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CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY STRATEGIC STUDIES**



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The second issue of Strategic Impact journal, number 95/2025, examines security in a world marked by uncertainty and rapid change. In this edition we find articles addressing how European and global defense postures must adapt after a conflict that reshaped geopolitical realities. Moving from military dynamics to the power of ideas, another article revisits formative texts that influenced identity, legitimacy, and long-term tensions. The cognitive dimension of conflict is explored in one article which reveals how language and symbolic models shape strategic perception. Technological transformations are at the center of an article assessing how automation and decision-support systems may alter stability, escalation, and control. Together, these studies illustrate how security is built at the intersection of history, discourse, technology, and human contribution.

The first rubric, *Political-Military Topicality*, the article written by Mr. Matei Blănaru examines whether historical “lessons learned” remain relevant for professionals in security, defense, and geopolitics. Through a brief literature review and comparative analysis of recent conflicts, it argues that the post-Ukraine war landscape will be significantly more unstable. Regardless of the war’s outcome, emerging technologies, new military capabilities, and operational expertise developed during the conflict are likely to spread globally, increasing volatility in the international security environment.

The next section, *Geopolitics and Geostrategy: Trends and Perspectives*, brings to the reader’s attention an article, signed by Mrs. Bianca Brandea, which analyzes the role of religion as a political instrument in the emergence of Zionism. It explores how Jewish identity and documented historical oppression in Europe were used to justify the creation of Jewish settlements in Palestine. The study argues that plans for colonization, initiated in the late 19th century, expanded beyond initial agreements and evolved into escalating violence against the Palestinian population. It also notes that current Israeli military actions have been publicly compared to genocide and the Holocaust.

The *Information Society* rubric presents an article co-authored by Mrs. Veronica Păstae, PhD, and Mrs. Diana-Cristiana Lupu, PhD, which examines how metaphors function as tools in cognitive warfare, shaping perception and framing conflict. Drawing on literature from metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics, it explores how metaphors can be strategically used to manipulate collective understanding and influence social consensus. The study also addresses implications for defense



policy, the development of counter-metaphor strategies, and the ethical and legal challenges associated with this non-kinetic form of conflict.

The fourth rubric of this issue, *Emerging technologies*, comprises two articles. The first, signed by Mr. Mario Marinov, PhD, analyzes how AI integration into nuclear deterrence systems can both enhance and destabilize strategic stability. Focusing on the U.S., Russia, and China, it traces the evolution of automation since the Cold War and examines how different types of AI – rule-based systems, machine learning, and foundation models – affect key functions such as early warning, targeting, and response. It concludes by assessing likely areas of AI adoption and its implications for future nuclear capabilities and deterrence dynamics.

The second article, authored by Mrs. Alida Monica Doriana Barbu, PhD, examines the historically overlooked role of women in espionage and Intelligence, emphasizing that gender equality and mixed-gender teams are essential to effective security institutions. It explores whether women differ professionally from men, what makes their contributions unique, and how Intelligence agencies address gender equality. Using qualitative discourse and content analysis and case studies, the research analyzes perceptions of female operatives across major Intelligence organizations and highlights how women's integration reflects progress toward equality in Intelligence and military institutions.

The *Military History* rubric encompasses an article signed by Mr. Andi Mihail Băncilă, PhD, that takes us back in time, when after World War II, Romania came under Soviet occupation, and Western neglect allowed the communists to consolidate power. To prevent uprisings, they focused on controlling the Romanian Army, the key institution for maintaining state order, ensuring the regime's stability for decades.

The *Scientific Event* rubric briefly presents aspects from International Seminar "Lessons Identified from the Conflict in Ukraine", held by CDSSS on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 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. The journal has been published since 2000 in Romanian, and since 2005 in English, 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, military history, and emerging technologies. 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 at URL: <http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/cs.htm>, indexed in the international database CEEOL, Crossref, ROAD ISSN, and Google scholar, ResearchBib and Open Journal Systems.

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





# THE VOLATILE SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AFTER THE WAR IN UKRAINE: 'LESSONS LEARNED' FROM HISTORY AND HOW WE PREPARE

*Matei BLĂNARU* \*

*One of the fundamental reasons why history is so important is that it essentially provides access to a vast collection of “lessons learned” accessible to those willing to study and understand them. In the realm of international relations, national defense, homeland security, regional geopolitics, strategic foresight, and societal resilience, history becomes essential. This article undertakes a brief literature review in order to understand whether professionals continue to regard “lessons learned” as a valuable tool. Furthermore, it includes a comparative analysis of recent wars and their aftermath, in order to address a central question – which are the challenges we can expect to face and how will the world look like once the war in Ukraine reaches its conclusion? Historical evidence suggests that, regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine, we will be looking at a much more volatile security environment throughout the world. This will be due, especially, to the proliferation of emerging technologies, new military equipment and the new expertise developed in the war in Ukraine, which will be exported worldwide.*

**Keywords:** *lessons learned, history, arms trafficking, war, mercenaries, instability.*

## Introduction

On the international stage, some actors have global visions, others have imperial ambitions, while others – such as Romania – must adopt regional defense visions and strategies. When nations disregard history and neglect lessons learned

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from the equation, things become simple: they will no longer have such visions of their own, or their own projections regarding their security environment, their development, their very existence. They will have to rely on others – for both vision and the fulfillment of those visions –, and if the defense and security visions are no longer their own, then these will most likely not be intended for their own defense and security. Hence, the risks and dangers that a lack of vision, a lack of lessons learned, a lack of strategy and regional awareness pose to the Romanian society as a whole are to be regarded most seriously. It is therefore imperative to begin preparing proactively for the transformations that will follow the war in Ukraine.

### 1. Lessons Learned

“Lessons Learned” represent one of the most important and closely monitored elements within the analysis of security, defense, and international relations - not only in these fields, but also in many other domains. They are also essential to NATO’s organizational culture, as evidenced by the Alliance’s sustained commitment to this concept through dedicated conferences, an online platform and a highly important center: the Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC s.a.). For example, according to NATO, *“The NATO Lessons Learned Process is NATO’s formal process for identifying potential lessons and ensuring that, through analysis of the cause and potential remedial action, they are learned in such a way that allows the Alliance to transform to better meet the needs of the Allies.”* (JALLC s.a.)

