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CONTENTS

SCIENTIFIC EVENT

EDITOR'S NOTE

Volume number 90 of Strategic Impact journal comprises five articles which deal with timely research findings within the realm of political-military topicality, EU's policies and strategies, trends and perspectives in geopolitics and geostrategy, concepts in defence and security, and aspects on the terrorist threat. The articles are followed by the *Scientific Event* and *Guide for authors* rubrics.

Political-Military Topicality. Brigadier General Constantin-Crăișor IONIȚĂ, PhD, opens our journal with an article on the subject of the Russia-Ukraine War and the perspectives of this conflict, with a focus on the main characteristics of the War in Ukraine at the beginning of 2024 to design several scenarios concerning what might happen in the near future. Even if the international support's effects in the theatre of operation are unclear and there is an uncertainty concerning the upcoming US presidential elections, the research could be used to design Eastern European countries' strategies for the evolving situation, including Romania.

NATO and EU: Policies, Strategies, Actions. The second article in the journal, written by Associate Professor Ruslana GROSU, PhD, refers to adapting military doctrines to the specifics of asymmetric conflicts as an ongoing process, which requires a flexible approach that allows military forces to respond effectively to a wide range of threats in a constantly changing security environment. Therefore, transformation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts is an imperative to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the military response to contemporary threats.

Under the heading ***Geopolitcs and Geostrategy: Trends and Perspectives*** Mr. Ljubomir Mitrović has approached a topic that encourages reflection on the implications of the independent state's concept for international peace and security. Since the 'frozen conflict' represents a latent and permanent threat to the security of state and the identity of society, the Serbian national security system is adapting to the dynamics of the security environment by revising its defence capabilities. Due to the escalation of violence on the Eurasian continent and the security situation in the Western Balkans region, the research critically examines the need for the development of a defence system in the case of the Republic of Serbia.

In the ***Defence and Security Concepts*** rubric we find an article signed by Mr. Matei Blănaru, the author explains how the importance of soft power strategies in recent decades has been both overstated in some cases, and understated in others, and, as both approaches have come with negative effects for the initiators, as well as the recipient societies, we can still encounter them in contemporary societies, and

we also encounter more moderate and more balanced successful approaches as well. The author's assessment is that a balanced, professional, realistic approach and, above all, having as its final goal collective benefits for several states, for an entire region, not only for the initiating state, a soft power strategy that does not conceal hard power goals behind it, would be extremely welcome for Romania, and the author suggests several elements to accomplish it.

The Terrorist Threat rubric comprises an article written by Mrs. Iulia-Mihaela Drăgan, PhD Student, which deals with a review of the specialized literature regarding the theoretical delimitations of radicalization, aiming for a definition as comprehensive as possible that would characterize in a holistic manner the process of Islamic radicalization. Also, another objective of the paper seeks to identify the challenges of the academic community regarding the conceptual elements of the phenomenon, using a methodology based on the confrontation of different theories through which the process of Islamic radicalization is explained.

The *Scientific Event* rubric briefly presents aspects of interest from STRATEGIES XXI International Scientific Conference – "The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment", held by CDSSS on February 28th, 2024, in a hybrid format.

Also, this edition includes the *Guide for authors*, a mandatory reading for those who wish to disseminate the research results in our journal.

For those discovering *Strategic Impact* for the first time, the publication is an open-access peer reviewed journal, edited by the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies and published with the support of "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, and, also, a prestigious scientific journal in the field of military sciences, information and public order, according to the National Council for the Accreditation of University Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU).

Strategic Impact is an academic publication in the field of strategic defence and security studies journal that has been published since 2000 in Romanian, and since 2005 in English, in print and online. The journal is currently published exclusively in English. The articles are checked for plagiarism and scientifically evaluated (double blind peer review method). The thematic areas include political science, international relations, geopolitics, the political-military sphere, international organizations – with a focus on NATO and the EU information society, cyber security, intelligence studies and military history. Readers will find in the pages of the publication strategic-level analyses, syntheses and evaluations, views that explore the impact of national, regional and global dynamics.

In terms of international visibility − the primary objective of the publication − the recognition of the scientific quality of the journal is confirmed by its indexing in the international databases CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library, Germany), EBSCO (USA), Index Copernicus (Poland), ProQuest (USA), and

WorldCat and ROAD ISSN, as well as its presence in the virtual catalogues of the libraries of prestigious institutions abroad, such as NATO and military universities in Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, etc.

The journal is distributed free of charge in main institutions in the field of security and defence, in the academia and abroad – in Europe, Asia and America.

In the end, we encourage those interested in publishing in our journal to rigorously survey and assess the dynamics of the security environment and, at the same time, we invite students, master students and doctoral candidates to submit articles for publication in the monthly supplement of the journal, *Strategic Colloquium*, available on the Internet at http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/cs.htm, indexed in the international database CEEOL, Google scholar and ROAD ISSN.

Editor-in-Chief, Colonel Florian CÎRCIUMARU, PhD
Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies

ENTERING THE THIRD YEAR OF THE RUSSIA – UKRAINE WAR: WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Crăişor-Constantin IONIȚĂ, PhD*

The war in Ukraine has entered its third year and no one can predict what may happen in 2024 and the years to come. Many military leaders consider that it is very difficult to predict the conduct of the Russia – Ukraine War in the next six months and beyond.

Even so, Russia's recent momentum, together with the upcoming Ukraine's weaponry and ammunition shortage, as well as the delayed US military aid, should raise serious red flags to political and military analysts regarding some concerns and worries on the current situation in Ukraine and the possible scenarios for the end of 2024 and beyond.

Moreover, the war in Ukraine should be analysed in an international context, taking into consideration the evolution of the situation in the Middle East and Africa, as well as the fierce Sino – American confrontation for the World dominance.

Therefore, this paper will focus on the main characteristics of the War in Ukraine at the beginning of 2024, in order to design several scenarios concerning what might happen in the near future. The research method is based on facts analysis and comparison with the last two years of war. The article has some limitations because the international support's effects on the battlefield are still unclear and the uncertainty regarding the results of the US future Presidential elections. But, even so, it could be used to design Eastern European countries' strategies for the evolving situation, including Romania.

Keywords: The Ukrainian War; Ukrainian defensive lines; scenarios; Competition Continuum; operational momentum; the US military aid; the Russian Offensive; drones.

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Introduction

The Russian unexpected invasion of Ukraine, started on 24 February 2022, evolved during a couple of years from a 'special military operation'[1] to a war of attrition, with both conventional operations and hybrid/asymmetric actions components being undertaken by the two belligerents. The permanent threat of using nuclear weapons as deterrence leverage, as well as the involvement of third parties as proxies and the continuous support provided to one or the other party in the war gives to this conflict a real potential to generate a Third World War.

From the beginning of this war, at the Eastern European border considered by politicians and military leaders as the biggest regional major conventional conflict since the end of the Second World War, the international community was split and grouped in supporters of each belligerent, with only few countries remaining neutral. Therefore, we can say that, "de facto", we already have a divided World in two opposing blocks – the Western democracies (NATO, the EU, G7) supporting Ukraine versus the authoritarian regimes (BRICS, majority of G20) close to Russia.

It is worth mentioning that the 21st century's wars have shown us the indubitable fact that conventional operations can no longer achieve big powers' desired strategic objectives and national interests on their own. As an example, the Coalition military campaigns in Iraq (2003 - 2011) and Afghanistan (2001 - 2021) demonstrated the emergence of a new type of warfare – the Global War on Terror (GWOT) –, in which conventional operations were followed by unconventional actions or were carried out simultaneously, in order to achieve the desired end state. Moreover, military conflicts in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014) highlighted another type of warfare – the Hybrid Warfare –, in which conventional actions were not assumed or recognized and were carried out at the edge of international laws. In the current war conducted by Russia in Ukraine, starting from February 2022, the Kremlin has decided to continue this trend of the Military Art, combining conventional operations with hybrid actions, as stated by the new "Gherasimov's military doctrine" of 'active defence' and 'limited actions'. This is why, the unsuccessful Russian conventional "special military operation", which was conducted by Moscow in Ukraine as a type of German `blitzkrieg` to obtain success in a very short-term was followed by a series of hybrid actions against the so-called 'Collective West'. Same was the case of Kyiv that decided to combine its joint defensive operations with asymmetric actions against Russian local authorities and forces from Ukrainian occupied territories, as well as targeting Russian central and regional authorities and population from across the borders.

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[1] Colonel (Ret.) Vladimir Kvachkov, former GRU and Spetnaz Brigade commander, defined the Russian `Special Military Operation` as „*a military conflict below the level of war that involves the conduct of a single decisive operation of combined arms in a direct approach, with the aim of achieving strategic success (demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine), in a relatively short period of time.*" (McDermott and Barties 2022)

No less important is to analyse this war in Europe in the international context of what is happening in the Middle East and Africa, especially the Israel – Hamas War, the clashes between Iran and Pakistan, the terrorist threat, as well as the coups d'état in Sahel and West Africa. Amongst all, the most important characteristic of the current security environment is represented by the fierce competition between the US and China for world dominance. It is demonstrated that the competition for technology is already underway and both powers are fighting to obtain their supremacy in this domain or to compete on the international sales market. The same is true for the economic competition, while the military one will start in the near future. As a result, the current article analyses what might happen in the third year of the Russia – Ukraine War and beyond, starting from the current situation and taking into consideration some international factors that could influence the possible scenarios of this military conflict outcome.

1. The Current Situation at the Beginning of the Third Year of War

After the Ukrainian 'Summer Counter-Offensive' failed to reach its strategic objectives in November 2023, the tactical situation on the Ukrainian front has changed very seriously. Exploiting their superiority in manpower and resources, as well as the lower military support provided to Kyiv by the West, the Russian Armed Forces succeeded to take over the operational momentum[2], especially on the Eastern front.

In the first five months of 2024, Russian forces occupied approximatively 500 km^2 of Ukrainian territory, including the strategic industrial city of Avdiivka (mid-February) and other five smaller towns and villages, which have allowed them to control the entire Donetsk and Luhansk provinces/oblasts (see Figure no. 1). The fights of March-April in Tonenke, Orlivka, Umanske (three villages situated west of Avddivka), Vodyane (a village which is just northwest of Donetsk City) and Chasiv Yar (the main Ukrainian stronghold outside the city of Bakhmut), together with the May surprise incursions in the Kharkiv Region (line Vovchansk – Starytsia –Lyptsi) across the border, have demonstrated the fragility of the Ukrainian defensive lines in the east, which was amplified by the pressing need of weaponry and ammunition. As President Zelensky has recently pointed out, "...no US aid means we will go back, retreat, step by step, in small steps" (Walsh 2024).

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[2] According to the doctrinal definition, the concept of operational momentum relates to "achieving and exploiting depth during offensive operations. Its purpose is to identify those elements which are essential to achieving and maintaining speed and mass required for operational momentum to overcome enemy resistance and penetrate in depth to strike decisive points." (Lovatt 1987, 3-4)

Figure no. 1: The current situation on the Ukrainian front, May 31ˢᵗ, 2024
(Source: https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/
russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-april-5-2024)

Another immediate need for Kyiv is represented by Western modern air defence systems, as well as fighter aircrafts, such as F-16. This vital requirement is imposed by the Russian continuous bombardment of Ukrainian big cities, targeting especially energy and grain critical infrastructure. In the last four months, using aviation, missiles, drones and artillery fires, the Russian forces have initiated the biggest air strikes of Ukrainian strategic targets in depth, in order to force Ukrainian authorities to capitulate as per the Kremlin's peace conditions. Because some targets were near the border with neighbouring countries, there have been several drones and missiles' crashes on Poland, Romania and Republic of Moldova territories and numerous illegal cross-passing of their national air space by Russian airplanes. At the same time, this continuous air strikes against 15‑20 Ukrainian large power

plants (up to 80% of Ukraine's conventional power plants and more than 50% of its hydroelectric ones) has changed the Kyiv energetic thinking towards building "hundreds of smaller ones that will be more resistant to Russian attacks due to their dispersion." (Guardian staff and agencies 2024) Through this new added approach Kyiv will completely decentralise its electrical grid to reduce its dependence on larger power stations.

Similarly, Ukraine has increased its strikes in the Ukrainian occupied territories and inside the Russian territory as well, with drones, missiles, long-range artillery fire and sabotages. Ukrainian forces succeeded to hit important Russian targets, including ports, airports, oil refineries and depos, with strategic effects on Russian regional authorities and population.

In the maritime operational domain, the efficient use of surface unmanned boats by the Ukrainian Special Operations Forces, together with air drones and missiles against Russian ships navigating near the Ukraine's southern coast or stationed in the Sevastopol Harbour, produced serious damages and even sunk some of them. In turn, this forced the Russian Black Sea Fleet commander to withdraw the majority of his vessels far from the Crimean Peninsula. Therefore, we can strongly affirm that Russia has lost its sea control in the Black Sea's international waters, especially in the north-western part of it, which is now controlled by Ukrainians.

Still, the threat of floating mines in the Black Sea remains, which jeopardises the entire commercial and military freedom of navigation and represents a major security risk for the littoral cities, fishing and energy infrastructure in the Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZs) of Romania, Bulgaria and Türkiye. So far, up to 100 such mines have been discovered and neutralised by those countries' naval forces. As Ankara is against bringing more NATO ships to the Black Sea, the Turkish Defence Minister, Yasar Guler, has proposed a trilateral initiative to establish a `Black Sea Mine Counter Measures Task Force` (MCM Blacksea)), comprising mine hunters and mine cleaners from riverine Allies. In this respect, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in Istanbul on January 11th 2024, which provides that four military vessels from Romania, Bulgaria and Türkiye would carry out patrols to hunt floating mines in the Black Sea. (Kucukgocmen and Hayatsever 2024)

In the Baltic Sea the situation is more relaxed after NATO and Allied riverine countries succeeded to isolate the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Kaliningrad Enclave. There are some analysts who consider this sea as a 'NATO lake' now, after Sweden and Finland joined the Alliance. (Kayali 2023) Only few incidents have happened here since the end of 2023, starting with a Chinese New Polar Bear container vessel crashing the Baltic-connector gas pipeline and disrupting the entire underwater gas supply between Finland and Estonia. Another incident orchestrated by Russia is considered the disruption of the GPS navigation in the Baltic Sea area in March-April 2024, where it was supposed that Russian electromagnetic weapons jammed

satellite signals. Therefore, the increased number of Allied patrols and exercises in the Baltic Sea, together with Finland's initiative to set up a NATO military base on Gotland Island, gave NATO a significant advantage in securing the waters and the airspace of Poland and the Baltic states.

So far, it seems that Russian authorities are in favour of a ceasefire agreement, using China's `12-point peace plan'[3] proposed by President Xi in 2023. The Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, considered this proposal "reasonable, because it was based on an analysis of the reasons for what is happening and the need to eliminate these root causes." (Al Jazeera and News Agencies 2024_1) His statement came before the bilateral meeting with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and the upcoming Ukrainian Summit in Switzerland (it is supposed to accommodate 80-100 countries), regarding President Zelensky's '10-point' peace formula, where Russia was not invited.

In April 2024, NATO foreign ministers agreed for a 100-billion-euro five-year fund to provide aid to Kyiv. (Gray and Irish 2024) This financial initiative will allow the Alliance to have a more direct role in coordinating the supply of arms, ammunition and equipment to Ukraine for the years to come. Apart from this endeavour, other Allied countries, like Germany, Finland and Czech Republic, will provide Ukraine with artillery ammunition. (AlL Jazeera and News Agencies 2024_2) Finland authorities announced that the country will extend its border closure with Russia "until further notice"[4] to protect its territory against migrants illegally crossing the border. At the same time, Romania and Lithuania started to build large NATO military bases near the European eastern border in order to strengthen the Alliance forward presence in their region – the Romanian "Mihail Kogalniceanu" Military Base will be ready, in 2030, to accommodate up to 10,000 military personnel from the US, France, Belgium, Poland, North Macedonia and the Netherlands, whilst the Lithuanian "Rukla" Military Base will be operational in 2027 and will hold 5,000 German troops.

Meanwhile, the war in Ukraine has changed the global arms trade, reinforcing the US global dominance (see Figure no 2). Because of the ongoing war and the threat of the Third World War, Europe became the main actor in purchasing new armament systems, especially from the US (55%) and South Korea. At the same time, if the worldwide trade in weapons declined by 3.3% overall from 2014-16 figures, the amount imported by European countries in the last five years has doubled. (Hasselbach 2024)

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[3] The China's '12-point peace plan' represents Chinese President Xi Jinping position on how to settle the Ukrainian crisis and was discussed with the Russian President Vladimir Putin during their meeting in March 2023. Its full text can be found on the site https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/3/20/full-text-chinas-position-on-settling-the-ukraine-crisis, accessed on 05.04.2024.

[4] The Finland measure to close its border with Russia (1,340 km) started in December 2023 and was extended several times, with the last extension set to expire on 14 April 2024.

USA	42.0%
France	11.0%
Russia	11.0%
Others	10.0%
China	5.8%
Germany	5.6%
Italy	4.3%
United Kingdom	3.7%
Spain	2.7%
Israel	2.4%
South Korea	2.0%
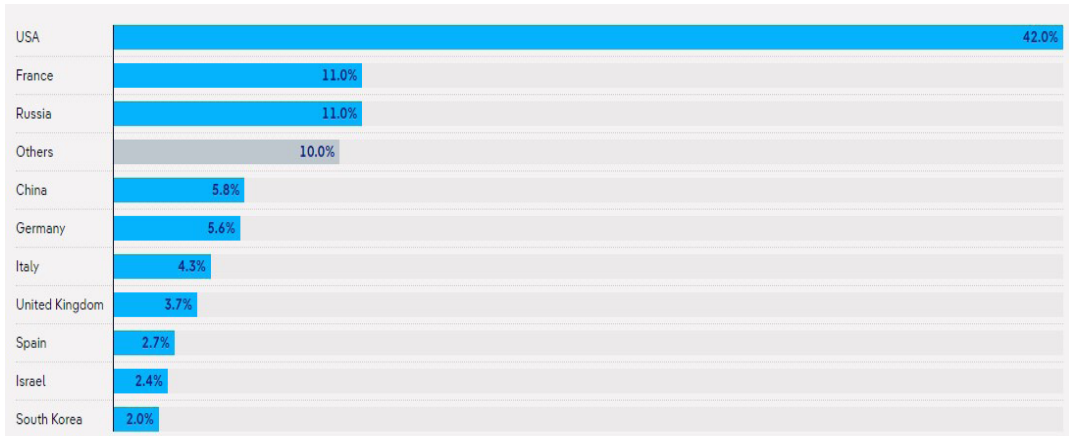
Figure no. 2: The global share of exports of major arms – the 10 largest exporters, 2019-2023 (Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar 2024)

Undoubtedly, Ukraine has been the biggest arms importer over the last two years, having the US, Germany and Poland among its top three suppliers. At the same time, France has overtaken Russia on the list with arms sale biggest exporters, increasing its sales with 47%, especially in Africa, in order to pursue its policy of `strategic sovereignty`. Among its top weapon systems there were Rafale fighter aircraft, submarines and frigates. Germany occupies the fifth position on the list, with the main customer region being the Middle East and Singapore that bought submarines, frigates and corvettes. Italy, the UK and Spain are next on the list after Germany, with sales of their main products to Africa and the Middle East. It is also wise to mention here that European arms companies from Poland and the Czech Republic are struggling to replace the Russian arms sale in Africa, negotiating new agreements to sell their weapons, military equipment and services to North African and Sahel countries. (Echipa Digi 24 2023)

Unfortunately, there is little hope that the war in Ukraine will end soon. No participant, including belligerents and proxy, is keen to finish the conflict before achieving its own political objectives and desired end states. The continuous military tests of new modern weapons in the Ukrainian Theatre of Operation do not help bringing rapidly a lasting peace in the region. Neither the current involvement of the US in the Israel – Hamas War, which halted the American financial and military aid to Kyiv and left Ukrainian army with few supply of weaponry and ammunition from the West.

2. Possible Scenarios for 2024 and Beyond

What is currently happening on the Ukrainian front is very sensitive and challenging for Kyiv authorities. This situation is exacerbated by the halt of the US financial and military aid for 2024 (around 60 billion USD), as well as the very low support provided by the EU and European countries that never arrived on time.

But the 2024's fight for the US Presidency between Joe Biden and Donald Trump constitutes the biggest problem for the Ukrainian President Volodymir Zelenski. This is because the former US President Donald Trump privately said he "could end Russia's war in Ukraine by pressuring Ukraine to give up some territory [n.a. Crimea and the Donbas border region]", which in turn, would reward the Russian President Vladimir Putin and condone the violation of internationally recognised borders by force. Moreover, the Trump's peace plan envisages also an international diplomatic trade in the American interest – limiting NATO expansion towards East (including Ukraine) versus President Putin losing his growing reliance on China. (Arnsdorf, Dawsey and Birnbaum 2024)

This is why many political analysts and military leaders consider the year of 2024 as being crucial for what might happen in Ukraine and the entire security for Europe and worldwide. The operational momentum gained by Russia on the eastern front, which is amplified by the Ukrainian army's shortage of modern weaponry and ammunition, as well as by the low Western military support to Kyiv, will probably be exploited by Kremlin into a possible "Summer" offensive. This perspective will, most likely, collapse Ukraine's defensive lines and allow Russian army to advance in eastern Ukraine. (Ellyatt 2024)

Describing this grim military picture, Elon Musk made another prediction on his X/Twitter page of the near-future situation in Ukraine, mentioning that "there is no chance of Russia taking all of Ukraine, as the local resistance would be extreme in the west, but Russia will certainly gain more land than they have today. The longer the war goes on, the more territory Russia will gain until they hit the Dnepr, which is tough to overcome. However, if the war lasts long enough, Odessa will fall too. Whether Ukraine loses all access to the Black Sea or not is, in my view, the real remaining question. I recommend a negotiated settlement before that happens." (Musk 2024) His prediction was strengthened by Ukrainian President Volodymir Zelenski's several warnings regarding the US' stalled multibillion-dollar package, which if not approved soon, Ukrainian forces will have to "go back, retreat, step by step, in small steps." (Dettmer 2024) He also warned that some major cities could be at risk of falling.

Even if NATO experts have provided solid statements that Moscow is not yet prepared to start an offensive, we could take into considerations three possible scenarios for the "Summer" 2024 or "early Spring" 2025 Russian offensive, as follows:

• Scenario # 1: to intensify the offensive actions carried out since the beginning of this year and break through the Selidovo-Pokrovsk defence line, continuing the offensive on the operational-strategic direction Tavria (Avdiivka-Marinka, Vugledar and Orikhiv/Zaporozhie areas), to extend Russian control over the entire occupied territories of Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions and include them, *in integrum*, in the Russian Federation – *the most likely*;

• Scenario # 2: to switch to the offensive from the Donbass region on the operational-strategic direction Hortitia, for the recapture of the Kharkiv region, threatening later on with taking over Kyiv, concurrently with enforcing and expanding the current defence positions;

• Scenario # 3: to shift to the offensive from Zaporozhye and Kherson regions on the operational-strategic direction Odessa, for the conquest of the Odessa region and, later on, succeeding to realise the junction with forces from Transnistria, concurrently with the improvement of the current defensive positions, – *the most dangerous, because it can lead to the attack of the Republic of Moldova*.

International strategic studies centres such as the British International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) and the American Institute for the Study of War (ISW), assessed that Russia is capable of sustaining an offensive campaign for some time, because it already started to mobilise several hundreds of thousands personnel to augment the forces in Ukraine, replenish tank loses and provide sufficient missiles and drones from Iran and North Korea. By maintaining its recent level of pressure on Ukraine's air defence, attacking its defence industry and attempting to erode Ukrainian civilian and military morale, together with the increasing level of the defence budget at 7.5% of GDP (1/3 of the national budget), Kremlin would be able to continue this war for a long time, at least 5 years.

A separate possible scenario refers to the threat of a Third World War starting either from eastern Europe or from the Middle East. There are many historians and political analysts who consider this period similar to the one before the Second World War. Currently, we have a lot of international factors affecting security of Europe and worldwide, apart from what is happening in Ukraine. We can speak about wars in the Middle East and Africa, with real possibility to extend towards other continents and include third party actors with significant military power as proxy players. Of course, the biggest threat is represented by the Israel – Hamas War, where the Israeli Prim-Minister Beniamin Netanyahu's anti-Palestinian policy could bring Iran and the Arab World on one part in the conflict, as well as the US and its Allies against them.

The African continent harbour many volatile areas, which could very quickly become armed conflict zones. This is the case of countries from North Africa and the Sahel region, where almost every month clashes occur. A similar situation is in East Africa, where the conflict situation from the Red Sea is leaving its mark on the local security.

