved and entered into the AFS inventory.

Project name: CLASS I TACTICAL UAS

The aim of the project was the conception, design and realization within CCISA of a class I tactical UAS for the execution of ISR (Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance) missions. The system allows the planning, collection, processing and exploitation of data and information collected from the sensors mounted on the air platform.

Project name: AIR SYSTEM ULTRA-20 VTOL ISR/AFG

The aim of the project was the conception, design and realization within CCISA of an aerial system without a human pilot on board for AFG (Aero-Photo-Grammetry) missions. The aerial platform has vertical take-off and landing and can be used in any terrain conditions.

Supersonic Aircraft

- Testing and evaluation for certification and approval of the upgraded aircraft MIG 21 LANCER;
- Testing and evaluation in order to certify some variants of armament with missiles and bombs for the MIG 21 LANCER aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation for certification for air-to-air firing with the on-board cannon for the MIG 21 LANCER aircraft;
- Flight testing in order to validate the armament configuration of the MIG 21 LANCER aircraft with the MAGIC 2 missile;
- Concept Study for Multirole Aircraft;
- Test and acceptance evaluation of MLU F-16 A/B M5.2 aircraft (Acceptance Assessment Test Plan, Acceptance Assessment Testing, Acceptance Assessment Test Report).

Subsonic Aircraft

- Concept Study for Short/Medium Transport Aircraft of the Air Force;
- Acceptance testing and evaluation of the C-27J Spartan aircraft delivered (Acceptance evaluation test plan, Acceptance evaluation testing, Acceptance evaluation test report);
- Concept study – Modernization of the avionics system of the C-27J aircrafts of the Ministry of National Defence;
- Concept study – Revitalization of the C-130 aircrafts from the Ministry of National Defence and modernization of their avionics system;
- Concept Study for The Management and Staff Personnel Transport Aircraft;

- Testing and evaluation for the purpose of approving IAR-93 aircraft in all equipment variants;
- Testing and evaluation for the certification and approval of IAR-99 aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation for certification and approval of IAR-99 FALCON aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation in order to certify the configuration of the IAR-99 FALCON aircraft with a ventral drift system;
- Testing and evaluation of the fuel consumption of IAR-99 FALCON aircraft;
- Instrumentation of IAR-99 FALCON aircraft;
- IAR 99 FALCON – Manual of armament configurations;
- Integration of IAR 99 airplane flight simulator in the ATN network through acts ground station;
- Flight testing in order to determine the flight operational performance of IAR-99 FALCON aircraft in various equipment configurations;
- Development testing and evaluation for IAR-99 FALCON aircraft structure status monitoring system;
- Modernization of IAR-99 ŞOIM aircraft – Technical study.

UAV

- Acceptance testing and evaluation for shadow 600 unmanned aircraft;
- Concept Study for Unmanned Aircraft Systems – UAV;
- Testing and evaluation for the certification and approval of the unmanned aircraft, the target-bearing tractor for anti-aircraft firing;
- Testing and evaluation for Mini UAV close surveillance in tactical field BOREAL 5;
- Concept study Class I MINI UAS;
- Achieving testing and evaluation capability in the field of low speeds and altitudes.

Helicopters

- Concept study for Helicopter transport staff management staff and MEDEVAC;
- Concept study for specialized helicopter attack capabilities and multi-mission helicopter;
- Concept study for Multimission Helicopters designed to establish air combat capabilities for SOF;

- Concept study – Specialized helicopter with ASW (Anti Submarine) capabilities;
- Testing and evaluation for the certification and approval of the IAR- 330 PUMA NAVAL helicopter and its qualification for operation on F22 frigates.

Missiles

- Testing and evaluation of the real technical condition of aviation missiles in order to extend the deadlines for keeping in operation;
- Realization of air-to-air school rocket with the use of the elements resulting from the completion of the programs for the extension of the technical resources.

Save Systems

- Ground and in-flight testing and evaluation for the approval of the Romanian catapult seats type HV-0;
- Integration of pilot survival equipment with the flight equipment, dash system, SCHV-0 catapult seat and the cabins of IAR-99 FALCON aircraft.

Aviation Equipment

- Technical study – Integrated system for recording flight parameters for F-16 aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation in order to approve the variant of equipment with location system based on ELT emergency radiobalise of IAR-99 STANDARD aircraft and FALCON/AN-26/30 aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation in order to approve the variant of equipping the AN-30 aircraft with digital aerial research system and use within the missions of the OpenSky Treaty;
- Realization of a system for downloading, storing and processing data from the recorder installed on board the AN-26/30 aircraft;
- Testing and evaluation for ground and in-flight approval with IAR-330 L, C-130 Hercules and C-271 Spartan aircraft of the Isolation and Transport System of personnel contaminated with biological agents.

Craftable video container – Execution, testing and evaluation, homologation

- Integrated system for determining the vibration levels at IAR-330 SOCAT helicopter by analysing the information recorded on the SAIMS system;

- Testing and evaluation for the certification and approval of the radio navigation, communications and beaconing system – ATTNA for Câmpia Turzii and Boboc aerodromes;
- Ground and flight testing and evaluation for the purpose of homologating the Trelleborg sealing solution. Substantiation by tests of the decision to reconsider the technical resource – Modernization of hydraulic servomechanism for movingtracking (SMHR-2D);
- Acquisition and processing system for calibrating the radionavigation means installed on military aerodromes – Technical study.

Ammunition Aviation

- Analysis of the possibility of using aviation bombs equipped with warheads from the AFS equipment, on F-16 aircrafts;
- Analysis of the possibility of using 20x102 mm calibre ammunition from AFS equipment on F-16 aircrafts;
- Evaluation of the real technical condition of the aviation ammunition (missiles, bombs and warheads) of the Air Force' equipment, in order to support the decision to keep it in operation;
- NATO standard cal. 20x102 mm strikes testing, developed within the national industry, designed to equip aircraft of the Air Force;
- Rectangular IR-infrared countermeasure training ammunition for all aircraft of the Air Force.

CONCLUSIONS

Looking forward

From a strategic point of view, there is some evidence that supporter states will make a decision on the delivery of combat aircraft in a timely manner. Because, especially in the event of a ceasefire, Ukraine should be supported in building up a long-term and credible deterrent capability against Russia. Since the training of flight and technical personnel is extremely time-consuming, the call for higher education internationalization is more critical than ever.

The debate about fighter jet deliveries, however, would do well to face a little more honesty. With fourth-generation fighter jets, Ukraine will not be able to attack ground targets on Russian territory, nor could the jets be delivered and put into operation in a few weeks or months. In particular, the public debate distracts from the question of when, which models, with which weapon systems could

and should be delivered to the Ukrainian Air Force. With regard to the military situation in Ukraine, the military requirements, as well as possible risks of escalation, they must be viewed in a differentiated manner. In order to limit the risk of escalation, the delivery of long-range cruise missiles could also be dispensed with.

In the short term, it should be checked whether Europe has the capability to deliver on time the necessary fleet to the Ukrainian Air Force. Ukraine would probably only be able to commission and use Western combat aircraft in a few years, however without the help of European maintenance personnel in the country. As mentioned previously, aircraft usually must be repaired where they landed after their mission – that is, in Ukraine. Depending on the level of qualification, the training of the technical staff takes several years to decades, and all the manuals would have to be translated. Furthermore, a considerable number of civilian contractors from Europe would therefore probably have to support the Ukrainian ground crew with maintenance – and this at airfields that would immediately become important targets for Russian ballistic missiles and cruise missiles. This does in fact result in risks of escalation: if a large number of Western and Eastern nationals were to die in a Russian air raid, the political pressure on the respective governments to intervene directly in the conflict could increase. Baring this is mind, no wonder Romania has not officially provided specifications on which of the resources above mentioned has been deploying to Ukraine.

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IDEOLOGY AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: TURKISH NEO-OTTOMANISM

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Turkey, as most countries in the world, is increasingly employing public diplomacy methods to promote its interests and to reach foreign audience in order to create soft power. In order to understand the neo-Ottoman ideology and the practices used by Turkish public diplomacy institutions in the attempt to influence foreign audiences and create soft power, we will analyse, in the present paper, the way in which neo-Ottoman ideas and theses have been inserted into various activities and actions subsumed under public diplomacy, and we will identify the regions in different areas of the world where public opinion has become a target group. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has made public its foreign policy goals, including that of increasing its influence in Muslim societies in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Considering the mentioned aspects, the paper explores the way in which AKP uses the instruments and institutions specific to public diplomacy to promote a neo-Ottoman ideology and to organise a foreign policy that reflects Ottoman imperial times.

Keywords: ideology; public diplomacy; neo-Ottomanism, Northern Africa; Middle East;

INTRODUCTION

In most analyses and theoretical studies, the main aim of public diplomacy is to influence and attract target audiences from a country to support the specific policies of another state, as well as to popularise and explain the institutions, the specific values of the particular state in all their complexity, so that opportunities for cooperation could be created and common objectives could be defined (Hlihor, 2017; Tuch, 1990; Waller, 2007).

Diplomacy is an activity pertaining to the field of foreign policy conducted by a state/non-state actor, which makes the transition from the use of *hard power*, entailing coercive and/or deterrent measures, to *soft power*, entailing persuasion and consent, obtained through activities related to knowledge, culture, entertainment, art, sport and, last but not least, the promotion of political and social values specific to an ideology. Public diplomacy has been used with relative success after the '90s. States have employed different actions and institutions pertaining to public diplomacy, depending on the way they have defined their foreign policy objectives in the medium and long term as well as on their historical, cultural and spiritual traditions (Pajtinka, 2019, p. 23). Political values and ideology have played an important role in promoting public diplomacy. The struggle for supremacy between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War involved public diplomacy as well by weaponizing the information and the image belonging to the core ideology in the West (liberal democracy, with its specific forms) and in the East (Marxism-Leninism, with its national forms). The Soviet Union collapsed because people lost faith in communism (Hlihor, 2016, pp. 114-126). Free speech and personal freedom, values promoted by the West through means and institutions of public diplomacy, have converted the public opinion from the space of former socialist states (Datta, 2019). In fact, no public diplomacy activity/action today is neuter from the axiological perspective.

The confrontation between the Western liberal democracy and the state/non-state actors promoting various forms of ideologies that underlie authoritarian regimes will no longer have the intensity and scope of the Cold War, but it will not be won *“until we discredit their ideological allure”* (Ib., 2019). Some actors that want to become regional powers, such as Russia and Turkey, if we refer only to the states in the neighbourhood of the European Union, make full use of *soft*

power to get their foreign policy objectives materialised. To that end, they have built public diplomacy national institutions, having specific ideologies that have emerged in the past decades as a vector for transporting the mentioned objectives to the target, namely *Putinism* (Kolesnikov, 2022) and *neo-Ottomanism* (Maziad, Sotiriadis, 2020).

In this paper, we will analyse the way in which the ideas and theses of neo-Ottomanism have been inserted into various activities and actions subsumed under public diplomacy and we will identify the regions where public opinion has become the target group. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) has made public its foreign policy goals, including to increase its influence in the Muslim societies in the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Thus, we will justify the research approach by exploring how the AKP uses the specific instruments and institutions of public diplomacy in a manner designed to promote neo-Ottomanism.

IS THERE A NEW ERA IN PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN TURKEY?

As an instrument of foreign policy, public diplomacy emerged and was institutionalised in Turkey relatively late compared to other countries, namely in the 2000s (Çevik, 2019, p. 56; Kalin, 2011, pp. 5-23). Professor Muharrem Ekşi states that it could be explained by two dynamics, which he considers to be key to the mentioned phenomenon. *“The first is the policy of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) to present itself as a model in the Islamic world, especially in the countries of the Middle East. The second is the high trade/economic growth of Turkey, which in the 2000s was the 16th largest economy in the world. This fact has allowed the construction of public diplomacy, which requires large amounts of money. Although public diplomacy is based on soft-power tools, its implementation requires <hard dollars>”* (Ekşi, 2019, p. 177).

Professor İbrahim Kalin states that, in Turkey, public diplomacy was established out of the need to counterbalance the negative image that was shaped in international policy because of *“the propaganda activities against Turkey as well as the imprudent policies developed by the governments in Turkey in the past. Extrajudicial killings, torture in prisons, the application of inadequate policies related to the Kurdish issue, violations of human rights, religious minorities, restriction of freedom of thought and belief and other similar problems have reinforced an extremely negative image for Turkey both domestically and internationally. In some circles abroad, Turkey is portrayed as a country that invaded Cyprus, killed Armenians and undertook military operations in neighbouring territories in the name of fighting the PKK*

(Kurdistan Workers’ Party)”. (Kalin, 2011, p. 16). Under such circumstances, the need for public diplomacy arose “so that Turkey’s new story can be told for the public worldwide in an efficient and comprehensive manner” (Özkan, 2013, p. 4).

Consequently, institutions and policies specific to the field of public diplomacy have been established and developed in Turkey within most important state institutions. Thus, the Presidency for the *Turks Abroad and Related Communities* as well as the Prime Ministry *Public Diplomacy Coordination Office*, renamed the *Public Diplomacy Office*, were established. The latter was established on 30 January 2010, following a presidential decision, under the Prime Minister of Turkey, with the aim of influencing and guiding the international community, having departments such as: Media Works, Political Communication, Cultural Works, Corporate Works, and Project Development. The main activities of the *Office* have included public diplomacy panels organisation, foreign policy advocacy programmes, foreign policy workshops and youth programmes in Turkey (Ekşi, p. 182). During the same period the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was restructured to include new directorates and departments specific to *soft power* vector-institutions. Thus, in 2010, ten new units were established within the Ministry. Among them, the most important and relevant in terms of public diplomacy are *the General Directorate for Information, the General Directorate for Overseas Promotion and Cultural Relations, the Deputy General Directorate for Cultural Diplomacy* (Ib., p. 180).

Following the model of European culture institutions, the *Yunus Emre Institute* was established in 2009 having as main goal to expand Turkish influence in the Balkans, the Middle East and Africa. The institute intends to meet the goal by introducing and promoting Turkey, its language, history, culture and art worldwide. Although the Yunus Emre Institute employs a nongovernmental institution-like operative principle, it is affiliated to both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture, which makes it part of the administration mechanism. It is worth noting that the president of Turkey is the honorary chair of the administration council (Ib.).

Moreover, there were established additional institutions and organisations in the context of public diplomacy for Turkish diaspora and the communities outside the borders of Turkey. All the mentioned institutions *“have become the new channels and mechanisms of the Turkish Foreign Policy”* (Ib., p. 179). To them, according to Professor Abdullah Özkan, there should be added *“the almost 200 universities in Turkey that could be mobilised in the context of public diplomacy”* (Özkan, p. 4). Even though Turkish authorities decided relatively late to employ public diplomacy-related soft power instruments, in the past years Turkey has become a strategic

player in the field in the Wider Black Sea Area, in the Balkans, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Nowadays, according to Professor Ibrahim Kalin, Turkey has multiple public diplomacy objectives (Kalin, 2011, pp. 17-19). One of them is related to the authorities as well as the civil society institutions desire to make the voice of Turkey “heard” in the regions of strategic interest. Other objectives refer to making the story and vision of the “new” Turkey known to as many target groups as possible, repairing the negative image it has in different societies, especially in the West, removing errors of perception, diluting prejudices and historical psychological fixations about Turkey. Last but not least, Turkey’s public diplomacy is aimed at promoting an image of a model modern Islamic state in Muslim societies across a wide geography, particularly in Central Asia and the Middle East, and, most importantly, at its becoming, through the influence thus gained, a regional and even global strategic player. Referring to this aspect, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan stated, in the article *Turkey as an Emerging Power*, published more than a decade ago, that “emerging powers require increased public diplomacy strategies that highlight the nation’s successes, compared to established powers that have already proven their position in the global order. If an emerging power seeks to be more highly regarded in the global arena, it requires that states acknowledge and appreciate its progression. Thus, Turkey’s increased public diplomacy efforts concerning the domestic transitions to a flourishing economy and strengthened democracy are a result of the emerging power status” (Erdogan, 2010; cited by Huijgh, Warlick, 2016, p. 14).

These objectives of Turkish public diplomacy are part of, or are subsumed under, a broader strategy of foreign diplomacy, built on the ideology of neo-Ottomanism. It became manifest after President Erdogan and his team, especially Ahmet Davutoglu, the foreign minister from 2009 to 2014, who also published, in 2001, the paper *Strategic Depth (Stratejik Derinlik)* came to power (Murinson, 2006, pp. 945-964). Davutoglu, a Professor and a politician, built his strategy for a modern Turkey on an idea that emerged in the geopolitical imaginary of Turkish leaders after the end of the Cold War, according to which the vast region of Anatolia is a bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia, and therefore “Ankara’s geopolitical interests must be pursued through a strategic depth that spans three continents” (Massara, 2022). Public diplomacy has thus become, for the leaders of the conservative regime in Ankara, a very good vector to the “target” of these ideas and visions about Turkey’s role and place in the world.

Turkish public diplomacy has made real progress in just a decade, mostly through institutional development in geopolitical spaces of strategic interest to Turkey. This fact has led Derya Büyüktanir, one of the acclaimed public diplomacy analysts, to state that “public diplomacy institutions are the new actors in Turkey’s foreign policy and have served as new channels and mechanisms for defining and implementing recent policies” (Büyüktanir, 2018, p. 2). The political and cultural elite of contemporary Turkey has understood that classical diplomacy becomes more effective if *soft power* instruments and institutions are employed.

The newly established public diplomacy institutions are also a product of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs restructuring (Açma, Kwachuh, 2021, p. 170). Therefore, these institutions work in cooperation with the newly established units within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to tailor Turkey’s foreign policy to the international environment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was reorganised to add objective public diplomacy departments and directorates, such as the Directorate of Religious Affairs Abroad (*Diyanet*), which manages about 2,000 mosques and financially supports religious education in European, Latin- American and African countries, thus promoting Turkish culture. The department has 61 branches in 36 countries, including Lithuania, Russia and Belarus. In addition, it has published and distributed the Qur’an and other religious books in 28 languages and financially supported official Islamic representative institutions in the Balkans, continental Europe and Africa. It has also provided educational and material support to imams from foreign countries and organised official meetings such as the Eurasian Islamic Council, the Islamic Council of the Balkan Countries, the Muslim Summit of Latin American Countries and the Summit of African Religious Leaders. Thus, *Diyanet* has been playing a leading role among the other organisations under the Muslim umbrella (Öztürk, 2018, p. 23).

These new institutions have established the civilian aspect of Turkey’s foreign policy, helping to exercise public diplomacy through *soft power* activities, mostly related to the social perspective, rather than through the *hard power* approach, entailing political practices.

NEO-OTTOMAN IDEOLOGY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

The conservative Justice and Development Party, which came to power under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan in 2002, brought Ottomanism back into the collective memory, highlighting the Islamic imperial glory of the Sublime Porte. Erdogan expanded the ideas launched by Ahmet Davutoglu in his “*Strategic Depth*” into his own geopolitical narrative (Pattnaik, Panda, 2022, p. 339).

Hakan Yavuz, an eminent Islamic Studies Professor at the University of Utah, explained the emergence and sanctioning of the term “*neo-Ottomanism*” (Yavuz, 2016, pp. 438-465; Yavuz, 2020). He stated that David Barchard, a British journalist, used the notion of *neo-Ottomanism* for the first time, *providing it with a definition while intuiting it will become a force in Turkish policy, one much more important than Islam*. (Yavuz, 2020, p. 4). David Barchard proves to be an expert in the history and the political realities in contemporary Turkey, which is backed by his career as “*The Guardian*” and then “*Financial Times*” correspondent in Turkey in the ’70s and the ’80s. The international community provides different interpretations for the term. Nevertheless, it certainly has an ideological connotation, being the best linguistic option to describe not only Turkey’s current foreign policy but also the way in which it is implemented (Avatkov, 2018, pp. 80-88). Hakan Yavuz considers that in order to understand neo-Ottomanism, “*one must examine how the ideal and memory of the Ottoman Empire persist as a guiding force in the ongoing nation-state project of the Republic of Turkey. Although Kemalist nation-building incorporated all means to suppress the Ottoman heritage, this imperial <ghost> has haunted the state and society since the empire’s collapse. As Turkey became more secular, thus moving closer to the West, the search for its lost soul has intensified. The Ottoman past offers a reservoir of experiences, lessons, and opportunities to shape the present and come to terms with the roots of Turkish identity. Therefore, as Turkey becomes more self-confident and economically prosperous, Ottomanism echoes in incrementally louder tones in every corner of Turkish society’s cultural, political, and social spaces*” (Yavuz, 2016, p. 440).

Although the Turkish nation has developed for more than a century, taking into account its historical evolution, ordinary Turks do not necessarily consider themselves members of a nation-state, but rather participants in a multicultural project. Turkey cannot be understood as a standard nation of Western civilization. It is a society with many identity groups, comprising a large number of diverse ethnic (at least 13), linguistic (at least 16 native languages) and religious groups. Hakan Yavuz believes that the memories of the Empire and Islam can be the main common denominators for these ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups for “*what is known today as the Turkish nation. Neo-Ottomanism offers a loosely (or broadly) defined amalgam of identity that would allow all these ethnic and linguistic identities to coexist. It offers a pluralistic view of Turkish identity*”. (Yavuz, 2014, p. 445). This mentality has been built in recent decades by appealing to the historical memory of Ottoman greatness, and it is not limited to the borders of present-day Turkey. Therefore, neo-Ottomanism, before constituting an ideological corpus,

was elaborated as a memory of the past through the specific means of art, film, history and many other forms of cultural expression, and then transferred into political actions and public discourse. One of the many examples in this regard is the historical fiction serial film “*The Magnificent Century*”, built on the idea of neo-Ottomanism and the synthesis of Turkish-Islamic civilisation. The series glorifies the Turks, portraying the Ottoman Empire as the superpower of the world where European emissaries are degraded at the sultan’s court and European states are powerless in the face of the absolute power of the Ottomans (Khan, Pembecioğlu, 2019, pp. 216-219). The series was initially broadcast in Turkey and Northern Cyprus, later exported and broadcast in over 70 countries, including Romania. As an ideology, *neo-Ottomanism* can be identified with Turkey’s aspirations to become a regional power and can be interpreted as a Turkish foreign policy strategy formulated by AKP leaders who focused on expanding Turkey’s relations with the states in the territories that were formerly Ottoman. *Neo-Ottomanism* is often given the connotations of an imperialist ideology. It would also explain the desire of the governments formed by AKP leaders to implement in public diplomacy ideas and activities that are specific to neo-Ottomanism, so that “*the new ideology could be explained to the world*” (Açma, Kwachuh, 2021, p. 167) while the new image of the country in international relations is explained (Ekşi, Erol, 2018).

Neo-Ottomanism is not explicitly present in public diplomacy activities and actions, being wrapped in cultural-artistic, spiritual and other forms and expressions that make up a seductive image of Turkey for the target audience. The application of public diplomacy in the target societies is achieved through the *neo-Istimalet policy*¹. This type of diplomacy is not new in Turkey, being implemented both before and after conquering new territories, by establishing relations entailing social aid, education, language and culture. Moreover, even today, Turkey presents to the world “*its model of moderate Islam, having an attenuated secularism, which has incorporated the neoliberal capitalist economy*” (Ib., p. 3).

The strategic depth doctrine developed by Davutoğlu, which actually expresses the ambition of Turkey to become a regional power having influence in former Ottoman Empire territories, is translated into public diplomacy through *soft power* activities. The author himself defines it not as an influencing policy but as a “*zero problems with neighbours*” one. However, AKP narratives often present the Ottoman past as the basis for establishing closer relations with former members

¹ Istimalet – a policy of accommodation between the authorities established by the conquerors and the local religious authorities. It explains why not all the territories conquered by the Ottomans were Islamised. See also Kolovos, E. (2019). *Istimalet: What do we actually know about it?* In Marinou Sariyannis (ed.) (2019). *Political Thought and Practice in the Ottoman Empire*. Rethymno, pp. 59-70.

of the Empire. The motto of public diplomacy actions is expressed by President Erdogan himself: *“Our policy is not to create enemies but to establish stable ties with all countries. Turkey’s relations with Middle Eastern countries are only natural as is the case with Balkan or Caucasus countries”*. (Sandrin, Damasceno Toscano Costa, 2020, p. 284).

Another basic narrative of Turkey, projected in societies in which it has an interest, is its internal development, democracy, rapid economic growth, openness to the global economy. Through its public diplomacy Turkey conveys the image of a country capable of successfully blending traditional Islamic-Ottoman culture with socio-economic modernisation. The theme of modernisation is adopted by all its public diplomacy institutions in debates about classical modernity, multiple types of modernity, multiculturalism and sovereignty. The messages transmitted to the target audience show that the relationship between tradition and modernity simultaneously includes the ideal of a balance between conservative values and modern means. Turkey wants to be perceived as a country that transforms and redefines modernity by preserving its conservative values.

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AND THE PROMOTION OF NEO-OTTOMAN TURKEY IN AREAS OF GEOPOLITICAL INTEREST. THE CASE OF THE BALKANS

The authorities in Ankara have almost naturally concentrated public diplomacy efforts in the regions that used to be part of the Ottoman Empire as well as in the areas of strategic interest, namely where the country desires to increase its political, economic and cultural-spiritual influence. Such concerted efforts can be noticed especially in the Balkans, the Middle East and Eurasia, namely where there are societies that share their cultural memory and knowledge with Turkey, and where Turkey intends to consolidate the regional leader position by employing public diplomacy. Neo-Ottoman ideology is wrapped up in the *Ottoman legacy* slogan (Atci, 2022, p. 554). The Turkish public diplomacy activity is present in many societies in Europe as well, considering not only the Turkish diaspora, accounting for over five million people who live abroad, but also the fact that Turkey aspires to become a member state of the European Union. Most of public diplomacy activities in Europe are related to the promotion of Turkish culture so that a positive image can be conveyed. Moreover, the EU hosts many Turkish schools and culture centres meant to strengthen the relations with Turkish diaspora (Huijgh, Warlick, 2016, p. 21).

The concentration of public diplomacy activities in the Balkans, immediately after the end of the Cold War, was determined by objective as well as subjective

considerations. In addition to the fact that Turkey considers itself a Balkan country too, many other factors determine the importance of the Balkans for Turkey. Thus, a large population of Balkan origin lives in Turkey as well as significant Turkish and Muslim communities live in the Balkans. This reality has historical roots, dating back more than 550 years ago. During this historical period, 62 of the 215 grand viziers of the empire were of Balkan origin. Moreover, the Empire’s relations with the peoples in the Balkan region, in terms of trade and security, were portrayed, in the fall of 2009, by Davutoğlu, a political leader and a renowned scientist, as a *“story of peace and success”* belonging to a *“golden age for the Balkans”* (Makovac, 2023, p. 25)². It is this perception of the Ottoman-Balkan past that has clear implications for Turkey’s current policy in the Balkans, in accordance with the desire to become the leader of the region. In this context, Ahmet Davutoğlu clearly expressed the mentioned perception in his controversial speech in Sarajevo, in 2009: *“Like in the 16th century, which saw the rise of the Ottoman Balkans as the centre of world politics, we will make the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East, together with Turkey, the centre of world politics in the future. This is the objective of Turkish foreign policy, and we will achieve this. We will reintegrate the Balkan region, the Middle East and the Caucasus, based on the principle of regional and global peace, for the future, not only for all of us but for all of humanity”* (Ib.).

Alexander Murinson considers that *“Turkey’s expansion in the Balkan states after the end of the Cold War was one of the most important foreign policy agendas of Turkey, as it was its expansion in the Turkic states in Central Asia”* (Murinson, 2006, p. 945). The relative success of the multitude of activities, including public diplomacy, carried out in the Balkans in the early post-Cold War years made some opinion leaders launch a geopolitical vision entitled the Turkish World for Turkey. In the mentioned vision, Turkey starts from the Balkans and extends to Turkey, Central Asia, the Russian Federation and China (Atci, 2022, p. 554). Public diplomacy and other means and instruments specific to *soft power* have become vectors to the target in these spaces so that this geopolitical vision could be achieved. From this perspective, it is not at all surprising that the first branch abroad of the most important institution that organises public diplomacy activities, the *Yunus Emre Institute*, was established in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 17 October 2009, under the name *“The Sarajevo Yunus Emre Turkish Cultural Centre”* (Ekşi, 2019, pp. 183, 184). By 2020, the institute had established 58 branches in various areas of interest

² Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu opening speech at a conference organised, in 2009, in Sarajevo, *“Ottoman Heritage and the Muslim Communities of the Balkans Today”*, cited by Makovac, M. (2023). *From Neo-Ottomanism to Pragmatism? Turkey’s Foreign Policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 2009*, <https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle/20.500.11956/179220/120437473.pdf?sequence=1>, retrieved on 4 June 2023.

for Turkey. Out of them 15 are in the Balkans (Albania 2, Bosnia and Herzegovina 3, Croatia 1, Montenegro 1, Kosovo 3, Hungary 1, Macedonia 1, Romania 2, Serbia 1) (Kiliçaslan, 2020, p. 651).

The *Yunus Emre Institute* branches have as basic objectives to popularise Turkish art and culture to foreign audiences, to teach the Turkish language, to provide information about the Ottoman historical past and to attract sympathisers for Islamic spirituality. All this is important for exporting a positive image of Turkey to the world in general and to the Balkans in particular.

According to Professor Muharrem Ekşi, the *Yunus Emre Institute* develops a wide range of projects: Turkology, promoting the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language in the education system of the countries where it operates, the reconstruction of the cultural heritage of the Balkans, the revival of traditional Turkish crafts in the Balkans, the establishment of 100 libraries with Turkish language works, the translation of 100 Turkish books, the organisation of joint painting exhibitions, the commemoration of common history on site, the establishment of Turkish cafes, the Turkish distance education etc. (Ekşi, 2019, p. 185).

Public diplomacy activities in the Balkan countries with either Islamic religion or important Islamic ethnic minorities experienced a flourishing development in the period 2000-2016. After that date, there have been some setbacks in Turkey's Balkan policy. Ahmet Davutoğlu resigned as Prime Minister and, following the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016, Turkey has intensified its efforts against the Gülen movement³, which was and still is particularly present and powerful in the Balkan countries (Güzeldere, 2021, p. 4). Mention should be made that the Turkish state has had such education institutions in Romania as well. After Davutoğlu's resignation as Prime Minister, Turkey has focused its public diplomacy and other soft power activities, especially on the Muslims in the Balkans, insisting on four main areas: religious institutions, Islamic history, education, mass media and popular culture, but even in these areas the results have not been spectacular (Güzeldere, 2021, p. 5).

Although the results of Turkey's public diplomacy activities in the Balkans have not been so spectacular in terms of increasing its influence, the fact that most of them have fallen into the cluster of neo-Ottoman ideas and regional hegemony aspirations has attracted the attention of other classical and non-state geopolitical

³ The Gülen Movement refers to a group of religious, educational and social organisations inspired and founded by Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar. The movement advocates for a secular education for faithful Muslims, which they need to thrive in the modern world. At the same time, it also emphasises the importance of traditional religious teachings. To this end, the movement has inspired the establishment of a worldwide network of schools and other learning centres that focus on secular subjects in the classroom, while offering extracurricular programmes that emphasise religious themes.

players interested in this region of Europe. For example, in an article published in *The New York Times*, businessman George Soros called for more support for the countries of the Western Balkans on their way to EU membership, arguing that if the region is not integrated into the EU, "it will become a sphere of influence of third actors, such as Russia, China and Turkey". (Ekinci, 2019, pp. 40-41). A German historian described Turkey as part of a historical "great game" in the Balkans, pursuing its hegemony as an alternative to the EU integration (Ib., p. 41). Moreover, it is very difficult to promote, through public diplomacy, the image of Turkey as a model of reconciling Islam with democracy and that of a benevolent regional leader that implements a policy of *zero problems with the neighbours*, while Turkey intervenes militarily in Syria, against the Kurds (Euphrates Shield in 2016/2017; Olive Branch in 2018 and Peace Spring in 2019) (Sandrin, Damasceno Toscano Costa, p. 254).

CONCLUSIONS

The study, through the formulated working hypotheses, shows that state and non-state actors frequently resort to the resources of public diplomacy to promote their national and geopolitical interests in different regions or globally. However, public diplomacy cannot be effective if its specific actions are conducted without taking into account the political and cultural characteristics, stereotypes and historical psychological fixations of the target groups considered at a given time.

Turkey has not really gained a predominant role in the Balkans, as it would have liked, regardless of the diversification of public diplomacy activities and of the large amount of allocated resources. No matter how seductive the stories promoted could be, no matter how varied and attractive to the public the actions and activities carried out could be, if they are not anchored in the political reality of the respective society, public diplomacy cannot fulfil its purpose.

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UNMANNED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLE (UCAV) – WEAPON OF THE FUTURE –

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Unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAVs) are an integral part of modern military conflicts, being increasingly relied upon to perform various tasks in the interest of the armed forces. The article aims to review the most popular and used UCAVs, consider their advantages and disadvantages and describe the tasks they perform.

Keywords: unmanned combat aerial vehicle; cruise missiles; loitering munitions; drones; targeting;

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, military conflicts place new demands on the conduct of military operations, in which high-precision weapons and high-tech military equipment are increasingly used. Unmanned aerial vehicles are no exception, on the contrary. In the 21st century, we cannot imagine conducting military operations without the participation of UAVs performing a wide variety of tasks – surveillance, reconnaissance, adjusting artillery fire, direct fire, retranslation, electronic warfare among other tasks.

The mass use of UAVs began in the second half of the 20th century, and for decades UAVs were mainly used for surveillance and reconnaissance (additional reconnaissance) of previously identified enemy targets and for transmitting data about them. The rapid technological progress has allowed the developers to create reconnaissance and striking systems with UAVs, capable of carrying various missile and bomb weapons. Currently, the combat UAVs (UCAVs) are fully-fledged used, their main task being to strike various objects (targets) of the opponent.

UNMANNED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLES – UCAVs

Nowadays, when troops have become more technologically advanced, UAVs can become one of the leading types of weapons. Many countries adopt and rely on UAVs as means that enhance combat effectiveness. Economically less developed countries also rely on UAVs, since rearmament with new and modern equipment is more expensive.

UAVs are currently used for:

- *surveillance and reconnaissance;*
- *adjusting fire;*
- *creating deceptive targets for the enemy;*
- *launching missile and bomb attacks on land and sea targets – by UCAVs*
- *others* (FMI 3-04.155, 2006; Dimitrov, Antonov, 2009, pp. 531-537).

Thanks to modern target detection systems and guided munitions, the UAV has a higher efficiency in destroying enemy equipment, structures and troops. They execute unexpected almost silent attacks, compared to combat aircraft or helicopters, thus being a very strong demoralizing factor for enemy military

personnel. Also, UAVs, which can circle over the target area for many hours, greatly exhaust the enemy's air defence personnel, who have to be constantly on edge of their abilities.

The use of UCAVs has increased several times in the military conflicts in Syria, Armenia and Ukraine, where their usefulness has been demonstrated. They are equipped with a diverse array of armament – guided missiles, aviation bombs and other weapons (Conev, 2007, pp. 120-126).

UCAVs are mainly separated into two groups:

- *UAVs carrying a certain type of ammunition – with fixed wings or powered by a multicopter system;*
- *loitering munitions (“kamikaze”).*

The main purpose of this type of weapon is to find an enemy target, and if the commander decides to strike it, the UCAV hits the target by launching missile, bomb attack or direct hit – for loitering munitions. If the target is not appropriate, the flying system searches another target, while the reconnaissance one should be hit with another fire means (artillery).

PERFORMED TASKS BY UCAVs

UCAVs can perform a large array of tasks, ranging from several tens of meters to under one meter. Although the tasks are different, in general, they can be divided into the following groups:

❖ *reconnaissance-strike* – the implementation of reconnaissance and search actions in order to detect a target (group of targets), identify dangerous targets, and, if necessary, immediately attack in automatic mode or at the commands of the UAV operator;

❖ *strike* – striking with missile or bomb weapons against pre-identified stationary or mobile targets with known coordinates or located in a limited area of the theatre of operations, at an enemy with weak air defence/missile defence system. As a rule, these targets are scouted by another source (optical reconnaissance, radar stations, reconnaissance UAVs) and are engaged by means of artillery, aviation or attack UAVs;

❖ *suppression of the air defence/missile defence system* – delivering strikes using high-precision missile and bomb weapons on objects of the enemy's air and missile defence system, especially in cases where the solution of the same task using manned aircraft is difficult for various reasons (for example, striking

at objects air defence/missile defence system requires the attacking aircraft to perform manoeuvres that exceed the limit set for pilots), or is associated with a high risk of loss of life. In this case, strikes can be delivered both against objects with coordinates known in advance and on objects that are quickly detected in the course of a particular operation;

❖ *electronic warfare* – the implementation of electronic warfare measures, namely the suppression of various electronic means of the enemy. In particular, they are related to the control systems of the enemy's radar and air/missile defence as well as to the disruption of its communications.

The first two tasks can be performed by many different UAVs, including those modified to carry munitions. Task performance depends on payload characteristics and the range and flight duration of a particular UAV.

The implementation of the third task is related to the almost inevitable contact of the enemy's air/missile defence forces and means under intense fire, which is why it is necessary to use specially developed unmanned aerial vehicles characterized by higher flight characteristics and manoeuvrability (especially in flights at low and extremely low altitudes), significantly less visibility at various ranges (including the active use of “*stealth*” technologies) and higher survivability, including high resistance to various combat damage.

In addition, if in the first two cases it is possible to equally effectively use the UAV in manual (by operator commands), semi-automatic or automatic control mode, while performing tasks when striking elements of the enemy's air/missile defence system, the automatic mode of operation can be used most effectively. In rare cases, the semi-automatic control mode can also be used. The reason is that in the event of a breach in the enemy's air/missile defence system, it is very likely that the data exchange system will be disrupted on all channels, as a result of the enemy's active use of electronic warfare systems.

POPULAR UCAVs USED IN RECENT MILITARY CONFLICTS

Recent military conflicts in Syria, Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine have shown that UCAVs will be heavily relied upon to strike enemy targets, especially forces with a weak or unprepared air defence system (<https://topwar.ru>).

Some of the most used and popular UCAVs with fixed wings in the 21st century are shown in *table 1*.

Table 1: UCAVs mostly used in military conflicts
(<https://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/unmanned-combat-air-vehicle-ucav.php>)

UCAV	Length (m)	Width/span (m)	Height (m)	Weight (kg)	Max speed (km/h)	Ceiling (m)	Range (km)	Armament	Country
Bayraktar TB2	11.2	12.0	3.2	420	250	8230	6000	2xUMTAS; MAM-L;MAM-C	Turkey
Bayraktar TB3 (2023) new*	8.35	14.0	2.6	1170	300	9500	200	PGMs; LGR; Anti-infantry mortars	Turkey
TAI Anka	8.0	17.3	3.4	700	217	9140	4900	PGBs	Turkey
Hermes 450	6.1	10.5		450	176	5486	200	2xHellfire ATGM	Israel
MQ-20 Avenger (Predator C)	12.5	20.12	2.1	4650	740	18288	5835	AGM-114 Hellfire; GBU-24 Paveway III guided bomb; GBU-31 JDAM; GBU-38	USA
MQ-9A Reaper	11.0	20.0	3.81	2223	Up to 400	15000	5920	Up to four AGM-114 Hellfire; GBU-12 Paveway II	USA
Orion (Inokhodets)	8.0	16.0	2.0	500	255	7500	700	Payload up to 200 kg	Russia
Forpost	7.22	8.55		350	200	4500	250	ATR Kornet; KAB-20	Russia
Punisher		2.55			198	400	45	UB-75HE; MACE	Ukraine

*The model is given for comparison with the previous and most widely used model – Bayraktar TB2.

The battles in Ukraine demonstrated the effectiveness of Turkish Bayraktar TB2 and the Russian Forpost and Orion, especially in the initial stage of the conflict. At the present moment, this kind of weapon is rarely used.

Some of the most used loitering munitions in the 21st century are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Loitering munitions/“kamikaze” mostly used in military conflicts (lb.).

UAV “kamikaze”	Weight (kg)	Width/span (m)	Range (km)	Endurance, (min)	Max speed (km/h)	Country
Zala KYB	6	0.95	65	30	130	Russia
ZALA Lancet			40			Russia
Switchblade 300	2.5	1.20	10	15	160	USA
Switchblade 600	22.7	1.80	40	40	185	USA
Phoenix Ghost				360		USA
Warmate	5.7	1.4	40	50	80	Poland
IAI Harop (Harpy)	23.0	3.0	1000	540	417	Israel
HESA Shahed 136	200	2.5	2500		185	Iran
Athlon-Avia ST-35	3		30		150	Ukraine

Unlike UCAVs, loitering munitions are now increasingly being used. It is due to the fact that both countries have adapted their air defence systems to combat drones, while neutralizing “kamikazes”, especially when they are in a swarm, is still a problem.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF UCAVs

UAVs have an **advantage** over manned systems when immediate target engagement is required after reconnaissance. The use of UAVs is not associated with the risk of loss of the crew, which expands the conditions for their rational use, including in situations where the enemy’s air defence systems create too high a risk of loss for manned systems. UAVs flight time has no limitations related to the pilot’s life support system. Furthermore, the battle stress is less when UAVs are used than when a mission is fulfilled by aircraft with a pilot. All this allows the use of UAVs in situations where the use of aviation is impractical or even impossible. In particular, they are often used in risky operations. After all, losing a drone is not as dangerous as losing an expensive aircraft and pilot.

Projects are being developed for unmanned aerial vehicles that can be charged with solar energy. This will greatly extend the stay of such devices in the air.

Despite the many obvious advantages that attack UAVs have in combat, manned aircraft still have a clear advantage in dynamic combat operations and when close integration with ground or naval forces is required. Achieving air superiority

and maintaining ground forces in direct contact with the enemy are two combat tasks that fall within the stated conditions.

At the same time, there is a large number of combat missions in which UAVs are more effective. The mentioned aspects create possibilities for increasing efficiency through the rational joint use of UAVs and aviation while benefitting from the advantages of both systems.

The role of UAVs in modern military conflicts has significantly increased. The perfect weapon does not yet exist, and drones also have their **disadvantages** (Antonov, 2020, pp. 8-13). For example, the fact that the signals of these devices can be easily intercepted by the enemy's air defence systems, and therefore the device is exposed to serious risks, from physical destruction to reprogramming and striking its own positions.

Another drawback is that, in order to be able to carry a heavy payload, some of them acquire impressive dimensions. As a result, they become an easy target for air defence assets. Part of this shortcoming is solved by changing the construction and using certain materials to reduce their reflectivity.

All possible disadvantages of UAVs can be compensated by proper tactics of their use. For example, if not only individual UAVs are used for strikes but they are used together with other forces (e.g., artillery), then the effectiveness of their use increases and the loss rate can be reduced. In recent conflicts, the UAV swarm tactic has become widely used, thanks to which it is possible to carry out massive strikes against enemy targets (Chanev, 2021, pp. 86-91).

CONCLUSIONS

The main task of drones is aerial reconnaissance. However, in recent years, the list of tasks that they can perform has expanded significantly. They are capable of launching missile and bomb attacks on land and sea targets, intercepting air targets, correcting fire and indicating targets, transmitting data and delivering cargo.

UAVs have proven their viability as a separate type of weapon, and their neutralization requires an expensive and modern air defence system that is not "affordable" to many countries.

UAVs have become an integral part of armed conflicts and the experience of their combat use have a serious impact on military science and military development in many countries, resulting in a significant change in the organization of air defence systems and the tactics of combined weapon systems.

In the future, the range of tasks performed by unmanned aerial vehicles will expand due to the development of science, technology and engineering. Moreover artificial intelligence is expected to be inserted in the design of UAVs. That is why many experts call them one of the most promising types of weapons of the future.

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RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND RETENTION OF MILITARY PERSONNEL – A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE –

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The article addresses, in an integrated way, three of the most pressing issues of the military body, which concern human resources: recruitment, training and retention of personnel and, after a psychological analysis of the three elements, concrete solutions are proposed for their development.

In addressing these issues, we started with the description of the psychosocial profile of the military organisation and from the hypothesis that the optimal efficiency of the operation of the military organisation is given by a series of three interconnected processes: recruitment, training and retention of personnel.

In this sense, based on exhaustive research, the factors influencing the reference processes from a psychological and social point of view were evaluated and realistic, pragmatic and specific solutions to improve recruitment, training and retention were sought.

Therefore, the article reveals both the biggest problems and the solutions of recruitment, training and personal retention.

Keywords: recruitment; training; retention; psychology; personnel;

INTRODUCTION

It is appreciated, axiomatically, that the human resource represents the most valuable asset of an organisation, and even more so of the military organisation. And so it is. This fact has been demonstrated by countless real-life examples, empirically. Thus, it can be seen that, no matter how well-technological an organisation is, if it does not have people capable of using that technology to its maximum capacity, its results will be mediocre, at best. That is probably why “*talent hunting*” is a primary priority of high-performing organisations.

Obviously, the process is continued by the training of recruited people and the development of schemes to retain them in the system. Therefore, the recruitment, training and retention of personnel represent some of the most important objectives of the military organisation, because it is based on people, and the quality of the human resource is an undoubted guarantee for the fulfilment of the entrusted missions. In general, the recruitment, training and retention of staff are most often associated with human resource structures, but the reality of recent years has shown that the success of these efforts should be based on psychological structures, which develop a better deep and scientific understanding on human nature and can measure a series of “*parameters*” of future candidates to know if they are suitable for one job or another.

Sometimes human resource management structures are content to operate hires just to reach their staffing targets, leaving time to prove to what extent the human resource hired was or was not suitable for the respective positions. In the military system, such an approach can be toxic both to the military body and to the fulfilment of the mission entrusted to the forces. Toxicity can be explained psychologically, through elements such as: the lowering of employment standards, concessions in staff training, the lack of a retention policy, the promotion of uncertainty in the system, the development of mentalities such as “*that’s how it goes*”, the creation of cracks in the organisational culture, poor retention of staff, low morale, etc.

Psychologists can instead evaluate potential candidates and develop scientific, long-term forecasts based on a whole panoply of psychological techniques and methods. When good cooperation is achieved between the final beneficiaries of the human resource, the human resource management structures and those

of psychology, it can be said that the recruited human resource meets the best criteria to function optimally, over a long period of time in the organisation of reference.

Next, we will review the most relevant psychological aspects, which concern the recruitment, training and retention of personnel in a military organisation.

STUDY METHOD

Research into the psychosocial aspects that bring more efficiency to a military organisation was carried out based on an extensive opinion survey involving more than 10,000 subjects.

This study started from the hypothesis that, among the multitude of factors that influence the operation of an organisation, those related to human resources have a special significance. Thus, after the statistical analysis of the data, three factors emerged that really matter: recruitment, training and staff retention. They will be described throughout this article, from a qualitative perspective.

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PROFILE OF MILITARY ORGANISATIONS

The psychosocial profile of military organisations can vary significantly depending on many factors, such as: the category of forces, the tactical, operational or strategic level of the unit, the mission of the unit, the relationship of the unit with other structures, traditions and combat experience, the organisational culture of the military structure etc. However, some *common characteristics* can describe military organisations, as follows:

- **Strict hierarchy:** Military organisations have a very clear hierarchical structure, with degrees and ranks indicating the authority and responsibility of each member;
- **Firm enforcement of military discipline:** Discipline is essential in military structures and is strictly enforced to maintain order and efficiency. Often, military rules of discipline are much stricter than in civilian life and mandatory, and non-compliance can attract punishment;
- **Armament and military equipment management:** Military organisations have access to advanced military equipment and weapons of war, to fulfil their missions;
- **Execution of specific missions:** Military organisations are created to perform specific missions, such as defending the country, attacking the enemy or maintaining peace;

- **Existence of military uniform:** The military wear distinctive uniforms that symbolise their membership in the organisation. On these uniforms, one can read their military rank and experience (decoration bars);
- **Enforcing of military doctrines:** Military organisations have well-defined doctrines and strategies to achieve their objectives and missions. These are not encountered in civilian life;
- **Continuous Training:** Continuous training and skill development is essential to maintain the effectiveness of the military organisation. Thus, career courses, specialisation courses, etc. can be described.
- **Rapid Mobilisation:** The military must be prepared and mobilise quickly in emergency situations. The departure of each soldier from the garrison is strictly monitored by the organisation;
- **Guided by strict orders and rules:** Military organisations are strictly guided by strict orders and rules that cover almost every field. These are also reflected in the behaviour and actions of the members;
- **Promotion of specific values:** Military organisations promote, through all their actions, the traditional cultural values of the nation, such as: patriotism, courage, loyalty, supreme sacrifice, determination, resilience, honesty, honour, dignity, enduring the hardships and privations of the military service, respecting the culture of intelligence etc.
- **Secrecy:** Sensitive information is kept secret, to protect national security, and staff are trained in this regard;
- **Flexibility:** Military organisations must be flexible and adapt to changes in the area of military theatres of operations.
- **Leadership:** Military leaders are trained to act, both in peacetime, but also in war or deep crisis situations. This asset allows them to find the best solutions for crisis situations.
- **Continuous training and development:** Continuous training and skill development are essential in a military organisation. Psychologists contribute to the development of training programs and performance evaluations to ensure that members are mission-ready.
- **Adaptability and Resilience:** Military organisations must be adaptable and resilient to adapt to changes in the environment and to meet security, technological, economic and other challenges. Psychologists work on developing the organisation's ability to adapt and respond optimally to new situations.

- **Information capacity.** The military organisation, in order to fulfil its mission, must be constantly informed about the potential enemy. In this sense, a wide range of sensors, both human and technical, are used.

It is important to note that the psychosocial profile of military organisations is complex and dynamic. Implicitly, the personnel who give life to these organisations must share their values, and their organisational culture and possess certain psycho-professional and social characteristics. Starting from these characteristics, the recruitment, training and retention of personnel in military organisations will be addressed in turn.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT

As I have already stated, the recruitment of personnel for the military organisation is one of the most complex actions, because it involves a lot of bureaucratic aspects (determining the personnel to be involved in the recruitment process, analysing and clarifying the vacant positions in the organisation, establishing the needs of employment, configuring the psycho-professional and moral profile of the candidate for each category of positions, determining the priorities for employment, configuring the rights and obligations of future employees, formulating the minimum requirements for occupying the position, designing an appropriate promotion of the positions to be put out to competition, organising contests/interviews/psycho-physical and medical tests, specifying the conditions for contesting employment decisions, communicating the results, determining the training/preparation/education needs of those admitted, establishing the recruitment pool, specifying the recruitment methods used, choosing a recruitment agency or recruitment by your own HR staff in collaboration with other structures, etc.). The more complex the job requirements, the more important the process of recruiting future candidates (Cable, Judge, 2018).

As can be seen, recruitment is not limited to a *“hic et nunc”* type of present (here and now) but has a strong component of future orientation and career forecasting of those who will be employed in the organisation (Chatman, 2019). This aspect is essential for military organisations, which can ensure personnel a long career. So, in the following, we will refer, especially to a series of psychological aspects that military organisations should take into account for the *success of the recruitment process*, as follows:

❖ **Clear definition of the positions put out to competition.** The more clearly defined the job requirements, the more likely they are to be accessed by potential candidates. In defining them, it is important to specify, among others, the following elements: job description, advantages offered by the job to the employee (salary,

career, related rights, social status, etc.), education and experience requirements necessary for registration, technical data regarding registration and participation in the contest, etc. These elements produce a cognitive clarification regarding the reference post;

❖ **Promotion of the competition for the occupation of certain positions through an extensive media campaign.** Obviously, this campaign must take into account the characteristics of the targeted public to apply, on the one hand, and their access to certain media channels (internet, posters in the city, messages on social networks, newspapers, etc.). Thus, candidates can find out in advance the intention of the military organisation to recruit personnel, on the one hand, and they can thoroughly prepare to face the competition tests, on the other hand;

❖ **Creation of an easy-to-access application for uploading enrolment documents.** Such a friendly application with potential candidates gives them a good picture of the organisation and helps them save time and resources compared to a classic application (building the track file, submitting it in person at the company/institution headquarters etc.);

❖ **Development of the organisation’s brand.** Candidates must really want to become members of that military institution, not just take a temporary job out of desperation. Creating motivation for employment is a really important psychological argument;

❖ **Informing candidates about the psycho-physical requirements imposed by the organisation.** Thus, it is recommended that the websites of the recruitment structures contain all the necessary information for a candidate to make an informed decision about his future in a military organisation. In this way, scales for physical tests and even a psychological test can be posted, so that the interested person can preliminarily evaluate himself concerning his personality traits and possibly about his intellectual performances.

❖ **Searching for candidates actively by the organisation.** A military organisation that really wants to recruit quality personnel draws up a *“recruitment plan”*, based on which it can organise meetings with graduates from different educational institutions or select people of interest from different backgrounds and formulate them over the phone or by e-mail/mail an invitation to participate in a prospective interview. When the potential candidates are selected from certain educational institutions or certain environments of interest, it is assumed that they already have the background desired by the institution/company and implicitly a set of skills and psychological characteristics useful for the position put up for competition. In this context, it is also recommended to analyse your employees, especially if it is about promotions;

❖ **Carrying out preliminary checks:** Checking CVs, educational documents, references, recommendations, records, psychiatric antecedents, previous professional experience, etc. – is a mandatory step for accepting a person in a military organisation. This approach allows the selection of the best candidates and allows the extraction of useful information, which can be evaluated superiorly, both during psychological and human resources interviews;

❖ **Maintaining an open communication channel, available to candidates.** This fact is useful for clarification by the candidates or by the organisation of some aspects related to the position to be filled. Open, jovial and informative communication is a psychological factor, which helps the candidate a lot in deciding to apply and participate in the selection process;

❖ **Designing unified messages that the organisation's representatives will convey to the candidates.** In this sense, a team must be selected that will take care of recruitment (and communication) and that will be properly trained to achieve the objective that the military organisation has proposed. Consistency in the messages coming from the representatives of the organisation is very important, from a psychological point of view, for the candidates. They should be clear (as in wording and informative content), short (without unnecessary details) and precise (refer, punctually, to a particular matter of interest);

❖ **Organisation of a transparent and legal competition.** The competition for filling the position must have all technical aspects clarified (date, time, duration, topic, bibliography, participation rules, evaluation criteria/scores, marking/scoring method, structure of the management project, appeal, etc.) and take place under legal conditions. Thus, possible suspicions of fraud or favouritism of any candidate will be significantly reduced. Psychologically, candidates must experience a sense of justice and fairness.

Considering the elements described above can make the difference between a successful recruitment (well-trained and motivated people for the position, several candidates for a position, etc.) and a routine recruitment (lack of candidates or candidates presenting to the competition mediocre, poorly motivated for the position or accepted without competition).

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF STAFF TRAINING

Normally, after staff are recruited and placed on the job, they have to go through a training process. No matter how well prepared he is, it is appreciated that his training is necessary, to optimally adapt to the demands of the organisation (Aguinis, Kraiger, 2009). The training process can be customised according to the job

family that received new staff. Training can be of several forms and durations and can take place at different stages of the employee's career and in different military educational institutions (military academies, mm and non-commissioned officer schools, application schools, training centres, etc.). Empowered structures should configure these forms of training, to respond as best as possible to the organisation's requirements (Kanfer, Chen, 2016).

Some forms of staff training can be carried out at the local level, through the organisation's own structures (e.g.: ad hoc courses – held by staff with experience in a certain field, courses in the organisation's accredited institutions etc.) or through structures external to the organisation (e.g.: postgraduate training, qualification courses etc.).

The issue of staff training also refers to staff with seniority in the organisation. Periodically (it is recommended at least once every 4 years), each employee should take part in some form of training (Klein, Koslowski, 2013). These forms of training allow employees in military organisations to get in touch with new developments in the field, develop their skills and knowledge, become more productive, adapt much better to changes, increase their level of job satisfaction, improve their self-confidence, reduce errors and incidents and implicitly the risks at the level of the organisation, to develop in their career, to become more creative and, last but not least, to improve their interpersonal relationships, on the line of communication and cooperation (Saks, Haccoun, 2018).