In other words, “lessons learned” are about the systematic study of past experiences – our own or those of others –, in order to prepare for the future. Yet, this raises a critical question: how can a society engage in such learning if it stops studying the past and its own history? No matter how appealing certain ideologies narratives may find to erase national identities or national histories, in a region such as ours and in today’s global security context, this would be an inexcusable irresponsibility – one that would cause significant security damage to our entire society, both in the medium and long term.

“Lessons learned” are also essential for the United States, which likewise maintains a dedicated institution for this purpose – the *Center for Army Lessons Learned* (CALL s.a.). However, such processes are just as essential for any other responsible and professional actor within the international arena. Relatively recent articles authored by former or current high-ranking American officials in the field of strategic planning have emphasized that the U.S. must pay even more attention to the “lessons learned” from history when formulating major strategic decisions today (Lettow 2021).

These examples were presented because it is important to understand that experienced practitioners consider that the “lessons learned” from history continue,



to a large extent, to be valid today. Numerous examples, discussed in subsequent sections, further substantiate this perspective. Human nature, in its essence, remains largely constant across time. Depending on the era and the context, certain traits may temporarily take on greater importance than others. The only things that truly change are the tools, technological innovations, and the scale of their impact – yet, the core principles articulated by Sun Tzu thousands of years ago remain just as relevant today.

If we were to stop learning the writings of Sun Tzu and the events that have shaped human history over the last few thousand years, we would be forced to begin anew, gaining nothing from past experience. Who would benefit from us ignoring past experience? Obviously, it would serve the interests of our adversaries.

By extension, the same reasoning applies to the broader study of history – the only ones who do not want us to benefit from the “lessons learned” of the past are our adversaries. All major actors on the international stage are aware of this reality, and they place great importance on “lessons learned” and history.

## 2. What Will Follow the War in Ukraine

Returning to the central topic, history is very useful because it will illuminate certain aspects and outcomes likely to emerge once the war in Ukraine ends – *regardless of the manner in which it does so*. Of course, this represents only one of the many lessons that can be learned from the war in Ukraine. A critical issue, however, that will affect us globally – and one that few people are considering today – concerns what will happen to the vast number of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers at the frontlines and in supporting roles. Also, what will happen to the enormous amount of military equipment and war experience accumulated during the war in Ukraine?

Once the war ends, irrespective of its outcome, a considerable proportion of those currently mobilized will be demobilized. The size of that number will depend on the durability of the future ceasefire and the peace in Ukraine.

According to some estimates from 2024, Ukraine had over one million people engaged in this war within its defense and security forces (Kottasová and Gak 2024). Russia, by most accounts, had likely many more people directly involved in the war. Naturally, not all of these individuals are deployed on the front lines – but modern warfare involves more than just trenches and direct assaults. It also includes logistics, research, planning, analysis, intelligence, strategy and policy-making, among other domains. Beyond those directly involved, various assessments indicate that each side has likely suffered over 500,000 wounded and killed soldiers (France24 2025).

Once the war ends, some of those currently on the front lines or mobilized in various capacities will return to their homes, professions, and their pre-war



routines – because such large standing force cannot be sustained indefinitely by the state. However, a significant number of individuals will seek to continue doing what they have learned during the war -especially since there will be third parties or international entities interested in exploiting their expertise, and willing to pay handsomely for it.

At present, considering how the war has been fought in Ukraine, both Russian and Ukrainian soldiers possess unparalleled practical experience in the world in the application of new technologies and combat tactics. No other armed forces in the world currently match the level of hands-on proficiency in modern warfare than the Ukrainians and Russians fighting in Ukraine.

This accumulated expertise will make them highly sought after by states around the world, whether in Africa, Latin America, Asia, or Europe. And Western nations will be looking for Ukrainian ‘advisors’ as well. However, such engagements will not always be just for ‘advisory’ roles. For example, only a few years ago, everyone was talking about the famous Russian mercenaries, the Wagner Group, who initially numbered no more than a few thousand experienced individuals (before increasing their numbers through massive recruitment of more inexperienced personnel). Let us picture what will happen when hundreds of thousands of ‘Wagner-like’ Russians and Ukrainians, with far more experience than the Wagner mercenaries of 2022, are spread across the international environment, actively operating with great success in Africa and the Middle East.

Undoubtedly, the post-war international environment will be much more dangerous and turbulent, particularly across regions such as Africa and Asia. However, unpleasant surprises could also emerge in other parts of the world. The expertise acquired by soldiers who participated in the war in Ukraine will make them highly sought after not only for authoritarian regimes but also for regional rivalries, and for coup interests from various state or non-state entities in the Arab world, Russia, China, the Western states, or, why not, Ukraine. This will make the world far more dangerous than it is at present. Africa is likely to experience the most pronounced destabilization (even more than it is at present!), with humanitarian consequences and migration-related issues that are difficult to anticipate. It is possible to see a revival of the Libyan conflict while the Middle East may once again provide fertile ground for the escalation of regional tensions and proxy confrontation.

### **3. Wars and What Followed. Examples: Chechnya, Former Yugoslavia**

Why do we refer to history as a vast repository of “lessons learned”? Because, time and again, it has demonstrated recurring patterns of human behaviour. Throughout history, soldiers with experience in the latest military tactics and techniques have frequently become highly sought as mercenaries once their own wars ended. One of



the most famous examples is that of the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine emperors (preceded by at least a century by other Viking mercenaries), who took advantage of the combat experience of the Vikings to hire them for their own conflicts. A similar dynamic is likely to unfold in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine.