Apart from regional and local conflicts, there are a lot of crises that affect the security situation in those regions. We can mention the migrant crisis, both in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which affects the local humanitarian situation, causes tensions between the local population and emigrants and amplify the terrorist threat. The food crisis is a result of the Russian hybrid war against the `Collective West`, which, unfortunately, affected the entire world, especially the Middle East and Africa. The energy crisis is also an emanation of the Russia – Ukraine War, with huge challenges and changes in the energy policies of European and Asian countries and increasing the oil and gas prices. Not to mention the predicted economic recession of Western countries, including the US, which is possible to start in 2024 (see Figure no 3).
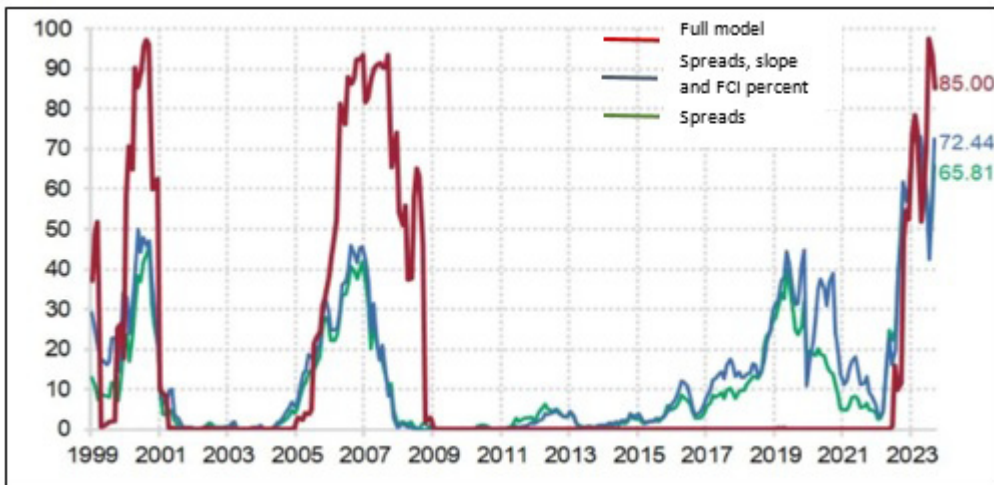
Figure no. 3: The US 12-month ahead recession probability
(Source: https://finance.yahoo.com/news/us-now-
85-chance-recession-022705048.html)

There is another international factor that we should look deeply into – the fierce competition between the US and China for world dominance. The technological confrontation is already happening, with Beijing authorities stating that nothing will stop China to become the world technological hegemon in the near future. They already master the quantum communications and 5/6G and are on the way to become the most significant player in robotics. Same is happening in the economic domain, where the China market has come to play an important part in sustaining world growth, rising its economy in some areas of global trade and investment and becoming a dominant factor. Meanwhile, the Anglo-American financial model is

much tarnished by recent events. (Freeman 2023) Therefore, we can consider that the US is about to lose the global political hegemony, whereas China is not yet capable of succeeding to this role.

Taking into account all these international factors that affect what might happen in Europe and worldwide in the near future, as well as the current situation in Ukraine and the predicted scenarios, there are two important ideas to keep in mind. One refers to the probability that the Russia – Ukraine War will last more than one year and will become a protracted war of attrition that could only be ended by a stalemate in which Ukraine would probably loose part of its territories. According to the assessed situation on the Ukrainian front, this seems to be the best-case scenario for Europe. The second idea refers to the possibility of a Third World War that might happen. There are already many defence ministers and chiefs of Defence Staffs, including those from the UK, Sweden, Romania and generals from NATO, who warned the world could be engulfed by wars involving China, Russia, North Korea and Iran in the next five years and Allies should take all necessary measures to be prepared.

Conclusions

It is very difficult to assess what will happen in the Russia – Ukraine War in the near future. Many Allied generals consider that any assessment of the evolving situation in the Ukrainian Theatre of Operation beyond a six-month period is almost impossible. This is because everything is so complicated, volatile and changeable, starting with belligerents' plans and visions and ending with third parties' involvement and interests.

President Putin's new strategy in Ukraine is about targeting critical infrastructures, in terms of both energy and grains, in order to exhaust the local population and psychologically produce some effects on how Ukrainians view the war. Increasing 'disillusionment' of Ukrainian population regarding its central and local authorities is what Kremlin want to achieve as a strategic effect by letting Ukrainians in cold and hunger to struggle for food and shelter, which, in turn, might jeopardise their will to fight and their morale. There are many voices mentioning today that the number of those who hope Kyiv can negotiate an end of this conflict is growing.

At the same time, Moscow is eager to downsize and even stop the Western military and financial support to Kyiv. By imposing some hybrid threats to the 'collective West', including continuous nuclear deterrence measures and using last year experience – when the US aid was postponed until after the US Presidential elections and the European support was slowed down –, President Putin has taken

several steps ahead of President Zelensky in achieving his goals. In 2024, Kremlin could make further headway by launching a "Summer" offensive to extend the Russian control over the entire occupied territories of Donbass, Zaporozhye and Kherson regions, followed by a later on inclusion of them into the Russian Federation. That means the first proposed scenario is the most likely to happen.

Of course, there are several external and internal factors that could make this scenario start later (perhaps, next year). From an internal point of view, Russia has been confronted in April with the worst flooding of its southern part in decades (Ural Mountains, south of Siberia and the border with Kazakhstan), caused by the river Ural, the third largest river in Europe. President Putin had to efficiently deal with the flooding after his new election, as well as after complaints from the residents of the flooded localities regarding the low involvement of local authorities in solving this issue. A second internal factor is represented by the worker shortages in Russia, which constrains the production in the country and limits a further mobilisation. In the near future, Kremlin has to choose between a continuous growth of Russia's economy and bringing more soldiers on the Ukrainian front.

The most important external factor is represented by the outcome of the next inter-presidential meeting between Putin and President Xi, planned to take place this Summer, as well as the result of the US presidential elections of November 2024. All those results would very much influence Kremlin's next move in Ukraine and against Europe. There is also another external factor which is directly linked to Russia's nuclear deterrence approach. This factor is represented by the international public opinion regarding the possibility of a radiological accident that could happen at the Ukrainian nuclear plants and the negative image of initiating a Third World War with a nuclear component. This kind of incident already happened at the beginning of April 2024, when the Russian-held Zaporizhzia nuclear plant was directly targeted by military strikes (drones), without any official recognition. Russian authorities want to be recognised as respecting the international law and the UN Charter to maintain their supporters and not having the intention to start the Third World War.

The year 2024 is considered to be the most challenging time for Ukraine since the beginning of this war. The Kyiv's dependency on the Western support, especially for aircraft, air defence systems and ammunition, will force its military leaders to consider conducting defensive operations only to maintain their current defensive lines, manage the rest of the Ukrainian territory and prepare themselves for a new counter-offensive in 2025. This defensive posture should be an 'active' in terms of continuing to exploit its naval superiority in the Black Sea, obtaining air superiority in the near future and strengthening the deep strikes in the Ukrainian-occupied territories and inside Russia.

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AN ACADEMIC APPROACH OF THE MILITARY DOCTRINE TRANSFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ASYMMETRICAL CONFLICTS

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Transformation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts is an imperative to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the military response to contemporary threats. This transformation requires a holistic approach that integrates technological innovations, international cooperation, interoperability, reflecting the dynamics and complexity of the global security environment. Military doctrine requires a foundation based on a thorough analysis of the existing threats and potential risks, provided that the asymmetric conflict imposes the need for a quick and adaptable reaction. Asymmetric conflicts differ from classic conflicts by involving a number of actors, and the integration of these actors in the planning and execution of military strategies can support post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction efforts, thus strengthening the resilience of communities and states facing asymmetric threats.

Therefore, adapting military doctrines to the specifics of asymmetric conflicts is an ongoing process, which requires a flexible approach that allows military forces to respond effectively to a wide range of threats in a constantly changing security environment.

Keywords: *military doctrine; asymmetrical conflicts; adaptability; technologies; international cooperation; security environment.*

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Introduction

In the context of asymmetric conflicts, changes in the military doctrines constitute an essential field of research in security and defence studies, because they reflect the adaptation of strategies to combat non-frontal and multidimensional challenges such as terrorism, guerrilla warfare and proxy wars. The study elucidates how states reconfigure their doctrinal principles to counter asymmetric threats, which undermine the traditional balance of military forces. In accordance with NATO AAP-6 (2008), an asymmetric threat is defined as "a threat emanating from the potential use of dissimilar means or methods to circumvent or negate an opponent's strengths while exploiting his weakness to obtain a disproportionate result." (Ashe, et al 2012) M. Rubin considers that "the asymmetrical threat concept describes how the weak might battle the strong, discussions diverge when discussing asymmetrical threats from states versus those posed by non-state actors" (Rubin 2007). Others think that "asymmetric threat is defined as a set of diffuse threats coming from very weak and technically poorly equipped subjects." (Vejnović and Obrenović 2018, 267) We consider that the asymmetric threat refers to the strategic deployment of unconventional methods and means by one party to exploit the vulnerabilities and circumvent the strengths of a more powerful opponent, achieving disproportionately significant impacts. This concept encompasses the actions of both state and non-state actors who, despite being relatively weak or technically under-resourced, utilize their unique capabilities in unpredictable ways to challenge stronger entities. Thus, an asymmetric threat challenges traditional concepts of warfare by leveraging disparity as a tactical advantage to offset power imbalances.

The research problem focuses on the evolving global security landscape, characterized by the increasing prevalence of asymmetric conflicts, such as terrorism and guerrilla warfare. This shift demands a transformation in military doctrines to effectively address the unique challenges posed by these non-conventional threats. This research aims to elucidate and present more points of view on how the military doctrines adapting to meet the unique demands of asymmetric warfare, focusing on the incorporation of technological innovations, international cooperation, and strategic flexibility.

In the current study, the research hypothesis posits that military doctrines which incorporate adaptability, technological advancements, and international collaborative efforts significantly bolster the operational capabilities of military forces to effectively confront asymmetric threats. This enhancement is anticipated to lead to a substantial improvement in global security dynamics. By integrating flexible strategies, cutting-edge technology, and global cooperation into military planning and operations, these doctrines are expected to provide a more robust and responsive framework. This framework not only addresses the immediate challenges

posed by non-conventional warfare but also adapts to the unpredictable nature of future security threats, ensuring a proactive rather than reactive defence posture.

The research objectives are to conduct a comprehensive analysis on:

− diverse perspectives from various scholars and experts, identifying key areas of consensus and debate regarding the need for military doctrines to adapt in response to the challenges posed by asymmetric threats;

− critical factors driving the evolution of military strategies to effectively counter non-traditional threats;

− historical evolution and current state of military doctrines in response to asymmetric conflicts;

− how technological advancements and international cooperation are integrated into military doctrines;

− the impact of these doctrinal transformations on the effectiveness of military responses to asymmetric conflicts.

The study adopts a comprehensive qualitative research methodology, designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the adaptation of military doctrines in response to asymmetric threats. The methodology includes several distinct components, incorporating an extensive review of literature including academic journals, military records, and expert analyses. This review aims to establish a theoretical framework and historical context for the transformations in military doctrine. Certain case studies of specific adaptations in military doctrines from countries like the USA or NATO members, were chosen based on their unique approach to addressing asymmetric warfare, providing a comparative analysis that highlights different strategies and outcomes. Critical examination of several official military and governmental documents provided additional insights into the strategic intent behind doctrine modifications and the anticipated versus actual outcomes of these changes Additionally, the previous research of vary scholars, based on interviews with military strategists and defence analysts, provide deeper insights into the practical implications and effectiveness of these transformations.

Foremost**,** we will define the military doctrine from several perspectives to build a solid conceptual foundation for this study. The military doctrine is defined by H. Høiback as "authoritative documents military forces use to guide their actions containing fundamental principles that require judgment in application." (Høiback 2013, 22) Another author defined the military doctrine in a more holistic manner "Military doctrine is an important part of the building material for military strategy. It represents central beliefs or principles for how to wage war in order to achieve the desired military ends. Doctrine thus provides ways to use military means against a given type of threat or scenario. [...] Doctrine has implications for force structure, training, and equipment. The ideal military doctrine would be truly joint – i.e. integrating land, air, maritime, and special operations in an efficient and effective

way to achieve military objectives – and flexible enough to deal with any kind of foreseen and unforeseen threats, as well as a range of political objectives." (Barfoed 2015, 1)

Researcher J.S. Sauboorah, cited by G. Sloan, defines doctrine as a conceptual and operational framework that functions as a bridge between thought and action in the military context, interpreting ideas about war and their impact on the conduct and character of conflicts, combining strategic theories and operational plans along the lines functional directories for action. "Doctrine can be conceived as a bridge between thought and action. It interprets ideas about war, and how they affect its conduct and its character, by combining strategic theories and operational plans into functional guidelines for action. To put this another way: military doctrine articulates war." (Sloan 2012, 244)

Researcher Lindgaard emphasizes the complex and essential role of a written military doctrine in managing the delicate balance between continuity and change within military organizations. A written doctrine functions as a bridge between the military structure and the operational environment, serving to blend past experience and future requirements into a coherent strategic framework. This aspect makes the development of a doctrine a central point in the planning and execution of military operations. "To help military organizations balance continuity and change, they should lean on written military doctrine, as it functions as a bridge between the military organization and the operational environment. This makes the doctrine development a nexus for military organizations. However, developing a good doctrine is difficult. Doctrine's conceptual lens may be oriented towards the (near) future, but it can only be practiced in the present, which is firmly rooted in the past. Therefore, doctrine is continuously trapped in a limbo of both space and time" (Lindgaard 2023, 15).

We believe that it is indispensable to evaluate the paradigm of change in military doctrines, taking into account the transition from conventional approaches, based on direct and symmetrical confrontations, to flexible and adaptive strategies, oriented towards combating unconventional and elusive adversaries. This transformation entails a detailed analysis of operational, tactical and logistical strategies adjusted to deal with the elusiveness and tactics of asymmetric adversaries. M.-V. Păunescu elucidated the role of the doctrine in maintaining military relevance and efficiency, considering a military doctrine as the main tool in change and adaptation. The author mentioned the importance of understanding and applying military doctrine in the context of modern conflicts, emphasizing that the military doctrine must be continuously adapted to the nature of conflicts, including asymmetric ones, in order to remain relevant and effective. (Păunescu 2015, 125)

A central aspect of this analysis is the assessment of how a military doctrine has undergone transformations to account for the distinct characteristics of asymmetric conflicts. The approach also includes some mechanisms by which the military

doctrines have been modified to integrate advanced technologies, information and cyber warfare, as well as to develop resources in the fight against terrorism and counterinsurgency. The academic analysis of the transformation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts provides an integrated perspective on the dynamics of military adaptation in the face of contemporary security challenges. Through a nuanced understanding of these transformations, strategic recommendations can be made to optimize military responses and strengthen regional and global security and stability. The analysis of how military doctrines have transformed in the context of asymmetric conflicts highlights the challenges and need for continuous adaptation to new forms of conflict.

In the current context, where the asymmetric conflict is becoming more and more present, the military studies and doctrine must respond to some specific strategic and operational needs. In the academic literature, we have identified several points relevant to this analysis, underlining the importance of a dynamic and responsive approach to military doctrines, necessary to ensure the complexity of contemporary security scenarios and to effectively respond to ever-changing global threats. (Rothstein and Arquilla 2012; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2000, 2001) The most relevant ones refer to the development and adaptation of military doctrines, NATO transformation and the response to asymmetric conflicts, the innovative nature of a military doctrine in relation to asymmetric threats, the integration of technology and cybernetics, the continuous analysis of threats and risk assessment, international collaboration and interoperability.

1. Fundamentals of Adapting Military Doctrines to Asymmetric Conflicts

A key aspect represents NATO's transformation, which reflects the adaptation to the new requirements of international security, where asymmetric conflicts, such as terrorism and proxy wars, require new forms of military action. This transformation process is cyclical and requires a new mindset and culture, with a significant impact on member states' militaries. NATO's transformation is highly relevant in the context of the adaptation of military doctrines to asymmetric conflicts, reflecting the shift from traditional, state-centric warfare to addressing non-state actors and irregular combat scenarios, which are the hallmark of asymmetric conflicts. We marked some key points emphasizing the significance of NATO's transformation referring to focus on collective defence and rapid response, integration of cyber and information warfare, interoperability and multinational cooperation, adaptation to new security challenges, enhanced intelligence and surveillance.

NATO's transformation has led to the development of initiatives such as the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) and the enhancement of NATO Response Force (NRF), designed to quickly and effectively counter emergent, asymmetric threats

requiring rapid mobilization and flexible strategies. This strategic shift enhances NATO's cyber defence capabilities, vital in defending against unconventional threats like cyberattacks and information warfare. The transformation includes bolstering interoperability among member states, ensuring that multinational forces can operate cohesively in complex asymmetric warfare scenarios. NATO's Strategic Concept has evolved to address a wide spectrum of threats including terrorism, cyber threats, and weapons of mass destruction, advocating for an update in national military doctrines to effectively tackle these challenges. Additionally, NATO has prioritized enhancing intelligence-sharing and surveillance technologies, critical in asymmetric conflicts for preemptive actions and maintaining situational awareness. Upgrades in satellite communication and reconnaissance support the modern military's need to adapt to the complexities of asymmetric warfare, ensuring readiness and strategic alignment with evolving global threats.

Such perspectives emphasize the need for an integrated and dynamic approach in the development and adaptation of military doctrines in order to effectively respond to the complex challenges of contemporary asymmetric conflicts. Thus, it is essential that the military doctrine is in continuous evolution, reflecting changes in the global security environment and the specific needs of each context.

In academic literature, the issue of continuous adaptation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts is presented by many researchers as a necessity imposed by the dynamics of global threats and the evolution of modern technologies. Beyond these ideas, we mention the general categories, according to some researchers, that are used in the content of military doctrine "The most general categories in military doctrine are: (1) thing (people, equipment, organizations), (2) attribute (capabilities, functions, roles, including relational attributes of command or support), and (3) process (for example, the joint planning process)." (Morosoff, et al 2015, 6) The necessity for continuous adaptation in military doctrines is profoundly linked to the dynamic interplay between the technological evolution and the complex nature of modern asymmetric conflicts. Ensuring that military doctrines can rapidly and effectively respond to these changes is not just a strategic advantage, but a fundamental requirement for maintaining global security and operational efficacy in contemporary military engagements. This adaptation ensures that military forces remain capable of responding to evolving threats in a timely and effective manner, thereby safeguarding national and international security interests.

In some recent studies, an author has elucidated the inadequacy of traditional methods in military training and leadership, proposing a deep review of how to respond to new types of conflicts. "Asymmetric warfare, unconventional warfare, new generation warfare – all refer to a combination of methods intended to facilitate the achievement of specific goals for the country using them. In today's volatile and extremely complex security environment, it is an impossible challenge to clearly

differentiate between military power and the power generated through asymmetric measures." (Constantinescu 2021, 37) The author emphasizes the complexity of modern war and the difficulty of distinguishing between traditional military power and the one generated by asymmetric measures, indicating a need to reevaluate response strategies to contemporary threats. In addition, there are some pertinent arguments contextualizing this issue referring to blurring of conventional and asymmetric warfare, adaptation of training programs, leadership in asymmetric warfare, integration of technology and human intelligence, ethical and legal considerations. The traditional military training and leadership methods must undergo significant transformation to align with the demands of modern warfare. This transformation is not just about tactical changes, but also about a strategic shift in how military power is conceptualized and applied in an increasingly complex global security environment.

With reference to the British military doctrine, S. Roberts emphasizes the need for the continuous adaptation of the military doctrine in the conditions of rapid changes and the increased complexity of modern conflicts. The adaptation and evolution of the military doctrine is considered essential for maintaining the effectiveness of the army in responding to various contemporary challenges. The researcher emphasizes the importance of a flexible doctrine, able to adapt to varied and unpredictable situations. In the context where most authors support that adaptation should not only be reactive, but also proactive, S. Roberts insists on the need for an anticipatory approach, with an emphasis on preparation for war as the foundation of all military operations. "...This leads to another core tenet of British military doctrine: that focusing on war is absolutely essential to approaching all military operations. ... For this reason, it is a fundamental tenet of British military doctrine that the Army should be organized, trained and equipped first and foremost for war." (Roberts 2021, 193). Thus, a military doctrine must be flexible enough to respond to ever-changing needs and to ensure that the military remains ready and able to adapt to different conflict scenarios, regardless of their complexity or nature. At the same time, the military doctrine transformation is necessary to reflect and integrate lessons learned from past experiences and to incorporate emerging new technologies and strategies. By focusing on preparation for war, a solid foundation is created for the successful conduct of other types of military operations, such as peace support operations. Thus, the military can more easily transition from combat readiness to peacekeeping operations, reflecting the adaptability and resilience required in a dynamic security landscape.

Referring to the flexibility in the decision-making process and decentralization of decisions, some authors recognize the need for increased flexibility in military structures and decentralization of decisions to allow quick and effective responses in unpredictable situations (Roberts 2021, 195). The relationship between the need

to transform military doctrine and decision-making involves how doctrine and decision-making must evolve to effectively respond to the dynamic challenges of the contemporary combat environment. The military doctrine must be adapted to incorporate the principles of mission command, which promote initiative, innovation and surprise, and doctrine adaptation is necessary to ensure that the armed forces remain relevant and effective in an ever-changing combat environment that requires a capability quick response and adaptability. This style of decentralized command allows for quick and informed decisions that are critical to overcoming an adversary's decision cycle. (Roberts 2021, 195) We believe that the adaptation of military doctrine and decision-making processes to incorporate principles of decentralized command is very important for sustaining operational effectiveness in contemporary military contexts. This approach enhances the operational capabilities of military forces and aligns with the dynamic nature of contemporary warfare, where flexibility, rapid response, and tactical innovation are key to achieving strategic objectives.

In this context, B.R. Posen emphasizes the duality of the existence of military organizations between peace and war, indicating how this duality contributes to uncertainty and the need for a doctrine which recognizes and integrates this complexity to prepare commanders. (Posen 2016, 163) The author explains how the characteristics of a special environment such as war, and how military organizations rely on the doctrine to navigate this challenging environment, which emphasizes the importance of doctrinal adaptability for operational effectiveness and autonomy in decision-making. "Friction, fog, and fear combine to make the special environment of war. Military organizations hope that doctrine will help them navigate into and through this treacherous environment." (Posen 2016, 164) S. Roberts and B.R. Posen express the same position that transforming the military doctrine and improving decision-making are vital in the context of the complexity of field operations, arguing that the doctrine must recognize and integrate this complexity, preparing commanders to delegate and to act autonomously to maximize operational efficiency.

The historical evolution of the states differs in several aspects, including the military doctrine. In this regard, some scholars discuss the impact of military history and past experience in the development and adaptation of military doctrines, arguing for a balanced approach that combines combat experience and proactive vision of future trends and adaptation to new forms of conflict. The historical approach is also capitalized by A. Jackson, which explores the origin and evolution of military doctrine, analyzing constancy and change in the practice of war. "Ultimately, however, understanding the epistemology of the military doctrine is important for far broader reasons. Doctrine, expressive of a military's institutional belief system, is a gauge for the way militaries view their role and therefore their institution, in relation to the states and societies that sustain them. The emergence of each new school of doctrinal ontology and more recently the inclusion of anti-positivist concepts within doctrine,

indicate changes in a military's institutional understanding of its relationship with state and society." The researcher highlights the importance of understanding the historical roots of a military doctrine for the development of effective strategies (Jackson 2013). In essence, the development and adaptation of military doctrines are not just about strategic choices and how these choices reflect and respond to historical legacies, current realities and future uncertainties. This comprehensive approach ensures that military strategies are both historically informed and forward-looking, capable of responding effectively to both conventional and emerging threats.

Experienced-scholars' standpoint in the military field express a cohesion on the need to adapt military doctrines from several perspectives. Thus, T. Frunzeti emphasizes the importance of learning from past experiences and flexible adjustment to the new realities of conflicts. The researcher articulates his position around the idea that flexibility and dynamism are essential to effectively respond to evolving threats, suggesting that adaptability must be embedded in the structure military doctrine. (Frunzeti 2010, 11). Specifically, this adaptive process is crucial for addressing the challenges posed by asymmetric warfare, where traditional battle strategies might be less effective. The development of doctrines that can effectively respond to these non-traditional threats is therefore a critical focus, ensuring that military actions remain relevant and effective in the face of the unique and changing conditions of modern battlefields.