So, below will be presented **a series of ways to train employees**, with psychological relevance, that organisations should consider, as follows:

- **Classroom training sessions.** Thus, short-term classical courses can be organised in a classroom, where teachers/instructors will be invited to teach a series of lessons, according to a predetermined plan;
- **Online training sessions.** The use of online learning platforms allows the training of employees from several cities/countries, through modular lessons, which can be accessed either simultaneously or sequentially by employees;
- **Organisation of workshops and seminars.** These should be interactive forms of training, where employees can work together and learn new things;
- **Lectures and presentations.** Within these forms of training, experts from a certain field can be invited, from whom employees can learn new and useful things, including through question and answer sessions;

- **Games and simulations.** This type of training reinforces the practical skills of employees very well because it involves repeating some scenarios, several times, until learning;
- **Mentoring and coaching.** Pairing new hires with experienced mentors gives new hires the chance to learn continuously, over an unlimited period of time (Phillips, Phillips, 2016);
- **Presentation of podcasts and videos.** This form of training deals with specific matters, which employees must know very well. By listening/watching these posts useful technical knowledge can be imparted quickly and well-targeted;
- **Job rotation.** Through this operation, employees can learn new things from several fields/areas of interest and use their acquired knowledge creatively;
- **The use of virtual and augmented reality in the training process.** Through this form of training, employees can practice certain scenarios, until they perfect their work skills at a very high level;
- **Participation in conferences and technical-scientific events.** This form of training allows employees access to the latest in the field, as well as to the development of a network of professional relationships. Some of the projects/ideas noted during the conferences can also be implemented in the organisations of origin (Kraiger, Ford, 2019). This form of training requires the issuance of an official act, certifying the skills acquired by the employee;
- **Professional training of employees through individual study.** Some organisations offer employees access to: physical and virtual libraries, databases, tutorials, etc. and ask them to document a certain period of time, before a possible evaluation or taking over a new position or integrating a new process/equipment in the organisation;
- **Training through feedback.** In this case, employees receive detailed and ongoing feedback on how tasks are performed. Thus, they can correct their possible errors and permanently improve their efficiency at work;
- **Training by accessing some forms of accredited, postgraduate or post-high school training.** In this case, employees are encouraged to pursue master's programs, graduate courses, and doctoral and post-doctoral programs, in order to improve their performance at work. These forms of training take place according to accredited and nationally/internationally recognised analytical programs. Some military organisations may cover some of the costs of this type of training;

- **Training through employee evaluation.** This form of employee training can be periodic (e.g. once a year). On this occasion, employees will try to present themselves as well as possible at the evaluation and will implicitly prepare ahead of time, in order to obtain good results. Sometimes the scores obtained in these assessments can be used as career promotion criteria;
- **Discussion groups/experts.** Within this form of training, specialists from a certain field or several fields can meet and discuss finding solutions to certain problems of interest to the organisation. Creative problem-solving methods can be used in these sessions.
- **Military exercises and applications.** Within this form of training, different skills and competencies are integrated so that, at the end of the exercise/application, the staff can act together and practice all their previously acquired competencies.
- **Employee certification.** A special form of training is represented by the official certification/attestation/accreditation of employees as specialists in a certain field. It can thus be seen that many forms of training can be used by the military organisation to train its personnel on a case-by-case basis.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF STAFF RETENTION

In this way, candidates are recruited who have the right psychological skills for the work they are hired for, are open to improvement and professional development, and remain loyal to the organisation in the long term, thus having the chance to go through all the career steps offered by the respective organisation and, last but not least, they can offer their experience to the newest, for the good and success of the military organisation.

When discussing, however, personnel who are to be part of military organisations, things are even deeper, because these recruited and trained persons must dedicate their entire active life to the country and people to which they belong. Obviously, there are some short-lived careers, but these are exceptions in most military organisations. Although considerable efforts are made to identify such candidates, in reality, systems have significant losses, sometimes difficult to predict.

The causes of this phenomenon, known as “*retention capacity of the organisation*”, can be multiple. Just to illustrate, we will list only a few of these causes that decrease the ability to maintain high-performing people in the organisation:

❖ **Lack of adaptation of the organisation to changing social imperatives.**

In the past, people were loyal to the organisation because they were emotionally, patriotically, and even ideologically attached to it. Gradually, societies began to prioritise

money and success as measured by financial rewards. In this way, people began to look for what is best valued in society – money, thus becoming much more mercantile (Salas et al, 2012);

❖ **The lack of proper valorisation of employees.** People began to realise their intrinsic value. Some organisations strive to hire valuable individuals with great potential for development. Moreover, these organisations develop multiple training programs for their own staff to make them even more efficient. At some point, these people realise that they are valuable, not only to the reference organisation, but also to themselves, and that they have seen a significant increase in their “market share” in recent years. With military organisations invoking all sorts of rigid and bureaucratic rules about rewarding their work, those people are thinking of selling their professional success on the open market and joining other organisations that pay better (Allen, Bryant, Vardaman, 2010).

❖ **Hiring over-qualified people.** In certain situations, it happens that people are hired for certain positions who have a level of academic training clearly higher than the requirements of the position (for example, they have one or two faculties and are only rank-and-file soldiers or non-commissioned officers). These people will be eternally dissatisfied with what they do (Becker, Gerhart, 1996), and their level of aspirations will tend to another category of personnel, which will create professional frustrations and disappointments and will cause them to leave the military system;

❖ **Lack of organisational projects.** In this case, we refer to the need to involve employees in various projects of the organisation. People, par excellence, need social recognition, and the organisation can also provide them with this by involving them in various initiatives. Thus, staff can express opinions, participate in decision-making, bring creative elements, bond emotionally with the organisation through the reference project, etc. In the absence of these elements, the employee’s connection with the organisation is strictly limited to the formal and mercantile aspects, a fact that will negatively affect retention;

❖ **The existence of a negative mood in the organisation.** People value the mood in the organisation more than financial or other rewards. Our statistics have highlighted the fact that more and more people are ready to accept specific deprivations imposed by a certain organisation and even a limitation of income, just because they feel good in that organisation: there is good communication on vertical and horizontal, bosses are authentic leaders, initiative is encouraged, there is good moral support in the organisation, responsibilities are clear and successes predictable. Obviously, if things are like this and the morale in that organisation collapses, the staff will look to leave it as quickly as possible;

❖ **Lack of ethics in the organisation.** Regardless of the position a person occupies in the military organisation, he automatically becomes a good observer of what is happening in that structure. Thus, each person is attentive to the system of rewards and punishments, to the evaluation and recognition of the work done, to the promotion, to the assignment of tasks, to the boss-subordinate interactions, and the motivation system - in general. When employees’ perceptions are built around organisational injustices or even illegalities, they tend to leave the corrupt organisation and look for a more ethical one (Martocchio, 2017);

❖ **Insufficient staff.** In some military organisations, the lack of personnel is easily visible. Although the state of the organisation provides for a certain number of positions, in reality, they are not filled and, implicitly, the remaining employees will have to work more to make up for the lack of staff. The degree of bear ability to take on additional work is limited, from person to person (Mathis, Jackson, 2019). Some organisations try to increase the retention of the remaining staff by offering them management positions, with all kinds of increments, but without ensuring the optimal number of subordinates. Up to a point, things might work, but then psychological phenomena such as: stress, burnout, chronic fatigue, anxiety, depression, restlessness, insomnia and more can appear – which, over time, definitely affect performance employees, no matter how resilient they are;

❖ **Lack of promotion prospects.** Most people, as they gain experience and seniority in the military organisation want to be promoted. The military is also trained in this regard. The lack of promotion opportunities dampens their enthusiasm and gives them a persistent feeling of being stifled and the organisation disinterested in their work. In many situations, the respective persons seriously consider leaving the respective organisation and some actually do so, thus reducing the retention capacity of the institution (Pfeffer, 2015);

❖ **Absence of a functional motivational system.** Beyond the financial and promotional rights, the staff motivation system can convince the employees to work continuously and efficiently for the organisation. As a rule, the organisational and operating regulations of organisations provide for rewards and punishments, with a motivational purpose. So, the motivational system can be oriented towards either positive or negative motivation and used depending on the situations that arise. For example, some forms of employee motivation will be listed: offering access to health programs, offering free access to the gym, free/reduced meals, company car, company phones, offering medals, decorations, plaques, badges, recognition diplomas, representative pennants, symbolic gifts with the logo of the organisation, appreciation of the employee in front of the collective, granting

of credits/professional points, granting of certifications, promotions, appointing the employee as a mentor for newcomers, sanctions for violating the rules of the organisation, etc.;

❖ **Inadequate training within the organisation.** As previously stated, the training/education of personnel is essential to the smooth running of the military organisation. Regardless of the type of organisation, it is statistically estimated that once every 4-5 years new technologies/methodologies/working techniques, new machines and new approaches to the business/institutional/international/security environment appear (Phillips, 2016). In this context, any responsible military organisation is concerned with the training of employees, either by organising courses in their own institutions (for example, military organisations are structured as universities, academies, schools, etc.), or by calling on experts from the free market (companies specialised in coaching, academic or school institutions, etc.). The non-existence of these stages of preparation or their elimination due to financial considerations/lack of staff/disinterest/etc. it can generate employees' perception that the organisation is not concerned with their professional training and implicitly with their promotion. In this context, it is only a step until the staff leaves the respective institution/company and looks for another opportunity in the labour market;

❖ **The imbalance between time spent at work and free time.** Although some commanders/bosses tend to value employees who stay overtime very well, in reality, psychological studies have shown that this criterion of appreciation is a false and perverse one because employee overtime can be caused by both willingness to work and affirmation above average, but, most of the time, it is generated by their inability to solve the tasks in the legally allocated working time, by the overloading with tasks of the staff, by the bad management of working time, the lack of authentic leadership, the desire of some employees to "check off" in the eyes of the bosses, etc. Slowly, slowly, what seemed like enthusiasm will turn into dissatisfaction, revolt and then the decision to leave the organisation, because the bosses cannot reward all those who stay behind schedule, and the fatigue accumulates, drop by drop, day by day, disrupting the personal life of employees, sometimes irreparably;

❖ **Toxic leadership style.** This aspect has a devastating role in the functioning of military organisations, regardless of their structure. The leadership/management style directly affects the employees and the performance of the organisation. An inadequate (even toxic) leader for a given organisation can do more harm than all the previously mentioned factors, cumulatively. That is why organisations must appoint valuable people to leadership positions, who, by vocation, possess

leadership qualities and who can lead the organisation now and in the future. Otherwise, the affirmation of a harmful leader/manager can represent not only a brake in the development of the organisation, but also a trigger/facilitating factor for reducing staff retention;

❖ **Lack of communication in the organisation.** Communication in the organisation helps par excellence, to solve its problems and to diffuse tensions when they arise. If there is real communication in the official vertical and horizontal channels (transmitting clear tasks and feedback from management to employees, solving employee grievances, openly discussing the organisation's problems, sending motivational messages to employees and explaining sensitive situations, etc.), employees no longer have reasons to create parallel communication networks, which, as a rule, focus on their dissatisfaction with the organisation's management/leadership. Therefore, the lack of real official communication within the organisation can create hostile communication networks towards its management, a fact that has a high chance of crystallising employee dissatisfaction and implicitly them leaving the organisation (Schneider, Smith, 2004).

❖ **Increasing competition in the free market.** The pursuit of successful people is continuous and, more often than not, knows no limits in achieving goals. Thus, all kinds of methods are being developed to attract valuable personnel, not only those without a job, but especially those who have demonstrated at their current workplace that they are performing. In this whirlwind of jobs, in which it is found that trained people are less and less, compared to job needs, there are: atypical phenomena of unfair competition – in which state organisations attract personnel from other state organisations, phenomena of public humiliation between different organisations – to convince people to leave the respective system, phenomena of "hypnotising candidates" with offers that cannot be refused, etc. All these elements reduce staff retention and create a real effervescence in the labour market, in which each person is looking for a more attractive job, without striving to provide, over time, the expected results in his current job.

❖ **The incompatibility between the personality of the subject and the psychosocial profile of the organisation.** Sometimes it is found that some candidates and subsequently employees do not have a suitable personality profile to work in the military organisation (Barrick, Ryan 2003). This aspect significantly affects both their job satisfaction and their organisational effectiveness. These people will be eternally dissatisfied, frustrated, negative, and refractory to everything new. They will be focused only on the salary received, most of the time (Bauer, Erdogan, 2012). Although other factors influence staff retention, we summarise the ones

presented, considering that they have attracted the attention of the reader long enough.

Next, we consider it necessary to expose some *methods of staff retention* in an organisation. Each of the described methods has a significant psychological component.

- **Developing a positive and supportive work environment.** In such a working environment, staff can develop and demonstrate their true worth. In military organisations, such a work environment is fundamental to developing a sense of camaraderie and loyalty to the institution, commanders, and colleagues.
- **Implementation of professional development and promotion programs within the organisation.** These programs allow employees to seek to constantly improve themselves and to be up to date with the latest elements in their professional area (Noe et al, 2019).
- **Offering competitive benefits and compensation packages, with a motivational role.** People can devote their whole being to a job, for limited periods of time, because routine habits are established (Aguinis, 2020). So, in order to stimulate them and make them squeeze other personal resources for the current work, the staff must be rewarded, periodically, according to the merits, established based on clear performance standards.
- **Creating a balance between the professional and personal lives of employees.** Although employees are important at work, it must also be considered that they have a family and a psycho-physiological need for rest. Working overtime and commuting long distances are the main obstacles, which can disrupt the reference balance.
- **Recognising and rewarding employee performance.** The basic principle is that high performers should be rewarded. Thus, they will become even more effective for the military organisation, and others will follow their example.
- **Establishing clear and achievable objectives for each employee.** For people to feel comfortable at work it is important that the goals per person and per sub-organisation are realistic and achievable. The loading of tasks beyond the employee's strength will generate a state of deep dissatisfaction, which will cause him to leave the respective unit (Ployhart, 2014).
- **Providing opportunities for advancement and internal promotion.** The military promotion system is considered to be an optimal one for the career promotion of personnel. Obviously, those who consistently stand out positively can be promoted more quickly.

- **Encouraging communication and collaboration between employees.** Good official communication must be augmented by an informal, positive and constructive one. This way, staff can express their opinion openly and without fear when faced with a problem. At the same time, such informal communication helps soldiers develop a sense of camaraderie and belonging to the reference unit.
- **Implementation of an ethical and realistic feedback and performance evaluation system.** Evaluation is essential in any management process and even more so in the military organisation, which is governed by multiple professional or international standards (for example, NATO's STANAG system).
- **The organisation of team building activities and social events for employees.** Such activities are important for getting to know the employees informally and increasing the informal ties between them.
- **Ensuring a safe and healthy work environment.** In this case, the provision of security and safety measures at work is considered. Although the military environment is a dangerous one, by its nature, it is dominated by very clear functional rules, aimed at ensuring the health of the personnel.
- **Providing support and assistance for the development of employee's skills and competencies.** Personnel in the military organisation are recruited to be open to new and continuous training, therefore, they must be constantly stimulated (Ployhart, Moliterno, 2011). This must be followed, with consistency, by the competent structures and promoted among employees.
- **Implementation of policies to recognise the achievements and contributions of employees.** To function optimally, people need recognition for their work, efforts and more. Thus, staff retention is ensured.
- **Providing flexibility in the work schedule and the location of the activity.** Although the working schedule seems strict, in certain situations exceptions can be made, and these exceptions, properly understood by the respective employees, but also by the collective, can guarantee a good retention of the staff on the job.
- **Creating relationships of trust and respect between employees and management.** Every person wants to be respected as a person and as a professional. Ultimately, everyone is important in their position, and the efficient, joint work of everyone ensures the success of the unit's mission. In this equation, mutual respect and trust are very important, because they create a work environment conducive to retention.

- **Development of a personalised success plan for each employee.** Fortunately, we are different! This aspect allows us to find different solutions to the same problem, to cover the entire range of needs of a military unit and more. So, if professional management solutions are found for each employee, the success of the military organisation is guaranteed, and people will not want to leave it because they feel that they are successful.
- **Promoting balance between routine work and interesting and challenging projects.** This is especially true for creative people or those who have been doing the same type of activity for a long time. Sometimes breaking the routine and involving staff in an adjacent project keeps their alertness awake and their sense of value high.
- **Implementation of mentoring and coaching for employees.** Such an approach is especially useful for those new to the organisation. The approach will help them adapt much faster and show their true value, as quickly as possible. They, in turn, will feel compelled to mentor the younger/new arrivals in the military organisation, which is to the benefit of both the people and the organisation.
- **Carrying out employee opinion surveys and using the feedback to improve the work environment.** Practice has shown that employees need to communicate, through opinion polls, all kinds of problems to senior management. In turn, the management can find out through the opinion polls, what is the perception of the employees regarding a multitude of surveyed aspects and obtain the most realistic feedback. It is important that after these opinion polls, the staff is informed about the results obtained and measures are taken to correct some of the problems reported by them. Thus, in the following surveys, staff will participate openly, without prejudice.

The list presented above is only a set of suggestions, which can be significantly improved by each organisation.

CONCLUSIONS

Effective recruitment, training and retention of personnel are three interconnected and essential components for the success and development of a military organisation. These aspects can have a significant impact on organisational performance, institution/firm/company culture and long-term goals.

Here are some key points about each of these.

Regarding the efficient recruitment of personnel, the data analysis allowed the identification of a set of main directions of action, aimed at the following components:

- **Identifying the needs of the organisation in terms of the human resource to be recruited** begins before this process and involves clearly defining the organisational needs so that only those candidates who best match the job requirements are sought.
- **Promoting the organisation** means, par excellence, communicating the culture and values of the organisation in recruitment materials so that potential candidates understand the environment in which they would be working.
- **Selecting the right candidates** involves choosing those people who not only have the skills and knowledge required for the job but also the values and aptitudes that match the organisational culture of the military body in general and the recruiting unit in particular (Schneider, Barbera, 2014).
- **Effective use of the selection interview** is both about assessing the technical and behavioural skills of the candidates and observing the candidates' perception of the military organisation, their readiness to engage in specific military missions, and their level of expectations.

Effective staff training:

- **Training planning and design** consider the development of well-structured training programs that meet organisational needs and provide employees with the necessary skills to perform tasks from entry to exit from the military structure.
- **The use of an optimal diversity of training methods** envisages the use of interactive training procedures and techniques, adapted to, at least: the level of training, the specialty in which the personnel is being trained and the category of military personnel (officers, non-commissioned officers/mm, soldiers-professional ranks).
- **Feedback and assessment** are provided constantly throughout training programs to monitor employee progress and ensure they understand and apply new knowledge and skills.
- **Continuous development is an imperative of training,** which does not stop with the initial period, but continues throughout the military career, including for the ranks of general.

Effective staff retention:

- **The transfer of organisational culture to new employees is achieved** through open communication, based on mutual respect and support.

- *The correct recognition of merits and the ethical use of rewards* presupposes the existence of a fair and objective evaluation system, associated with a set of just rewards and punishments and with a high motivational value.
- *Providing opportunities for advancement* is a strong element of personnel retention because people need recognition of their value and their work alike, associated with a goal of further service in the military organisation.
- *Achieving a balance between personal and professional life*, by respecting working hours and holidays, is highly valued by employees.
- *Professional development stimulates employees* and requires the organisation to invest in their professional training by offering them learning and training opportunities that motivate them to stay in the institution.
- *Fostering open communication* keeps the lines of dialogue open between employees and management to identify issues and address concerns promptly.

Overall, the success of an organisation largely depends on how it manages the recruitment, training and retention processes of staff. Effectively addressing these issues can contribute to the development of a talented, motivated and committed team, capable of meeting organisational objectives.

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EUROPEAN MILITARY MOBILITY – IMPLICATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INTEGRATED DEFENCE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT –

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The European Union's decision to deepen and develop the military mobility from a logistical and organisational point of view represents a logical step in its natural evolution. The implementation of the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility, presented by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in 2018, represents a main act in achieving the generic purpose of the European Union, i.e., a European Defence Union.

This article aims to highlight these military mobility measures proposed to be implemented, but also to emphasise the outcome from the integrated management of defence resources point of view.

This article will try to link the causes to the results concerning the implementation of European military mobility. A synthetic documentary analysis, taken mainly from a qualitative point of view and with an additional quantitative support, will try to highlight the causal element and the effects on European military mobility related to the integrated management of defence resources. The research hypothesis is related to the utility of measures taken for the development and operationalisation of European military mobility in relation to the actual impact on defence resource management, respectively the coherence of defence planning in member states and resource optimisation.

Keywords: military mobility; projects; networks; transport; resources;

INTRODUCTION

The current approach of the European Union in terms of developing and streamlining processes that include or have as a basic element or support military mobility links the types of visions generated in the recent past with the present marked by the new geopolitical, geostrategic and security challenges.

A true European Defence Union, “*a Europe that protects, a Europe that empowers, a Europe that defends*” (Jean-Claude Juncker, 2017, p. 1), is based on and must “*exploit civilian/military synergies to expedite military mobility – both within our borders*” (Commission, 2017, p. 2). For example, as concluded by the European Commission in the *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the Action Plan on Military Mobility*, transport infrastructure “*has traditionally been a necessary component of any defence system, providing in particular routes for military supplies and troop movement*” (Commission, 2017, p. 3).

If the idea of mobility promoted by the European Union, prior to the aggression of the Russian Federation on Ukraine, had as its starting point the Global Strategy of the European Union (EEAS, 2016) and was focused, at that time, on a mix between civilian and military elements without a clear individualisation, in order to achieve generic objectives, today we talk and refer to well-determined elements of European military mobility established and assumed as such. The turning point was, in this matter, obviously, the coming into force of the Strategic Compass in 2022 (Council of the EU, 2022), a fundamental programmatic document in the projection of the European Union as a global actor in security and defence.

Moreover, the integrated elements that have been adopted and which, through the documentary analysis, will be analysed below, generate and design the concrete steps taken by the European Union (EU) in achieving the global goal assumed by the Maastricht Treaty, namely the creation of a European identity in defence and security matters (Member States, 1992, p. 105) and, in time, of a genuine common defence (Banu, 2022, p. 9).

Highlighting the effects and implications on defence resources management of the new European policy on military mobility is an equally important element of analysis on which it will be deepened.

EUROPEAN MILITARY MOBILITY – A BRIEF LOOK BACK

Military mobility – a new direction of action for the European Union

❖ Based on *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the Action Plan on Military Mobility* (Commission, 2017) conceptualisation and terminological identification of the term military mobility in the European Union, hereinafter referred to as European military mobility, represented the step taken by the EU in dealing with the topic and the phenomenon of mobility in its own right.

The document referred to above contains two separate elements, policy elements, but also strict measures to implement this policy: *the EU Action Plan on Military Mobility* and the convergent measures in order to achieve the goals set out in that communication.

The regulatory layers of the document concern:

- identification of the current situation;
- vulnerabilities and related risks;
- proposals to improve military mobility, seen through the prism of hybrid threats.

The starting point in the Commission's vision at that time was a "*common understanding of needs and requirements*" (Commission, 2017, p. 5), converted into actions targeting at least certain areas (eur-lex.europa) considered essential for successful implementation of measures.

The generic purpose of the communication, but also of the administrative procedural measures envisaged, was to generate a normative-administrative-procedural framework that would allow an easy, fast, and efficient movement in the European Union without difficulties or physical, legal or administrative-procedural barriers, travel to benefit military personnel and equipment related to the execution of ordered missions.

Basically, the European Commission aimed to generate a joint integrated effort on the line of committing resources for defence, an effort that would be sustainable from a procedural and normative point of view, laying the foundations for a framework for the effective implementation of the elements of European military mobility identified or identifiable along the way.

The heterogeneous elements in the development of the transport infrastructure of member states need to be approached as analysis and understanding in a unitary manner, in relation to the dual use of infrastructure, the military requirements being different and having a special specificity from the civilian ones.

Focusing on the assessment of existing road, rail, air or sea infrastructure, the Commission proposes, as a start, to identify the drivers of deficiencies in the integrated approach to infrastructure, with a view to gradually improving and eliminating these shortcomings, through legislative, procedural measures and financial instruments to aid implementation.

The Commission exemplifies the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and the possibility of using it also for military purposes. The TEN-T analysis should note the opportunities for use, but also the overlapping elements or gaps identified in the implementation and development of the project, given that the Trans-European Transport Network was conceived, from the beginning, as a multimodal infrastructure for civil use.

The Commission's effective proposal as a procedural and legislative element to achieve the specific objective was for "*the EU to develop an infrastructural standard that integrates the military profile for multimodal transport*" (Commission, lb., p. 6), a standard that addresses current and future EU infrastructure investments and that, through the dual-use approach, supports European military mobility.

On the other hand, the Commission proposed strict procedural measures in customs and dangerous goods legislation, with facilities for military vehicles and equipment transiting through the EU to be harmonised with civilian ones already existing or to be applied. As regards uniformity in order to use a single procedure relating to military mobility on the territory of the member states, the European Defence Agency is given as an example to provide the necessary experience for the development of such a procedure, taking into account the projects already carried out.

In the event of an emergency in the Baltic states, allied forces would have to cross the Suwalki breach – a strip of land about 60 km wide and stretching for about 100 km along the Lithuanian-Polish border between pro-Russian Belarus and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. The corridor could become a choke point for Western forces and cross NATO's land supply axis to the Baltics (Ikram Aboutaous et al, 2021).

At the same time, the Commission considered the need to continue taking measures to counter hybrid threats to European critical transport infrastructures and increase resilience, as well as to continue working and coordinating with NATO to streamline, facilitate and increase the dynamics of military mobility in the European Union.

To follow up on the elements proposed in the Communication, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security together with the European Commission have undertaken to present an Action Plan on European Military Mobility for approval by member states, with the aim of formulating recommendations on actions, actors and deadlines in increasing efforts to improve European military mobility¹.

Basically, the European Commission aimed to generate a joint integrated effort on the line of committing resources for defence, an effort that would be sustainable from a procedural and normative point of view. The Commission laid the foundations of the framework necessary for the effective implementation of the elements of the European military mobility identified or identifiable along the way.

The Commission's causal approach aimed to generate an impact in defence planning in member states along the lines of an integrated infrastructure management. The military mobility is being viewed at an integrated level projecting changes and developments from planning, allocation, and use of resources to developing member states' capabilities and capabilities.

¹ "This plan will build upon the results of the European Defence Agency's Ad Hoc Working Group on Military Mobility and will propose recommended actions, implementing actors and ambitious timelines on how to address identified barriers hampering military mobility within the European Union" – Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council and of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017JC0041>, p. 8, retrieved on 8 September 2023.

❖ Presented in March 2018, *The Action Plan on Military Mobility*² set out a number of guiding principles to be used in its effective implementation and better and efficient coordination and reinforcement between member states.

All parties involved acknowledged and concluded that increased military mobility, within and beyond member states' borders, streamlines the deployment and exploitation of resources and generates additional stability and security at EU level.

Moreover, the close cooperation of all relevant actors within member states, public or private, military or civilian ones, is the cornerstone of the implementation of the Action Plan.

On the other hand, the Commission drew attention to the need for much closer cooperation with NATO in the field of military mobility in order to develop a common vision and pragmatic and unitary approach to the challenges and obstacles identified, legal, administrative or fiscal issues being equally challenges identified as elements of actual infrastructure or technical or operational nature.

In other words, for example, understanding the administrative-territorial organisation of all states involved can be as important as fully identifying and mapping landforms. Similarly, national legislation may pose challenges as significant as different track gauges or the impact of climate change in certain geographical areas.

The Commission concluded the need for cooperation with NATO to find common solutions to overcome these challenges, respecting the security policy of each member state involved, in conditions of transparency and equidistance. Practically, the Commission's conclusions converged towards identifying all the necessary resorts to fulfil the generic purpose of collaboration with NATO, respecting certain pre-mentioned principles.

The 2018 Action Plan was based on *the Roadmap for Military Mobility* developed by the ad hoc Working Group established within the European Defence Agency by Steering Board decision of September 2017 (EDA, 2017, p. 3).

The ad hoc Working Party addressed the topic of military mobility in Europe, in particular to identify obstacles to cross-border movement and surface transit of military personnel and capabilities across the European Union, to map existing initiatives and shortcomings and to identify relevant actors within EU and at national level (Ib.).

² Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the Action Plan on Military Mobility, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018JC0005>, retrieved on 8 September 2023.

The roadmap prepared by the Ad hoc Working Group identified and outlined:

- tasks,
- responsibilities,
- ambitious timetables for improving military mobility,
- legal aspects,
- customs,
- specific military requirements,
- updating military standards related to infrastructure,
- identification of measures allowing cross-border movement, including related diplomatic authorisations (eda.europa.eu).

The implementation of the Plan will generate among member states the possibility to act faster both in the context of missions and operations carried out under the Common Security and Defence Policy, as well as national and multinational activities (Commission, 2018, p. 2).

More than listing forms, aims or principles, the 2018 Action Plan has proven to contain effective measures and clear steps to follow in areas such as transport of dangerous goods, customs duties and VAT, or cross-border travel permissions.

The Commission recommended to member states measures to revise the relevant national legislation, outline the operational requirements specific to each area, but also the existing restrictions and motivate them from a political point of view, possibilities to adapt regulations and sign agreements to harmonise procedures and rules to facilitate the implementation of measures in order to substantially improve European military mobility (Commission, 2018, p. 9).

Such a complex measure envisaged optimising and interrelating member states in terms of adjusting operational capabilities and increasing pooled capabilities in the field of defence resources. A sharing of existing infrastructure, whether civilian or military, an increase in its capabilities would generate the effects predicted by the Commission in terms of improving European military mobility, and this is already happening within the framework of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

European military mobility, a project within the Permanent Structured Cooperation

The natural step in the development of military mobility projects was the initiative of military mobility projects within the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

The establishment of this European framework for cooperation by Articles 42 (6) and 46 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Protocol No. 10 to the TFEU on permanent structured cooperation respectively enabled the adoption of EU Council Decision 2017/2315 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and adopting the list of participating member states (Council of the EU, 2017).

Examples of the direct applicability and application of the 2018 Action Plan translated into cooperation projects under the PESCO umbrella can be provided by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany Direct initiatives to which reference can be made are the project:

- “Military mobility”, coordinated by the Netherlands,
- “Network of logistics centres in Europe and support for operations” project whose framework nation is the Federal Republic of Germany.

Denmark has been applying the Common Defence and Security Policy since 2022 by abandoning the opt-out clause agreed by the Maastricht Treaty (EU Information Centre - Danish Parliament, 2022).

Under the coordination of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, all member countries of the European Union are participating in this project, except Ireland, Malta and the Kingdom of Denmark, a country that started to be part to the Common Defence and Security Policy in 2022 by giving up the opt-out clause agreed by the Maastricht Treaty.

Moreover, between 2021 and 2022, Norway (Council of the EU, 2021a), Canada (Council of the EU, 2021b), the United States (Council of the EU, 2021c) and the United Kingdom (Council of the EU, 2021b), (Council of the EU, 2021c) joined (Council of the EU, 2022) military mobility cooperation programme.

The stated aim of the project is to support member states’ commitment to finding ways to simplify and standardise cross-border military transport procedures, aiming to enable the unhindered movement of military personnel and goods within EU borders, by road, sea, rail or air, without lengthy bureaucratic procedures (www.pesco.europa.eu-1).

The second project “Network of logistics hubs in Europe and support to operations” has as its main vision Germany’s idea to improve military mobility by eliminating existing infrastructure deficiencies (railways, roads, bridges) and speeding up the administrative and regulatory procedures needed to move military assets. This translates into creating “a multinational network based on existing

logistic capabilities and infrastructure. The goal is to use a network of existing logistic installations for MN business to prepare equipment for operations, to commonly use depot space for spare parts or ammunition and to harmonise transport and deployment activities” (www.pesco.europa.eu-2).

The generic purpose is to pool resources and capacities, concentrated in specific areas, in the form of logistics hubs. These resources and capacities such as warehouses, equipment maintenance facilities, etc. will be shared by Member States. The implementation of these logistics hubs as an interconnecting element of member states is based on the use of the multimodal transport network within the European Union.

Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Netherlands joined this project coordinated by the Federal Republic of Germany.

The advantages of such projects envisage better coordination in resource allocation planning, predictability, forecasting and development of military capacities and capabilities needed for the execution of missions requiring cross-border military mobility within the EU and beyond.

The establishment of those logistics hubs, in an integrated format, facilitates a return on the financial resources needed to be committed, a coordinated investment planning as well as an efficient management of the defence infrastructure of each member state.

Evaluating the two PESCO projects in terms of European military mobility, the first serves as a political-strategic platform for simplifying and standardising cross-border military transport procedures, while the second targets a multinational network based on existing logistical capabilities and infrastructure to reduce reaction time and increase the capabilities and sustainability of military operations across Europe (Hadeed & Sus 2023, p. 157).

ACTION PLAN ON MILITARY MOBILITY 2.0 – NOVELTY ELEMENTS AND EFFECTS ON INTEGRATED DEFENCE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

Action plan on military mobility 2.0 – short presentation

The political-socio-economic developments at European level, namely the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, determined the European Commission to accelerate the process of implementing integration measures into the European military mobility project. The geopolitical situation is providing the Union the current need to take precise and directly targeted measures on key areas in order to achieve the objective. The EU is updating and rethinking the strategic vision on military mobility, a key area in the defence and security domain of the entire European Union and beyond.

The coming into force, in 2022, of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence as a “*programmatic document and, at the same time, a vision through which the EU stages its capacity to be a relevant actor at geostrategic level*” (Bangală, 2023, p. 4) was the decisive step in approaching military mobility as a main element in building the new conceptual framework in security and defence. Also this approach will allow the EU to achieve the already established goal – the horizontally construction of a strategic autonomy that will enable the Union to reduce dependence on other external actors (Anghel et al, 2020, p. 2).

The proposal of the “*Action plan on military mobility 2.0*” in November 2022 represents for the European Commission “*the next chapter of work on military mobility for the period 2022-2026. Enlarged in scope and proposing additional measures, it will contribute to a well-connected military mobility network, with shorter reaction times and capable, secure, sustainable and resilient transport infrastructure and capabilities*” (European Commission, 2022, p. 1).

Topic	Budget (EUR) - Year : 2023	Stages	Opening date	Deadline	Contributions	Indicative number of grants
CEF-T-2023-MILMOB-WORKS - CEF-INFRA CEF Infrastructure Projects	750 000 000	single-stage	05 May 2023	21 September 2023		

Figure 1: Budget overview

Taking into account the foundations for the development of European military mobility, the Commission notes that the Council of the EU has already adopted requirements for military mobility within and outside the EU, including technical specifications and main military routes (European Commission, 2021) and there are

budgetary allocations of over €2.8 billion for dual-use infrastructure projects under the programme *Connecting Europe Facility* (CEF) carried out between 2021-2027 (European Council, 2020. p. 20).

At the same time, strictly for projects related to military mobility, an amount of EUR 1.69 billion is allocated under the CEF 2.0 – Transport section (www.eumonitor.nl), carried out between 2021-2027. For 2023 alone, the European Commission has made available EUR 790,000,000 for projects aimed at military mobility at EU level (ec.europa.eu).

On the other hand, the Commission recalls that transport infrastructure requirements applicable to certain categories of dual-use infrastructure actions under the CEF have already been adopted (Commission Implementing Regulation EU, 2021, pp. 37-47), customs procedures have been simplified and cross-border transport has been optimised, and member states have proposed collaborative projects in the field of military mobility under PESCO.

The Action Plan on Military Mobility 2.0 has a strategic approach condensed into a definition that is intended to be comprehensive and quasi-comprehensive in terms of its generic purpose: the Action Plan is *“a comprehensive framework to enhance military mobility. It proposes further actions to enable the swift, efficient, and unimpeded movement of potentially large-scale forces, including military personnel and their equipment, both in the context of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, as well as for national and multinational activities, notably in the framework of NATO”* (defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu).

Basically, the strategic approach aims to optimise a network for military mobility containing multimodal transport corridors, nodes and logistic centres that provide support and facilitate the deployment of troops and related equipment, that is governed by harmonised, optimised and administratively digitised rules and procedures, and that is individualised and characterised by sustainability, resilience and readiness to optimise civilian and military logistical capabilities, elements of utmost importance in military operations without which they cannot be carried out and sustained (Ib., pp. 2-3).

Action plan on military mobility 2.0 – Guidelines in strategic approach

The guidelines of the strategic approach of the document are outlined and developed in the 4 pillars identified by that document:

- multimodal corridors and logistics hubs,
- regulatory support measures,
- resilience and preparedness,
- partnership policy (Ib., p. 3).

❖ Multimodal corridors and support hubs aim to use transport routes and connect logistics hubs in order to enable the deployment and transit of troops and equipment in a short period of time. This implies a development of existing transport routes, in order to transform them into genuine dual-use transport routes, the construction of new ones, as well as the arrangement or redevelopment of logistics hubs in predetermined directions.

The Commission proposed to revise the 2013 TEN-T Regulation by extending core network corridors to Western Balkan partners by including additional road and rail sections on the existing geographical network to reduce gaps with the military network.

*Aim: - maximising synergies between the use of existing infrastructure by the civilian and military sectors;
- raising more technical standards for TEN-T infrastructure, a measure with direct benefits in troop movements and military materiel (European Commission, 2022, p. 4).*

In particular, the Commission recalled the importance of the current TEN-T network established in 2013. Reiterating that in 2019 the European External Action Service (EEAS) carried out an analysis to compare TEN-T and the EU military network, balancing military requirements for transport infrastructure with technical requirements for TEN-T transport infrastructure, the Commission highlighted the outcome of this analysis which concluded that the military network of Member States and TEN-T, overlapped by 93%. This means that transport infrastructure investments on the trans-European network directly improve military mobility, with the objective of a centralised network by 2030 (European Commission, 2022, p. 3).

On 27 July 2022, the Commission adopted the *“Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network, amending Regulation (EU) 2021/1153 and Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 and repealing Regulation (EU) 1315/2013”*, an updated proposal on the TEN-T network to reflect the new geopolitical context following the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine. Basically, the European Union envisages a concrete element *“an immediate response to the requested action communicated in the “Solidarity Lanes” Communication, an extension of four European Transport Corridors to Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova is proposed, based on the indicative maps of the core network in these two countries. This regards notably an extension*

of the North-Sea Baltic Corridor via Lviv and Kyiv to Mariupol, the extension of the Baltic-Black-Aegean Sea Corridor to Odessa via Lviv and via Chişinău as well as an extension of the Baltic Sea-Adriatic Sea and the Rhine-Danube Corridors to Lviv”³.

Member states’ actions on this pillar are expressly mentioned by the Commission, inviting them to maintain and develop a network of national contact points for military mobility, to develop and submit proposals for dual-use infrastructure projects, to contribute to updating military requirements for military mobility within and outside the EU. Member states are also required to submit to the Commission and the EEAS, by mid-2023, their national assessments of the capacity of physical networks to meet infrastructure requirements identified in military requirements, and before the end of 2023 to identify synergies on energy efficiency in their national strategies for preparing their armed forces for climate change, as requested in the Strategic Compass (European Commission, 2022, p. 8).

❖ The regulatory support, the second pillar of the Action Plan, has as defining elements the need to harmonise procedures for further facilitating military mobility, respecting two fundamental principles, territorial sovereignty, and decision-making independence.

The components of the Pillar relate to facilitating cross-border transit, harmonising legislation from a customs point of view, digitalising administrative processes and developing the necessary logistics.

With the help of the European Defence Agency, in 2019 member states (except Ireland and Denmark) managed to implement the *Optimising cross-border movement permission procedures in Europe (CBMP)* programme to harmonise and simplify cross-border movement procedures, addressing both regulatory and procedural aspects, and to develop solutions optimised without generating additional administrative burden (eda.europa.eu-1). In 2020, Norway joined that programme coordinated by the European Defence Agency. The CBMP programme serves as the framework programme for the implementation of two technical arrangements (TAs), signed in 2021, for border crossing permits: one for land and one for air (Ib.).

Regarding the harmonisation of customs legislation, under the aegis of the same European Defence Agency, in May 2021, 23 member states and Norway signed the *“Harmonisation military requirements related to customs”* agreement aimed at *“the digitalisation of military customs related activities”* (eda.europa.eu-2) and making available the resulting dataset for exchange with civilian customs authorities.

³ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ec755361-0dbf-11ed-b11c-01aa75ed71a1.0001.01/DOC_1&format=PDF, p. 2, retrieved on 14 September 2023.

The steps taken towards achieving the objectives of this pillar consisted in the creation, in 2021, of a consortium of companies from Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Romania, Luxembourg and Norway, which, by 2025, with funding from the European Defence Fund, will develop a digital data and information exchange system, in a secure regime, specific and necessary for military mobility.

“Additive Manufacturing, as a key technology, contributes to both sustainability and industrial competitiveness. Finally, reducing the logistical footprint – such as the required (re)-supply, maintenance, and other logistics required when moving a military unit and/or materiel – would free up capacities and resources, and thus make military movements more efficient and faster” (European Commission, 2022, p. 10).

Concerning the development of the necessary logistics, it should be noted, as the Commission has also noted, that the logistical systems and processes of the Member States are heterogeneous, a uniformity and harmonisation of them being necessary, to build a coordinated system of response to the needs and implications of the military mobility of the member states and beyond. Therefore, the European Defence Agency proposed and supported member states in finding solutions for implementing common standards in the field, in accordance with the Capability Development Plan (CDP) constantly promoted and updated⁴ by the Agency.

Also, the implementation of common standards for Additive Manufacturing (AM)⁵, for example, for the military field can generate added value by ensuring, in a very short time, a rapid military mobility optimizing the supply of standardized and fully compatible spare parts in the logistics supply chain.

❖ In relation to resilience and preparedness, military mobility networks must always be prepared to face hybrid threats, cyber threats, but also be resilient and prepared to face climate change (global warming generates an obvious impact on rail, road, air or sea transport networks of transport hubs and supply hubs).

⁴ *“The purpose of the periodic CDP revision, a key tasking of the Agency, is to provide a full capability picture that supports decision-making at EU and national levels regarding defence capability development.”*, <https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/all-activities/activities-search/capability-development-plan>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

⁵ *“Additive manufacturing (AM) is the name of the industrial 3D printing process, a computer-controlled process that creates three-dimensional objects by depositing materials, usually in layers”*, <https://www.twi-global.com/locations/romania/ce-facem/intrebari-frecvente-faq/ce-este-fabricatia-aditiva-additive-manufacturing>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

How will these elements of resilience be achieved? The Commission is proposing a holistic approach to mapping logistical gaps and weaknesses with reference to land, sea or air capabilities needed to be covered to optimise the large-scale movement of troops or equipment. In this respect, the Commission gives as an example, as an element of good practice, the PESCO project “*Strategic Air Transport for Outsized Cargo (SATOC)*”⁶ to improve European Strategic Air Transport Capabilities in the critical area of oversized or specialised cargo. For 2023, this project has a budget of 157,000,000 Euros (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/edf-2023-ra-protmob-satoc>).

This requirement comes from observing the inability of civilian structures to meet military requirements, the use of the first-come-first-served concept being the basis for the operation of civilian networks. In order to overcome these problems and improve military mobility at European level, the Commission discussed identifying those measures to prioritise and optimise the civilian response to military needs.

At the same time, the Commission proposes to identify urgent measures to facilitate priority access to transport, infrastructure, capabilities in full respect of EU member states’ sovereignty over their national territory and decision-making processes on military movements.

To maintain the high level of preparedness, the Commission proposes to carry out exercises in this area, based on a well-established plan, and calls for an increase in the level of protection against transport security risks.

Basically, the resilience to physical destruction of transport networks, cyber threats, including those related to air, rail or maritime traffic control), container terminal management systems, control systems for locks, bridges, tunnels, etc., is the generic objective, and the measures taken or proposed must be circumscribed to the resilience of critical entities – Directive on the resilience of critical entities COM (2020) 829⁷ - NIS2 Directive, entered into force in January 2023.

The Commission is also considering solutions for military mobility to benefit from the development of space programmes. Thus, the European satellite-based

⁶ *The overall goal of the Strategic Air Transport for Outsized Cargo (SATOC) project is to fill the critical deficit by developing, in a gradual 3-step approach, a European solution for the transport of large and heavy cargo* – <https://www.pesco.europa.eu/project/strategic-air-transport-for-outsized-cargo-satoc/>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

⁷ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0829>, retrieved on 15 September 2023.

navigation programme (Galileo/EGNOS) or the Copernicus observation programme are solutions identified as potentially generating data and information to optimise military mobility. Moreover, the Commission refers to the Public Regulated Service (PRS), the Galileo navigation service relevant for governmental applications and to the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) with utility and applicability in logistics and transport operations.

In terms of partnership dimension, EU-NATO relations remain the main element of cooperation and development in the field of military mobility, the technical requirements of the two partners being overlapped, due to close and efficient collaboration, in a percentage of 95%. A coherent and partnership approach to military mobility may lead to an overcoming of procedural, technical, or administrative obstacles or barriers, for the benefit of both entities by strengthening resilience and the possibility of participating in military mobility exercises.

In the same vein, the Commission encourages member states and refers to strengthening the relationship with other partners, the US, UK, Canada, or Norway being already partner states in various projects related to military mobility.

The main aspects to be highlighted in the evolution of European military mobility envisage on the one hand, the **identification of needs** in order to optimise the planning process and execution of military operations, in the process of facilitating the mobility of military equipment and personnel of the member states and on the other hand, **a realistic determination of the capacities** available to carry out this process. The European Commission has created the normative and administrative framework to develop this crucial field in the generic ensemble of European defence, but in our opinion, member states need a more pronounced involvement (punctual or generic) in order not only to assume military mobility projects, but also to their effective implementation.

CONCLUSIONS

The way of understanding and implementing a set of measures to generate a new, better outlined, pragmatic and efficient approach to military mobility on the European continent represents, nowadays, in our opinion, not only a *desideratum* to be achieved in shaping another level of European security, but also a form of deep integration of the member states into the European project.

Military mobility is part of the set of instruments that might generate major changes in the approach to defence resources, from planning and logistical support to the implementation and effective conduct of military operations, the measures taken or in full implementation process being decisive in approaching each member state.

Practically, this entire process of adapting and resizing resources for defence must, on one hand, be correlated through the procedural-technical-administrative measures that have been presented synthetically in the present research, and on the other hand, it must be verified in practice, through exercises and simulations that clearly show the viability and traceability of the component elements.

Therefore, for example, as an element of approach, the above-mentioned PESCO projects imply the contribution of the participating member states in terms of resources and capabilities necessary to improve military mobility, while the challenges related to the integrated management of resources for defence, identified along the way, should have a unitary solution at European level, with individualization specific to each member state. An attempt to cover up the shortcomings in the area of military mobility independently is, from my personal point of view, a low-success action that does not help the European Union as a whole.

Therefore, the civilian and military synergy in developing concrete projects and the *sui generis* concept of mobility can be exploited by the two parties involved, with mutually palpable benefits. As concluded by the President of the European Commission, Ursula Van der Leyen, in her State of the European Union address to the plenary of the European Parliament on 13 September 2023, for example, “*The Rail Baltica project is not only a symbolic return of the Baltic States to Europe, but also holds significant economic and geostrategic importance. By reconnecting the Baltic States to the European rail network, the socio-economic benefits are estimated at EUR 16.2 billion. It also enhances regional security by enabling the swift and efficient transportation of troops and equipment through the region*” (European Commission, 2023, p. 23).

Basically, such projects as *Rail Baltica* or the extension of the Baltic-Black Sea-Aegean corridor to Odessa via Lviv and Chişinău are based on a profound reassessment of TEN-T, with obvious implications for the member states. The nomination of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova as termination points, but also as potential beneficiaries of these networks is likely to effectively include them in the European security architecture, these countries being currently candidate countries for EU membership. Basically, the development of these large transport corridors should generate the possibility of ensuring the transit of troops and military equipment of all categories without encountering major obstacles in the current area of the European Union and beyond.

The significant impact on defence resources, as well as the need to finance projects will generate major challenges for member states, which is why the Commission came to their support and stipulated that the development of this dual-use infrastructure will be achieved through co-financing through the European

Defence Fund (CEF), a financing instrument that remains, further, an essential pillar in the implementation of the Action Plan (European Commission, 2022, p. 3).

In conclusion, the measures presented and analysed aim to maximise the coherence of defence planning in the member states and to optimise resources in order to operationalise a deep military mobility at European level. The research hypothesis is verified in the sense that the military mobility measures at European level proposed and implemented decisively influence the defence resource management of member states.

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CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY PARADIGM

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War has always been the greatest challenge for armed forces and soldiers. The modern warfare, through its forms and new technologies, challenges the training of leaders and military structures at higher levels, able to operate in all conditions and with all forms and super-technological systems encountered in the modern theatre of war. Contemporary dangers, threats and risks force the decision-making structures to identify solutions to combat them, in line with their level of technology and the field in which they propagate.

Modern warfare challenges leaders, commanders, and staff officers of planning, command, and control structures to identify ways to maximize the combined effects of manoeuvre and firepower and to synchronize military actions in the tactical field with the characteristics of modern technologies and with the established strategic objectives.

Keywords: security; strategy; unmanned aircraft; military actions; air operations;

INTRODUCTION

The present-day provides a picture of the security environment dominated by political-economic, military and social uncertainties, threats and tensions. Many of the vital systems that ensure the normal functioning of society are going through a period that is difficult to manage. Political crises alongside with those in the health, energy, economic and environmental protection fields, the degradation of the standard of living in less developed countries, the increase in migration and the exodus of refugees from areas where military actions are carried out, complete the overall picture of the security environment with a touch of generalized instability.

Providing national, regional and global security becomes, thus, a wish for the political classes and a challenge for the structures responsible for monitoring, managing and strengthening the security climate.

In view of the picture in which the image of the security environment is represented, the conflict in Ukraine is superimposed today, with all its particularities and the effects of multi-domain actions that transform the current confrontation into a long-lasting war.

The position of Romania in the current configuration of the security environment is an extremely important one and implies predictability and responsibility on the part of decision-making fora due to the relationship between the current regional security environment and the status that our country has assumed, as a member of political and military organizations of the EU and NATO, as the host of the anti-ballistic defence shield elements and a member of the strategic partnership with the USA.

On the other hand, due to its geographical position, Romania, which has a common border with Ukraine and access to the Black Sea, is NATO's last outpost in Eastern Europe, and all these realities, in turn, emphasize even more the importance of managing the regional security environment.

Thus, Romania has framed its national security objectives and established its main directions of action in line with the global and regional geopolitical context and with the respect and permanent defence of the values, rights and freedoms that the state guarantees to its citizens, according to the Constitution. Following and fulfilling these objectives involves the design and implementation of doctrines, norms, procedures and plans that are reflected at the tactical level in dispositions and action orders that entities and structures at the execution level must carry out.

The battlefield and modern warfare are composed of a series of combat systems that act differently and, together, develop a huge pressure on security systems, and the appearance of new smart technologies, devices that act on the basis of algorithms built by artificial intelligence, of remotely controlled equipment, completely changes the concepts so far and outlines a new image of the national, regional and global security environment.

The “*man versus machine*” war is no longer the prerogative of “*Science Fiction*” films, and strategic approaches and doctrinal constructions must take into account the existence and involvement of artificial intelligence, technologies and modern unmanned systems with their operating capabilities in military actions at all levels of the contemporary battlefield.

The space of military actions or the modern battlefield is today unstable and variable, dynamic and volatile, intelligent and augmented. This is due to its dimensions (land, air, sea, space, cyber, information etc.) that intertwine and they influence each other displaying variants of missions and military actions of an extremely advanced and comprehensive scope that can be countered only by the use of force or systems and types of weaponry that have a common characteristic, the effect of mass destruction.

Part of this conglomerate that today makes up the battlefield, the modern airspace in turn has a new characteristic attributed to it, that of intelligent airspace, a characteristic that implies the introduction into the scene of military actions of strategies and advanced technologies intended to increase the efficiency of operations in the airspace through the use of autonomous systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones and other equipment that can operate without direct human intervention.

AIR SPACE AND INTELLIGENT AIR SPACE

Airspace has always represented the dimension that man wanted to dominate, to control. It has been the dream of many scientists, engineers and inventors who contributed to the design and construction of the first machines heavier than air, and this only to feel the emotions and thrill of flight.

The possibility of using such platforms opened the way to a new approach to the configuration of the battlefield. The combat aircraft missions significantly tipped the balance in terms of the war outcome. The defeat of the enemy was also due to the way of acting in the area of military operations of this new force structure, aviation, a vector of power characterized by omnipresence, efficiency and precision. Once the victory is achieved, the immediate objectives of the victory, at the level

of the theatre of operations, are oriented towards securing the obtained advantages and consolidating the positions in the land, sea and air space. These objectives present a challenge to the subunits on the ground, and air support provides sustenance for land and/or maritime operations and provides, in addition to reconnaissance and action missions, operations by which still active elements of the enemy’s device can be engaged, essential structures can be disabled from the logistics structure and structures designed to ensure command, control, communications and transport capabilities can be also eliminated. Thus, aviation constitutes a power vector, a force that quickly and easily integrates the operations and manoeuvres of combat structures, an instrument that offers advantages and is able to decide the fate of the confrontation on the battlefield through the actions developed in and from the airspace.

In parallel with the military dimension of the airspace, the civil side is also developing. Humanity benefits from the advantages offered by the speed of transport and the ability to reach hard-to-reach areas, and thus more and more different users of airspace appear. There is a need for a legal framework, norms and rules to coordinate the aeronautical activity. Thus, in Paris, in 1919, 42 states signed the first international convention on the use of airspace, the “*Convention on the Regulation of International Airspace Traffic*”, a document that laid the foundations for an international system of regulations of air navigation. In the years that followed, airspace means evolved, the missions and purposes for which air space is used increased exponentially, the use of air dimensions becomes a necessity for the military, political, economic, medical, touristic, communications and transport fields and at the same time an area from which threats to national and international security can be proliferated.

At the national level, the airspace is framed as an integral part of Romania’s territory, whose sovereignty and control are ensured in accordance with international law and where international norms, rules and agreements are valid, regulating all aspects related to air navigation, safety, security, protection environment, civil liability and competition in air transport.

Today, airspace is managed with professionalism and responsibility through rules, standards and procedures established at international level by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and implemented at national level as well, with Romania’s accession to the specialized European system established at the EUROCONTROL International Conference (Official Gazette no. 115 on 5 June 1996). The acceptance and adaptation to international rules is achieved through the Romanian Administration of Air Traffic Services – ROMATSA, an entity that manages,

“administers and exploits the Romanian airways, ensures the management and unitary development of the activities of directing aircraft belonging to Romanian and foreign airlines” (Official Gazette no. 22 on 29 January 1991, art. 1).

The airspace organized in this way allows for the planned and coordinated development of civil air traffic. However, in situations specific to crises and conflicts, when a threat to national safety and security is identified that propagates from this area, the responsibility for managing all actions carried out in the airspace belongs to the Ministry of National Defence that, through the specialized structures, coordinates the necessary actions to eliminate the threat and achieve the level of control over the airspace.

The development of the aerospace technological component, the implementation of procedures coordinated by artificial intelligence in aviation and the increasingly intensive exploitation of airspace represent new challenges for the structures responsible for managing this field, and in an attempt to safely coordinate air traffic and to identify, isolate and exclude the aspects that can provide events, decisions are needed that include the entire spectrum of actions and that must be taken in the shortest possible time. The realization of this need is today based on the consultation and increasingly intensive use of artificial intelligence, which deals with intelligent airspace management.

The framing of intelligent airspace in the configuration of the airspace and especially in the configuration of the national territory is a reality that involves the adaptation of the structures responsible for their management from the point of view of ensuring safety and security, to the identification of solutions to integrate autonomous systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and drones, in advanced operational strategies and plans to improve the safety and effectiveness of planned and organized military actions to ensure national security. This initiative can only be implemented after a responsible and professional review of air assets, autonomous systems using both offensive and defensive intelligent airspace.

UNMANNED AIR VEHICLES

Artificial intelligence (AI) and autonomous systems in the intelligent airspace are forcing a redesign of the modern battlefield. Their use together with a variety of sensors and algorithms needed to navigate and operate in airspace without human intervention, communication languages developed for interaction with other systems in airspace optimizes the performance of the systems versus the costs of their realization and operation.

Nowadays, the most relevant intelligent systems used in modern airspace are unmanned technologies, or more precisely without a human pilot on board. Considered as airborne components, these systems constitute the technological pinnacle identified at the Air Force level, and their importance is reflected in the methods, techniques and strategies of operating UAS in the conditions of hybrid and asymmetric warfare.

Unmanned aerial systems have valid and mature operational characteristics in ISR/ISTAR concepts and neutralization of ground and air, static or kinetic targets (Știr, 2010, no. 6; Prisacariu, 2013, pp. 169-180; 2017, pp. 181-189). UAS capabilities and attributes offer relevant advantages in conflict zones, and among the most relevant are: persistence and penetrability alongside versatility and autonomy. Specialized studies and analyses support the technological evolution and the place in the UAV classification matrices offers a series of significant fields and projects that have marked development stages of aerial vectors without a human pilot on board (Valavanis, 2007; Prisăcariu, 2017, pp. 181-189; Fahlstrom, Gleason, 2012; Prisacariu, Boșcoianu, Luchian, 2014, pp. 51-50; Prisacariu, 2022, pp. 200-210).

At the same time, the current technological requirements and limitations (prototyping, manufacturing, operation/flight safety and economic) of unmanned aircraft determine sustained research and development concerns for the optimization of UAS functions under the conditions of intelligent airspace, directed functions for obtaining products/data on the conceptual cycle and on all levels of *intelligence* (Prisacariu, Boșcoianu, Luchian, pp. 51-58; Maltego team), see *figure no. 1*.



Figure no. 1: Intelligence concept (Maltego team, Understanding the Different Types of Intelligence Collection Disciplines, <https://www.maltego.com/blog/understanding-the-different-types-of-intelligence-collection-disciplines/>, retrieved on 2 May 2023)

Unmanned aircraft in the system architecture of the same name can provide real-time *intelligence* data in IMINT, COMINT, and SIGINT concepts with the help of multispectral sensors.

Thus, IMINT (Imagery Intelligence) sensors provide information extracted from the sampling and processing of digital data in the form of static or dynamic images, and the current technological level offers the possibility of sampling by UAVs, from high altitudes, images with high resolution levels (4K, 8K). Examples RQ-4 Global Hawk (*figure no. 2*) or MQ-9 Reaper (*figure no. 3*).