Throughout history, different populations that have accumulated significant military experience have always been highly sought after and used as mercenaries, as well as models for training and developing domestic armed forces - the Scythians were used by the Persian Empire, Philip II used mercenaries to train and build his own Macedonian army, and later the Macedonians were often employed as mercenaries by the Greeks and others, the Cumans, Albanians, even Aromanians and Romanians were sought for their military experience. The Tatars, the Circassians (especially following the genocide (ECR Group, 2022) committed against them by the Russian Empire), were used by the Ottoman Empire for their military experience. These examples represent only a fraction of the historical precedent demonstrating how militarily experienced populations have been mobilized across different powers and contexts. A more recent example, not so much with mercenaries *per se*, is how the Soviet Union and the U.S. sought to acquire the expertise of Nazi scientists and access to German military technology, at the end of World War II. At that time, technological knowledge and research capabilities were in high demand and now it will be the practical military experience, the way modern technologies are used on the battlefield, that will be highly sought after.

### **3.1. Chechnya**

Immediately following the Second Chechnya War in 2000, military analyst G.D. Bakshi pointed out how this conflict boosted Russian arms exports (Bakshi 2000). Likewise, it is reasonable to anticipate that both Russian and Ukrainian arms exports will increase substantially after the war in Ukraine ends, regardless of its outcome. Significantly increased arms exports will undoubtedly mean significantly increased global volatility. The same army analyst pointed out in 2000, in the aftermath of the Russian victory in Chechnya, that “Such an economic and military revival of the Russians could greatly hasten the onset of a truly multipolar or polycentric world order in place of the existing unipolar one. At the operational and tactical level, there are many useful lessons to be learnt from the Chechen military campaign” (Bakshi 2000). We cannot fail to see how these words seem to be very actual today and they bear a remarkable similarity to what is happening today, to what concerns us today.

Also, the war in Chechnya was a constant source of fighters for foreign conflicts. For example, Chechen fighters reportedly fought alongside Taliban forces in Afghanistan against the U.S. and its allies and were also reported to have participated in the Syrian civil war, engaging against government forces and contributing to the lasting instability in the region (Steinberg, 2014). The wars in Chechnya continue



even today to represent a source of terrorism, and some Chechens even reportedly had links to al-Qaeda (Bhattacharji and Jeffrey 2010). These very short examples show just what we mean by “lessons learned” regarding the consequences and the arms and fighters exports that follow ended wars. They show just how much the small local wars in Chechnya contributed and still contribute to global instability and security concerns. This historical perspective naturally prompts reflection on the potential regional and global consequences of the eventual conclusion of the war in Ukraine.

### ***3.2. Former Yugoslavia***

As Joel Fraser explicitly noted in a 2020 article, “It’s been almost 20 years since the Yugoslav Wars ended, and the Balkans are now at relative peace. For Western Europe, however, the shadow of Yugoslavia’s wars continues to haunt with a serious security threat” (Fraser 2020). And the author highlights specific instances of how arms originating from the former Yugoslavia have contributed to security challenges in Europe. For example, Zastava M70 rifles and ammunition used to carry on 12 ruthless killings in France in 2015 by al-Qaeda gunmen were purchased from Bosnia. In November 2015, a Yugoslavian rifle, an AK47 from Communist Albania and another one from Bulgaria were used by Islamists in another attack at the Bataclan Theatre. The author concludes that “The task of efficiently tracking and stopping the flow of illicit arms from the former Yugoslavia is almost impossible” (Fraser 2020). However, this is only one aspect resulting in the aftermath of the war in Yugoslavia. There was also radicalisation of Muslim fighters in Bosnia, foreign Muslim combatants that had joined the war in Bosnia and later on spread their experience worldwide. There were also ex-fighters that joined or created human and drug trafficking cartels, and these, alongside the arms trafficking mentioned above, are direct security threats that made the whole of Europe less secure following the war in Yugoslavia.

## **4. What is Happening Today**

The patterns described above have happened repeatedly wherever there had been devastating wars. Each of the historical examples discussed (and many others) stand as reasons to suspect that this may happen again after the conclusion of the war in Ukraine. There already have been numerous accounts of U.S. arms or financial aid intended for Ukraine, but ended up “unaccounted for” or used for illicit actions or sold on the black market instead. For example, in early 2024, the Pentagon’s Office of Inspector General reported there were one billion dollars’ worth of weapons sent by the U.S. to Ukraine, unaccounted for (NPR, 2024). A 2022 CBS documentary, citing a statement that “only around 30% of aid was reaching the front lines in



Ukraine” was partially retracted (Baker, 2022), yet it nevertheless did cast doubt on what is happening to U.S.-made military equipment. Especially in the aftermath of what happened to U.S. military equipment in Afghanistan. In late 2024, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC) bluntly pointed out that “recent evidence shows early signs that organized arms trafficking is on the rise in Ukraine” (GI-TOC, 2024). Such developments are to be expected in an active war zone, and they reinforce the central argument of this paper, and we have no reason to suspect that illicit arms trafficking is not having an impact on the Russian army as well.

To provide additional examples, one of the many unanswered questions concerns a 2022 incident in which a plane leased by a Ukrainian company - allegedly transporting ammunition from Serbia to Bangladesh – crashed in Greece, despite the fact that Ukraine was constantly requesting ammunition donations (Stamatoukou, 2023). Ironically and tragically at the same time, Ukraine, a current theater of war, was transporting ammunition from another very recent theater of war in Europe, namely Serbia. This episode serves, so to speak, as a foreshadowing of what Ukraine and Russia will be after the war ends. A related question arises regarding the factories that now produce hundreds of thousands of FPV combat drones. While some facilities will close, others will shift to different production, but some will continue to supply war theaters or organizations in other parts of the world as well as the needs of their own national forces. Recently, a helicopter of the Colombian armed forces was apparently shot down by a drone belonging to drug cartels (Altman and Rogoway, 2025). This underscores the broader pattern noted earlier: technical and military expertise from the war in Ukraine is being exported. It is no coincidence that there have been publicly reported cases of ‘volunteers’ from Mexico and Colombia fighting in Ukraine (DefenseRomania Team, 2025), and who are in fact infiltrated in order to learn new combat techniques and later employ them within their criminal organizations or for other actors willing to pay for their expertise.

We can also talk about possible acts of state terrorism. In the case of the Russian Federation, this comes as no surprise, since the assassinations committed against critical journalists, such as Anna Politkovskaya, or political opponents of Vladimir Putin are well known and documented (Leopold, 2024). As are the acts of state terrorism carried out by the U.S.S.R. since its very inception, through brigades of activists, saboteurs, Comintern members, the NKVD, etc., all of which were sponsored, trained, and coordinated by the Soviet state institutions and officials.