Both T. Frunzeti and H. Høiback emphasize the importance of learning from past experiences and recent conflicts to improve the content of military doctrines (Frunzeti 2010, 9), the latter reviewing the four generations of military doctrine: "first-generation doctrines, or rather, doctrine-like documents, such as the Royal Navy's Fighting Instructions and Frederick the Great's Instructions for His Generals, were made for forces where the supreme commander fought along with his men, either in front of them or close behind. In the second generation of doctrines, the supreme commanders had left the battlefield. The third-generation doctrines followed the commanders and left the battlefield as well, and tried, instead, to orchestrate a three-dimensional space and the entire range of combat capability, including physical, moral, and mental domains. The fourth generation of doctrines is in danger of leaving even the war." (Høiback 2013, p, 178-179). Therefore, this approach calls to a constant reflection on the past to better anticipate the future. The evolution from direct combat roles to strategic command also reflects the adaptation to non-traditional warfare, such as cyberattacks and information warfare, which do not necessarily require physical presence on a traditional battlefield. Modern military doctrines must continue to evolve to address these types of asymmetric threats effectively. The historical evolution of military doctrines underscores the critical importance of drawing lessons from past experiences and emphasizes the need for military strategies to be dynamic and adaptable, enabling them to

effectively respond to the continuously evolving challenges of global warfare. This historical perspective enriches the strategic planning process and ensures that military operations are both reflective of past wisdom and adaptive to future challenges. Understanding the trajectory of past military strategies allows for better predictions and preparations for how conflicts might evolve, especially in terms of technology and the geopolitical landscape. This proactive approach is vital in a world where military threats can change rapidly and unpredictably. The transition to doctrines that consider the three-dimensional space of warfare (physical, moral, and mental) illustrates the increasing complexity of military operations. In this context, the modern doctrines must integrate these various domains to effectively manage contemporary conflicts that are fought on physical battlefields and in the realms of public opinion, cyber space, and psychological warfare.

Some studies elucidate the ways in which pressures from changing security environments require a constant review and improvement of military doctrines, proposing a perspective that values strategic adaptability and organizational optimization to face emerging challenges, placing particular emphasis on the importance of a solid theoretical foundation for adaptation. These perspectives underline a common view of the need for continuous adaptation, but also introduce the idea that adaptation must be proactive and anticipatory, not just reactive. "Asymmetrical warfare often challenges traditional military doctrines by presenting unconventional threats that require flexible and adaptive responses. By incorporating Lehmann's theory, we could argue that militaries facing asymmetrical threats must reevaluate their organizational structures, levels of command delegation, and openness to experimentation, characteristics that are determinant for success in non-traditional warfare environments." (Lehmann 2023, 331) R.T. Lehmann challenges the notion that military effectiveness is solely determined by specific strategies or favorable military cultures. In the context of this research, this insight can be expanded to critique the traditional views on military doctrine in asymmetrical conflicts, advocating instead for a more nuanced understanding that considers organizational flexibility and adaptive capacity as key drivers of effectiveness in irregular warfare. We note that through the reasoning from which the mentioned authors started, the lessons learned and the need for a proactive reaction to future threats, the need for balance between traditional knowledge and the adoption of innovations is validated, constituting a solid foundation for the effective adaptation of military doctrines.

The spatial and temporal complexity of multiple doctrines, addressed simultaneously, was explored by Lindgaard, promoting a holistic view of military doctrine as an amalgam of guidelines and practices in a network of human and non-human actors. The researcher explores the complexity of managing multiple doctrines within the same military organization, emphasizing the need to understand

how different approaches interact and influence each other. "Firstly, by doing so, literature implicitly gives the impression that it is viable, feasible and desirable to find a single optimal doctrine to harness the power of military doctrine (i.e. striving for that illusive silver bullet of the ideal military doctrine). Secondly (and most importantly), literature ignores the fact that Western military organizations do not just have one doctrine, but constantly write and/or practice multiple doctrines simultaneously to deal with various types of problems in various contexts. Thus, studying how military organizations practice multiple doctrines simultaneously will help to address a gap in the existing literature and provide new insights to understand the spatial and temporal complexity of doctrine." (Lindgaard 2023, 61) In this context, the author supports an approach that leverages technology and innovation to sustain doctrinal practices, facilitating a more rapid and coherent adaptation to changes in theaters of operations. Lindgaard explored the complexity of technology use and innovation, while other authors chose to channel their research in narrower directions and did not focus on this dimension. Therefore, the researcher emphasizes the importance of an integrated vision that defines a military doctrine not only as a set of rules, but as a much more complex one because it encompasses both written guidelines and practical applications, involves multiple interrelated doctrines practiced by a single organization, extends beyond military structures to include various actors, and is influenced by enduring elements from the past that can limit current adaptability. We appreciate this perspective, but some critical points (practical challenges of implementation, risk of over-complexity, technological dependency, historical continuity *vs.* innovation) suggest that while Lindgaard's proposals for a dynamic, integrated military doctrine are forward-thinking, they also require careful consideration of practicality, simplicity, technological reliance, and the balance between tradition and innovation to ensure they enhance rather than complicate military effectiveness.

It should be mentioned Lindgaard's holistic vision on military doctrine, analyzing it from the perspective of a continuous process, generating several operational definitions starting from a metadefinition (Lindgaard 2023, 264-265), in contrast with the more traditional or specific approaches of other authors, such as M. Wheeler, who approaches the military doctrines as principles applicable to other areas, such as civil negotiations. M. Wheeler explores how the principles of military doctrine can enhance the effectiveness of civilian negotiations, demonstrating that adaptability, strategic planning and critical thinking are essential in military operations and can be transferred to other domains. (Wheeler 2013) "Modern theories of maneuver warfare could help fill this conceptual void, particularly in devising ways to effectively move forward and adapt in the face of uncertainty and risk. [...] As I explain later, the ideas underlying maneuver warfare are more subtle and supple than commonly thought." (Wheeler 2013, 25-26) The author highlights

the way in which modern theories of maneuver warfare can improve adaptability and efficiency in responding to uncertain and risky situations, emphasizing the connections between military doctrine and negotiation techniques in complex contexts. Noteworthy is the explanation regarding the transversal utility of military skills in managing the asymmetric conflicts. M. Wheeler explains the philosophy of maneuver warfare as a method of breaking down enemy cohesion through rapid and unexpected actions, which is essential to effectively manage asymmetric threats and maintain strategic superiority in unpredictable conflict conditions. (Wheeler 2013, 31) This approach illustrates how the transformation of military doctrine, by adopting the principles of maneuver warfare, can facilitate a more effective and adaptive response to asymmetric conflicts, emphasizing the need for a flexible and proactive approach. M. Wheeler also argues that the principles of military doctrine can be extended to improve the civilian negotiations, emphasizing adaptability and strategic planning as essential elements in conflict response. The researcher believes that strategic military thinking can serve as a model for civilian crisis management, providing a robust framework for decisions made under pressure (Wheeler 2013, 25, 31). Based on previous analysis, we have found several critical points which may be considered to refer to scope of applicability, risk of oversimplification, balance between flexibility and structure, cultural and ethical considerations. These critical points prompt a thorough examination of the development and implementation of military doctrines, ensuring they are effective in their specific contexts while also being sufficiently adaptable to address the complexities of modern, asymmetric warfare and relevant civilian applications.

There are studies focusing on the analysis of cognitive work in the military context with an emphasis on better understanding from a cognitive perspective to improve the military doctrine in terms of adaptability and responsiveness, with researchers advocating a data-driven approach to supplement and "refine" the content doctrines and ensuring that they are responsive to the real needs of operators on the ground (Naikar, Treadwell and Brady 2014). The authors have focused more on cognitive aspects and research-based data for adapting the doctrine and "emphasized that military doctrine and strategy need to be inherently adaptable and responsive to geopolitical events and technological developments. This adaptability is very important, because it ensures that military forces can remain effective under rapidly changing conditions." (Naikar, Treadwell and Brady 2014, 330). We consider that integrating cognitive perspectives and a data-driven approach into the development of military doctrines ensures that these doctrines are pertinent and scientifically grounded and enhances their adaptability to meet the rapidly evolving demands of modern warfare and technology. This holistic and empirically informed approach is essential for preparing military forces to face contemporary and future challenges effectively.

Other papers contain research on the balance between structural and human relation-based adaptation. Certain studies by these researchers illustrate the differences between traditional approaches and new strategies that integrate cognitive science and information technology to respond more effectively to asymmetric threats. B. R. Posen discusses two main approaches in adapting military doctrine: the structural and human relations, emphasizing the reduction of organizational uncertainties and the coordination of efforts on the battlefield to respond to asymmetric threats (Posen 2016, 162-163). The researcher mentions the importance of adapting organizational structures to effectively respond to asymmetric threats, promoting a dual approach that combines structural rigor with sensitivity to the human factor. The author also argues that flexibility in command and decentralization of decisions are vital to enable units to adapt quickly and effectively to unpredictable combat conditions. "Because the guidance is meant to be practiced and tested, it provides a source of cohesion when the fighting starts. It creates a fictive certainty about an inherently uncertain activity... Because doctrine is hard to hide, it also sends diplomatic messages – deterring (or coercing) adversaries and reassuring allies." In this excerpt, B.R. Posen discusses how a military doctrine can serve as a stable and accepted framework essential for navigating the uncertainties and complexities of combat, also emphasizing the role of interpersonal relationships and internal cohesion to maintain morale and improve responsiveness in stressful and unpredictable situations. (Posen 2016, 163-164). This research reflects theoretical perspectives on the importance of flexible and adaptive structures in military doctrine, as well as the critical role of human relations in strengthening military efforts in the context of modern threats.

Considering the analysis of a pertinent framework for adapting military doctrine to address asymmetric threats through a blend of structural adjustments and human relational strategies, several critical points warrant a deeper examination. While B.R. Posen advocates for the decentralization of command to enhance flexibility and responsiveness, there is a critical need to balance this with the risk of fragmented command structures that might result in inconsistent application of military strategy across different units. Over-reliance on decentralization can potentially lead to a lack of cohesive strategic direction and unified command, which are very important during large-scale operations. It is essential to establish clear guidelines and strong communication channels to ensure that the decentralization enhances rather than complicates the command structure.

B.R. Posen emphasizes the importance of human relations and internal cohesion within military units, particularly in enhancing responsiveness and morale in unpredictable combat situations. However, the dynamics of human behavior under extreme stress and prolonged conflict are complex and can be unpredictable. The assumption that structured human relational strategies will consistently yield positive outcomes may not always hold true, especially under the unique pressures

of asymmetric warfare. Further empirical research is needed to explore how these strategies perform across diverse scenarios and troop compositions to ensure that doctrines are realistically tailored to human capacities and limitations.

The argument that adaptable and flexible military doctrines serve diplomatic purposes by deterring adversaries and reassuring allies also needs a nuanced examination. While flexibility in military response is undoubtedly valuable, it can also create perceptions of unpredictability and inconsistency, potentially undermining diplomatic relations. The balance between demonstrating capability and maintaining a predictable stance in international relations is delicate. The military doctrines must be crafted with taking into account the operational adaptability and the broader geopolitical implications of how military readiness and strategy are presented on the international stage. These critical points underscore the need for a nuanced approach to implementing B.R. Posen's recommendations, ensuring that military doctrines are not only adaptable and responsive but also strategically coherent and diplomatically prudent.

Also, in elucidating a sensitive aspect such as inconsistencies between strategy and doctrine, leading to inefficiencies and operational failures, some researchers have emphasized the need for continuous review and updating of both. (Barfoed 2015, 2). The study focuses on how the military strategy and doctrine can be optimized to respond to rapid changes in the global and technological security environment, suggesting new research directions in the study of alignment and differentiation between the military strategy and doctrine to improve the ability to respond and adapt to contemporary challenges. Based on the analysis which highlights the dynamic interplay between military strategy and doctrine in adapting to global and technological changes, the following three critical points merit a focused attention. The need for continuous synchronization between military strategy and doctrine is determinant due to their distinct yet interdependent roles. Strategy, often dynamic and responsive to immediate threats and opportunities, can occasionally diverge significantly from established military doctrines, which may be more rigid and slower to evolve. This misalignment can lead to operational inefficiencies and failures, as tactical decisions might not be supported by the doctrinal backbone necessary for their execution. It is essential to develop mechanisms that ensure doctrine evolves concurrently with strategic needs, allowing for a seamless operational flow that is both agile and doctrinally sound. One critical point that arises from the need for continuous review and updating of military strategy and doctrine is the institutional resistance to change. Military organizations, with their deeply rooted traditions and structured hierarchies, may exhibit inertia against rapid doctrinal changes, even when strategic necessities dictate otherwise. The academic discourse could benefit from exploring strategies to overcome this resistance, potentially drawing from change management theories to devise ways that facilitate smoother transitions and

acceptance of necessary doctrinal updates. The suggestion for new research directions on the alignment and differentiation between military strategy and doctrine opens up a methodological inquiry into the best practices for maintaining this balance. It is very important to develop and refine methodologies that can effectively measure and analyze the congruence between strategy and doctrine. This might involve the use of advanced simulation tools, real-time feedback mechanisms, and perhaps artificial intelligence to predict and manage the impacts of strategic decisions within the doctrinal framework. Research should focus on creating some models that would accommodate the current security environment and would be adaptable to unforeseen future scenarios. Each of these points underscores the complexity of adapting military strategy and doctrine in a rapidly evolving global context. Addressing these challenges through focused academic research and practical policy applications is essential for enhancing military responsiveness and effectiveness in facing contemporary security challenges.

In this context, adaptation must be holistic, incorporating lessons from history, technological advances and innovative tactics to effectively respond to asymmetric threats. This need for transformation not only affects the way in which the armed forces train and operate, but it also requires a continuous reassessment of strategies to ensure the relevance of doctrines in the face of rapid changes in the global security environment.

2. The Relevance of Military Doctrine Transformation on National Level

Certain pertinent examples highlight the diversity and complexity of adapting military doctrines in response to asymmetric threats, reflecting both regional security concerns and international cooperation imperatives. Each country's approach is tailored to its strategic context, underpinning the importance of national effort in global security frameworks.

Over the past two decades, the United States has undergone significant revisions in its military doctrine, primarily influenced by its operational experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. These conflicts highlighted the complexities of engaging with non-state actors and insurgent groups that operate outside traditional warfare paradigms. As a result, the US has shifted its strategic focus towards flexibility and rapid adaptation, recognizing the critical need to understand and integrate local socio-political dynamics into military operations. The evolution of the US military strategy is stipulated in the *United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability*, published in 2022. This document emphasizes a proactive approach to conflict prevention and stability enhancement, aiming to pre-emptively address the root causes of instability that fuel insurgent activities. By doing so, the US military seeks to not only respond more effectively to immediate threats but also to reduce the

likelihood of long-term engagements that can drain resources and lead to complex humanitarian crises. (United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability 2022) This strategic shift reflects a broader understanding that modern conflicts often require more than just military might. They demand a comprehensive strategy that includes diplomatic efforts, economic support, and cultural competence to build resilience in volatile regions. The US military's adaptation to these realities involves training troops to be adaptable to diverse environments, enhancing intelligence capabilities to better predict and respond to emerging threats, and strengthening partnerships with local governments and international organizations to foster collective security and stability. Through these doctrinal changes, the US aims to achieve a more sustainable and effective approach to international security, one that not only counters immediate threats but also contributes to a stable and peaceful global landscape.

The UK has adopted a comprehensive approach to its military doctrine, emphasizing an integrated response to global threats. This is articulated in *The Integrated Review 2021*, which outlines the UK's vision for a "whole-of-government" approach. (The Integrated Review 2021) This strategy integrates military, economic, and informational tools to address asymmetric threats such as terrorism and cyber warfare. The doctrine has shifted towards preparing for a wider range of scenarios, ensuring that the UK can operate under different forms of warfare. This includes increasing spending on cyber defence and enhancing the ability to conduct remote operations.

France's military doctrine reflects its expansive role in global security, particularly in regions such as Africa and the Middle East, where it often engages in peacekeeping and counterterrorism operations. (Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale, 2013.) The *French White Paper on Defence and National Security* outlines the necessity of rapid deployment forces that can engage effectively in asymmetric warfare environments, emphasizing the interoperability with allied forces under the framework of international cooperation, particularly within the EU and NATO, to enhance collective security measures.

In Post-Cold War context, Germany has been reevaluating its military doctrine to better participate in international security. The *White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr 2016* illustrates Germany's pivot towards a more active role in global military engagements, focusing on crisis prevention, conflict management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. (White Paper on German Security Policy 2016) The doctrine emphasizes the importance of working within international frameworks, enhancing capabilities in cyber warfare, and ensuring a high level of readiness to respond to hybrid threats.

The Baltic States have focused their military doctrines on countering the hybrid warfare tactics that they perceive as threats from their Eastern neighbour, Russia. (Rain 2017; Kols 2022) This includes enhancing cyber capabilities and informational

warfare defences, as outlined in various national security documents. Each state emphasizes the importance of NATO's strategic umbrella, especially the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) battalions stationed in their territories, as a deterrent against potential aggression.

Sweden and Finland, historically non-aligned, have recently taken significant steps to bolster their defence capabilities in light of increasing geopolitical tensions in the Baltic Sea region. Sweden's reinstatement of conscription (Dalsjö, and Jonsson, 2022) and Finland's focus on comprehensive national defence are both reflective of a doctrinal shift that emphasizes preparedness for asymmetric threats (Linnainmäki, Pesu, Pihlajamaa, Särkkä and Vanhanen, 2024). Both countries have enhanced their cyber defence capabilities and developed doctrines that allow for rapid response and resilience in face of unconventional warfare.

These doctrinal adaptations reflect a global trend towards preparing for and mitigating the risks of asymmetric warfare, demonstrating a convergence of traditional and modern military strategies tailored to each nation's specific circumstances and strategic interests.

3. Technology Integration and International Cooperation in Military Doctrines

Incorporating advanced technology and cyber into a military doctrine is becoming essential to the effective management of modern conflicts. The use of drones, facial recognition, and satellite surveillance is transforming the way we combat threats and is imposing a new paradigm in information warfare and psychological operations. Also, the importance of interoperability and international collaboration is accentuated by the need to develop common standards and facilitate a coordinated response to transnational threats. This entails continuous adaptation of the armed forces to integrate new technological capabilities and maintain adequate readiness in the face of asymmetric challenges.

S. Roberts argues for a constant revision of the military doctrine to integrate technological innovations, insisting on the flexibility of doctrines to allow adaptation to varied and unpredictable situations. The researcher also emphasizes the role of modern technologies and international cooperation in formulating effective responses to asymmetric threats, arguing for the continued integration of technology into military doctrines (Roberts 2021). By advocating for the persistent incorporation of new technologies into military doctrines, we consider that this will lead to more robust and adaptable military operations, positioning armed forces to better tackle the complexities of contemporary warfare environments.

Maria Constantinescu elucidates the concept of military power and the impact of geopolitical factors in the adaptation of doctrines to asymmetric scenarios,

highlighting the importance of the relative assessment of power in the context of international cooperation and advanced technological integration. "The novelty in the modern world resides in the use of the advances in technology, psychology and the changes in society (such as the rising popularity of social media) to achieve military objectives. Asymmetric warfare, unconventional warfare, new generation warfare – all refer to a combination of methods intended to facilitate the achievement of specific goals for the country using them." Here, the author mentions how advances in technology are utilized in modern warfare, "specifically in the context of asymmetric warfare, where technology plays a key role in achieving military objectives." (Constantinescu 2021, 36) The author also demonstrates the impact of modern technologies on military power, emphasizing the need for a continuous assessment of relative power in the context of international technological cooperation and integration. This approach refers to the technological advancements within the context of capabilities-based planning, criticizing the generic nature of such planning which may assume an adversary is technologically sophisticated without considering other factors. (Constantinescu 2021, 33) Therefore, we conclude that the assessment of relative power in the context of international cooperation and advanced technological integration can influence the development and implementation of the military doctrine provisions. Thus, the ideas launched by S. Roberts and M. Constantinescu suggest a valuable debate about how technological innovations should align with geopolitical strategies and international cooperation, exploring how technology can facilitate or complicate strategic alliances and doctrinal adaptation.

N. Naikar, A. Treadwell and A. Brady explore the use of advanced technology in intelligence gathering, arguing for a deeper integration of technology into the doctrine development. "CWA provides a strong theoretical lens with which to view and comprehend the distinctions between such concepts as a force's purposes, goals, values, principles, laws, functions, missions, roles, and characteristics... Based on these distinctions, the concept of functions in a military context may be viewed as representing the utility of objects or devices independent of actions. In contrast, missions may be considered an activity-based concept, involving sequences of actions for achieving specific goals with particular objects." (N. Naikar, A. Treadwell and A. Brady 2014, 331) The authors emphasize the importance of data analytics and artificial intelligence in anticipating and responding to threats, highlighting how technology can transform intelligence gathering and strategic analysis (Naikar, Treadwell and Brady 2014). The research of these authors elucidates the way in which technology is redefining the traditional paradigms of modern conflicts and the need for its effective integration into military strategies to maintain national and international security.

Other approaches explore the impact of multinational military exercises on the development of doctrine and the strengthening of international cooperation.

The researchers highlight the importance of these exercises, which can serve as platforms for sharing best practices and joint adaptation to new technologies and tactics. "Multinational Military Exercises (MMEs) are often viewed by states as opportunities to increase interoperability, improve cooperation, and solve common security problems. We argue that in addition to this, MMEs work as tools to shape the shared beliefs of coalition partners surrounding threat. Specifically, MMEs allow multinational forces to identify best practices, consolidate beliefs, and codify behavior through doctrine, typically by means of some institutional process." (Frazier and Hutto 2017, 1). Consequently, the significance of these exercises in the formation of strategic consensus and the adaptation of doctrines is decisive in strengthening international cooperation in the effective response to transnational threats and contributes to the synchronization of doctrines between allies.

Thus, researchers D.V. Frazier and W.J. Hutto appreciate the complexity and benefits of international cooperation in an evolving technological landscape, highlighting how alliances and partnerships can facilitate more effective and coordinated adaptation of military doctrine. "The use of MMEs makes sense in a world of transnational and diverse threats. As internationalization increasingly creates new global partnerships, MMEs will become important ways in which state militaries evolve, communicate, and cooperate. The development of common doctrine is a key process by which states might internalize elements of shared interest by means of socialization and identity transformation." (Frazier and Hutto 2017, 15). We note that the emphasis on socialization and identity transformation through shared doctrinal practices underlines the transformative potential of MMEs in aligning military strategies and operations among nations facing common threats.

We consider that a military doctrine requires an alignment with technological evolution and must facilitate strategic cooperation between different states and branches of the armed forces, being adapted to technological and geopolitical changes, to enhance the responsiveness and operational effectiveness of the armed forces. In this sense, we can look at technology as a catalyst for international cooperation, facilitating the exchange of information and coordination between allies. Thus, a doctrine must be proactive and not reactive, thus making it possible to anticipate technological developments, with their integration into strategic planning.

There are studies that elucidate the importance of integrating technological advances and innovations into military tactics, highlighting the need to adapt to new realities such as advanced technology. (Gallo 2018) At the same time, A. Gallo examines the way in which doctrines evolve in peacetime, preparing armies for future conflicts. Within military organizations, this competition manifests itself not only at the level of resources, but also in the development of combat technologies and doctrines. This competition also extends to the international level, where military organizations from different states compete for technological and doctrinal

superiority, an aspect that influences state power, decisions regarding war and peace, and international relations in general. (Gallo 2018, 6)

Therefore, the military doctrine is a reflector of the power arrangement within a military organization, but also a compromise between the relevant actors. This means that the military doctrine is not only a set of principles or battle strategies, but also an expression of domestic and international politics, resulting from negotiations and compromises between various stakeholders, whether domestic (different branches of the military) or international (in the case of military alliances or strategic competitions). In this light, the military doctrine serves as an essential tool for navigating the complexities of power dynamics both nationally and internationally.