Figure no. 2: RQ-4 Global Hawk
(<https://www.northropgrumman.com/what-we-do/air/global-hawk>, retrieved on 4 May 2023)



Figure no. 3: MQ-9 Reaper
(<https://www.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/104470/mq-9-reaper>, retrieved on 4 May 2023)

UAS AND NATIONAL STRATEGIES

National Defence Strategy and White Paper on Defence

Inventions and new technologies have a significant impact on the battlefield. The effects of their use are found primarily in surprising the enemy, and then in creating a more realistic picture of the battlefield, in improving information about the situation on the ground, in making precision strikes and in the area of communications through better communication and coordination between the troops. All these effects aim at achieving a stable security environment and, in the case of conflicts, achieving victory and reducing the risk of human life loss. These objectives are set at the national level through strategies and doctrines, and as technology continues to evolve its role is increasingly important in shaping the outcomes of future battles and conflicts.

According to the *National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024* (2020), aspects are revealed regarding *the extensive process of building robust deterrence and defence capabilities, which began in 2015¹*, with unmanned aerial systems constituting

¹ Presidential Administration (2020), *National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024*.

the current technological peak. At the same time, UAS are part of that range of tools that Romania needs to have a fast and strong response capacity to crisis situations.

As a national security interest, securing the eastern border through the use of advanced stationary and mobile aerial sensors from medium and high altitudes, in areas of interest and when the situation requires it, is already a reality that needs responsible and serious decisions.

From an internal perspective, robotic aerial systems are in the attention and equipment of structures intended to ensure the safety and security of citizens and are used to contribute to the prevention of criminal activities with a negative impact on national interests (e.g., cross-border criminality).

From the perspective of foreign policy, we can talk about capitalizing on congruent and possibly complementary partnerships to raise the level of equipment with UAS-type vectors in order to meet national security objectives. Possible partnerships leading to the dynamism of the national defence industry and the horizontal technological empowerment of industrial partners in the civil area, such as technology transfer for the Bayraktar TB-2 (Curtifan) or Watchkeeper X (Defense Romania team).

As an integrative document of the government with a series of measures and actions in the field of defence, the use of unmanned aerial systems targets both the specific missions of the armed forces and the directions for the development of defence capabilities (Prisacariu, 2022, pp. 200-210).

A series of missions specific to the Romanian armed forces can be instrumented with intelligent/robotic/autonomous aerial systems in peacetime through the surveillance and defence of the national territory (land, air, fluvial and maritime) or areas of responsibility of information interest and early warning. More precisely, missions regarding the collection, processing and dissemination of defence information to specialized government institutions. In civil emergency situations, UAS are used for specific support missions for search-rescue or interventions to remove the effects of natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes).

EQUIPPING THE NATIONAL DEFENCE SYSTEM WITH UAS

Starting from the historical *VR-3 Reys* from the years 1968-1997 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tupolev_Tu-143) and then *RQ-7 Shadow 600* (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AAI_RQ-7_Shadow), now, the recent intentions of the government in Bucharest have focused on the procurements started for the entry into the national defence system of complex tactical-operational unmanned air vector systems: *Bayraktar BT-2* and *Watchkeeper X* (Curtifan; Defense Romania team).

Bayraktar BT-2

It is a MALE (medium altitude long endurance) class UCAV (unmanned combat aerial vehicle) capable of kinetic weapons neutralization missions, produced in Turkey by Baykar Makina, built primarily for the Turkish Air Force. It is powered by a piston engine and has an array of onboard EO-IR/FLIR sensors (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baykar_Bayraktar_TB2).



Figure no. 4: Bairaktar BT-2 and ground control station (lb.)

The most relevant characteristics and performances are displayed in *table no. 1*.

Table no. 1: Characteristics and performances of Bayraktar TB-2

Features	Value	Features	Value
Span	12 m	Ceiling	7620 m
Max. weight / Payload	700 kg / 150 kg	Direct signal C2ISR	300 km
Max. speed	222 km/h	Max. Range	4000 km
Endurance	27 h	Weapons	Bombs, rockets

Bayraktar TB-2 has a high level of reliability, it has three redundant C2 systems and an autonomous flight control level. In addition to EO-IR equipment on a self-stabilized platform, TB-2 is also equipped with laser systems such as laser designator, laser finder and laser pointer and smart ammunition (http://crd.yerphi.am/files/Baykar_catalog_eng.pdf).

Watchkeeper X

It is a robotic aerial system specially designed for ISR missions with COMINT capabilities, developed by Thales and Elbit, equipped with a synthetic aperture radar and EO-IR sensors and can be operated independently or as part of C4I networks. It is equipped with laser designator, laser finder and laser pointer (<https://www.thalesgroup.com/en/countries/europe/united-kingdom/markets-we-operate/defence/air-systems-uk/isr-air/watchkeeper>).

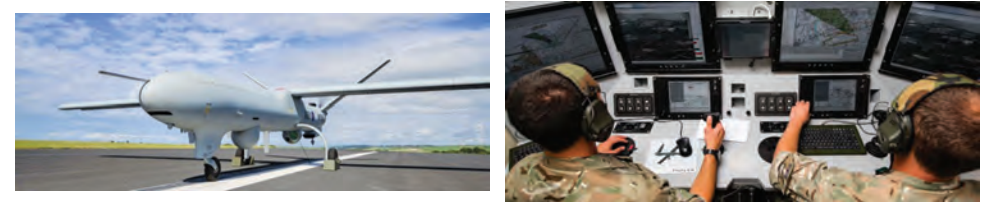


Figure no. 5: Watchkeeper X and ground control station (lb.)

It has a number of CAA (civil aviation authority) and NATO (STANAG) accredited features and performances recommending it for both civil and military uses (*table no. 2*).

Table no. 2: Characteristics and performances of Watchkeeper X

Features	Value	Features	Value
Span	10,9 m	Ceiling	4876 m
Max. weight / Payload	550 kg / 180 kg	Max. Range	200 km
Max. speed	150 km/h	Endurance	16 h

CONCLUSIONS

The theatre of military actions represents the tactical area where combatant forces are pitted against each other so that at the end of the confrontation the strongest and best trained one will win. Plans developed at the operational level are implemented in the tactical field, and military actions are coordinated with precision and effectiveness to obtain the advantage that will shape victory. In this general context, the emergence of a new element, technology or system with multiple capabilities and possibilities can represent that advantage that tilts the balance and determines the winner.

In the air space, air systems are modernized from one day to the next, fighter jets pass from one generation to another and reach capabilities that can hardly be fought. The increasing use of artificial intelligence in the airspace and the use of autonomous systems has led to the creation of intelligent airspace, a new dimension that defence strategies must include in future battle plans and concepts.

The world is digitizing, spaces overlap and intersect, intelligent systems take over the duties of human operators and rapidly implement algorithms that can shape decisions on the battlefield. The concept of man vs. man war is already history, and man vs. machine war is slowly becoming a robot vs. robot showdown. The super-technology of the battlefield and the emergence of new autonomous systems in intelligently defined spaces controlled by artificial intelligence determine

a new approach to future strategies. The vision of political and military leaders must be oriented towards decision-making algorithms programmed in binary code, and strategies and doctrines can no longer be developed without taking into account the importance and influence that autonomous systems have today.

Just as more than 120 years ago the airplane and aviation completely changed the face of war and introduced a new dimension to the plans and strategies of those times, today UAVs are redefining the airspace and implicitly the battlefield, applying some courses of action based on logical algorithms and solutions imposed by binary codes. What should not be lost from attention are the principles and norms that strategies and doctrines must introduce and apply, especially in the decision-making area, so that the objectives are fulfilled with the help of technology, but under the command of the human leader, the one who can intervene where the machine does not take into account free will and applies decision matrices that can generate chaos and perhaps even the end of human existence on Earth.

The paper presented general aspects, marked by the conditions of the intelligent airspace, regarding the traceability of robotic air systems on the axis of use/missions, capability and strategic programmatic documents.

Future research efforts will focus on advanced multi-criteria analysis or AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process) of UAS in the MALE and UCAV classes (separate analyses) to rank, identify and highlight the criteria and technical aerial systems analysed.

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TEMPORARY BUILDINGS FOR MILITARY FACILITIES – SOLUTIONS FOR INCREASING ADAPTABILITY AND EFFICIENCY –

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Temporary constructions involve structures that can be quickly assembled or disassembled and easily modified. Since the adaptability they offer is essential in the conduct of military actions, in the development of permanent infrastructure and last but not least in post-disaster interventions, they play a significant role in the defence infrastructure framework.

Real estate investments of the Ministry of National Defense (MApN) must comply with both national legislative frameworks and departmental regulations. Temporary facilities are no exception. By analysing the regulations applicable for their implementation, the article briefly presents the typologies of temporary constructions defined by military regulations, the stages of technical documentation development and the conditions for authorising execution works, as well as some considerations on the opportunity to create a regulation dedicated to temporary military constructions.

Keywords: defense infrastructure; temporary facilities; semi-permanent facilities, temporary constructions; military regulations;

INTRODUCTION

In the current context characterised by accelerated dynamics, the ability to swiftly and efficiently adapt to new circumstances is essential. Considering that the implementation of a real estate investment is an expensive and time-consuming process, temporary constructions serve as an alternative for the prompt provision of necessary facilities to the armed forces, under economically efficient conditions.

Temporary structures are designed and built for short-term or interim use. They come in a wide range of typologies, from large tents to container buildings. These structures are distinguished by their mobility (ease of transport), adaptability (they can be mounted in different locations) and ease of assembly and disassembly (requiring minimal time and smaller teams, having reduced complexity). Due to the advantages they present, their use ensures a rapid and effective response to the diverse requirements of military activity and this adaptability is essential for the success of missions.

This article explores the various typologies of temporary constructions and their authorisation conditions, concluding with a series of considerations for increasing efficiency in the provision of military facilities.

MILITARY FACILITIES

Regulamentul proprietății imobiliare în Ministerul Apărării Naționale¹ defines barracks as entities consisting of lands, constructions and landscape developments designed to provide the necessary facilities for carrying out administrative and training activities, communications, storage and maintenance, accommodation and catering, medical and community services.

The facilities are classified in terms of duration of use and construction complexity into four categories: initial, temporary, semi-permanent and permanent.

Initial facilities are temporary and relocatable structures, intended for forces deployed for training purposes or in the context of crisis or conflict situations. They offer austere conditions and can be used for a limited duration, no more than six months.

¹ *Regulamentul proprietății imobiliare în Ministerul Apărării Naționale* is approved by *Dispoziția șefului Direcției domeniilor și infrastructuri nr. DDI-13* from 17 June 2022.

An example of initial facilities is the tents used by the Romanian army in military exercises or situations of natural or humanitarian disasters. These structures can be quickly assembled and dismantled, providing shelter, work and rest areas for soldiers. The conditions are functional but austere, providing necessities for a limited time. Another example is the tents used to provide temporary shelter for disaster victims or to create coordination and logistics centres for response crews.

These structures are essential for rapid and effective response in emergency situations.



Photo 1: Tent (<https://ccsm.ro>)



Photo 2: Tent camp (<https://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro>)

Temporary facilities are also temporary and relocatable constructions intended for prolonged crisis situations, post-disaster or post-conflict scenarios, with improved durability and efficiency, thus enabling their use for up to 5 years.

Temporary facilities are characterised by austere but superior conditions compared to the original facilities, offering better living conditions, often including access to electricity, water and sanitary facilities.

Similar to the initial facilities, these solutions are scalable and can be expanded or modified as circumstances change, consisting of upgraded tents, modular containers or prefabricated structures.

Semi-permanent facilities are usually fixed constructions, designed for use over more than 5 years but less than 25 years. These structures are more robust than temporary constructions, being designed in accordance with the site conditions and to the same technical standards as permanent buildings. They are built only on state-owned land, their design ensuring the possibility of easy adaptation over time to new requirements.

Regarding their operational lifespan, the time limitation of 25 years is dictated by the dynamics of the functions that need to be provided in the barracks, and it is not related to the technical solution or to the materials from which these buildings are made.



Photo 3: Tent with windfang and electrical installation (<https://ccsm.ro>)



Photo 4: Container construction with temporary foundations²

Being made from durable materials such as steel or precast concrete, semi-permanent facilities provide an adequate level of insulation. Compared to permanent facilities, these are less expensive constructions, with generic plans easily adaptable over time, made in modular or partially prefabricated solutions to speed up the building process. At the end of their lifecycle, the materials from these constructions can often be recovered and reused, contributing to long-term sustainability.



Photo 5: Modular building made of containers (<https://www.mobilemodularcontainers.com/blog/shipping-container-apartments>)



Photo 6: Lightweight construction with prefabricated structure (<https://structurausoara.ro/proiecte>)

Permanent facilities are definitive, fixed constructions, designed with special engineering effort, and used in the long term for special or representative functions. Like semi-permanent facilities, these too are built only on state land.

² Image source: DoDI 4165.56, Relocatable Facilities, https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/416556p.pdf?ver=uXTqsbk9V5eFQvn8W_1INw%3D%3D, retrieved on 2 November 2023.



Photo 7: MApN Headquarters
(<https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fi%C8%99ier:20171003-103447-ministry-of-defence-romania.jpg>)



Photo 8: National University of Defence
(https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universitatea_Na%C8%9Bional%C4%83_de_Ap%C4%83rare_%E2%80%9ECarol_I%E2%80%9D#/media/Fi%C8%99ier:Universitatea_Nationala_de_Aparare.jpg)

The term “facility”, as defined in the US Army construction regulations, is structure or construction located on land, with or without fixed foundations, including landscaping, walkways and exterior stairs, utility connections, equipment and the installations that support the use and are an integral part of these constructions (DoDI 4165.14, Real Property Inventory and Reporting, p. 15)

The four categories of facilities listed above are also found in the US regulations with the distinction that in the National Ministry of Defense (MApN) the initial and temporary facilities are provided by temporary constructions and the semi-permanent and permanent facilities are provided by definitive constructions while the Department of Defense of the United States of America (DoD) deals with initial, temporary, and semi-permanent facilities in a dedicated regulation for non-permanent facilities.

The four construction levels described in *UFC 1-201-01, Non-permanent DOD facilities in support of military operations* are:

- Organic Construction Level: It is a subset of the initial Construction Level and is intended for short-term use, up to 90 days, with the possibility of extension up to six months;
- Initial Construction Level: This level is intended for immediate use by military units upon arrival in the theatre of operations, lasting up to 24 months. Tents or container buildings are initial-level facilities unless specifically designed for a higher level of construction;
- Temporary Construction Level: This level involves buildings and facilities designed and constructed for use up to five years;

Temporary Buildings for Military Facilities – Solutions for Increasing Adaptability and Efficiency –

- Semi-permanent Construction Level: Buildings and facilities at this level are designed for a use of less than 10 years, but with proper maintenance and repairs, they can be extended to 25 years.

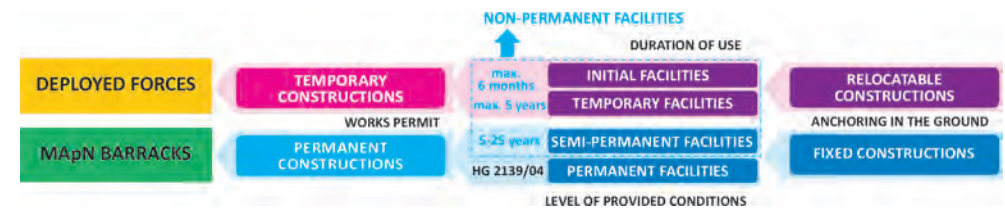


Figure 1 Classification of military constructions according to the Real Estate Regulation in the National Ministry of Defense (author's design)

Military constructions are conditioned both by military regulations and by national legislation specific to the construction sector. That is why, to discuss military buildings, it is necessary to clearly define the terms specific to the field and the legal framework at the national level. This includes the distinction between temporary and permanent constructions, also classified according to their mobility as fixed/immovable or relocatable/mobile as well as establishing the implications of the duration of operation/use/utilisation and life expectancy.

BUILDING PERMIT FOR TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTIONS

According to the *Real Estate Regulation in the Ministry of National Defense*, temporary constructions are used to ensure initial and temporary facilities, while definitive constructions are used for semi-permanent and permanent facilities.

Regardless of the materials used, due to the nature of the building's functions or because of the urban conditions, temporary constructions³ have a limited duration of existence, specified in the building permit. Upon the expiration of the operating term, they are dismantled to restore the land to its initial state, a requirement imposed by the permit.

Having a temporary character, temporary constructions are not subject to the same mandatory technical standards as permanent constructions, according to national norms and regulations. To limit construction and maintenance costs, investments are proportional to the duration of use. Thus, they may or may not be equipped with thermal insulation, soundproofing, etc., and may or may not be connected to utilities.

³ Temporary constructions are defined in *Legea nr. 50 din 29 iulie 1991 privind autorizarea executării lucrărilor de construcții*, annex 2, para. 7.

According to the law on the authorisation of construction works, temporary constructions are authorised under the same conditions as definitive constructions. To simplify the authorisation procedure, the permit for provisional constructions is issued based on technical documentation with simplified content⁴ concerning the framework content provided for definitive constructions.

It should be noted that in *Legea nr. 50/91 privind autorizarea executării lucrărilor de construcții* and in its implementing rules, military constructions are not addressed in terms of temporary structures. Consequently, the technical parameters imposed for the erection of temporary constructions are limited, and in the context of military infrastructure, the specifications regarding the minimum standard and the necessary documentation for the placement of these structures remain unclear.

To implement the standards necessary to ensure the safety and health of military or civilian personnel, the design of temporary facilities involves the involvement of specialised design personnel and the development of a regulatory framework that standardises the minimum requirements for compliance and equipment according to the purpose of the construction and its operating duration. Additionally, the development of standard designs can speed up the construction implementation process, this standardised approach ensuring that temporary facilities are designed efficiently at least in terms of operational safety and fire protection.

Since the provisional permit involves the dismantling of the constructions after a term specified in the permit, and considering that the decommissioning of the constructions before the completion of the duration of use is subject to administrative investigation, it is necessary to clarify the implications of the depreciation period of the investments.

DEPRECIATION DURATION OF BUILDINGS

The classification of military facilities into four typologies provides a basis for understanding and addressing the usage durations of constructions in the military context. Despite the existence of such a conceptual structure, the national construction legislation does not provide in the existing classifications a specific lifetime for these categories of facilities.

⁴ The simplified content of technical documentation is presented in Annex no. 2 of *Normele metodologice de aplicare a Legii nr. 50/1991 privind autorizarea executării lucrărilor de construcții*, approved by *Ordinul nr. 839 din 12 octombrie 2009 al Ministrului Dezvoltării Regionale și Locuinței*.

Under *Ordinul nr. M. 45 din 9 mai 2008 pentru aprobarea Normelor tehnice de domenii și infrastructuri*, the operating duration of the buildings belonging to the Ministry of Defense should correspond to the maximum duration specified in the Catalog regarding the classification and normal durations of operation of fixed assets, approved by *Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 2.139 din 30 noiembrie 2004*. This normal operating life indicates the interval in which the initial value of fixed assets is recovered fiscally through the depreciation process, being generally shorter than the actual physical life of the respective fixed asset.

This classification⁵ adopts a concept of performance that emphasizes the construction's ability to perform a specific function, regardless of the material from which it is made. For example, regardless of the constructive solutions adopted, administrative buildings have a normal operating life of between 40 and 60 years. Consequently, any military headquarters, even if it is militarily classified as a temporary or semi-permanent facility, must operate for at least 50 years to be depreciated before being decommissioned.

The MApN regulations establish their own classification of building service lives, but for practical application, these must be correlated the *Catalogul privind clasificarea și duratele normale de funcționare a mijloacelor fixe*. Moreover, in the header of the *Catalog* it is specified⁶ that for the fixed assets intended for the national defence system, MApN⁷ with the approval of the Ministry of Public Finance can develop its own rules for their classification and normal operating periods.

In conclusion, there is a gap between the general classification of the operational durations of fixed assets and the specific needs of the military infrastructure. To ensure an alignment with the specific needs of the national defence system and the flexibility and adaptability requirements of the military infrastructure, it would be appropriate to develop its norms, which would establish the normal operating durations for the constructions that constitute the temporary and semi-permanent facilities.

⁵ This classification is introduced in the Romanian legislation starting with the 1998 version of *Catalogul privind clasificarea și duratele normale de funcționare a mijloacelor fixe*, that starts with the intention of aligning to global trends.

⁶ The Annex of *Hotărârea nr. 2.139 din 30 noiembrie 2004 pentru aprobarea Catalogului privind clasificarea și duratele normale de funcționare a mijloacelor fixe*, chapter III, para 7.

⁷ According to *Legea nr. 346 din 21 iulie 2006*, art. 19, the Minister of National Defence is the chief authorising officer and designates by order the secondary and tertiary authorising officers (Ib., art. 68).

The decommissioning and demolition or dismantling of temporary constructions are carried out upon reaching the term specified in the construction permit. Considering that the depreciation of the investment involves the use of the constructions until the fulfilment of the established normal operating duration, the relocatable constructions represent a technical solution for the use of a facility for a limited period in a location, which through repeated use ends up being used for the normal duration of use.

RELOCATABLE BUILDINGS

Based on their anchoring in the ground, constructions are divided into two categories: relocatable/mobile and fixed/real estate. According to *Regulamentul proprietății imobiliare în Ministerul Apărării Naționale*, relocatable constructions are used for providing initial and temporary facilities, while fixed constructions are used for semi-permanent and permanent facilities.

Relocatable constructions are a category of temporary constructions, characterised by:

- portability: designed to be easy to transport;
- rapid installation: can be erected in a very short time;
- reusability: can be disassembled and reassembled in different locations;
- low ecological impact: their temporary nature allows for the restoration of the land to its original state.

According to the Real Estate Regulation in the Ministry of National Defense, relocatable constructions are not considered real estate property and are purchased either complete or in components, being assembled, dismantled or moved, by the owning military unit with the minimum necessary arrangements for adapting to the terrain.

Currently, the specifications for the construction of temporary facilities are based on the specifications drafted by the Domains and Infrastructures Directorate – DID for the acquisition of container-type modules, on the instructions for the placement of military camps and on the manufacturers' manuals.



Photo 9: Textile structures with supporting framework
(<http://ro.tendars-marquee.com/marquee-tent/hangar-tent.html>)



Photo 10: Modular buildings from ISO containers
(DoDI 4165.56, Relocatable Facilities)



Photo 11: Inflatable structures
(<https://buildair.com/inflatable-structure/>)



Photo 12: Prefabricated construction booth, kiosk, cabin
(<https://karmod.ro/produs/chio%C8%99c-magazin-215x270>)

To supplement the specifications applicable to relocatable construction in the military context, a relevant source is the DoD Relocatable Facilities Directive. These instructions provide a minimal framework for the implementation and management of these types of structures in the military domain. In this regard, we mention only a few specifications that are not found in the national regulations and that would be useful to optimise the consumption of resources for the infrastructure:

1. Relocatable facilities are used in place of conventional permanent construction when the duration of the requirement is uncertain and interim to provide the necessary spaces until permanent space becomes available in existing facilities or through the construction of a conventional permanent facility;
2. Relocatable facilities must be purchased or leased as equipment;
3. The standard duration of use for a relocatable facility shall not exceed 7 years. The maximum duration of use for a relocatable facility, extending the location authorization, will not exceed 14 years;

4. Site preparation for the placement of relocatable facilities, including earthworks, foundations, networks and connections to utilities, sidewalks, exterior lighting, parking lots or landscaping, may represent a real estate investment and must be treated accordingly;
5. Manufacturer's specifications for relocatable facilities shall meet all requirements, standards and codes for operational safety and fire safety at the level required for real property. When time, materials and funds permit, relocatable facilities should promote sustainable design and ensure energy efficiency;
6. Conversion of relocatable facilities into real estate properties, by connecting to a foundation, must be done through a real estate investment, based on a building permit, ensuring the entire assembly meets the minimum standards for permanent buildings.

In conclusion, to ensure that the minimum requirements for operational safety and fire safety are met, the design of relocatable facilities must be carried out by qualified personnel. To standardise the solutions, the development of a technical norm is necessary, and for the realization of the constructions, a catalogue of standard projects would speed up the process.

REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS

Unlike relocatable constructions, fixed constructions, made of durable materials, cannot be disassembled and rebuilt in another location. They are treated as immovable assets, their acquisition and modifications being managed through real estate investment projects. According to *Ordinul nr. 151 din 27 noiembrie 2017 pentru aprobarea Instrucțiunilor privind realizarea obiectivelor de investiții, recepția construcțiilor și stabilirea valorii finale a lucrărilor de construcții, cuprinse în programul de investiții al Ministerului Apărării Naționale*, the stages of elaborating technical documentation for execution are regulated by *Hotărârea nr. 907 din 29 noiembrie 2016 privind etapele de elaborare și conținutul-cadru al documentațiilor tehnico-economice aferente obiectivelor/proiectelor de investiții finanțate din fonduri publice*, namely: the elaboration of the conceptual note by the beneficiary and the design theme, the feasibility assessment and the approval of technical-economic indicators, the authorization of construction works and the realization of the technical project for execution.

In conclusion, the realisation of a real estate investment is a lengthy process compared to the acquisition and placement of a relocatable construction. The works carried out for the transformation of a relocatable construction into a fixed construction, through the creation of permanent foundations and connection to utilities, constitute real estate investments and are carried out according to the legal stages. However, real estate investments can be accelerated through the use of standard designs and prefabricated modular constructions.

CONCLUSIONS

Currently, temporary constructions are becoming increasingly important due to budget constraints and the frequent need for rapid adaptation to new circumstances. Their ability to provide adaptable, cost-effective and sustainable solutions aligns with modern military strategies and operations. As a result, they have become a frequently used solution for military facilities as well, representing an alternative to permanent infrastructure, the realization of which is costly and time-consuming.

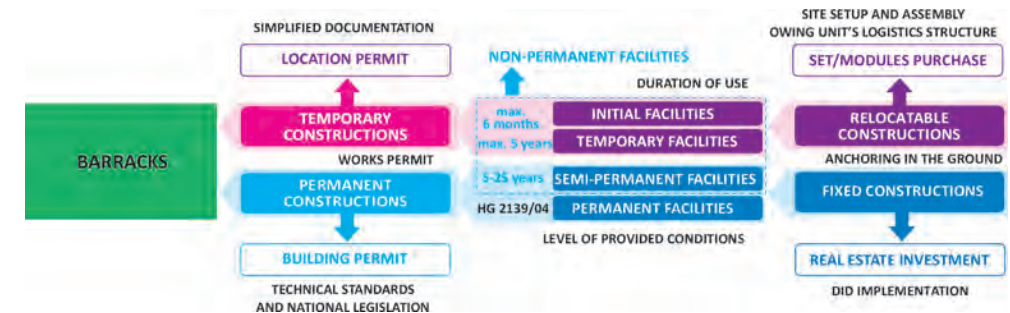


Figure 2: Authorisation and Implementation of Works Related to Military Constructions According to the Classification in the Real Estate Regulation in the National Ministry of Defense (Author's design)

The initial and temporary facilities, intended primarily for deployed forces, offer austere conditions but rapid adaptability in scenarios such as training, emergencies, crises, disasters or conflict. They can be used for short periods of up to 6 months, respectively 5 years, their configuration and location being the responsibility of the owning unit's logistics structure.

Although tent camps require a temporary location permit, military tents are not constructions, being classified in terms of fixed assets as military equipment. In conclusion, the initial facilities are not usually treated by the use of construction.

The temporary facilities, being provided by relocatable constructions, are purchased without the need for a feasibility study. Because they are temporary constructions, they do not have to provide the same isolation and efficiency conditions as a permanent building, and the building permit can be obtained based on simplified documentation.

On the other hand, according to the classifications from the Real Estate Regulation in the MApN, the infrastructure of the barracks is composed of semi-permanent and permanent facilities, made of fixed constructions. Semi-permanent facilities are constructions designed for periods of use of at least 5 years to 25 years, with the ability to be easily adapted according to the future needs of the forces they serve. They are adapted to the site conditions, being made to the same standards imposed by the legislation and technical norms in the field of construction as permanent buildings.

As the duration of the operation is limited by the Regulation, the semi-permanent facilities would be created based on a building permit for temporary constructions which establishes their duration of use. However, given the obligation to amortize the investment by using it for a term determined according to the purpose of the building, we conclude that only relocatable building solutions could be used to create semi-permanent facilities. Although the Regulation allows this solution, as long as the technical standard for the realisation of semi-temporary facilities is similar to permanent constructions, making them a relocatable version is difficult and would not present notable advantages. To correlate the specific needs of the military infrastructure with the general classification of the operational durations of the fixed assets, it is necessary to develop some norms specific to MApN constructions.

In conclusion, we appreciate that the introduction of a regulation dedicated to the construction of temporary and semi-permanent facilities could contribute to the efficiency of military operations, ensuring the operationality and safety of military personnel, as well as the economy of resources.

In this regard, we propose a classification for military constructions respectively: *Operational military constructions* for temporary facilities and *Adaptable military constructions* for semi-permanent facilities. The names emphasise the flexibility and functionality of these facilities, highlighting their ability to adapt to different operational requirements and environmental conditions over a significant, but not unlimited, period of time.

Temporary Buildings for Military Facilities – Solutions for Increasing Adaptability and Efficiency –

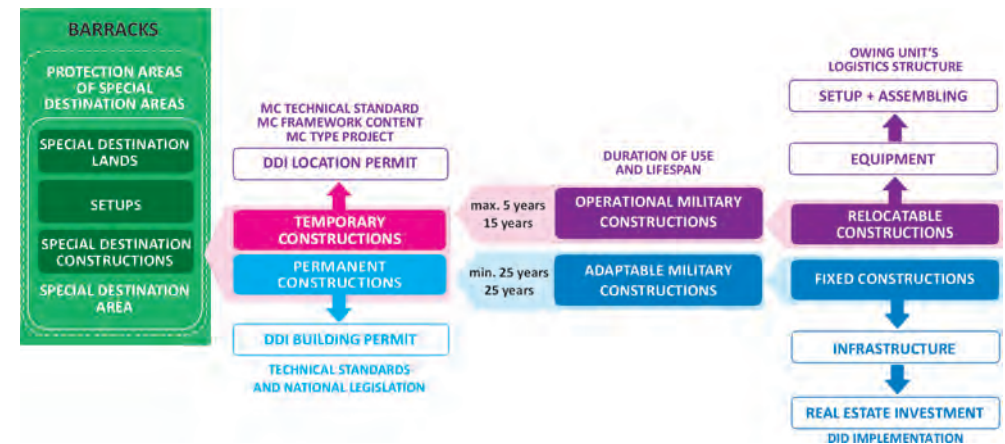


Figure 3: Authorisation and Implementation of Works Related to Military Constructions According to the New Classification, Proposed by the Author

For an effective intervention (time, cost, functional requirements) it is essential to establish a regulation for the standardization of the two categories of military constructions, specifying:

- The type of fixed asset and the approval, acquisition and execution process;
- Duration of use for amortisation;
- Minimum technical standard for military functionality and personnel protection;
- The documentation required for the building permit.

Furthermore, to implement them quickly and within the forecasted budgets, a series of standard projects can be developed based on the destination and duration of operation to ensure the standardization of technical solutions.

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AN ASSESSMENT OF 2023 EXTREME CLIMATE MANIFESTATIONS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

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According to numerous reports, the year 2023 is considered the hottest year on record, as a series of natural disasters have struck especially in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

These calamities, such as vegetation fires and floods like the recent ones in Greece, are not just a localised threat, but one that goes beyond the perimeter of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, as these uncommon occurrences of nature are also being observed in other parts of the world.

Considering that this sort of threat is highly unpredictable and requires specific measures, this paper aims to assess the effects of the recent natural disasters in Southern Europe and to identify measures taken by Greece to counter and mitigate the effects of the mentioned calamities.

Keywords: natural disasters; Mediterranean Sea area; disaster management; climate change; threats to society;

INTRODUCTION

As a subunit of climate, the weather has a significant role in daily life and has an impact on a person's activity as well as mood. When waking up in the morning, the first thing one normally does is to have a look out of the window to check the weather, to plan activities for the day and the outfit. From human to human, the weather also has a psychological impact, which can affect productivity, fatigue or even the level of serotonin our bodies produce. Thermal discomfort is usually associated with the temperature-humidity index exceeding a certain threshold specific to hot summer days, with air temperatures above 35°C and low relative humidity. Due to climate change, such days when heat wave orange codes persist will become increasingly frequent, with a significant impact on one's energy and working capacity.

The debate on climate change is no longer new. There are initiatives to promote awareness on these topics, but large-scale action is yet to become mainstream. Responding appropriately at the right time requires on one hand comprehensive and transparent reporting and on the other hand allocation of necessary resources. Global warming is not a recent phenomenon since reporting on this development can be dated back to the 1960s when industries began to expand and the concentration of greenhouse gases began to increase beyond control. Experts in the field have developed several climate models and have estimated that the average annual temperature will rise by between 1.1°C and 6.4°C during the 21st century (Meteo.ro, 2023).

But what is global warming and how does it affect daily lives? According to Meteo Romania, "global warming is the phenomenon of an increase in the average recorded temperatures of the atmosphere in the vicinity of the land as well as the oceans" (Ib.). Rising temperatures are determined by climate change depending on the area affects several domains of activity such as tourism, agriculture, other parts of the economy and therefore national security. Tourists plan holidays according to the time of the year and the destination, and relatively recent global warming makes this almost impossible due to temperature changes and the disasters that come with them. Agriculture is a very sensitive area and it is affected

by this development as global warming leads to seasonal average temperatures exceeding the threshold and decreasing water sources, hence crops are affected and food trade is potentially at risk. Agriculture and tourism are the main industries that support the economy of a developed country that is well placed on the map in terms of terrain and accessibility to water sources, so the impact of climate change can be felt in almost all areas of work.

In the first three quarters of 2023, recorded events have demonstrated that climate change can cause significantly more unpredictable damage and that countries are not prepared enough to cope with the effects of disasters such as wildfires in Greece and Spain, floods in Türkiye, Bulgaria and Libya.

Amid voices in the public space claiming that some outbreaks were caused by humans, on purpose, and not by climate change, this paper aims to highlight as much as possible that global warming is real and contributes to the natural disasters that are occurring increasingly often in Southern Europe, as well as in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND SPECIFIC CLIMATE

General characteristics

To understand better why Southern Europe and the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea are more vulnerable to natural disasters, one needs to look at the terrain and climate.

Europe is located between 36° and 71° latitude North, which situates it largely in a temperate climate, and the northern area beyond the Arctic Circle in a cold climate. Air masses play an important role in the temperature distribution on synoptic maps, so the southern part of Europe is dominated by Mediterranean or North African air masses with warm and humid characteristics. This results in higher temperatures and increased atmospheric instability. The air temperature decreases from S-W to N-E, resulting in higher temperatures in this area. Atmospheric precipitation decreases from west to east, making the area around the Mediterranean more prone to drought (Matei, 2023). While these general characteristics should explain the vegetation fires in this area, flooding also takes place where rainfall is normally completely absent.

Our planet is deviating from the well-known rules, hence there is a need to see where it all starts. The atmosphere is divided into five layers: troposphere (where all living beings exist), stratosphere, mesosphere, thermosphere, and exosphere. It is

important to know these layers because this is where weather phenomena originate. The ozone layer is about 20-30 kilometres above sea level and plays an important role in sustaining life on our planet. It is naturally formed in the atmosphere. If this ozone layer did not exist, the Earth's temperature would be much higher because UV rays would come into direct contact with the ground, thus increasing ground temperature and eventually air temperature. Despite speculation and assumptions, the main source of heat on Planet Earth is not the Sun, but the ground, so the ozone layer can be seen as a barrier against solar radiation preventing additional heating. Reports indicate in recent decades that the ozone layer is thinning faster than it would naturally. Additionally, a high level of CO₂ is present in the atmosphere and plays an important role in the greenhouse effect, exceeding normal limits (Piticar, 2023, p. 15).

The greenhouse effect is a natural process that keeps heat in the lower troposphere. It is favoured by certain greenhouse gases such as water vapour, CO₂, methane and other gases. Without it, the heat would evaporate faster into the atmosphere and the earth's surface temperature would be 33°C lower. As a natural process, the gases that form it are found in the atmosphere as follows: water vapour comes from evaporation at the surface of seas and oceans, methane comes from the decomposition of organic matter and CO₂ from human and animal respiration. The amount of CO₂ is multiplied due to excessive pollution in the atmosphere, and greenhouse gases lose balance (Piticar, 2023, pp. 30-34).

Thus, the thinning of the ozone layer which causes much stronger radiation from the Sun, together with the high concentration of greenhouse gases and a large amount of CO₂ present in the lower atmosphere, increases ground temperature significantly.

Permanently influencing phenomena

Annual temperatures are rising, the ozone layer is reportedly thinning, and natural disasters surprise us at every step. The general characteristics that explain higher temperatures in southern Europe are not a good enough argument to support calamities in 2023. It is also worth looking at the *Jet Currents*, permanent currents that influence the weather, but also on the *El Nino* phenomenon.

Jet streams are bands of very strong winds, which are found in the upper levels of the atmosphere around 30,000 feet or 9,000-10,000 meters. The winds blow from west to east, and due to the properties of warm and cold air; the band

of currents moves north and south. Depending on the latitude at which they are located, they vary in height as well as speed, with some reaching speeds of over 442 km/h (NOAA, 2023).

El Nino is a climate model that describes the unusual warming of the surface waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean. *El Nino* represents the warm phase of this phenomenon and *El Nina* the cold phase. This phenomenon not only influences ocean temperatures but also the speed and strength of ocean currents, along with weather from Australia to South America (Society, National Geographic, 2023).

Although the *El Nino* weather pattern does not seem to affect Europe, in recent years with an influence from the *Jet Stream*, it has warmed Europe in summer and cooled it in winter according to the sources cited above.

Mediterranean climate

After a brief analysis, it can be stated that there are factors countries affected by natural disasters have in common, such as their proximity to the Mediterranean Sea and the Mediterranean climate. By name, the Mediterranean climate is predominant in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It is characterised by a temperate climate, very hot and dry summers and rainy winters. It can be associated with four types of climates, but only three of them represent an area of interest for this study.

The typical Mediterranean climate is found throughout much of Spain and the average temperature is over 18°C, often reaching the heat wave threshold. The continental Mediterranean climate is predominant in areas further from the coast, where humidity decreases. It can be found in Italy, Türkiye, Lebanon, and inland Spain. The dry Mediterranean climate occurs when there is a transition between the Mediterranean climate and the desert, thus very arid areas. This is where Greece and Libya fall as areas of interest, as well as most North African countries (Sanchez, 2023).

EXTREME PHENOMENA IN COUNTRIES BORDERING MEDITERRANEAN SEA IN 2023

At the time of the study, i.e., mid-September 2023, it can be mentioned that during the nine months of this year, numerous allegedly natural disasters have occurred. Among the most known are floods in Greece, Türkiye, Bulgaria, and Libya, earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, and vegetation fires in Spain and Greece.

The disasters that occurred are many more in number, but they were given much attention so they have not been publicised. The dangers are much greater, and after every disaster, it seems a lesson was learned, but are these countries really prepared? In the following, the study will mention all major natural disasters that occurred this year to date, then conclude with the measures that were taken, and conclude with the question: “*What to do if it hits again/other regions too?*”.

Türkiye

On 6 February, an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck in southern Türkiye, on the border with Syria. Just nine hours later, another earthquake struck the country, this time measuring 7.5 in magnitude. This was the strongest earthquake recorded in Türkiye in the last 20 years, matching another one from 1939. According to several sources, the death toll exceeded 57,000, with more than 121,000 injured (CDP, 2023).

There are still no studies to confirm that climate change plays a role in earthquakes, although along with other natural disasters such as floods and wildfires, we can see that tectonic plate movements have also increased this year. However, one can observe that this event kicked off the calamities in 2023. Therefore, further work may be required to determine any potential connection between climate change and other potential natural disasters.

Wildfires season in the Mediterranean

Major fires hit Spain ahead of the season, along with other countries such as Greece, Italy, Portugal and the islands of Rhodes and Corfu due to a lightning strike in July. August was a critical month for the European Union (EU) as the fires caused significant material damage and casualties. The most severe fires were recorded in Greece, in the Alexandropoulos area on the border with Türkiye. They started on 19 August and continued for several days, fuelled by the dry vegetation specific to Greek terrain, but also by strong winds and high temperatures. They razed over 45,000 hectares of forest and over 62,000 hectares of nature reserves. A study underlined that in some countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, more than 135,000 hectares of forest burned in 12 days and more than 120,000 people were affected (Joint Research Center, 2023).

August is the month when numerous tourists choose to travel, especially to warm-weather destinations. Those who had chosen Tenerife as their destination suffered from vegetation fires that razed over 15,000 hectares of forest in just a few

days. According to the authorities, the flames were more than 40-50 meters high and more than 13,000 people were evacuated. The islands' climate in the Atlantic Ocean, along with dry timber scattered across the island, high temperatures and winds typical to coastal terrain, made it almost impossible for firefighters to put out the fire in a short time and stop it from spreading to people's homes (Brelie, 2023).

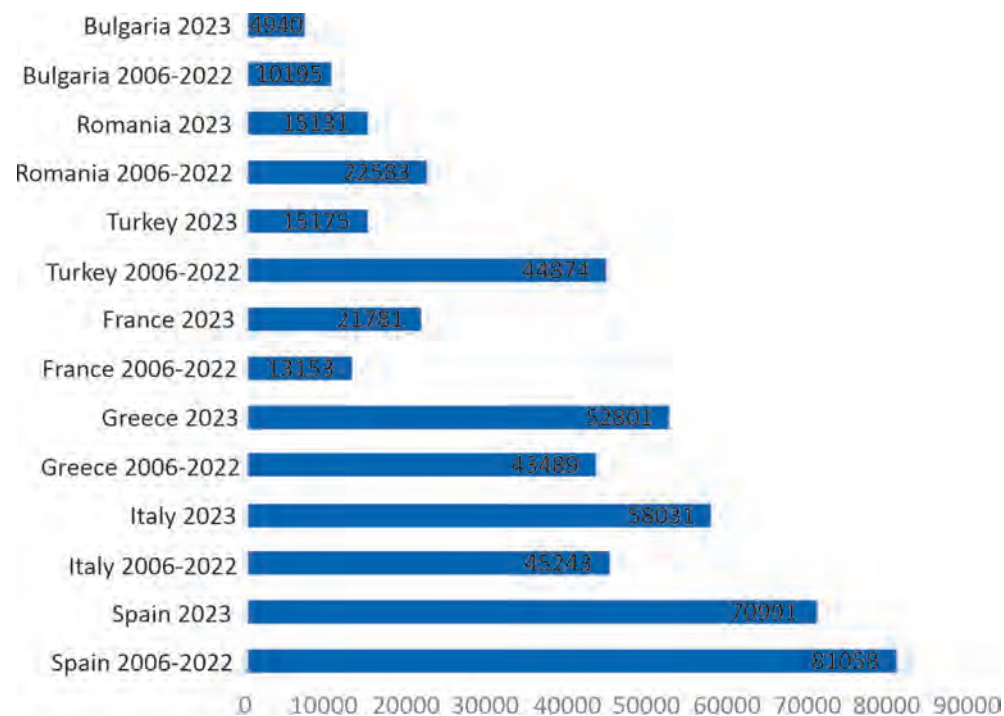


Figure 1: Area burnt by vegetation fires (in hectares) (Salas, 2023).

According to *Figure 1*, we can see that the number of hectares burned in 2023 in most countries is close to the number of hectares burned during the previous 16 years of measurements. France, Greece, and Italy exceeded the previous 16-year total of fires in 2023 to date. What does this mean? In the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, more hectares burned in 2023 than in 16 previous years combined, which is a worrying record. The amount of carbon dioxide and other harmful gases released in the atmosphere is immense, leading to the waste of long efforts towards preventing climate change in days due to uncontrolled fires caused by climatic factors and, why not, the population. There is no official data that can confirm the total number of fatalities from the wildfires, but in Greece, at least 20 people lost their lives due to fires.

Floods beyond the Mediterranean Sea

If questions about guilt could be asked, man or nature, when it comes to floods, the answer is clear. Although there are many ways for countries to prevent flooding, including canals, drains, and dams, it is practically impossible to control the amount of rain that will fall, and even with the best prevention systems, to avoid flooding if the amount of water that reaches the ground in one day equals the amount that would fall in 5 months has not been planned for. This happened in mid-September in southern France, a country bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The event is still ongoing and the damage cannot yet, be estimated. Major floods from southern Europe are further analysed in chronological order.

Outside the Mediterranean region, there were floods in the UK, Germany, and Serbia earlier this year, where dozens of people lost their lives. Returning to the countries adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea, in March a series of floods occurred in Türkiye in a southeastern region, with 14 people losing their lives. April got off to a strong start in the Calabria area of Italy, where one person lost their life after a vehicle was swept away. May was a critical month for several areas of Italy after dozens of people died and hundreds more were evacuated from flooded regions. Fortunately, the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not cause any casualties but left hundreds of people homeless. Towards the end of the month, deadly floods hit Italy again, this time in other areas. June focuses on Türkiye, Kosovo, and Romania, where dozens of people lost their lives in heavy rains. July does not surprise Türkiye with anything new, with the same area again suffering casualties as more than 250 mm of water per square metre fell in less than 24 hours. September started with a series of floods in Spain, where rainfall exceeded 240 mm in 24 hours. Greece, Türkiye and Bulgaria were hit by rainfall exceeding in some regions 600 mm per square meter, which killed dozens of people. Although these amounts of water were reported in advance, inadequate infrastructure in the cities led to extensive material damage (Floodlist, 2023).

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) named storm "Daniel" as the cause of flooding in Greece and Libya. It moved from southern Europe to northern Africa along the Mediterranean Sea. According to the water cycle in nature, water vapour is formed at the surface of the seas and oceans, the humidity is higher in the neighbouring areas, so cloud formations above water surfaces can be more water-laden. This has caused massive flooding in Libya, with the Derna dams collapsing,

approximately several thousand casualties and more than 10,000¹ people missing at the time of this study (WMO, 2023).

Although there is speculation that the Derna dams have been partially damaged since the 1990s, this does not explain the flooding level that occurred given the topography of Libya, which is considered the most desert country in the world with over 98% of its territory desert and rocky. With such a dry Mediterranean climate and terrain, it is almost impossible to prepare such a country against such deadly flooding.

Table 1²: Analysis of the 2023 floods in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea

Where?	When?	Why?	Damage (nr. of victims, evacuated families)	Amount of precipitation
Türkiye	15 March	Heavy rain, floods	14 deaths	104-151 mm in 24 hours
Italy	3 April	Heavy rain, floods	One dead	118 mm in 24 hours
Italy	3 May	Heavy rain, floods, rising rivers	15 deaths, 36.000 evacuated	190 mm in 24 hours
Italy	26 May	Heavy rain, floods	One dead	No data
Türkiye	5 June	Heavy rain, floods	2 deaths	127-147 mm in 24 hours
Spain	7 July	Heavy rain, floods	No data	27.6 mm in 10 minutes 46 mm in a few hours
Türkiye	9 July	Heavy rain, floods	One dead, over 700 evacuated	250 mm in 24 hours
Spain	2 September	Heavy rain, floods	No data	243 mm in 24 hours

¹ Please note that for the moment the number of casualties is modified every day by the Libyan authorities.

² It should be noted that posts/articles from the floodlist.com website have been consulted to fill in the table below. To avoid cluttering the page with footnotes, I have referred only to the general site, respectively, Floodlist, 2023.

Where?	When?	Why?	Damage (nr. of victims, evacuated families)	Amount of precipitation
Greece Turkey Bulgaria	5 September	Heavy rain, floods, Storm "Daniel" in Greece	11 deaths	754 mm in 24 hours in Greece (Davies, 2023)
Libya	9-10 September	Heavy rain, floods, storm "Daniel", broken dams	Different figures are mentioned, including 11.300 deaths	414 mm in 24 hours (Davies, Breaking News, 2023)

According to the analysis of countries mentioned above, we can see that among the most affected countries are Italy and Türkiye if the number of floods that occurred this year was considered. If the number of victims is considered, unfortunately, Libya is at the top of the list, followed by Türkiye and Italy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the climate of these countries is predominantly Mediterranean with a maritime influence. The phenomenon of showers is not known in the countries of Europe, but the amount of rainfall in a few hours can be compared to the amount of rain that has fallen in recent years in these countries. This is a very special phenomenon and raises alarm bells for climatologists because of climate change

MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST CLIMATE DISASTERS

With the year 2023 considered to be the hottest in history, with millions of property damage and hundreds of victims of wildfires and floods, the European Union is under increasing pressure to find long-term solutions. This year has brought hundreds of fires, temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius, hence thousands of tourists have been evacuated and dozens of locals have lost their homes and businesses. There are now several projects underway, experimenting with ways to reduce fires and their impact (European Commission, 2023).

One example would be "GreenChainSAW4LIFE", an ongoing project in Northern Italy that aims to address climate and environmental risks, including fires, in certain areas of the country. This project is worth around €5.5 million and will run until 2024. It hopes to save up to 200 tons of CO₂ per year by reducing forest fires.

How will it achieve this? The project aims to manage local forests innovatively, making them resilient to climate change and using wood to produce green energy and biomaterials to benefit the local economy and nature. The project also promises to assess the possibility of switching to renewable energy by mapping the territory's energy consumption (Greenchainsaw4life, 2023).

Spain and Portugal, two of the countries most affected by wildfires, are running a project called *"LIFE LANDSCAPE FIRE"* which aims to prevent fires by allowing goats to walk free and eat all the dry grass and shrubs. The project coordinator in Portugal mentioned that dry grass and shrubs are like fuel for fires, and this should reduce the risk of fires (European Commission, 2023).

Another project run by the European Commission is *"LIFE REFOREST"*, a project using a state-of-the-art biotechnology also called *mycotechnosol*. With this, soil and burnt vegetation will quickly recover to produce soil erosion. Worth €1.6 million, it has already been tested in three of the worst affected areas in north-west Spain and Portugal, with considerable results: soil erosion has been reduced by 70% and water pollution by up to 90% so that soil has recovered in half the typical time (European Commission, 2023).

In fact, an organisation was created specifically to provide information on emergency situations arising from natural disasters. *"The Copernicus Emergency Management Service"* has continuously monitored the impact of fires on areas adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea. The CEMS fire system has recorded more than 1,273 fires in the European Union by the end of August 2023. Through its components, CEMS provides essential information to civil authorities to prepare for and monitor critical events. In addition, the mapping service produces detailed geographical maps of the events that help to estimate the population, buildings and infrastructure affected (Joint Research Center, 2023).

Following Greece's request for help on 20 August, the European Union's Emergency Centre responded with the largest ever aerial fire-fighting operation, mobilizing 11 aircraft and 1 helicopter in addition to 5 from Greece. Through the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, more than 62 vehicles and 407 people jumped in to help. This followed the Union's swift response a month earlier, when fires were raging across the country and it took 9 planes, 510 firefighters and more than 117 vehicles to douse the blaze (Joint Research Center, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

As noted in this research, the effects of climate change can be both unpredictable and disastrous, as seen in southern Europe this year, which has not yet ended. Climate change is an issue of international concern and a topic of increasing discussion at various UN, EU and WMO conferences. Measures to combat climate change to conserve the planet have been in place for several years and are well known to the population: increasingly electric cars on the market and encouragement to buy them, recycling, replacing plastic products with cardboard ones, and the list goes on. Although the population is made aware of these measures, not everyone complies with them as the rules remain at a recommendation level as of now. The year 2023 exhibited what the planet is capable of if significant action is not taken, and the effects are worrying. There is an acute need to properly identify, report and tackle climate change-related disasters. Every week major wildfires and floods occur in neighbouring countries and aid has been sent, but preventive measures are still to be properly developed. *"What to do if it hits again/other regions too?"*

If an extreme weather event has only happened once, it cannot be attributed to climate change. What can be attributed is the likelihood of new extreme events occurring in a short period of time (Mistry, 2023).

On another note, Romania as a country, has not implemented extensive measures against climate change, probably on the premise of low occurrence rate and resources constraints. These assumptions may have become wrong because climate disasters do not take into account country, terrain or climate. A good argument for this statement would be what is happening right now in Libya, a country with predominantly desert terrain, where it rained in a year as much as in ten, or rather, the increase in floods and vegetation fires in Romania. Romania's hydrological network is extensive, which increases the risk of flooding. Temperatures this summer in the south often exceeded 40 degrees Celsius and the asphalt went to higher temperatures, hence the risk of fires is also increasing. Countries like Spain and Greece, which have invested millions of Euros in global warming projects made some steps in this direction. These countries have a terrain and climate prone to wildfires, but they have taken measures for all types of climate disasters.

Potential future impacts of climate change include more wildfires, longer periods of drought and increased wind and rainfall from tropical cyclones as stated by NASA. These effects will increase the mortality rate in the affected areas

and cause property damage that is difficult to estimate. Given this, and the fact that climate change is irreversible and getting worse every day, this represents an issue of international concern that needs to be taken seriously and deserves more attention because the future can still be positively impacted.

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THE FIRST LOSS OF ROMANIAN COMMERCIAL VESSELS

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The issue of Romanian commercial vessels during the Second World War has not been extensively presented in Romanian historiography, although it pertains to national security and defence.

After great financial efforts, in 1939, Romania had a commercial fleet that ensured part of the transport needs of exported and imported goods. With the exception of the passenger ships sent to Istanbul, the other vessels, which were in ports in the Mediterranean, the USA and Great Britain, as well as those leased to Germany, were lost. Even if some shipowners managed to recover the vessels or their value, they did not sail under the Romanian flag.

The mentioned situation was determined by the geopolitical and geostrategic evolution in Europe and worldwide. With regard to Romania, the proximity to Germany and, then, the "alliance" with the government in Berlin were catastrophic also from the perspective of the situation of the Romanian commercial fleet. The USA, Great Britain and the USSR acted in accordance with their interests both during the war and after its end, so that the Romanian state could not recover any vessel or the value of those lost.

Keywords: abuse; shipowner; commercial; government; requisitioning;

INTRODUCTION

In the years of the Second World War, in a complex, complicated, dynamic geopolitical context, Romania's situation was a difficult one, the geostrategic position proving unfavourable as the great belligerent powers wanted to capitalize on Romanian space and resources, especially oil, which was vital considering the military structures motorization and mechanization.

The fateful entry into the German sphere of influence was unacceptable for Great Britain, the USA and the USSR, which reacted to that situation, seriously affecting the commercial fleet of the country, which was achieved with great efforts in the interwar period.

On 30 August 1939, two days before the outbreak of the Second World War, the vessels of the Romanian Maritime Service (RMS) were in various situations in the ports where they operated (AMNR, collection Microfilms, roll P 3.1164, f. 693):

Name	Tonnage	Situation	Date of departure from the country	Destination	Date of arriving in the country
<i>MAIL SHIPS</i>					
"Transilvania"	6,672	Beirut			3 September
"Basarabia"	6,672	Constanța, stationing	31 August	Alexandria	10 September
"Dacia"	3,419	Haifa		Beirut	2 September
"România"	3,151	Constanța	3 September	Beirut	16 September
"Regele Carol I"	2.369	Galați	-	-	-
<i>MIXED CARGO SHIPS</i>					
"Alba Iulia"	5,695	Constanța, unloading	21 September	Marseille	26 October
"Peleş"	5,695	On the way to Piraeus		Marseille	27 September
"Suceava"	5,695	Constanța, maintenance			
"Ardeal"	5,695	Constanța, unloading	19 September	Port Said	15 October

Name	Tonnage	Situation	Date of departure from the country	Destination	Date of arriving in the country
"București"	2,499	Galați, loading	6 September	Port Said	6 October
"Oituz"	2,525	Beirut		Port Said	18 September
"Durostor"	1,309	Salonika		Piraeus	5 September
<i>CARGO SHIPS</i>					
"Carpați"	4,336	Brăila, unloading	20 September	Hamburg	20 November
"Bucegi"	4,330	Haifa, unloading			2 September
"Sulina"	5,700	Under construction at the shipyard in Palermo			
"Mangalia"	5,700				
"Cavarna"	5,700				
"Balcic"	5,700				

On the same date, the maritime vessels owned by some companies or shipowners sailing under the Romanian flag were in the following situations: "Carmen Sylva", owned by the "Capato&Macri" Company, in the East; "Danubius", owner Mateo Loewensohn, abroad; "Siretul", "Prahova" and "Oltul", the property of the "Ing. Vlasov" Company, sailing, America-Poland, America-Italy; the oil tankers "Câmpina", "Steaua Română" and "Oltenia", the property of the "Steaua Română" oil company, sailing, Italy-America, Italy-Genoa, London (Ib., f. 692).

The most modern and efficient ships, the cargo ships "Sulina", "Mangalia", "Cavarna" and "Balcic", which entered service between September 1939 and June 1940, could, in case of mobilization, be transformed and adapted to the needs of war.

ROMANIAN COMMERCIAL SHIPS DETAINED OR REQUISITIONED BY THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES

The first reaction of the British authorities towards some Romanian commercial ships was in the spring of 1940, in the context of the existence of fears that the transported products would be re-exported to Germany. The ships "Alba Iulia" and "Suceava" were the first subject to the abuses of the British authorities.

"Alba Iulia" was intercepted by the English military authorities on 17 February 1940, near the island of Tenedos (Bozcada), and its captain was forced to change course to Malta, where the ship was detained by order of the English naval authorities. In accordance with procedures, the captain submitted a Maritime

Protest to the British authorities, however, the documents on board the ship were seized by the British and checked by law enforcement officers, and the captain and other crew members were questioned by officials of the Contraband Control Service at the Malta Base.