It is noteworthy that Ukraine is also adopting some of the same methods historically associated with Soviet-era practices. From the infamous Mirotvorets website which maintains close ties to Ukrainian secret services and was supported by high Ukrainian officials (Johnson, 2024), on which names and addresses have



been listed – including those of Ukrainian<sup>1</sup> (Kramer, 2016) and U.S. journalists (Kramer, 2016) or officials who, in the view of some Ukrainians, might deserve to be “punished” for harming Ukraine’s interests, earning the nickname ‘kill list’ (Armstrong, 2022) – to the blowing up of the Nord Stream pipelines, which could not have been done without the knowledge and resources of Ukrainian institutions (Pancevski, 2024). More recently, the 2025 assassination of Andrei Portnov in Spain, a former Ukrainian official and potential political rival to President Zelensky. Oleksiy Arestovych, formerly close to President Zelensky and now a political rival himself, also preparing a presidential bid, stated openly what many people already suspected at the time: “The murder of Andrey Portnov is 99% likely Zelensky preparing for elections.” (Arestovych, 2025). All the more so given that there is information according to which Andrei Portnov had apparently just been summoned to meetings with high Ukrainian officials in Kyiv, and had met them just a few days before being assassinated (Melanovski, 2025), leaving open the possibility of either Ukrainian, or Russian involvement.

It is also essential to acknowledge assassinations most likely carried out by Russian actors. For example, in 2024, Maxim Kuzminov, a Russian pilot who had defected to Ukraine, was assassinated in Spain (Chiappa et al., 2024). Not to mention the assassinations carried out by Ukraine and Russia within their own territories. In addition, it is no coincidence that the Russian Federation negotiated a prisoner exchange with the U.S. and released the notorious Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout, who, according to some reports, has already resumed activities in the international arms trade (Al Jazeera, 2024).

In Mali, the ongoing conflict provides an example of how the war in Ukraine is extending beyond its immediate theater. Government forces in Mali have been supported and trained by Russian mercenaries, while at the beginning of 2025, a Ukrainian official hinted that Ukraine may have helped Islamist rebels with ‘intelligence’ to shoot down a government forces helicopter using a drone: “a Ukrainian military intelligence official, Andriy Yusov, implied thereafter that Kyiv had provided the rebels with information to aid their attack. Ukraine later denied that it provided intelligence, as well as reports that it had supplied rebels with drones” (Staff Writer With AFP, 2025). There is no doubt that the war between Ukraine and the Russian Federation is also being fought outside Ukraine and is exporting violence and weapons.

The events described above represent only one part of the export of violence stemming from the war in Ukraine; they are only the tip of the iceberg we are seeing now. This dynamic is likely to continue even after the war on Ukrainian territory have ended.

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<sup>1</sup> “A pro-Russian commentator living in Kiev, Oles Buzina, whose home address was publicized in a *Myrotvorets* post last year, was shot and killed on a street not far from his home days later” (Kramer 2016).



Therefore, unfortunately, it is reasonable to predict that the arms, the ammunition, the operational experience and methods, the people who have gone through the war in Ukraine and their military experience will continue to fuel conflicts and instability, worldwide. We will encounter Russian and Ukrainian ‘advisors’ or mercenaries in various forms in many countries around the world, from Latin America to Asia, from Africa to Europe and Australia. It will only depend largely on the responsibilities of global and regional leaders, who will shape how this military experience is applied in the post-war environment.

## 5. How to Prepare

The main idea is that Romania must prepare intensively to address the security challenges that the upcoming years will bring – a world that is much more conflictual, much more turbulent, characterized by the potential for additional armed conflicts, increasingly dramatic challenges generated by climate change, large-scale migration, the irresponsible internal division of our societies, challenges generated by the unethical and aggressive use of new technologies, and others. For example, regarding Artificial Intelligence, global regulation is unlikely to align with the EU’s local framework. And any excessive regulation, when adversaries do not impose comparable constraints, represents a loss of competitiveness and a vulnerability, as the U.S. Vice President mentioned some time ago. Moreover, Romania must also consider the expansionist tendencies of some regional actors (Russia, for example), or the unpredictability of other important regional actors like Iran. These are just a few of the challenges we can anticipate to some extent. Certainly, there will be others that cannot be anticipated at present.

*What can Romania do to prepare for future challenges?* Things are relatively simple. On the one hand, we need to prepare in terms of the technological dimension of the armed forces’ equipment, the research and innovation sector; on the other hand, we need to work on the societal dimension, fostering social cohesion and healing internal fractures, rather than exacerbating polarization. Achieving this requires effective communication and education that responsibly address issues of national identity (which have been ideologically neglected for decades, weakening and significantly making us more vulnerable to events just like the ones that are happening today). Of course, none of these efforts can succeed without appropriate concern for economic development. Our analyses have consistently tried to address these two main dimensions - military and societal. The military dimension was tackled in 2024, in an article titled “The Need for an Integrated Model of Smart Warfare”, which was published in the Bulletin of the ‘Carol I’ National Defense University. The article outlined some directions regarding how current warfare is changing



and how Romania should prepare for future security challenges. Unfortunately, the acquisitions, actions, and narratives of Romanian political decision-makers have not reflected an awareness in this direction, while international developments prove us right, confirming the urgency of those directions and the need for proactive engagement.

On the societal dimension, also drawing from historical ‘lessons learned’ and analyzing current trends, long before the recent internal events that have shaken Romanian society, we tried to draw attention on irresponsible developments and narratives that will divide and weaken our society if not adequately addressed. Which eventually has happened, unfortunately. Regarding these dangerous developments, more than three years ago we published an analysis in the Romanian language titled “The ‘Afghanistan’ of our society today – between ideology and the crises yet to come”. Additionally, over two years ago, we contributed an article to the *Romanian Intelligence Studies Review*, published by the “Mihai Viteazul” National Intelligence Academy, titled “What Is Communication And What It Should Be? Problems With Modern Public Communication”. In this work, we highlighted the societal processes that risked causing severe societal fractures in Romania and throughout the Western societies, thereby increasing vulnerability and amplifying security threats and risks.