There are studies that take a balanced approach to the role of technology in reinforcing the doctrinal changes, which combines the combat experience with technological innovation, providing a comprehensive perspective on how technological innovation must facilitate the continuous adaptation of military doctrines to meet the complex challenges of an environment of changing global security. (Przybyło 2019, 138) Ł. Przybyło's argument, emphasizing the synergy between combat experience and technological innovation for doctrinal adaptation, presents a crucial perspective for modern military strategies. However, several critical aspects warrant further examination to fully appreciate the complexities and potential limitations inherent in this approach. While the integration of advanced technology into military doctrines is undeniably beneficial, there is a risk of becoming overly dependent on technological solutions. This over-reliance could potentially lead to vulnerabilities, especially if adversaries develop countermeasures or if technology fails during critical operations. The assumption that technology can solve all tactical and strategic challenges may overshadow the need for robust, basic military skills and adaptability in environments where technology may be compromised or unavailable. The rate at which technology evolves and the speed with which military doctrines can realistically adapt are often out of sync. Technological innovations occur at a rapid pace, whereas doctrinal changes, which involve comprehensive training and restructuring, can be slow. There is a risk that by the time a doctrine integrates certain technologies, those technologies could be outdated, or new challenges could have emerged that require different solutions. This lag can create gaps in military effectiveness and responsiveness. The focus on integrating cutting-edge technologies into military doctrines entails significant financial and resource investment. The costs associated with developing, acquiring, maintaining, and updating technological tools can be substantial. This investment must be balanced against other critical needs within a defence budget, such as personnel and traditional capabilities, ensuring that the pursuit of technological superiority does not undermine the overall balance and capabilities of the military. By critically analyzing these aspects, we can appreciate the nuances of integrating

technology into military doctrines. While Ł. Przybyło's perspective is forward-thinking and strategically vital, it also necessitates a cautious approach to ensure that the benefits of technological advancements are realized without compromising operational integrity, some ethical standards, or strategic flexibility.

The role of technology in transforming the way in which the doctrines are practiced and applied was elucidated by P.J. Lindgaard, emphasizing the interaction between human and non-human factors in military operations. The author brings up the "actor/network" theory, which contributes to understanding the interconnected roles of different actors inside and outside the military organization, highlighting the importance of integrating non-human actors in the operational effectiveness of military strategies. The researcher promotes the systemic integration of new technologies within existing doctrines to ensure a fluid and efficient adaptation (Lindgaard 2023, 86). In this context, it is worth mentioning the importance of creating the international cooperation networks that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences in the implementation of advanced technologies. This approach reflects the importance of international cooperation in developing and synchronizing military doctrines within alliances such as NATO, highlighting the need for compatibility and integration across different national military strategies.

This multi-stakeholder perspective provides a more complete picture of how a military doctrine must adapt to contemporary challenges and integrate emerging technologies, while promoting international cooperation and addressing global strategic imperatives. This synthesis demonstrates the correlation between theory and practice, which interweave to formulate a cohesive response to the dynamics of modern security. Therefore, we conclude that a complex approach is necessary for the effective adaptation of military doctrines in a constantly changing global landscape, because in the digital era the essential role of technology and international cooperation in the formulation of security strategies is undeniable.

4. Views on the Reform of Military Doctrines in a Global Context

The military doctrine must reflect changes in the international security landscape, which implies a thorough analysis of existing threats and potential risks. The adaptation of military doctrines in different countries illustrates varied approaches, influenced by the geopolitical context, conflict history and international alliances.

S.N. Romaniuk has investigated the importance of adapting the military doctrine to asymmetric threats, elucidating the impact of adjusting the doctrine in the context of asymmetric conflicts, with a focus on the US military experience in Vietnam. In this context, the US has modified the military doctrine to respond to asymmetric threats, such as those encountered in Vietnam. "The pace of doctrinal debate in the context of the US army and joint contexts has continued to increase,

particularly with the seeming resurgence of asymmetric threats towards the turn of the millennium (9/11) but this increasing momentum is also driven by conscientious analysts of US military history and the contrast between US military victory and defeat." (Romaniuk, 2015, 2) Referring to the adaptation of the military doctrine in the context of asymmetric conflicts, the researcher writes "Strategic, tactical, and operational considerations were previously considered by the US government (USG), and in close cooperation a US military services, to such an extent that a string of military operations registered as remarkable victories beyond the tactical and operational spheres." (Romaniuk 2015, 3) These passages emphasize the evolving nature of military doctrine in response to the complexities introduced by asymmetric warfare, showing how adaptations in strategy, tactics, and operational art are determinant for addressing the unique challenges posed by such threats. They also highlight the importance of continuous evaluation and adaptation of military doctrine to ensure effectiveness in dynamic conflict environments. For example, the United States and Israel developed some specific doctrines to respond quickly and effectively to asymmetric threats, while NATO countries focused on stability operations and post-conflict reconstruction. These adaptations underscore the need for a flexible and dynamic approach that enables the armed forces to respond effectively to a wide range of threats in an ever-changing security environment.

Some authors address the need to develop a common ontology for military doctrine, to improve the interoperability of the armed forces information systems. (Morosoff, Rudnicki, Bryant, Farrell and Smith 2015, 6) This perspective is important for the operational efficiency in interconnected environments and emphasizes the importance of common standards in the context of the globalization of security threats. Such studies highlight that unified framework that can support multinational operations, creating a basis for cooperation and operational efficiency.

The interaction between military strategy and military doctrine was addressed by J.R. Barfoed, highlighting the need for close alignment to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of military actions. This approach underscores the importance of continuous review and updating of military doctrine to adequately respond to rapid changes in the global security and technological environment. With reference to the need of adapting the military doctrine to strategic contexts, the author claims referring to the necessity for doctrine to adapt to strategic contexts that "Military doctrine is an important part of the building material for military strategy. It represents central beliefs or principles for how to wage war in order to achieve the desired military ends. Doctrine thus provides ways to use military means against a given type of threat or scenario... However, the reality is that in addition to unforeseen scenarios, political, economic, or social considerations invariably constrain operations and strategies; therefore, doctrine will always have to be adapted to the specific strategic context of a crisis or war." (Barfoed 2015, 2) This approach suggests a need for

continuous review and updating of both to respond to rapid changes in the global and technological security environment. In the same vein, researcher A.A. Gallo expressed a similar vision, arguing "Strategy is the bridge between the tactics and operations employed by the military and the state's policies. Military doctrine can be a tool used to execute a strategy, but it is rarely intended to be the strategy itself." (Gallo 2018, 11) Overall, while the scholars provide valuable insights into the necessity of adapting military doctrine to changing strategic contexts, it also opens up areas for deeper analysis regarding the practical challenges and implications of such adaptations.

Some debates on the importance of adapting the military doctrine generate assertions on how standardization and strategic integration can improve not only interoperability, but also the ability to adapt the military doctrines to a global and rapidly changing security environment. Such analyzes emphasize the need for adaptation, technological integration and reform of military doctrines in the context of the complex challenges of contemporary security, illustrating the need for a multifaceted and collaborative approach.

Lindgaard emphasizes the need for the military doctrines that are not only theoretically valid, but also practically applicable and adaptable in the long term, addressing the challenges of managing multiple doctrines within a single organization and reflecting on current needs and future uncertainties (Lindgaard 2023, 80). The author's analysis reflects how each scholar contributes to the debate on adaptation, technological integration, and reform of military doctrines in the face of complex and asymmetric challenges of contemporary security.

Thus, by juxtaposing and integrating these authors' ideas, the diversity of approaches and the need for an integrated vision for effective adaptation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts, technological integration and international cooperation are highlighted. This analysis reflects the complexity and dynamics of contemporary debates on military doctrines and emphasizes the importance of a multifaceted and progressive approach. Considering the complexity and breadth of the subject, it is clear that the transformation of military doctrines in the context of asymmetric conflicts is a multidimensional process, influenced by internal factors (such as organizational culture and military history) and external factors (such as the evolution of asymmetric threats and international relations).

5. Limitations of the Study

The study, while comprehensive, encounters a few notable limitations that could impact the robustness and applicability of its findings. The first significant limitation is the restricted availability and accessibility of classified military documents and strategic information. Such constraints can substantially limit the depth and accuracy of the analysis concerning specific doctrinal changes. This

limitation is particularly acute in military studies, where much of the critical data pertaining to strategic decisions, capabilities, and operational outcomes remains classified for national security reasons. As a result, the study may rely on open-source materials and declassified documents, which may not provide a complete picture of the strategic landscape or the nuanced details of military doctrine evolution. The second limitation is the potential for biases in interpreting qualitative data derived from various sources. While qualitative approaches provide valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of military personnel and strategists, they are inherently subjective. Different researchers might interpret responses in varied ways, influenced by their own backgrounds, expectations, and theoretical inclinations. The third limitation refers to the rapid evolution of technology and the dynamic nature of asymmetric threats, which pose a substantial challenge to the study's relevance over time. Technological advancements and shifts in asymmetric warfare tactics can quickly outdate the findings, especially in a field as fluid and rapidly evolving as military strategy. By the time the study is published, some of the technologies or tactics analyzed may have been superseded by more advanced or altered approaches. This "lag effect" makes it challenging to provide up-to-date recommendations and may require continual updates to the research to maintain its relevance. These limitations underscore the need for ongoing research efforts that adapt to the changing security environment, employ rigorous methods to mitigate bias, and ensure access to the most current data possible to keep pace with the ever-evolving landscape of military conflict and technology.

Conclusions

The research hypothesis posits that the military doctrines incorporating adaptability, technological advancements, and international collaboration significantly enhance the operational capabilities of military forces, thereby improving global security dynamics. The research objectives aim to thoroughly analyze how military doctrines have adapted to asymmetric conflicts by focusing on several key areas: diversity of perspectives, critical factors, historical evolution, integration of technologies and cooperation, impact on military effectiveness.

The study compiles and analyzes opinions from various scholars and experts, identifying consensus and debates on the necessity for military doctrines to evolve. This broad perspective helps to establish a comprehensive understanding of the current state and needs of military strategy adaptation. There were identified critical factors that drive the evolution of military strategies, such as technological integration and the need for international cooperation. These factors are determinant for developing doctrines that can effectively respond to modern threats. The research traces the historical development of military doctrines extracting from various papers, noting most significant changes and continuities. This historical approach provides

insights into how past experiences and future anticipations influence current military strategies. The study has assessed how technological advancements and international cooperation are being integrated into military doctrines. This analysis is vital for understanding how doctrines can leverage new technologies and global partnerships to enhance military effectiveness. Finally, the research evaluates the impact of these doctrinal transformations on the effectiveness of military responses to asymmetric conflicts, providing evidence of improvements in operational capabilities and strategic outcomes.

The study has validated the hypothesis, demonstrating that modern military doctrines, which are adaptable and integrate both technological innovations and international cooperation, are more effective in responding to the dynamic challenges of asymmetric conflicts. This transformation not only addresses immediate threats, but also builds a proactive defence posture capable of anticipating future security challenges.

In summary, the research comprehensively achieved its objectives, illustrating the necessity of continual adaptation and innovation in military doctrines to maintain relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing global security environment. This transformation is decisive for enhancing military capabilities and for ensuring that military strategies are in alignment with contemporary and future geopolitical realities.

The analysis elucidates the challenges and needs of adapting the military doctrine in a dynamic global security environment, emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach that integrates technology, international cooperation and continuous learning. The approach reveals the way in which some theoretical and practical aspects intertwine to formulate a cohesive and effective response to the dynamics of modern security. Consequently, a constant revision of a military doctrine is crucial to respond to asymmetric threats and adapt strategies, tactics and technologies to the unconventional enemy. Integrating technology into military doctrines is critical to adapting to asymmetric conflict, marked by advanced technology and cyber operations.

Thus, to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the military response, the military doctrine transformation must be holistic, integrating technological innovation and international collaboration. This process involves threat analysis, development of response capabilities, and involvement of civil society and non-military actors. Therefore, the military doctrine must promote international collaboration, develop common standards for multinational operations, and integrate non-human actors in ensuring operational effectiveness. In addition, a proactive and innovative approach is required that includes changing strategies and a paradigm shift within the armed forces, promoting a mindset open to innovation and continuous adaptation.

In conclusion, the transformation of military doctrine is essential to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the armed forces in the face of constant global change and to ensure that they are optimally equipped, organized and prepared to meet current and future challenges.

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DEFENCE SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN A 'FROZEN CONFLICT' CONDITION: CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

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Safeguarding the security of the state and society is the meaning and reason for the national security system's existence and its functioning. How security will be achieved depends on the organisation of the state security system, which is determined by the level of vulnerability of proclaimed national values. Since the 'frozen conflict' represents a latent and permanent threat to the security of state and the identity of society, the national security system adapts to the dynamics of the security environment by revising its defence capabilities. Reconsideration of the readiness for defence is most often manifested through an increase in military potential, which can generate a security dilemma problem and threaten regional stability.

Due to the escalation of violence on the Eurasian continent and the security situation in the Western Balkans region, this study critically examines the need for the development of a defence system in the case of the Republic of Serbia. The purpose of the research paper is to encourage reflection on the implications of the independent state's concept for international peace and security. Is the solution that brought peace to Europe nearly four centuries ago a source of nowadays conflicts?

Keywords: *national security; defence system; frozen conflict; security dilemma; Serbia.*

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Introduction

Security is the foundation of the state community's existence and represents its inseparable attribute. Although the nature of security risks and threats at the beginning of the 21st century has changed, the standard unit for international relations and security remains the sovereign state (Keković and Dimitrijević 2017).

The optimal condition of security represents the state's minimum right. Since in the absence of security the state as a sovereign entity does not exist, the state security function is the guarantor of the endurance of the state and, thus, the respective society. The security function is often identified with the protective function, that is the function through which security is provided to society within the state (Grčić 2000). The realisation of the security function in terms of safeguarding the values of the state and society is defined as national security (Sretović, Talijan and Beriša 2016). National security is a condition in which the state and society are not threatened by a military attack, political pressure, or economic threat from outside, as well as an extremely political, economic, ideological, religious, or cultural attack from inside (Stajić 2015, 33). Therefore, from the aspect of security sciences, security as a nation's function implies activity and action aimed at achieving an optimal state of security for the state and society.

1. The Security System Organisation

As a polyvalent element, the state executes the security function by systematising security affairs into a normatively, structurally, and functionally ordered entirety. Organising security affairs into a systemic entirety, the security system as the bearer of the security function of the state is established. Accordingly, the national security system represents the doctrinally regulated entirety of a series of human activities and specialised bodies directed by state policy toward achieving a specific security goal (Savić 2007, 61).

The security system organisation rests on legal rules and documents and depends on the totality of connections and relationships between system elements, as well as connections and relationships that the security system achieves in interaction with other social (sub)systems. According to the system general theory, the security system organisation depends on the complexity and size of the security and socio-political systems, as well as the system's stability and tasks, operating services, end users, security competition etc. (Pejanović, Vejnović and Rakić 2017). In other words, the organisation of the security system is carried out in a manner and in a scope that corresponds to the character, needs, and state capabilities. As the scope and importance of a state protection are different, the organisation of the national security system differs and depends on the level of development of the society and its social relations (Kršljanin and Karović 2015).

The security system is determined by the principles of the socio-political system and legal order. The scope and structure of the national security system are shaped by various factors, such as internal and foreign policy; the strategic-doctrinal sight of national security; international relations; the political and economic stability; as well as social, demographic, geographical, and other elements (Ratković and Petrović 1981). The security system is determined by the established state order, i.e., the form of government, the type of political regime, and the power of state authorities (Mitrović 2019, 60). The socio-political system affects the security system by shaping its conceptual framework, organisation and structure, content, and method of the implementation of security activities, as well as the management and position of entities within the national security system (Gaćinović 2020; Rakić 2020). National security policy as a state-systematic approach to the problem of (in) security unites the organisational factors of security. According to the national security policy viewpoint, different democratic arrangements influence an organisation, management, supervision, and state control over the security system, as well as its ability to confront security challenges, risks, and threats (Mitrović 2019). The organisation of the national security system is carried out following the adopted security policy, which determines the method of performing the security function, the purpose of the security system, and the manner of organising security forces and means (Debeljak and Zekić 2016). Therefore, a properly measured and targeted strategic approach to security is a condition for achieving national security.

2. The (In)Security Perception in a State of 'Frozen Conflict'

Since security is inextricably linked to the protection of national values and interests, the optimal condition of national security implies the absence of threats by mitigating their impact to vital national values and the absence of fear that threatened such values (Wolfers 1952, 485). As the protection of national values represents the general goal and meaning of the existence of a security system, this system's architecture is conditioned by the nature of the protected values, the characteristics of challenges, risks, and threats to given values, as well as the respective means and methods used by it in their protection (Stajić 2015, 24; National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019; Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019).

The national security concept, with a focus on the state lasting as a sovereign entity, sees territorial integrity and sovereignty as a primary interest and a vital value that is protected by its realisation (Møller 2001). According to the national security concept's perspective, the unresolved integrity and sovereignty issues over a certain part of the territory is the reason for the 'frozen conflict'. In addition to the territorial dispute, the condition of 'frozen conflict' is also characterised by a certain ideological, political, national, ethnic, religious, cultural, and other pressure

suffered by the resident population within the territorial borders whose sovereignty is disputed. Consequently, alongside the threat to the state that exists as a sovereign entity, the state of 'frozen conflict' also implies the threat to the collective identity of the resident population, i.e., societal security. The threat to the collective identity of a society can be obviated by strengthening the influence of its own identity, or by transferring the issue of social (in)security to the political or military sector (Ejdus 2015). Similar to that, the 'frozen conflict' is a state of permanent and latent threat to the state security and the collective identity of the society generated by the separatist aspirations of a certain group, incited by a previous, frequently an externally supported, armed rebellion.

The primary role in protecting the state's sovereignty and territorial integrity from all forms of threats is the defence system. In consequence, national security is guaranteed by increasing the diplomatic, information, economic, as well as the military power of the security system. As a system of organised military resources, the military force provides optimal conditions for the protection of national values and interests (Rakić 2016, 238). The only, although not perfect, response to the situation of the armed rebellion outbreak, as foreseen by the highest state's strategic and legal documents, is precisely the use of military force. Although some authors point out that the military force is the only factor that ensures peace (Gashi 2016), such an attitude has deeper negative implications for regional and international security. Namely, the military force has a deterrent role in the sense of the absence of direct violence, i.e., organised and collective violence between large groups of people, such as nations and even between classes, races, and ethnic groups (Galtung 1967, 14). Military force is the factor that ensures negative peace. Nevertheless, peace, besides the absence of negative elements, also includes the presence of positive elements. As the most expressed characteristic of a frozen conflict, the absence of social justice and equality in the presence of indirect and structural violence implies the absence of positive peace. In consequence, the policy of improving defence readiness for the sovereignty and territorial integrity safeguard by increasing military potential may cause the problem of a security dilemma and disrupt stability in the region.

Since the use of force is a condition for the realisation of the state's protective function, the state must dispose of all elements of force – economic and military capacities, as well as knowledge of how to use it in the rational and appropriate way. A state can be an economic and intellectual giant, but a political dwarf if it does not have the instruments of force at its disposal (Stajić 2015, 15). However, the assessment of the elements of the potential military strength of the state – in terms of the size of the territory and population, economic and technological development, geographical location, military capabilities, etc. – is not sufficient for understanding the essence of the security dilemma, i.e., the question of why one state's actions are interpreted rather as offensive than defensive by another (Walt 1985).

The impetus for the creation of the security dilemma issue exists in the efforts of states to take care of their security needs (Herz 1959). Concern for one's safety leads to the emergence of a feeling of insecurity in others, each of whom interprets it in its own way. Considering the capacities of those who represent a potential threat, states increase their capabilities they consider necessary for their defence. In addition to seeing their activities as forced, they regard the rivals' activities as premeditated, often with malicious intentions (Ejdus 2015). The perception of (in)security formed in such manner influences states to closely monitor actions of others, first and foremost their military power. The decisive factor in determining whether the adversary's movements are offensive, or defensive is the perception of the other side's (in)security, which depends on the 'view of the world' held by its analysts and political decision-makers.

3. The Security System's Organisation Framework in a State of Frozen Conflict

The organisation of the security system as an instrument of national security protection rests on the strategic-legal framework, which consists of internal and international legal norms, and strategic documents. Arranged from top to bottom under hierarchy and degree of generality, the internal framework is composed of the Constitution, strategic and doctrinal documents, laws, and by-laws, while the international-legal framework is made of the UN Charter and a series of ratified multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The state's defence policy, along with the Constitution, is the starting point for the establishment of various systems aimed at protecting national values. Apart from the legal ones, the Constitution contains rules of a political and programmatic nature that express society's needs (Lilić and Bulajić 2010). By drafting strategic and doctrinal documents that align with the state's defence policy and the proclaimed society's requirements, the establishment of the strategic-legal framework as an assessment of the security conditions within the state and the region is achieved. Based on the adopted regulations, the national security system evaluates the security situation inside the state and in the region whereby directives are activated for the implementation of pre-planned procedures of the state's security structures and institutions with a noticeable division of departmental and personal tasks and responsibilities (Gaćinović 2017). By adopting state strategies, preconditions for synchronised operational-tactical actions of all elements of the national security system in peacetime, state of emergency, and wartime are created, as well as in times of 'frozen conflict', as a unique security modality. The established strategic-legal framework is regulated more closely by laws and by-laws that define the internal

organisation of various security structures, their scope of actions, as well as methods, means, and measures that these structures utilise during their activity.

The International Framework of the Security System of the Republic of Serbia

After the withdrawal of Montenegro from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 by the adoption of the Constitution in the same year, Serbia, for the first time since its independence, has unequivocally identified priority national interests and values. The importance of national values was initially confirmed in 2009 by the adoption of strategic-doctrinal documents in the fields of security and defence, and then in the framework of new strategies – the National Security Strategy and the Defence Strategy, in 2019.

Spurred on previous emergencies (the armed conflicts in Kosovo and Metohija during 1998 and 1999; the NATO bombing, i.e. aggression on Yugoslavia without authorisation of the UN Security Council in 1999; the March Pogrom of the Serbs and other non-Albanian minorities in Kosovo and Metohija in 2004; and the unilateral and illegal declaration of Kosovo and Metohija independence in February 2008), Serbia has emphasized the preservation of territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty as one of the primary and inalienable national interests, as well as the protection of the national, cultural, religious, and historical identity of the Serbian people and identities of national minorities (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019).

Considering that the territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia has been violated because of the unresolved sovereignty of Kosovo and Metohija, Serbia's security system has been operating in a state of 'frozen conflict' since 1999. As Serbia's legal regulations have been put ad acta across the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, the security issues of the Kosovo-Metohija region are regulated following ratified international documents, implemented by international security and police forces. Even though they explicitly guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, the ratified documents do not specify the competencies that the Republic of Serbia has in Kosovo and Metohija (UNSC 1999a). Although a temporary political regime functioning based on the Kosovo-Metohija self-government has been established on the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, international military and civilian institutions implement arbitrary power instead of the temporary organs of the self-governing government of Kosovo and Metohija. Thus, the Constitution and laws of the Republic of Serbia across the territory of Kosovo and Metohija are derogated, while Serbia's security system is put out of action by the provisions of the UNSC Resolution 1244 and the Kumanovo Military-Technical Agreement.

Starting in June 1999, the ratified documents limited the protective function of the security system of the Republic of Serbia, in Kosovo and Metohija by order

of arrival of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) on the Kosovo-Metohija territory after the withdrawal of Serbian security forces. The security function was further reduced by establishing two security buffer zones – the Ground Safety Zone, without the presence of the armed forces, with a width of 5 km that extends beyond the territorial borders of Kosovo and Metohija within the territory of Serbia, and the Air Safety Zone, without a flight permit, at a depth of 25 km within the airspace of the Republic of Serbia (UNSC 1999a; UNSC 1999b). A special aspect of the limitation of the Republic of Serbia's security system function in the Kosovo-Metohija area concerns the use of military force. The KFOR commander has the authority to order the use of force in cases of violation of the Military-Technical Agreement provisions (UNSC 1999b).

Based on the decision of the Secretary-General of NATO, in May 2001, the Ground Safety Zone was abolished, which led to the military and security consolidation of the southern part of the territory of Serbia (NATO 2001). Also, the return of up to one thousand members of the Serbian Armed Forces to the administrative line of Kosovo and Metohija, which was originally foreseen by the UNSC Resolution 1244, became possible (UNSC 1999a). At the end of 2015, the flight-banning policy in the Air Safety Zone for all types of Serbian aircraft, without the prior consent of the KFOR commander, was abolished. By the decision of the Secretary-General of NATO, the 'upper airspace' above the Kosovo and Metohija territory is open for civil air traffic.

4. The Republic of Serbia's Defence Policy in a 'Frozen Conflict' Condition

As stated by the Law on Amendment of the Law on Defence (2015), the defence system is the warrantor of Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity from all forms of threats. Thus, when analysing Serbia's strategic-doctrinal documents, it is evident that in assessing the level of national security, Serbia takes an almost Hobbesian 'view of the world', according to which military power is the only guarantee of its existence (Ejdus 2015; Stojanović and Bardžić 2017). Considering the traditional understanding of security, which is based on military security, i.e. the balance of military power and arms control, the framework of Serbia's strategic documents is dominated by a military-centric approach to security (Mikić, Stojanović, Despotović and Ranđelović 2016). Following the geopolitical and security situation in the Western Balkans region, by adopting strategic documents in the field of security and defence in 2019, Serbia revised the previous approach to the protection of national security. However, instead of affirming the concept of human security in the National Security Strategy, Serbia has kept state-centric stress in its approach to national security (Mijalković and Popović-Mančević 2020, 357). The National Security Strategy did recognize the human security problems but gave them secondary

importance concerning the traditional national value of territorial integrity (Popović and Cvetković 2013, 170).