Without any explanation, the representatives of the Contraband Control Bureau agreed to grant freedom of navigation to the ship, after its captain gave a statement regarding compliance with the destination of the goods. In relation to the attitude of the British authorities, the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs intervened in London on 26 February 1940, but the ship had been already released since 21 February 1940.



"Alba Iulia" cargo ship (Source: <https://marinari.ro/nava-mixta-alba-iulia/>, retrieved on 22 September 2023)

Although it was considered that such situations would not be repeated, the impositions of the British were becoming more drastic, as the commercial attaché of Great Britain in Bucharest demanded that, in order to avoid similar situations, the RMS "should make a statement by which it obliges itself to retain the goods it transports to the port of destination through its agents, on its responsibility and until it receives British instructions" (AMAE, 71/Anglia collection, vol. 11, p. 284).

On 7 April 1940, the ship "Suceava" was on its way to Izmir, being stopped and controlled by the crew members of a British warship, who allowed it to continue its way to the destination, asking the captain for a written commitment that, after unloading the goods destined for the port of Izmir, he would continue the way to Malta, for a second control (AMNR, *Ministerul Aerului și Marinei* collection, file no. 4301/1943, p. 151). Arriving in Malta on 13 April, the ship was escorted to Valletta, where several British naval officers requested and then retained the documents accompanying the goods with the certificates of origin.



"Suceava" cargo ship (Source: <https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?184685>, retrieved on 22 September 2023)

The captain's interventions with the British authorities were without result. Thus, the captain of the ship addressed the issue to the RMS in Bucharest and to the Romanian Legation in London, on 15 and 20 April, without receiving any response, then, again, to the Contraband Control Service in Valletta, finally managing to obtain approval for departure on 22 April.

The abuses of the British control authorities in the spring of 1940 on the crews of the ships "Alba Iulia" and "Suceava" represented only the first of the series of difficult situations that the personnel of the Romanian commercial ships, regardless of the owner, faced in the period that followed.

On 20 June 1940, the government led by Ion Gigurtu, at the request of the German authorities, ordered not only the detention of British and French merchant ships on the Danube, but also the arrest of some British oil "experts" in Romania. Under those conditions, the government in London ordered the detention of some Romanian commercial ships in Port Said, Alexandria and Haifa.

DETAINMENT AND REQUISITIONING OF THE SHIP "BUCEGI"

Up to mid-February 1941, when the diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Romania were severed, the issue of the ships belonging to the RMS or some shipowners, Romanian citizens, had no solution in terms of clarifying their legal situation. On the date of the severance of the Romanian-British diplomatic relations, the situation of some Romanian ships was as follows: "Oltenia", "Steaua Română", "Bucegi" and "Ing. Vlasopol" were requisitioned by the Ministry of War Transport within the British government; "Oltul", "Siretul" and "Prahova",

which were in different ports in South America, were put up for sale, with the approval of the Bucharest government.

On 23 June 1940, the cargo ship "Bucegi" was anchored at Port Said, with cargo bound for Istanbul and Constanța on board. In the context of the Romanian-British divergences, on that day, the British authorities from Port Said notified the captain of "Bucegi" that from that moment on it was "in a state of detention", a situation about which the Ministry of Air and Navy was immediately informed, and on 2 July, Adjutant Rear Admiral Nicolae Păiș informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting urgent intervention in London to obtain permission for the ship to depart for its destination.



"Bucegi" cargo ship (Source: https://www.graptolite.net/Facta_Nautica/press/Bucegi.html, retrieved on 22 September 2023)

After a month, the British Admiralty allowed the ship to depart, on 4 August, with the destination Istanbul. However, on the same day, British sailors boarded the ship and forced the captain to sail to Haifa, the officer assigned to detain the vessel handing the captain a *Note* from which it appears that "the vessel above named is in a state of detention in this port and that any attempt to move the vessel without the written authorization of the officer in charge of the vessels detained in this port will be considered a violation of ownership... Possession was placed on the ship's documents together with the documents onboard" (ib., file no. 5530/1940-1941, p. 64).

From the moment the Romanian ship was detained, the British authorities acted promptly and efficiently to take over the ship, while, in Bucharest, Haifa and Jerusalem, the Romanian authorities acted to obtain the release and resumption of voyage, initially to Istanbul, then to Constanța.

After the ship's arrival in Haifa, the British authorities checked all the documents in the captain's possession, the cargo on board was inventoried and the schedule of the Romanian crew was established. The British authorities were interested in taking possession of both the ship and some of the cargo on board, so they acted quickly and efficiently, as requested from London. Although the Romanian authorities tried to lease or sell the ship to the British authorities, their attitude was firm, the requisition decision being final.

After several discussions with the British authorities in Palestine, on 21 September 1940, 20 Romanian sailors from Bessarabia were repatriated, and on 24 November 1940, other 27 sailors left for the country, leaving 14 people on board, according to the requirements formulated by Haifa port authorities. The 14 crew members remained on board the ship until 2 December 1940, when they were disembarked by the British authorities.

Requisitioning of the ships belonging to "Steaua Română" Company

The oil tankers "Steaua Română" and "Oltenia", whose value was estimated at 500 thousand lei, to which it was added the value of the cargo, 140 thousand dollars, were detained on 12 June 1940 in Alexandria, Egypt, until 10 September 1940, when they were transferred to the port of Mombasa, where, in early January 1941, they were requisitioned.



"Oltenia" oil tanker and captain Alexandru Dragoș

(Source: <https://furcuta.blogspot.com/2010/12/romanian-oil-tanker.html?m=1>, retrieved on 2 September 2023)

The odyssey of the ship "Oltenia" began in the spring of 1940, when it left the port of Constanța on its last voyage to the Mediterranean Sea. By order of the "Steaua Română" Society in Constanța, on 11 June 1940, the ship was taken

to Alexandria to be placed at the disposal of the British authorities, from where, after a few days, it left for Port Said, and from there to Suez, where it was ordered to go to Abadan. On 17 August 1940, the ship left the port of Suez for Aden, where the captain of the ship was ordered to proceed to Mombasa (Kenya). After a period of uncertainty regarding the future, on 16 October 1940, the ship's captain received the requisition order, the vessel being transferred under the English flag. Under those conditions, all crew members opted for repatriation, leaving 3 officers and 7 sailors on board the ship for the surrender of the ship. The 10 sailors went to Bombay to be repatriated via Iran, but eventually the Romanian sailors ended up in a prison camp in Palestine.

After being requisitioned, the ship was renamed "Oltenia II"¹, transporting oil and derivative products according to the orders of the new "owner". Its fate was not the desired one, being torpedoed and sunk by the German submarine U-436 on 8 January 1943.

The ship "Steaua Română" was taken to the port of Alexandria, where, on 12 June 1940, was detained by the British Admiralty. The captain of the ship was obliged to comply with the orders of the British, to follow the navigation course imposed by them through the Suez Canal to Port Said, then to Mombasa, where, on 16 October 1940, it was officially requisitioned by the harbour authorities. The ship remained anchored in the port of Mombasa for a long period of time, with part of the Romanian crew, doubled by English sailors, on board, the crew fate remaining uncertain.

On the date of being requisitioned, on board the oil tanker "Steaua Română" there was a crew of 36 sailors, of whom 21 were repatriated, and 15 remained on board, who, finally, were detained and sent for internment in a prison camp in India (AMAE, collection *Problema 214/Anglia 38*, 1940-1955).

During the war years, the oil tanker "Steaua Română" transported liquid fuel materials in the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean, being constantly under the threat of German and Japanese submarines, which carried out attacks on commercial and war vessels under the British flag operating in those waters.

The ship survived the war, being used by the Ministry of War Transport until 4 March 1947, when it was sold to "Chr. Salvesen & Co" and renamed "Polar Maid".

¹ *Oltenia II British Steam tanker*, <http://www.uboat.net/allies/merchants/ship/2572.html>, retrieved on 12 September 2023.

The new owner used it as a supply ship for Hawke Harbor Labrador and South Georgia ports until 1957 when it was decommissioned and disassembled at the shipyard in Rosyth, Scotland².

Requisitioning of the ship “Inginer N. Vlassopol”

In September 1939, the ship “*Ing. N. Vlassopol*” left Constanța for England, and at the beginning of the war, the owner ordered that the ship “*should be used in the service of England and for the cause of the Allies, thus avoiding the fall of the ship into the hands of the Germans, as it happened to the ship Jiul*” (AMAE, collection Anglia 38, 1940-1955, Problem 214). In December 1940, having just arrived from Canada, the ship was requisitioned by the British Ministry of the Navy, invoking the domestic and international legal basis, although, at that time, there were no valid reasons for such an action. On 3 January 1941, the ship was confiscated by the British authorities, a gesture that attracted the reaction of the Romanian authorities that used diplomatic channels to clarify the situation of the ship and the crew.

After being requisitioned, on 15 February 1941, the ship was renamed “*Hampton Lodge*”, then used for cargo transports between Canada and Great Britain, being sunk on 21 January 1943 in the Mediterranean Sea after being hit by three bombs dropped by a German JU-88 plane on 20 January.

THE VESSELS BELONGING TO ALEXANDRU VLASOV

Alexandru Vlasov (1880-1961) was one of the shipowners who established a shipping company in Romania following the purchase of three ships: “*Oltul*”, “*Prahova*” and “*Siretul*”, which sailed up to a certain point under the Romanian flag. During the Second World War, they were sold or requisitioned by the British and American authorities. Being renamed, they sailed under various flags.

The situation of the ships became complicated in the spring and summer of 1940, in the context of the unfavourable evolution of the situation for Great Britain, so Alexandru Vlasov established in New-York the company “*Alvion Steamship Corporation*”, registered in Panama, then, “*Compania Argentina de Navigacion de Ultramar SA*” (CANUMAR), the ships sailing under the Romanian or other flags.

After 22 June 1941, the ships under the Romanian flag were no longer safe in the Atlantic Ocean, so Alexandru Vlasopol decided to sell the ship “*Oltul*” to a South American company, “*Prahova*”, to the North Americans, and “*Siretul*” was captured

and transferred into the service of the British Ministry of War Transport. The ship “*Siretul*” was captured by the British naval forces on 27 May 1940 near the Cape Verde Islands and forced to change its course to Cadiz, under military escort. After a long period of inactivity, in which it was blocked in port, starting in August 1942, it was renamed “*Omega*” and made available to “*Navigation & Coal Trade Co Ltd*”, a British company founded by Alexandru Vlasov, requisitioned, in turn, by the British Ministry of War Transport. After the end of the war, the ship continued to remain at the disposal of the British Ministry of War Transport until 1947, when it was returned to its owner.

The ship “*Oltul*” left the port of Buenos Aires for Genoa, on 22 July 1940. On 9 August, it entered the port of Recife (Brazil), where the captain requested a “*navicert*” from the British Consulate, a request that was refused. On 28 December 1940, the ship was sold to the “*Bolphin Company Inc*” of Panama, being renamed “*Esmeralda*”. On 6 November 1941, the ship became the property of the “*Compania Argentina de Navegacion de Ultramar*” from Buenos Aires. After October 1942, the situation of the ship “*Oltul*” is unknown. What is known is the fact that, having a new name, it sailed under the Argentinian flag.

COMMERCIAL SHIPS REQUISITIONED AND SOLD IN THE USA

In the spring of 1940, the ships “*Sulina*” and “*Suceava*” had arrived in the US ports and had been loaded with materials destined for Romania and other countries. After fulfilling all the formalities regarding navigation in international waters, they left and arrived in the port of Constanța. Two other ships, sailing under the Romanian flag, “*Prahova*” and “*Moldova*”, belonging to some shipowners, were in the territorial waters of the USA, being subject to restrictive measures, so the owners tried to solve the problems, which brought them great financial damage in the short and long term. Even in that context, considering that different ministries had purchased raw materials, military material and spare parts, it was decided in Bucharest to send the cargo ship “*Mangalia*” to New York, on its first voyage.

“Mangalia” cargo ship in a one-way voyage

Arriving at destination, after unloading the cargo, the ship was reloaded, to leave for the country on 2 July 1940. On 24 June 1940, the ship was blocked in the US territorial waters, most likely at the request of the British government. Therefore, the Romanian authorities intervened through diplomatic channels in London

² About the use of the ship after 1947, see: *Tales of a “Vindi Boy”, Part Four: Polar Maid Adventure*, <https://merchantships.tripod.com/vinditales4.html>, retrieved on 12 August 2023.

to obtain freedom of navigation. In July 1940, in Constanța, it was considered that *“Mangalia”* was not detained, but it was only ordered to remain in New York until it obtained free navigation from the British government, which did not happen, so the ship remained in the port of New York³.



“Mangalia” cargo ship in New York, 1941 (Source: US National Archives, RG-19-LCM, <https://www.navsource.org/archives/09/13/130046.htm>, retrieved on 22 September 2023)

Under those conditions, the sale of the goods that had been loaded was suggested and approved. The situation became complicated when, on 10 October 1940, the US Congress passed a law by which the President could authorize the requisitioning of certain products and materials for the US needs and for other purposes, a measure that also targeted Romania, so that all the Romanian available products in the US were blocked.

Coste Brutus, the charge d'affaires in Washington, unsuccessfully intervened with the Department of State to obtain some relief regarding the ship and the cargo, provided that the measure applied to other states. Therefore, along with the sale of the goods, the Romanian government authorized the sale of the cargo ship *“Mangalia”* by the RMS. The sale of both the goods and the ship was a failure, caused by the fact that it was determined by late decisions, adopted in Bucharest, but also by procedures established by the American authorities, which were aimed at a course of action favourable to them. A proof in this regard was the involvement of the US Treasury in knowing the situation of the goods loaded on the ship

³ For more information about the history of *“Mangalia”*, see Ion Giurcă (2021). *Rechiziționarea cargoului “Mangalia” în 1941. Un diferend româno-american*. București: Editura Militară.

“Mangalia”, meaning that those interested knew how to defend their interests by invoking the legislation and orders of the US President.

Against the backdrop of the difficult situation in the Atlantic Ocean, where the British had blocked most of the transport ships, decisions were being made in Washington regarding the US national security and defence. Therefore, on 7 May 1941, the members of the House of Representatives of the US Congress voted a law authorizing the President of the country to order the requisitioning of foreign ships that were refugeed in American ports, so the fate of the ship *“Mangalia”* was predictable, the authorities in Bucharest being promptly informed. Based on the new law, on 24 June 1941, the US Maritime Commission established and submitted to those that were subject to the decision of the Congress and the President the method of notifying the captains of the ships regarding requisitioning.

The next day, the US Maritime Commission representatives boarded the ship *“Mangalia”*, where, according to the procedures established in case of requisitioning a foreign ship in US territorial waters, they displayed in a visible place the notice of taking over the ship. Regarding the gesture of the American authorities, on 19 July 1941, on behalf of the Romanian government, Coste Brutus submitted a protest to the Department of State, stating that *“the Romanian government does not recognize the legality of requisitioning and reserves all rights to the ownership of the vessel and to compensation”* (AMAE, collection USA/71, Package no. 214 USA, vol. 1, p. 116). In the days that followed, the Maritime Commission proceeded to taking an inventory of the vessel, which was completed on 2 July 1941, the day that marked the definitive loss of the motor ship *“Mangalia”*.

After being repaired, converted and adapted to the needs of the US naval forces, the ship, renamed *“Pleiades AK-47”*, was used for transporting materials to ports in Europe, survived the war, remained in the possession of the USA, without being returned to the Romanian authorities, despite the steps taken in this regard in the period 1945-1959.

Requisitioning of the ship *“Prahova”* by the USA

On 9 June 1940, the ship was in the USA, at Hampton Roads (Virginia), from where it immediately left for New York, the port of Charleston, to unload the cargo on board. After being loaded with goods in Charleston, the ship *“Prahova”* left for Los Angeles, then sailed along the west coast of the USA. On 17 December 1940, the ship collided with another ship, being seriously damaged and sent for repairs

to the San Pedro dock, in order to be transferred to an owner from the “*Alvion Steamship Company*”, in which context its name was changed to “*Tropicus*”, under the Panama flag.

It was the moment when the ship definitively lost its Romanian identity. Through this action, Alexandru Vlasov tried to save the ship from being requisitioned by the USA. On 8 September 1942, the ship “*Tropicus*” was requisitioned by the US authorities and renamed “*Cloverbank*”, the arguments of the US authorities being similar to those in the case of the cargo ship “*Mangalia*”, and it was used for maritime transport throughout the war period. After the end of the war, the ship was transferred to the company “*CIA. Argentina de Navigación de Ultramar*”, carrying out commercial transport between Argentina and Brazil.



“*Prahova*” ship (Source: <http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/P-Ships/prahova1922.html>, retrieved on 2 September 2023)

The ship was returned to Alexandru Vlasov in 1947, after the name “*Tropicus*” was restored, based on a document issued by the United States Maritime Commission, entitled “*Deposition of Just Compensation*”.

Sale of the ship “*Moldova*”

The ship “*Moldova*” belonged to the “*Vlassopol*” Company. It left the port of Constanța in the fall of 1939, sailed in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to Buenos Aires, where its presence was recorded on 11 February 1940.

From Buenos Aires, the ship “*Moldova*” sailed to the Caribbean Sea, passed through the Panama Canal, anchored at Puerto Eten, in Peru, from where it left for Europe, arriving at Marseilles towards the end of May 1940. In the fall of 1940,

the ship was in ports on the west and east coast of the USA, leaving New York for Kobe, where it was sold on 1 February 1941, its flag being handed over to the Romanian representative in Tokyo. It was the moment when the ship “*Moldova*” was removed from the records of the Ministry of Air and Navy.

LOSS OF SOME COMMERCIAL SHIPS IN THE BLACK SEA

The Romanian commercial ships were used in the Black Sea in the period 1941-1944 according to the concept of the German naval command installed in Constanța, based on the “*Lease Contract no. 11011*”, signed, on 20 October 1941, between the RMS, as the shipowner, and the German Navy, represented by the “*German Admiral Black Sea*” Command, as the beneficiary, through which the Romanian state leased, only for the ports accessible to vessels from the Black Sea, including Istanbul, the following ships: “*Balcic*”, “*Câmpina*”, “*Carol I*”, “*Oituz*”, “*Peleş*”, “*Suceava*”, “*Danubius*”, “*Romania*”, “*Durostor*”, “*Ardeal*”, “*Carpați*”, “*Sulina*”, “*Cavarna*”, valid during the hostilities in Russia, each of the parties having the obligation to denounce it for each individual ship with a ten-day notice (AMAE, collection 71/Romania, 1941-1943, *Probleme militare*, vol. 365, pp. 223-225).

The contract stipulated that the leased vessels could be used by the Germans in the accessible ports of the Black Sea, as well as in Istanbul. The lease period was limited to the duration of hostilities in Russia, the parties being able to terminate it with a ten-day notice. Regardless of their type, the ships could transport the materials necessary for the conduct of military operations, capture and prisoners of war. It was stipulated that the vessels would sail under the Romanian flag, the crews would be made up of Romanian sailors, some of whom could be replaced only following the RMS agreement.

In case of loss of a ship, the German state undertakes to provide the Romanian state with another ship having similar characteristics within one year at most. Also, the Germans were to pay the insurance premiums of the crews to a company in Romania, their value being 100 times the salary and monthly allowances.

Most of the ships leased to Germany were sunk by the Soviet naval and air forces, and the “*Alba Iulia*”, saved as if by a miracle, was requisitioned by the “*liberators*” in 1944, after Romania’s transition to the Entente. The only commercial ship that remained under the Romanian flag after 23 August 1944 was the “*Ardeal*”. Each of the listed ships had a glorious and tragic history, their crews doing their duty, most of them making their ultimate sacrifice.



"Ardeal" cargo ship (Source: <https://marina-noastra.ro/2021/12/13/flota-noastra-comerciala-distrusa-in-cel-de-al-doilea-razboi-mondial/>, retrieved on 22 September 2023)

ATTEMPTS TO REGAIN THE SHIPS REQUISITIONED BY THE USA AND GREAT BRITAIN

From the moment of the detention and then the requisitioning of the ships belonging to the RMS or other shipowners, whose ships crossed the seas of the world under the Romanian flag, the authorities in Bucharest and the owners acted for the physical recovery of the ships, their value and the financial damages incurred during the period between the detention until the declaration of war was transmitted by our authorities to the governments in London and Washington.

In the USA, throughout the war period and after the end of the war, the Romanian authorities acted for the recovery of the cargo ship "Mangalia" and the resolution of disputes related to the goods on board the ship. The finalization of the litigation that dragged on for seven years was unfavourable to the Romanian state, and the way of resolving the dispute remains debatable, given that we consider that it was acted in a manner that disadvantaged the authorities in Bucharest, in a context in which the Romanian-American relations were far from the normality existing after the conclusion of the Peace Treaty in Paris, but understandable under the conditions of the outbreak of the "Cold War".

The transition of Romania to the side of the Entente was followed by the resumption of political, economic, diplomatic and cultural relations with the USA

and Great Britain, in the context in which the USSR had the freedom to impose its will on the territory of Romania, invoking the provisions of the Armistice Convention signed on 12 September 1944. The representatives of the USA and Great Britain who came to Bucharest acted in accordance with the instructions received with regard to the Romanian requests in connection with the lost ships.

The resumption of the attempts for the physical or value recovery of the ship "Mangalia" was recorded in the fall of 1944, on 25 September, when the Undersecretary of State for the Air, General Ermil Gheorghiu, was informed by the Director of Economic Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the sale of the aviation materials on the cargo ship "Mangalia" by the US Department of Treasury through the law firm "WM. Müller&Co.Inc".

In February 1946, as a result of the decisions adopted at the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, held in Moscow between 16-26 December 1945, the governments in Washington and London recognized the Bucharest government, and the mutual level of representation was raised from that of a political representative to that of a legation.

In the proceedings for the recovery of the vessel, the RMS requested that the motor vessel should be returned to it, and in case it was lost, it should be replaced with a vessel of the same type or having similar characteristics, given that it was seized. The Romanian authorities managed to document well the situation of the ship "Mangalia", so that, on 7 March 1956, the Romanian government submitted a "Note" to the American government proposing a meeting of the delegations of the two states, which would analyse and regulate the unclarified economic and financial problems, to find ways and means to relaunch economic exchanges between the two states. The response from Washington was favourable, establishing that the meeting should take place in Bucharest, between 15 October and 3 November 1956. For that meeting, among the documents prepared and sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the "Note regarding the problem of the 'Mangalia' vessel left for New York and requisitioned there by the American authorities in 1941" (AMAE, Problema 214 SUA, 1944-1959, vol. 1, f.f.n.), in which it was formulated the request to obtain the official document of the American law on requisitions from 1941, which would constitute a basis for discussion in the ongoing negotiations. The Romanian party gave a certain interpretation to the provision of the Peace Treaty, in the sense that the article was not applicable in the case of the ship "Mangalia",

since Romania had no complaint to make in connection with the requisitioning of the ship by the American authorities, but only requested for the ship to be returned or its value to be compensated for by the Americans. The answer from the USA came on 14 December 1959, when the requested documents were sent. However, the gesture was not intended to resolve the Romanian-American dispute regarding the ship requisitioned in 1941, but only to present the US legal framework based on which action was taken. It is as clear as possible that, even in 1959, there was no hope for the recovery of the ship or the payment of its value. Things seem to have been resolved a few months later, when, on 30 March 1960, in Washington, an *“Agreement between Romania and the USA was signed by which the various pending financial problems between the two countries were liquidated. At the same time, a Declaration was published regarding the development of commercial relations between the two countries”* (*Politica externă a României*, 1986, p. 268).

The attempts made in London in relation to the requisitioning of Romanian commercial ships were complicated, complex and long-lasting, being possible only after 15 February 1946, when the two states mutually agreed on their representatives. 12 April 1946 marked the beginning of direct relations between Romania and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Thus, the issues of the Romanian vessels and sailors in the territories of the British Empire were discussed directly between the representatives of the two states, a fact that ensured, at least theoretically, the possibility of a faster solution to the divergent problems between the two states. A first attempt to recover the damages generated by the requisitioning of Romanian commercial ships belonged to Gheorghe Navrea, the commander of the *“Steaua Română”* oil tanker, from the time he was in the Dehra Dun prison camp. It was followed by the actions of the owners of the ships requisitioned by the British – the RMS, *“Steaua Română”* Company and the company of Spiridon Vlassopol, which generated discussions between the British institutions having a decision-making role in relation to meeting the demands of the injured parties.

Given that the British ministries were aware that the demands of the Romanian owners of the requisitioned ships were justified, the main problem was to find an advantageous solution to avoid payments. On the other hand, the authorities in London, through their representatives in Moscow and Bucharest, mostly British secret service personnel, acted in every way possible to counter the demands

of the Romanian owners, in order to reach an agreement with the Soviet authorities from Moscow and Bucharest, even with Veaceslav Molotov during the Potsdam Conference (16 July- 2 August 1945) and afterwards. The correspondence between various figures in British political life is evidence of concerns for finding a politically and financially advantageous solution for the government in London.

A decisive position of the British authorities towards the legitimate claims of the Romanian owners of maritime vessels was expressed on 24 July 1945 by the British Foreign Office, in a letter to the Head of the British Treasury, who was requested to find a justification for avoiding payment compensation to owners. Furthermore, it was suggested that the Romanian state should be compensated for the detention of British ships on the Danube in the summer of 1940, as well as the fact that the resolution of the dispute should be the responsibility of the Treasury and the Ministry of War. The British approach was also based on the provisions of a Romanian-Russian agreement, signed on 19 July 1945, regarding the establishment of the Soviet-Romanian Joint Navigation Company *“Sovromtransport”*⁴, with the stated purpose of managing the recovery of Romania’s debts to the Soviet Union. In that view, on 2 August 1945, the Foreign Office in London launched the idea that *“...our reasons for protest would be better based on the argument that the Russian/Romanian Agreement is a violation of Article 11 of the Armistice rather than on the ground that the agreement is discriminatory”* (National Archives Kew). It was referred to the provision in the Armistice Convention according to which: *“Romania will pay compensations for the losses caused in Romania to the properties of the other Allied States and their nationals, during the war, compensations whose amount will be fixed at a later date”*⁵.

The matter under discussion concerned the ships *“Ing. N. Vlassopol”*, *“Bucegi”*, *“Steaua Română”* and *“Oltenia”*, about which the British *“argued”* the requisitioning with the *“Defence Regulations of the Colonial United Kingdom”*, stating that: *“His Majesty’s Government would be fully entitled to undertake any measures that could prohibit any legal right to claim compensation regarding the requisition period*

⁴ *Monitorul Oficial al României/Official Gazette of Romania*, no. 172, 1 August 1945, pp. 6583-6586.

⁵ *Convenție de Armistițiu din 12 septembrie 1944 între guvernul român, pe de o parte, și guvernele Uniunii Sovietice, Regatul Unit și Statele Unite ale Americii, pe de altă parte/ Armistice Convention of 12 September 1944 between the Romanian government, on the one hand, and the governments of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, on the other hand*, <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/31>, retrieved on 22 September 2023.

that the Government of Romania may propose... By prohibiting the legal right to claim compensation, we could put ourselves in the position of paying compensation in exchange for an equivalent gesture on the part of the Government of Romania" (National Archives Kew, Foreign Office collection, General, 1945, 371, file no. 953, f.f.n.). Finally, the British government found another reason not to pay compensation to the Romanian party: *"Only one of these ships, Ing. N. Vlassopol, was requisitioned in this country"* (Ib.).

However, the British government did not find a convenient, unassailable solution, in order not to pay compensation, so it acted to impose a provision in the Peace Treaty with Romania, in the chapter dedicated to economic problems, working in this sense with the USA and the USSR representatives. Therefore, according to the provisions of Article 30, Romania waives *"complaints in relation to the decisions or orders of the Prize Courts of some Allied or Associated Powers, Romania accepting to recognize as valid and binding all the decisions and orders of these Prize Courts, pronounced on 1 September 1939, or after this date, regarding Romanian vessels, Romanian goods or the payment of expenses"* (Ib.).

Despite the provisions of the Peace Treaty, on 10 April 1953, the Ministry of Transport requested from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Treaties Directorate, an opinion regarding the legal situation of the ships *"Bucegi"*, *"Steaua Română"*, *"Oltenia"* and *"Inginer N. Vlassopol"*: *"let us know your opinion whether we can consider that these vessels are still our property, or whether the English would be entitled to consider them as war captures"* (AMAE, collection 38/Anglia, Problema 214, 1940-1955, file *Vase sub pavilion românesc rămase în ape engleze, 1940-1955, f.f.n.*).

On 1 September 1953, through a *"Note"*, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the claimant that: *"At the beginning of June 1940, the Romanian government, under the influence of the German government, did not authorize the operation of registering the French fleet on the Danube under the English flag, fleet which, owing to the precipitate events in France, had been sold to England. Also, under the pressure of the Hitler government, at the beginning of July 1940, the Romanian government prevented the British vessels from leaving the Danube"* (Ib.).

After presenting the situation of each vessel, the author of the *"Note"* estimated that the measure taken by the British was one of retaliation in the case of the ships *"Bucegi"*, *"Steaua Română"* and *"Oltenia"*, which, in the end, were requisitioned,

and in the case of the ship *"Ing. Vlassopol"*, which was war capture and then requisitioned.

In the context of the post-war situation, Spiridon Vlassopol acted in his own name alongside the British authorities for the recovery of the damage, so that, in the years 1950-1951, the British party carried out a detailed documentation on the situation of the owner and his ship, which formed the basis of discussions and analysis in a trial held in London, at the end of which it was decided to award compensation for the period during which it was detained and used by the British authorities.

CONCLUSIONS

The situation of Romanian commercial ships starting in 1939, even before the outbreak of the war, was a difficult one, which, under the conditions of the evolution of the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in 1940, became more and more complicated, reaching the point of physical or value loss. The relations with Germany after 1939, its impositions from 1940 regarding the British and French ships on the Danube, led to worsening the relations with Great Britain and the USA and their reaction regarding Romanian commercial ships. Also as a result of the relations with Germany during the war, the leased commercial ships that operated in the Black Sea were, with one exception, lost.

After the end of the war, the situation did not improve for Romania in terms of commercial ships, their physical or value recovery, given that the three great allies, the USA, the USSR and Great Britain, in the same situation regarding the requisitioning of some Romanian ships, found the convenient solution in terms of solving the problem in their favour.

In relation to the commitments assumed by Germany regarding the loss of the leased and used Romanian ships, the Romanian party has never raised the issue.

The analysis of the context and the conditions in which Romania's commercial fleet was lost during the Second World War demonstrates, similar to other situations, that, in the relations with the great powers, small states, always considered to have limited interests, suffer defeats when the interests of the big ones require it. It was not only the case of Romania.

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ROMANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF TÜRKIYE AND ITS ROLE IN THE BLACK SEA (NOVEMBER 1940-JUNE 1941)

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In November 1940, the direct German-Soviet bilateral contacts revealed some substantial differences of interest, mainly concerning the Black Sea basin and the Balkan Peninsula. The relations between Germany and the USSR would become increasingly cold and difficult, culminating in the launch of Operation Barbarossa, on 22 June 1941. The intensification of the German-Soviet differences was seen as an encouraging development by both Romania and Türkiye, as both Pontic states had been subject to expansionist tendencies of the USSR, manifested in various forms and, in Türkiye’s case, lacking concrete results.

Our article briefly presents Romanian perceptions of Türkiye’s importance and conduct in the region, within the context of a shrinking Romania that had become part of the Berlin-Rome Axis system, while Türkiye was striving to maintain its neutrality, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Among the sources we consulted, a number of documents from Romanian diplomatic and military archives ought to be mentioned.

Keywords: sources of information; assessments; systems of alliances; agreements; balance of power;

INTRODUCTION

November 1940 was a crucial stage in the deteriorating trend of German-Soviet relations, due to the increasingly deep and obvious divergences between the two Great Totalitarian Powers, signatories of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, mainly concerning the area of South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea basin.

The causes of the German-Soviet rupture lie both in the ambiguous delimitation of spheres of influence in Southeast Europe on 23/24 August 1939 (Constantiniu, 2002, p. 76) and in the political and military developments of the ten months following this arrangement, which led both totalitarian powers to pay increasing attention to the Balkan Peninsula and areas adjacent to it from mid-1940 onwards (Ibid., pp. 113-140).

ROMANIA AND TÜRKIYE UNDER THE IMPACT OF GERMAN-SOVIET COLLABORATION (AUGUST 1939-NOVEMBER 1940)

The military and political developments between August 1939 and June 1940 led to Romania’s complete international isolation, a situation that was taken advantage of by the neighbouring revisionist states, starting with the USSR itself which, after the occupation of Basarabia and other Romanian territories, following the final notes of 26-27 June 1940, continued its hostile conduct through numerous border incidents and by encouraging Bulgarian and Hungarian revisionism against Romania. Under these conditions, the Bucharest government, led by King-Dictator Carol II, desperately sought the protection of Germany and Italy, which was eventually obtained on 30 August 1940, at the price of new territorial concessions, this time in favour of Hungary (about 2/5 of Transylvania) and Bulgaria (Southern Dobrogea/Quadrilater). The collaboration with the Berlin-Rome Axis was to be accentuated and accelerated after the abdication of Charles II and the establishment of Ion Antonescu’s regime (5/6 September 1940), with the entry of German troops into Romania (10 October 1940) and the accession of the Romanian state to the Tripartite Pact (23 November 1940).

The new trend in Soviet foreign policy, inaugurated in August 1939 also affected Türkiye’s relations with the USSR, which cooled considerably due to the Moscow government’s demands regarding the status of the Straits, which it sought to take

control of, by installing military bases in their vicinity (Ekrem, 1993, pp. 98-103). After Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu's long and not very fruitful visit to Moscow (25 September-17 October 1939), Türkiye concluded an alliance pact with Britain and France and significantly reduced its trade with Germany, a trend that was reversed, but at a slower pace, from the summer of 1940 (Özden, 2013, pp. 94-96). Towards the Italo-Greek war, which began on 28 October 1940, the Republic of Türkiye maintained its neutrality, but sometimes hinted that it might intervene to help Greece, its ally in the Balkan Pact, if Bulgaria became involved against it (AMFAR, vol. 61/1940, pp. 408-409; RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 3-5, 13).

In the autumn of 1940, Great Britain regarded the USSR as a future ally against Germany and showed a growing interest in widening German-Soviet differences in the Balkans and the Black Sea area, including by encouraging aggressive action by the USSR against Romania in the Danube Delta (Constantiniu, 2002, p. 141). As early as July 1940, Adolf Hitler had realised the possibility of British-Soviet collusion in Balkan affairs, which contributed to the decision to attack the USSR (Ibid., pp. 114-115).

After the conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, with Italy and Japan, on 27 September 1940, Hitler raised the question of bringing the Soviet Union into this structure, on condition that Moscow gave up its expansionist ambitions in the Balkans, contenting itself with the Persian Gulf area, Iran and, perhaps, the Indian sub-continent; as regards the Straits, Germany wanted to liberalize traffic through them and a guarantee for the integrity of Türkiye by the the founders of the Tripartite Pact and USSR (Duroselle, 2006, p. 219) In this context, political and diplomatic relations between Romania and Türkiye entered, in September 1940, on a clear downward slope, the essential cause being the fact that the two states belonged from then to different alliance systems. Consequently, on 23 September 1940, the level of mutual diplomatic representation was lowered, by mutual agreement, from that of embassy to that of legation (AMFAR, vol. 61/1940, p. 384; Calafeteanu coord., 2004, p. 329). On 28 September and 13 October 1940, Romania's Foreign Minister, Mihail Sturdza, and even the head of state, General Ion Antonescu, made categorical statements to the effect that the Romanian state had denounced the Balkan Pact concluded on 9 February 1934 (Calafeteanu coord., 2003, p. 330). The entry of German troops into Romania in October 1940 led to the appearance of unfavourable comments in the Turkish press, some of which were repeated on Radio Ankara (AMFAR, vol. 61/1940, pp. 402-406).

On the economic (commercial) level, however, there were quite substantial common interests, Türkiye needing Romanian kerosene and Romania being interested, first of all, in the procurement of raw materials for the textile industry (cotton and wool), but especially in the continuation and safety of traffic across the Straits (*Stenogramele/Transcripts*, 1997, doc. 13, pp. 342-360). In the Council of Ministers meeting of 8 April 1941, General Ion Antonescu made a more general observation, related to the treatment of foreign nationals and the possible repercussions or reprisals in the event of abuses by the Romanian authorities: *"We have Romanians in Türkiye, in Spain, in France. Our fellow citizens are there trading and it would mean that they would be picked up in 24 hours and ruined, they and their families; judge all these things!"* (*Stenogramele/Transcripts*, 1999, doc. 4, pp. 99-11).

According to the information available to the Romanian specialised military structures, in mid-November 1940 Türkiye had about 1,000,000 people under arms, most of them in Thrace (the European part of Türkiye). The maximum number of people able for mobilisation amounted to 1,200,000, while the permanent army forces comprised about 10,000 officers, 20,000 non-commissioned officers and 150,000 troops respectively (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 348/1940, p. 3). The population of Türkiye at the outbreak of the Second World War was 17,369,000 (Kyçyku, 2005, p. 95). The Turkish Army included, in peacetime, 25 infantry divisions (at mobilisation, 40), 4 mixed mountain brigades, 3 cavalry divisions (at mobilisation, 5), 2 fortification divisions and 1 mechanised division, with a total of about 400-500 battle tanks, 480 aircrafts and 16 warships with a total tonnage of 40.000 dwt (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 348/1940, pp. 4-5).

15 DECISIVE DAYS: 12-26 NOVEMBER 1940

In mid-October 1940, Nazi Germany's Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, invited his Soviet counterpart, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, to visit Berlin (Duroselle, 2006, p. 219). The visit took place on 12 and 13 November 1940, when Molotov held talks with both his German counterpart and Adolf Hitler. The discussions highlighted the differences and diverging interests between the two sides. Thus, the hosts sought the USSR's adherence to the Tripartite Pact in counterpart for territorial gains in the India-Iran area, to which they later added the exclusion of the Black Sea states from the Straits navigation (Duroselle, 2006, p. 220). In return, Molotov emphasised Soviet interest in Finland and especially in the Balkan Peninsula and the Black Sea basin, making Bulgaria the epicenter of Soviet claims due to the strategic position

of this small Slavic state as a bridgehead in the Balkan Peninsula and a gateway to the Straits (Constantiniu, 2002, pp. 144-154). The Soviet note sent to Germany on 26 November 1940, in which Moscow reiterated its previous demands concerning Finland, the concessions on the island of Sakhalin and especially in the Balkans and the Black Sea, was to remain unanswered by Germany (Jelavich, 2000, pp. 211-212).

The second half of November 1940 marked a defeat for Soviet diplomacy in the battle for predominant influence in Bulgaria. Thus, on 30 November, the Bulgarian government declined Soviet proposals for a mutual aid pact, communicated on 18 November by Molotov to the Bulgarian minister in Moscow and reiterated on 25 November by the diplomat Arkady Aleksandrovich Sobolëv, who had arrived on a visit to Sofia (Duroselle, 2006, p. 221). The Soviet offer made to Bulgaria on 25 November 1940 included the promise of territorial gains for Türkiye up to the Enos-Midia line. (Ilchev, 2019, p. 557; see also: Miller, 1975, p. 34, Biagini, 2005, p. 125).

On 26 November 1940, the head of the British government, Winston Churchill, told the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, that Britain's aim in South-Eastern Europe was for the Turkish government to declare that any action by Germany through Bulgaria against Greece, or any action by Bulgaria against Greece, would be followed by a declaration of war by Türkiye (Miller, 1975, p. 43). In order to avoid such a situation, the government in Ankara proposed to the government in Sofia the conclusion of a neutrality and non-aggression pact between Türkiye and Bulgaria, but without success (Ibid.).

A military intelligence bulletin for November 1940 reported a state of great unrest in Türkiye, particularly in the second half of the month, as a result of the international situation and the application of exceptional military measures such as the imposition of a curfew in several districts of Thrace and western Anatolia, troop movements to the west, mobilisation of contingents and the introduction of anti-aircraft camouflage (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 345/1940, pp. 579-584).

Romanian military documents from the mid-1940s and 1941 consistently underlined the consistency of the military and financial aid granted by Great Britain to Türkiye (Ibid., file no. 315/1940, passim.). The Turkish-British collaborative relations aroused suspicion and even unease in some Romanian circles. Thus, on 22 November 1940, the Romanian consul in Beirut, Paul Negulescu, quoted a series of allegations from some Turkish circles in the future capital of Lebanon, according to which, in the event of the arrival of German beyond the Danube (from Romania),

the British air force would react with massive attacks directed towards the Ploiești-Câmpina oil area, using Turkish airports and airfields as launching bases (AMFAR, vol. 61/1940, p. 433).

THE WINTER OF 1940-1941 AND BULGARIA'S ACCESSION TO THE AXIS

The violent and anarchic actions undertaken by the Iron Guard arm squads towards the end of November 1940 led to the appearance in the columns of some Turkish newspapers of a series of articles highly critical of the realities and developments in Romania, in particular of the new domestic and foreign policy of the Romanian state. In this respect, the newspapers *Tan* (The News), *Yeni Sabah* (New Morning), *Vatan* (The Homeland) and even the government newspaper *Ulus* (The State) stood out (AMFAR, vol. 61/1940, pp. 448-463; RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 345/1940, pp. 603-606).

At the end of November 1940, the mood in Türkiye was evolving towards a certain calm, according to the information available to the Romanian specialised services, two factors being at the origin of this situation, namely the discussions of the German ambassador von Papen with Şükrü Saraçoğlu and, respectively, the postponement of Bulgaria's accession to the Tripartite Pact (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 345/1940, p. 599). The tendency to calm the general atmosphere in Türkiye was to continue throughout December, in parallel with another tendency, manifested at the level of diplomacy and the press, towards a certain reconciliation with neighbouring Bulgaria (Ibid., pp. 679-684).

A political-diplomatic event which aroused some comment in various circles in the Balkan (and also other) states was the conclusion of a friendship pact between Hungary and Yugoslavia on 12 December 1940. At the government meeting on 13 December 1940, the last meeting he attended as foreign minister, in reply to a question from Ion Antonescu, Mihail Sturdza blamed the previous day's act on influence from Great Britain, the USSR and the USA through Türkiye (*Stenogrammele/ Transcripts*, 1997, doc. 33, p. 626). The Romanian military attaché in Ankara, famous colonel Traian Teodorescu, observed, in connection with the same event, the tendency of Romania's isolation on a regional level, urging, consequently, to maintain ties with Greece and Türkiye, despite belonging to different alliance systems, since the two mentioned South-Eastern European states were characterized as anti-Slavic (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 345/1940, pp. 655-657). There was also the initiative to set up a Romanian consulate in the Turkish town of Trabzon (old

Trebizond), located on the Anatolian Black Sea coast; following this request, Hüseyin Numan Menemencioglu, the general secretary in the Turkish Foreign Ministry (future, head of Turkish diplomacy), confidentially communicated on 5 January 1941 to the Romanian diplomat, Al. Télémaque that the Ankara government had decided not to approve the establishment of any new consulate in Trabzon, in order not to irritate the USSR, suggesting the establishment of a Romanian consulate in Smyrna/Izmir (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, p. 4).

On 9 January, the Turkish Minister in Bucharest, Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, was received in audience by the Romanian diplomatic official Gheorghe Davidescu. The Turkish diplomat inquired about the possibility of making the Romanian railway network available to German troops for transport south of the Danube, receiving a negative reply, accompanied by the assessment that such an act would not be directed against Türkiye, “which is valued by the German factor”. Suphi Tanrıöver launched into a Russophobic and anti-Soviet tirade, beginning with historical examples, continuing with data on the situation of the Turkish-speaking populations of Central Asia and the Caucasus, and concluding that Türkiye had a vital interest in the defeat of the USSR, which prompted the Ankara government to faithfully fulfill its economic commitments to Germany (Ibid., pp. 8-9).

As far as trade relations were concerned, there were some dysfunctions linked to delays in cotton deliveries from Türkiye and disagreements over the method of payment, to which the Romanian side responded by reducing oil deliveries to Türkiye (*Stenogramele/Transcripts*, 1997, doc. 33, pp. 604-605). At the government meeting of 9 January 1941, the ministers took note of the fact that Turkish wool had arrived in Constanta, while cotton was on its way to the country (*Stenogramele/Transcripts*, 1998, doc. 1, p. 5).

Meanwhile, the *Barbarossa* Plan for attacking the Soviet Union had been perfected in Berlin, with the consequence that German efforts to control south-eastern Europe were stepped up. Thus, on 13 January 1941, the Nazi dictator met King Boris III of Bulgaria at Berghof and asked him to join the Tripartite Pact and become directly involved in the war against Greece; the Bulgarian sovereign, renowned for his ability, objected that Bulgaria was not prepared for such politico-military action, citing the possibility of reprisals from the USSR and Türkiye (de Launay, 1988, pp. 207-208). Four days later, V.M. Molotov expressed his dissatisfaction with the freezing of Soviet-German political contacts after the exchange of notes on 25/26 November 1940 to Ambassador Friedrich-Werner von der Schulenburg, who reiterated Soviet views on Bulgaria and the Straits, considered “part of the USSR’s

security zone”, which should have ruled out the idea of another “foreign military presence there” (Constantiniu, 2002, p. 165). At the same time, Great Britain urged Türkiye to declare war on Italy (which had attacked Greece), but also on Germany, in case the Reich sent its troops to Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. The government in Ankara rejected these suggestions in the context of visits to Türkiye by Lord Halifax and Sir John Dill, citing its own military shortcomings and the ambiguous attitude of the Soviet Union (Özden, 2013, p. 97). British diplomatic efforts were also supported by the administration in Washington DC. On 21 January, US Colonel Donovan, the US President’s special envoy, held talks with King Boris of Bulgaria, but he did not make any categorical promises (de Launay, 1988, p. 208).

In this context, at the beginning of 1941, the Turkish authorities resorted to massing troops near the Bulgarian border and declaring or maintaining a state of emergency in some districts in the west of the country (Ekrem, 1993, pp. 116-117).

On 15 January 1941, following a meeting with Şükrü Saraçoğlu, the Romanian diplomat E. Krupenski reported that the head of Turkish diplomacy was satisfied with the reassuring explanations offered by the German ambassador, but that Türkiye could not renounce certain military measures. The diplomat E. Krupenski also mentioned that other (unspecified) sources had reportedly told the Greek military attaché that Türkiye would join Britain in the war if German troops entered Bulgaria. At the end of the same telegram, E. Krupenski mentioned the assessment of foreign military circles in Ankara that Türkiye would attack Bulgaria only in the event of substantial British military support, estimated at several hundred tanks and 1,000 fighter planes, with the aim of pre-emptively taking it out of action before German troops crossed the Danube (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 10-11). A few days later, the repeated broadcast by Radio Ankara of a news report on the concentration of German troops in Romania was to provoke considerable dissatisfaction and concern in Türkiye, and this topic was commented upon by the main newspapers (Ibid., p. 17). After another meeting with Şükrü Saraçoğlu on 27 January 1941, the Romanian diplomat E. Krupenski concluded that the Turkish Foreign Minister was considering a Turkish-Bulgarian collaboration to prevent German military penetration of the Balkan Peninsula, which he attributed to the ‘usual optimism’ of the Turk minister; at the same time, the head of Turkish diplomacy seemed convinced that Yugoslavia would defend itself, in the event of a German attack (Ibid., p. 19).

In the first half of February 1941, in the context of the imminent rupture of relations with Great Britain, the government of Ion Antonescu also took the measure of interrupting navigation between Romanian and Turkish ports (Ekrem, 1993,

p. 114). Imports of cotton from Türkiye continued to be difficult, a fact also recorded in the meeting of the Council of Ministers of 6 February 1941 (*Stenogrammele/Transcripts*, 1998, doc. 7, pp. 130-169). A week later, after Minister Nicolae Dragomir had presented some data regarding the delivering of wool and cotton quantities ordered from Türkiye, General Ion Antonescu said: *“As far as Türkiye is concerned, the situation is getting more and more complicated, because of the war in the Balkans and the Turkish-British links. So we must expect that this source of raw materials will also cease”* (Ibid., doc. 11, p. 237). In the next government meeting, held the very next day, after expressing his exasperation at the continuing delays in the issue of cotton imports from Türkiye, Ion Antonescu also referred to the problem of the safety of ships, ordering that ships under the Turkish flag in the port of Constanța be detained until the return home of Romanian ships sent to Turkish ports; for such missions, considered risky, it was recommended to send ships of lower quality and value (Ibid, doc. 12, pp. 268; 271-272).

On 15 February, Suphi Tanrıöver was received by Ion Antonescu. During the meeting, the Turkish diplomat insisted on the resumption of Romanian-Turkish navigation links, reiterating a series of firm security guarantees for Romanian ships. In reply, Ion Antonescu justified the Romanian government’s gesture by circulating information on the preparation of British air bases on Turkish territory, rumors denied by Tanrıöver. Turning to general foreign policy issues, Ion Antonescu considered that Türkiye’s entry into the war against Germany, at Britain’s suggestion, would be a *“capital mistake”*, as it would give the Soviet Union the possibility of an attack from the Caucasus into Anatolia. The Turkish diplomat stated that his country would not want to enter the war unless there was an enemy attack, to which the Romanian leader considered that neither Germany nor Italy intended to attack Türkiye (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 31-32). At the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 20 February, Ion Antonescu informed the ministers of the discussion with the Turkish minister in Bucharest. After mentioning the Turkish diplomat’s insistence on the resumption of bilateral trade relations, the head of the Romanian government stated that trade had resumed, but recommended great caution, again citing information on the existence of British air bases in western Türkiye (Eastern Thrace and the Straits area) (*Stenogrammele/Transcripts*, 1998, doc. 15, p. 318). The next day, the Head of State wrote a triple resolution on the memorandum received the previous day, concerning the denial by Türkiye of the rumours about some intentions of hostile military actions towards Romania; General Antonescu asked for clarification as to whether or not foreign warships would be authorised

to enter the Black Sea through the Straits, whether there were foreign air bases in Türkiye and, respectively, what the attitude of the Turkish state would be in the event of the entry of German troops into the territories of Bulgaria and Greece (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 39-40).

In the meantime, on 17 February 1941, a Bulgarian-Turkish pact had been concluded, which was perceived in many circles as an act of disengagement of Türkiye from Greece, even in the event of a Bulgarian attack. Moreover, the news of the perfection of this pact was received with disappointment in Anglo-American circles and with great satisfaction in German and Italian circles (Miller, 1975, p. 45).

In a report written on 19 February 1941, Colonel Traian Teodorescu explained Türkiye’s diplomatic step by the general perception of the Ankara government of the war, dominated, on the one hand, by the conviction that Great Britain (also supported by the USA) would finally emerge victorious, and on the other hand by the appreciation that, in the given situation, a determined commitment on the side of Great Britain would have been too risky for Türkiye. Another common belief in Turkish circles was that *“neither the Russians, nor the Germans want each other at the Dardanelles”*. The recent severing of the Romanian-British diplomatic relations had caused concern, as it was perceived as a manifestation of Germany’s tendencies towards increasing direct involvement in the Balkans (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, pp. 63-69).

In a military information report dated 21 February 1941, we could find a rather negative assessment of the Turkish army, especially in terms of dress, equipment and sanitary conditions, and the outbreak of an epidemic of typhus. However, the population’s state of mind was considered positive (Ibid. file no. 348/1940, pp. 12-16). According to an informative summary completed on 1 March 1941, Türkiye’s military forces at that time totalled three armies, including 17 corps. The number of infantry divisions was 38, to which were added four in the process of being organised; three cavalry divisions and one motorised division were also in operation. The fighting strength of an army corps included three infantry divisions, a heavy artillery regiment (6 batteries), a cavalry division, an anti-aircraft battery, a signal battalion and a pontoon company. Under arms were about 800,000-1,000,000 troops, with the total mobilisation strength estimated at a maximum of 1,500,000. Another element of vulnerability was the very diverse origin of the weapons and ammunition: French, British, German, etc. (RNMA-CADP, Collection 5417, file no. 918/1940, pp. 1-18).

In bilateral Romanian-Turkish relations, a gesture of goodwill on the part of the Ankara government intervened by granting a favourable opinion on 21 February 1941 for the appointment of the Romanian diplomat Al. Télémaque as Minister Plenipotentiary (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, p. 42). However, three days later, the Romanian diplomat E. Krupenski expressed to Numan Menemencioğlu the Romanian government's protest against the attitude of some Turkish newspapers towards Romania, receiving the usual formal assurances that such deviations would not express the point of view of the Turkish government and people; the Romanian diplomat considered them, however, as a signal of loyalty sent by Türkiye to Great Britain (Ibid., p. 43).

An important diplomatic moment was the visit of the head of British diplomacy, Anthony Eden, to Ankara on 26 February 1941 on his way to Athens. On this occasion, the Turkish government's lack of confidence in the effectiveness of British aid in the event of a direct conflict with Germany became apparent (Ekrem, 1993, p. 118). On the same day, the Turkish minister in Bucharest, Suphi Tanrıöver, had a conversation with Ion Antonescu. At the beginning of the discussion, the Romanian head of state wanted to know the purpose of Eden's visit to Ankara, receiving the answer that the visit was not likely to change the position of Türkiye, which would only enter the war in the event of direct external aggression against it. At Antonescu's urging for Romanian-Turkish collaboration, under German aegis, against *"the danger of Slavic penetration and anarchy"*, the Turkish diplomat expressed some fears about Germany's alleged intentions to take control of the Straits, in order to use them as a base of attack towards Suez (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 44-45). On 2 March 1941, after examining several pieces of information and hypotheses, Colonel Traian Teodorescu concluded that the visit had been a success in terms of general British policy, with the amendment that British officials had given up the intention of drawing Türkiye into the war, realizing that the neutrality of this country was the best solution, under those circumstances (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, pp. 70-77). The assessment of the Romanian military attaché was to be shaped both by the subsequent evolution of events and by the historiography of the problem (Biagini, 2005, pp. 125-126).

In the Council of Ministers meeting of 27 February 1941, General Ion Antonescu concluded that the Black Sea remained a safe trade route; Romanian interest in Turkish barley and oats, however, proved to be without end, as the export of these items was banned by the Ankara authorities (*Stenogrammele/Transcripts*, 1998, doc. 17, pp. 397-398; Ibid., doc. 22, p. 520).

On 1 March 1941, in Vienna, the ceremony of Bulgaria's formal accession to the Tripartite Pact took place, as the skilful King Boris had obtained Hitler's agreement to maintain Bulgarian neutrality in the event of a German-Soviet conflict (de Launy, 1998, pp. 210-211). Bulgaria's adherence to the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis aroused the dissatisfaction of the USSR, which was transparently expressed (Constantiniu, 2002, pp. 169-170).

MARCH 1941 – A MONTH OF DIPLOMATIC EFFERVESCENCE FOR TÜRKIYE

After Bulgaria's accession to the Axis in March 1941, Türkiye became the object of extensive and insistent British, German and Soviet diplomatic efforts. The British warned in particular of the German danger, but did not mention the Soviet one. For their part, the Germans promised to respect Türkiye's independence and territorial integrity, accompanying these promises with gestures such as withdrawing troops from Bulgaria 60 km from the Turkish border, or revealing Soviet intentions towards Türkiye after the conclusion of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Finally, the political and diplomatic defeat in Bulgaria and the cooling of relations with Germany convinced the Soviets to reassess their attitude towards Türkiye, so that on 24 March a bilateral declaration of neutrality and non-aggression was signed and published (Ekrem, 1993, p. 119). Hitler had ruled out the possibility of military action against Türkiye for several reasons, including the assessment that Turkish resistance would have been substantial and likely to create considerable difficulties, especially in view of the confrontation with the USSR (Kyçyku, 2005, pp. 68-69).

In a note of the Special Intelligence Service (SIS) of 3 March 1941, after describing the defensive military measures taken in the Bosphorus area, the granting of numerous leaves of absence to soldiers of the troops deployed in Thrace after the conclusion of the Turkish-Bulgarian Pact was mentioned (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 39-41). Another informative note, dated 12 March 1941, reported the same troops going on the defensive, which was explained by fears of a German attack, to which the troops crowded into the restricted area of European Türkiye were very vulnerable (Ibid., pp. 43-44). An additional factor of vulnerability was, according to information obtained from *'casual sources'*, the Turkish army's net inferiority in aviation and motorised troops, including in Thrace (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 348/1940, p. 9). Another *'casual source'* had, two days earlier, passed on information leading to the conclusion that Turkish-British collaboration intentions had proved a failure;

according to this source, British financial aid, though substantial, had proved useless, the Turkish army being neither materially nor morally prepared for war, the only supporters of entering the war being the Jewish Greek and Armenian minorities, disavowed by the vast majority of ethnic Turks (Ibid, p. 25).

On 18 March, Al. Télémaque officially presented his letters of accreditation to President İsmet İnönü, only 78 hours after the arrival of the Romanian diplomat in the Turkish capital, a fact underlined in the opening of the solemn audience. On the issues of pressing political importance, the President of Türkiye expressed his concern about the massing of German troops in Bulgaria, considered to be a preliminary act to the attack on Greece, and questioned the new Romanian Minister about Germany's attitude towards Türkiye; the Romanian diplomat expressed his conviction that the Axis Powers would respect Türkiye's neutrality, as long as Türkiye would keep itself within the limits of neutrality. At the end of the audience, despite certain customs, President İnönü spent a few minutes with each member of the Romanian delegation, emphasizing the feelings of mutual Romanian-Turkish friendship (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 46-49). However, bilateral economic relations continued to be hampered by the delay in the delivery from Türkiye of much-needed cotton to the Romanian textile industry (*Stenogramele/Transcripts*, 1998, doc. 26, pp. 646-647).