These processes have accelerated in recent years and have only recently become fully visible to the broader public. We tried to draw attention to them long before their consequences became apparent. Even last year, right before the internal political turmoil in Romania which inflicted severe damages to our society, we published another article in Romanian, informal in tone but nevertheless explicit and direct titled “The crisis of our society. Caught between the grotesque parody of the Last Supper and Șoșoacă. Caught between the progressive far left and the Russian Federation”. In this article, we tried to draw attention to the same societal fractures previously identified, fractures that we needed to heal if we wanted to be able to withstand any adversary informational campaign directed against us from the Russian Federation or from anywhere else. The main idea of our article was that *we needed to fight ideological radicalization either from the right, or from the left, because ideological radicalization has a severe negative impact on national security anywhere in the world.*

Unfortunately, although these warnings have since proven accurate, no responsible measures have been implemented to heal the widening fractures in Romanian society or, at the very least, to prevent their further deepening. This has led to seemingly even more internal developments that harm us all and cause further division within our society.



## Conclusions

Access to *lessons learned*, to history and its proper analysis are a guarantee that we will be able to maintain our own vision for both the present and the future. If we give up on history, we also give up on the privilege of having our own vision for our future and for how we will carry it out and defend it. And then, we will be the victims of others' visions. Unfortunately, our region has never lacked expansionist and imperialist visions. Historically, Romania has existed at the intersection of three empires: the Russian, the Austro-Hungarian, and the Ottoman. We are still caught today between similar expansionist visions. We return again to our choice – will we abandon history, or will we learn something from it to safeguard our society now and in the years to come? Regardless of anyone's ideological or political choices, we must still remember that the job description of all Government employees in Romania, beginning with elected representatives, states that they must act in the interest of the Romanian society, not in the interest of any other type of group, ideology or utopian society.

The outcome of the war in Ukraine does not depend on Romania; it does not depend on us. *However, the way we prepare for future security challenges does depend on us.* Again, recalling history, we would have said the same thing in the years preceding Second World War, and it would have been extremely important for Romania's leaders at the time to do exactly the same things we are encouraging today. Had Romania been adequately prepared (societally, militarily, technologically, economically, politically, etc.) for the challenges that were soon to follow, the consequences might have been far less devastating for our nation. Instead, back then, our leaders sank into endless internal crises, with pitifully small personal or political stakes compared to the challenges that followed, which caught us unprepared and caused so much harm to us as a nation and society. It is true, no one knew for sure back then that another world war would follow. But it would not have hurt to prepare adequately when it was clear that the security situation was degrading.

The same principle applies today: we do not know what the future holds, but we must prepare adequately for any crisis that might come. A stronger society, more united in the national interest, a stronger, fair, economy, a stronger military, adequately equipped and trained for the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, taking into account the lessons learned from the war in Ukraine, nonetheless, a strategy, a vision for the peaceful development of Romania and its role within the regional, European, and global context, would definitely help regardless of the challenges the future may bring.



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# ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM: A CRITICAL STUDY ON EARLY PUBLICATIONS

*Bianca BRANDEA\**

*Political matters in which religion is used as an instrument have led, throughout history, to some of the most remarkable geopolitical consequences that conjointly involve military and paramilitary interventions, as well as casualties and violent reactions among civilians. The present paper examines various motivations that influenced the emergence of Zionism, where the use of the Jewish religion – along with the reported oppressions of the Jews in Europe – became a key justification for establishing Jewish settlements within the Palestinian borders. The colonization plans that had been debated since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century not only exceeded the initial agreements, but have been also escalating into extreme attacks against the indigenous Palestinian population. Also, Israeli armed incursions, ongoing at the time of the present paper’s publication, have been publicly compared to a genocide and the Holocaust.*

**Keywords:** *Zionism; anti-semitism; geopolitics; Palestine; Israel; extremism.*

## Introduction

The present article reveals political and international matters that led to the Israeli settlement.

It represents a brief analysis on some of the most relevant publications from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century about the definition and settlement of the Zionist movement, in the interest of differentiating the spiritual dimension of Judaism from the intrusive politics implied by Zionism. In addition, the present paper alludes

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to the contemporary perception of anti-semitism, which has become a censorship argument against public disclosure of offensive actions committed by Jewish actors. Thus, the analysis aims to bring better understanding of various perspectives and motivations that contributed throughout decades to the contemporary geopolitical landscape.

### 1. Romania's Involvement

Although there is no major impact from Romania's side upon the Jewish settlement in the Holy Land<sup>1</sup>, its plentiful mentions in early Zionist publications suggest that our country was not only an unsuitable location for Jewish settlements, but also Jewish individuals born here could not be fully integrated into the Romanian society.

Numerous statements from the observed publications accused Romania of discrimination against Jews, including those who had been born in Romania: 'Thus it is left for a Jew to take the action of an avowedly anti-Semitic Government like that of Romania as a basis for raising an outcry against the nationalistic effort of Jews to emancipate their people' (Levy, Sarna and Baker 1902, 3). The reported hostility perceived in Romania led to a rather offensive portrayal, casting the country's intention to preserve its religious and social integrity in a negative light.

Further in the aforementioned publication, Romania is listed among the countries whose 'anti-semitism' and 'race-nationalism' had been responsible for the development of Zionism: 'Zionism is the child of anti-Semitism – of the race-nationalism of France, Germany, Russia, Roumania' (Levy, Sarna and Baker 1902, 5).