Intending to satisfy the need for safeguarding territorial integrity and independence, the Republic of Serbia advocates a national security and defence policy based on the traditional comprehension of security issues (Milošević and Stojadinović 2013, 132). Serbia's defence policy is entrenched in the total defence concept. The concept of total defence aims to preserve the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of the Republic of Serbia, and the internal stability and the security of its citizens (Total Defence Concept - Summary 2024, 6). By emphasizing the Kosovo-Metohija problem, Serbia is rather oriented toward the traditional understanding of the security concept, which represents the predominant factor in shaping its current security and defence policy (Rizmal 2012). Therefore, the 2019 National Security Strategy of Serbia remains a national security strategy in its original meaning, with a focus on the state's foreign policy interests (Stanković 2021, 106).

A significant change in terms of the security approach – compared to the previous view formulated by the 2007 Resolution of the National Assembly on the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order of the Republic of Serbia – is represented by an expanded display of the military neutrality concept. As a militarily neutral state, Serbia will not join military alliances, while the protection of national values will be based on its own potential and defence forces (Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019). Formulated in such a manner, the military neutrality concept requires an appropriate economic power so that the modernisation and equipping of the armed forces with modern combat systems become possible (Rančić, Zarić and Beriša 2019). Thereby, the concept of neutrality requires the allocation of greater financial resources to gain the full provision of national security.

Financing the national defence directly depends on the economic owner and available Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Since the budget is the main factor in the development of the defence system, its form, and the scope of engagement, Serbia strives for economic development, intending to ensure greater financial investments in defence industry development and the modernisation of the military and other defence forces (Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019). The development of the defence system is based on Serbia's needs and possibilities, followed by the strengthening of economic and demographic potential (National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia 2019). In this regard, an analysis of the funds allocated from the defence budget for military financing purposes between 2011 and 2021 was carried out.

In 2011, the total defence expenditures of the Republic of Serbia was amounted to about 1.8% of the GDP (Stoilkov and Ivanova 2017, 122). However, the allocated financial resources did not create the conditions needed for optimal development of

the defence system and the operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces. In this respect, for the functioning and development of the defence system, it was necessary to provide at least 2% of GDP (White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia 2010, 128). Apart from the fact that military expenditures did not reach the projected 2% of GDP, they were reduced to 1.4% of GDP in 2016 (Stoilkov and Ivanova 2017, 122; Kostić, Knežević and Lepojević 2018, 177). Starting with 2018, the defence budget gradually increased, reaching a record of 2.4% of GDP in 2021 (Ignjatijević, Bjeloš and Šterić 2022, 14). Since 2021, the defence budget has been increasing steadily, according to the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. The structure of military spending - shown in Figure no. 1 - has also changed (Kostić, Knežević and Lepojević 2018, 178; Ignjatijević, Bjeloš and Šterić 2022, 14). Between 2011 and 2016, the distribution of military expenditures per year was approximately the same, whereas in 2017, it changed significantly. Although the continuity of the growth of personnel expenses and investments in the defence system in recent years has been evident, the largest part of the 2021 military budget was spent on the procurement of new weapon systems and equipment.
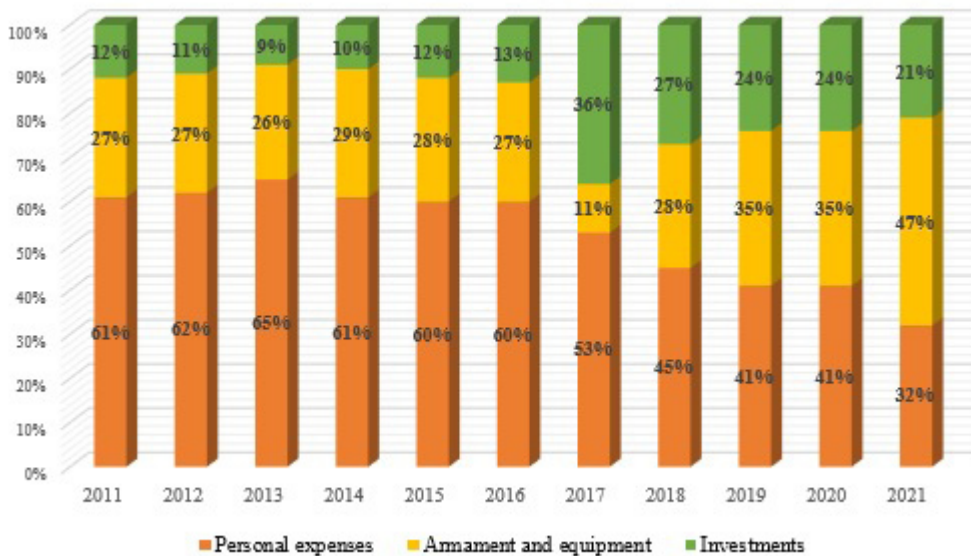
Figure no. 1: A graphic presentation of the defence budget structure of the Republic of Serbia

Under the established defence policy, the organisational structure of Serbia's defence system and the numerous size of its Armed Forces are determined by the types and characteristics of challenges, risks and threats to national security, defined defence interests, the operational capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces,

available defence resources, and the level of Serbia's integration into global security processes (Strategic Defence Review of the Republic of Serbia 2011, 47). Since the organisational structure of the defence system should be able to establish personnel and materially harmonious relationships among the state requirements and possibilities in the specific socio-historical condition, the Republic of Serbia is intensively working to improve its defence potential.

The process of the reorganisation of the Armed Forces involves organisational, personnel, and technical-technological aspects. The activities carried out in this regard are aimed at the development of enough military capabilities through the acquisition and integration of modernised weapons systems. The second part of the reorganisation activity concerns increasing the personnel potential power (number size, expertise, etc.) of the Armed Forces in peacetime, times of emergency, and times of war – according to an adequate recruitment model. The proportions and total defence expenditures of the Armed Forces' reorganisation are determined by the nature of risks and threats to state security, national interests, and defence policy (Kovač 2013, 104). As the defence activities are directly dependent on the current security situation, the question arises as to what security challenges, risks and threats Serbia is facing or will face, and whether the implementation of the aforementioned activities is necessary to improve the current level of national security.

In terms of acquiring new weapons systems, it does not necessarily mean that new and/or significant security challenges, risks, and threats have been recognised. The modernisation of the defence system is also justified by the flow of time because the existing combat systems are of an older technological generation and at the exploitation limit (Rančić, Zarić and Beriša 2019, 17). Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of the security threats included in the strategic documents in the field of security and defence from 2019, concerning those from 2009, reveals differences in terms of changing the character of security threats that are important for the modernisation of the defence system. Analysing the priority security issue of the unilaterally and illegally declared independence of Kosovo and Metohija, the 2019 Defence Strategy, unlike the one from 2009, indicates the spectrum of threats that are or can be, caused by the Kosovo-Metohija issue. With the statement that the security situation in Kosovo and Metohija has worsened, the 2019 Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia sees the ongoing transformation of the so-called 'Kosovo Security Forces' into Armed Forces as one of the main security threats.

In this respect, in 2018, by the decision of the temporary local government authorities in Kosovo and Metohija, the transformation of the 'Kosovo Security Forces' into a professional army was started with the support of some Western allies. Although NATO does not formally support the professional transformation of the 'Kosovo Security Forces', individual NATO members organise joint exercises, donated weapons, and carried out combat training of the 'Kosovo Security Forces'

members. Regardless of whether the transformation of the 'Kosovo Security Forces' leads to the creation of the Armed Forces or the so-called 'territorial defence forces' – estimates indicate a significant increase in the military costs of the 'Kosovo Security Forces. Following the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, military expenditures for the 'Kosovo Security Forces' in 2023 were higher by 0.5% of GDP compared to 0.8% of GDP in 2018 and are still rising. In 2023, Serbia's military expenditures stood at 2.9% of GDP, contrary to 1.6% in 2018, as stated by the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database. At the end of 2022, the Republic of Serbia sent a request to the Office of the NATO Mission in Kosovo and Metohija for the return of up to 1,000 members of the military and police force to Kosovo and Metohija. The reason for such request was the reduced levels of societal safety and security of the Serb minority. According to the Knoema Global Peace Index Database, the level index of societal safety and security in Kosovo and Metohija in 2022 was 2.27. Although, according to the UNSC Resolution 1244, this office does not have the authority or the right to refuse the request, KFOR believed that there was no need for the return of the Serbian security forces to Kosovo and Metohija territory. Paradoxal, less than a year after Serbia's request, NATO has sent additional troops to Kosovo and Metohija (NATO 2023). The level of societal security in Kosovo and Metohija in 2023 was 2.28, as stated by the Knoema Global Peace Index Database. For comparison, the state with the best societal safety and security levels in the world in 2022 and 2023 was Iceland, with a score of 1.24 in 2022, i.e., and 1.28 in 2023.

From the security dilemma viewpoint, the development of the 'Kosovo Security Forces' is of special importance and influence in organising Serbia's defence system in a time of 'frozen conflict'. In other words, the formation of the 'Kosovo Armed Forces', which is contrary to the UNSC Resolution 1244, along with the possible withdrawal of KFOR forces from the territory of Kosovo and Metohija at the end of its mandate, represents a direct threat to the national and defence interests of Serbia. The nature of recognised risks and threats requires additional defence measures and increasing military resources (Stojković and Radović 2017, 11; Rančić, Zarić and Beriša 2019, 17). In response to the identified risks and threats, Serbia strives for defence system modernisation through the procurement of new defence systems, following both operational needs and financial possibilities (Doktrina Vojske Srbije 2010; White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia 2023).

The second part of strengthening the defence potential involves the change of approaching the manning policy in the defence system. A significant factor of the Armed Forces reorganisation is the possible mobilisation effort of the total population, i.e., the ratio of the peacetime and wartime composition of the Armed Forces, which depends on the state's doctrinal commitment. According to the standards, the mobilisation effort in peacetime extends from 0.5 to 1% of the total population number, while during wartime the mobilisation effort ranges from 5% to

10%. States that advocate the deterrence doctrine have a smaller difference between the wartime and peacetime compositions, contrary to the states that are determined for the defence doctrine. Most states base the peacetime establishment of their Armed Forces at 0.5% of the total population and the wartime establishment at 5% of it. The same standards have been implemented by Serbia (Mišović 2015, 227).

Accordingly, the Republic of Serbia is considering the reactivation of the conscripts' service, which was suspended in 2011, when the professionalization process of its Armed Forces began. The reorganisation of the Serbian forces required a brand-new filling model of forces, modifying its composition and structure, establishing a functional and spatial organisation, and a system of command and logistical support (Rakić 2016, 239). Since 2010, the Republic of Serbia has opted for a three-service composition of its Armed Froces as the basic military force that defends Serbia against military threats. The filling policy of defence subjects ranges from the recruitment level to the purely professional level, which depends on the political and security situation, economic opportunities, and the achieved degree of technological development of the state. Consequently, the issue of (re)activation of military obligation is particularly highlighted.

Regardless of the implemented model of Armed Forces recruitment /general or selective, the level of perceived endangerment caused by external security threats and the strengthening of civil-military relations stand out as the most relevant factors of recruitment in the military (Nikolić 2021, 4). Analysing the defence policies of states that reintroduced the obligation of military service, it can be concluded that they decided to take such a step after assessing that they were facing certain external security threats.

After the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine in 2014 – the so-called Donbas war –, there was a change in the perception of security risks and threats on the European continent, whereby some European states began to review their security and defence policies. These movements led to discussions about regular military service in many states in Europe. This issue became especially emphasised after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Since the Russian invasion of the Crimean Peninsula, Ukraine (in 2014), Lithuania (in 2015) and militarily neutral Sweden (in 2017) have reactivated military service, while Sweden and Ukraine have started with the consideration of NATO membership. The decisions were directly related to the assessment of the external security threats – the proximity of militarily superior Russia and the deteriorating overall security situation in Eastern Europe (Vaicekauskaitė 2017; Nikolić 2021). Apart from introducing the military conscription, Lithuania initiated the process of harmonising its security policy with Latvia and Estonia, intending to simultaneously increase the defence capacities of all three Baltic States through regional cooperation in the field of defence. Since 2014, the defence policies of the Baltic States have

allocated larger budgets for the defence to modernise and increase the size of their Armed Forces (Szymański 2015). Additionally, since January 2024, Latvia has introduced mandatory military service. The Russian act of aggression on Ukraine in February 2022, which contributed to the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian War, influenced the change in Sweden's and Finland's perception of security, which shortly thereafter submitted a request for membership in NATO. This procedure ended a decades-long era of military neutrality for these two states. There is no dilemma that the neutralism concept in international relations has changed distinctly. Even the most typical examples of militarily neutral states, Austria and Switzerland, express attitudes that are not aligned with the traditional comprehension of neutralism (Gashi 2016). Although they are militarily neutral and have a stable security environment in terms of a low possibility of an armed conflict, Switzerland and Austria carry out general military conscription. Despite pronounced sociological changes in the perception of military service in Swiss society, refusal to serve in the military results in the payment of financial compensation or a prison sentence (Szvircsev 2011). On the other hand, Austria has never suspended compulsory military service, not even after positive changes in its security discourse after the end of the Cold War.

Faced with security challenges in the region, Israel practices a policy of general gender-neutral military service, regardless of the evident trend of growth in the number of individuals who are seeking exemption from mandatory military service granted on various grounds (Cohen and Cohen 2022). A similar view of (in) security has the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, which are introducing military conscription due to security threats from current conflicts in their environment. For the first time in history, Qatar initiated compulsory service in 2013, while in the UAE military obligation started in 2014. Similarly, India has never had any conscription laws, and joining the Indian Armed Forces was on a voluntary base. However, in 2022, the Indian Government announced that it would begin recruiting up to 46,000 men aged between 17 and a half and 21 years old annually to serve on 4-year contracts, under a process called 'the Agnipath Scheme'. Türkiye, Greece, Cyprus, Armenia, and Azerbaijan continue with the military obligation policy in frozen conflict. Apart from the execution of the general military obligation, until the mutual escalation of violence in 2020, Armenia and Azerbaijan have worked intensively on increasing military capacities through the acquisition and integration of new weapons systems. As in the case of Serbia's strategy, Azerbaijan's armament strategy implied greater financial investments to increase the capacity of its dedicated industry as a basis for the modernisation and equipping of the defence forces (Gurbanov 2019). Türkiye, as a reliable partner of Azerbaijan and with established outstanding relations with the biggest regional power – Russia, acts as a starting point for the capacity decrease of the dedicated industry. Nevertheless, the Azerbaijani perception of (in)security led to military capacities to increase.

Despite the differences regarding the (non)existence of security threats, due to the lack of a supreme authority that would guarantee their security and existence, states are forced to increase their defence capacities since military power is the only guarantee of their survival (Herz 1951, 14; Brauch 2005, 10). Regardless of the formal and legal state equality in the international system, states are not essentially equal because they do not have identical hard and soft power or rights, and therefore neither the possibility of exercising force (Stojanović and Đurić 2012). Consequently, states seek to increase their military strength as much as possible, according to their perceptions of (in)security (Wolfers 1962). Same as in the past times, all states behave in a similar manner nowadays.

Concluding Considerations

Frequent changes in security circumstances influence states reviewing their defence capabilities. The analysis of the security and defence strategies of the European and non-European states shows that the strengthening of the national defence potential depends directly on the state's security perception. Raising defence potentials might be in different forms, such as greater financial allocations and procurement of weapons systems, military obligation introduction, alliances with other states, or membership in existing alliances.

The 'frozen conflict', as a distinctive modality of security, illustrates a change in the security architecture of defence significance for the integrity and sovereignty of the state. The security architecture establishes the conditions for the re-definition of national security and defence policies, alongside the strengthening of state's defence readiness. Accordingly, the Republic of Serbia strives to increase its defence capacity due to the disturbing security situation in the Western Balkans region, the identification of risks and threats of greater intensity to the highest national-proclaimed values and interests, the impossibility of adequate safeguarding of national values due to reduced staff and material resources, and the obsolescence of the military equipment. Strengthening the defence potential is currently only Serbia's answer to the threat of a 'frozen conflict'. Any other solution is in contradiction with the national values defined by the Constitution and would be interpreted as an inconsistency of the national security policy.

However, the fact is that the Hobbesian's perception of security is not only characteristic of Serbia but also of those states that interpret security threats more traditionally and whose defence strategies were part of the analysis of the present study. Security practice shows that in the conditions of a 'frozen conflict' states always give priority to traditional values at the expense of the worth of contemporary history. Along with the security threat to the territorial borders, states often take the threat to the identity of domicile society as a reason and justification for improving the military potential.

An alternative to existing national defence strategies is the complete affirmation of new security concepts and values in the constitutional and legal frameworks, and state security and defence policies. Current 'transitional' security and defence policies are still hybrid. Although their content affirms the postulates of the human security concept, their framework is still state-centred. Another solution to the problem of national security protection in a 'frozen conflict' would be a defence alliance with other states that could guarantee the security of their members. However, the question arises whether the stated 'solution' is the one to national security safeguarding since the protection of national values and interests, in that case, is transferred to a collective or supranational level, while the instrument of deterring security threats remains the same – the military force.

Is the independent state concept, whose roots date back to the 17th century, applicable in preserving the societal values of contemporary history? It appears to be not. Instead, the concept of an independent state is rather a source of today's conflicts than international peace. The traditional compression of national security according to which the strengthening of military potential and concluding military alliances represent the strongest guarantee of preserving the security of the state and society has been overcome. Moreover, it contributes to the arms race, strengthens mistrust between states, causes international instability and reflects the mentality of the Cold War period. To maintain peace and security, the 21st century international community requires an alternative approach that would guarantee the preservation of societal values by reconciling the right to self-determination and the right of a sovereign state to defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

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THE NEED FOR A SOFT POWER STRATEGY FOR ROMANIA. ELEMENTS

Matei BLĂNARU*

The importance of soft power strategies in recent decades has been both overstated in some cases, and understated in others. Both approaches have come with negative effects for the initiators, as well as the recipient societies. We can still encounter both approaches in contemporary societies, but we also encounter more moderate and more balanced successful approaches as well. Our assessment is that a balanced, professional, realistic approach and, above all, having as its final goal collective benefits for several states, for an entire region, not only for the initiating state, a soft power strategy that does not conceal hard power goals behind it, would be extremely welcome for Romania, and we propose several elements for it.

It would be even more necessary in an area like ours, where different soft power strategies are seen in action, and they have broader strategies concealed behind them, usually characteristic of hard power, with revisionist aims, namely to resuscitate old empires. We can give the example of neo-Ottoman strategies of Recep Erdogan's Turkiye, Vladimir Putin's strategies or Viktor Orban's. In some cases, the hard power strategies disguised in soft forms have been revealed, in others, not yet.

Keywords: *Romania; soft power; strategy; international; Central Europe; Balkans.*

Introduction

This analysis should begin with being realistically aware of the fact that every state, every nation has specific positive cultural, historical or political elements and interests, and highlighting these specific positive elements, in benign interests, that bring nations closer to each other, and do not make them drift apart, can only be an extremely positive aspect in international relations. Even more so in the Romania area.

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Romania urgently needs a soft power strategy that would pursue its regional interests, that would build a positive public image abroad, and that would even contribute to a much needed nation-building dimension, as Romania seems to be still looking for a resolutely assumed regional identity, both politically, and at the societal level. Such a successful strategy would bring economical, political, societal, cultural, and ultimately even security related benefits, dimensions that we will further show, that other countries, such as Poland, are very much aware of. The very endeavour of writing about a soft power strategy for Romania, but also its structuring, must in no way be viewed in connection with the radicalism of certain unscientific exaggerations that deny, deconstruct or minimise the positive attributes of Romanian civilization and culture. Just as they should neither be seen in relation to opposite types of radicalism that fall at the other extreme of a protochronism which is equally false, unrealistic and harmful. As a Romanian researcher with a PhD from the Sorbonne put it, in terms of history, one of the very important elements for developing a soft power strategy: "Romania's ancient history should not be exploited, nor distorted, but it should neither be ridiculed nor ignored." (Grigorescu 2022) These words are just as valid regarding other dimensions of a Romanian soft power strategy.

Just the same, such an endeavour must not be ethnocentric in any way, but must be focused on pragmatism, on cultural, political, diplomatic, economic and public image elements. A soft power strategy and its related elements are not emotional matters, these are as pragmatic matters as possible *−what do we have, what can we work with, how can we promote them, what concrete results can they bring us?* This is what it is all about.

Thus, among the elements used in a soft power strategy we can list cultural products, history, sports, political products and manifests of Romania, diplomacy, humanitarian aid, religion (which is more than a cultural product), communication - public diplomacy. The main objective of this analysis is to emphasize the need for a regional and international soft power strategy of Romania, its scope, the significant latent regional potential, the elements on which such a strategy could be founded, and concrete significant benefits of a geopolitical, strategic and economic nature. Romania should definitely improve in all these directions, considering its potential, the strategic positioning and the size of the country.

Hard power and *soft power* for the national interest

Regarding the relationship between soft power and hard power, it is worth mentioning that in this analysis we have strictly referred to a soft power strategy for Romania. It is easy to understand that for achieving objectives of strategic interest and security, we cannot speak anywhere in the world about an effective soft power strategy that is not accompanied by a hard power strategy. Especially in the current

context, especially in the region where Romania is located, strengthening lethal hard power capabilities, especially regarding the equipping of the Armed Forces, is essential. This has been emphasized numerous times at the Euro-Atlantic level and is also underscored by current events, especially the war in Ukraine. Furthermore, it is obvious that if certain constituent elements necessary for our soft power strategy or certain objectives of our strategy are not recognised and favourably resolved by other actors in the region, according to international law, human rights, European norms, bilateral or multilateral agreements in force, of course, Romania must also use other more assertive peaceful non-lethal means of persuasion, described by some as "hard power" as well, such as coercive diplomacy (which seems to have been completely forgotten by Romania's representatives), a much more incisive communication campaign on the given topics, or more convincing economic means, among others. Among these objectives that have not yet been resolved and will probably need hard power instruments as well, here we can mention Romania's access to certain organisations to which it is entitled to belong, access to certain logistical, economic, and energy infrastructure projects, etc., or the rights of Romanian minorities outside its borders that must mirror the rights of minorities in Romania, or attempts to falsify history and science by foreign entities inventing so-called "Vlach" and "Moldovan" languages. However, obviously, as we have already mentioned, among these hard power instruments that need to be used, there is no question of using threats or armed interventions, but only peaceful means.

However, these hard power means are not the subject of the current analysis regarding the necessity of a soft power strategy. In this analysis, we have already assumed as necessary and anticipatory some actions from Romania in order to achieve specific goals (access to certain organisations such as the Schengen Area, OEEC (Organisation for European Economic Co-operation), minority rights for Romanian citizens abroad, etc.), including through peaceful hard power means, such as coercive diplomacy, if necessary. It must be emphasised that all these examples regarding the need for Romania's inclusion in certain regional organisations, and observing Romanian/Aromanian minorities' rights abroad, and other such examples, are not unusual requests or exaggerated unilateral demands from Romania, but rather just certain normal specific issues that are unacceptable if not favourably met in bilateral/multilateral relations almost anywhere else in the world. Yet, Romania's representatives have inexplicably accepted and allowed unfavourable situations, such as those, persist for decades, to the detriment of pragmatic national interests. Yet, regarding the adequate protection of Romanian minorities' rights abroad, we must understand that, beyond any ethnocentric approach, a state that does not adequately protect its national minorities and diaspora abroad will never earn the respect of its neighbors. In other words, these are pragmatic issues that have a direct impact on Romania's status, interests, and security in the region, because no one will respect a state that does not protect its own citizens and minorities beyond its borders.