At the same time, Turkish-British discussions were taking place in Cyprus aimed at co-opting Yugoslavia into a regional structure designed to halt German expansion, but the Turkish offer of collaboration conveyed to Belgrade was ignored by Drag Cvetković's government (Ekrem, 1993, p. 118). An informative note of 18 March 1941 reported the strong echo in Turkish public opinion of the speech of the North American President F.D. Roosevelt, interpreted as a real declaration of war addressed to Germany (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, p. 100), and other sources reported deliveries of American ammunition to Türkiye via the port of Basra in southern Iraq (Ibid., file no. 345/1940, p. 51).

On 23 March, the Turkish authorities decreed an extension of the curfew in some western districts for another three months (Ibid, file no. 315/1940, p. 52), and the next day the joint Turkish-Soviet declaration of neutrality and non-aggression was issued, with the effect of reducing the military forces previously concentrated by both states in the Caucasus area; according to a report of 10 April 1941, this tendency manifested itself more rapidly on the part of the USSR, a fact blamed on the suspicion of Turkish military commanders (Ibid., file no. 401/1941, p. 223).

Hostilities against Greece continued on a course unfavorable to the Italians. After having advanced about 100 km into Albania at the end of 1940, occupying the towns of Koritsa (Korçë) and Argyrokastron (Gjirokastër) in the so-called Northern Epirus, in March 1941 Greek troops advanced to the vicinity of the port town of Vlorë/Valona (de Launay, 1988, p. 197). Things were not going well for Italian forces in Africa either, as they suffered defeats in Libya in the winter of 1940/1941. To support his allies, Hitler decided to send the *Afrikakorps*, which went on the offensive towards the end of March, but the German-Italian offensive aiming Suez, in the spring of 1941, would be carried out in parallel with a series of serious defeats in Ethiopia (Ibid., pp. 197-199).

TÜRKIYE BETWEEN TWO CONFLICT ZONES (27 MARCH – 1 JUNE 1941)

The Yugoslav crisis triggered after the Belgrade coup of 26/27 March 1941 was considered by I.V. Stalin as an opportunity to draw Hitler's attention to Soviet interests in the Balkans, the Kremlin dictator anticipating a longer Yugoslav resistance to Germany (Constantiniu, 2002, pp. 170-171). What is certain is that after 27 March 1941 Soviet-Yugoslav diplomatic contacts took place both in Moscow and Belgrade, culminating in the signing of a bilateral pact at dawn on 6 April 1941 (de Launay, 1988, p. 12). A memo from the Romanian Secret Intelligence Service of 2 April 1941, based on information gathered from circles close to the Turkish Legation in Bucharest, recorded the satisfaction in some Turkish circles with the events in Yugoslavia, which had occurred shortly after the joint Soviet-Turkish declaration; according to the document in question, Türkiye had prepared for war against Germany, and landings of military specialists and even British troops on Turkish territory were mentioned (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, p. 63). Coincidentally or not, but in flagrant contradiction to the news circulated in the first half of the month, an intelligence note of 27 March 1941 mentioned the continued presence in Thrace and the Straits area of a large number of large units of the Turkish army, while in the Caucasian border area the general situation had been calm since December 1940 (Ibid., p. 54). On 14 April 1941, after the outbreak of the German-Italian attack on Yugoslavia, when hostilities were coming to an end, the Reich Minister in Bucharest, Manfred von Killinger, recommended to General Ion Antonescu that Romania should keep a calm attitude, facing possible provocations from the USSR, and then mentioned Berlin's irritation at Soviet diplomatic manoeuvres in Türkiye and Yugoslavia (Constantiniu, 2002, p. 198).

The Romanian Minister in Ankara, Al. Télémaque, had a meeting with Numan Menemencioglu. On this occasion, the Turkish official considered that Bulgaria would adopt, in the Yugoslav crisis, the attitude dictated by Germany, and to the Romanian diplomat's question on Türkiye's attitude in the event of Bulgaria's participation in a German-coordinated attack against Yugoslavia, he had not expressed a very clear answer, which was interpreted by the interlocutor as a clue that Türkiye would keep its neutrality. When Al. Télémaque brought up the Soviet factor, Numan Menemencioglu stressed the independence of Turkish foreign policy, and then, with a more relaxed attitude, noted the distancing between the USSR and Germany (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 51-52).

An event that further complicated, temporarily but considerably, Türkiye's position in the region was the anti-British uprising in Iraq (formally, an independent state since 1931), which broke out on 1 April 1941 in a coup d'état and which would be suppressed during the next month by British-Arab forces, without Germany being able to intervene, as it was busy preparing for the anti-Soviet war (Rondot, 2003, pp. 45-46).

The onset of the German invasion of Yugoslavia and Greece (6 April 1941) led to several popular demonstrations in Türkiye against the Axis Powers and in sympathy with the two Balkan states under attack, according to an informative note from 'one of our residents in Istanbul'; according to the same source, the anglophile Turkish circles considered that the right time to enter in the war had just arrived, but they were categorically opposed by the General Military Staff, led by Fevzi Çakmak (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 68-69), the only Marshal of Türkiye.

According to a telegram of 11 April, at the latest meeting of the Turkish government, Foreign Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu had asked for the general mobilization of the Turkish army, but, following the reluctance expressed by the military commanders, a compromise solution had been adopted, consisting of the mobilisation of two more contingents, in addition to the 10 already called up (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, p. 57). Bulgarian troops did not take direct part in the military operations against neighbouring Yugoslavia, but were given the mission of protecting the border from Türkiye (Calafeteanu C., 2011, p. 110).

On 15 April, the Romanian minister in Türkiye submitted a report to General Ion Antonescu (who was also acting head of Romanian diplomacy at the time), on the partial evacuation of the population from Istanbul to the interior of Anatolia. According to the Romanian diplomat, the evacuation operations were compulsory

and very well organized, including in terms of presenting and explaining the reasons to those concerned; the number of those already evacuated was estimated at 100,000 people, the operation having only just begun (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 71-73).

The Axis Powers' campaign in the Balkans ended after 23 days (in Yugoslavia after 12 days), with the full occupation of Yugoslavia and mainland Greece. The Germans captured huge numbers of Yugoslav and Greek prisoners, as well as vehicles, guns and cannons; the numerical and, above all, technical superiority of the invaders proved itself, temporarily, more important than the courage and heroism of the defenders (de Launay, 1988, p. 218). It is worth noting that, in the case of occupied Greece, Germany retained control over the strip on the land border with Türkiye, as well as Thessaloniki, the interior of Aegean Macedonia, the city of Piraeus, and later three islands in the Eastern Aegean and finally most of the island of Crete (occupied in the last decade of May), while Bulgaria occupied Western Thrace, lost in 1919, but did not annex it (Glenny, 2020, p. 504).

The rapid victory of the German troops in the Balkans was followed by the USSR's consistent series of concessions to the Reich: Recognition of German claims in the area of the common frontier in Poland, official recognition of the anti-British government formed in Iraq, the expulsion of the ambassadors of Yugoslavia, Greece, Belgium and Norway from the USSR, the appointment of a Soviet ambassador to the Vichy collaborationist French government, and the continuation of "economic collaboration", with the anticipation of supplies of raw materials to Germany (Duroselle, 2006, p. 223). The German military successes in the Balkans in April 1941, combined with other elements (events in Iraq, older pro-German tendencies in Iran, French Syria's placing under the authority of the Vichy government, etc.) led to increased German pressure on Türkiye.

According to a Romanian military information bulletin on Türkiye, from the beginning of May 1941, under the shock of the Balkan campaign, the Turkish authorities had decided to declare Ankara an open city in the event of direct conflict with Germany. Turkish fears of a possible Soviet attack were, however, on the wane, the transparent cooling of German-Soviet relations being the reason for this trend, and the likelihood of a German attack on the USSR was also considered. Consequently, Türkiye's main military preparations at that time were aimed at preventing a possible German attack (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, pp. 256-262). Another document of the same nature, but covering almost the whole of May, focused on the idea that the main concern of Turkish decision-makers

was to avoid direct involvement in the war and to keep it as far away from their own borders as possible; among the Great Powers, the best relations were maintained with Great Britain, without, however, raising the question of leaving neutrality, while with regard to the USSR, a long-term caution was expressed (Ibid., pp. 401-412).

An informative note at the end of April 1941 mentions the continuation of fortification work in the Bosphorus Strait area and the alleged intention to move motorised troops from Ankara to the town of Diyarbakir, in south-eastern Anatolia near the border with Iraq (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 76-79).

Another military development which caused concern in Turkish circles was the occupation by German forces of Greek Aegean islands in the vicinity of the Dardanelles Strait (Lemnos, Lesbos, etc.) in early May 1941. According to a report of 3 May 1941, taking control of these islands gave Germany an enormous strategic advantage in the Straits, which it could block at will; the German advance towards the islands in the southern Aegean Sea heightened Turkish fears of a possible Reich attack on Syria and Cyprus (Ibid., file no. 401/1941, pp. 307-309). An informative summary prepared a few days later reported, also in connection with military developments in the Aegean Sea, movements of Turkish military units, the number of which was not specified, from Thrace to the areas of Brusa, Edrenit and Izmir, located very close to the islands recently occupied by the Germans (Ibid., file no. 348/1940, p. 29).

On 7 May, Colonel Traian Teodorescu sent a report from Ankara on the impact of events in Iraq on Türkiye. According to the Romanian military attaché, the anti-British uprising under the leadership of Ali Rashid al Gaylani had caused great concern in Türkiye, with rumours circulating that Germany (or even the USSR) might ask for military transit rights in aid of the new power in Iraq. Other concerns, also in relation to Iraq, were the possibility for pan-Arabic trend to proliferate, or, on another level, the likelihood of Türkiye's supply of British munitions *via* Basra being cut off. Under these circumstances, the government in Ankara was very concerned about developments in Iraq and was quick to offer its good offices for the earliest possible resolution of the British-Iraqi conflict (Ibid., In another report, sent only two days later, the same Romanian officer remarked on the polite and elegant way in which the Turkish authorities understood to relate to Germany in the context of the events in Iraq, quoting the following phrase attributed to Turkish diplomats: *"just as our government could not allow our British friends and allies to transport troops through Türkiye, so our government will not be able to allow this to our German friends"*. According to Colonel Teodorescu, the improvement in the general tone

towards Germany was a trend that could also be observed in the Turkish press, but this would have caused dissatisfaction among some of the younger military personnel (Ibid., pp. 340-341).

At the same time, the question of cotton imports from Türkiye continued to preoccupy the Romanian government, as the transcripts of its meetings of 8 and 9 May 1941 show. Under-Secretary of State Toma Petre Ghițulescu described the cotton import situation as *"very serious"*, with annual requirements of almost 35,000 tones, 95% of which came from imports, and indicated that the purchase of 5,000 tones had been completed. The next day's meeting again mentioned the problem of importing cotton from Türkiye, a country which had also supplied cotton to Italy (Ibid, doc. 14, p. 363).

The Battle of Crete, fought between 20 May and 1 June 1941, ended in a costly victory for the German troops, the losses suffered causing Hitler to lose confidence in the paratroopers' weapon and to abandon his intention of launching an airborne operation against the island of Cyprus, then British territory (de Launay, 1988, pp. 219-220).

In this context, on 27 May 1941, after a few weeks of the Turkish Minister in Romania being in Ankara, a new conversation took place between Ion Antonescu and Suphi Tanrıöver. At the opening of the meeting, the Turkish diplomat sent greetings from the President of the Republic of Türkiye, İ. İnönü, and the Prime Minister Refik Saydam, then congratulated the Romanian Head of State for having accurately forecast, three months earlier, the rapid advance of the German armies in the Balkans and the Aegean Sea, but finally tried to obtain some information and assessments on a possible German attack against the USSR. To this question, Ion Antonescu did not formulate a clear answer, emphasising the benevolent attitude adopted by the Soviets in recent weeks in their relations with Germany, and shifting the emphasis to the common interest of Romania and Türkiye in working together, under German aegis, against Greater Bulgaria, described as an *"extension of Slav expansionism in the Balkans"*. Without giving a categorical answer to Antonescu's suggestion, Suphi Tanrıöver agreed with his interlocutor on Bulgaria, mentioning the increasingly difficult situation of the ethnic Turks in Southern Dobrogea (Quadrilater) after the territory's reintegration into the Bulgarian state. Towards the end of the discussion, although he had previously been skeptical about the likelihood of a German-Soviet war, I. Antonescu tried to sound out Türkiye's willingness to participate in an anti-Soviet military coalition under German aegis, receiving the reply that only the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister could answer such a question (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 69-70).

JUNE 1941: THE IMMINENCE AND OUTBREAK OF THE GERMAN-SOVIET WAR

At the end of a report dated 1 June 1941, Colonel Traian Teodorescu quotes the new wording by which the Ankara government justifies its policy of remaining neutral: *“England’s interest is to keep the Turkish army intact, because it will need this army in order to bring order to the Balkans at the end of the war, which the British will win in the West”* (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, p. 425). At the same time, against the background of increasingly intense rumours of an imminent German attack against USSR, a kind of optimistic scenario began to circulate in Turkish circles, which was to be found, at least in the first months after 22 June 1941, also in some Romanian circles: Germany would defeat the Soviet Union, and Great Britain and USA would subsequently defeat Germany (Özden, 2013, p. 99).

In an information summary dated 18 June 1941, it was recorded that the general mood in Türkiye was tending to relax after certain fears were expressed about some information about the concentration of German air-navy borne troops in Romanian Dobrogea (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 315/1940, pp. 86-89). Military developments in Türkiye’s southern neighbourhood, in particular the liquidation of the anti-British rebellion in Iraq and the beginning of the offensive by British troops to take control of French Syria, had probably contributed to this positive development (Ibid, file no. 401/1941, pp. 464-465), but above all, the conclusion, also on 18 June 1941, of the treaty of friendship and non-aggression between Germany and Türkiye.

The text of this treaty did not contradict, at least in a blatant and direct way, the commitments previously made by Türkiye to Great Britain (Biagini, 2005, p. 127). Moreover, prior to this political-diplomatic act, Ankara’s decision-makers had been consulting assiduously with the British (Ekrem, 1993, p. 121). The idea of the compatibility of the newly concluded treaty with Türkiye’s previous commitments to other states was stressed by Suphi Tanrıöver during his conversation with Alexandru Cretzianu on 20 June 1941. In this regard, the Turkish diplomat stated that the Treaty of 19 October 1939 between Great Britain, France and Türkiye would have had no other purpose than to deter a possible maritime aggression by Italy, reiterating Türkiye’s determination to defend its independence and territory against any aggression. The Romanian diplomatic official confined himself to expressing his satisfaction at the agreement reached between *“Germany allied with Romania and friendly Türkiye”* (AMFAR, vol. 62/1940, pp. 71-72).

According to an informative summary of 25 June 1941, the negotiations for the conclusion of the German-Turkish pact had lasted six weeks, mainly cause of the objections from London; The Turkish population had, however, welcomed the news of the conclusion of a treaty with Germany, a situation which the author of the summary attributes to the awareness of the broad circles of the Turkish public opinion that, regardless of how hostilities might develop, the probability of really advantageous territorial gains, in the Caucasus or in the Mosul area, was still very small (RNMA-CADP, Collection XIV, file no. 401/1941, pp. 465-466). A very important consequence of the German-Turkish agreement, which also explains to a large extent the satisfaction caused by it in many Romanian circles, was the elimination of the possibility for Great Britain to use Turkish territory as a base for launching military actions, primarily air-raids, on South-Eastern Europe, against Germany and its allies, including Romania (Ibid., p. 467).

At dawn on 22 June 1941, the anti-Soviet war had begun, prompting a further Cretzianu-Tanrıöver meeting next day. On this occasion, the Turkish minister in Bucharest handed over the declaration of neutrality of his country and thanked the Romanian leadership for the *“sincere feelings of friendship it had shown towards Türkiye”* (Ibid., pp. 73-74). In the new context, the territory of Türkiye served as a corridor for the evacuation of Romanian diplomats from the USSR and also of Soviet diplomats from Romania (Ibid., pp. 79-81, 84-85 et seq.) In the informative summary of 25 June 1941, several *“private declarations of sympathy towards Germany and Romania”* were reported, in connection with the outbreak of the anti-Soviet war, but the Turkish authorities kept their caution (Ibid., p. 468).

CONCLUSIONS

The month of November 1940, crucial for the irreversible deterioration of German-Soviet relations, found relations between Romania and Türkiye on a clear downward slope, due to the different positioning of the two South-Eastern European states, formerly allies, in relation to the Great Powers, first of all towards Germany and Great Britain, which were enemies. However, some elements of convergence persisted between Bucharest and Ankara, such as the common fear of Soviet expansionism and the interest in continuing economic relations and trade. Although in Romanian circles, fears of a potential Turkish participation in hostile military actions initiated by Britain were expressed with some recurrence (until the conclusion of the German-Turkish Friendship and Neutrality Pact on 18 June 1941), the diplomats, the military experts and, ultimately, the Romanian

decision-makers correctly identified Türkiye's foreign policy guidelines (primarily staying out of the conflict) and the motivations for this conduct (confidence in Britain's final victory, unfavourable then conjuncture, the Soviet factor, etc.). The conclusion of the German-Turkish pact of 18 June 1941 was greeted with a very predictable satisfaction in Bucharest, but Türkiye could not be drawn into the anti-Soviet war, despite German pressure and some efforts by Romanian diplomats and Russophobic Turkish circles.

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THE ROMANIAN AND SOVIET MILITARY POTENTIAL – AS A MEANS OF SECURITY IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS DEBATED AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS, WITHIN THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE OF GENEVA, FROM THE PERIOD 1920-1934 –¹

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“King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum

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During the period analysed in this research, in order to try to remedy the deficit situation in the Armed Forces, the country's authorities took some legislative measures, including the “Law on the Organization of the Nation and the Territory for Time of War”, promulgated on 23 April 1933, in which it was specified that “the organization of the nation and the territory has as its purpose the capitalization on all the country's forces and resources to ensure national defence”. The act basically stipulated obligations for the conscious engagement of the entire people in the effort to strengthen the national defence, the development of own defence industry, agriculture and communications. In the same context, the importance of the Convention on the Definition of Aggression played a major role for Romania in the subsequent negotiations for the normalization of diplomatic relations with the USSR, which was accomplished on 9 June 1934.

Keywords: League of Nations; armament limitation; Pact of Paris; Dawes Plan; Young Plan;

DISARMAMENT – BASIC PRINCIPLE OF THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

At the end of the First World War, after the capitulation of Germany, on 11 November 1918, given the immense human and material losses, the international world was preoccupied with the idea of organizing peace and security by applying the principle of disarmament. Otherwise, they were not new concerns, the first such efforts to limit armaments on an international scale, both quantitatively and qualitatively, had been undertaken even before the First World War, during the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907, but without a real success, on the contrary.

However, the idea was resumed at the end of the great conflagration, with even more conviction. That is why the deterrence of military conflicts by reducing the state of armament of the countries was, with priority, a distinct issue on the agenda of the Paris Peace Conference. In its opening meeting, on 18/25 January 1919, it was also decided to create the *Commission for the League of Nations*, based on the proposal of American President Woodrow Wilson², contained in his 14 points, which he had presented in the American Senate since 27 December (old style) 1918.

As Raymond Poincaré, the President of France, emphasized, the mission of the expected Society of Nations – or the League of Nations as it was also called – was *the supreme guarantee against new attacks on the rights of the kinships*.

Organized by the nations that sacrificed themselves for the defence of the right, the League of Nations had as its essential purpose to prevent, as far as possible, the renewal of the war, for this seeking to respect the peace that it will have established (Sofronie, 1936, p. 7).

The definitive text of the *Covenant of the League of Nations* was adopted, after extensive debates, on 28 April 1919, being an integral part, then, of all peace treaties³. Together with the treaties, it was intended to be the broadest general guarantee of the territorial order and politics existing after 1918.

² Woodrow Wilson, (28 December 1856 - 3 February 1924), was the twenty-eighth president of the United States of America (1913 - 1921). About his contribution to the establishment of the Versailles peace system at length in: Kendrick, A.C. (1992). *The Presidency of Woodrow Wilson*. Kansas: Univ. Press of Kansas; Knock, T.J. (1995). *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

³ *The peace treaty with Germany* – 28 June 1919, signed at Versailles; *Peace treaty with Austria* – 10 September 1919, Saint-Germain; *The peace treaty with Hungary* – 4 June 1920, Trianon; *The peace treaty with Bulgaria* – Neuilly sur Seine, 27 November 1919; *The peace treaty with Turkey*, signed in Sèvres on 10 August 1920, supplemented by *The peace treaty with Turkey* – Lausanne, July 1923; we also mention *The Treaty of Paris* – 28 October 1920 – concluded between Romania, on the one hand, and Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan, on the other, which recognized Romania's sovereignty over Bessarabia.

¹ The study is a synthesis of the author's work: “*Romanian-Soviet Relations, 1917-1934*” (Chap. VIII, pt. 1-3, 6), currently being published by the Military Publishing House.

The fundamental objectives and principles proposed by the League of Nations (L.N.), to serve as a beacon for the future of the peoples of the world, were formulated in the Preamble of the *Pact* – which also mentioned the establishment of the League of Nations – as follows: *The High Contracting Parties, Considering that, in order to develop cooperation between nations and to guarantee their peace and security, it is important to receive certain obligations not to resort to war, to maintain, to the light of day, international relations based on justice and honour, to observe, rigorously, the prescriptions of international law, recognized on the future as a rule for the effective governments' management, to make justice reign and to honour with sanctity all the obligations of the Treaties, in the mutual relations between the organized peoples* (Titulescu, 1971, p. 26; 1994, p. 375; *Le Pacte de la Société des Nations, 1919*, p. 7; *Société des Nations...*, 1930).

It was the first time when it was expected to replace violence in interstate relations by a system based on the principles of international law, treaty obligations, mutual respect and international cooperation.

Of particular importance, along with other generous articles – through their content, for ensuring the security and peace of the world – was also Article 8 (Titulescu, 1971, pp. 379-380) of the *Pact*, which was to guide the disarmament debates and around which the discussions were held, especially in the period to which we refer.

Its content stated:

The members of the Society recognize that maintaining peace requires the reduction of national armaments to the minimum compatible with national security and with the execution of international obligations imposed by a common action.

The Council, taking into account the geographical situation and the special conditions of each state, prepares the plans for this reduction, with a view to the examination and decision of the various governments.

These plans must be subject to a new examination and, if necessary, for a revision, at least every 10 years.

After their adoption by the various governments, the limit of armaments thus fixed cannot be exceeded without the consent of the Council.

Considering that the private manufacture of munitions and material of war raises serious objections, the Members of the Society instruct the Council to consider what measures are to be taken to avoid its troublesome effects, having regard to the needs of Members of the Society who cannot manufacture their own munitions and material of war necessary for their safety.

The members of the Society undertake to communicate in the most frank and complete manner all information respecting the scale of their armaments, their military, naval, and air programs, and the condition of such of their industries as are liable to be used for war. (Ib.)

But not all states supported the principles enshrined in the *Pact*, so the “victims” of the peace treaties, especially Germany and the USSR, polarized – throughout the interwar period – the revisionist front in Europe. Hungary, Bulgaria and Italy added to them, states that spoke against the peace treaties and for their revision, in the chapters related to borders, disarmament, reparations. Unfortunately, secret diplomacy and the policy of *compensations*, sometimes of *appeasement*, facilitated these guidelines and the violation of peace treaties would neither be prevented nor sanctioned, but accepted as a *fait accompli*, or, sometimes, only with formal protests.

However, in order to discourage revengeful tendencies, a major principle was imposed at the League of Nations – that of disarmament. The topic was discussed at the League Assembly in December 1920, and it continued to be the subject of debate in the following years.

In the desire to resolve the controversial issue between the priority of security or that of disarmament, in the 3rd General Assembly of the League of Nations, in the fall of 1922, the text of the “14th Resolution” was voted, a document drafted by Henry de Jouvenel (France) and Lord Robert Cecil (England) (Matei, 1971, p. 26). The respective text established the connection between the three basic principles of peacekeeping, disarmament and security, with the specification that a state would not disarm until security guarantees were given to it. At the same time, the general principles were fixed for the elaboration of a defensive agreement accessible to all states, which was to be discussed in the session of 1923-1924. But serious obstacles arose in the way of the project, caused by the non-payment of German debts and, on this background, by the accentuation of French-English misunderstandings, followed by the occupation of the Ruhr by the French-Belgian armies.

In this context, the *Dawes Plan*⁴ intervened, adopted in London (16 July - 15 August 1924). This represented the triumph of the Anglo-American vision

⁴ *The Dawes Plan* – after the name of the American economist Charles G. Dawes, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925, thanks to this solution. Other references in: Felix Gilbert, *The End of the European Era: 1890 to the present*, New York: Norton, 1970; Stephen A. Schuker, *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976; B.J.C. McKercher, *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990; Eugene V. Rostow, *Breakfast for Bonaparte U.S. national security interests from the Heights of Abraham to the nuclear age*, Washington, DC: National Defense UP, For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. G.P.O., 1993.

of the economic reconstruction of Europe. It was a temporary, five-year plan to help Germany pay off its war debts. In essence, the Dawes Plan represented a first revision of the Treaty of Versailles, reducing the total that had to be paid by Germany and removing the coercive power of the Reparations Commission. When it expired it was replaced by the *Young Plan*⁵, adopted in The Hague, on 31 August 1929. It acquired such a name because its promoter was the American economist Owen D. Young, and through this support Germany regained its financial autonomy, deliveries in goods were gradually reduced, to be eliminated within a period of ten years, and the completion of the due payments was extended until 1988.

When the state of tension eased, the League of Nations concluded the need for a mutual assistance treaty project, which was to be carried out by two means: “the general guarantee involving all states” and “special treaties” – by involving only some states (Matei, p. 26). The general guarantee was to be applied only after a reduction in armaments; and the designation of the aggressor state rested with the Council of the League of Nations. The idea was to be completed by the “15th Resolution”, in which the importance of regional agreements was revealed, and the final result was the mutual assistance treaty project adopted by the League’s General Assembly on 29 September 1923. The analysis of the text indicates the formulation of new ideas regarding the concept of aggression and aggressor, of mutual assistance and security, superior from a theoretical point of view to the existing formulations in the *Pact*, but due to the imperfections in its contents it never materialized (Moisuc, 1991, pp. 220-221).

And, for Romania, “arbitration, security and disarmament formed a whole condition” (Matei, p. 26). In the case of arbitration, in the Romanian governmental spheres a “rigorous specification” of its area of application, but also of decisions for the adoption of “effective sanctions” is considered necessary; and as long as the League of Nations “could not translate them into reality”, the alternative for Romania still remained the regional security agreements, provided, moreover, in the Pact of the Geneva Forum (Ib., p. 26).

⁵ About the Young Plan see also: Gotthard Jasper, “Die große Koalition 1928-1930”, in: *Die Weimarer Republik*, Band III, Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, <http://www.blz.bayern.de/blz/web/100083/01.html>; William K. Klingaman, 1929, *The Year of the Great Crash*, Harper&Row, 1989; Susan Willoughby, Douglas Willoughby, *The USA 1917-45*, Heinemann, 2000; Findley, Carter Vaughn, J.A. Rothney, *World War I reparations, Twentieth Century World*: 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company: 2006; Claire Suddath Monday, “Why Did World War I Just End?”, in *Time World*, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2023140,00.html>, 4 October 2010; Wolfgang Stäbler, “Young-Plan, 1929/30-1932”, in *Historisches Lexikon Bayerns*, http://www.historisches-lexikon-bayerns.de/artikel/artikel_44651, 2010 etc.

On 2 October 1924, during the 5th General Assembly of the League of Nations, based on the project formulated by Édouard Herriot and Ramsay MacDonald, the Prime Minister of France and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, adopted the principle of the direct connection between arbitration-security-disarmament.

Based on this, the Assembly recommended, among other things, to take “in very serious consideration the draft protocol, for all members of the international organization” (point “1” of the resolution) (Ib., p. 29).

Through the recommended Protocol, actually called the *Protocol for the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes* or the *Geneva Protocol*, an attempt was made for the first time to repair the cracks in the Covenant of the League of Nations. Thus, “war was completely prohibited and arbitration was mandatory as a means of peaceful settlement of disputes, declaring as the aggressor the state that would not have accepted the proposed solution”.

The abstentions of some great powers, especially Great Britain, for fear of being drawn into the problems of Europe, but also of Italy and the USA, meant that in October 1924 the document was not adopted, and the debates were postponed until 1925.

At the same time, in the resolution of the 5th General Assembly of the League of Nations, at point “4”, the Council called for an “international conference for the reduction of armaments”, in Geneva. If that forum did not reach a consensus, then the Geneva Protocol would become obsolete; hence the indissoluble link between: arbitration, security, disarmament.

This fact leads the Romanian diplomat, Nicolae Titulescu, to state: *The necessary corollary of this feeling of mistrust is the need to revise the treaties in a friendly way, as the only means to prevent war [...]. The idea*



Image taken between Montreux and Geneva, with members of the Romanian delegation to the Disarmament Conference of the League of Nations: N. Titulescu (centre), Commander Roșca (left), Major C. Teodorini (right)

(Source: MMN Archive, “Original Photographs” Collection, inventory number 19569)

of the possibility of revising the treaties creates insecurity, [...] it incites the desire for revenge. This is the surest road to war (Titulescu, 1967-1, p. 168).

The issue of the Protocol mentioned above was resumed in the debate of the General Assembly in Geneva, at the session of March 1925. However, being “a clearly unfavourable moment”, at the proposal of Eduard Beneš, it was postponed until the 6th session of the General Assembly of the League of Nations, from September 1925.

From the Romania side, Nicolae Titulescu, appreciating the document as “the technical instrument of peace organization”, supported the maintenance of the protocol “as it was designed, based on the obligation of legal and not only moral assistance”. In addition, he advocated “the introduction of an optional clause” that would allow states that had not wish to go beyond the pact’s obligations “to limit the additional obligations of assistance to what they wished to be just and possible at the time of an aggression” (Titulescu, 1967-2, p. 266).

But the chances of debating the Protocol were no greater at the autumn session, all that could be done was the adoption of a resolution that “sought to save the ideas of the document, through private arbitration conventions” (Moisuc, pp. 220-221). It was the period of negotiations for what would become the *Locarno Pact*, which strengthened the so-called “*pactomania*”, characteristic especially of the third decade of the 20th century.

The atmosphere of relaxation that followed in Franco-German relations, after 1924, allowed for the *Locarno Conference* (5-16 October 1925) to take place and the conclusion of the *Rhenish Pact*, an attempt to solve the security problem at the Franco-German-Belgian borders, as well as the Eastern European equation, especially after the failure of France following the occupation of the Ruhr, on 11 January 1923 (Titulescu, 1996, pp. 495-517).

Through the documents initiated at the end of the meeting in *Locarno*, it was aimed to replace the Versailles system with “freely consented agreements” regarding the “recognition of the territorial status quo in Western Europe, as the basis of the collective security” (Ib., p. 516)⁶ of the European continent.

In fact, the *Locarno* system led to the division of European states into: countries with guaranteed borders, the signatories guaranteed the maintenance of borders between France and Belgium on the one hand, and Germany on the other;

and countries with unguaranteed borders, because Germany, with the support of Great Britain, refused to grant Czechoslovakia and Poland the same guarantees that it granted to its western neighbours, signing only arbitration treaties with them.

Anyway, from this arrangement Germany came out with “a consolidated international position”, which offered it a new possibility to approach foreign policy, which allowed Romania to hope for German mediation in Romanian-Soviet relations (Chiper, 2000, p. 33). But the fear “that it could be drawn into anti-Russian combinations” made Germany refrain then, and later, from such involvement. Moreover, it was feared that the decrease in the Soviet Union’s pressure on Romania would have brought Germany the “disadvantage of a Soviet dissatisfaction”, which would not have been covered by the “advantages of a friendly Romanian attitude”; as, a Romanian-Soviet rapprochement would also have meant “a consolidation of the Romanian political situation, which was undesirable from the point of view of Germany’s economic policy” (Ib., p. 34) – a position from which it will benefit to the fullest, especially during the world economic crisis. At the same time, the clearing up of Romanian-Soviet tensions, apart from the fact that the revisionist potential of Hungary and Bulgaria would be decreased, it would bring, to the detriment of Germany, advantages to Poland and France. The first, because it released itself from the responsibilities towards Romania in the Bessarabia problem, and could focus its attention towards the west, and the second, it could profit by a rapprochement with Soviet Russia, at the expense of Germany.

Thus, the *Locarno* agreements gave Germany the opportunity, later, to manifest its revisionist tendencies towards the east, even though its entry into the League of Nations, in September 1926, seemed to offer a reasonable guarantee against this revisionism (Titulescu, 1996, p. 516). The Englishman Austen Chamberlain, known for his rather anti-German attitude, drew attention to such a diplomatic mistake in 1925. Considering the policy of appeasement towards Germany inappropriate, he declared in the House of Commons: “I consider that [the agreements concluded with Germany] at *Locarno* are not the end of the work of pacification and reconciliation, but only the beginning” (Rudman, 2011, p. 3).

The policy of Gustav Stresemann (the German foreign minister), wrapped in a “pacifist” cover, did not change the reality of the revenge goals of the German ruling circles (de Launay, 1965, pp. 201-202, apud Matei, p. 40).

⁶ About the League of Nations also in: Constantin D. Cutcutache, *Revizuirea tratatelor sub regimul Societății Națiunilor*, București, Institutul de Arte Grafice “Cultura Poporului”, 1929; *Dix ans de coopération internationale*, Secrétariat de la Soci des Nations, Genève, 1930.

THE PACT OF PARIS (27 AUGUST 1928) AND THE MOSCOW PROTOCOL (9 FEBRUARY 1929), THE RESULT OF THE DEBATES WITHIN THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

In the presented international political climate, the “victims” of the Versailles system, skilfully speculating on the differences between the victorious states, tried, therefore, to get rid of the oppressive burden of war reparations in order to restore their economic and military potential, in the idea of changing the *status quo* of the territory established by the peace treaties. Thus, in order to prevent these retaliatory tendencies and out of the need to organize peace, the responsible politicians of the time realized that in order to “prevent war as a social phenomenon” they must, first, “prevent war as a legal institution” (Titulescu, 1996, p. 363). That is why, in the same year 1925, during the 6th Assembly of the League of Nations, through extensive project proposals, debates and various opinions, an attempt was made to save, at least in part, the *Geneva Protocol*, by finding some new, generally accepted formulas for viable disarmament. The solution seemed to be a *World Conference on Disarmament* (CD), a fact for which the Council of the League of Nations established, on 12 December 1925, a *Preparatory Commission for the Conference on Disarmament* (PCD).

The debates in the working committees of the PCD reaffirmed, in general terms, the theses and concepts of disarmament formulated previously, but maintaining the controversy regarding the priority of disarmament or security, which in fact represented the difference of opinion of the two major orientations: French and English.

The preparatory commission, unlike the other commissions, between 1920-1925, created a broad framework for debate, with the participation of all member, or not, states of the Society, including the United States of America and the USSR.

In the period 1926-1930, six sessions took place, and the circled took place around the two theses⁷:

1.) The French concept aimed as an objective, in accordance with art. 8, from the Covenant of the League of Nations, subordinated the reduction of armaments in favour of ensuring the security of the states, a fact for which it had foreseen a rigorous international control of armaments; it supported the limitation of armaments to the extent that acts of surprise aggression could no longer be committed, establishing a corresponding relationship between land, naval and air disarmament.

⁷ The six sessions took place as follows: 2 – in 1926; 2 – in 1927; 1 – 1928; 1 (and the last) – in 1929-1930, with a long interruption caused by the naval conference in London (1930).

Along with other states, Romania supported this French position, along with its allies from the Little Entente and Poland.

Also, regarding the “*limitation of land armaments*”, France claimed that “*only peacetime armaments, usable before mobilization, with which acts of aggression could be committed by surprise, should be limited*” (Sofronie, p. 12; Matei, p. 42), which was also supported by Romania, along with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Belgium, Argentina, Japan etc.

2.) The English concept – considered that the notion of “*military potential*” was too complex to be taken into account, rejecting international control, and the limitation of armaments that it envisaged did not remove the danger of aggression, which explained the support of the English thesis by Germany and other revisionist states.

In the first year of the debates within the PCD among other interventions, Romania stood out with the proposal of 20 November 1926, regarding “*the elaboration of an international convention for the universalization of the repression of terrorism*” (Pella, 1933, p. 13; Matei, p. 44). It was the first country that proposed the development of such a convention for the suppression of terrorism, fuelled by the revanchist circles.

The Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference highlighted the divergence of interests and opinions, of conception and method of the various delegations, materialized in some projects (Matei, p. 46)⁸.

Related to the topic presented, we mention that the Soviet delegation also submitted its own project, in November 1927, on which occasion M. Litvinov (Soviet Foreign Affairs Commissioner) declared that it was “*the only proposal capable of satisfactorily solving the problem of security and peace*” (Sofronie, p. 14; Matei, p. 47). The Soviet project was debated in the fourth (3 November - 3 December 1927) and fifth (15 - 24 March 1928) sessions of the PCD, and, in short, provided: “*immediate, complete and general disarmament*” (Matei, p. 47).

⁸ The differences of interests and opinions during the debates in the technical committees of the PCD led in the following sessions to the elaboration of new projects. Thus, during the third session of the Preparatory Commission (21 March-26 April 1927), two projects were submitted: a British one, developed by Robert Cecil; and another French project, developed by Paul-Boncour. But the difference in conception and method in terms of disarmament only created a wave of disputes and controversies. Their effect was the meeting of the first Naval Conference in Geneva, from 20 June to 4 August 1927. But, through the call of American President Coolidge to the signatories of the naval treaty in Washington, on 6 February 1922 (USA, England, France, Italy), to negotiate an agreement on limiting the classes of ships not covered by the respective treaty, attracted the resistance of France. Already, from this period it was noted that the Germans made “*a lot of noise about the need for disarmament*”, opposing any measure aimed at strengthening international security. Gustav Stresemann (the German foreign minister) was active in this regard, for the strengthening of Germany’s role in the League of Nations, striving to annihilate an oriental Locarno.

In extenso, the Soviet resolution stated: “Considering that the existence of armaments and the evident tendencies to increase them must inevitably lead states to armed conflicts, that the armed forces are a means used by the great powers to stop small peoples and colonial countries, recognizing that only the complete destruction of all armaments is the most effective guarantee of peace, a guarantee for the prevention of wars, the fourth session of the PCD to decide to immediately start the elaboration of a draft convention relative to general disarmament”. “The basis of the project was to be <the complete abolition of all land, naval and air armed forces, the destruction of all armaments, ammunition and all means of war, the cessation of recruitment for the military industry, abolition of the legislation for military service, the suppression of patents for inventions for the means of destruction, the passing of laws declaring the violation of the above conditions as crimes against the state>” (Textes et documents, 1932, p. 29, apud Matei, p. 47).

With the exception of Germany, the Soviet project had no support, so the Soviet delegation returned with it to the PCD again in February 1928, but this time too without any chance of success.

Without giving up definitively, the Soviet delegation then presented another project, this time providing, in essence, “partial, progressive and proportional disarmament”, by which it proposed that the large countries reduce their armaments by half, the medium ones by a third, and the small ones by a quarter (Matei, p. 48). The debate on this proposal was initially postponed, and later, like the other proposal, it was without any chance of success.

In September 1927, the Assembly of the League of Nations appreciated that the separation of the security-disarmament issue could end the impasse in which the Geneva debates were. Therefore, disarmament was left to the *Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference*, and security came under the competence of the *Arbitration and Security Committee*, a newly created body, under the presidency of the Czechoslovak Eduard Beneš (it worked until June 1928). In this context, the Polish delegation presented a project to suppress the war, through a universal non-aggression pact, which condemned any kind of war (Moisuc, 2003 and 2007, p. 139).

But earlier, in 1927, on the tenth anniversary of America’s entry into the First World War, the French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, had been on a visit to Washington and proposed to Frank Kellogg, the US Secretary of State the idea of a draft of a treaty through which to denounce the war and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes. Even if Kellogg, effectively, “did not know what reaction to adopt in front of a document by which he renounced something that no one feared

and offered something implied by everyone” (Turliuc, 2008), he accepted the idea. Then the US advanced the project of a general security pact, which became for history the *Pact of Paris* or the *Briand-Kellogg Pact* (AMAE, collection 71/1920-1944, URSS, vol. 132, pp. 261-263).

The two promoters of the Pact, in the desire to maintain a general peace, went even further, promoting the need for a call for accession to all states. Following the steps taken, on 27 August 1928, the *Pact of Paris* was signed by 15 states and became the law on 24 July 1929 (Moisuc, 2003; 2007, p. 139; *Monitorul Oficial/Official Gezette*, no. 22/7 March 1929, p. 619)⁹. After that date, the document remained open to accession by other states, regardless of whether they were members of the League of Nations or not. Being a general treaty of non-aggression, “whose formula was without limit in time and space”, in only a few years it obtained the impressive adhesion of 63 states, which gave the treaty a “moral and political authority that no similar pact had known in the history of world diplomacy” (Oprea, 1967, p. 24).

Romania also joined the Briand-Kellogg Pact on 4 September 1928 (AMAE, collection 71/1920-1944, ib., pp. 264-265)¹⁰, and the country’s Parliament ratified the affiliation on 27 January 1929 (Georgescu, 2004, p. 76; Oprea, pp. 24-25; *L’agrésion*, p. 37)¹¹.

The fundamental idea of the Pact was that of non-aggression, being concentrated in art. I, where it was specified: “The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare, on behalf of the respective peoples, that they condemn the use of war for the regulation of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their mutual relations” (Oprea, p. 26).

Its importance derives from the fact that it came to correct, in a happy way, the fundamental vice that was imputed to the Covenant of the League of Nations, the fact that it did not contain “a mandatory solution” for international conflicts, for all the conflicts, without exception.

The Covenant of the League of Nations did not excluded war entirely, and from a legal point of view it made war possible in four cases: 1) resorting to war after an arbitration case, by not respecting the Council’s decision, after the expiration of a three-month period; 2) when the Council could not adopt a unanimous resolution to resolve a conflict, nor could the Assembly with the required majority. In such

⁹ The states that initially joined were: France, the United States of America, Japan, Great Britain, Canada, Belgium, Poland, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Ireland, Italy, the South African Union and India.

¹⁰ Romania’s declaration to join the Pact (4 September 1928) was signed by C. Argetoianu, the Foreign Affairs Minister.

¹¹ Romania and the USSR further joined the Pact.

a case, the Pact mentions that the members of the League of Nations involved could reserve the right to act as they see fit, *“for the maintenance of law and justice”*; 3) when a dispute between the parties was considered by one of them to be within the domain of the domestic law, and recognized as such by the Council; 4) when there was a dispute between two states, one of which was not a member of the League of Nations, and it had refused to submit the dispute to the latter institution (Titulescu, 1996, p. 156).

Or, the Briand-Kellogg Pact meant precisely giving up war in the four cases. It could be invoked before the League of Nations, as well as before the Hague Court, in order to prevent the exercise of the legal right to war, as it results from the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Therefore, from the point of view of international law, the Pact of Paris stipulates:

“a) the suppression, as regards the members of the League of Nations, of war in the four cases in which the Pact of 1919 failed to curb the legal right to war;

b) extending the renunciation of the legal right to wage war also for states that are not members of the League of Nations;

c) the obligation not to oppose [...] the sanctions that the League of Nations would establish to prevent war [...]” (Ib., p. 158).

However, even in the case of the Paris Pact, war was still possible in three situations: *“legitimate defence; breach of commitments made by one or more signatory states; the need to fulfil the obligations provided for in art. 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations”*. But, in these cases, the war was reducing *“either to the natural right of self-defence [...], or to a punitive action undertaken by the community against those who violating the accepted laws [...]”*. From this point of view, Nicolae Titulescu, like others, also had critical words for the Paris Pact, saying that *“it cannot be considered a progress”* compared to the Geneva Pact, with all its imperfections, underlining that it originated from *“the grandiloquence of Briand”* and the *“concrete political interest”* of Kellogg, to *“collect foreign laurels, which cost nothing for America”* (Titulescu, 1967-2, pp. 322-324; 1967-1, pp. 235-239; Matei, p. 49).

On the other hand, the Greek diplomat N. Politis, who enjoyed a significant reputation at the League of Nations, was expressing that it was *“a deliberate exaggeration, intended to stimulate imaginations, to say that the Pact of Paris outlawed war. In fact, it limits itself to proclaiming a principle. But it does not organize the application of the principle and does not prescribe the sanction”* (Matei, p. 50; Coulon, 1934, p. 235).

For Romania, joining the Briand-Kellogg Pact also meant some advantages: the strengthening of relations with France, which had played an important role in granting the international loan of stability for Romania, considering that it was also the beginning of the period of the world economic crisis; keeping the same policy towards the countries of the Little Entente and Poland; opened a new perspective in economic relations with Germany. In the view of the German minister in Bucharest, von Mutius (Chiper, p. 34), post-war Romania could have taken over the role of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire as a *“leading power in the East”*, otherwise, he considered that an economic and social regression in Romania could have been an opportunity for the *“Bolshevization and Russification”* of the country. It was not desirable, therefore he considered, in the interest of his country, to support Romania *“in its economic and state consolidation”* (Ib., p. 35).

But, especially, the importance of the Briand-Kellogg Pact for Romania was that it paved the way for a reconciliation in Romanian-Soviet relations, constituting the future legislative basis regarding final the documents for the regulation of relations between the two states, knowing that through the decree signed by Vl. Ilyich Lenin, on 13/26 January 1918, Soviet Russia had unilaterally broken diplomatic relations with Romania.

*

In the period following the conclusion of the Pact of Paris, in the spirit of its provisions, the diplomatic efforts dedicated to the defence of peace took on various forms of manifestation, whether they were initiated by specific international forums or by the governments of countries located in the immediate vicinity of possible outbreaks of war.

The Soviet Union had a similar initiative. Eager for affirmation and recognition on an international level, after having joined the Briand-Kellogg Pact, on 4 October 1928, in accordance with Article 1 of the document (which provided for the possibility of the other states joining), the USSR proposed to the Polish and Lithuanian governments, on 29 December 1928, the signing of a *“protocol”* for the early implementation of the Briand-Kellogg Pact. The stated goal was to consolidate peace in Eastern Europe. Initially, a tripartite agreement was intended: Soviet-Polish-Lithuanian, but, in the end, other countries from the region were also involved, including Romania.

With Romania, Soviet Russia had not held official talks since 1924. Moreover, a press release of the *“TASS”* Agency, dated 18 March 1927, revealed this fact, noting that *“neither open, nor direct negotiations had been held, nor indirectly”*; as *“no negotiations on Soviet-Romanian relations with any other government and gave*

no reason to suppose a possible return of the USSR compared to the position they took in 1924, in Vienna, on the Bessarabia issue” (*Relațiile româno-sovietice. Documente*, vol. I, 1999, p. 266).

The announcement was made at a time when Italy was going to ratify the Convention it had signed on 28 October 1920, recognizing the union of Bessarabia with Romania¹².

Anyway, by the end of the same year (1927), the USSR made attempts for an official contact with Romania (AMAE, collection 71/1920-1944, URSS, vol. 78, pp. 314, 320).

The efforts continued the following year – especially through the representatives of the Little Entente – when the “*tendency of getting closer to Russia*” had been observed, during the meeting of the three in Geneva, in March 1928.

In this context, the representative of Czechoslovakia, Eduard Benes, had been empowered to negotiate with the USSR, including for a Romanian-Soviet understanding, without prejudicing our country’s position on the issue of Bessarabia – the Gordian knot in Romanian-Soviet relations. Negotiations continued until the first part of 1929, through various friendly diplomatic channels, finally finding a text formula for an unanimously acceptable treaty, which was to emphasize the “*maintenance of the existing peace situation*” (Ib., collection 71 URSS/1917-1937, vol. 137, p. 110) between the signatory states. In these conditions was signed, on 9 February 1929, the *Moscow Protocol* or *Litvinov Protocol*, between the governments of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Romania and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Ib., collection 71 URSS/1920-1944, vol. 132, pp. 267-269; vol. 189, pp. 126-129).

THE ROMANIAN AND SOVIET MILITARY POTENTIAL – AS A MEANS OF SECURITY, IN RELATION TO THE DRAFT CONVENTION ON THE REDUCTION AND LIMITATION OF ARMAMENTS – DEBATED DURING THE GENEVA DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE

In the same year of the signing of the Litvinov Pact, 1929, the Preparatory Commission for Disarmament from the League of Nations entered its 6th session and had the difficult mission of coagulating the divergent opinions of the representatives of the participating countries, so the *Draft Convention on the reduction*

¹² It had previously been ratified by: Great Britain, on 14 April 1922; France, on 24 April 1924; Italy, on 23 May 1927; Japan never ratified it.

and limitation of armaments (AMR, collection 948, Microfilme, roll P.II. 1.2000, f. 74-79), began to take shape, in order to be subject to the debate of the *General Conference on Disarmament*¹³.

Referring to the contribution of the Romanian military delegation within this international body in Geneva, we can say that it was an important one, in the sense of the concern for ensuring national security. Evidence of such an appreciation is currently offered by an invaluable documentary collection kept especially in the Archives of the Ministry of National Defence, drawn up at that time by the higher fora with attributions in the defence of the country. Being debated in the Superior Council of National Defence and presented at the Geneva *Disarmament Conference*, in order to be able to support the need to ensure the security of the Romanian state, it was a strictly secret material and remained so for a long time.

To the sources cited above, we add another, equally original and useful for the topic under debate, namely the testimony of the former Major, at that time, Corneliu

¹³ The issue of Disarmament in general has been debated in many specialists works, such as: André Gardes, *Le désarmement devant la Société des Nations*, Ed. A. Pedone, Paris, 1929; Davud Daries, *Le problème du XX-e siècle*, Paris, Payot, 1931; *Resolution adoptée de 1843-1931 par les congrès universels de la paix concernant la désarmement*, Geneva, 1932; “*Sociétés des Nations, Conférence pour la réduction et la limitation des armements*”, in *Journal*, no. 5/6 February 1932; Liviu P. Nasta, “*Marea bătaie pentru dezarmare și pace*”, in *Adevărul*, 22 November 1932; Georges Otlilik, *La Sociétés des Nations et le désarmement, Editions de l’Annuaire de la Sociétés des Nations*, Geneva, 1932; Paul Mantoux, Alfred Zimmern, Ernst Jäckh, Henry de Jouvenel, *Le désarmement et l’opinion internationale*, Paris, 1932; Constantin Kirițescu, *Dezarmarea morală. Le Désarmement moral*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1933; A. Soreanu (LTC), *Dezarmarea*, București, 1934; A. Soreanu (LTC), G.J. Ciorogaru (PhD), *Civilizație și potențialul de război*, Imprimeria Națională, București, 1935; Aimé l’Hote, *Renseignements documentaires sur la Conférence pour la Réduction et la Limitation des Armements*, Paris, 1936; Pierre F. Brugière, *La sécurité collective, 1919-1945*, Ed. A. Pedone, Paris, 1946; Eduard Milhaud, “*Le pacte de la Sociétés des Nations et le Pacte de Renonciation à la guerre*”, in *Dictionnaire diplomatique*, vol. I., n.d. I. Lemin, “*Formarea celor două focare de război și lupta Uniunii Sovietice pentru securitatea colectivă (1931-1938)*”, in *Politica externă a URSS și relațiile internaționale contemporane*, Editura A.R.L.U.S., 1952; I.F. Ivașin, *Contribuții la istoria politicii externe a U.R.S.S.*, Editura Politică, București, 1960; Raimond Barraine, *La réglementation des rapports internationaux et l’Organisation des Nations Unies*, Paris, 1964; Gh. Zaharia, D. Tuțu, “*Aspecte ale politicii externe a României în anii 1933-1936*”, in *Anale*, no. 5/1965; N.Z. Lupu, “*Planul de la Geneva și împrejurările eșuării lui*”, in *Anale*, no. 1, 1966; Naoum Sloutzky, *La Société des Nations et le contrôle du commerce international des armes de guerre (1919-1938)*, Centre européen, de la Dotation Carnagie pour la paix internationale, Genève, 1969; Z.S. Șeinin, “*V Ghenuie i Gaaghe (Straniți diplomaticekoj deiatelnosti M.M. Litvinova)*”, in *Novaia i novejšaia istoria*, Moscow, no. 3, 1968; Sergiu Verona, *Armele și dezarmarea*, Editura Politică, București, 1970 etc.

Teodorini¹⁴, who, from 1930, was part of the Romanian Military Commission in Geneva, therefore, directly participated in both the PCD as well as in the General Conference on Disarmament.



Towards Montreux – members of the Romanian delegation to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference (from left to right): Major C. Teodorini, General Toma Dumitrescu, N. Titulescu, Savel Rădulescu, Adjutant Colonel Aviator I. Stoicescu (Source: MMN Archive, “Original Photographs” Collection, inventory number 19570)

According to his notes, the composition of the Romanian delegation at CD was: the head of the delegation – Dimitrie Ghica, the Minister of Foreign Affairs;

¹⁴ Archive of the National Military Museum “King Ferdinand I” (hereafter: M.M.N. Archive), in: *Memories from the career of General Corneliu Teodorini* (hereafter: *Memories...*), in: “Manuscript” Collection (in short: mss. no. 306, written in 1965), pp. 1-2. Corneliu Teodorini (1893–1976) participated between September 1930 and December 1933 in the League of Nations Disarmament Conference, respectively in the Conference for the Limitation and Reduction of Armaments. At that time, he was working at the Second Intelligence Section, Bureau 4 Treaties and Military Attaches, the structure that dealt with “issues pending with the League of Nations” (M.M.N. Archive, mss. no. 306/1965, p. 6); later he was attached to the military in France and Belgium (November 1938 - May 1941); he witnessed the events of the “war” in France (September 1939-July 1940) and the Regime of Marshal Petain-Vichy (July 1940-May 1941); he was an active participant on the fronts of the Second World War, both in the East and in the West, holding, at the same time, important positions. Thanks to his merits, he was promoted in this confrontation to the rank of general and obtained important military distinctions: the Order “Mihai Viteazul” cl. III, by Royal Decree no. 399/8.02.1943 and cl. II, by Royal Decree no. 3267/20.12.1943 (as brigadier general) etc.

and as members: Nicolae Titulescu, minister plenipotentiary in London; C. Antoniadă, minister plenipotentiary to LN; university professor I. Petrovici; General Nicolae Samsonovici, head of the Great General Staff.; minister Al. Zăuceanu; minister Savel Rădulescu, head of the economic division in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; General Toma Dumitrescu, Commander of the Army Corps; deputies: university professor V.V. Pella; technical advisors and experts: Commander E. Roșca, Colonel Aviator royal field aid I. Stoicescu, Lieutenant Colonel Gh. Potopeanu, Lieutenant Colonel B. Alinescu, Major. C. Teodorini, secretary of the military delegation; secretaries: Ed. Ciuntu, first secretary of the Romanian Legation under LN; D. Buzdugan, first secretary of the Legation in London; P. Zănescu, attached to the legation; other private secretaries and typists (MMN, Manuscripts collection, mss. no. 306/1965, p. 21).

By the way, Major Corneliu Teodorini was also the head of the “S.D.N. Military Bureau”, established in 1932, which was subordinated to the Superior Council of National Defence (SCND), reflecting, once again, the importance given to this issue at the management level of the the country. In that Office, Teodorini also had Captain Zadic and Sergeant-Major of Administration Dragomirescu (secretary) as helpers, both from the Second Section of the Great General Staff (AMR, Collection 948, Microfilms, roll P.II.1.2008, f. 198)¹⁵.

General Toma Dumitrescu, the representative of the Romanian military delegation since the establishment of the PCD, following the unfolding of events in the country in the early 1929, informed about the state of mind in Geneva, stating that, from 1925 to the end of 1929 (6th session), “things had settled down and the debates were about to reach a common denominator” (Ib., roll P.II. 1.2000, f. 67-69, Report no. 447/28 May 1929). There was also the possibility of establishing a date for convening the CD, based on a “Draft Convention, on which the great powers and the majority of the states had to agree, except Germany and the rest of the armies defeated in the great war, as well as Soviet Russia” (Ib., f. 67).

At that stage, the great powers tried to impose their principles, summarized as follows:

- 1.) in the issue of “limitation of land armaments – the French point of view prevailed;
- 2.) for naval armaments – the Anglo-American point of view;
- 3.) for aerial armaments – the Franco-English point of view” (Ib., f. 68).

¹⁵ The two had already accompanied Teodorini for two years, at the Disarmament Conference.

The Romanian delegation, in agreement with its allies, supported the French point of view, which stipulated that *“the first step towards disarmament must be carried out taking into account the degree of security enjoyed by each individual state and the assurance of their full sovereignty”*. This *“corresponded to the interests of our national defence, the situation of armaments [...], reserving, at the same time, the possibility and freedom to equip our army with the armaments we needed”*.