Later mentions challenge the country's lack of intention of granting Romanian nationality to Jewish citizens born in Romania:

'Every Jewish individual in the world, like every other individual, possesses the positive attribute of the legal Nationality of some State within the comity of Nations, and the negative and correlative attitude of alienage, apart from two exceptional varieties: the one is the Roumanian, which is an exception more apparent than real,

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<sup>1</sup> Publications issued before 1948 mention that the Biblical Holy Land has been identified as the Palestinian Territories. 'The Holy Land of the Bible is the Holy Land of to-day. It has the same skies as those under which the Wise Men followed the Star to the birthplace of Jesus. It has the same flowers as those trodden by Joseph and Mary, and the water in Jacob's Well is still sweet, notwithstanding it is now compared with that of the Nile which flows in pipes over the desert almost to the Pool of Siloam (...). All these belong to the Palestine perennial, and to that Palestine belong the talks of this book. They are based on the notes dictated to my stenographer or written by me in the midst of the scenes they describe. I give them as they came hot from the pen, changing only a line here and there to accord with the changing conditions (...). Throughout the journey, the old is ever tramping on the heels of the new, and the Palestine of the future is seen through the veil of the Palestine of the past' (Carpenter 1922, 1-3).



for the status of the Jewish People in Roumania is, it would seem from the standpoint of International Law, one of Roumanian Nationality, even if Roumania chooses as yet to regard its autochthonous Jewry in such large numbers as within the sphere of alienage ; the other is an exception not specific to the Jewish People, but represents a phenomenon of International Law, of not infrequent recurrence it is the person of disputed nationality, disclaimed by one state and not acclaimed by the other. It can thus be seen that with the exceptions quoted the Jewish individual can acquire from the point of view of International Law the nationality of any Nation within the comity of Nations but that he cannot acquire a Jewish legal nationality, for such a nationality is at present non-existent' (Benas 1919, 11).

Another relevant comment pertains to a 19<sup>th</sup> century Jewish publication, where the author questions Romania's right of existence and his offenses are addressed in a relatively threatening tone:

'A most remarkable bit of intelligence has, just reached my ears with regard to the muched-vexed question of the Roumanian Jews, which is again on the *tapis*. The bigotry and intolerance of the Roumanian people, and the incapacity or willful neglect of the Roumanian Government will, it seems, compel the powers to interfere again on behalf of the persecuted Israelites, whose position in Roumania is about what it was all over Europe during the middle ages. And there these continual protests and threats of intervention will, without doubt, sooner or later, end in the wiping from the map of Europe this bastard semi-independent little state, which certainly has no adequate *raison d'etre*, no sufficient cause in existence, even though it has to be done at the risk of opening up the muchdreaded Eastern Question' (Sneersohn 1872, 139).

## 2. Religiously Motivated Politics

The most debated case of political religion in the latest decades involves the usage of Islam as a pretext for extremist politics (Brandea 2024, 159-160). But Islam is not the only religion which can be manipulated in order to justify political and geopolitical outcomes.

Thus, for the purpose of the current study, it is necessary to distinguish Judaism from Zionism. While Judaism represents the monotheist religion of the Jewish people (Judaism n.d.), Zionism refers to 'a political movement that had as its original aim the creation of a country for Jewish people, and that now supports the state of Israel' (Zionism n.d.).

Even before the emergence of Zionism, the rejection of religious diversity in the 'Holy Land' was articulated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century records. The following example illustrates a paragraph extracted from an 1844 Jewish book which tackles historical and biblical aspects of the 'Holy Land', advocating for the Jewish religion while



discrediting the Islamic one: ‘Palestine remained subject to Grecian authority till the rise of the Mahommedan power in the east. The followers of the false prophet, extending their doctrines and dominions by fire and sword, conquered successively the provinces of Arabia, Syria, and Egypt; and in 686, the caliph Omar’s troops marched to Jerusalem’ (Bonar 1844, 106).

### ***2.1. Zionism versus anti-semitism: who’s who?***

Theodor Herzl is believed to have conceived the characteristics of Zionism in his 1917 book entitled *A Jewish State. An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question*. It is worth mentioning that one of the matters he deliberates in this publication is whether the Jewish settlement could have been organized in either Argentina or Palestine (Herzl 1917, 12), Palestine being preferred for the Biblical connections between its land and the Jews.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zionism was described as ‘one of the most articulate Jewish weapons directed against anti-Semitism’ (Moskowitz 1917, 1). The Zionist agenda had been divided in a 1918 publication into four stages: ‘first, the colonisation and development of Palestine; secondly, the cementing of the scattered sections of Jewry; thirdly, the strengthening of the Jewish national consciousness; and fourthly, the enlistment of the sympathy and assistance of powerful nations’ (Simon 1918, 11-12). Another publication, from the following year, suggests that the Zionist settlement would bring notable benefits to the entire humanity: ‘The re-establishment of the Jews as a nation among the nations is needed for the development of the Jews, and as a means for their working out their distinctive solution of the problems of humanity; that is, it is needed for the sake of a sane patriotism and a sane universalism it would help Jew and Gentile’ (Lewis 1919, 16).

Nevertheless, cynical comments had been addressed even among the publications of those times. One such perspective argues that the ‘return’ of the Jews in their own country could had been possible only through the interventions of ‘anti-semitic governments’ or through prophetic accomplishments: ‘The restoration of the Jews to the land of their old independence may occur in one of two ways. It may be by the concerted ‘act of the Governments of the countries of their dispersion, devised as a measure of self-protection against the spread of the Jews; or it may be by the fulfilment of prophecy when the Jewish mission as complete. The first is the creed of good anti-Semites, the second of orthodox Jews’ (Magnus 1917, 4).

Even nowadays, the ‘anti-semitism’ term is rather used to designate the hate against Jewish people. However, it is worth noting that, in fact, semitism refers to the speakers of semitic languages, such as Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, Aramaic, or Tigrinya (Abella et al. 2025). Additionally, any sort of support addressed to occupied peoples from the former ‘Holy Land’ is considered an act of anti-semitism (Klug 2021), despite the fact that Israelis and Arabs are equally Semite.



The world's separation from the Jewish people which had been reported by the Zionists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is one of the most important justifications for their forceful approach: 'The oppression we endure does not improve us, for we are not a whit better than ordinary people. It is true that we do not love our enemies; but he alone who can conquer himself dare reproach us with that fault. Oppression naturally creates hostility against oppressors, and our hostility aggravates the pressure. It is impossible to escape from this eternal round' (Herzl 1917, 10).