Thus, in order for the soft power strategy to be successful and not to raise unnecessary and counterproductive suspicions from other regional actors, the two strategies of hard power and soft power must be complementary in Romania's national interest, but they must have specific objectives and separate means. Furthermore, as we have emphasised, Romania's soft power strategy should not only focus on Romania's well-being but also on its contribution to regional security, the resolution of regional conflicts, and building on Romania's image as a protector of the independence and territorial integrity of states in the region. It should be a vision that integrates rather than divides. And this can only be achieved with a peaceful, transparent, yet consistent, determined, and professional hard power strategy, with Armed Forces equipped comparably to what Poland is doing, incorporating the most modern combat techniques, equipment, and tactics (because future warfare will be very different from the current one), coupled with *an honest and separate soft power strategy*. Otherwise, we risk what President Recep Erdogan has been doing in Turkiye, where he started with a neo-Ottoman soft power strategy, first outlined by Ahmet Davutoğlu, a strategy that nonetheless had hidden militaristic and expansionist hard power objectives behind it[1]. For example, one of its essential points that this neo-Ottoman strategy initially had was "zero problems with neighbors", yet in just a few years, Turkiye went from there to threatening Greece and Armenia with military invasions, and to actual military interventions and occupation in Syria and Iraq, as well as espionage directed against the Turkish diaspora (SCF 2017), and cultural institutions like TIKA, YTB, or the Yunus Emre Institute, about which there are multiple testimonies that they are covers for recruitment and activities of the Turkish secret services (Bozkurt 2020), or some Turkish NGOs which have been helping ISIS, al-Qaeda, Hamas, and other terrorist organizations (Kenez 2023) (Dombe 2021). In other words, we are talking about activities, means, and objectives of hard power disguised as activities and entities providing soft power, and these actions lead to regional insecurity and distrust.

Therefore, although both hard power and soft power strategies are essential for pursuing Romania's strategic and defence interests and should be complementary, we

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[1] Even though it is clear that, theoretically, hard power is not usually an end goal in itself but rather a set of tools for achieving objectives, in this analysis, we will refer to "hard power objectives/goals" as those objectives typically associated with the use of hard power instruments, such as militarization, offensive military interventions, economic/political/territorial subjugation of neighboring entities, territorial expansion, or imperialistic visions, etc. The use of soft power instruments to pursue an agenda of hard power objectives is extremely common in our region; we have cited examples such as Russia, Turkiye, and Hungary. Therefore, we encourage the separation of these two strategies in the case of Romania, in order to gain trust and to build a stable and advantageous regional environment for all actors, not just to pursue specific self-interests. In the long term, this separation of objectives and means used may be more advantageous than disguising hard power objectives as soft power for immediate gains, but which leads to the discrediting of the policies of those states, regional distrust, and instability.

must ensure that each agenda acts as stipulated, that there are no hidden hard power objectives behind the soft power strategy, in order not to compromise Romania's image and credibility we want to build in our region. Trust is perhaps one of the most difficult assets to find at the international (and domestic) level at the moment, and Romania must build regional credibility for the good of all. And it cannot do this by disguising revisionist, expansionist, or coercive hard power intentions and strategies under soft power forms, as Russia, Turkiye, or Viktor Orban's Hungary have been doing. Romania can build regional trust only through the honest pursuit of a hard power strategy when it decides to use one (obviously, non-revisionist), and the honest pursuit of a soft power strategy when it decides to use one. We have to do what we say we are going to do.

1. What Does a *Soft Power* Strategy Mean? What Elements Does it Rely on?

Soft power means much more than what Romania is currently doing. Soft power entails a strategy through which cultural image and economic elements that represent Romania penetrate all layers of the targeted societies, not just at an elitist or declarative level. However, some of these essential topics for Romania's soft power strategy are not currently being treated with the seriousness, professionalism, or objectivity required, but rather with a peripheral dilettantism from a scientific and subjective point of view. Examples of this include ignoring or ridiculing Romania's history in relation to the Daco-Roman civilisation. Nevertheless, strictly from the perspective of international relations, strictly from the perspective of image potential, marketing, and strategy, these topics, themes, and their potential cannot be ignored, let alone ridiculed.

Romania is currently placed more than mediocre in the *Global Soft Power Index* for the year 2024, ranking 58th in the world (Brand Finance 2024, 65-6), far behind Poland (ranked 33), behind Hungary, Croatia, Oman, Bahrain, Ukraine, Georgia, or Estonia. The reality is even more dramatic than this ranking suggests because even this position is deceptive and not due to any soft power strategy of Romania or any concentrated effort in this direction by Romanian representatives. It almost certainly owes only to the international recognition of some prominent Romanian sports figures like Nadia Comăneci, Gheorghe Hagi, Ilie Năstase, or David Popovici and the "Dracula" brand, which have made the name "Romania" familiar worldwide. However, scores in education, science, knowledge of Romanian culture internationally, governance, international relations, influence, or communication are extremely weak.

With that being stated, it is imperative to briefly clarify what we understand by soft power. There's no need to review the extensive literature on this subject or its importance and elements. Instead, we will refer to one of the seminal works that

talked about soft power. Joseph Nye Jr. is the one who developed the concept of soft power in the 1990s, and in an emblematic volume from 2004, he stated: "Soft power rests on some shared values. That is why exchanges are often more effective than mere broadcasting. By definition, soft power means getting others to want the same outcomes you want, and that requires understanding how they are hearing your messages, and fine-tuning it accordingly. It is crucial to understand the target audience". (Nye 2004, 111)

The same author highlights the main categories of sources for exercising soft power: "The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority.)" (Nye 2004, 11) We will further show how, on all three fronts, Romania has significant real potential.

Joseph Nye's perspective on the concept of soft power has sometimes been criticized for being too "unstrategic" (Patalakh 2016, 87), because it lacks a broader strategic vision and does not adequately consider the soft power strategies of competitors in the region, that it may be more suitable for a liberal approach in international relations rather than a realist approach. Our assessment is that a soft power strategy lends itself to both approaches and depends more on the sources used, the instruments employed, the proper awareness of target societies (including awareness of the soft power strategies of other regional actors, even their potential counteraction), but also on the goals proposed to be achieved, whether a soft power strategy is liberal or realist.

2. The Importance of Soft Power Strategies
in the Contemporary World. Examples.

To give two of the most relevant examples of approaches at opposite extremes regarding the use of soft power, which have failed, with negative effects both for the initiators and the target societies, we can mention episodes from the recent history of the United States and China.

For example, as early as 2012, Anna Simons, an American researcher in the field of national security, criticised the fact that American foreign policy had become far too dependent on soft power approaches: *"In light of this, tying our long-term security to the notion that we can out-manipulate and out-spin others in the realm of cross-cultural persuasion, and thus wage some sort of soft, smart war seems especially imprudent."* (Simons 2012) Subsequent events have only proven her right, culminating in the devastating failure in Afghanistan. A devastating failure for both the local population and the USA. Despite investing huge sums of money and equipment, despite making extremely welcome progress in terms of human rights

and women's education, for example, the fact that the USA did not complement these with a much more pragmatic policy regarding the selection and promotion of more honest local collaborators, the fact that they relied on corrupt local elements (Azizi 2021), the fact that there was also US corruption (Paton Walsh 2021), these were some of the extremely important reasons why the USA earned such antipathy from the local population, dissatisfied with the rampant level of corruption, and had as allies local leaders who, faced with local Taliban threats, did nothing but accumulate their wealth and flee. In short, here is the failure of overreliance on a soft power strategy, which was poorly implemented on the ground, did not take into account the local specifics, the true needs of the local population, and was subsequently abandoned even by its own hard power elements.

On the other hand, the second example consists of a failure due to underestimating the importance of using a soft power strategy, which comes from the other side, from China. China has invested enormous sums of money in Central Asian states, in Central Asian infrastructure, has concluded agreements with local political leaders, thereby securing its borders against terrorist threats, obtaining significant economic, strategic, geopolitical, and security benefits, and has outlined and built elements of the Belt and Road, an economic and geopolitical initiative almost essential for China. But despite all this, despite the fact that in territorial disputes with Central Asian states it settled for less territory than that in dispute, despite economic investments and vaccine diplomacy, China has lost support and sympathy from the respective societies. We are even witnessing violent attacks against Chinese investors and workers in Kyrgyzstan (Shailoobek 2021), for example, and China is not very well perceived in the region. What is the reason for all this? It is about lack of a soft power strategy to engage with Central Asian societies, and this has been noted at the highest level of academic research in China, by Lu Gang, the director of the Center for Central Asian Studies at East China Pedagogical University. He acknowledges that "(...) China also has strategic disadvantages in Central Asia. One of the most obvious ones is that it does not enjoy a very solid public opinion at the grassroots level of society, and the cultural identities of the two sides are quite different. The reasons are complex. On the one hand, China has long focused on top political leaders and the top management of large enterprises, failing to penetrate the social depth of Central Asia and integrate with ordinary citizens." (Toma and Ghinea 2023). Indeed, the last words seem to accurately describe the same reasons for the failure of the USA in Afghanistan: "focused on top political leaders (...), failing to penetrate the social depth (...) and integrate with ordinary citizens." (Toma and Ghinea 2023)

We have also cited Joseph Nye earlier saying that "It is crucial to understand the target audience." (Nye 2004, 111), so here is explained a very important reason why the USA failed in Afghanistan and, so far, why China has failed to win the sympathy of the societies in Central Asia – they did not understand those societies. This is

why Romania's soft power strategy must be tailored to the audience −it will address the Polish society in one way, perhaps relying on the Vlach culture, on the interwar closeness, on current Euro-Atlantic interests, logistical and strategic commonalities, and in a different way will approach the message for the society in Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, or the United Kingdom.

Seeing these two extreme examples presented, our assessment is that a pragmatic approach, balanced and not strictly driven by instrumental purposes but also aimed at bringing people together, closer, can only be positive and extremely useful for any country, especially for a country like Romania. Especially considering the current absence of such a coherent strategy for Romania, coupled with significant potential and a history devoid of expansionist pretensions that could have created distrust and rejection.

3. Different Dimensions of Romania's *Soft Power* Strategy

A soft power strategy of Romania should be based on two different dimensions, but with many common basic elements, among which cultural products, sports, attitudes, Romania's political products, international relations, Romanian minorities, religion, and communication − public diplomacy. This strategy must encompass elements of nation-building, nation branding, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and of course, communication, under the umbrella of the goals of a single soft power strategy of Romania to pursue economic, cultural, political, diplomatic, and security related objectives. It may seem surprising that we added nation building to the enumeration above, but today's Romania could use a bit more nation building to help with societal cohesion, to halt massive migration from the country, and to focus citizens' efforts towards a common, beneficial goal. Not to mention the importance of societal cohesion from the perspective of national security. Therefore, in addition to the two different dimensions, one dedicated to close neighborhood, the other dedicated to the global environment, a concentrated soft power strategy of Romania would also have direct beneficial effects on how Romanian citizens perceive themselves, not just on how Romania is perceived externally.

We already have evidence of how nation building and nation branding, for example, intersect today in Ukraine and have significant geopolitical and political importance: "Firstly, nation branding is to a much lesser extent exclusively an activity that is directed to an audience of foreign investors and tourists. The direction toward the international field of politics is much more evident today, compared to what it was before (even if that was also a component in branding campaigns before Russia's attack). Most importantly, it is also directed toward a domestic audience − the citizens of Ukraine. Secondly, and following from that, this means that there may no longer be any sharp distinction between nation building and nation branding − at least not in times of an ongoing armed confict". (Bolin și Ståhlberg 2023, 221)

3.1. The dimension focused on close neighbourhood

Thus, a first dimension of Romania's soft power strategy should focus on the nearby regions, like the Balkans, and Central and Eastern Europe, where we still have Romanian/Aromanian ethnic or cultural minorities, hence a strategy centered on common ethnic/cultural soft power sources, geographical and historical proximity, or certain sources of historical friendship, as well as religious soft power sources. From this perspective of close historical relations or at least without historical tensions, the states with probably the greatest potential are Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Albania, or North Macedonia, not to mention the Republic of Moldova, with which the history and relations are different.

The approach regarding the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine will not be thoroughly presented in the current analysis for several reasons, considering the specific and complex nature of their relationship with Romania, but we will briefly point out why a soft power strategy for them would be very useful, as well. Firstly, the Republic of Moldova is a state formed by the Soviet Union through the abusive occupation of Romanian Bessarabia, first carried out by the Russian Tsarist Empire in 1812, through the occupation of a portion of the Principality of Moldavia, inhabited by a definite majority of Romanian ethnics. The Principality of Moldavia, by de jure and de facto means, what remained of it, united with Wallachia in 1859 to form Romania. In the Republic of Moldova, the official language is Romanian, and almost 1.5 million of the country's 2.5 million citizens are also citizens of Romania. However, this specificity in bilateral relations does not mean that Romania should not have a soft power strategy for the Republic of Moldova. On the contrary, the lack of such strategy from Romania has contributed to Moscow maintaining significant influence in the Republic of Moldova, which can lead to increased instability in the entire region at any time. The inaction of Romania's representatives over the past 30 years has left room for Moscow to operate almost freely until recently in the Republic of Moldova. We hope that this war has convinced decision-makers in Bucharest and Chisinau that a new approach is needed in bilateral relations, including the possibility of reunification with Romania.

Secondly, in a similar manner, relations between Ukraine and Romania do experience certain specific and complex issues, largely due to the same legacy of imperialistic conquests and raptures of Romanian Moldavian territories by the Austrian Habsburg Empire and the Russian and Soviet Empires. However, both Ukraine, and Romania need to go beyond these historical challenges and legacies, beyond mutual distrust, and need to properly adddress each other's concerns (especially regarding Romanian minority rights in Ukraine, such as religious, educational, cultural, language rights, and, respectively, the full support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and lack of any revisionist claims or policies from Romania – there have been no such official claims or policies, but perhaps Ukraine and the

Ukrainian people, especially in this difficult context for them, need to be reassured that there will be none either). This is exactly why a soft power strategy would be very useful to reduce suspicions between people and countries, to build trust and cooperation on the basis of the current internationally recognized territorial and political status of both countries.

3.1.1. Sources of cultural/ethnic soft power. Romanian minorities and "Vlach" cultural elements.

As we have mentioned at the beginning of this analysis, it must be explicitly stated from the outset that such strategy must not in any way involve or even allude to any form of revisionism, territorial claims, and must not be ethnocentric, but rather focused more on cultural aspects. One such vast cultural heritage is the "Vlach" heritage that exists in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe, with numerous associations in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, the Balkans, assuming a "Vlach" identity. "Vlach" used to be the name given to Romanian/Aromanian people by other nations. *However, in order to draw soft power benefits from this identity and cultural legacy, a parallel strategy (even with hard power instruments, if necessary) of Romania is essential, along with concentrated and vigorous efforts to explicitly embrace and assume the "Vlach" cultural (sometimes ethnic) heritage in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe.* This strategy has been entirely lacking in Romania so far after the 1940s, but the potential benefits of such an endeavour are substantial, whereas its neglect has already caused significant harm to Romanian minorities in nearby states, to cultural heritage, and to Romania's strategic potential. A case in point is Serbia, where a so-called "Vlach language" has been invented, purportedly different from the Romanian language, with the aim of assimilating Romanian ethnic minorities.

Certainly, where they still exist, Romanian/Aromanian minorities must be decisively supported as well based on the principle of reciprocity according to Romanian norms regarding minorities in Romania, as well as international and European rights. Unfortunately, this is not happening, including because of the lack of involvement by the Romanian authorities.

Specifically, this "Vlach" dimension of soft power should be based on the common elements of Vlach culture ranging from Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia to northern Greece, highlighting the specificity and reputation of this "Vlach" culture throughout this area, with economic and image benefits. Among the attributes of this culture in host countries, we can enumerate mountains and landscapes, forests, a civilization of wood, animal husbandry, tourism, ecology, cheesemaking, and others. For example, remnants of Vlach culture in Czech and partially Slovak Moravia include stereotypes associated with "Vlachs" such as

their sense of and struggle for "freedom" and their rebellious character[2] (Košťálová 2022, (3)), much appreciated throughout the history of their home countries, as well as animal husbandry, cheese production, landscapes, mountains, forests, and Vlachs were (and still are) described as defenders of order and the Christian religion (especially Protestantism), both through their struggle against the Turks and against the Habsburg Empire (Košťálová 2022, 42).

3.1.2. Sources of religious soft power. The geopolitics of Orthodoxy

Regarding the geopolitical and strategic benefits, an essential component of this strategy must also be the so-called *Geopolitics of Orthodoxy*. The essential aid provided by the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia to the entire Orthodox Eastern European countries, occupied by the Ottomans for almost 500 years, must be highlighted and used accordingly. For example, it was the consistent aid from the Romanian Principalities which supported and ensured the survival of Mount Athos Orthodox Monasteries, one of the most sacred Christian Orthodox sites in the world, which was occupied by the Ottomans for 500 years. In this regard, there are numerous testimonies[34] (Damaschin 2017, 18), studies[5] (Sullivan 2023, 15) and volumes, such as *Romanian aid to the monasteries of Mount Athos*[6] (Bodogae 2003, 7), and ohers[7] (Coman 2012, 121).

Whether we are practicing Christians, non-practicing, or not Christians at all, if we are realistic, the importance of Orthodox religion for identity in Romania and for the entire regional space cannot be denied in any way. And if we acknowledge this huge importance, then why not try to cultivate and use it appropriately and strategically?

The Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) is already involuntarily playing a role as a soft power element with real geopolitical benefits for Romania, although,

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[2] "The sense of Wallachian "freedom" and "rebellion" marked intensively Czech and Moravian leaders of the National Revival, struggling for the maintenance of the Czech language and its dialects. (…) this stereotype of Wallachian identity became an iconic image"

[3] "No other Eastern Orthodox people have done as much good for Athos as the Romanians have done", Porfirie Uspenski (Hristianskyi Vostok, Afon vol. III, p. 334).

[4] "Archimandrite Ephrem, the abbot of Vatopedi Monastery, stated at the University of Bucharest during his visit to Romania in 2000: "We, those from Mount Athos, are indebted to the Romanian Orthodox Church for eternity! We do not forget that Romanian rulers, after the Byzantine emperors, are the founders of most Athonite monasteries." (Mischevca)."

[5] "In the *post-Byzantine period*, the rulers of the north-Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, through their *monetary gifts* and *donations*, played central roles in the continuation of *religious life* within and beyond the borders of their domains."

[6] "The unique situation of relatively free rulers that the Romanians had - and therefore with extensive political, diplomatic, cultural, and ecclesiastical powers - what could be called the Romanian hegemony in the Orthodox East."

[7] "For a period of about 500 years, from the fourteenth until the nineteenth century, the Romanians were the principal sustainers of the Holy Mountain. It was a unique historical and religious phenomenon which has not yet been fully studied and evaluated."

unfortunately, without consistent political support from the representatives of the Romanian state and without any strategy from them to assist the BOR in its endeavors. In this sense of a very important geopolitical role and soft power element played by the BOR, we can mention the establishment of the Dacia Felix Episcopate in Serbia for the Timoc Romanians (whom Romania's representatives do not defend against intimidation and forced assimilation actions by the Serbian state, which continues to arbitrarily classify them as so-called "Vlachs" who supposedly speak a so-called "Vlach language", and Romanians). Additionally, we can mention the re-establishment of the Metropolitanate of Bessarabia for Romanians in the Republic of Moldova, wrongly placed under the Moscow Patriarchate by the USSR, and we can mention the establishment of the Southern Bessarabia Episcopate. Also, very recently, we can mention a decision of the Romanian Orthodox Church accepting the return of Romanians from Ukraine back under the jurisdiction of the BOR (Ursulean 2024), after they were forcibly placed under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate by the USSR. This illustrates how the Romanian Orthodox Church, acting as a bridge between East and West, plays an extremely important role in terms of soft power influence in our region, reducing the influence of the Moscow Patriarchate and attempting to protect the cultural and ethnic heritage of Romanians in the region. This is a natural course of action, which other states elsewhere in the world have already placed among their top priorities.

And the demand for these soft power actions from the Romanian Orthodox Church is very high even outside Romania today; the Romanian Orthodox Church is being requested from abroad to perform more of these actions, and many people expect the BOR to continue with such initiatives. For example, we have surveys showing that over 60% of Romanians in Ukraine would agree to the opening of Romanian churches in Ukraine by the Romanian Orthodox Church (Gherman 2022, 10) (35% of respondents did not say they would not want this, but chose not to respond to the question −a huge percentage, which suggests fear of answering or attachment to local priests, things that nevertheless did not collide with the desire for the return of the Romanian Orthodox Church to Ukraine. Among those interviewed, only 4% disagreed with the initiative of the Romanian Orthodox Church of opening Romanian churches in Ukraine), and 64% of citizens of the Republic of Moldova would like Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church to cross the Prut River and visit the Republic of Moldova (Vocea Basarabiei 2024). These are very significant percentages within populations that have been subjected to intensified practices of denationalization and Russification during the USSR era, so they are even more surprising and important to consider in Romania's strategies.

3.1.3. Humanitarian soft power sources. Helping others, philanthropy

Therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church and the historical aid provided by the Romanian Principalities to the entire Orthodoxy for centuries fought geopolitically

soft power battles against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, even though the hard power battles had already been lost by Christians. And this brings us to another element that could be a true pillar of Romania's image and soft power strategy in the region: generosity, mutual assistance, philanthropy as part of Romanian culture, as some researchers also attest. (Sullivan 2023, 42)[8]

Perhaps the most convincing recent example of this trait was the astonishing mobilization of Romanian civil society in support of Ukrainian refugees at the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. This mobilization of ordinary people, churches, associations, and many volunteers was impressive, noted internationally, and far exceeded the mobilization of representatives of Romanian state institutions. It was the people who helped people, and not a political decison of one kind or another.

Eloquent for this support from ordinary people in Romania, their generosity, is a survey too little or even not highlighted at all in Romania, a survey to which Ukrainian refugees from several European countries responded (FRA 2023). Among all the European countries in the survey, Ukrainian refugees in Romania felt the most helped and best treated across multiple dimensions (for example, only 4% of refugees were denied medical assistance in Romania or treated worse because they were foreigners, the smallest percent of all the countries in the survey, and a much smaller percentage even compared to Poland) (FRA 2023, 55)). And among all the states included in the survey, Ukrainian refugees were the least mistreated in Romania (FRA 2023, 51). Overall, the Ukrainian refugees in Romania were treated much better across multiple dimensions even compared to those refugees in Poland or Germany, which may come as a surprise to many.

If Romania did not capitalize at all politically, strategically, or in terms of external image on this remarkable aid provided to the Ukrainians, Poland, on the other hand, pragmatically used the aid given to Ukraine as a soft power element. Poland, like Romania, was among the first countries to provide aid to Ukraine, and humanitarian aid was extremely substantial from both countries. However, while Poland extensively utilized this aid narratively and morally, explaining and showing the world what it was doing for Ukrainian refugees and Ukraine, Romania witnessed an inexplicable silence, which cannot be excused in any way by "secrecy", as we were told by Romanian decision-makers (of course, we understand that specific security aspects cannot be made public, but here we are talking about a communication campaign at a general level, as all states have done), because absolutely all other states in the world have had a completely different approach and have boasted to the democratic world about what they have done for Ukraine.

The failure to capitalize politically and in terms of image on the aid provided to Ukrainian refugees and Ukraine (logistics, armaments, ammunition, economic

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[8] "it was the people who made the decisions in the end, and their donations speak as much to the breadth of patronage as to the humanity, piety, and ambitions of the donors themselves."

support, etc.) has brought immeasurable damage to Romania's image and international political capital. Even a highly publicized interview with Romania's foreign minister at the time, interview conducted by Stephen Sackur, is an example of the damage done to Romania. The lack of a public communication strategy that could bring huge benefits to Romania's image is impossible to understand, and easy to observe. We have been pointing out this aspect for about a year now. (Blănaru 2023)

Here it is, simply put, from a Polish analyst, how incorporating such elements into a soft power strategy brings benefits to Poland: "Poland's image is an important tool of soft power in international politics, but it also plays an auxiliary role with respect to the hard factors determining the importance of NATO (...) displaying a large amount of solidarity towards Ukraine as well as a decisive, pro-Western approach open to working together with its allies. In the future, this could bring Poland tangible benefits. Above all, it will allow us to play a key role, taking part in decisions on the architecture of the security system in Europe." (Stec 2022) Exactly what Romanian decision-makers refused to understand and implement, both in terms of a soft power strategy and in terms of hard power. For example, Romania found itself in the incredible situation where it no longer produced gunpowder and imported it from Serbia, made with Russian raw materials.

3.1.4. Sources of political soft power. Romania's image as a supporter and guarantor of the independence of states in the Balkans and Central Europe.

We have shown above how events and political actions represent an essential resource for a soft power strategy. From this perspective, an essential dimension for developing Romania's image in the region and even for the success of any soft power strategy, especially in our region, with potential substantial geopolitical and strategic benefits, should focus on consolidating trust in Romania as a state that *has no territorial claims against anyone, hence as a non-revisionist state that supports the independence and territorial integrity of all states in the region, one that has never had expansionist attitudes, as a European state, fully integrated into NATO and the EU.* These should be essential pillars of this dimension, essential pillars also for the stability of the Western and Southern Balkans and the entire Central and Eastern Europe, and they are based on multiple actions of Romania and Romanians/Aromanians (Vlachs) over time.