It should be noted that in 1929, three conventions related to disarmament had been drawn up at the League of Nations, the implementation of which could have been *“very disadvantageous”* for Romania, as General Dumitrescu expressed it, if the existing situation in the country does not change as quickly as possible. The conventions he was talking about referred to: 1.) Control and publicity of private and state factories, of war materials; 2.) Control and publicity of war material trade; 3.) The limitation and reduction of armaments. By implementing them, Romania would have had *“great inconveniences”*, because, according to the wording in the documentation: *“while other countries that will possess the complete, or almost complete, material will have nothing to publish, we should submit to control and expose the huge material that we lack. We will thus appear to be the most militaristic country in Europe, while the reality is different”*. To the difficult situation, the only solution we can apply is *“hasten for the supply of the army with the materials it needs, for an increase in our military expenditure for equipping the army will be very difficult later, when the limitation and reduction convention are enforced”* (Ib., f. 69).

Later, through a balance report dated 7 October 1929 (Ib., f. 70-73)¹⁶, General Dumitrescu again informed his superiors about the evolution of the disarmament problem at the LN. For a better understanding of what was previously presented and in attempt to highlight as conclusively as possible the concerns of the League of Nations in the thorny issue of disarmament, he came up with new additions.

Invoking the *“Convention on the Control and Publicity of the International Trade in Arms, Munitions and War Material”*, drawn up in 1925 and signed by more than 50 states, he specified that, due to some flaws in the content, it had only been ratified by a very small number of states (4). It could thus be easily deduced the inconvenience it presented to most states, because, if it had been implemented, only non-armament producing countries would have been forced to submit to control, which would have put them in a state of inferiority to the producing

countries. In order to ensure a fair resolution of the situation, it was concluded that in the final part of the aforementioned Convention, the composition of another convention should be specified, which would have as its object the control and publicity of *“private manufactures of weapons etc.”*, in accordance with art. 8 of the LN, which was absolutely necessary to be able to put into force the first arms control convention from 1925.

As a result of the above requirement, it was established at the LN a special Commission that developed, in the 1927/1928 sessions, a *Draft Convention on the private production of weapons etc.*, based on the provisions contained in the 1925 Convention (Ib., f. 70).

Referring to the interest of Romania, vis-à-vis the two documents, General Dumitrescu indicated that *“the application of both the 1925 Convention (traffic) and that of manufacturing (the 1929 project) are not favourable to us as long as we do not have the necessary weapons for our safety. The explanation was that during this time we would be subject to the publicity obligations provided for in both conventions, whether we buy materials from abroad or manufacture them in the country”*, while *“the states that currently possess the armaments they need will not be affected by the provisions of these conventions”* (Ib., f. 71). To complete what has been stated, he added: *“we sought and obtained that in both conventions the application of advertising obligations should be suspended for Romania, Poland and the Baltic countries, as long as Russia does not adhere to these conventions”* (Ib., f. 72). In the same sense, General Dumitrescu showed that also in the session of August 1929, during the discussions on the *Draft Convention on Manufactures*, by common agreement with France, Poland and Czechoslovakia, Romania had supported the restriction of advertising of state manufactures.

At the same time, he had also agreed with the French proposal for postponing the manufacturing convention, until after the work of the Disarmament Preparatory Commission was finished. The Romanian General specified that he had supported it in order *“to gain time and avoid the shortcomings that the application of this convention would bring us in the current situation”*. At the end, the general added that the *Draft Convention* presenting the aforementioned divergences was sent to the General Assembly of the LN, where it was submitted to the 3rd Commission (of disarmament), within which a resolution had also been approved that was presented by the Romanian delegation. Its was done in the sense of a *“new meeting of the Special Commission, for the definitive drafting of the Draft Convention, only after the PCD will decide on the <Publicity> Chapter”*.

¹⁶ Document addressed to the Chief of the General Staff – General N. Samsonovici.

The informative document to which I referred was presented to the Minister of War, General Henri Cihoski¹⁷, on 31 October 1929. Through the resolution he placed on that document, he undertook the mission of informing the Superior Council of National Defence about *“the need for the urgent arming of our army”, “in relation to the changes in the activity of the Military Section of the League of Nations”* (AMR, collection 948, Microfilms, roll P.II.1.2000, f. 70) – as it was expressed.

By the end of 1929, the *Draft Convention on the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments* (Ib., c. 74-79) was already foreshadowed at the Geneva forum, on which the Romanian representative had drawn up an extensive Report (Ib., collection M.St.M., file no. 338, pp. 3-42)¹⁸, for the information of the country’s decision-makers. Mainly, it should be noted that in the *Draft Convention*, an extensive analysis was made on the following chapters: I. Military forces; II. Materials; III. Budgetary expenses; IV. Chemical warfare and V. General provisions.

For the preparation of the documentation related to each mentioned chapter, precise instructions were recorded in the *Report*. For example, with regard to the *Troops*, it was stipulated: *“The land, naval and air forces are dealt with, each state commissioning itself to limit its forces in service, fixing certain figures that must be entered in the tables. When establishing these tables, the numbers will be entered as men in service, results from the calculation of average daily effectives, which are obtained by dividing the total number of days of presence by the number of days of the budget year”*¹⁹ (Ib., collection 948, Microfilms, roll P.II.1.2000, f. 97-130).

At Art.-A. of the Chapter *Military forces*, details were given on the figures that had to be entered in the tables or published as information in the Chapter V of the Convention. Article “A” also stated that the number of untrained recruits could be made public, but as *“optional information”*.

¹⁷ General Henri Cihoski (1872-1950) led the Ministry of War in the Iuliu Maniu Government, between 10 November 1928-7 June 1930. Under this government, a series of economic laws were developed, with the intention of protecting the armament and security of the country. In the context of the deterioration of the international situation, as a result of the insufficient equipment of the Romanian Armed Forces, the government decided to take measures to remedy the situation. Appreciating that the Romanian industry cannot manufacture the necessary armaments and ammunition in a very short time, the government concluded a contract with the Czechoslovak company *Skoda*, on 17 March 1930, in the amount of 1,250 million lei, for machine guns, and 5,500 million of lei for cannons, a total of 6.75 billion lei. The conditions under which this contract was concluded would generate lively debates regarding the *“Skoda affair”*. On 8 April 1935, the contract was redefined (Source: Ion Mamina, Ioan Scurtu, *Guverne și guvernanți 196-1938*, Editura Silex, București, 1996, pp. 69-72, 77).

¹⁸ See also collection *Microfilms*, roll P.II.1.2001. *Dare de seamă asupra activității Conferinței Dezarmării, între 25 aprilie-15 iunie 1933*.

¹⁹ *“Instrucțiunile...”* - Work was signed by Major General Henri Cihoski, Minister of War, Major General Samsonovici, Chief of the General Staff, and by the head of the 1st Organization-Mobilization Section, Colonel Dediu.

In Art.-C, it is detailed *“what is meant by militarily organized formations”*: police forces of any nature, whose effective numbers are limited and entered in the tables from Art. A. For this chapter, the First Section of the Great General staff and of the army inspectorates had the mission of compiling tables with the situation of the army as of that date, *“compared to the provisions of the budget for the year 1930, for the Great General Staff to appreciate, for the future, what figures should foresee and which would lead to the change of budget expenditures in the respective chapters”*. Also, it became necessary to find a way *“to camouflage some effectives in the service, admitting that the establishment of some limit figures no longer allowed increases when applying the convention”* (Ib., f. 75).

As an observation, it was added: *“In this chapter, only the limitation or fixation of the effectives in service was provided. It must be taken into account that the possibility is not excluded that some delegations will come back and add – as a requirement – the limitation of the trained reserves”* (Ib., f. 76).

For the same chapter, reference was then made to a bushy and meticulous situation (presented in 14 annexes) (Ib., f. 102-105)²⁰, regarding the effectives of each individual unit, from which I compiled a centralization, for example, in *table 1*.

Table 1: Global effectives by units and periods, for the troops in term (including gradations), for the year 1929 (Ib., f. 102-105)

UNIT NAME	1.01.– 4.02 (48 days) Older	18.02 – 28.06 (131 days)			29.06 – 1.09 (65 days)	2.09 – 22.10. (15 days)	23.10 – 31.12 (70 days)	Remarks
		Recruit	Total					
I. Ministry of War – total	2529	2529	574	3103	2303	3103	2463	
II. Military Commands – total	3114	3537	-	3537	2645	3537	3287	

²⁰ The 12 centralizations were: Appendix no. 1 – *Table of the global effectives by units and periods, for the troop in term (including gradations), for the year 1929*; Appendix no. 2 – *Table of the global effectives of the gradations of troop corps*; Appendix no. 3 – *Table of the combat force of an Infantry Regiment Type “A”*; Appendix no. 4 – *Table of the combat force of a Type “B” Infantry Regiment*; Appendix no. 5 – *Table of the combat force of a Type “C” Infantry Regiment*; Appendix no. 6 – *Table of the combat force of a Battalion of Rifles*; Appendix no. 7 – *Table of the combative force of a Regiment of Hussards*; Appendix no. 8 – *Table of the combat force of an Artillery Regiment (gun, shell) Type “A”*; Appendix no. 9 – *Table of the combat force of an Artillery Regiment (gun, shell) Type “B”*; Appendix no. 10 – *Table of the combative force of a Mounted Artillery and Mountain Gun Division*; Appendix no. 11 – *Table of the combat force of a mountain Howitzer Regiment*; Appendix no. 12 – *Table of the number of days of maintenance, which belong to the commands, troop bodies and services by periods and for the whole year*; Appendix no. 13 – *Table of distribution of animals in army*; Appendix no. 14 – *Table of the number of guards and of civil preventive force remains*.

UNIT NAME	1.01.– 4.02 (48 days) Older	18.02 – 28.06 (131 days)			29.06 – 1.09 (65 days)	2.09 – 22.10. (15 days)	23.10 – 31.12 (70 days)	Remarks	
		Recruit	Total						
III. The infantry – total	48184	47320	59355	106675	59540	106675	52790		
Reg.	Type "A"*	1090	1078	1022	2100	1380	2100	1100	
	Type "B"	600	788	912	1500	650	1500	630	
	Type "C"	460	448	452	900	400	900	400	
IV. Cavalry – total	8859	8855	8778	17633	9510	17633	8170		
V. Artillery – total	17013	17599	19924	36893	20144	36893	17789		
VI. Engineering – total	5292	5221	7620	12841	5685	12841	5550		
VII. Military firefighters	684	684	276	960	500	960	490		
VIII. Military high schools	667	667	240	907	520	907	655		
IX. Justice, camps, orders (garrison commands)	656	704	-	704	629	704	619		
X. Recruitment / Circles	2677	3124	-	3124	2190	3124	2411		
XI. Deposits of Remount	570	570	260	830	555	830	490		
XII. Armament establishments, ammunition	4500	4510	2140	6650	4080	6650	4140		
XIII. Sanitary establishments	3074	3075	978	4053	2265	4053	2505		
XIV. Administrative establishments	2194	2194	1485	3679	1963	3679	1960		
XV. Guards with enlisted troop	811	811	-	811	811	811	811		
GENERAL TOTAL	101424	101400	101000	202400	113340	202400	104130		

*) It differs, since 1930 their numbers will be supplemented, reaching 2,100 (maximum).

Increased attention was also paid to the "industries that worked for the needs of defence", and for which a draft law had been drawn up, only after a thorough study on the way in which the neighbour states presented themselves, especially those with revenge orientations, but also for the friends, the conclusion being disarming for the state of supply of the Romanian armed forces.

At the end of the study, Lieutenant Colonel Velescu, head of the 4th Section from the Great General Staff, concluded: "For us, the issue must be studied in advance by Section I and IV of the Great General Staff, and by the XII Technical Directorate (from the Ministry of Defence), as bodies directly interested, and by Section III and II as consultative bodies, to see [...] what can be proposed for the future. The general views of Section IV are directed towards the Polish system (highly developed), which have to be added a part of the ideas of the French system, of course, applied to our political, economic, industrial situation" (Ib., f. 294) etc.

The responsible factors of the Romanian armed forces had such concerns in the following period as well, all the more so since our neighbours from the east, as we reported in the previous section, had waved the spectre of war, remaining followers of disarmament only at the declarative level, as we will ascertain.

Extensive studies were devoted to Armaments of the USSR, from which it follows that their military potential was not in agreement with the statements.

It is necessary to recall that during the 4th session of the PCD, from November-December 1927²¹, the USSR had officially expressed its point of view on disarmament, through the resolution proposed by Maxim Litvinov. The Soviet commissar then demanded: "the complete abolition of the land, naval and air armed forces, the destruction of all armaments, ammunition and all means of war, the cessation of recruitment for military service, the abolition of military service, voting of laws which to declared the violation of the above conditions as crimes against the state" (Moisuc, 2003; 2007, p. 135).

The proposal was supported at the time only by Germany and Turkey, but it had fundamental flaws: 1.) the security of the borders was not ensured by anything; 2.) it did not exclude the policy of force and the threat of force; 3.) it did not recognize in advance the territorial *status quo* of the states; 4.) it did not exclude invasion through different forms and means. Regarding the last point, we must remember the Comintern, through which the USSR was organizing actions to undermine the sovereignty of neighbouring national states. The "Tatar-Bunar" case, from 1924, was instructive in this regard. On the other hand, based on the programmatic documents issued by the Communist International, a program had been developed to "destruct the armed forces" of the non-communist states, because their defence depended precisely on the degree of "solidity" of the respective countries' armed forces. In this vision, in the program entitled: *The Work of the Communist Party*

²¹ The Soviet project, although rejected by most states, was taken up with insistence by the Soviet and German foreign ministers, Maxim Litvinov and Gustav Stresemann, in 1928 and 1929.

for the Disintegration of the Armed Forces of the Dominant Classes, it was clearly stated, along with many other considerations, that “the possibility of the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie will largely depend on the degree of disintegration of a bourgeois army and the crush of the bourgeois state”, when there is “an immediate revolutionary situation” (ANIC, collection C.C. al P.C.R., Foreign Relations, file no. 32/1933, pp. 415-431).

So, the Soviets campaigned for formal, official disarmament, instead through the well-known subversive methods, they made the prologue of the world revolution that did not exclude war. But for them it was “excusable”, because they preached the “noble” cause of the Bolshevization of the world!

Such a reality was also exposed by the Soviets in “Pravda”, in 1929, saying: “The issue of the fight against the war must be raised in the future enlarged session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and detailed resolutions must be adopted, explaining that only the revolutionary party, tried and prepared in advance, with a good illegal apparatus, will be able to successfully carry out the campaign against the war; that the means of fighting the war is not the strike, but the organization of revolutionary cells in all the belligerent armies and their preparation for making the revolution” (Pravda, 20 January 1929).

And what was the revolution, if not a state of anarchic, militaristic confrontation?

We must also remember that the USSR was in friendly and collaborative relations with the other “victim” of the Versailles treaty system, Germany, since the first years after the war. It is appropriate to invoke the date of 16 April 1922, when, in Rappallo, Walter Rathenau and Gheorghii Cicerin signed the German-Soviet Cooperation Treaty, with several secret annexes, supplementing the secret military agreements of 17 April 1919 and 25 March 1921. Thus, they flagrantly violated the Treaty of Versailles and the Covenant of the League of Nations²². The German-Soviet dream was big and bold, envisioning an Eastern Europe allied with Central Europe to swallow up Western Europe (Jitianu, Cd. C.II. A.T., ib., p. 9).

²² General Ion Jitianu, Commander of the II (A.T.) Corps, *A few words on disarmament* (hereinafter: *A few words...*), 1923. (Bucharest: the Great Staff), p. 9. *La France Militaire*, of 16 December 1922, recorded that the German-Russian alliance treaty, on the basis of which there was such cooperation, had been signed on the Russian side by Novitzky and Stefans, and on the German side by General von Seeck and Admiral Behne. Following these agreements, it was no longer a secret that in 1923 the Russian armed forces had benefited from major German support: over 500 officers had been sent to Moscow; a large number of engineers from the “Krupp” factory had worked for the assembly of the plants in Petrograd and Samara, in Kronstadt they had rebuilt the fleet. Germany had also sent Russia 500 airplanes, and in the Monsk-Petrograd-Moscow region they had rebuilt the railways.

In this sense, the Soviets wasted no time, as it is known. Since the Moscow Disarmament Conference (December 1922), half of the budget of that year had been allocated to war material. This fact determined the USSR, through its delegation from the PCD, that on 8 December 1930, when the *Draft Convention* was accepted, to adopt a position of total rejection (Sofronie, p, 21; Matei, p. 65). The document, being largely inspired by the French theses, maintained the provisions of a military nature from the peace treaties, therefore, it did not give “equality of treatment” as Germany wanted. And because the document avoided an effective solution to the disarmament problem, providing only a reduction and limitation indirect, budgetary, of the armaments (quite imprecise), it was refused by the Soviets.

It is also interesting to note that in the discussions on the report of the PCD (the Cobian-Bourquin report) to the Council of the League of Nations, there was a “live confrontation” between the representative of the Soviets, A.V. Lunacerski, and the Polish delegate, General Kaperzinschi, in connection with the “reservations” expressed by some states bordering Soviet Russia: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland and Romania. All these states conditioned the signing of the Disarmament Convention on its signing by the Soviet Union. The Soviet delegate considered the reservation as an affront, demanding the withdrawal of the relevant paragraph, as well as the final provisions of the Draft Convention. He had declared that it was “unacceptable”, because it put his country in an “exceptional situation”, because: “Nothing gives the right to say that the Soviet Government will not sign the convention” (Matei, p. 66; Dimineața, 11 December 1930). After the incident, a “transactional text” was then adopted, with the following content: “In the text of the convention adopted in the first reading, there was an article by which Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Poland and Romania specified certain conditions for their accession to this convention.

The Commission decided to reserve consideration of this proposal for the Conference on Disarmament. This provision was taken for two reasons; the first, because the text raised an eminently political issue; and the second, because it was a complete problem, that of the game of the reservations which the contracting parties will possibly afford, to formulate at the time of signing”.

The text was also accepted by Romania, being then voted with a majority of votes.

Considering such facts, Romania followed with attention and concern the evolution of the state of armament of the neighbouring state, especially since the warnings of an expected war against us, coming from everywhere. From a detailed study of 1930, which we will refer to for exemplification, without pretending

to exhaust it, it was found that *“Russia was intensively preparing for war”*, that *“it was making extraordinary efforts to train the troops and officers, for the creation and improvement of its own military industry, for increasing the number of technical means and for the preparation of the entire economy of the country, in view of the war”* (AMR, collection 948, S.C.S.A.T., file no. 4/1930, p. 62)..

The policy of *“peace”* that Soviet Russia preached at the League of Nations was *“diametrically opposed to the military preparations”* it was making, having at its disposal an *“enormous”* budget for equipment and training (Ib., p. 58). So, the military forces of the USSR knew a great increase, and especially aviation, whose achievements *“exceeded all expectations”*, being rated as the best. In this field, Stalin himself had publicly committed that in the future, not to make any material sacrifices so that the aviation would be ready to *“destroy in a few hours, enemy cities within a radius of 500 km”*; in the same sense developing an industry of *“combat gases”*, through the German company *“Stolzenberg”* (Ib., p. 59).

The USSR had also taken important measures to fortify the border and build strategic roads, and to check the military knowledge of the troops and officers, manoeuvres were held every year. In this way, the Soviet armed forces were *“maintained in an atmosphere of immediate danger and hatred against neighbours, by all possible means”*.

Regarding the armaments and the war industry in Soviet Russia, it could be said that, in the period 1927-1929, it had taken care to equip its entire army with armaments and war material, especially for the border divisions. Then, during 1929-1930, the Soviets pursued the development of technical and motorized weapons, especially for heavy artillery. Regarding to the infantry, it should be specified that since 1928 they had equipped it with a machine gun of their own construction, much superior to the previous one; and in 1929 they had built in their own factories two models of light battle chariots, as well as a new type of armoured car.

The information also showed that starting from 1927, the Soviets made great efforts *“to increase the war industry and prepare the industrial mobilization”*, and *“thanks to the German technical aid”*, they could fuel *“a long-lasting war, with their own means”*. For it they had own: cannon foundries, weapons factories, arsenals for artillery material, 15-20 factories of airplanes and aviation materials, numerous factories and factories of tractors, tanks and armoured vehicles of their own models.

Apart from its own industrial effort, Soviet Russia armed itself also through orders in Germany, Italy, the USA and Czechoslovakia, countries whose industries *“removing all political considerations”* thought *“only of material advantages”* (Ib.,

p. 60), as stated in the mentioned study. For example, in 1928 they had bought from:

- 1.) Germany – aircraft engines, armoured motorcycles, anti-aircraft artillery optics;
 - 2.) Italy – 300 *“Savoya”* seaplanes, 2 counter-torpedoes, 3 cargo boats, 3 coastal defence vessels, *“Fiat”* light battle chariots; and following an agreement, until 1932 it was to buy also other materials for aviation, the fleet and the metallurgical industry, worth 200 million lire.
- To the mentioned equipment, others were added from:
- 3.) America – about 5,000 tractors;
 - 4.) Sweden – from *“Cassa Bofors”* – torpedoes and airplane bombs;
 - 5.) Czechoslovakia – *“Avia B.H.3”* fighter planes and *“Walter”* engines for airplanes;
 - 6.) England – 60 battle chariots;
 - 7.) Paris – 400 planes.

For all this, primarily the USSR had a budget for the military that *“exceeded all other countries in Europe”*. From 1924 until the date in question it had increased year after year, as the statistic in table 2 below also reflect (Ib., p. 61).

Budget year	The General Budget (million rubles)	Army budget (million rubles)	The proportion in which the military budget increased compared to the previous year %	The proportion in which the military budget increased compared to the budget of 1924/1925 %
1924/25	403,5	35,1	-	-
1925/26	678,7	59,0	68	68
1926/27	780,8	67,9	15	93
1927/28	923,0	80,3	18	128
1928/29	1061,0	92,3	14	162
1929/30	1115,6	97,0	5	176

*) The data entered in the table were officially communicated by Soviet Russia

In conclusion, according to the budget intended for the military, 217,500 lei were intended annually per one Soviet soldier.

Second, Soviet Russia had benefited from the *“intellectual support”* of the *German Reichswehr* (Ib., pp. 61-62). In the same vein, it is interesting to note that during the manoeuvres of 1929, the Soviet fleet visited the German ports in East Prussia, exchanging *“courtesy”* with the German officers in Swinemünde.

Also, German General Hammerstein, commander of the *Reichswehr*, participated in the Soviet manoeuvres in 1929; and to German manoeuvres on the Elbe, participated a delegation of Soviet officers, headed by General Kork, Army Commander. Then, numerous officers and engineers from the German armed forces worked in factories in Soviet Russia, and Russian officers, in turn, participated in the command trips of the German General Staff.

Regarding the aforementioned collaboration, the *Daily Mail*, from 6 September 1930, headlined: *“It is obvious that former German officers are currently leading the construction of airplanes and airships in Soviet factories. Numerous German experts, mostly former officers of the German armed forces, work in the 64 toxic plants of Soviet Russia”* (Ib., p. 132).

For its part, the German newspaper *Tempo* recorded: *“Soviet officers can participate in the command trips of German General Staff officers and are informed about the tactical and armament matters of this military. Red Army officers have free access to German infantry schools, where Uborevich, former commander of the Moscow Military District, also did a long internship. They can enter everywhere and learn about all the secret dispositions of the German military”* (Ib., p. 133).

Over all visible forces, the USSR was also preparing numerous camouflaged military forces. Apart from the pre-military activities, they also had paramilitary ones, so that one could speak of an *“armed nation”* (Ib., p. 123). The education of the masses for the war was entrusted to militarized societies, the most important of which was *“Osoaviachim”*, which had over 5,000,000 members, and was led by *“the most outstanding military, technical and scientific personalities”*. Its purpose was to *“prepare the elements of the armed forces before incorporation, to maintain and extend the military service and to equip the Soviet armed forces with the most modern means of combat (aircraft, chemical means, tanks etc.)”* (Ib., p. 58). And according to a law that was to enter into force (in 1933), *“all elements of the nation, of both sexes and of any age”* were *“obliged to render productive military service in case of war”* (Ib., p. 124); service that extended to all branches of activity: industry, agriculture, schools and universities, state or private establishments. Both students and workers of any category were required to complete a military course and take part in manoeuvres or exercises with the troops, and those who for certain reasons were exempted from military service were required to perform other works of public utility, such as: field work, in forests, road construction, fortifications etc., both in peacetime and in wartime.

The Soviet leadership went so far with this field of total military education that it was expected that *“the education of fighters should start from the school benches, not only to the troops but also in the concentration camps”*. Voroshilov himself, the military commissar of War and Navy (Ministry of War) publicly appreciated, in 1930, that in the last five years the Red Army had made progress, moving to new forms of organization, based on new regulations; the active training of the commanders was improved and the individual training of the shooter and specialists etc.

On this aspect and, especially, on the value of the Soviet command staff, Romanian military analysts appreciated:

- *“The command staff, intended for the Great Commandments, are generally young and without military training and special culture;*
- *They all have the experience of the civil war, where they distinguished themselves as men of energy and with the intuition of leading the masses;*
- *Lately, some of them, even the older ones, have started attending the War Academy and other training courses;*
- *The superior officers are of the same quality;*
- *Lower command personnel are well trained. The majority consists of convinced communists;*
- *Where the party does not have absolute confidence in the commander of the Great Unit, it is doubled by a military commissar”* (Ib., p. 122).

Following what was presented, the Romanian military specialists concluded that *“Russia is intensively preparing for war”*, making, therefore, *“extraordinary efforts for the training of troops and officers, for the creation and improvement of its own military industry, for the increasing number of the technical means and for the preparation of the entire economy in view of the war”* (Ib., p. 62). The Soviets had the same preoccupation even later, predicting amounts even higher for the 1934 budget exercise, as the following figures demonstrate:

1.) The General Budget for the year 1934 had been fixed, by the decree of 4 January 1934, at the amount of 48,879 million rubles (3,910,353,000,000 lei = 3 trillion, 910 billion, 353 million lei), which represented an increase of almost 40% compared to the 1933 budget;

2.) The armed forces budget – totals 2,873,295,000 rubles (229,863,600,000 lei), with an increase of 27% compared to the 1933 budget.

Therefore, the proportion of the army budget to the general budget was 5.88%. Under these conditions, it was distributed as follows:

- a) for a soldier – 5,113.00 rubles (409,040.00 lei);
- b) for one inhabitant – 17.41 rubles (1,392.80 lei).

It was thus appreciated that the Soviet budget had known a continuous ascendancy, so that in six years it had grown six times, the largest amounts being allocated to the industrial branches that were related to the war potential.

Having also a share of 6.5% intended for the reserve fund, it also offered great flexibility in the secret distributions of the funds, towards the general interest of the Soviet Armed Forces.

The situation was the same with regard to the Budget of the *War and Navy Commissariat* (Ib., f. 451).

And if the troops of the Red Army, *“at the same time, were the same”*, it appeared that *“the majority, if not the totality of the budget above was intended for the Army, for the war materials”* (Ib., f. 452-453). The distribution of the funds of the Soviet military budget by chapter was secret, each year only the global distribution was published, which in the case of the 1934 budget was:

- 58% for the Army and Navy – 1,665,000,000 rubles (133,200,000,000 lei);
- 5% Special Forces – 130,000,000 rubles (10,400,000,000 lei);
- The general administration and management of socio-cultural activities represented 37%, i.e. 1,078,295,000 rubles (86,263,600,600 lei); which meant a General Total of 2,873,295,000 rubles (229,863,600,000 lei).

In the study I referred to, it was also specified that the figures presented did not fully illustrate the reality of the funds intended for the Soviet Armed Forces. In fact, they were much higher, because part of the maintenance expenses had been directed, since 1926, to be supported by the *“budgets of the Republics, Regions and local Administrations”* (Ib., f. 453). To these were added the private contributions, *“more forced than voluntary”*, through a *“skilful propaganda of the Communist Party and militarized civil societies”* – *“Osoaviakhim”, “Autodor”, “Red Cross”* etc.

To show, comparatively, the level of procurement and the capacity of the Romanian Armed Forces at that time, we could continue with similar assessments for Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, France, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland (Ib., collection 948, S.C.S.A.T., file no. 4/1930, pp. 68-77).

In any case, following the analyses carried out, a conclusion was clearly imposing, namely that *“a political tension ruled over Europe”*, being reflected in the *“armament over fever”* and in the financial effort that all countries were making *“to ensure their political goals, through armed support as strong as possible”* (Ib., p. 58).

In such an atmosphere, Romania’s military situation was assessed as *“becoming exceptionally serious”*, the results of the analysis of its own military situation being *“more than worrying”* (Ib., p. 77).

Following such an analysis, punctually, it was concluded:

“1.) Our enemies have far superior forces to attack us. The enemy’s armament, especially that of the Russian and Hungarian armies, is being improved every year; heavy and motorized artillery, tanks, and above all, aviation, which will have hundreds, maybe even thousands of planes. Behind their armed forces, our enemies have a powerful war industry capable of supplying by itself the entire consumption of war materials. Romania does not have a war industry.

2.) In front of these perspectives, the military situation of our country becomes exceptionally serious.

Indeed: The enemy is much superior to us numerically and can attack us simultaneously on three frontiers. We are therefore forced to wage a war on internal lines against numerically much superior forces; The experience of all wars proves that, in such a case, the one attacked cannot escape destruction unless it achieves essential conditions: a) to strike decisively and completely beat one of the opponents; b) to manoeuvre quickly between them (see Germany and Austria in the Great War, Romania 1916). However, the material shortages of our army (heavy artillery, aviation, tanks) do not allow us to completely defeat one enemy at a time, and the current state of communications does not allow us to manoeuvre quickly. In such conditions, the problem that the war will pose cannot be solved properly, and the country remains under the threat of a great danger” (Ib., pp. 77-78).

Taking into account these realities and for the recovery of the military system, the Romanian General Staff, starting in 1930, made a series of proposals, which aimed primarily at increasing the mobilization forces, by 1/3 of the total existing at that time, because the morale factor *“had an overwhelming importance”*. Also, it was necessary that *“the material of the army be at the height of modern warfare”*, because otherwise the situation was *“disastrous”* and *“the damages much greater than the expenses”* that would have been made *“to eliminate the shortages”*. It was thus *“imperatively necessary”* that *“the armed forces, in a possible conflict, from the beginning of the operations have strong material support”*, so as not to repeat a 1916.

In the documentation of the General Staff speaking of the *“lack of armaments and materials”* it was mentioned that they are so great that they require a very large expenditure, therefore, in order to be covered, in the *Plan for the material procurement for the Armed Forces*, two implementation stages were proposed:

I. The first stage would have required 49,436,000,000 lei, over a period of 5 (five years), and would have included the provision of the forces with *“the material and armament required by the needs of the war”*, in accordance with the ones mentioned in the *Plan*;

II. The second stage, expected the amount of 27,678,000,000 lei, also for 5 years, and it had referred to *“increasing the number of large units”* (Ib., p. 81).

The periodization was necessary, because *“since the war, the sums necessary for this purpose were not allocated, and a very precious time was lost, so that today (1930- A.N.) we find ourselves in a very difficult situation”*. Added to this was the fact that the country’s industry was not yet organized for the manufacture of war material. It was necessary, therefore, to be encouraged, giving it the opportunity to manufacture war material in peacetime; as, other materials had to be procured from abroad, and in wartime it should not be forgotten that this supply was conditioned by the safety of the communication routes, the experience of the first war showing how easily it could be isolated from this point of view.

Despite all the good thoughts and plans made, in 1930, the first year when the *Plan for the material procurement for the Armed Forces* was applied, from the General Budget of the country, in the amount of 69,480,198,723 lei, only 13.8% was made available to the Armed Forces, i.e. 9,092,700,000 lei, of which 1 billion for the payment of materials from the country and only ½ billion lei for the payment of annuities abroad. To these amounts, the Armed Forces had added 1 billion lei, from its normal budget, which meant a total of 2 million and a half lei, compared to approximately 10 billion lei as it should have been, so that, if things went at that rate, the *Plan* was expected to be achieved in 25 years.

Table 3: General budget of the various states, of which the armed forces budget (Ib., p. 102)*

	Hungary	Poland	Czecho-Slovakia	Bulgaria	France	Yugoslavia	Italy	Romania	Remarks
General Budget	42,8	55,3	46,8	8,3	321,1	41,5	157,8	70	*) note
Army Budget	12,6	15,6	13,1	2,2	83,9	10,5	39,9	9,06	
The proport. between G.B. and A.B., %.	30%	30%	30%	27,54%	26%	25,27%	25,27%	13%	

*) Russia is not included in the table, because with a population of 154,000,000 inhabitants – the general budget being very high, a comparison with the military budget does not show a real picture of the effort made to maintain it.

Making a simple calculation like this, it meant that only in 1955 the Romanian Armed Forces would have carried out its plan of organization and modernization, or the neighbours from the East, as it is known, did not give us the necessary respite (!),

which makes us better understand now, in a historical perspective, the phenomena that generated the territorial seizures of the Second World War.

The evaluations of the state of the Romanian Armed Forces were not only made by the specialists of our country, but also by those from abroad. They came both from Romania’s enemies and from the Allies, which were all the more serious, *“because they were beginning to no longer trust us”* (Ib., p. 82). Such a message emerged from a briefing received from Yugoslavia, in which it was specified that *“the majority of the Yugoslav staff officers declare that the Romanian military has made almost no progress and has lagged far behind in terms of the provision of war material”*; while, in comparison, the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak armed forces made *“remarkable progress in all respects, so that they could say they have <truly modern military>”*; therefore, Romania was warned that by ignoring its military *“it does not respect the obligations of the alliance treaties”* (Ib., p. 92).

However, as far as the USSR assessments on the Romanian Armed Forces were concerned, they were even more worrying, numerous publications reflecting the precarious state of our military. We recall the *“Krasnaia Armia”* (*Red Army*, dated March 24, 1930), which wrote: *“The military industry in Romania is much weaker than in Poland. The equipment of the Romanian Armed Forces relies on the reserve of armaments and materials acquired following the World War. From the point of view of quantity and especially quality, there are many shortcomings, namely: they have 3 (three) models of weapons: Russian, Austrian and French; The cannons are old, worn out and almost impossible to replace without other supplies from abroad; Artillery material is even more varied than that of infantry”* (Ib., p. 137).

The reviews from *“Krasnaya Zvezda”* (*Red Star*, from 30.V.1930) were no less harsh (Ib., pp. 90-91). Through the article *The character of the future war*, it was highlighted that *“compared to the other neighbours”*, the Romanian divisions are *“the weakest”*, in terms of their combative force (Ib., p. 137).

Similar assessments were also made in other Soviet writings. For example, the Soviet work: *Foreign Armies and Fleets*, officially published in Moscow, under the auspices of the Soviet Army Printing Office, specified about the Romanian Army: *“Compared to the other armies of our neighbours to the West, the Romanian Army has the weakest preparation for war, and the combat its capacity is reduced”* (Ib., f. 90). Among the causes of this situation, the authors had stated: *“The material condition of the Romanian soldier is miserable: poorly fed, in the barracks he sleeps on bare boards, desertions (are) very frequent, discipline leaves much to be desired. Although the Romanian High Command recently pays special attention to raising*

the army combat capacity and organizing it on a more modern basis, however, the current shortcomings of the army cannot be corrected due to the following causes:

- Lack of a soul connection between the officers and the troop;
- The officers have a bad material situation, they are often moved and, in addition, the good ones are not encouraged and rewarded at all” (Ib., p. 92).

Referring to the “mobilization stock”, the same paper reinforced the claims in *Krasnaia Armia*, on 24 March 1930 (Ib., c. 91).

Regarding the Romanian aviation, the Soviet opinion was that “it does not represent a combat weapon because it has old material, few and primitively arranged airfields”; and concluded that “in a possible war it does not even matter”, and that all these shortcomings “put the Romanian armed forces on the lowest step of war preparation”.

Regarding the Soviet assessments, the Romanian specialists said that they were “quite precise”, which indicates that they were well informed.

Table 4: Annual expenditure for a soldier, from the budget of the armed forces of different states (1930) (Ib., p. 103)

The State	Russia	Germany	Hungary	France	Yugoslavia	Italy	Poland	Czecho-Slovakia	Bulgaria	Romania
Military budget (billions - lei)	174,000	29, 241	12,682	83,984	10,500	39,946	15,655	13,110	2,286	9,090
Personnel at peace (of people)	800,000	135,000	60,000	577,882	90,000	400,000	210,000	127,012	33,000	240,000
Expenses for a soldier per year, in “lei”	217,500	216,593	211,366	145,500	116,666	99,866	74,550	71,178	69,272	38,200

Given the precarious situation of the general state of the Romanian Armed Forces and following the news provided by the Military Commission within the PCD from Geneva, at the Romanian General Staff, a Supreme Council was held 19 December 1930, under the presidency of King Carol II. Following the debates, it was concluded that changes had to be made to the “armed forces procurement plan”; “analyses and studies” undertaken on the “armament of the Romanian armed forces compared to other countries”, from which conclusions and future solutions were derived, both for the conference and for the country; a greater care for the military budget (Ib., f. 91).

After the establishment of the “organic framework of the armed forces”, during of the Disarmament Conference, the Romanian representatives contacted the representatives of the Little Entente, France and Poland, deciding that their general staffs should prepare for the Secretariat of the League of Nations the answers drawn up on an identical basis, regarding the situation of armaments, based on a common principle, that of “ensuring the most complete military security conditions” (Matei, p. 87). Apart from that, Teodorini has said that, during the mentioned period, he had a close connection and consultation with the partners from the Little Entente and Poland, managing, under the umbrella of France, to have better support within the Disarmament Conference. Despite all the efforts, in the period of the following years, the results were not different. It was proved by a vast documentation made by Section IV of the Romanian General Staff, later included in *Study no. 2196/1934*, which was sent to the Superior Council of National Defence, through the *Information Note* of 20 June 1934.

The respective study, in accordance with the mobilization plan, reflected the armament required for the equipment of the Romanian Armed Forces, in order to meet the appropriate defence capacity. As will be seen from the tables below, compared to what was needed, this armament was missing “almost entirely” (Collection 948, Microfilms, roll P1.II.1.2000, f. 467).

I. A. Artillery fire power (Ib., f. 469).

Current number	Weapon name	Necessary	Existing	Surplus	Deficit	Remarks
	Field gun – 75 mm	1852	-	-	1852	-
	Field howitzer – 100	1070	-	-	1070	-
	Mountain cannon – 75 mm	510	-	-	510	-
	Howitzer of mountain – 100 mm	54	20	-	34	-
	Long cannon – 105 mm	831	-	-	831	-
	Howitzer hard – 150 mm	631	-	-	631	-
	High power cannon – 150 mm	432	-	-	432	-
	High power howitzer – 220 mm	144	-	-	144	-
	High Power Cannon on Rail – 240 mm	24	-	-	24	-
	Trench mortar – 150/170 mm	96	-	-	96	-
	Trench mortar – 200/240 mm	48	-	-	48	-
	Guns (a.c.a.) – 75 mm	948	-	-	948	-

I. B. Portable automatic weaponry and infantry and cavalry accompanying weapons (lb., f. 470)

Current number	TYPE OF WEAPON	CALIBRE	NUMBER OF PIECES				Re-remarks
			Necessary	Existing	Surplus	Deficit	
1.	Rifle and carbine	7.92	51,4951	-	-	51,4951	-
2.	Semi-automatic rifle and carbine	7.92	100,678	-	-	100,678	-
3.	Rifle Machine gun	7.92	19,566	-	-	19,566	-
4.	Machine gun	7.92	9,270	-	-	9,270	-
5.	Machine gun cannon "Oerlikon"	20	926	-	-	926	-
6.	Heavy machine guns	13.2	882	-	-	882	-
7.	Cannon of accompanying	75	810	-	-	810	-
8.	Bayonets	Pt. 7.92	61,5629	-	-	615,629	-
9.	"Trablons"	Pt. 7.92	4,0146	-	-	40,146	-
10.	Automatic pistol "Steyer"	9	100,843	<u>15,800</u> 14,600	-	85,043	No. - are functional
11.	Daggers	-	377,363	<u>130,486</u> 103,514	-	246,877	<i>Idem</i>
12.	Swords	-	48,875	<u>97,949</u> 37,399	49,074	-	From surplus to repair 11,476
13.	Rifle and carbine	Dif.	545,441	<u>958,000</u> 770,000	412,559	-	For artillery - Weapons restoration service
14.	Pistols	Dif.	39,364	<u>49,700</u> 45,900	10,336	-	<i>Idem</i>
15.	Bayonets	Dif.	407,501	<u>799,943</u> 634,029	392,442	-	<i>Idem</i>

I. C. Ammunition (lb., f. 471)

Current number	TYPE OF AMMUNITION	CALIBER (mm)	Quantities				Remarks
			Necessary	Existing	Surplus	Deficit	
1.	Cartridges – old rifles and carbines	7.92	262,107,500	-	-	262,107,500	-
2.	Semi-Automatic carbine cartridges	7.92	45,707,000	-	-	45,707,000	-
3.	Cartridges – Rifles machines guns	7.92	97,830,000	-	-	97,830,000	-
4.	Cartridges – Machine gun	7.92	208,360,000	-	-	208,360,000	-
5.	Cartridge – Machine gun cannon "Oerlikon"	20	27,780,000	-	-	27,780,000	-
6.	Pistol cartridges – "Steyer"	9	4,033,720	302,027	-	3,730,693	-
7.	Projectiles – machine gun cannon	75	573,600	-	-	573,600	-
8.	Projectiles – accompany mortar	75	729,000	-	-	729,000	-
9.	Cartridges – old rifles and carbines	-	109,088,200	298,023,638	189,135,438		-
10.	Cartridges – different pistols	-	1,574,560	2,371,996	797,436		-
11.	Cartridges – heavy machine guns	13.2	17,640,000	-	-	17,640,000	-
12.	Different grenades	-	3,102,000	Offensive. 76,7,504; Def. 1,117,161; V.B. 58,703			

Note: "Artillery ammunition is completely deficient, the material is non-existent; The old ammunition could be fired with the new material if it is stipulated in the manufacturing conditions".

Table 5: Existing armaments and ammunitions, which have the same calibre as those in the mentioned Study but do not have the same technical and tactical properties (weight, projectile, speed, impact etc.) (Ib., f. 472)

Current number	NAME	ARTILLERY FIRE POWER	AMMUNITION	Remarks
1.	Field gun, 75 mm	898	2,654,708	-
2.	Field howitzer, 100 mm	220	239,314	-
3.	Mountain cannon, 75 mm	79	166,887	-
4.	Mountain howitzer, 100 mm	20	-	-
5.	Long cannon, of 105 mm	21	89,669	-
6.	Heavy howitzer, of 150 mm	63	155,107	-
7.	Big cannon for 150 mm	57	51,791	-
8.	Guns (a.c.a.) - 75 mm	12	22,192	-
9.	Accompany mortar - 75 mm	110	74,819	-

Note: "These materials cannot replace their counterparts in the General Staff Study, as they do not have the same technical and tactical properties. Only the ammunition can be used, provided that in the specifications of the new materials ordered this clause should be included".

Table 6: Existing armament and ammunition that would no longer have any use, after the equipment provided for in the General Staff Study (Ib., f. 473)

Current number	WEAPON NAME	ARTILLERY FIRE POWER	AMMUNITION	Remarks
1.	Bayonets	39,442	-	-
2.	Swords	49,074	-	-
3.	Rifles and carbines	412,559	189,135,438	-
4.	Rifles machine guns	13,306	28,337,994	-
5.	Machine guns	13,557	118,586,040	-
6.	Revolvers	10,336	797,436	-
7.	Mortars of 58 mm	209	67,839	-
8.	Mortars of 90 mm	149	65,347	-
9.	Cannon, 37 mm	149	156,724	-
10.	Cannon, 53 mm	194	142,092	-
11.	Field gun 76 mm	460	1,007,045	-
12.	Mountain cannon 76 mm	141	290,090	-
13.	Mountain cannon 76.5 mm	36	178,928	-
14.	Field gun, 77 mm	91	157,196	-
15.	Light howitzer, 105 mm	185	45,839	-
16.	Light howitzer, 114.3 mm	85	50,498	-
17.	Light howitzer, 121.9 mm	115	91,290	-
18.	Long cannon, 104 mm	13	53,364	-

Current number	WEAPON NAME	ARTILLERY FIRE POWER	AMMUNITION	Remarks
19.	Long cannon, 106.7 mm	31	33,404	-
20.	Long cannon, 102 mm	79	121,644	-
21.	Heavy howitzer, 152.4 mm	27	57,678	-
22.	Heavy howitzer, 155 mm	27	61,556	-
23.	Heavy howitzer, 210 mm	16	46,450	-
24.	Cannon (a.c.a.) 57 mm	40	91	-
25.	Cannon (a.c.a.) 76.5 mm	36	4,503	-

It should be noted that the materials listed in the above table were "quite numerous" and that required "a rather long time" for replacement. Therefore, in the Study of the General Staff it was stipulated: "All this time we will have to use the ammunition, so as not to have to destroy or throw it away", and recommended:

"1.) Completing the gaps in the current mobilization plan with the new calibres and models;

2.) The introduction into the service of the army of weapons that do not currently exist (semi-automatic weapon, machine gun etc.);

3.) Replacement of old materials, which no longer correspond to the requirements of the battlefield" (Ib., f. 468-469).

Regarding the state of Romanian aeronautics, in another situation signed by General Ion Antonescu and submitted to the Supreme Council of Defence of the Country, 30 June 1934, it was specified that, after the consultation with Prince Nicolae, the following conclusion was reached:

– "The current organization of our Aeronautics does not correspond either to the real needs of the armed forces, since attention was paid only to the Covering Aviation, nor to the need of the aviation as a service, par excellence of great mobility and availability, since the organization is cumbersome, lacking in flexibility and unadaptable to the needs of the armed forces;

– Its organization is macrocephalic, it has too many commands;

– The units are too numerous compared to the existing material, so that some of them are equipped, as far as the flying echelon is concerned, with incomplete material, and the rolling echelon is non-existent;

– The current infrastructure does not correspond either to the needs of storage and conservation of materials, nor to the requirements of tomorrow's war, which requires a certain grouping for the best possible defence;

– The production capacity of the indigenous Aeronautics industries must be specialized, in order to satisfy a need of a goal-oriented production and a well-established conception of equipment etc." (Ib., f. 474-475).

As a conclusion of the causes that had generated such a state, it was inserted that *“with us there is nothing clarified and decided”*, this fact being perpetuated, *“due to the lack or non-compliance to a basic plan”* (Ib., f. 475); and the units existed *“either on paper”*, or they were *“units of weak fighting capacity or incapable of a sustained effort”*.

CONCLUSIONS

During the analysed period, in order to try to remedy the deficit situation in the Armed Forces, the country's authorities took some legislative measures, including the *“Law on the Organization of the Nation and the Territory for Time of War”* promulgated on 23 April 1933, which stated that *“the organization of the nation and the territory has as its purpose the valuing of all the forces and resources of the country to ensure the national defence”*²³. The act basically stipulates obligations for the conscious engagement of the entire people in the effort to strengthen the national defence, the development of the own defence industry, of the agriculture and communications. In the same context, it was specified that *“all the inhabitants of the country, subject to military obligations, are part of the armed forces”*, and those who do not have such duties *“may be obliged in time of war to render a service in the interest of national defence”*. We can also recall the Law no. 83/8 May 1934, for the *“pre-military training”* of the youth, which stipulated the mandatory pre-military training for all young people between 18-20 years of age. The body created for the training of youth in the field of defence of the country was the *“Oficiul de educație a tineretului român/Office of Education of the Romanian Youth”*, the youth organizations *“Cercetașii României /Scouts of Romania”*, and later *“Straja țării/Country Guard”* (created in 1937).

Regarding the development of a war industry and the training of specialists in the field, with all the concerns, in the situation of the world crisis and the lack of funds, only from the middle of the fourth decade will improvements be felt in this regard. Without abandoning orders for combat equipment from abroad, some measures were also taken to develop a local industry, which would provide, at least in part, the necessary armaments and ammunition that the armed forces needed. Among such measures were: the launch of the loan to equip the country (5 November 1934), the introduction of the *“aviation stamp”*, the establishment of the National Defence Fund (13 November 1934), the promulgation of encouraging laws for the armaments and ammunition industry, the allocation of more important

budget funds for the needs of the armed forces, the conclusion of new conventions, especially with foreign companies producing combat equipment.

It was only in the conditions of the increasing danger of revenge and revisionism, that the Romanian state registered the achievement of a solid defence system as a major concern, creating the Ministry of the Armed Forces procurement, on 1 November 1938.

*

In conclusion, the efforts of the international community made in the issue of disarmament in the year when the *Draft Convention on the reduction and limitation of armaments* was finalized, was expressed by Nicolae Titulescu in October 1930, at the end of the 11th session of the General Assembly of the League of Nations, whose president he was. In summary, he highlighted: *“Almost all the states, members of the League of Nations, have expressed their agreement to art. 36 of the Hague Court Statute [...]. Today, mandatory arbitration is radiating all over the world and yet, let us be honest, the fact seems normal to you. But there is something more much: you have here solemnly signed a convention in which solidarity appears bright. The states came here to undertake, even if the war does not threaten them, to impose taxes to come to the aid of the members of the international community, victims of some aggression”* (Titulescu, 1967-2, pp. 341-343).

The year that followed, 1931, represented for the military delegations from the League of Nations – the year of preparing all the materials that each delegation needed to support its interests during the Disarmament Conference, which would begin on 2 February 1932.

Following the same path, the Romanian Government was able to transmit its response to the League of Nations on 15 September 1931, through the technical instructions sent, accompanied by a memorandum, called *Summary Observations*, through which Romania insisted on its specific situation and, implicitly, on the need for some military forces that corresponded to the requirements of ensuring its security (Matei, p. 87). In the document, three considerations were made, which were to be advanced to the Disarmament Commission, as proposals. Of these, the one concerning the *“anti-Soviet reservation”* should be noted, by which it was desired to introduce a special clause into the text of the Disarmament Convention, which would provide for the entry into force of the convention for the signatory states, members of the League of Nations and neighbours of non-member states, only when the latter states will have signed and ratified the convention, under the same conditions as the member states of the Geneva forum (Ib., p. 87).

As far as the Romanian party was concerned, C.Teodorini testified that the secret documents provided by all the sections of the General Staff, on the segment that interests us and to which we have already referred, were systematized

²³ *Evoluția sistemului național de apărare și a politicii militare a României în perioada interbelică/The evolution of the national defence system and the military policy of Romania in the interwar period* (hereinafter: *Evolution of the system...*), <http://www.armyacademy.ro/e-learning/working/capitol7.html#sistemul/capitol7.html#sistemul>.

by the II Information Section in a succinct material, *“as close to the truth as possible”*, necessary to *“combat the tendentious and inaccurate statements of the opposing delegations”* (AMMN, mss. no. 306, p. 31). In order to reach a consensus in this thorny issue of disarmament, the military committees had taken as the basis of the discussions the *Draft Convention*, concluded by the PCD, and as data on the development and war potentials had been based on the *“so-called Military Yearbook of the League of Nations, which contained the data provided annually by each member state”*, but which, although each state provided them officially, under the signature of the heads of government or their plenipotentiaries at the League, *“very often did not correspond to reality, which gave rise to endless discussions within the committees”*.

For the same reasons, in order to hide the true situation of armament of the states, the military delegations had to take into account, as the basis of the discussions in the military committees, the indications of their political factors, which were for the *“camouflage”* of the real armaments, more precisely, *“the <misleading>, with the aim, obviously, that when it came to fixing the quantitatively (calibres, horsepower etc.), each nation would benefit from the much-desired plus, compared to its dangerous neighbours”*. Starting from this aspect, Major Teodorini testified that, otherwise, all the military delegates were of the opinion that it would have been easy for them to reach a consensus on the issue of disarmament, if the political factor had not intervened, counteracting the technical solution. And yet, in all this there was a logical explanation. Even if the representatives of each nation were aware of the enormous burden that was pressing on all the citizens of their country, as a result of the arms race, and even if they sincerely wanted to reduce the expenditures for armaments and direct them to the other compartments of the state’s needs (social, economic, education etc.), the desire to ensure the security of their country, however, made them affirm their agreement for disarmament, *“but with only one prevailing condition: everyone should remain with a better machine gun, with a superior cannon, with an airplane and tank stronger than the neighbour”* (Ib., p. 29).

Seen from this aspect, *La Conference du Disarmement* became rather *La Conference des armements*, as the disarmament *“actors”* themselves ironically called it. And all this happened during the period when the world economic crisis was in a vertiginous ascent, and with it all the procession of negative consequences, both social and political. That is why, in the plenary session of the same Geneva forum, regarding future expectations, Titulescu expressed his desire, to all the delegations of the participating states, to show a unity of will, as *“he had felt it on all occasions”*, so that *“through a joint action to stop the economic crisis”* that was haunting the world, and for this he professed his confidence, relying on the *“collective soul”*

that he felt, uniting *“all races, all peoples”*, making them understand, despite that, all the differences, all them formed *“an indivisible block”*.

*“I have never understood better than from this presidential chair, the Romanian diplomat finally expressed himself, that the League of Nations relies less on the Pact than on the human heart, I have never understood better that bringing amendments to the Pact, that extracting from it all that can lead to hatred; that strengthening everything that can bring the peoples closer together; that by letting it tell us freely what it wants; that by transforming its demands into commandments of international life, the interests of the League of Nations are best served”*²⁴.

Relying on this unity, during the 12th Assembly of the League of Nations, also as President, Nicolae Titulescu advanced the idea of a one-year armistice to stop armaments, all the delegates of the Geneva forum being invited on 1 November 1931 to respond to this challenge. On that date the call was crowned with success, the Secretariat of the League of Nations announcing the taking into effect of the armistice for a year (Matei, p. 88)²⁵.

The international community was equally concerned with both disarmament and overcoming the crisis, so that, on 25 July 1931, in Prague, the Council of Politicians and Scientists met, and decided to organize an international conference to discuss the issue of disarmament. The result was that, on 26 and 27 November 1931, not the Conference took place, but the International Disarmament Congress in Paris. Its resolution summarized the basic conclusion: *“disarmament is vital for the organization of peace and the establishment of confidence on which economic prosperity depends”* (Ib., p. 81).

In Geneva, the General Commission of the DC resumed its work on 2 February 1933, and the first debates were devoted to the French disarmament plan. On that occasion, the Soviet representative, M. Litvinov, appreciated the importance of this orientation on security, but previously (January) he had made proposals *“on precise criteria for defining aggression”*, which took the form of a statement entitled *Definition of the aggressor*.

The new concept prevailed over the other opinions, and following the debates it would be an integral part of the text of the future disarmament convention (Ib., p. 180).

²⁴ *“Lucrările Adunării Societății Națiunilor pe anul 1930/Proceedings of the Assembly of the League of Nations for the year 1930”*, 4 October, *Special Supplement*, no. 97. Also published in: *Universul* of 6 October 1930. *“The proceedings of the 11th session of the Assembly of the League of Nations, chaired by Nicolae Titulescu, ended with effective resolutions and decisions for the good development of international relations [...], it should be noted the measures taken by the Assembly regarding the unanimous accession of the state member of League of Nations to the principle of binding arbitration stipulated in the statute of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, as well as the decisions adopted with the aim of improving the world economic situation, decisions which foresee the ignorance of the objective and legal character of the crises of overproduction in capitalism”*.

²⁵ Later it will be extended by four months.

Simultaneously with the events taking place at the Disarmament Conference, its atmosphere was favourable for Romania, in the idea of taking steps to normalize diplomatic relations with the USSR, without constituting an obstacle in the way of the allies. This was due to the fact that “*the Romanian and Soviet points of view were getting closer and closer*” (AMAE, collection 71/1920-1944 URSS, vol. 82, p. 33), as Nicolae Titulescu expressed himself, on 25 May 1933. The respective synonymy of opinions stemmed from the fact that the interest of both states required to remove from the report “*Politis*” the formulation according to which “*acceptance of arbitration could constitute a way of designating the aggressor*”, but also the acceptance of the definition of “*territory*”, which meant “*the territory over which a state exercises its authority*” (ib., pp. 79-84).

And because the Geneva debates were moved to London, in June 1933, for the Economic Conference, the London atmosphere proved to be a favourable one for the materialization of the expressed common points of view, Romanian-Soviets. Thus, on the initiative of M. Litvinov, between 3 and 5 June 1933, at the headquarters of the Soviet Embassy in London, three *Conventions defining aggression* were concluded: the first, was signed by the representatives of the governments from Romania, Afghanistan, Estonia, Latvia, Persia, Poland, Turkey and the USSR, in the form of a regional non-aggression pact; the second, was signed on 4 July 1933, by the USSR, Turkey and the states of the Little Entente, and the third, initiated on 5 July 1933, between the USSR and Lithuania.

In general, the importance of these conventions resided in the fact that they had no time limit and remained open to accession by other states. Instead, for Romania, the Convention on the Definition of Aggression played a major role in the subsequent negotiations for the normalization of diplomatic relations with the USSR, which was accomplished on 9 June 1934.

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ROMANIAN-TURKISH NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE SIGNING OF MILITARY CONVENTIONS – NEW APPROACHES IN VIEW OF THE PROXIMITY TO THE BLACK SEA –¹

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The military collaboration between Romania and Turkey became imperative, especially after 1933, when the general revisionist trend became apparent. In broad terms, the course of the discussions in that regard was intricate, beginning with talks for a bilateral military arrangement, followed by joint negotiations with other partners in the Balkan Pact, during which bilateral discussions between Romanian and Turkish military planners continued, and concluding with bilateral support commitments after Yugoslavia's defection and the outbreak of war in September 1939.