A main objective of Zionism was believed to be the preservation of the Jewish culture, although a study published in 1917 observes that Zionists did not explicitly support this aspect:

'The advocates of Zionism as a solution of the subjective phase of the Jewish question assume, first, that Judaism, in its broader sense, is worth preserving, and consequently that its preservation is made possible only by the establishment of a Jewish State, acting as a cultural centre which will exist primarily for the purpose of perpetuating it. The Zionists say vaguely that Jewish culture is worthy of preservation. Whatever is of distinctive worth in a nationality should be cultivated and contributed for the enrichment of humanity' (Moskowitz 1917, 3).

On a rather philosophical note, one might notice a magnifying mirror effect in the pattern of the Zionist actions subsequent to their reported maltreatments. For example, the segregation they felt within the European societies could be comparable to an externally imposed psychological wall which has been eventually transmuted into an actual separation wall among the heir inhabitants of Palestine and West Bank (see OCHA, 2022, and Al Jazeera, 2020). Another accessible comparison points to the broadly debated Hamas attack from October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (see UN News, 2023), which galvanized not only the military incursions on the Palestinian civilians – which had been proceeding since the 1948's settlement (Shaw 2010, Crowley-Vigneau, et al. 2025) – but also airstrikes and raids that had been equaled to the renowned Holocaust (Segal 2023).

## **2.2. Ownership contradictions**

Racial differentiations between Jews and Palestinians had been reported in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century – namely before the emergence of Zionism from 1882 (Halperin 2015). Such perspectives challenged the inhabiting right of the contemporary residents within the 'Promised Land':

'In alluding to the origin of the name Palestine, it may be necessary to observe that the LXX translate the Hebrew word Philistiim, *Allophyli*, (strangers or aliens,) intimating that they were a people distinct from the Israelites. –When the twelve tribes of Israel came into possession of this their promised inheritance, the lots or territories of Judah and Benjamin were contiguously seated towards the Southern boundary of the country: and according to divine appointment, the kingdom of Judah was hereditary in the house of David' (Unknown Author 1823, 4).



The issue of land ownership in Palestine has been mainly maintained due to the lack of bilateral conventionalities. Specifically, lands that have been inherited for numerous generations by Palestinian inhabitants within the Palestinian Territories' borders had not been recognized as belonging to them, despite their official proofs. This context is exemplified in the statement below, which belongs to a Palestinian farmer and had been extracted from Malek and Hoke's (2014) research on Palestinian and Israeli perspectives upon the occupation:

'My extended family had land here going far back, and my grandfather inherited a piece of it. We have paperwork going back to 1943 that documents our right to these twelve acres and three houses (...). Then, when I was around fifteen years old, the settlers came onto our land. There had been settlements in the area since I was a boy, but none so close. First, we started seeing roads going in sometime around 1996. That same year, the first settlers showed up in trailer homes. There were maybe fifteen to twenty trailers that appeared near our village. These first settlers were just a few families. But they were never without guns – AK-47s, big guns. The first thing they did was come to the village to see if they would have any trouble. They were pretty rough. There were some clashes at first over land. I remember one old man whom the settlers struck on the head – he almost died. They also started building a fence around the settlement and some of our farmland right away. We had a fence around most of our property, and that helped keep the settlers from building directly on our land, but they took the land where our sheep graze outside the fence, about a thousand square feet of grazing land. They also took some of my father's sheep. And they took other villagers' land and sheep when they could (Malek and Hoke 2014, 64-65).

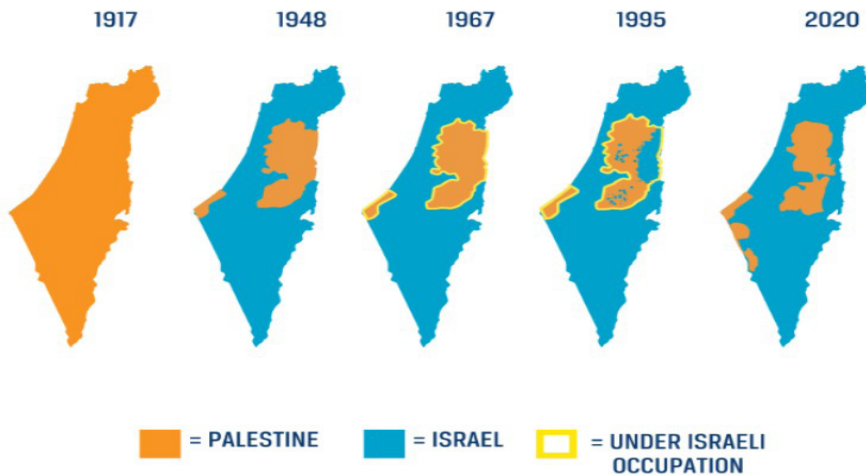
### **3. The imminence of violent responses**

Although the Israeli settlement in the Palestinian territories was expected to be peaceful for the three religions inhabiting the land in question – Christianity, Islam, Judaism (Carpenter 1922, 197) –, its expansion not only that exceeded the borders that had been initially established, but has also led to military interventions in order to impose the civilians' relocation (Rubin, Arnon and McAlexander 2023).

The settlement of the Jews in the Palestinian territories had been explicitly supported by the British Parliament in the early 20th century (English Zionist Federation 1901) and was later described as a colonization process comparable to the one from America (Carpenter 1922, 196).

The UN's Resolution 181 adopted in 1947 was meant to support the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, handing over about 55 percent of the land to the settling Jews, while Arabs were granted 45 percent of the land; Jerusalem was declared a separate internationalized territory. However, this partitioning plan had never been implemented (Haddad and Chughtai 2023).

According to various studies on radicalization, terrorism, and violent attitudes, individuals who had been raised in unstable environments and constant aggression from dominant authorities are more prone to extremist acts (Hudson 1999, 15-16) and revenge-seeking behaviors (Andros 2023). Consequently, the emergence of paramilitary, nationalist, and politically extremist movements and organizations are rather predictable especially due to the insufficient international and diplomatic involvement.