Thus, numerous highly important and valuable historical connections can be made to shape and support Romania's image in the region as a promoter of the independence of various nations, where Romanian/Aromanian "Vlachs" are among the heroes of the struggle for independence, such as in North Macedonia (Pitu Guli, an Aromanian, is a national hero), in Albania (Savu 2023), Greece (Dimaca 2016, 62) (just an example, Evanghelie Zappa, an Aromanian, fought for the independence of Greece and came up with the idea of resuming the ancient Olympic Games)

(Dimaca 2016, 62), even in Hungary or Serbia, Iancu of Hunedoara or Matei Corvin, or in Slovakia or Czechia through the "Vlachs" from Moravia who fought against Habsburg occupation and the Ottoman Empire. Also, Romanians contributed to the future independence of Bulgaria in 1908, Montenegro, and Serbia, through their fight of 1877-1878 against the Ottoman Empire. The Vlachs were the primordial element in the struggles for the independence of Vlachs and Bulgarians from the Byzantine Empire in 1185. It was also the "Vlachs" who initiated the resurgence of the Byzantine Empire after the occupation it suffered following the Fourth Crusade, by defeating and killing in 1205 the Latin Emperor Baldwin I by the Vlach-Bulgarian Empire led by Ioniță Caloian. Romania refused to participate in the partition of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany and Horthy's Hungary in 1938, Romania also refused to send troops to suppress the Prague Spring Revolution in 1968. Romania was also the one that helped Poland evacuate its army, treasure, and many civilians following its invasion in World War II by Nazi Germany and the USSR. This evacuation of the Polish army through Romania subsequently helped create true legends about the fight of evacuated Polish soldiers in the West, especially against Nazi Germany. These are extremely significant political matters on a regional level, which we have a duty not to let be forgotten and can contribute to creating a positive image of Romania in the sense indicated by us.

Indeed, a multitude of historical and modern elements can be used to construct an image of Romania (as inheritor of the ethnic and cultural "Vlach" element, as well) as a supporter of the independence of all nations in the Balkans and Central Europe in the face of domination by various empires or fascist and communist dictatorships. Although we are aware of some potential obstacles that certain historical events may pose to such a strategic narrative of Romania (especially related to the Southern Dobruja region), we believe that the historical elements presented above are overwhelming and can be decisive for shaping such an approach by Romania. If such a positive image of Romania were to be constructed, historically substantiated, as we see it, it would be extremely valuable, especially in this region we find ourselves in, marked by mutual suspicions of territorial claims among almost all states, and especially in the current geopolitical context, with the ongoing aggression in Ukraine. Such an image would contribute to the regional security climate and would undoubtedly bring various geopolitical, strategic, and even economic advantages to Romania, both in the medium and long term, but even in the short term, if implemented in a concentrated manner.

We can and should demonstrate that the Balkans of Europe are not only Greek, Slavic, or Ottoman, but have also had/ have a common trans-national "Vlach" identity, which can represent a common denominator through the struggle it has led for the independence of Balkan nations for almost a millennium. In other words, by emphasizing the struggle for the freedom of Balkan states by Romanians/Aromanians

within them, we can show that the Balkans do not only mean division, but can also mean unity. And the fact that Vlachs (Romanians/Aromanians) have contributed to the independence of so many states in the Balkans must mean something, perhaps alleviating fears of territorial claims. As mentioned earlier, Vlachs (Romanians/ Aromanians) have contributed to the independence of Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia. We need to embrace all these things as part of Romania's identity and use them as soft power, as a common integrating identity of the Balkans, unlike identities that divide. Here there may be room for a kind of motto for a soft power campaign in the region, a soft power campaign that reassures regional states that there is no revisionism or territorial claims behind this campaign: "Vlachs/Romanians have always fought for the independence of the states they were in" or "Vlachs/ Romanians have always fought against imperialism."

Such a soft power campaign from Romania can have real chances of success, especially by focusing on this aspect: "Romanians/Vlachs have always fought for the independence of the states they are in". Especially in contrast to Turkish soft power, which rightly raises suspicions of Ottomanism in the region, in contrast to Greek soft power, which raises suspicions of pan-Hellenism, of *Megali Idea*, or even elements of Bulgarian or Serbian soft power, which again raise suspicions among their neighbors. However, Romania can play on this card of being a "historical supporter of state independence" in the South and West Balkans, through the Vlachs who must be part of Romania's identity, which Romania must assume not only in a scientific, academic manner, as it is now, but also in a practical and narrative way, through communication and through different strategies on the ground. Because this will open up countless political, diplomatic, economic, bilateral, and even multilateral cooperation opportunities in the future, these are also the main goals and the definition of soft power, as we have seen.

3.2. The soft power dimension focused on the global environment

The second dimension of Romania's soft power strategy should have specific elements focused on Romania's overall image in Europe and the world, largely a so-called nation branding, but a bit more, including a dimension of political and strategic interests, not just related to tourism/image/economy/investments.

3.2.1. Cultural and scientific sources of soft power.

Alongside cultural products such as classical music, modern sculpture, already well-promoted through events such as the George Enescu Festival or others dedicated to Constantin Brâncuşi, this dimension can also include and must include narratives dedicated to a broader spectrum of modern societies, narratives that construct an image of elegance, refinement of Romania, of both antiquity and modernity simultaneously.

Such an image can be developed in our case based on narratives and strategies developed on themes with antiquity, such as that of Dacian gold, for example (including in the narrative, of course, the gold from Romania's Treasury stolen by Moscow), on the imposing statues of Dacians made of red porphyry and marble in museums around the world, on viticulture, beekeeping, cheese-making, ecology, mountains, forests, landscapes, the IT sector, aerospace research, and others. About Dacian gold, one of the world's most renowned experts, Barbara Deppert Lippitz, stated: "In my opinion, you are the only country in Europe that has its history written in its own gold. (...) It is regrettable that you, Romanians, have not capitalized on this history written in gold, as you would have deserved. And when I say 'you would have deserved,' I think of what your history meant for Europe, of the power your gold had in building a civilization worthy of the great civilizations of the world. Here, with you, we do not find gold bought or obtained through conquests, as in other museums around the world. Here we exclusively speak of indigenous gold." (Brilinsky 2007) Indeed, it is striking how a foreign expert pointed out that we haven not capitalized on "a history written in gold". How could we not use "a history written in gold" as an essential element in a soft power strategy? How could we allow the Orăştie Mountains to be vandalized for decades, where many more treasures were lost than the famous Dacian gold bracelets that have been recovered? The main reason as to why we have not yet capitalized on this, is the fact that we have been influenced by very well spread narratives that ridiculed the Dacian legacy of Romania (or, just as bad, exaggerated it), and this prevented us from being objective about it and seeing its pragmatic real potential.

On the same subject, a Romanian-born researcher with a PhD from Sorbonne University, in art history, stated in a remarkable study rewarded by the Romanian Academy that the monumental statues of Dacians in Trajan's Forum did not represent prisoners of war (an atypical aspect in Roman art, as they did not have their hands tied behind their backs), and the fact that some were sculpted out of red porphyry, a "royal" material used only for extremely important persons, demonstrates respect and admiration (Velcescu 2016, 145) for the Dacians in the Roman Empire. The same author goes on by saying: "And the series of the statues of Dacians made of cherry-red porphyry for the porticus porphyretica (the porphyry gallery in the Forum of Trajan) even more confirms the fact that the Dacians were not represented as prisoners. We could say that these monumental sculptures representing Dacians are shown to advantage not only as regards the aspect of the dignified position and attitude of every "barbarian" character, but also as regards the material they were made of: cherry-red porphyry. In the Roman world this material was considered pietra regale (see Note 371) and was used for representing the Roman imperial power; the red porphyry was the emperor's monopoly and despite all this the Dacians were sculpted in this material. "Barbarians" were never represented in royal

red porphyry by Roman official art, except for the Geto-Dacians, which is quite an out-of-the-ordinary fact. Without the agreement of Emperor Trajan it would not have been possible for the picture of the Geto-Dacians to be rendered by the Roman official art in this exclusively imperial material" (Velcescu 2016, 94). However, unfortunately, certain recent unscientific creations by some authors have received more publicity, belittling and ridiculing this amazing Dacian heritage of Romania, significantly harming the proper interpretation of Romania's heritage, its value, and potential, as well as the history itself regarding the Dacian era and beyond. Such attempts at denigration, from authors sometimes rewarded in Budapest, should make us reconsider some of their actions and implications, especially in our regional context.

Returning to the point, what we want to say is that the foundation of the strategy must be argued and built upon antiquity, upon elements of a certain type of prestige and elegance that were defining from an identity standpoint for this space since Roman conquest, being sculpted on Trajan's Column, in Trajan's Forum, now being in museums worldwide, coupled with the modernity and importance of research in nuclear physics, IT, aerospace, lasers, for example. The example of some keywords for the potential impact of such a strategy cannot fail to reveal the enormous potential of it: *gold, ancient statues, red porphyry, wine, mountains, forests, ecology, honey, classical music, sculpture, IT, aerospace, nuclear physics, lasers*, the latter keywords bringing all this image of Romania into the modern era through Romania's huge potential in terms of new technologies.

Such a strategy dedicated to a wide spectrum of the modern international society, along with classical music and modern sculpture, also founded on antiquity, on ancient civilisation, on proven continuity through elements sculpted in stone in one of the most famous monuments in the world and through the presence of the same identity elements today, cannot fail and will be much more elegant, more complex, and more refined than what Romania seems to represent today from the standpoint of the country's brand worldwide. For example, according to an analysis, ChatGPT purportedly identified "Dracula" as the thing Romania is best known for. (Naturalbornfox 2023) How does this image compare to Czech beer, Alexander the Great, Oktoberfest, the Eiffel Tower, Pope John Paul II, flamenco, or wine, which was purportedly the respective response from ChatGPT regarding other countries?

From an economic standpoint, "Dracula" can bring some relative economic benefits to Romania; through the country brand "Dracula", one can create amusement parks, for example (either literally or figuratively). However, from the perspective of Romania's international image, in terms of prestige and geopolitical advantages, a "Dracula" amusement park does not help at all. And in today's world, the country brand you build must also bring image, political, geopolitical, and strategic benefits, in addition to purely economic ones.

Despite being dramatically underfunded for decades, as we have already mentioned, there is tremendous potential in Romanian research in the field of IT, in physics research, in aerospace, in nuclear, in the Magurele Laser, to name just a few. These areas are extremely relevant, very important, and will become even more crucial in the world of tomorrow. For this future world, Romania must prepare today and build an image and identity anchored in history, in culture, and in modernity. In other words, Romania must build a reservoir of soft power to help it rise to the top, because all of these will mean direct benefits for all Romanian citizens.

3.2.2. Sources of soft power from the diaspora, universities, sports.

In the same direction, another element is particularly important for building an attractive global reputation and image of Romania: the Romanian diaspora, starting from the descendants of the interwar emigration to the more recent one. A large number of researchers, intellectuals, or professionals of various types from the West originate from Romania. Their expertise, their contribution to host societies, and their image can bring serious benefits to Romania, just like their accumulated experience in their respective fields.

Similarly, a large number of foreign citizens from Eastern Europe, or the Balkans, including Greece and Albania, or from Middle Eastern countries, have studied or are studying at universities in Romania. Therefore, their potential from the perspective of soft power cannot be overlooked. In Joseph Nye Jr.'s seminal work on soft power, Colin Powell is quoted as having said that "I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here." (Nye 2004, 44), and the author points out that "International students usually return home with a greater appreciation of American values and institutions, and, as expressed in a report by an international education group, "The millions of people who have studied in the United States over the years constitute a remarkable reservoir of goodwill for our country." (Nye 2004, 42) "Many of these former students eventually wind up in positions where they can affect policy outcomes that are important to Americans." (Nye 2004,44-5)

Romania has the advantage of having several legendary figures in certain sports. Together with adequate investments in sports, they have always been and will always be one of the most important methods of promoting a country, making it well-known, appreciated, and loved worldwide. The lack of investment in this direction and the lack of strategy cause significant damage to Romania.

And any international public image, political, or geopolitical benefit automatically means a security and strategic benefit for the country. Poland, Israel, and Hungary all understood this, Ukraine as well, while in our region, Romania seems to be unique in ignoring the pressing need for a country's soft power strategy that addresses both its immediate neighborhood and the international community as a whole.

3.2.3. Sources of political soft power.

Here, some of the themes that are valid for use in the immediate neighborhood can be reiterated, some of them have already been outlined earlier in the study: Romania as belonging to Western European civilization, membership in the European Union and NATO, humanitarian and military aid provided by Romania to Ukraine, contributions with various peacekeeping troops in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan, etc., the absence of territorial claims against neighbors, lack of revisionism, the historical fight of Romanians/Aromanians alongside other Central and Eastern European nations for their independence, Romania's non-participation in the occupation of Czechoslovakia, and others.

4. Poland: A Case Study

On the other hand, unlike Romania, representatives of Poland have been very active in exercising soft power functions and launching regional initiatives with significant soft power elements. Even though their project was rejected by the European Union, we can only mention Poland's initiative to create a Carpathian Macro-Regional Strategy within the European Union. It is difficult to understand how Poland, a country that only holds about 10% of the Carpathian mountain range, could come up with such an initiative, but representatives of Romania, a country that holds approximately 50% of the Carpathian Mountains within its territory, could not propose a similar initiative.

It was also Poland who proposed a European North-South transit route initiative, called the Via Carpatica (Pătrașcu 2024), extremely necessary, and the success of this project is attributed to Poland's soft power, which had both soft power interests behind it as well as concrete pragmatic strategic interests, economic, logistical, and geopolitical. Why could not Romania's representatives conceive such a project? This only goes to show the difference in strategic vision between Poland and the representatives in Bucharest. Such examples could go on, with Romania remaining in the shadow of regional strategies pursued by Austria, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Turkey, or Greece. Romania has even lagged behind Russia's regional strategy, as Romania has not been sufficiently involved in the Republic of Moldova, not even as soft power (Simina 2020) (even though the vast majority of the population in the Republic of Moldova is historically Romanian, and we share a considerable number of common values, including the common language). By not doing this, Romania left a lot of room for the Russian Federation's destabilizing geopolitical maneuvers. Today, there are plenty of analyses on this topic, but for 30 years, most of these voices were silent and did not advocate at all for Romania's closer ties with the Republic of Moldova.

But this difference in strategic vision compared to Poland can still be observed if we follow the thread of a soft power strategy. In Poland, even in the *Foreign Policy Strategy of Poland for the years 2017-2021*, we can clearly see emphasized elements of Poland's soft power strategy: "We strive to find pragmatic solutions that are consistent with Poland's raison d'état. However, high international status cannot be achieved solely on the basis of a country's military capabilities or economic might. It also stems from "soft power", the intangible dimension of foreign policy which is defined by its attitude towards values, as well as its predictability and consistency in adhering to them. Put together, these factors determine a country's credibility and build its image. At times, such "soft" factors tip the scales by boosting the efficacy of other foreign policy instruments, thereby helping to achieve better results with fewer resources" (Republic of Poland, 20). Indeed, this is probably one of the best and most concise definitions available for what soft power is and what it can achieve.

Continuing, Poland has long realized that "In the modern world, a country's image is no longer a matter of arbitrary opinion – it has become a brand that comes with a measurable value. It can affect a country's ability to achieve its foreign policy goals, as much as it can alter the costs of running a business. Since the Polish brand directly affects our international environment and helps determine our international economic and political standing, helping to build it is a major Polish foreign policy goal" (Republic of Poland, 23). This is the way Poland has realized how important it is to have a strong country brand, and how much it can influence both the domestic economic situation and Poland's international political power, making soft power a major objective of their foreign policy. Representatives of Romania seem not to have cared about these aspects and have often preferred to do almost nothing, often bringing forward ideological pretexts for not doing anything in this regard in a national interest.

In Romania, even though there was an attempt at a so-called "country brand" at some point, it ended up with a logo that faced accusations of being plagiarized (Observator News s.a.), and a non-existent or unimplemented strategy, if it ever existed, beyond this logo. And in The National Defence Strategy of Romania for 2020-2024, although there are a few mentions of Romanian culture, heritage, or minorities, they do not show at all the outline of any soft power strategy (as emphasized decisively in the Polish strategy above), nor have they had any concrete repercussions in the actions and attitudes of Romania's representatives, internationally or at home. In other words, they have largely remained just words. This is an unacceptable situation for a country of Romania's size, positioning, and capabilities.

Among the characteristics pursued through Poland's soft power strategy, we can enumerate: supporting Poles outside the borders and protecting Polish cultural

heritage and memorial sites outside Poland, especially in Eastern Europe; valuing and promoting the Polish identity abroad through values derived from their country's history and culture; reconstructing Polish monuments and cultural heritage outside the country; building credibility in foreign policy, including through humanitarian aid and assistance for reconstruction in other states, UN peacekeeping missions; encouraging private economic actors from Poland to engage in reconstruction projects; providing better protection for Polish citizens abroad through more efficient consular services; protecting Polish minorities abroad; implementing a flexible visa policy for other Eastern European states (as seen through the significant number of work permits and visas granted to Ukrainians) (Republic of Poland, 1-25).

In addition to all these, regarding the building of the country's brand, Poland was to focus on: "translating the key messages of Poland's history and culture into a contemporary language that will be understood by audiences across the globe" (Republic of Poland, 23), on promoting and presenting the country as a center with achievements and potential in the field of science, promoting Poland as a modern and innovative country "open for business," presenting Polish contributions to Western civilization and promoting its historical and cultural values, making the study of the Polish language a key branding tool for the country, close cooperation with the Polish diaspora, and activities in international negotiations on climate change (Republic of Poland, 23-5).

Here are some more points in common with our proposals regarding a soft power strategy for Romania: we also propose presenting and promoting Romania as a center and leader in the development of science, especially in the IT sector and software development. We also advocate for the valorization of Romania's historical heritage (beyond "Dracula"), the economic, political, and public image development of the "Vlach" cultural heritage throughout the entire Central-Eastern European and Balkan region, making the Romanian language part of a country brand, highlighting Romania's contributions to European and universal culture and science, focusing on nature conservation and promoting an ecologically friendly country. This includes addressing illegal and excessive deforestation, and wildlife protection, as Romania is home to some of the largest populations of large carnivores in Europe. We also emphasize closer ties with Romanian minorities across borders and the adequate protection of Romania's cultural and memorial heritage within its borders, which currently lacks a clear vision from Romanian representatives (Herlo 2024), and from outside Romania's borders (and not in the way Emanoil Gojdu's extraordinary heritage in Hungary was abandoned by Romanian politicians), but also the protection of Romanian/Aromanian minorities abroad, and policies for granting visas and study grants for them much more extensively than what is currently being done.

Conclusions

The reasons Romania lacks an integrated strategy or vision for soft power at both regional and global levels are primarily three, and quite simple: deep-seated ideological indoctrination that has severely and negatively impacted Romania's national interests and security (where, for a long time, discussions about national interests, national security, and national identity were suppressed), indifference, and incompetence.

In the current analysis, we addressed the necessity of a soft power strategy for Romania in the region, and on a wider international level. However, we must understand that this soft power strategy does not only mean attracting tourists/ investors or creating a positive public image of Romania, but entails much more. There are implications of Romania's soft power strategy for its security, regional status (a state with a high level of regional trust, credibility and respect is clearly one with an increased national security), regional projects or interests (strategic or economic advantages for its own citizens), defence (NATO needs trustworthy and regionally secure states, such as Poland, mentioned earlier as an example, and if Romania brings more benefits to its allies, if it is a more determined regional actor with a positive global public image, then the benefits brought in return by allies to Romania's defence are clearly also more substantial). Furthermore, a successful soft power strategy also brings societal benefits (nation branding and nation building are linked, a positive public image of Romania domestically and internationally can help slow down emigration, increase respect for fellow citizens, culture, and common values, which catalyze a society and make it more resilient to threats, fake news, manipulation), cultural benefits (implicitly, public image, economic, status benefits, also benefits regarding education), political, and geopolitical benefits (Romania must have a much stronger voice in certain regional strategic projects that affect us all), among many others.

Disparate elements of soft power are discernible in Romania's politics and civil society (to give just two examples, what the *La Blouse Roumaine Association* is doing for Romania's public image and culture is remarkable, and what the *Ambulance for Monuments* is doing for Romania's cultural heritage is equally remarkable). However, the lack of a strategy to promote them coherently, adequately, and integratively, to refine and pursue them in the broader interest of Romania, means that some of these elements will be easily ridiculed by some adverse elements or strategies, others will suffer from a lack of human and material capital, others will not have the opportunity to reach their true potential, some will be forgotten (such as Romania's aid to Poland or Romania's refusal to invade Czechoslovakia alongside Nazi Germany, or, later on, alongside the USSR), and others will disappear over time, like Romanian ethnic

and cultural minorities in the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe. The sum of all these shortcomings and losses will mean that Romania will miss its true potential in the region and in Europe and will miss its regional objectives, as it has done so far (if it had any). All these things will affect Romanian entrepreneurs and Romanian products economically, and all will directly impact Romania's national security and regional importance. Because, in times of crisis, the first to be sacrificed are the entities that are not very important or do not have a say.

Reiterating the initial statements of the current study, these are not sentimental matters; they are as realistic and pragmatic as can be — *what we have, what we can work with, how we can promote them, and what concrete results they can bring us for our own benefits and for the benefit of our entire region, as well*. The way we look at it, this is what a soft power strategy is about, and Romania sorely lacks one and desperately needs it.

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REASSESSING THE CONCEPTUAL ELEMENTS OF ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION: THEORETICAL CHALLENGES AND RESEARCH TRENDS

Iulia-Mihaela DRĂGAN*

The radicalization phenomenon has captured the attention of the academic community, considering the need to understand its conceptual elements and to analyze the impact of the main causes that trigger the radicalization process. On the other hand, the rationale to elaborate on this article is that there is no unanimously accepted definition of radicalization at the academic level, and the causes that determine the radicalization process are explained reductively most of the time. Thus, what this article proposes is to review the specialized literature regarding the theoretical delimitations of radicalization, aiming for a definition as comprehensive as possible that would characterize in a holistic manner the process of Islamic radicalization. Also, another objective of the paper seeks to identify the challenges of the academic community regarding the conceptual elements of the phenomenon, using a methodology based on the confrontation of different theories through which the process of Islamic radicalization is explained.

Keywords*: literature review; Islamic radicalization; theoretical challenges; research trends; conceptual analysis.*

Preliminary considerations

Researching the radicalization phenomenon has generated different approaches at the academic level, similarly to the challenges generated by understanding the causes and factors that determine the manifestation of terrorism. While the academic

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research focuses predominantly on understanding the causes and factors that trigger the radicalization process, practitioners essentially report on identifying the early warning signs of the advanced stage of radicalization (Drăgan, 2023) in order to prevent the materialization of a terrorist attack, as well as the effectiveness of de-radicalization or disengagement programs at national level.

The purpose of the current article is to evaluate the particularities exposed by the relevant theories that explain the manifestation, as well as the conceptualization of the phenomenon in various forms, in relation to their applicability for the typology of Islamic radicalization. In this sense, the objective of the article is to develop a definition as comprehensive as possible regarding the manifestation of Islamic radicalization and to equally nuance the interpretations of the main theories that explain the development of the radicalization process.

The article's relevance for the academic community resides in the contribution made to the re-evaluation of the conceptual aspects related to the study of this phenomenon, as well as to underline the current challenges for the academic community regarding the understanding of the radicalization process.

The methodology used for the article was firstly based on the review of the specialized literature and the collection of current interpretations from the art of knowledge regarding the manifestation of radicalization. In a second stage, it comprised the refinement of the theoretical study by two criteria. Thus, the first criterion consisted in narrowing the area of interest in relation to the theoretical applicability of the typology of Islamic radicalization. Also, the second criterion consisted of the identification of relevant theories for understanding the phenomenon, appreciated in terms of the application and use of these theoretical tools in de-radicalization or disengagement programs, and subsequently the nuance of these concepts in relation to the new approaches from the art of knowledge.

The usefulness of the research lies in the evaluation of current interpretations, considering the identification of existing gaps in the state of knowledge. Thus, in order to quantify the research objectives, the article aims to answer the following research question: What are the conceptual challenges regarding the explanation of the Islamic radicalization process?

1. A Review of the Conceptual Framework for Islamic Radicalization

Radicalization, which has become a subject of interest for research, especially since the 2000s, is understood by some theorists as a subject of confusion (Sedgwick, 2010) or lacking an unanimously accepted conceptual approach (Zin Derfoufi, 2020) in relation to the definition, framing a theoretical understanding of the causes and factors that accelerate or influence the manifestation of this process (Awan et al., 2012).