Both parties had their own objective defence needs, but also shared goals such as discouraging revisionist tendencies in the Balkan region or beyond.

Keywords: Romanian-Turkish negotiations; Straits Convention; military collaboration; military conventions; Balkan Pact;

INTRODUCTION

The need for Romania to articulate consolidated political-military alliances in the Balkan region near the Black Sea became imperative after 1933, when the general revisionist trend became apparent.

Simultaneously, the victorious powers in the recent war were transitioning to a policy of concessions towards the former defeated powers. Although there were legal “loopholes” in the League of Nations Covenant that allowed for “legal” revisions of treaties in well-established domains and methods, revisionist states sought to evade them and implement a *policy of fait accompli*. Thus, the League of Nations found itself in the position of formally condemning acts of aggression and adopting formal sanctions for which it did not possess powerful instruments.

Against this backdrop – and in such a context – the exception emerges in the form of the appeal made at the beginning of 1936 by the Turkish state, requesting the League of Nations to revise the Straits Convention in the Treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923) “by legal means” (in the sense that this “course of action” was provided for in the Covenant of the League of Nations). The League’s leadership responded positively, but to ensure the success of its diplomacy, Ankara aimed to convince partner countries of the justness of its request before the start of the debates.

Surprisingly, the diplomacy in Bucharest displayed reluctance toward the appeal of its ally (there was a bilateral treaty between the two states from 1933). Moreover, Turkey and the Kingdom of Romania were signatories of the Balkan Pact of 9 February 1934.

Nicolae Titulescu’s reservation did not pertain to Turkey’s request itself – which he considered justified -, but rather to the danger that Romania perceived, believing that it would open a “Pandora’s box”; other states dissatisfied with treaties could request similar revision procedures on other issues, including territorial ones².

Understanding the legitimacy of his ally’s appeal, Titulescu stated: “Anything that affects Turkey’s security affects Romania’s security, and anything that concerns

¹ This paper includes documents also used for: Alexandru Oșca, *Managementul crizelor regionale. Modelul balcanic interbelic*, AISM, București, 2003.

² Romania was concerned about the modification of the Straits’ regime because there was a risk that the new regulations would affect its security and defense interests; the Soviets could turn the Black Sea into a “Russian lake” and the allies had no way to help the Romanians.

*the Black Sea is of the utmost interest to my country, given that our only access to the open sea is through the Black Sea and the Straits. I would say that the Straits are Turkey's very heart. But they are at the same time Romania's lungs. When a region is, by its geographical situation, the heart of one nation and the lungs of another, the most elementary wisdom dictates that these two nations should unite and form a whole. Romania and Turkey understood this*³.

Ultimately, the Montreux Conference was organized, allowing for the reinstatement of Turkey's sovereignty over the Straits and their remilitarization.

This is the event I refer to in my communication to demonstrate that it unlocked the Romanian-Turkish military negotiations within the framework of the Balkan Pact.

ROMANIAN-TURKISH MILITARY NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN THE BALKAN PACT

Let us review some key points from the Romanian-Turkish discussions on military cooperation. The collaboration became necessary, especially after 1933. In broad terms, the course of the discussions was intricate, beginning with talks for a bilateral military arrangement, followed by joint negotiations with other partners in the Balkan Pact (during which bilateral discussions between Romanian and Turkish military planners continued), and concluding with bilateral support commitments after Yugoslavia's defection and the outbreak of war in September 1939.

Both parties had their own objective defense needs, but also shared goals such as discouraging revisionist tendencies in the Balkan region or beyond.

As it is often the case in military negotiations, each side started from its own needs, sometimes disregarding the needs of the other. The young Turkish Republic felt its European borders exposed, especially since it did not exercise sovereignty over the Straits – which were an obstacle to manoeuvring large units from Anatolia in case support was needed for European Turkey. That was the reason why Turkish planners insisted that the rejection of a possible aggression from the Balkan space against them should be primarily resolved through the contribution of Balkan allies, especially the Romanian Armed Forces. The Turks were convinced that Romania had the most consolidated position obtained through peace treaties.

In contrast, Romania felt threatened at its expanded borders, where three of the most ardent promoters of revisionism were located, which naturally pertained to Romanian territories: to the East – the USSR, to the West – Hungary, and to the South – Bulgaria.

³ "Declaration of Nicolae Titulescu regarding the navigation regime through the Black Sea Straits (Montreux, 22 June 1936)", in Vianu, Bădescu, 1976, p. 242.

After the war, the Republic of Turkey, with a population of 14 million people and a vast territory, had limited armed forces but many security needs. However, Romanian military planners had information that reinforced their belief that, after a decade, Turkey had regained its balance. Therefore, they hoped that Turkish staff officers would assume the main role in thwarting a hypothetical Bulgarian aggression against a Balkan ally. That way, the bulk of Romanian forces could be distributed to other dangerous areas.

Romanian-Turkish military relations took shape more precisely in early 1935 and were solidified through the adoption of two military conventions within the Balkan Pact (the Three: Romania, Turkey, and Yugoslavia, and the Four: Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece). After signing the conventions, efforts were concentrated on concrete multisectoral collaboration among the allies, which was dense, ambitious, but very short-lived and interrupted/halted by the outbreak of war in September 1939.

For the sake of clarity in this communication, I will separate, as much as possible, the Romanian-Turkish bilateral military discussions from those within the conventions into three or four sections.

In the Romanian-Turkish military negotiations for adopting a convention, it was evident who the common enemy could be – Bulgaria. However, Turkish military strategists expressed reservations about the value of the forces to be brought to the European part of Turkey to counter a hypothetical Bulgarian aggression. In practice, the Turkish military argued that the corridor of the Straits divided the territory of the state into a European part and an Asian part. On both sides of the Straits, a demilitarized zone was established as imposed by the Lausanne Convention (Article 6), which was effectively removed from Turkey's sovereignty (Cojocar, 2008)⁴.

⁴ Ionuț Cojocar, *De la războiul greco-turc la conferințele de la Lausanne și Montreux/From the Greek-Turkish war to the Lausanne and Montreux conferences*, in the *Analele Universității Spiru Haret, Seria Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene*, Year II, no. 2, 2008, Note 17. The Lausanne Convention (24 July 1923) established:

1. Full freedom of navigation for all merchant and warships, under any flag, with any cargo, in time of peace; conditions remained the same in wartime if Turkey remained neutral.
2. In time of war, if Turkey was a belligerent, it had no right to stop the passage of the ships of the states through the Straits, it was not allowed to send warships into the Black Sea that exceeded, in terms of capacity, the fleet of the most powerful neutral littoral countries.
3. Warships could pass freely through the Straits, both by day and by night, regardless of flag, with the restriction that the fleet introduced by a foreign country in the Black Sea should not exceed the fleet of the most powerful littoral state and reach a maximum of 30,000 tons.
4. Submarines crossed the Straits floating on the surface.
5. Warships did not have the right to station in the Straits.
6. It was decided to demilitarize the Straits and to set up the International Commission of the Straits – made up of representatives of France, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia and Soviet Russia – which supervised the fulfillment of the provisions of the Convention. This commission was under the control of the League of Nations.

What conclusions can we draw from the military arrangements of the pact?

1. An asymmetry in reciprocal support obligations was created among the allies. Romania accepted the Russian clause (where Turkey informed its partners that it would remain neutral in a conflict involving the Soviets⁵) and the Greek reservation regarding Italy.
2. For Romania, the Pact “... results from the need to ensure the security of the eastern front...”. As we can see, it had no security gain by assuming obligations within the new alliance, neither on the eastern border (it could not rely on Turkish intervention!), nor on the southern border where, technically, the Convention of Defensive Alliance was in force with Yugoslavia (and the Military Convention of 1922).
3. Romania did not invoke any clause, committing without reservations to come to the aid of an aggressed ally from within the Balkan space, supported by an extra-Balkan power (especially Italy was targeted).

On 17 October 1933, a Treaty of Friendship, Conciliation, Non-aggression and Arbitration was concluded between Romania and Turkey. A secret convention in general terms was also signed (on 5 June 1934, ratified on 30 October 1934). Meanwhile, on 9 February 1934, the Balkan Pact was signed in which Turkey and Romania were signatories. As a result, Section 3 Operations Bureau of the Romanian General Staff specified that the document must be supplemented as soon as possible with a convention within the Pact (AMR, 948 *Section 3* collection, file no. 1449, pp 7-52).

For this purpose, the Romanian General Staff sent a delegation made up of Colonel Gheorghe Rozin and Major Lupescu to Ankara (Idem, Report no. 141 on 13 May 1935) to negotiate the terms of the military convention. The negotiations were extremely difficult, the Romanian officers were surprised by the stubbornness of their Turkish colleagues: the Turkish officers had advanced solutions that, if applied, would have made the Romanian plans inoperable⁶. For the time being, the claims of the parties had been taken into account while waiting for the necessary concessions.

⁵ Mihai Retegan, *În balanța forțelor*, București, Editura Semne, 1997, p. 137. The Soviet ambassador in Ankara asked for clarification about the nature of the Pact. As a result, the Turkish government made a special reservation to the Treaty: “On behalf of the government of the Republic of Turkey, I have the honor to declare that under no circumstances will Turkey admit to considering itself committed to take part in any acts directed against the USSR”.

⁶ Idem, pp. 88-115, Report on the mission in Turkey, signed by Colonel Gheorghe Rozin, head of Section 3 Operations Bureau.

There were two issues that each of the parties had in mind:

- a. Romania tried to persuade Turkey to concentrate more forces in Thrace to counter a Bulgarian aggression against Romania. Romanian planners proposed that a possible Bulgarian aggression should be countered with the following forces: Turkey with 15-16 infantry divisions and 1-2 cavalry divisions, Romania with 3-4 infantry divisions. Yugoslavia was also expected to participate with 3-4 infantry divisions.
- b. Turkey insisted that if the Bulgarian army were to aggress against it, Romania should decide to concentrate its main forces east of the Danube, in Dobrogea⁷.

Romanian military staff initially did not understand the strategic reasons invoked by their Turkish counterparts regarding the zone of concentration of Romanian forces. Moreover, that request, repeatedly made, raised suspicions. General Gheorghe Angelescu, the Romanian Minister of Defence, cautioned: “...we must be cautious and try, in particular, to understand whether the unyielding claims of the Turkish General Staff regarding the zone of concentration of our troops are not related to suggestions they may receive from another power by concentrating our forces where it is insistently requested”⁸. The Romanian Minister referred to the USSR, given the close relations between Turkey and this power.

The delays continued until the summer of 1936 when, suddenly, the Turkish General Staff abandoned the conditionality of signing military conventions on the Romanian commitment to concentrate the majority of its troops in Dobrogea. It was evident that a new factor had intervened, changing the previous approach. That event was undoubtedly the Montreux Conference (Ib.), which recognized Turkey’s sovereign rights over the Straits and eliminated the demilitarized zone around them.

The path to the adoption of the Military Convention accelerated, and at the Chiefs of Staff Conference in Bucharest in November 1936, the Convention documents were adopted.

Bilateral military collaboration between Turkey and Romania was reactivated after Yugoslavia’s defection (Yugoslavia signed a treaty of “eternal friendship” with Bulgaria without the approval or notification of the allies in the Pact) when direct

⁷ Idem, file no. 1488, pp. 139-147, Report of Section 3 Operations Bureau with reference to the history of the Romanian-Turkish dispute on the subject of the military convention.

⁸ Apud: Mihai Retegan, *op.cit.*, p. 144. The author quotes from Collection 948/RSS 3, file no. 1488, p. 30.

contact between Turkish and Romanian military officials were resumed based on the secret Convention from 5 June 1934⁹.

Essentially, it provided that if one party became the victim of aggression by a *Balkan state, whether allied or not with an extra-Balkan power*, the other party committed to going to war against the aggressor in the Balkans. Article 2 also allowed for coordinated action against a *non-Balkan aggressor*, meaning the non-attacked ally was obligated to declare war on the aggressor state (AMAE, *Înțelegerea Balcanică/Balkan Pact* collection, vol. 36, pp. 25-26).

In the new context, Romanian leaders hoped they could obtain Turkish cooperation based on a military convention that would contribute to the “*solution of the Romanian external military problem*” (AMR, M.St. M./Great General Staff collection, Section 3, file no. 443, p. 17).

After discussions in Ankara, Colonel Gheorghe Rozin assessed: “*The alliance with the Turks is solid; the government and the General Staff seem determined to have sincere collaboration*” (Ib., file no. 1488, p. 148). That commitment became credible after the Montreux Conference on 20 July 1936¹⁰.

The Romanian General Staff sent a military delegation to Turkey, led by Colonel Gheorghe Rozin, the head of the Operations Section, for further discussions after the Permanent Council session in May 1936 in Belgrade. Upon their return, the officer reported that the Turkish General Staff had postponed finalizing the discussions until after the Montreux Conference in June-July 1936. A protocol was signed, resolving both the Romanian and Turkish reservations made earlier (AMR, M.St. M., Section 3, file no. 1608, p. 159).

⁹ At the same time, a secret convention was signed between Turkey and Yugoslavia.

¹⁰ The conference was held between 22 June-21 July in Montreux. The participant countries were: Turkey, USSR, Great Britain, France, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Australia and Japan. A Convention was adopted, which essentially established:

- If Turkey took part in the war, commercial ships of neutral states could pass through the Straits, provided they did not collaborate with Turkey's enemy.
- The maximum tonnage of the warships of non-littoral countries was not supposed to exceed 30,000 tons.
- The maximum stationing period of vessels in the Straits should not exceed 21 days.
- If Turkey had been neutral, the warships of the non-belligerent states had the freedom to pass through the Straits; the belligerent countries, under the conditions of a neutral Turkey, could cross the Straits only if they respected the obligations arising from the Covenant of the League of Nations and the special pacts of mutual assistance in which Turkey was a party.
- If Turkey had been belligerent, the passage of military ships belonging to neutral states through the Straits was left to the discretion of the Turkish government. The submarines of the littoral states could enter the Black Sea floating on the surface. Civilian aircraft could fly over the area of the Straits, military ones not having that right.

A set of discussions referred to the number of forces each party could make available to counter an aggression in the Balkans. The other point of contention – the concentration zones – was resolved through concessions made by Romanian military planners at Montreux. They agreed to concentrate a significant number of forces in Dobrogea, but only under the condition that Romania was not engaged on another front and only if *the bulk of Bulgarian forces* were engaged against Turkey.

In the view of Turkish military planners, Bulgaria was the most dangerous enemy for Turkey: “*An Italian action against the Dardanelles can only succeed if Bulgaria is united with it*”. Bulgaria became the most important pillar even in the following scenario: “*So even if Turkey fears Italy, it is still Bulgaria that, by its immediate proximity to the Straits, will determine the decision in Thrace and the region of the Straits. Therefore, the defence of the Straits can only be achieved by keeping the Bulgarians as far away as possible. Not a single kilometre should be ceded to them to the southeast*”¹¹.

It was agreed that the documents would be signed at the Chiefs of Staff Conference in Bucharest in November 1936, which coincided with the first foreign trip of Turkish Marshal Fevzi Pasha.

The Marshal arrived in Constanța on Tuesday, 3 November, on a warship (the cruiser “*Hamidie*”), accompanied by Colonel Ismail Hakki Akoguz, Colonel of Aviation Sefik Çakmak, Lieutenant Colonel of the General Staff Yusuf Adil Egeli, the first secretary of the embassy Faik Zihni (head of department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), and Mehmet Sabri, police commissioner. The old marshal was impressed by the reception given by Romanian authorities in Constanța and Bucharest. Upon his return to Turkey, the marshal was visited by the President of the Republic and Prime Minister Ismet İnönü and gave a two-hour presentation to the Council of Ministers.

Unfortunately, the events in the vicinity of the outbreak of the war negatively influenced the functionality of political and military cooperation within the Pact. Attempts were made from various quarters to dislocate the alliance or diminish its role. Romanian diplomats in the Turkish capital learned of Bulgaria's attempts to dislocate the Balkan Bloc through political manoeuvres. Invited by Turkish officials

¹¹ Ionuț Cojocaru, *De la războiul greco-turc la conferințele de la Lausanne și Montreux, op. cit.*, note 54: According to Turkish General Staff, the most important theatre of operations for the Turks is Thrace and the Straits, because losing them means for the Turks “*throwing*” them into the wasteland of Anatolia and implicitly removing them from the sphere of European interests, which Turkey cares so much about. In the hypothesis of Italy's collaboration with Bulgaria against Turkey, it would create serious problems for Turkey because a Bulgarian action in force in Thrace combined with an Italian action on southern Thrace would be very dangerous for Turkey.

to join the Bloc, Bulgarian officials stated: *“Bulgaria conditions its entry into the bloc on the satisfaction of certain territorial claims at the expense of Greece and especially Romania”* (AMR, M.St.M. collection, file 1608, p. 14).

The direct meeting between İnönü and Kiosseivanov was monitored by Romanian diplomats. They reported the pressure from Kiosseivanov, who asked Turkish leaders to ensure the Bulgarians about the *“satisfaction of territorial claims from the Romanians”* (Ib.). The Turkish-Bulgarian friendship treaty was invoked, by which Turkey made certain commitments, in no case those invoked by the Bulgarians. The Romanian attaché reported to Bucharest a dynamic scene that took place during the İnönü-Kiosseivanov dialogue: *“Kiosseivanov asked: <What will be Turkey’s attitude if Romania were engaged in the West, and the Bulgarian government, forced by public opinion, would enter Dobrogea?>. That time Mr. İnönü answered promptly: <Je marche contre la Bulgarie>. < But if – Kiosseivanov asked again – one of the members of the Balkan Agreement – for example Yugoslavia – does not respect the Pact and remains neutral?> İnönü replies: <Je marche toujours>. <But if Greece is not with you either>, Kiosseivanov insisted”* (Ib.). According to the story of the Romanian military attaché, the President of Turkey would not have hesitated: *“En allie fidel et loyal de la Romania, je marcherai quand meme contre la Bulgarie”*. (Ib.)

Romanian military staff asked Colonel Teodorescu (the Romanian military attaché in Ankara) to find out the official Turkish military position in the new European context. After consultations, the military attaché reported: *“In case Italy attacks Greece and Bulgaria intervenes, we, Turkey, will reach Plovdiv in two days”* (Ib., file 1706, p. 46); *“We have no doubt that the armies of Turkey and Romania will not take long to occupy all of Bulgaria (...) Please note that Turkey relies heavily on us in action against Bulgaria, and it no longer speaks of Yugoslavia, whose intervention against Bulgaria they consider doubtful given Yugoslavia’s current situation”*. The Romanian military attaché concluded that *“Turkey was the only Balkan country on which Romania could confidently rely”* (Ib.).

Strategic cooperation between Turkey and Romania became essential in the period that followed. In a note prepared after the Romanian-Turkish meeting in February 1937 (point 3), it was stated: *“A possible defection of Yugoslavia in a Balkan conflict necessitates a closer approach to Turkey. It is closer to us, and therefore, military cooperation, mutual influence on operations, and free passage through the Straits necessitate us to be able to rely on them from a military perspective”* (Id.,

file no. 1536, p. 4). A few months later (August 1937), the Chief of the Romanian General Staff, General Sichițiu (accompanied by General Iacobici, Colonel Șteflea, and Lieutenant Colonel Cernăianu – a renowned theorist), visited the Turkish armed forces and participated in exercises of Turkish units. Later, in 1939, Romanian military staff was informed by their Turkish counterparts about British and French plans in the Balkans.

General Weygand of France, appointed commander of the Eastern Front, insisted in lengthy conferences with Turkish military officials on their engagement in a different concept from the one desired by the Turkish General Staff, which wanted to maintain involvement only in the event.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

A study conducted by the Romanian General Staff on 11 April 1939 (Id, file no 1703, p. 27), regarding the recent events in Eastern Europe, warned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that after the fall of Czechoslovakia, Romania could no longer rely on the Military Convention between Romania and Yugoslavia from 10 January 1922. New consultations and a new bilateral convention between the two countries were deemed necessary. The study assessed the behaviour of allies in a certain situation and posed questions such as: *“To what extent can we still rely on Yugoslavia within the Balkan Alliance (...) Can we count on cooperation with Turkey against Bulgaria, even when it is threatened by Italy?”* (Id., pp. 28-29).

The Chief of the Romanian General Staff concluded with the following resolution in the study: *“The only sure part is the firm connection with Turkey”* (Ib.)

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THE ROMANIAN-TURKISH CONVENTION (1934) – THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE BALKAN PACT –

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In the context of the conclusion of the Balkan Pact (1934), it was necessary to sign a bilateral secret Romanian-Turkish convention. The convention was based on the strategic-military purpose of Romania, namely the isolation of possible Bulgarian attacks, material conditions, the quality of forces, their concentration, the direction of interventions, but also the solution of the strategic problem of maritime traffic. The discussions on the convention, led by the Romanian delegation with Turkey's, had as main purpose the interpretation of the secret articles, the exchange of information on Bulgaria and the proposals for solving possible problems.

Keywords: Balkan Pact; military strategy; Romania; Turkey; Secret Convention;

INTRODUCTION

The Balkan Pact, a regional alliance, represented a pillar in shaping and consolidating Romania's foreign policy in the first half of the 20th century. After the First World War, the Balkan Peninsula continued to represent an interest on the political-military scene of the great powers. For Romania, the security interests in the Southern European region were increased, a fact caused by the control exercised over the portion of the Black Sea coast and the mouths of the Danube. In the context of maintaining the security of Southeast Europe, on 9 February 1934, the foreign ministers of Greece, Romania, Turkey and Yugoslavia signed the *Balkan Pact* in Athens. As part of the Agreement, a series of conventions were negotiated and signed in order to support the goals pursued by the Balkan Pact. The first conventions concluded separately between the powers were bilateral and aimed at the goal of the alliance, according to the annexed protocol of the Pact, which stipulated that, within six months, negotiations should begin for the materialization of the agreement in the military field.

Under the terms of the military regulations of the Balkan Pact, several conventions were drawn up to support and guide the Balkan Pact on the path of security and the fight against aggressive tendencies presented by the certain powers, in order to maintain peace. The main objective of discussions between the diplomatic bodies of the four allied states was to clarify the military aid and the material support that would be offered to guarantee neutrality in the event that one of the allies felt victim to an aggression. They got materialized on 15 May 1934 through a document which confirmed the position of each party in the case of an unprovoked aggression.

“SECRET CONVENTION” – GUARANTOR OF THE EASTERN BORDER SECURITY

The Romanian Government also paid more attention to the possibility of concluding some military conventions to support them and secure their position (Oșca, Nicolescu, 1994, pp. 56-57). The *“secret convention”*, concluded between Romania and Turkey on 5 June 1934 and ratified in the same year, was necessary in terms of Romanian-Turkish military cooperation with the aim of bringing the Central

and Mediterranean states to a common opinion. For Romania, it represented ensuring the security of the eastern border, given that the relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey would partially solve the problem (Retegan, 1997, p. 138).

In essence, the Convention provided for mutual military aid in the event that one of the component parties became the victim of a military aggression (Ib., p. 139). At the same time, it established the material conditions, the quality of forces, their concentration, the date and direction of interventions, aeronautical and naval collaboration. The convention, signed on 5 June 1934, entered into force, in accordance with Article III, on the day of its signature, being ratified by the ratification protocol signed in Ankara on 30 October (National Military Archives of Romania, Microfilms 948 Collection, Section 3 Operations, file 1449, f. 552-624).

The convention contained three articles, two relating to mutual arguments and the final article with the conditions of ratification. The first article established that if one of the two contracting powers will be the object of aggression from a Balkan state, the other party will also be considered attacked.

The article concerned Bulgaria, as a Balkan state, and Greece was being excluded because it had no common border with Romania, although a Greek-Turkish conflict was possible.

The second article provided for the case of an attack by a non-Balkan state, namely the Soviet Union, against which the foreign minister of Turkey, Tevfik Rustu Aras, said that no military actions would be conducted. The Romanian-Turkish convention represented for Romania a great progress in terms of removing Bulgaria from the case, but with the need to supplement it with a similar Yugoslav-Turkish convention or with a special clause added to the current convention. The Romanian General Staff positively appreciated the conclusion of the convention because it offered a chance to solve the problems of strategic nature that Romania was facing. At the same time, it ensured the passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits.

It was necessary for Turkey to assume the commitments of the secret convention and, in May 1935, it was decided to send the Romania delegation to Ankara, so that the general staffs of Romania and Turkey to discuss and prepare the details of the convention. The delegation consisted of Colonel Gheorghe Rozin, Head of the Operations Section and Major Constantin Lupescu, 2nd Section – The General Staff. They contacted the military attaché in Ankara, Lieutenant Colonel Gheorghe Ion, and decided that the duration of the trip and meeting should be over 5 days and it should be done in a discreet manner, without ceremonies (Ib.). On 3 June,

the Romanian delegation arrived in Ankara with great discretion, where the two delegates had a meeting with Marshal Fevzi, the Head of the Turkish General Staff. The activity lasted until 10 June, taking place in an atmosphere of sincerity and cordiality, with a technical discussion, as Eugen Filotti, the Romanian foreign minister, said in Ankara: a working atmosphere (Ib.).

During the discussion held by the representatives of the Romanian General Staff in Ankara, the issue of possible war situations was raised, taking into account the relations existing at that time between powers. The interest of the Romania-Turkish convention consisted in their joint action on Bulgaria, although it was a secondary enemy, it represented for Romania a form of domination of the freedom of action on the common front. There were three situations in which Bulgaria represented a serious threat: 1) the one in which neither Turkey nor Romania was threatened by another power; 2) the one in which one of the two countries was in another war, on another front, while the second country was neither attacked nor threatened; 3) in the case that both countries were already attacked and involved in another war with another country. A Romanian-Yugoslav concentric action against Bulgaria presented serious difficulties and multiple disadvantages because it required a considerable number of forces, without being able to ensure their superiority.

The working program of the delegations focused on the change of information of Bulgaria, which both sides considered the source of the possible conflict. Also, they discussed the importance of controlling the straits for the two sides, which in the case of development of their fortification process by Turkey would have meant a series of benefits, such as ensuring the free transit through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus of the Turkish fleet for the defence of Romanian communications and increasing, considerably and unconditionally, the forces with which the Turkish armed forces would intervene against Bulgaria (Ib., f. 625-626).

Regarding the discussion between the two parties and the conclusions, both the Turkish General Staff and the Romanian General Staff conceptions on co-operation were presented. The conception of the Turkish General Staff on cooperation was based on the domination of the straits, the ties with Asia and Russia, proposing that each state contribute 10 infantry divisions to be able to remove the Bulgarian armed forces from the cause. The question of the number of forces with which the allies should engage formed the object of discussion. In Romania's perspective, without diminishing the strategic importance of Bulgaria, the comparison between Bulgaria and Hungary from a strategic point of view established that Hungary was a much more dangerous enemy. At the same time, the Hungarian armed forces had a great

power of concentration with great possibilities of manoeuvre, while the Bulgarian armed forces were slowly and had little possibilities of manoeuvre. Hungary had a modern armament and at the same time it could receive armament from Austria, while Bulgaria was isolated from its allies (Ib.). As a result, the Romanian delegation requested that the Turkish forces should be concentrated to combat a Bulgarian aggression, so that the Romanian and Yugoslav armed forces could ensure freedom of action in the West. Turkey's point of view was not close to that of Romania, considering the action of the Romanian armed forces on the front east of the Danube as vital (Oșca, 2003, pp. 285-286).

The Romanian delegation tried to mediate the dispute of the political factor, although they did not lead to tension in the Romanian-Turkish military relations. The alliance with the Turks was appreciated, in a statement, by Colonel Rozin, as “solid, the government and the General Staff seem decided to a sincere collaboration” (National Military Archives of Romania, Microfilms 948 Collection, 948, Section 3 Operations, file 1449, f. 627). The friendship and conciliation treaties concluded between Romania and Turkey (1928-1933)¹ were also the basis for maintaining the negotiations, being equally interested in maintaining the general peace and fulfilling the strategic goal of each party. The decision was taken also at the end of the Yugoslav-Turkish consultation (August 1935). Yugoslavia, that was in a similar position as Romania, insisted that the discussions should be held in a tripartite military conference, which would take place in November 1935 in Belgrade.

CONCLUSIONS

Romania was persistent regarding the strategic-military goal, presenting the objective of joining the Balkan Pact, but also the importance of bilateral agreements. The bilateral military collaboration proved to be essential in case of political-strategic failures, being an alternative in the multilateral alliance system. Romanian-Turkish relations can be positively characterized, over time both countries having a common goal, namely maintaining the integrity of the territories and maintaining state sovereignty.

The creation of “a block of small and medium sized countries” in order to form a system of alliances, posed a question of the strength they had in the face of attacks of the great powers, when it came to maintaining international security

¹ The amicable relations between the two states were materialized in the *Treaty of amity, non-aggression, arbitration and conciliation between Romania and Turkey* for future relations, in order to maintain peace in a common spirit of trust for the resolution of possible conflicts and differences, apud Gh. Zaharia, *Politica de apărare națională a României în contextul european interbelic, 1919-1939*, Editura Militară, București, 1981, p. 373.

and peace. Because of the current revisionist politics, the Turkish General Staff could be justified for the reserved attitude, especially in the conditions in which the main objective was to preserve the Straits. Bulgaria was a dangerous enemy for Turkey, being in the immediate vicinity of the straits, and Italy was second, becoming a real problem only after an alliance with Bulgaria.

In the context of the Balkan Pact, the Convention defined the position of the members and their role in materializing political and military collaboration. For the Balkan Alliance, the Turkish-Russian agreements could become an important tool in stopping revisionist expansion and at the same time guaranteeing the security of the Balkan borders. Based on the ideas concluded by Nicolae Titulescu, “*Romania and Turkey are meant to practice a sincere and active friendship*”, the convention supported the commercial, economic and military commons.

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A FORGOTTEN NAME: GENERAL EUGEN COTIUJINSCHI

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Romanians have a long history of fighting for national unity and recognition as a nation. Despite being divided by power-hungry empires, they have shown immense courage and heroism throughout the centuries. Many military figures have emerged from this struggle, some of whom are well-known from school. Unfortunately, others have been forgotten, especially those who were intentionally erased from collective memory during the communist period for ideological reasons. General Eugen Cotiujschi is one such figure who deserves to be remembered and rehabilitated. Despite being unfairly overlooked, his life story is one that should be shared with the public. Cotiujschi was the son of a Moldovan priest and rose to become a Lieutenant General in the Russian imperial army, participating in three wars. His example is one that can inspire younger generations today.

Keywords: Basarabia; army; military service; war; heroism;

INTRODUCTION

After being annexed in 1812, Basarabia was separated from the Country of Moldova and subjected to a 100-year process of Russification aimed at changing the ethnic composition of the population in favour of the Slavic group. Despite the Russian imperial authorities forbidding natives from studying and conducting religious services in their mother tongue, the Romanian population remained the majority in the province. Even in these harsh conditions, the Basarabian Romanians were able to produce outstanding personalities in various fields, including the military. Eugen Cotiujschi was one of these exceptional individuals.

EXPOSITION



Photo 1: General Eugen Cotiujschi
(NARM, Ib.)

Eugen Cotiujschi was born on 5 January 1859, in the family of Iacov Cotiujschi, the Moldovan priest from Sculeni, the parish priest of the Church of Sf. Nicolai from the locality, an important communication node on the Prut River between the Russian Empire and Romania.

Besides Eugen, Iacov had an older son, named Vladimir, who graduated from the theological seminary in Chișinău, in 1862, the only secondary education institution in Basarabia that taught the Romanian language, which was known then as the Moldavian language. In 1868, the family lost their father, Priest Iacov Cotiujschi, who died leaving his followers without means of existence (NARM, 1862 Collection, inventory 9, file 415, p. 19 reverse).

Vladimir, the pillar of the family, graduated from the Theological Seminary in Chișinău and proceeded to have a distinguished ecclesiastical career, eventually becoming the principal priest and an inspector of parish schools in Soroca county (Иллюстрированный адрес-календарь Бессарабской губернии на 1914 год., 1913, p. 268).



Photo 2: Chișinău Theological Seminary (NARM, lb.)

At the age of 14 in 1873, Eugen Cotiujschi, being the son of a deceased priest, entered the seminary in Chișinău, upon being urged by his elder brother. The seminary in Chișinău was the only secondary education institution in Basarabia that upheld the spirit of true Romanianism. Eugen Cotiujschi, who was already well-educated at home, adapted well to the strict rules of the institution and performed well in all his tests. During the academic year 1873/1874, he obtained good results, scoring 4 in Holy Scripture, literature theory, universal history, Greek, Latin, French, German, and composition, and 3 in math on the passing exam for the next class (NARM, F. 1862, inv. 9, f. 434, p. 11). In the next academic year 1874/1875, he scored even better results: 5 in conduct, Holy Scripture, Russian literature, and religious chant, and 4 in universal civil history, mathematics, Greek, Latin, German, and composition (lb., d. 87, p. 14).

As time went by, it became evident that Eugen was not interested in pursuing a career in the church. After completing the third class, he left the seminary and took the exam to become a military contractor with a reduced term of service of category 2. On 28 May 1876, he joined the 55th Podolia Infantry Regiment as a short-term common soldier with permanent placement in Tighina (Bender). Due to his studies, he was promoted to corporal on 10 August 1876, and to lower sergeant on 20 August. One of the benefits of short-term military service was that soldiers had the right to attend military schools upon the request of their unit commander.

On 6 September 1876, Sergeant-inferior Eugen Cotiujschi was instructed by the regiment command to enrol in the Odessa School of Military Infantry Students and was directly admitted to the upper class. After completing one year of study, on 30 July 1878, he returned to the unit with full military education (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 2 reverse). The unit was stationed in Leskovets, Bulgaria, and was part of the IV Infantry Division, which took part in the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-1878 (*Сборник*, 1898, p. 123).

On 9 August 1877, the 14th Infantry Division received the bad news that Russian troops in the Shipka pass were attacked by Turkish superior forces. To help the Russian troops, the division marched towards the Shipka pass, reaching it on 12 August. The division held its defence for 139 days and nights, resisting countless attacks from the Turks. The Russians were trying to prevent the Turks from taking this strategic point. On 12 August 1877, the 55th Infantry Regiment Podolia occupied the defensive positions on Mount Sf. Nikolaos. From 15 August to 5 September, the Turks tried to attack the Russian positions, but they were rejected with great loss of life on both sides. On 30 November 1877, the Turks launched a long artillery offensive and attacked Mount St. Nikolaos. The companies of the 55th Infantry Regiment stood against them, halting the attack and forcing the Turks to return to their original positions (lb., p. 178). On 9 November, the unit was alarmed to repel Turkish attempts to go on the offensive (lb., p. 179). For the courage demonstrated in the battles of 30 October and 9 November 1877, Sergeant-Inferior Eugen Cotiujschi was decorated with the badge of the Military Order “Sf. Gheorghe”, popularly called Military Cross “Sf. Gheorghe”. For his skill and courage demonstrated in the battle of 5 September 1877, he was awarded the primary rank of officer – 2nd Lieutenant aid (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 2 reverse). After a series of battles, the Turks lost the war and the Russian army returned home in the spring of 1878, including the 55th Podolia Infantry Regiment.

After returning home, he continued his military service. On 1 March 1881, Eugen Cotiujschi was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, and on 21 April 1884, he was appointed head of the regiment’s training team. This role required military

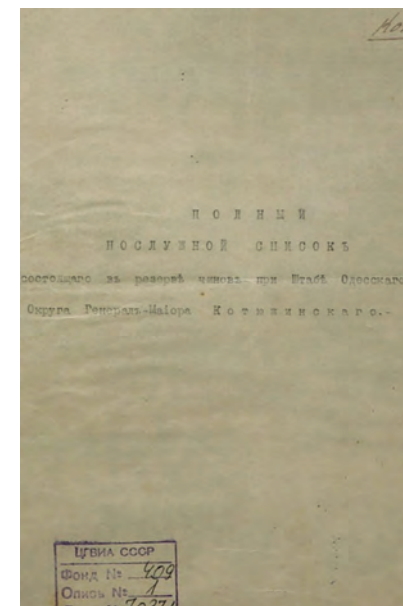


Photo 3: General Cotiujschi's file (lb.)

knowledge, as well as a lot of tact and tolerance in educating young soldiers, mostly people without books and education. Eugen Cotiujinschi had acquired these qualities in his family and at the Theological Seminary. On 24 June 1885, he was promoted by High Order to the rank of Lieutenant. His success in educating young soldiers convinced the unit commanders that he also had the capabilities to lead a combat subunit. Thus, on 14 October 1885, he was appointed as commander of the 5th Infantry Company (Ib., p. 2 reverse). He transformed the company into a model subunit, which is why, on 6 May 1886, he was decorated with the order of St. Stanislaw, 3rd class.

In the late nineteenth century, the Russian Empire intensified its expansion in the Far East, where it had territorial claims towards China and Korea. Russia's expansionist ambitions in that region were at odds with the limited number of military units deployed there, which did not allow an aggressive policy of territorial expansion. To redress the situation in the Far East, the General Staff decided to establish new military units in the region with permanent arrangements in the small towns of Siberia. In September 1886, the Stretensk Reserve Infantry Battalion was established, consisting of five companies. Officers from all units of the Russian Imperial Army were deployed to complete these units. By the High Order of 25 April 1889, Lieutenant Eugen Cotiujinschi was transferred, for work purposes, to the Stretensk Reserve Infantry Battalion, with the appointment as commander of the 5th Reserve Infantry Company, with permanent disposition in the city of Nerchinsk. He arrived on 3 September 1889, at the new place of service, where he quickly fit into the new collective, being highly esteemed by the rest of the officers. Due to his personal qualities, he was elected a member of the Court of the battalion and of the Council of Honour of the Corps of Officers of his unit. On 24 April 1890, he was given the rank of Captain.

Its location in the unit was short-lived because, in search of an appropriate formula for the forces available in the Far East, the Russian War Ministry was experimenting with the formation of new and new military units in the region, including the 5th East-Siberian Riflemen Battalion. By the High Order of 2 January 1891, Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi was transferred to this newly established unit, and shortly thereafter, on 29 May 1891, redirected to 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment, stationed in the town of Razdolnoie, 58 km away from Vladivostok, which was soon renamed the 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment. Shortly after arriving in the unit on 15 June 1891, he was appointed commander of the 4th Company. With the transition of the unit to regiment, on 10 March 1892, he was appointed

regiment commander assistant per household (Ib., p. 3.), which he served until 1896, when, on 2 January, he was appointed commander of the 2nd Company. For his military service successes in various positions, on 24 February 1896, he was exceptionally promoted to Captain. On 11 March 1898, he was appointed commander of the 4th Company and, on 31 May 1899, he was unanimously elected President of the Regiment Tribunal (Ib., p. 3 reverse).

The quiet progress of his military career was suddenly stopped by the Boxer Rebellion in China, started in the summer of 1899 by the Yihetuan fighters, directed against the Western and especially Russian expansionism in China. By 1900, the uprising had spread throughout China, and in July of the same year, the siege of the embassies in the country's capital, Beijing, began. The situation was also quite serious in southern Manchuria, occupied by the Russians, with important urban centres – the cities of Mukden (Shenyang), Liaoyang and Haicheng. To cover this direction, on 18 July 1900, the Southern Manchuria Detachment was created under the command of Major General Nicolai Fleischer, which was composed of 8 infantry battalions, an engineer platoon, 16 field guns, 6 mounted artillery guns and 4 *sotnie* of Cossacks (Овсяный, 1910, p. 248.). At the request of Major General Nicolai Fleischer, Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi, who had experience in managing logistical problems, occupying for a long time the position of regiment commander assistant per household, was appointed, on 27 July 1900, quartermaster of the Southern Manchurian Detachment and on 7 September 1900, he was appointed quartermaster of the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Brigade. As part of the detachment, he participated in the campaign of 1900, which ended with the capturing of the city of Mukden (Shenyang). To a large extent, the successes achieved by the Russian troops in Manchuria were also due to the impeccable logistics service organised by Captain Eugen Cotiujinschi, who did not even dream that the experience gained in Manchuria would serve him well in the Russo-Japanese War, in which he would take part. For the special merits and courage shown during the China campaign, by the High Order of 15 March 1901, he was decorated with the order of St. Anne, 3rd class with swords and bow, and on 15 September 1901, with the commemorative medal "*In memory of 1900-1901 military events in China*".

After the campaign in Manchuria, which ended on 18 January 1901, he returned to the regiment, at the command of the 4th Riflemen Company. Soon after, on 26 February 1901, he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and appointed to the position of assistant regiment commander-head of household (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 4.). His merits in the field of logistical management of the regiment, located at the eastern end of the empire, were fully appreciated.

On 5 December 1902 he was decorated with the high order of St. Vladimir, 4th class with bow, which automatically gave him access to the hereditary nobility of the Russian Empire. On 6 November 1902, Lieutenant Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed commander of the 1st Battalion, where he demonstrated his qualities as a commander and professional in such a way that, in the absence of the commander, he successfully performed as regiment commander. This experience was invaluable given that the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) began.

The military actions in China were carried out according to a plan developed by the General Staff, which involved applying defence tactics in Septentrional Manchuria with the limited number of troops available in the theatre of operations. This was done until larger military forces arrived from Russia to proceed with the decisive counteroffensive, which would end with the destruction of the Japanese army (Leșcu, 2009, p. 60). The 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Division, including the 1st East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment, was involved in these holding battles. In the absence of Colonel N. Ozerski, Commander of the 2nd East Siberian Riflemen Regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was temporarily appointed as his replacement. After returning from his trip, he was temporarily appointed as the commander of the 1st East Siberian Rifle Regiment on 2 June 1904. He led the regiment in the historic battle of Wafangtien against the Japanese 2nd Army, with the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Corps tasked with stopping the Japanese advance towards Port-Arthur. To stop the Japanese offensive, General Georg von Stackelberg, commander of the Siberian Corps, decided to fight near the Wafangtien railway station. On the morning of 1 June, the Japanese attacked the left flank of the Russians, where the positions of the 1st East Siberian Rifle Regiment were located (Русско-японская война, 1910, p. 29).

Under the superior fire of the enemy, the units of the regiment began to withdraw and strengthened their positions at the height of 178.1. On 2 June, the Japanese continued the offensive, aiming to attack the left flank of the Russians with the 3rd Infantry Division and the centre of the Russian defence disposition with the 5th Infantry Division (Ib., p. 41). Unaware of the Japanese plans, the Russians went to the attack, but six companies of the 1st East Siberian Riflemen Regiment occupied positions that forced General Oku to bring new reinforcements to the scene of the battle (Ib., p. 58). These reinforcements changed the fate of the battle, and the Russian troops were forced, starting at 14.00, to withdraw from the conquered positions, resulting in their defeat. During the battle, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was wounded in the left thigh but did not leave his position and continued to lead the fighting (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 9.).

The Russian defeat at Wafangtien caused significant human casualties, especially in the officer corps. To cover the vacancies in the command corps, Lieutenant-Colonel Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed acting commander of the 3rd East-Siberian Riflemen Regiment on 17 July 1914 (Ib., p. 4 reverse), and acting commander of the 4th East Siberian Riflemen Regiment on 15 August 1904. He was then permanently appointed to the position by a High Order on 30 September 1904. The appointment was remarkable because Eugen Cotiujinschi was appointed regiment commander with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel instead of Colonel, which was the only rank that gave someone the right to hold the position of regiment commander. He was exceptionally promoted to the rank of Colonel on 17 November 1904. For his bravery, skill and professionalism displayed during the battle of 2-3 June 1904, he was decorated with the Order of St. Stanislaw 2nd class with swords by Order of 19 September 1904.

Taking command of the unit, under pressure from the Japanese army, he retreated towards the city of Liaoyang, where Russian commander General A. Kuropatkin planned to fight a decisive battle. The Russian army continued to retreat to fortified positions from the Sha He River, where General A. Kuropatkin planned to give another decisive battle. The plan was for the Siberian Corps of General Georg von Stackelberg to make a frontal strike, while the Japanese armies commanded by Marshal Oyama Iwao would be surrounded on their right flank. The offensive began at dawn on 22 September 1904. By 23 September, the main Russian forces reached the line of the Sha He River (*Русско-японская война 1904-1905* r.r. volume IV, p. 97). The actual decisive battle began on 22 September 1904. According to the battle disposition, the right column advanced towards the Nanshan Puha-Tavan gou alignment. On the right, the detachment of Colonel E. Cotiujinschi advanced and soon conquered the town of Hamatani, distancing itself by 8 km from the main forces. On 27 September 1904, E. Cotiujinschi's detachment reached the Cengou Lin pass but was forced to retreat to the town of Sialiuha Tzi due to pressure from the Japanese, and there he began strengthening defence positions (Ib., p. 180). The Japanese troops began the offensive against E. Cotiujinschi's detachment on 28 September, which retreated to the village of Hamatani, where it arrived on the night of 29 September. On this day, Marshal Oyama Iwao began the general counteroffensive, directing the main thrust against the 4th East Siberian Riflemen Corps. The 4th East Siberian Riflemen Regiment occupied the defence positions to the left of Padiaza town, having two battalions in the first line and one battalion in the second line (Ib., p. 259), which

repelled all enemy attacks. On the morning of 30 September, the Japanese went on the offensive again, attacking in the direction of the village of Siu-Liu Hudzi, defended by the regiment of Colonel E. Cotiujschi. Due to intense enemy fire, around 10:00 a.m., only 50-70 riflemen remained fit for battle in the companies of the regiment, with only 25 riflemen remaining in the formation in the 10th Company. Running out of ammunition, the soldiers were prepared to fight with bayonets (Ib., p. 279). They began to throw stones at the Japanese (Ib., p. 280), but held on to the occupied positions. Colonel Eugen Cotiujschi was seriously wounded in the leg, but he did not leave his position, continuing to lead the battle (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 9.). For his heroism shown in the battles of 29-30 September 1904, when, *“under the pressure of the more numerous enemy and with less than 50% of the regiment remained on the battlefield, not only did he not surrender the occupied positions, but forced the enemy to retreat”*, he was decorated with the highest state military distinction, the Order of St. George, 4th class (Разведчик, 1905, p. 639). It was only after the battle that he was evacuated and hospitalised until 18 January 1906, when the war was already over.

He was then appointed commander of the 52nd Vilno Infantry Regiment on 24 July 1906, with permanent headquarters in the city of Feodosia, Crimea (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 5). In the absence of the brigade commander, he often performed his duties. For his merits in the management of the unit, he was decorated with the High Order of St. Vladimir, 3rd class and on 10 January he was allowed to wear the Ottoman Order of Osmaniye, 2nd class. On 29 October 1911, he was awarded the military rank of Major General, and on 11 September 1912, he was allowed to wear the order of the Emirate of Bukhara, the Golden Star, 1st class.

Despite being at the peak of his military career, Eugen Cotiujschi's wounds from the battlefields of Manchuria began to affect his ability to fulfil service obligations. He submitted a report of release due to illness, and on 4 December 1912, he was released from military service with the right to wear military uniform and enroll in the infantry reserve of the Tavia government.

During the First World War, Major General Eugen Cotiujschi was 55 years old but wanted to contribute to the final victory of the allies. He applied to be re-employed in the army and was rehired by the High Order of 25 July 1914. The request could not be ignored, as it was submitted by a general and a knight of the order of St. George! He was appointed commander of the 1st Brigade, 34th Infantry Division, which included the 133rd Simferopol Infantry Regiment and the 134th Feodosia Infantry Regiment. Major General Cotiujschi and his Brigade

participated in the strategic operation to occupy Galicia, which was carried out through a concentric strike by the 3rd and 5th Armies towards Lviv and the 4th and 8th Armies from the Dniester to the west (Leșcu, 2009, p. 110). To implement the plan of the Russian Supreme Command, on 5/18 August 1914, the 8th Russian Army went on the offensive and reached the Gnilia Lipa River on 16/29 August 1914 (Ib., p. 114). The Russian troops halted on the marshy banks of the river, however, and suffered serious losses due to intense machine gun and rifle fire opened by Austro-Hungarian units. In these critical conditions, Major General E. Cotiujschi moved to the place where the Russian troops had stopped, took command of all subunits from different units of the division (in total, 6 companies and a platoon of infantry) who were lying in the mud, on the left bank of the river. With the cry *“Forward!”*, he got up and led them on the attack. By his example, he captured the enemy trenches on the right bank of the river and also captured a battle flag of the 50th Austro-Hungarian Infantry Regiment (SMARF, F. 400, inv. 12, d. 26747, p. 107.). The forcing of the Gnilia Lipa River was instrumental in the operation, which was completed by the capture of the city of Lviv on 21 August/3 September 1914. Major General Eugen Cotiujschi was decorated with the Sword of St. George, the second highest military distinction, for the battle of 16/29 August 1914, and with the High Order of St. Stanislaw, 1st class with swords, for his participation in the operation in Galicia (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 5 reverse.).

In 1915, it became clear that the war would become a long one and required new reinforcements in force. To supplement the losses on the battlefield, new divisions were formed, as part of the third wave of mobilisation in the summer of 1915. One of these divisions was the 125th Infantry Division, composed of recruits from Basarabia and the left of the Dniester and made up of the 497th Bălți Infantry, 498th Orhei Infantry, 499th Olviopol Infantry, and 500th Ingul Infantry regiments. It is not known whose idea it was and whether it was an intentional one, to appoint a Moldavian as the head of the division. By the High Order of 25 August 1915, Major General Eugen Cotiujschi was appointed as the commander of the division, which was practically made up of Moldavians. On 27 September 1915, the division arrived at the front, in the region of the city of Proskurov, and on 28 September 1915, it occupied its defensive positions near the town of Klevan, in Galicia. During the seven-month break between battles, knowing very well the psychology of the Moldovans, General E. Cotiujschi emphasised battle preparation, carrying out battle exercises in each regiment so that the soldiers could accumulate experience. These qualities fully spoke for themselves during the offensive

of the Central Powers in Galicia, when the army of A. Brusilov, on 9/22 July, left Lviv, retreating with battles to Volânia. On 14/27 August 1915, the 1st Army attacked the right flank of A. Brusilov's 8th Army. Simultaneously, the 2nd Austro-Hungarian Army attacked the 8th Russian Corps, creating conditions for the encirclement of A. Brusilov's 8th Army. The situation was saved when the 125th Infantry Division went into battle, within the 39th Army Corps, which repelled all Austro-Hungarian attacks, saving the army from destruction (Залесский, 2003, p. 94). For firm leadership with the great unit under his command, Major General Eugen Cotiujschi was decorated with the order of St. Anne, 1st class with swords, by the High Order of 26 November 1915. He was also decorated with the order of St. Vladimir, 2nd class with swords, on 24 June 1916.

During the summer of 1915, Eugen Cotiujschi participated in multiple battles which left him physically and mentally drained. Consequently, he was transferred to the active reserve of the Kyiv Military Region, and later, from 14 September 1916, the Odessa Military Region, where he was appointed as the president of the requisitions commission within the Odessa customs. After the abdication of Nicholas II, the Provisional Government appointed him as the President of the Officer Corps Verification Commission on 25 April 1917 (SMARF, F. 409, inv. 1, d. 70371, p. 6.). He was then promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General for his commendable efforts in reforming the Russian army based on democratic principles. To continue the fighting, the Russian army was in dire need of new reinforcements. For this purpose, in January 1917, the fourth wave of mobilisation was decreed and the 193rd Infantry Division was formed, stationed in Botoșani. Major General Eugen Cotiujschi was appointed as its commander on 7 August 1917, in place of General Constantin Tihonravov, appointed to the higher position of commander of the 2nd Army Corps. However, the unit practically ceased to exist due to the anarchy that engulfed the Russian army by September 1917.

After the disbandment of the army, Eugen Cotiujschi returned to Odessa with his wife and six children. Due to his age, injuries, and family obligations, he did not participate in the Civil War but was registered into the records of the Soviet security organs. His decision to sit out the Civil War saved him from the Stalinist terror that followed. In 1930, it was known that he lived in Odessa, on Tiraspolului Street, no. 7, and later moved to Anapa at the beginning of the Second World War. According to some sources, he died there during the occupation of the city by German troops (1942-1943).

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION

Eugen Cotiujschi's life and achievements as a son of the Romanian nation from the land of Cotiujenilor, Soroca, serve as an example of how a determined person can achieve remarkable success. Unfortunately, during the communist period, such individuals were often forgotten due to their abilities that did not fit into the propaganda clichés of the regime.

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ASPECTS OF THE ACTIVITY OF THE 9TH MECHANISED BRIGADE “MĂRĂȘEȘTI”, REFLECTED IN THE ROMANIAN MASS MEDIA

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The 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” is a mechanised infantry brigade belonging to the Romanian Land Forces. Its primary mission is to maintain stability and balance in the Black Sea region. The brigade operates in the Dobrogea province, which has an important geostrategic location in the area, serving as the NATO and EU border with the East. The brigade is the successor of the combat traditions of the Active Dobrogea Division, established on 1 November 1878. From 1902, it was known as the 9th Infantry Division, with its garrison located in Constanța. As part of the Romanian Army’s transformation strategy, the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” took control of all units in Dobrogea from the former 34th Mechanised Brigade. On 13 September 2023, in recognition of the professionalism and the role of the Dobrogean brigade, 58 representatives of the member states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe visited the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”. This visit aimed to promote mutual transparency and was organised according to the provisions of the 2011 Vienna Document, which aims to increase confidence and security in Europe. This article highlights significant aspects of the Brigade’s activity, in the context of the 145 years of its existence.

Keywords: 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”; Romanian Army; NATO; Dobrogea; Black Sea;

INTRODUCTION

The capacity of a state to use its military potential, following the policy of defence and promotion of national interests, gives the dimension of military power. The following can be used as indicators: the training level of the staff; response time to requests; ability to project and support forces in different theatres of operations, including outside national borders; its level of deterrence; result of the comparative analysis between own weapon systems and the most important ones worldwide (Orzeață, 2004, pp. 37-39).

The 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” is a large mechanised infantry unit of the Romanian Land Forces, continuing the fighting traditions of the Dobrogea Active Division, established on 1 November 1878. From 1903, by Order 15, it will bear the name 9th Infantry Division, with the garrison in Constanța¹. Under this name, the Division participated in all the military campaigns of the Romanian Army in the 20th century. The very special contribution to the success of large-scale confrontations has designated it as one of the great basic ground units of the Romanian Army.

The Dobrogean division went through several changes over time, becoming the 9th Mechanised Division “Mărășești” and, finally, the 9th Combined Operational Command “Dobrogea”². In the program of reorganisation and integration into NATO structures, the 34th Mechanised Brigade “Vasile Lupu”, a military structure from Constanța county, was disbanded in 2004, the remaining units passing to the Light Infantry Brigade, in the Clinceni garrison³.

¹ Starting from 2017, with the endorsement of the Historical Service of the Armed Forces, the Chief of the General Staff approved that the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” assumed the military traditions of the Active Division, established on 1 November 1878. *Brigada 9 Mecanizată “Mărășești” își dezvăluie secretele. Despre ce este vorba!*, in “Telegraf online”, 28 October 2018, <https://www.telegrafonline.ro/brigada-9-mecanizata-marasesi-isi-dezvaluie-secretele-despre-ce-este-vorba>.

² On 1 August 2000, the new organisational states of the Maritime Fleet Command, the River Flotilla Command and the 9th Combined Operational Command “Dobrogea” came into force. All major units and units subordinated to the 9th Army Corps, except the 301st Military Police Company and the 34th Transmission Battalion, which remained under the command of the Naval Forces General Staff, came under the 1st Territorial Army Corps.

³ On the former location of the 34th Mechanised Brigade “Vasile Lupu”, near the Mihail Kogălniceanu airport.

9TH MECHANISED BRIGADE MĂRĂȘEȘTI – HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND MISSIONS

The area of Dobrogea, located near the Black Sea, facilitates quick access to the turbulent areas in the East. In this context, Romania must develop its partnership with the USA to create a network of small advanced operational bases, to be present everywhere and to intervene wherever needed (Băhnăreanu, 2005, p. 39). Thus, the American military bases were installed on the territory of our country at the Mihail Kogălniceanu air base, in the Babadag range and the port of Constanța.

NATO and the European Union’s enlargement to the Black Sea requires new approaches, in which the Alliance manages security issues, and the EU is responsible for the economic development of the mentioned area. Starting from 2006, in Romania, the conscription method was stopped and soldiers were recruited voluntarily. A major effect was the substantial reduction of the strength of the military institution, as well as the increase in the level of professionalisation of the military personnel according to the requirements of interoperability with the armies of the NATO member states (Duțu, 2012, p. 48).