In a first approach, the concept of radicalization is defined as "the adoption of extremist beliefs and ideas, a fact that determines their channeling for the purpose of political actions to delegitimize authority" (Zin Derfoufi, 2020) or "the incorporation of this extreme vision, rejected by society for the purpose of legitimizing the use of violence to quantify societal or political change" (Hafez & Mullins, 2015). It is observed that radicalization in this sense is defined from the perspective of the cognitive dimension of people and highlights the segregation of beliefs adopted by society's values through an extreme approach that seeks to achieve change through violence. However, these definitions are insufficiently explored from a conceptual point of view, from the perspective of the fact that radicalization involves a social and psychological process regarding the adoption of a violent political or religious ideology (Horgan, 2008) which is not comprised inhere.

In a second approach, other definitions focus on characterizing the concept as "a process that involves both a psychological and a social dimension, from the perspective of incorporating extremist views by changing previous conceptions and perceptions" (Porter &Kebbell, 2011) and subverting the societal order (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010), or, "the process by which individuals or groups change their previous beliefs, adopt an extremist view, and choose to proclaim or practice violence to achieve their political goals" (Neumann, 2013). Thus, in this approach, referring to the character of radicalization as a social and psychological process, the gradual development of this process is an essential feature; there are very few cases in which radicalization starts suddenly.

As a rule, "the adherence to an extremist ideology and the change in the set of beliefs and perceptions about society are gradual, but without implying a linear transition" (Della Porta&LaFee, 2012). Thus, the unpredictability of "the evolution of the radicalization process can also be approximated from the perspective of the fact that multiple scenarios are possible, starting from the advancement of the radicalization stage, engaging in acts of terrorism" (Sedgwick, 2010), "stagnation of the process, or disengagement" (Horgan, Braddock, 2010). Therefore, this feature is emphasized by conceptualizing radicalization as "a social and psychological process of commitment to extremist political or religious ideology that may not necessarily lead to violence but which presents risk factors for it" (Horgan, 2008) or "a process of gradual change and transformation involving different stages" (Helfstein, 2012), but "without having linear, clear, or sequential steps, through the existence of internal and external variables" (Della Porta&LaFee, 2012) that can speed up or slow down the process (Al Lami Mina, 2009).

Moreover, although the gradual characteristic of the radicalization process has been explained by some authors through four stages (Borum, 2004; Wiktorowicz, 2005; Sageman, 2004), seven phases (Sinai, 2012), eight stages (Taarnby, 2005) or scales towards engaging in terrorist actions (Moghaddam, 2005), as well as

re-evaluated from the perspective of utility (Lygre et al, 2011), this trait must be understood as being determined by three essential variables: "the motivational component through the search for personal meaning, the ideological component in the meaning of the legitimization of the means of violence and the subject's receptivity to the incorporation of ideological elements, as well as the socialization side through networks and group dynamics that can give dynamic to the radicalization process" (Kruglanski et al, 2014).

Compiling the both sets of the approached definitions can emphasize the following aspects:

a. The applicability of "the concept of violence in radicalization does not automatically imply the finality of engaging in terrorist actions" (Hamid, 2015), but it can contain elements such as the dissemination of jihadist propaganda, attracting new people to share a violent ideology, and spreading the goals of hijacking and undermining authority and societal order.

b. The process of radicalization must be defined from the perspective of combining the cognitive side with the behavioral one, in the sense of understanding the impact at the level of cognition following the incorporation of extremist beliefs and violent ideological elements (Demant *et al.*, 2008), but also from the perspective of determined behavioral changes or those imposed by ideological normativity. Thus, even if not all cases of radicalization also involve visible behavioral changes of the subjects through physical changes, sudden changes in clothing and/or food style, giving up previous habits, adopting new customs, or breaking emotional ties with previous social circles (Schmid, 2016), can constitute early signals or indicators of the stages of radicalization.

Another approach in the light of which radicalization was conceptualized involves filtering the levels at which it operates (micro, mezzo, and macro) (Schmid, 2013). Thus, some authors considered that "radicalization can be understood as the process by which an individual, a group, or a mass of people undergoes a transformation from participating in the political process through legal means to using or supporting violence for political purposes" (Crosset&Spitaletta, 2010), observing in this case both the variety of radicalization methods (individual or coordinated) as well as the complexity of the impact of the social side regarding the initiation of the radicalization process. Another category of authors preferred to describe it through the lens of the micro level, in the sense that "radicalization involves a personal process in which individuals adopt extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that justify the use of indiscriminate violence" (Wilner&Dubouloz, 2010) or a "mental and psychological process that stimulates a person to take violent actions" (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2009) and is characterized by the "extremity of beliefs, feelings, and behaviors in directions that increasingly justify violence and sacrifice in defense of group goals" (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008).

Considering that the objectives of this research focus on the religious typology of radicalization, respectively Islamic radicalization corroborated with the Islamic ideology (Chifu *et al*, 2012), it should be mentioned that the specific of this pattern is understood as the process of joining the Global Jihad triggered by the desire for social belonging to an Islamist group, characterized by the progressive social isolation of non-believers, that is, people who belong to other religions or moderate Islam (Taarnby, 2005) or the process of incorporating Islamic fundamentalism that promotes hatred towards any entity that tries to undermine Islam (Mandel, 2012), the exercise of violence against apostates and non-believers with the aim of imposing Sharia globally (Matusitz, 2022).

Related to the conceptual elements identified previously, the proposed definition for Islamic radicalization is the following: *the psychological and social process developed at an individual level and inspired by the dynamics of a social group or a community or coordinated by a terrorist organization in order to incorporate, adhere to and disseminate a radical ideology based on Islamic fundamentalism, which legitimizes Jihad and promotes the use of violent means to quantify political-religious goals aimed at achieving a political, social or religious change contrary to democratic values or original authority, by imposing Sharia, cultivating hatred towards infidels or apostates and establishing a Global Caliphate.*

2. Research Trends in Islamic Radicalization

Radicalization is explained through several theories of influence in the psychological, social, political, or economic fields (Schmid, 2013). Therefore, in order to quantify the research objectives, the following theories were considered relevant for understanding the manifestation of radicalization, in the sense that, starting from the theoretical stage, they were used in de-radicalization or disengagement programs by practitioners (Demant et al., 2008; Horgan& Braddock, 2010). Another important aspect to mention is the fact that the trends regarding radicalization research were identified both from the constructivist approach, analyzing radicalization from the perspective of the theory of social movements and social factors, but also from the perspective of rationalism, characterizing radicalization as a process influenced by the cognitive predisposition of the individual (Schuurman, Taylor, 2018) and psychological factors.

However, over time, theories explaining the causes and factors that trigger radicalization have been refined to include the socio-psychological dimension in a complex manner (Wali, 2017), as well as references to macro-factors (cultural, economic, and demographic) that can influence the individual's choice (Gurr, 1970). From the constructivist approach, the theory of social movements explains "radicalization in the sense of the mobilization potential of a social group to subvert

the social order, the formation and motivation of recruitment networks, and the intensification of the motivation to engage radicalized persons in terrorist acts" (Borum, 2011). Moreover, from the same approach, the need to belong to a community or "the identity affiliation between potential recruits with close people from the social circle that mediates the triggering of radicalization, or the involvement in a social circle, would explain the gradual adoption by an individual of norms, ideologies, and radical habits as a major impact factor" (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008). Likewise, the role of social interaction is also exploited in the case of the recruitment of people by terrorist organizations, using social incentives to enroll and indoctrinate new followers with violent ideology but also to convince them to overcome the advanced stage of radicalization by engaging in terrorist actions (Wiktorowicz, 2005).

Also, from the spectrum of social theories, theorists have tried to explain the triggering factors of radicalization, referring to the importance of kinship, personal relationships, and social circles in the consolidation of extremist ideology (Sageman, 2004) or to refine these theories in the form of explaining the need for belonging to the Islamic Ummah and the consequent creation of the dichotomy "us versus them", which determined a new wave of extremism (Al Raffie, 2013). So, radicalization is explained from the perspective of social theories as a process influenced, triggered, or amplified as a result of social interaction or the dynamics of a group in relation to individual development, or understood at the macro level in relation to cultural and civilizational impact. Likewise, the ideological views can be intensified within the interaction with a social group by virtue of collective identity (Simon, Klandermans, 2001).

Starting from the social theories that explain radicalization in the form of factors at the macro level, the theory of economic deprivation is highlighted in the sense in which the policies of the West and the social and economic inadequacies (Murshed, Tadjoeddin, 2009) of Muslim immigrants can influence the initiation of the radicalization process, a fact that accentuates the perceptions of unfair and unjust treatment applied to the Muslim community (Molix, Nichols, 2012). However, according to this theory, the perception of injustice that some Muslim people feel can play a crucial role in triggering Islamist militancy by virtue of justifying Jihad in order to protect the collective religious identity (Syed Mansoob Murshed&Pavan, 2011). However, this theory presents a partial applicability in the context in which, although, on one hand, it explains the motivation for which some of the Muslim people belonging to a regional, cultural, and religious identity sphere may have to adhere to Islamic militancy, on the other hand, it does not cover the motivation that people belonging to other regional spheres or religious and cultural identities, such as European or Asian, feel as a starting point for the justification of Jihad.

This conceptual gap was initially covered by the theory of conversion models, which contributed to the understanding of the reasons and the way of Islamic radicalization chosen by people who initially do not share or know the moderate

Islamic religion (Galonnier, 2022). Later, this theory was interpreted in the form of conceptualizing radicalization as a sub-pattern of religious conversion. Thus, just as a process of religious conversion naturally operates, Islamic radicalization can similarly operate by replacing the adoption of a moderate religious belief system with a radical, fundamentalist one (Van den Elzen, 2018).

This theory is shared by theorists from the perspective of understanding radicalization as a sub-pattern of religious conversion, a process that automatically involves psychological and social factors but underlines progress in understanding the phenomenon compared to controversial theories of religious conversion models (Galonnier, 2022). An additional argument in support of this theory lies in the fact that, "while conversion to Islam in the moderate sense does not trigger the radicalization process, neither does the radical adoption of radical beliefs without knowledge of moderate Islam or distorted knowledge of moderate faith in following the conversion to Islam initiate affiliation with fundamentalist ideological elements, even at a time much later than the moment of conversion" (Drăgan, 2023).

Moreover, radicalization has also been explained from the perspective of psychological theories (Post, 2007), on the one hand, in the form of the individual's pathological predisposition or the existence of personal vulnerabilities and triggers (Arena & Arrigo, 2006), which intensified at the moment of an identity crisis in the subject's life prior to the radicalization process. On the other hand, the need for meaning and mission in life is often attributed to the goals promoted by extremist ideology. Thus, through the theory of the search for personal meaning, the pattern of radicalization involves three crucial components: motivational, namely the search for significance, which defines the purpose for which the person commits; the ideological component, which justifies and presents the means of violence necessary to quantify the jihadist objectives; and the social element, of group dynamics through which the individual shares and implements ideology as a means of gaining meaning (Kruglanski et al., 2014).

Concomitantly, at the theoretical level, a conceptual problem still exists in the form of understanding the role of ideology in the radicalization process, in the context where most theorists have rejected a purely ideological motivation for understanding the causes that lead to radicalization (Aly and Striegher, 2012). In this sense, some of the theorists preferred to explain the role of ideology as an intermediary to advance the process in the form of socialization in a community or group to strengthen the objectives or as a means of justifying the goals, behaviors, or beliefs assumed within the community. Another category of theorists focused on explaining radicalization by combining the psychological side, namely the personality traits of the subjects that allow adherence to a radical ideology, following the need for rigid order, regularity, exacerbated conservatism, or restructuring of a lost conformity of society (Hertog, 2019). Definitively, the extremist ideology

provides the framework for the need to reform the social order, the tendencies to reject democratic values, or the anti-Western narrative (Halverson & Way, 2012, p. 145). However, despite these clarifications regarding the implications of extremist ideology, it should be highlighted that radicalization at the cognitive level, which operates in principle as a result of the incorporation of a new system of beliefs and ideological narratives, does not inevitably lead to behavioral radicalization, a fact that justifies the algorithm for which ideology cannot be assimilated as the main cause that would lead to employment at the action level (Kasim, 2008).

Analyzing the previously exposed research trends, it is evident that there is a need to explore and deepen a multidisciplinary dimension in studying the phenomenon of radicalization (Veldhuis&Staun, 2009), in the sense that, in order to standardize practices, it is necessary to accumulate socio-psychological interpretations and cultural interpretations, as well as contextualize the manifestation of the phenomenon related to micro, mezzo, and macro factors. Similarly, reductionist approaches regarding the explanation of the concept of radicalization tend to focus exclusively on psychological or social factors, eliminating the cultural background, or treating the causes of the phenomenon's manifestation by exacerbating theological or ideological meanings (Galonnier, 2022).

Conclusions

The present research aimed to identify, along with the conceptual elements that particularize radicalization – a previously highlighted fact – the main theoretical challenges in the light of the analysis of trends in research. What has clearly emerged is that, although most theories insist on a uni- or bi-disciplinary approach of the factors and causes of radicalization, models of de-radicalization or disengagement can show effectiveness by combining a multidisciplinary vision on the subject related to the manifestation of Islamic radicalization, including a comprehensive perspective from the prism of social, psychological factors and causes, religious impact, cultural background, etc.

At the same time, although for practitioners, studying the causes and factors that lead to radicalization can be useful from the perspective of quantifying knowledge and applying it individually in relation to the needs of disengagement and de-radicalization programs, in terms of the theoretical field, challenges remain following the attempt to build patterns. Also, the contextualization of the manifestation of the phenomenon in relation to cultural factors contributes to the deepening of knowledge in the field, in the sense that the stereotyping of a certain social category or magnifying the role of a single disciplinary dimension (psychological, sociological, economic, or cultural) represent the main pitfalls in dealing with the subject of radicalization.

Also, in defining Islamic radicalization, another challenge lies in the need to segment and individualize the target groups on which the research studies are carried out in strong correlation with cultural background and religious identity.

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STRATEGIES XXI INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE - *"The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment"*

February 28th, 2024

This year's edition of the International Scientific Conference **STRATEGIES XXI**, on the topic of the ***"The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment"***, organized on ***February 28, 2024***, by "Carol I" National Defence University (NDU), through the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies (CDSSS), brought together in the Senate Hall participants from the national and international academic and research community, personalities with recognized expertise in the field of security, military personnel and specialists from the Defence Staff structures and institutions within the national defence, public order and national security system, members of the diplomatic community accredited in Bucharest, security and defence practitioners, MA and PhD candidates.

Photo: *Aspect of the International Scientific Conference*

The objective of the conference was to debate security and defence issues at national and regional level, in the context of the latest developments in the security environment, and to present and promote the results of scientific research in the field.

The conference was officially opened by Major General Eugen Mavriş, PhD, Commandant (Rector) of the "Carol I" National Defence University and Colonel Florian Cîrciumaru, PhD, Director of Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, followed by keynote speakers, international and national experts in the field of security studies, who debated the issues of contemporary warfare and international security, as follows: Brigadier General Emilian Chirea, Deputy Military Representative to NATO and the EU, ROU; General (r) Virgil Bălăceanu, President of the Romanian Reserve Officers Association, ROU; Mr. Răzvan Buzatu, PhD, Chairman of the Research Task Group on Strategic Awareness of Energy Security within the NATO, ROU; Mr. Pavel Anastasov, Director of Operations Division, NATO HQ, BEL; Mr. Sven Gareis, PhD, Dean of the Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, DEU; Asist. Professor Andreea Stoian, PhD, Director of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA; Mr. Andrzej Lis, PhD, Director of the Polish Armed Forces Doctrine and Training Centre, POL.

Photo: *Aspect of the International Scientific Conference*

We live in a dynamic world marked by a changing global environment, where the current security environment is characterised by attributes such as uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and is the basis for the manifestation of today's threats,

challenges and crises. An extremely complex case is the geopolitical situation on the Alliance eastern border, which has had a strong impact on the international security environment, generating a major conflict on Romania's border. These events show that a well-developed plan for ensuring global security is always needed, and good cooperation between states is a priority.

The conference was divided into three sections, the issues addressed being specific to the security and defence field, as follows:

- **Section 1**: *Contemporary Warfare and International Security*
- **Section 2**: *State and Nonstate Actors in Power Relations*
- **Section 3**: *Areas of Strategic Interest - Global Trends*

Within the sections, current issues in the security environment were debated, the main topics of interest covered issues such as the Russian-Ukrainian War and shaping future security policy, hybrid threats, concepts and theories on security and defence, tensions and crises in the Middle East, security trends in the Caucasus and Central Asia and last but not least, the impact of climate change on national security. The three sections comprised a total of 20 papers, 13 of which were presented by the authors during the conference.

The scientific event's main objectives were achieved by promoting a strategic and security culture, related to the new challenges, disseminating the latest research in the field of security and defence, developing national and international scientific cooperation and creating a framework for scientific dialogue in academia.
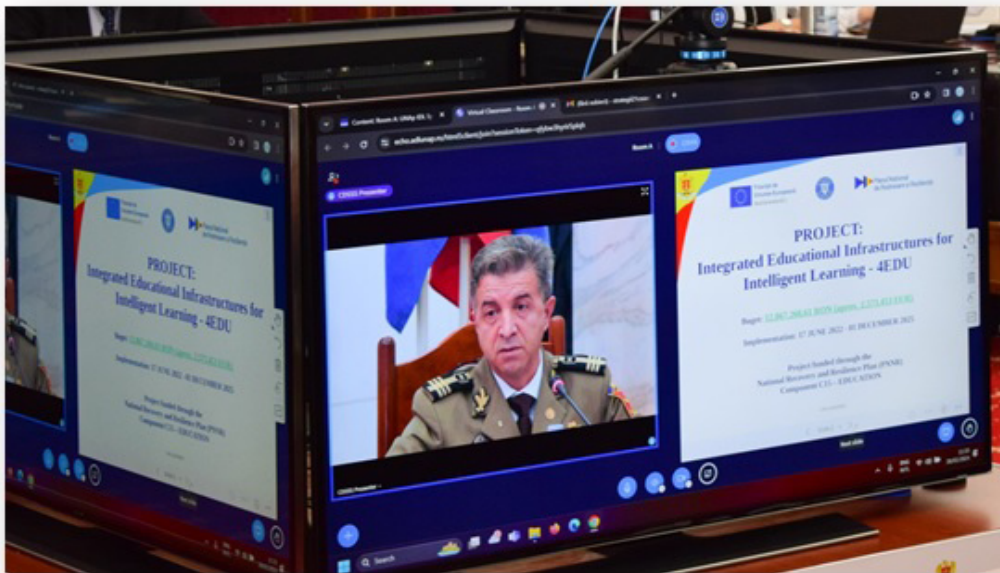

Photo: *Aspect of the International Scientific Conference*

The event created a framework in which the objectives of the 4EDU Reform/Investment Project entitled "Integrated Educational Infrastructures for Smart Learning" were presented by the project manager Vice-Rector for Scientific Research and Interinstitutional Relations. The overall objective of the project is to transform "Carol I" NDU into a modern, flexible, environmentally friendly, nationally and Euro-Atlantic recognized educational institution, connected to the principles of digital education and meeting the demands of future generations of students. He also gave a lecture entitled "Digital Transformation. Challenges and Perspectives", in which he highlighted the benefits of digitalisation in academia and the impact of these technologies.

Photo: *Aspect of the International Scientific Conference*

The conference was a landmark for the calendar of activities and scientific events of the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, offering, through the topics addressed, the scientific level of the debates and the diversity of participants, a high quality academic framework for debate.

Otilia LEHACI *

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GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

We welcome those interested in publishing articles in the academic journal *Strategic Impact*, while subjecting their attention towards aspects to consider upon drafting their articles. **Starting with issue no. 1/2023, the journal shall be published in the English language only!**

MAIN SELECTION CRITERIA are the following:
- ✓ **Compliance with the thematic area of the journal – security and strategic studies** and the following topics: political-military topical aspects, trends and perspectives in security, defence, geopolitics and geostrategies, international relations, intelligence, information society, peace and war, conflict management, military strategy, cyber-security;
- ✓ **Originality** of the paper – own argumentation; novelty character – not priorly published;
- ✓ **Quality of the scientific content** – neutral, objective style, argumentation of statements and mentioning of all references used;
- ✓ **A relevant bibliography**, comprising recent and prestigious specialized works, including books, presented according to herein model;
- ✓ **English** language shall meet academic standards (British or American usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these).
- ✓ **Adequacy to the editorial standards adopted by the journal.**

EDITING NORMS
- ✓ **Article length** may vary between **6 and 12 pages** (25.000 - 50.000 characters), including bibliography, tables and figures, if any.
- ✓ **Page settings**: margins – 2 cm, A 4 format.
- ✓ The article shall be written in **Times New Roman font, size 12, one-line spacing.**
- ✓ The document shall be saved as Word (.doc/.docx). The name of the document shall contain the author's name.

ARTICLE STRUCTURE
- ✓ **Title** (centred, capital, bold characters, font 24).
- ✓ **A short presentation of the author**, comprising the following elements: given name, last name (the latter shall be written in capital letters, to avoid

confusion), main institutional affiliation and position held, military rank, academic title, scientific title (PhD title or PhD Candidate – domain and university), city and country of residence, e-mail address.
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- ✓ **2 - 4 chapters** (numbered, starting with 1) (subchapters if applicable)
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In the case of tables, please mention above "**Table no. X**: Title", while in the case of figures there shall be mentioned below (e.g. maps, etc.), "**Figure no. X:** Title" and the source, if applicable, shall be mentioned in a footnote.

REFERENCES

It is academic common knowledge that in the Abstract and Conclusions there shall not be inserted any references.

The article shall have references and bibliography, in the form seen below. Titles of works shall be mentioned in the language in which they were consulted, with transliteration in Latin alphabet if there is the case (e.g. in the case of Cyrillic, Arabic characters, etc.). Please provide English translation for all sources in other languages.

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BOOK
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Grazer, Brian, and Charles Fishman. 2015. A Curious Mind: The Secret to a Bigger Life. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Smith, Zadie. 2016. Swing Time. New York: Penguin Press.

In-text citation
(Grazer and Fishman 2015, 12)
(Smith 2016, 315–16)

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[1] URL: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

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In the reference list, include the page range for the chapter. In the text, cite specific pages.

Reference list entry

Thoreau, Henry David. 2016. "Walking." *In The Making of the American Essay*, edited by John D'Agata, 167–95. Minneapolis: Graywolf Press.

In-text citation

(Thoreau 2016, 177–78)

ARTICLE

In the reference list, include page range for the whole article. In the text, cite specific page numbers. For article consulted online, include a URL or the name of the database in the reference list entry. Many journal articles list a DOI (Digital Object Identifier). A DOI forms a permanent URL that begins https://doi.org/. This URL is preferable to the URL that appears in your browser's address bar.

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

Keng, Shao-Hsun, Chun-Hung Lin, and Peter F. Orazem. 2017. "Expanding College Access in Taiwan, 1978–2014: Effects on Graduate Quality and Income Inequality." *Journal of Human Capital* 11, no. 1 (Spring): 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1086/690235.

LaSalle, Peter. 2017. "Conundrum: A Story about Reading." *New England Review* 38 (1): 95–109. Project MUSE.

In-text citation

(Keng, Lin, and Orazem 2017, 9–10)

(LaSalle 2017, 95)

WEBSITE CONTENT

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

Bouman, Katie. 2016. "How to Take a Picture of a Black Hole." Filmed November 2016 at TEDxBeaconStreet, Brookline, MA. Video, 12:51. https://www.ted.com/talks/katie_bouman_what_does_a_black_hole_look_like

Google. 2017. "Privacy Policy." Privacy & Terms. Last modified April 17, 2017. https://www.google.com/policies/privacy/

Yale University. n.d. "About Yale: Yale Facts." Accessed May 1, 2017. https://www.yale.edu/about-yale/yale-facts

Citare în text

(Bouman 2016)

(Google 2017)

(Yale University, n.d.)

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Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

Manjoo, Farhad. 2017. "Snap Makes a Bet on the Cultural Supremacy of the Camera." *New York Times*, March 8, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/technology/snap-makes-a-bet-on-the-cultural-supremacy-of-the-camera.html

Mead, Rebecca. 2017. "The Prophet of Dystopia." *New Yorker*, April 17, 2017.

Pai, Tanya. 2017. "The Squishy, Sugary History of Peeps." *Vox*, April 11, 2017. http://www.vox.com/culture/2017/4/11/15209084/peeps-easter

In-text citation

(Manjoo 2017)

(Mead 2017, 43)

(Pai 2017)

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