On 25 February 2008, the departure ceremony of the FND XVI Romanian National Forces Detachment took place in the Babadag garrison, commanded by Major Marius Gheorghescu, which participated, between 28 February and 15 September 2008, in the International Peacekeeping Force in Kosovo/KFOR. They carried out missions specific to peace support operations (PSO) to maintain stability/security and ensure freedom of movement: fixed/mobile traffic control points, research patrols, presence/security patrols, observation posts, escorting humanitarian convoys, guarding and security of vital perimeters (objectives). Following the Transformation Strategy of the Romanian Army, the 34th Brigade was reactivated, on 1 November 2009, as the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, thus taking control over all units in Dobrogea from the former 34th Mechanised Brigade⁴. New subunits were created, such as the 911 Infantry and 912 Tank battalions,

⁴ When the 9th Mechanised Brigade was established, there was no position for a military priest. On 15 November 2013, the military priest Bogdan-Tudor Gavrilă was appointed. *Capela Batalionului logistic Pontul Euxin-Constanța*, in “*Arhiepiscopia Tomisului*”, 31 January 2022, <https://arhiepiscopiatomisului.ro/2022/01/31/capela-batalionului-logistic-pontul-euxin-constanta/>.

the latter equipped with T-55 tanks and Flakpanzer Gepard⁵. Thus, the history of this military unit in Constanța continued, in 2009, by establishing the Command of the 9th “Mărășești” Mechanised Brigade, with Brigadier General Vasile Hermeneanu as its commander⁶.

From its establishment until now, the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, a large tactical unit of land forces belonging to the 2nd “Getica” Infantry Division, maintains and develops its level of operational capacity by carrying out all national and multinational training activities, in the places of disposition at peace, in national training ranges/grounds, outside the country and in theatres of operations, to be ready, within the stipulated terms, to fulfil their specific tasks of national defence, collective defence in an allied context and within the SEEBRIG initiative⁷.

⁵ The crew of a battle tank needs quite a long training job to reach the standard of training and because, with the decommissioning of “18” tanks, the servicemen either detached to other units or quit the army, currently, it is difficult to find specialists in this field. In the yard of the Murfatlar unit, there are or will be brought combat means developed on the TR 55 platform (tanks that were in the composition of the former Battalion 18) and, apparently, the Gepard anti-aircraft system, composed of two rapid guns mounted on the tank chassis Leopard 1. This system was imported second-hand from Germany several years ago and, although it is not part of the last generation of such systems, it is considered one of the most effective weapons in air and ground combat. Besides, the Cheetah could be admired on the Open Doors Day, at the headquarters of the 9th Brigade in Constanța. Martinescu, D., *Armata Dobrogei, reactivată după șase ani de repaus*, in “*Romania Liberă*”, 11 May 2010, <https://archive.ph/20130615184430/http://www.romanalibera.ro/actualitate/locale/armata-dobrogei-reactivata-dupa-sase-ani-de-repaus-186071.html#selection-851.1-851.52>.

⁶ Brigadier General Vasile Hermeneanu took the following positions: reconnaissance platoon commander (1978-1984); reconnaissance company commander (1984-1986); infantry battalion commander (1988-1990); chief of staff /34th Mechanised Regiment – Topraisar (1990-1995); chief of staff/34th Mechanised Brigade – Topraisar (1995-2000); deputy commander/34th Mechanised Brigade – Topraisar (2000-2001); head of operations/9th Operational Command “Dobrogea” – Constanța (2001-2003); chief of staff/9th Operational Command “Dobrogea” – Constanța (2003-2005); head of operations/2nd Joint Operational Command – Buzău (2005-2007); commander of 34th Infantry Brigade “Vasile Lupu” – Bucharest (2007-2009); commander of the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” – Constanța (2009-2013); Brigadier General (r.) (01.12.2013). “*Clubul Amiralilor*” Association, <https://www.clubulamiralilor.ro/general-de-brigada-r-dr-vasile-hermeneanu/>.

⁷ About 50 specialists in communications and IT, contract soldiers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and officers from the SEEBRIG Company of the 34th Transmission Battalion, subordinate to the 9th Operational Command “Dobrogea”, showed their professional value during the multinational exercise “*Viking 2003*”. Preparatory activities were carried out in communication and IT issues in Constanța and Bucharest. The Constanța broadcasters successfully carried out the materialisation of the communications and IT scheme. They provided the telephone network, the commercial telephone connection, the computer networks, the Internet connection. Solving the technical problems was possible due to the level of training of the SEEBRIG Company’s transmission specialists. Paul, L., “*Viking 2003*” și transmisioniștii Companiei SEEBRIG, in *Observatorul militar*, no. 1, 07-13 January 2004, <http://www.presamil.ro/OM/2004/01/pag%2021.htm>.

LAND TROOPS TRAINING IN MULTINATIONAL EXERCISES – COMPLEXITY AND PRO-ACTION

❖ The 341st Infantry Battalion “Constanța”, nicknamed the “White Sharks”, with the garrison in Topraisar, is the most experienced unit of the Dobrogean brigade, with numerous international deployments, including in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. After the 34th Mechanised Brigade⁸ was reorganised in 2004, the “White Sharks” Battalion maintained the highest training and was the only military unit based in Dobrogea during 2004-2009.

The “White Sharks” executed a tactical march in the Muratan Mound area near Biruința, where the biggest skirmishes in the Dobrogea area took place in the First World War: “The officers and soldiers of the 40th Infantry Regiment requested to bring their flag to the trenches. Under the rain of shells, while the music played <Wake up, Romanians!>, they all took an oath on the flag promising that they would not retreat in the face of the fierce enemy. And they would remain true to their word!”, says Lieutenant Alexandru Călin from the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”.

❖ In 2017, 18 international exercises took place in the Black Sea region, in which approximately 40,000 soldiers participated, *Saber Guardian 2017/SG17* being the largest and most complex of them. These exercises aim to demonstrate the superior joint and multinational capabilities of the US, allies and partners and highlight their cohesion, unity and solidarity to defend against any aggression⁹. The multiplication of space military actors is an important characteristic of this first half of the 21st century, in the area of the Black Sea area, in the context where new technologies and military equipment represent a key factor in the conduct of the new type of war¹⁰, in maintaining and consolidating a military power credible and able to counter the new security threats (Băhnăreanu, p. 11). After the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, NATO took far-reaching defensive measures on the borders with Russia, strengthening the presence of military troops in the region.

⁸ On 9 May 1995, in Topraisar, the ceremony of handing over the new battle flag of the 34th Infantry Brigade took place.

⁹ *Saber Guardian 2017 (SG17)*, the largest exercise held in the region of our country, in which 25,000 military personnel from 22 allied and partner countries participated. The exercise was led by the United States Land Forces in Europe (USAREUR) and took place between 11-20 July 2017 in Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. *Saber Guardian 2017*, in *Observatorul Militar*, no. 28/12-18 July 2017, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ On 1 April 2006, the traditional name of artillery divisions was changed to artillery battalions. Today, just as in the Western armies, in the Romanian Armed Forces, the term artillery means more than a simple cannon or howitzer, by artillery we mean a set of artillery systems.

In 1991, the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuściński said that “Ukraine’s future will unfold in two directions: relations with Russia and relations with Europe, with the world. Both are needed for the future to be favourable” (Tchernoff-Horovitz, 2022). The Russian-Ukrainian war, which began on 24 February 2021, would change relations in this part of Europe.

The Romanian soldiers participating in the various exercises are part of the units of the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (341st Infantry Battalion “Constanța”, 911th Infantry “Capidava” Battalion, 912th Tanks “Scythia Minor” Battalion, 114th Tanks “Petru Cercei” Battalion and 168th Battalion Logistic Support “Pontus Euxinus”). It should be remembered that the American soldiers come from the detachments deployed in Romania as part of the measures to strengthen the allied position on the entire eastern flank of NATO, as a defensive formula to ensure the security of the allies and to deter aggressive actions in the Black Sea region. The purpose of the combat exercise was to demonstrate the ability to react to the action of an opponent, based on a fictitious scenario.

❖ The multinational exercise “Justice Eagle” organised by the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, which takes place annually, based on a unique scenario, on the territory of Romania, aims to harmonise and increase the interoperability of the NATO member armed forces, maintaining the deployment and training capability jointly by exercising related logistical support, as well as developing a regional environment favourable to multinational military cooperation (Măndiță, 2022).

At the Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” Command, on 5 May 2022, the military and religious ceremony organized on the occasion of the repatriation of the Anti-Aircraft Defense Detachment, rotation X, from the theatre of operations in Poland took place¹¹. The Land Forces Chief of Staff, Major General Iulian Berdilă, and representatives of the Joint Forces Command, 2nd Infantry Division “Getica” took part in the activity. Representatives of the local public authorities were also present, according to the press release of the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (Avram, 2022).

❖ Hundreds of Romanian soldiers of the 9th Dobrogean Brigade and the American partners from the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), with over 100 technical means of combat, fired with live ammunition in the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, Tulcea county. They organised and executed the *Mărășești 22.2 exercise*. After intense planning and preparation, the final phase of the exercise took

¹¹ *Ceremonialul de repatriere a Detașamentului “GHEPARZII DE FIER”, in “România Internațional”, 3 May 2022, https://www.rri.ro/ro_ro/ceremonialul_de_repatriere_a_detasamentului_gheparzii_de_fier-2660318.*

place on 20 October, in the presence of the Land Forces Chief of Staff, Major General Iulian Berdilă, and the Commander of the 2nd “Getica” Infantry Division, Major General Ciprian Marin, of commanders of Dobrogea units and representatives of local public authorities (Lupu, 2022). *“We can train together and see how each one plans and executes operations. For the 101st Airborne Division, coming to Romania is essential to ensure that our partnership is strong enough to defend NATO’s eastern flank. The presence here is very beneficial in terms of preparation to strengthen our firm partnership and commitment to defend our NATO allies”,* communicated the commander of the 1st Battalion of the 502nd Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Williams¹².

“Mărășești” exercise takes place annually on the territory of Romania. The Ministry of National Defence shows that its objectives are to improve the skills regarding the use of the equipment and equipment, to increase the capacity of resistance and action to effort in a hostile operational environment. *“Also, through such military exercises, the aim is to improve the reaction capacity in scenarios as close as possible to the reality of the battlefield, as well as to increase interoperability with the strategic partner deployed at the 57th Air Base in Mihail Kogălniceanu¹³, maintaining the capability of joint deployment and training by exercising related logistical support and developing a favourable regional environment for multinational military cooperation”,* as specified by sources from the MoND. (Gavrilaș, 2022).

At the Mărășești 22.2 exercise, *“The soldiers from the brigade showed a high level of professionalism, they showed once again that the experience in different theatres of operations was fully fruitful and a smooth transition was achieved between the experienced soldiers and the newcomers. I am satisfied with the level reached”,* concluded Colonel Adrian Costaru, commander of the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” (Lupu, 2022).

¹² The US 502nd Infantry Regiment was established shortly after the US entry into World War II as part of the 101st Airborne Division Screaming Eagles, one of the most decorated units in the US Army. The regiment was disbanded in 1945, to be reactivated in 1956. It fought in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War. Starting in July 2022, American soldiers from the 502nd Infantry Regiment are deployed to Mihai Kogălniceanu.

¹³ The base was abolished in April 2004, following the retirement of the MiG-29, becoming an annexe to 86th Air Base. On 1 May 2007, the Mihail Kogălniceanu airfield was established, with the mission of coordinating aeronautical activities in the area of responsibility. On 1 July 2018, the status of operation of the 57th Air Base in Mihail Kogălniceanu, a structure subordinate to the General Staff of the Naval Forces, entered into force. US forces began using the base in 1999.

To understand the complexity of ground troops training, let us remember that the exercise, planned and coordinated by marine infantrymen, took place in three action environments: naval, land and air. According to the scenario, the military actions aimed to secure and defend critical infrastructure objectives against enemy airborne forces and reconnaissance-diversion groups supported by local paramilitary forces. The training objectives of the exercise were aimed at increasing the level of training and interoperability in a multinational training environment, training the command and staff element in planning and conducting riverine tactical actions, improving the collective skills of marine infantry subunits in the execution of riverine tactical actions as an amphibious landing, ensuring fluvial logistical support. *“Despite the exercise being conducted in harsh weather conditions with a significant drop in temperature, it proved to be a rigorous endurance test for the participants, given the unfavourable environment specific to the Delta”,* as stated by the Naval Forces in their official statement¹⁴.

❖ Military exercises in Tulcea county were also held in the context of Russia occupying Snake Island, at the end of February 2021. In the same year, an exercise from the “Danube Protector” series was held on the Danube and the Măcin arms aimed at exercising the landing in Dobrogea, combined with a CBRN attack. The main objective of the exercise is to strengthen the skills of the military for the execution of tactical actions to counter an air-mobile landing, in the conditions of hybrid-type threats and risks of CBRN attacks.

❖ On 5 April 2022, an exercise was carried out that included sequences of rejection and neutralization of enemy reconnaissance-diversion elements, sequences of rejection of a fluvial and air landing at the mouths of the Danube, in the Delta and the coastal area of northern Dobrogea, as specified by the General Staff of the Naval Forces. Seven river military ships, ten fast assault boats, a marine infantry company and an infantry platoon from the 9th Mechanised Brigade carried out, on the Danube and the Sfântu Gheorghe Arm, training actions for the defence

¹⁴ Marine infantrymen of the 307th Regiment carried out, between 19-23 September 2022, the joint multinational exercise “Heracleea 22”, in Mahmudia district, in the Danube Delta. Military river ships (a monitor and a river star), light motor assault craft, Pirahna armoured personnel carriers, armoured reconnaissance amphibious transporters, helicopters, trucks, special vehicles and logistical support equipment participated in the exercise. During the exercise, soldiers from allied states, such as the USA and France, were engaged. Bolocan, V., *Infanteriștii marini români au simulat respingerea unui atac în zona Deltei Dunării*, in “avestrul.ro”, 29 September 2023, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/infanteriștii-marini-romani-au-simulat-respingerea-2209020.html>.

of river communication routes and the infrastructure of the area of the mouths of the Danube in the Black Sea. A sequence of repelling a landing took place in the Mahmudia – Bălteni de Sus fluvial district (Brațul Sfântu Gheorghe) (Diac, 2022).

❖ “Noble Partner 2022” took place at the Vaziani military base in Georgia, from 29 August to 9 September 2022. The exercise aimed to increase training and interoperability between Georgia, the US, regional partners and allied countries, to ensure stability and a secure environment in the Black Sea region. “Romania is represented in this activity by a detachment of 35 participants from the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, including a military police platoon and 13 other soldiers integrated into the multinational brigade headquarters”, MoND sources said. The opening ceremony of the exercise was attended by Major General Giorgi Matiashvili, Chief of the Georgian Defence Staff, Brigadier General Roland Dzeladze, Commander of the Eastern Ground Forces Command of Georgia, who is also the leader of the exercise, as well as military attachés of the participating countries. The Romanian brigade was led by Colonel Eugen Popescu¹⁵. According to representatives of MoND, “Noble Partner 2022” counted about 2,500 participants and was conducted in partnership with Georgia and the United States of America.

❖ At the initiative of the Commander of the 15th Mechanised Brigade deployed in the town of Orzysz, between 2-3 August 2022, the Iron Cheetahs Anti-Aircraft Defence Detachment participated together with the other allies of the NATO Battle Group in Poland in a technical presentation in the Klusy range. Starting from April 2023, the “Iron Cheetahs” Air Defence Detachment, generated by the 348th Air Defense Battalion “Dobrogea” and coordinated by the Joint Forces Command “General Ioan Emanoil Florescu”¹⁶, trained jointly, alongside the American, British, Croats and Poles, within the NATO Battle Group in Poland. Their mission was to ensure the consolidated forward presence in the northeastern flank of the Alliance, according to the measures adopted during the Warsaw summit in 2016 (Nohai, Casapu, 2023).

¹⁵ In this event, soldiers from many countries participated, such as Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Greece, Great Britain, Turkey, Slovakia, Norway, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Germany, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Poland, Japan, Ukraine and Sweden. Antal, C., *Mai mulți militari români se află în Georgia, pentru exercițiul “Noble Partner 2022”*, in “Ziarul de Investigații”, 2 September 2022, <https://zin.ro/02/09/2022/administratie/noble-partner-2022-georgia/>.

¹⁶ On 1 October 2014, the Operational Command Centre became the Joint Forces Command. On 10 November 2017, the Joint Forces Command received the Battle Flag. In 2021, during the *DACIA 21 exercise*, the command reached Initial Operational Capability (IOC), and in 2022, with the “*HISTRIA 22*” exercise, Full Operational Capability (FOC). Joint Forces Command, <https://www.defense.ro/comandamente/cfi>.

❖ The multinational exercise “Saber Guardian 23” took place for a week, on several stages. Ended June 9, 2023. Tactics, techniques, and procedures were tested to ensure the cyber protection of mission networks and provide support for protecting critical infrastructure.

❖ The final sequence of the medical evacuation exercise Hospital Exercise 23 took place at 57th Air Base Mihail Kogălniceanu. Romania participated in the activity alongside Poland and the United States of America, with specialised personnel from the structures subordinate to the Medical Directorate of the MoND. The huge logistical effort must be appreciated, especially since various types of military equipment from the 14 allied and partner nations participated in the exercises, with 10,000 soldiers, and 1,700 technical means, training intensively in 11 locations¹⁷.

❖ Between 18.08-02.09.2023, soldiers from the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” participated in the multinational exercise “Agile Spirit 23”. On 21 August, the opening ceremony of the exercise was held in the Simulation Training Centre of the Georgian Armed Forces at the Krtsanisi training ground. Thus, the soldiers of the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” actively contributed to fulfilling the motto of the exercise: “Strength Through Partnership!”. The *Agile Spirit 23* exercise was conducted in partnership with Georgia and the United States of America. It sought to increase readiness and interoperability between Georgia, the United States of America, regional partners and allied countries to ensure stability and a secure environment in the Black Sea region. Romania participated in this exercise with a detachment of 55 soldiers from the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, led by the commander of the 911th Capidava Infantry Battalion¹⁸, Lieutenant Colonel Irinel Ristea (Ristea, 2023, p. 2).

❖ Between 20-25 September 2023, military convoys of equipment and personnel, belonging to the structures subordinate to the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, moved to the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, on railway and road communication routes, transiting the national territory, to participate in the “MĂRĂȘEȘTI-23” exercise.

¹⁷ “Saber Guardian 23”, un exercițiu multinațional de succes, <http://presamil.ro/saber-guardian-23-un-exercitiu-multinational-de-succes/>

¹⁸ Starting with 2016, the 911th Infantry Battalion “Călugăreni” took over the combat traditions of the 40th Infantry Regiment “Călugăreni”. The 911 Battalion Day was also celebrated by the detachment participating in the “Mărășești 23” exercise from the Secondary Combat Training Centre in Babadag, through a series of sports activities, in collaboration with the other battalions of the 9th Mechanised Brigade.

According to the press release of the 9th Mechanised Brigade, “the detachments are to move from the Târgoviște, Medgidia, Murfatlar, Topraisar and Constanța garrisons to the previously specified location. The military police recommend that those who travel on these routes drive with extra care and respect the directions and signals of the police. The “MĂRĂȘEȘTI-23” exercise is part of the brigade’s major training activities and is planned from 2022” (Georgescu, 2023).

OSCE – TRUST AND SECURITY IN EUROPE

On 13 September 2023, 58 representatives of the member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) paid a visit to the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”, as part of an activity of mutual transparency, organised according to the provisions of the Document of in Vienna 2011 on measures to increase confidence and security in Europe. As part of this activity, a static exhibition of equipment and equipment from the Land Forces was organised at the brigade headquarters, as well as a demonstration tactical exercise, and in the automated range from Topraisar, the 341st Infantry Battalion “Constanța” organised a tactical exercise in the field, company level, and another exhibition of techniques and equipment from the Land Forces (Băltărețu, 2023). The new thematic exhibition was visited and appreciated: *The military history of Dobrogea from the earliest times to the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești”*.

The Russian invasion was condemned on numerous occasions within the OSCE, this being considered a unique situation, unprecedented in the organisation’s history, as a result of the lack of coercive measures for the Russian Federation. Since before the outbreak of the armed conflict, Ukraine has been an important area of interest for the OSCE, especially after 2014, following the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the establishment of the separatist regime (strongly supported by Russia) in eastern Ukraine¹⁹.

A drone attack took place on the night of 25 to 26 September 2023 on the Ukrainian bank of the Danube, in the area of Orlovka and some pieces fell near a ferry with Romanians leaving for Isaccea. The Coast Guard announced the closure of traffic through the Isaccea border crossing point. In the context of increasingly frequent Russian attacks on the Ukrainian bank of the Danube, in the second part

¹⁹ When the Russian invasion of Ukraine began, on 24 February 2022, the mission still had approximately 500 monitors on the ground, who continued their work during the evacuation of the Ukrainian civilian population from the war-affected areas. Thus, starting from the second half of March 2022, the OSCE mission on Ukrainian territory was suspended.

of September 2023, the Ministry of National Defence discussed with the authorities in Brăila, Constanța, Galati and Tulcea the importance of correct coordination in a crisis situation, under the provisions of Government Decision no. 969/2007 “regarding the organisation, development and management of training for the defence of persons with management duties in the field of public administration, at central and local level, being, at the same time, a continuation of the dialogue supported by the leadership of MoND with the representatives of local public authorities”²⁰.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

An active role of Romania within NATO is crucial for promoting national interests at the inter-allied level and integrating Romania’s security concerns into the North Atlantic Alliance’s decision-making process. On 1 November 2023, the Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” celebrated 145 years of existence with a military and religious ceremony at the Monument to the Heroes of the War of Independence. The event took place at the plateau in front of the House of Culture in the Constanța garrison²¹. It is also a time to reflect on past achievements and set new goals in the service of the Motherland.

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²⁰ *Armata a băgat în ședință autoritățile din Dobrogea, după atacurile cu drone rusești de la graniță*, in “Digi 24”, 27 September 2023, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/armata-a-bagat-in-sedinta-autoritatile-din-dobrogea-dupa-atacurile-cu-drone-rusesti-de-la-granita-2520179>.

²¹ “Drill Team” exercises, historical reenactments, the Survival Range and the new permanent exhibition of Dobrogean military history from the earliest times to the 9th Mechanised Brigade “Mărășești” were presented to the public, at the headquarters of the “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum. Constanța branch, inaugurated in September 2023.

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COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE CHURCH IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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The process of secularisation, which started with the French Revolution in the late 18th century, was at its peak in the twentieth century when the Church was besieged by atheist regimes that emerged from the ashes of former empires after the First World War. However, the reverberations of this European anticlerical phenomenon were affected by the peculiarities of the Romanian space. Here, the church was called an auxiliary of the state, the support of the Church in preserving the state integrity being a constant throughout the centuries of existence of the Romanian people. This support was all the more visible in the first half of the twentieth century when the Romanian people fought for survival and national wholeness. These issues will be addressed, through the historical research method, during this article.

Keywords: army; church; "Metropolitan of the War"; military clergy; communist regime;

INTRODUCTION

The awakening of national consciousness in the mid-nineteenth century made the struggle that would unite Romanians within the borders of a single state and under a single flag inevitable. In anticipation of this struggle, the state authorities did not neglect the psychological and practical benefits expected by an active involvement of the Church within the Army. However, this involvement was not chaotic, but organised, according to a set of laws and regulations that were constantly updated, depending on the needs and requirements of the time.

Romania's entry into World War I led to the active involvement of all clerical personnel in the battles of 1916-1918. A character that brought invaluable services to the Army and People during this period was the Metropolitan of Moldavia, Pimen Georgescu, also dubbed the "*Metropolitan of the War*". He instructed that the authorities were provided with "*all available utilities of Metropolitanate*" (Pinca, 2010, p. 49).

The activity carried out by Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu for the benefit of the Army was a particularly extensive one, having a history dating back to the pre-war period. Thus, in 1913, he intervened with the Ministry of War to send doctors to monasteries to familiarise monks and nuns with the notions of small surgery. The results of this activity were not delayed, as "*both in the 1913 campaign and the 1916-1918 campaign, the teams of monks and nuns, sent to various hospitals by the wounded, they brought great services to the country*" (ib., p. 328). These great services were rewarded by the Army by granting the rank of second lieutenant in reserve to those military priests who distinguished themselves by valour during the defence battles of the autumn of 1916¹.

¹ Through report no. 473 of 12 February 1917, Archpriest Constantin Nazarie requested the granting of the rank of officer for the clergy who were with the troops in the trenches of the First World Conflagration. For more details, see Marius Catalin Mitrea, *Episcopia Armatei Române – Apostolat în slujba Patriei*, <https://www.aos.ro/wp-content/misiunea/MISVol1Art.13.pdf>, p. 55, retrieved on 12 August 2023.

LEGAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE CHURCH AT THE DAWN OF THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

The widening of the demographic basin of Romania, as a result of the First World War, has led to an increase in the number of soldiers of non-Orthodox confession. This diversification of the confessional spectrum among the troops emphasised the need to update the clerical-military legislation. The initiative of this change was taken by the *“Metropolitan of the War”* and the Minister of War, General Ioan Rășcanu. The new law on the organisation of the military clergy was passed on 19 July 1921. Thus, the Inspectorate of the military clergy within the Ministry of Interior was institutionalised. Within the ecclesiastical framework was born the Military Episcopate of the Romanian Army in the organigram of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Păcurariu, p. 29). This law, contained in 12 articles, legislated the status of Orthodox priests and those who met the needs of minority confessions.

The first called to shepherd this institution was Archpriest Vasile Saftu² from Brașov (Pinca, pp. 86-141). He was appointed the first Inspector of the Military Clergy by Royal High Decree no. 5303 of 10 December 1921. Unfortunately, his death, on 6 April 1922, took place before the completion of the stages preceding the inauguration ceremony. These stages were: tonsured a monk, ascending to the rank of archimandrite, ordaining as an archpriest, royal investiture, and installation in the episcopal see. The first to go through these stages and occupy both de facto and de jure the position of Army Bishop was Justinian Teculescu (Păcurariu, lb.). He was followed by the priest Dr Ioan Stroia, installed in this position on 20 May 1925. Under his supervision, the seat of the military Episcopate was moved from Bucharest to Alba Iulia. During his pastoral care, the priests of the former Austro-Hungarian army were integrated into the Romanian army. Brigadier General Ioan Stroia fought a fierce battle against the so-called *“sects”* who were active in the army and who had received 110 patents for *“a spread freely, unconditionally, their heresies throughout the country”* (Pinca, p. 77).

² Vasile Saftu (1863-1922), bishop of the Romanian Army. He was born in Brașov on 12 June 1863. In the period 1881-1888, he graduated from the Seminary “Andreian”, and pursued theological, philosophical and pedagogical studies at the University of Lipsca, obtaining the title of Doctor of Philosophy in 1888, with the work *“A comparison of physical education at Locke and Rousseau, the inaugural dissertation for obtaining the dignity of a doctor at the Philosophical Faculty of Lipsca”*. In 1896, he was appointed priest at the church “Sf. Nicolae” of Șcheii Brașovului, and in 1911 he became archpriest. He was actively involved in organising the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia in December 1918.

The military clergy functioned, based on the law, from 1921 to 1937, when a reorganisation of this institution became more and more stringent. This new law was adopted on 22 March 1937. Among the novelties brought into the organisation of the Military Episcopate was the establishment of a new function, that of the priest of the garrison. This measure was imposed by the financial hardships generated by the Great Depression, which no longer allowed the existence of a priest beside each regiment. Based on the new law, for various confessions, except the Orthodox one, diurnal priests were co-opted instead of active military priests, and the election of the military bishop was made by the close collaboration between the leadership of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the leadership of the Army. Of the three candidates proposed by the Holy Synod, the Ministry of National Defence designated the one whom it considered fit physically and culturally to serve as Inspector of the Military Clergy. In addition to the rank of bishop, within the ecclesiastical organisation, the appointed one was to receive the rank of brigadier general, thus achieving an assimilation of the priestly degrees with the military ones³ (Pentelescu, 2016, pp. 120-121).

Based on this new legislation, the head of the Military Clergy Inspectorate was elected His Grace Partenie Ciopron⁴ (lb., pp. 21-24). *“The Hierarch Partenie”*, as it was called, led the Military Clergy Inspectorate through the troubled times of the Second World War and during the installation of the communist regime in Romania. Following the territorial lawlessness suffered in the summer of 1940, the morale of the Romanian army *“reached the ground”* (AMNR, file 846, p. 25). For this reason, the former soldier from Oituz⁵, accompanied by the priest Colonel Ioan Dăncilă, travelled the country performing numerous religious services, completed

³ The assimilation of the ranks of the active military priests was done as follows: the garrison priest was assimilated to the rank of Captain, the division priest was assimilated to the rank of Major or Lieutenant Colonel, the army corps priest was assimilated to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel or Colonel, the military clergy inspector was assimilated to the rank of Brigadier General. Active military priests had the right to be greeted by all soldiers, as well as by lower or equal ranks in rank. Their duties extended from confessions, giving communions to the soldiers in posts, or at least once a year, to the vigil and care of the religious and moral education of the soldiers.

⁴ Partenie Ciopron (1896-1980), Romanian military bishop. He was born in the village of Păltiniș, Dorohoi County. He fought in the First World War and was wounded in the battle of Oituz. After the end of the war, he became a monk at Slatina Monastery in 1921. A graduate of the Faculty of Theology in Chernivtsi (1929-1933), he climbed the steps of the clerical hierarchy, being ordained archimandrite in 1934. Following the death of the Bishop of the Romanian Army, Doctor Ioan Stroia, on 18 April 1937, Doctor Partenie Ciopron climbed another hierarchical step. On 10 October 1937, the latter was enthroned in Alba Iulia as Bishop of the Romanian Army, having the rank of Brigadier General. He led an intense campaign to revive the institution of the military clergy. After the Communists took power in 1948, the Army Episcopate was disbanded, and Partenie Ciopron came to the attention of the Securitate due to his activity during the Second World War.

⁵ Some sources claim that Partenie Ciopron fought in Oituz, where he was also wounded; see A. Pentelescu, *op.cit.*, p. 83; Other sources claim that he fought in Mărășești, for this see P. Pinca, *op.cit.*, p. 235.

by moralising speeches for the mobilised soldiers. The coming to power of General Ion Antonescu on 6 September 1940, and the installation of a military government led to an accentuation of the symbiotic relationship between the church and the army. General Ion Antonescu understood that for national salvation, close cooperation between priests and civilians was necessary. At the end of September 1940, General Ion Antonescu launched a *“call to the servants of the altars”*, requesting the help of the clergy in what was to become known as the *“holy war against Bolshevism”* (Constantiniu, 2011, p. 390).

For this campaign were brought under arms and equipped an impressive number of soldiers⁶ (Boda, 2016), supported by numerous Orthodox priests. On 22 June 1941, there was a Brigadier General priest, a Colonel archpriest, 18 army corps priests with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and 88 Garrison priests with Major and Captain ranks. In addition to these active military personnel, for short periods of time, 200 priests from rural areas were mobilised, to whom the rank of captain was granted. One aspect that must be emphasised, in this social context, is the national humiliation of 1940, which has, paradoxically, generated an attenuation of ecclesiastical differences, as well as the formation of a common front of various confessions against the atheist scourge promoted by the communists⁷ (Păcurariu, pp. 31-32).

To participate in the action initiated on 22 June 1941, the military clergy benefited from varied equipment, adapted to the reality of war. It consisted of a *“bag of leather upholstered on the inside and provided with partitions. In this bag, the priest always had the Epitrachelion, the Metal Box with Holy Communion, the Cross, the Holly Water and Panikhida, two small pieces of blanket, the spoon, a bottle of wine, a metal plate, a bottle of spirits and matches. The latter were necessary for the disinfection of the spoon. In this bag, the priest also had the individual dressing’s package and the personal notebook, especially for noting deaths in any circumstances”* (Pentelescu, p. 141).

The activity of the lower echelons of the priesthood during the Second World War was particularly prolific, especially on the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, where the population had been subjected to an extensive

process of atheization. Throughout the territory ruled by the USSR, the churches were transformed into barns and cinema halls. The military priests, at the vanguard of the Army, first entered the villages of Ukraine and southern Russia: *“In the places where they arrived, the priests married, baptized, and so on, they sealed tombs and officiated jobs forbidden until then by the Soviet regime”* (Pop, 2018, p. 469). For example, the image offered by the village of Rosfiatowka is suggestive of thousands of other villages throughout the USSR: *“The altar became a screen. On the walls, instead of the icons, there was Stalin’s face, and instead of the Gospel quotations, some of the words of the man who imagined that he could fight with God are written in bright red. However, with a joy to admire, the people throw everything out of the church, making room for the cross and icons”*⁸. (Niculescu et al, 1998, p. 11).

To reduce the effects of communism, the priests of the army undertook extensive actions to recreate and reshape the places of worship. The testimony is, for example, the story of priest Dumitrescu H. Marin, who was accompanying the 2nd Mixed Brigade Mountain Hunters with the 38th Mountain Ambulance and who, as he was pictured in the Report no. 24/1941, in the 23 passed localities he performed the following religious assistance actions of the civilian population of Ukraine: 843 baptised, 574 received Holy communion, 4 churches opened for worship, 7 open chapels, etc., 434 prayers, 606 memorial services, 55 Holy unction services, 22 funerals, 8 divine services, 27 water sanctification. In a statement for the period 15 September-15 December 1942, the same priest, Captain Dumitrescu H. Marin, confessor of the 9th Mountain Battalion A.P. (active part), wrote among other things: *“I have endeavoured and God has helped me to gather and identify all the soldiers of unity who have given their lives so far away from their beloved country and all their loved ones for the Holy Cross and the justice of the Romanian Fatherland. I officiated the funeral service for 75 brother soldiers, heroes of the 9th Mountain Battalion, and several 145 brother soldiers, heroes from other units. A part (60) was buried in the cemetery formed by me in the municipality of Bakssan Kaukazia, and the rest (160) in the cemetery I built in the churchyard of Algir Kaukazia. So, in Gruzia, under the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains”* (Ib., pp. 25-26). The activity of the priests was much more visible in times of calm when they could officiate the Divine Liturgy and address a moralising message to the troops, such as, for example, this: *“I then preached, a priest notes, about the importance of letting go of personal*

⁶ For the offensive over the Prut, the Romanian Army had at its disposal several 14 divisions. Their strength was of about 150,000 soldiers. For more details, see Adrian Gheorghe Boda (2016). *Aliați și dușmani în percepția combatanților români în cel de-Al Doilea Război Mondial*, Cluj Napoca, unpublished doctoral thesis.

⁷ In addition to Orthodox priests, representatives of military confessions also went on the Eastern Front, along with troops. Thus, in the army organigram, we find both Catholic and Greek-catholic priests, Reformed priests and even Mullahs.

⁸ For more details on the state of Orthodox churches in Ukraine, see Niculescu et al, *op.cit.*

worries and desires and focusing only on the Homeland as the ultimate goal, which I have described using various ideas and images, as the highest good in the world after God, for whose defence and honour we should be willing to sacrifice ourselves. (Pinca, pp. 247-248).

At the higher level of the military clergy, Bishop Partenie Ciopron had an intense cultural activity, editing monthly publications *“Biserica basarabeană”* (totalising 14 issues, with over 450 pages) and *“Arma cuvântului”* (totalising 19 issues, with about 64 pages each). In this magazine, Partenie Ciopron vehemently sanctioned the Soviet territorial abduction since 1940, calling it *“a heavy and unexpected ordeal”*. These publications ceased to appear, as the Russians gained ground, the first in 1943, and the last in 1944. The advance of the Russians also meant the withdrawal of priests sent by Partenie Ciopron to carry out the re-Christianisation of Transnistrians. After 23 August 1944, military priests continued their work by accompanying the troops in the Western Campaign. Their work was hampered by collaboration with a regime that had been trying to suppress them since first contact. To this cohabitation, it was added the need to explain to the peasant soldiers why the *“holy war”* was stopped and why their comrades were taken prisoners by the Soviet ally, even after the return of arms⁹ (*“Veterani pe drumul onoarei și jertfei”*, 2002, p. 275). As Moscow’s influence on the government in Bucharest increased, the situation of military priests became increasingly undesirable for new decision-makers. Just before the end of the war, the *“brother from the East”* started the process of total secularisation of society. It began with the Metropolitans of Bucovina and Basarabia passing under the jurisdiction of the Russian Patriarchate, while the Bishops of the White Fortress-Ismail and Hotin were disbanded shortly after the occupation of these regions in 1944. Inside the country, on 20 April 1945, the Metropolitanate of Oltenia was abolished. (Pinca, p. 374).

THE END OF THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ARMY AND THE CHURCH

To eliminate any outbreak of future resistance against the communist regime, Partenie Ciopron, together with the rest of the military priests, were placed under surveillance by the Securitate bodies. In an information note dated 12 May 1947, it was stated, inter alia, the fact that *“the bishop and his associates are considered to*

⁹ After 23 August 1944, the treatment applied to the Romanian soldiers captured by the Soviets was, most of the times, a special cruelty: driven from behind by machine guns, embarked on trains without windows, without food, without water, and sent to prisoner camps in the USSR.

be a highly reactionary group that is fuelling a strong reactionary response in the city (Alba Iulia) and the County, and the Bishop himself voted with the *«eye»* (the electoral sign of the National Peasant Party, led by Iuliu Maniu in the parliamentary elections of 1946). I suggest that the Bishop be replaced and his associates be transferred to other locations. I recommend that an ECP (education, culture and propaganda) unit be established within the Military Episcopate”¹⁰. (Pinca, p. 380). For three years, the Army Episcopate struggled with forced layoffs and retirements, trying to keep the priesthood in the army structure. The attacks against the collaboration between the Army and the Church, which the bishop of the army faced, were accompanied by attacks against the influence exercised by the Church on civil society. In his fight, Partenie Ciopron resorted to the relations he had with some senior officers who still had some political influence. However, his attempts were doomed to failure in August 1944, when Romania entered under the sphere of influence of the USSR. The catastrophic situation of both the army and the clergy was sealed by the abdication of King Michael on 30 December 1947. The day after the abdication of the king, Petru Groza paid a visit to the second patriarch of Romania, Nicodim Munteanu (1939-1948). Following this meeting, the patriarch resigned. His last words, apparently prophetic, were retained by Dudu Velicu, former secretary general in the Ministry of Cults, the former patriarch remarking that, *“if he left, I no longer have any sense”* (Ib., p. 56). The communists did not wait long to remove the religious factor from the new political order of the army. Thus, by articles 58, 59, 60, and 61 of Decree-law no. 177 for the general regime of religious cults of 4 August 1948, the Romanian Army Episcopate was abolished. With the revocation of Law no. 68 of 19 March 1937, for the organisation of the military clergy, the military churches and chapels, with their entire inventory, passed into the property of the parishes within which they were located, and the Episcopal Cathedral of Alba Iulia, with its entire patrimony, passed into the property of the Episcopacy of Cluj, Vad and Feleac (art. 59). Through Art. 60, military priests could work in various parishes or could retire, under certain conditions (Maciu, p. 38). By the same art. 60, His Grace Partenie Ciopron was made available to the Holy Synod, preserving its titles and rights.

¹⁰ A classic measure of removing undesirable cadres, often used by communists, was retirement. Thus, through a Draft Decree, issued by the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Cults, on 3 July 1948, it was decided that *“members of the Military Clergy who, on the date of publication in the Official Gazette of this Law, have at least 20 years of effective public service, will be able to request retirement by way of derogation from the provisions of the general pension law, adding to it a 5-year increment to the time served”*.

By this law, fruitful collaboration between the Church and the Army was obliterated. The disappearance of the Army Episcopate meant the end of a centuries-old tradition of the presence of priests in the ranks of the country's army. "Religious assistance was removed from the structures of the Romanian army. Atheism replaced religion in barracks, military schools and hospitals, garrisons, with the army being separated from the official church". (Pinca, p. 384).

CONCLUSIONS

The collaboration between the Church and the State in the military field in the first half of the twentieth century was generated by the violent context in which the Romanian people evolved and existed. These circumstances caused the servants of the altars to be both on the front line and behind it, ensuring, under not always favourable conditions, the moral support of the troops.

Throughout history, the Church and the Army have represented two of the fundamental institutions of the Romanian people and, in addition, institutions with real credibility in the lives of the citizens of this nation, "two twinned institutions, which form the foundation of the state organisation", as stated by General Brigadier Bishop Partenie Ciopron (Nicolescu et al, p. II).

The geopolitical situation in which Romania was at the end of the Second World War did not allow the presence of priests in the army anymore, the place of the church and the priests was taken by the Romanian Workers' Party and its propaganda ideas.

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"FERDINAND I" MILITARY HIGH SCHOOL IN CHIŞINĂU – "NATIONAL ENERGY POOL"

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After the Union of Bessarabia with Romania (1918), the necessary premises were created for the connection of the education from the province to the national values. The subjects of study were taught in Romanian. In Chişinău, a military high school was set up to form the military and patriotic elite.

Based on archival sources, memoirs, period press and literature, it will be presented the process of establishing this educational institution in the second city, by population, in greater Romania, as well as its evolution. Thus, in the historical context, the human resources (teachers, pupils) and the activity framework of "Ferdinand I" Military High School in Chişinău will be highlighted.

Keywords: "Ferdinand I" Military High School; Chişinău; greater Romania; Bessarabia; interwar period;

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Military secondary education in Romania was organized in 1872. The School of Military Sons of Iasi, founded in 1872, is considered the first military institution of the kind, a "military high school". The school syllabus included courses similar to the civilian ones, plus those with military specifics (Răpan, Buşe, 2009, p. 990). In the autumn of 1919, the number of military high schools in Romania increased from three, which were up to the world armed scourge, to five, through the establishment of two new school institutions, in Târgu-Mureş and Chişinău. The need to establish a military high school in the second city of Romania, by population, was inherent in the Romanian province unrecognized by the Bolsheviks (Ib., p. 991).

On 25 June 1919, 60 copies of "Conditions for admission to military and officer candidate schools" were transmitted to the prefectures of Bessarabia [Agency, F. 723, inv. 1, on the address of the prefectures of Bessarabia, f. 24 (I), p. 93]. Until 1925, the activity of military high schools was based on the directives coming from the Directorate of military high schools and the provisions of the regulations in force. In 1925, however, the Ministry of War of Romania developed the "Regulation of military high schools" for the six military high schools in Romania. In the '30s, Romanian military high schools, being boarding schools, were called to become "real national energy plants, pouring iron into the blood of the youth", their desideratum being the training of "bronze characters and healthy bodies, while ensuring a solid intellectual training of the elements necessary for the officer schools" (Nădejde, 1935, pp. 235-237).

The triad after which the designation of military high schools was estimated was "God, Country and King" (Demetrescu, 1935, p. 664). Military high schools had the eight-year education stage, like regular high schools, but with administration and military education subordinated to the Ministry of Armed Forces (Popescu-Spineni, 1939, p. 472). "Atheneum", which appeared in 1935, was the ideology and science magazine of military high schools in Romania, in which materials were published in Romanian and French.

The Military High School was created together with two other military high schools in Romania, by the High Decree no. 3613 of 21 August 1919, signed by King Ferdinand I. From the point of view of the education system, military high schools

were subordinated to the Military high schools Directorate, and from the administrative point of view – to the army corps within which they were located. In the case of the Military High School in Chişinău, it was subordinated to the 3rd Army Corps. In the mid-'30s, the director of military high schools was General Dumitru Martian, and General S. Ion Demetrescu was a subdirector.

INAUGURATION AND OFFICIAL VISITS

At the inauguration of the Military High School in Chişinău, on 16 November 1919, have participated Generals Lupescu and Ghinescu, Archbishop Nicodim, the minister of Bessarabia and the authorities of the city of Chişinău (Agency, F. 1862, inv. 3, f. 3, p. 105).



“King Ferdinand I” Military High School
(National Library of Romania. Archival no. 19039)

Bessarabia, especially Chişinău, piously honoured the memory of the Royal House by names of high schools, streets, hospitals, orphanages, sports fields. In this context, in 1920, the name of King Ferdinand I was given to Military High School (Grati, 2020, p. 112). The high school was visited by King Ferdinand I and Queen Maria in May 1920 as well as by French Generals Berthelot and Le Rond, Marshals Alexandru Averescu and Ion Antonescu.

The itinerary of the troops that paraded on the occasion of official visits in Chişinău included the Military High School. It happened, for example, on 1 November 1920, when the President of the Council of Ministers, General Alexandru Averescu, arrived in Chişinău by train. On that occasion, the carriage circulation was interrupted for the Alexandru cel Bun Street, between Pushkin and Post Street, only trams having the circulation right (Agency, F. 723, inv. 1, f. 43, p. 380).

SITE

Initially, the building was located in a space that sheltered other institutions in the city, a space unsuitable for a school with military specific. In 1926, “King Ferdinand I” Military High School in Chişinău claimed the building of the Boys’ High School no. 2 “M. Eminescu”, located on the main artery of the city¹. Based on the decision of the authorities, the Boys’ High School no. 2 was evacuated from its headquarters in favour of the Military High School. The Administration of the Boys’ High School submitted a protest memo to the President of the Council of Ministers, against that decision, mentioning that it was: “an undeserved blow to a cultural institution with a past worthy of all praise”. Next, it was revealed that the state contributed to the construction of the institution by only one third of its value, and the rest of the expenses were from the private funds of the Lyceum and from donations. The decision of the authorities remained in force (Creţu, 2020, pp. 143-144). The educational institution was located in a monumental building on the central boulevard Carol II, building erected for that purpose and which was destroyed in 1944.

In the building was a painting depicting King Ferdinand standing (later, the Soviets replaced him with the statue of Joseph V. Stalin). Upstairs, there was the bust of King Ferdinand and a watch, in the vicinity of which the students were serving their sentence in an unshakeable position (“right”) for an hour or two (Chişinău, 2018, p. 133). On the ground floor, the building had a bright mosaic. The site was equipped with lecture halls, a library, laboratories, bedrooms, a gym and a model sports field (more than 2,000 spectators could attend the events there). In the courtyard of the educational institution shady trees grew, and access to the school was achieved by an iron staircase.

¹ Currently, the building houses the Intelligence and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova.

The holy place of the high school was the Chapel of *St. Emperors*, located on Alexandru cel Bun Street, corner with Constantin Stamati. Parishes and theology professors were priests Gavriil Zlatov, licensed in theology, Grigore Zaharescu (Județul, 1922, p. 75). There, every Sunday, religious services were held, and the students prayed that they would take a good grade on the thesis, pass an exam, for not *repeating the class* (Gheorghiu, 1993, pp. 75-76).

The Barrack *“Moara Roșie/Red Mill”* was occupied by the bedroom of the Military High School. For this place was to be paid a rent in the amount of 7,091 lei (Agency, F. 1404, inv. 1, f. 1453, pp. 11, 17).

COMMANDERS

High school commanders were Lieutenant Colonel M. Hristescu (1919-1924), Colonel Vasile Nădejde, PhD (1924-1935), author of a fundamental monograph – *“History of the Romanian Army”*, as well as of a project to reform the military secondary education system in Romania, Colonel Nicolae Ghica (1936-1939), Colonel Vasile Cialac (1939-1940). The last commander of the high school, before its dissolution, was Captain Valeriu Crintea.

TEACHERS

In total, 119 teachers, including 19 Bessarabians, all with higher education, were active at the Lyceum. Teachers were carefully selected. Eminescologist Augustine Z.N. Pop (real name: Augustin Popescu) was a Romanian teacher. In 1933, as a substitute teacher of Romanian language was hired the writer George Dorul Dumitrescu, the author of some memories about Chișinău (Dumitrescu, 1936; Dumitrescu, 2022). The Latin teacher was Gheorghe Dogaru, who later became a professor. Music teachers Orest Tarasenco and Alexandru Pavlov, from Chișinău, were conducting an orchestra. Another music teacher was the composer Mihail Barca, former director of the Chișinău Conservatory and head of the composition and counterpoint department. In 1921, Elena Alistar, a former member of the Country Council, married Romanescu (from the Kingdom of Romania) (the name with which she would later protect her identity in communist Romania), was also a mathematician, teacher at *“Ferdinand I”* Military High School and *“B.P. Hașdeu”* Boys’ High School no. 1 from Chișinău (Vieru-Ișaeu, 2018, p. 18).

At the High School also worked Vasile Harea, PhD, former deputy of the Country Council. Ștefan Grosu taught natural sciences, Alexandru Vicol and Ioachim Obada – Latin. History professor Ion Ciulcu founded the History Society in Chișinău,

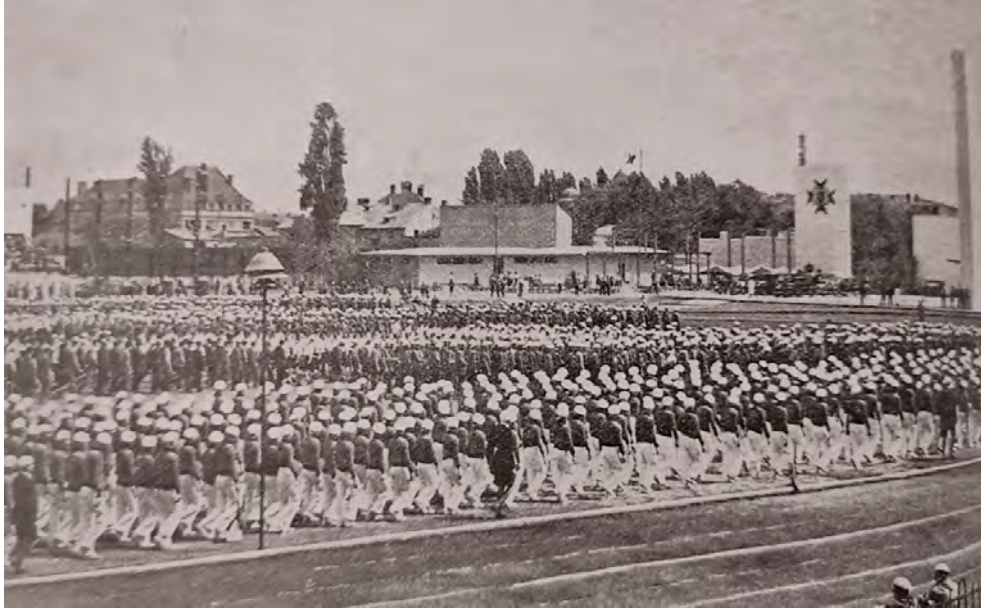
in 1936. Religion was taught by Professor Grigore Zaharescu, a graduate in 1915 of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Bucharest. In the religion class there was an icon. Gheorghe Rașcu, teacher of geography at *“King Ferdinand I”* Military High School, was active through cumulation at the Theological Seminary in Chișinău. Teachers of physical education were the writer Nicolae Dunăreanu and Platon Aparaschivei, the latter a graduate of the Higher Institute of Physical Education in Bucharest and of the University Pedagogical Seminary in Iași. In the Gym, the students were performing sports. Alongside the morning refreshment, physical education classes and various sports were practiced. At one and a half years of activity of the High School, it was already mentioned that the institution was *“a national energy outbreak where sports have reached the highest degree”* (Cronica, 1921, p. 34). Students presented *“a beautiful sports probation”* in front of King Ferdinand (Ib., p. 35). The example of the Military High School was followed by the entire Army. The high school football team was considered one of the strongest in Chișinău. The most common places to play football in the capital of Bessarabia were the Sports Field *“King Ferdinand I”*, the Hay Square (near the Central Penitentiary) and the sports field of the *“Ferdinand I”* Military High School.

STUDENTS

In order to be admitted to the High School, a series of tests had to be passed. For class I – a written test in arithmetic and Romanian language; an oral examination in the subjects of the primary classes. For the other classes, a written test was held in mathematics, with applications to the physical-chemical sciences, Romanian language with a subject from Romanian literature, history, geography or natural sciences, in French or German; an oral examination of the matter of the preceding classes. Following the tests, the average grade was calculated, which, in class I, was gathered from the three notes obtained at two written and an oral test, divided by three. In the following classes, the average grade was calculated from the sum of the average of the written papers with the average of the oral exam, divided by two.

In the first school year, 1919-1920, 120 students were admitted, including 17 Bessarabians, three from Chișinău (Ion Fortocheanu, Paul Odobescu, Gheorghiu Patrichi). The high school consisted of three classes – two first class (50 students) and one fifth grade class. The fifth grade was completed with 20 pupils from Iași, 4 pupils from Craiova. Each student had his or her order from the first day of study, thus ensuring a focus on studies, physical training and behaviour in society. The lesson schedule included seven hours a day (8:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00),

and the lesson preparation schedule, which was also held in the classroom, lasted four hours (17:00-20:00 and 07:00-08:00). Each class had an officer in charge of the pupils.



Military high school students, 8 June 1937
(Encyclopaedia of Romania, 1938, vol. I, p. 714)

Because it was considered that in some Romanian provinces there was a preponderance of minority elements in secondary education in 1934, the Military High School Directorate ordered 40 percent of the seats to be reserved for pupils from Bessarabia at the Military High School in Chişinău, for those from Transylvania at the Military High School from Târgu Mureş and for those from Bucovina at the Military High School from Chernivtsi (Nădejde, p. 239).

The celebration of the Eparchial School for Girls in Chişinău, on 21 November, made the city authorities to issue a decision to suspend the classes. There was a general cleaning. Moreover, the auditorium, the festive hall and the holy place were adorned with white chrysanthemums and embroideries. For the students from the upper classes, in the evening, a majestic ball was organized, to which were invited students from the Theological Seminary and the Military High School (Vnorovschi, 1995, pp. 222-223).

DISCIPLINES

Within the educational institution were taught: religion, Romanian language, French, German, Latin, Greek language, history, geography, mathematics, natural sciences, calligraphy, drawing, philosophy, moral education, chemistry, law, hygiene, vocal music, instrumental music, physical education, manual work, military instruction, psychology, political economy. The studies lasted for eight years. At the end of the studies, an exam was held that included the following tests: written – Romanian, French, mathematics; oral – Romanian, French, history, geography of Romania, philosophy and law, mathematics, physics-chemistry. Based on the baccalaureate diploma, the graduates continued their studies in military schools in Romania.

DISCIPLINARY VIOLATIONS

Despite the results with major resonance in society, of the Spartan disciplinary regime, however, the high school was not without incidents related to human vices. Thus, to mention a few examples, the fifth-class student, Mărcuş Gheorghe, who was on leave in May 1929, consumed alcoholic beverages in the city, in a pub, and as a result, he began to hit with the chair, being beaten for these deeds by some troublemakers. He informed the high school administration that he was ill. Another student, Ilie Ionescu, was caught several times stealing money from his comrades. In April 1932, the student Damian Nicolae, a refugee from the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova, organized drunkenness inside the institution, all of whom were caught in flagrante by the administration of the Lyceum.

Extra-regulatory relationships (fights) and the use of alcoholic beverages in the school territory were not excluded either. Out of 60 cases of breaches of discipline, recorded by researcher Anatolie Leşcu, 19 were related to the use of spirits (31%), nine – leaving the Lyceum (15%), and, eight – theft (13%), seven – extra-regular relationships between students (12%), six – bad behaviour (10%), four – brutality towards officers, soldiers, teachers (7%), and so on, three – holiday and leave delays (5%), two – unmotivated absences from lessons (3%) and two – no return from leave (3%). The punitive forms applied to students were: the drop in wearing grades; the accommodation of the student at his own expense; the temporary seven-day removal from high school; arrest; disciplinary transfer to another high school; final removal from the institution (Leşcu, 2016, pp. 98-99).





Order "Meritul Cultural"
in the rank of "Knight", F Category
– "Promotion of Culture"
(Presidential Decree no. 646
on 24.08.2004)



Order "Meritul Cultural"
in the rank of "Officer", F Category
– "Promotion of Culture"
(Presidential Decree no. 483
on 30.06.2014)



Order "Meritul Cultural"
in the rank of "Comandor", F Category
– "Promotion of Culture"
(Presidential Decree no. 483
on 10.05.2023)



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ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL INSURANCE. SUBSISTENCE

The annual budget of the Military High School exceeded 11 million lei, of which 10 million represented payment for the military, teachers and civilian employees. On 10 February 1927, at 10:00, at the Military High School took place a public tender for the supply of the institution for one year of meat, colonial and maintenance items (Publicaţiune, 1927, p. 4). The students' menu was consistent, being made up of carbohydrates, lipids and proteins. For example, on 9 November 1925, students were offered tea with bread, borsch with meat and vegetables, rice with meat, at 16:30, for breakfast, tea with bread, and for dinner, soup with rice and national stew (Ib., p. 100).

For food insurance, until 1932, the Military High School rented two vegetable gardens (one of 2 ha and another of 1 ha) from the Rascanovca estate, administered by Gr. Pilic. The rent price was 12,300 lei. For the years 1925-1932, the High School was to pay to the Chişinău City Hall an amount of 60,860 lei for the rent of the vegetable garden (Agency, F. 1404, inv. 1, f. 407, p. 42). The high school administration did not recognize any amount of debt. The garden was taken over by the 3rd Gendarme Battalion and the Fire Company of Chişinău [Ib., F. 1404, inv. 1, f. 844, pp. 532-533; ib., f. 6 (II), p. 216v)]. In 1929, the High School had a grazing place of 4 ha, with an annual rent of 7,045 lei, an amount that was paid to the City Hall (Ib., F. 1404, inv. 1, f. 407, p. 76).

Since 1940, the high school was transferred to Craiova, where it was active until 1942.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

"King Ferdinand I" Military High School from Chişinău represented an educational institution with a military profile with a strong ideological, national and security stake in the Romanian state. He brought together professional staff not only from the military field, but also from other sciences that created elitist personalities within the Romanian society. The high school graduates became generals, admirals, physicists, UN employees, doctors, linguists of international reputation, lawyers, engineers, senior officers. Other graduates participated in the Resistance Movement in the Carpathian Mountains (Toma Arnăuţoiu, Nicolae Dabija) (Colesnic, 2015, pp. 129-133).

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