**Figure no. 1** Over time changes in the Palestinian territories' occupation (Andros 2023)

In addition to these formal factors, it is worth acknowledging the education restrictions imposed by the Israelis against the Palestinian citizens (Abu-Saad 2018, Anwar, Wong and Bright 2022, Smith and Howard 2023, Quneis and Rafidi 2023), which can only perpetuate and aggravate this vicious circle where insufficient education could lead to radicalization and extremism (Macaluso 2016, Sajjad 2022, Gereluk 2023), and, eventually, to the so-called legitimate 'self-defense' (Tsagourias 2023) that involve military and ballistic assaults against civilians (OHCHR 2024, Israel's actions in Gaza 'intentional attack on civilians': UN inquiry 2024, Khalil and Sio 2025).

From a wider perspective, it is notable that a general consequence of the World War II end and the succeeding Cold War was the continuity of 'low intensity' conflicts around the world in a geopolitical context where terrorism was turning 'into an instrument of resistance' (Chaliand and Blin 2007, 208).



### ***3.1. The Muslim Brotherhood (its beginning in Egypt)***

One of the most important organizations from the Middle East that had contributed to preserving the antagonism between the Zionist actors and the local Arab world is the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been founded in 1928 in Egypt. The British interventions in Egypt during World War II has contributed to the fall of the local political system, which has been paralleled by an increasing popularity of non-governmental opposition and political pressure movements that assured the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (Zollner 2009, 11-2).

Moreover, according to Zollner's (2009) observations, the of the Muslim Brotherhood's paramilitary branch training camps, activities, and involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only that were tolerated by the Egyptian government, but it has also become their primary instrument for advancing its political agenda within Egypt itself (Zollner 2009, 13).

### ***3.2. From the Muslim Brotherhood to Hamas in Palestine***

A remarkable consequence of the Muslim Brotherhood development and involvement in the Palestinian matter is the emergence of the extremist branch of the Hamas party from Palestine, founded in January 1988 and aiming for resistance to the Israeli rule; following the continuous and militarized expansion of Israel within the Palestinian Territories, the 'resistance' of Hamas has turned into plotting the eradication of Israel (Frisch 2010, 91).

The initial ideology promoted by Hamas during its early years was that 'Palestine is Arab, Islamic land that fell to colonial control with the demise of the Ottoman Empire', disagreeing with Israel's legitimacy and encouraging the Palestinians to 'struggle in order to regain their homeland and freedom'. This approach of calling for the defeat of the occupier reveals a rather nationalist – not religious – agenda (Roy 2011). Simultaneously, Hamas has remained attached to the Muslim Brotherhood and became their Palestinian branch, focusing on violent anti-Israel activities – or Jihad against the Israeli *infidels* – rather than promoting Islamic values (Levitt 2006, 30).

Following their victory in the 2006 elections in Palestine, Hamas became 'the only Muslim Brotherhood group in the world that also forms a government and rules over large numbers of people'. Their popularity among Palestinian voters was mainly motivated by the violent approaches that led to the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from Gaza on September 12, 2005. Nonetheless, the influence gained by Hamas had motivated Egypt – together with the Muslim Brotherhood – to maintain public distance from them. A similar attitude has been promoted among other Sunni organizations as a consequence of Hamas' connection with Iran (Frisch 2010, 89-101).



## Conclusions

The colonization plans which had been debated by the first Zionists and supported by the great powers, especially after World War I and World War II, have led to disproportionate conflicts in the Palestinian Territories ever since 1948. The continuous hostility has led to post-traumatic stress disorder and even radicalization among some indigenous Palestinians and their international supporters, which contributes to the continuity of the local instability.

The consequent violent extremism, from both Jewish and Muslim actors, do not reflect the intention of their religious values' preservation; contrarily, radical and violent actions use—mostly in the Zionists' case—religious pretexts or justifications which, eventually, generate confusion and even repugnance from international communities.

Thus, the paper hints that Zionist actions generally use Judaism as a justification for aggressive approaches, although the nature of their purposes is rather political. The question of anti-semitism is also relevant in this context since it disputes the semitic identity of the Arabs and would not classify the occupation of the Palestinian Territories as an anti-semitic act, while any disagreement against the Zionist plans throughout history has been labelled as an anti-semitic intention. The earliest studies on this matter reveal a hostile attitude of the Western world against the “Jewish problem” and vice versa, leading to favourable denunciation of anti-semitism addressed to Western governments that had been, in fact, consequences of not supporting the Zionist settlement plans.

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# COGNITIVE WARFARE AND METAPHORS: FRAMING CONFLICT IN THE MIND

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*Metaphors are not merely linguistic flourishes; they shape cognition, frame conflicts, and can influence perception at scale. Within the emerging arena of cognitive warfare – where the human mind is the primary battlefield – metaphors are “deployed” strategically to reframe reality, distort perception, and manipulate social consensus. The present narrative review explores the literature on metaphor theory and cognitive linguistics to understand how metaphors are weaponized in cognitive warfare. Furthermore, the implications for defense policy, the development of counter-metaphor strategies, as well as the ethical and legal considerations involved in this form of non-kinetic conflict are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** *metaphor in cognitive warfare; communication as a weapon; conflict framing; cognitive linguistics; conceptual system; source domain; target domain.*

## Introduction

The 21<sup>st</sup>-century battlespace has evolved beyond physical territory and kinetic engagements to include the minds and perceptions of individuals and societies. Within this context, cognitive warfare (CW), as a domain of conflict aimed at influencing perceptions, decision-making, and societal cohesion, has thus gained prominence, especially in modern hybrid conflicts. Rather than rely on kinetic force

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alone, cognitive warfare mainly targets thought and rationality. Language plays a pivotal role in this respect as both medium and a weapon of influence.

Considering the above-mentioned aspects, the present paper, which is a narrative review, is intended to explore the relationship between language, mind, and experience, offering a linguistic-cognitive perspective on cognitive warfare, focusing on metaphors and their role, if any, in this field. Thus, in the IMRaD format (University of Minnesota, 2024), (Aarhus University, 2025), we intend, by examining the scientific bases of metaphors, to find answers to the following main *research questions*:

- do metaphors function only as linguistic tools, or are they affecting the way people think/perceive, how they do it, and ultimately, how they would act, based on particular thoughts/perceptions?
- do metaphors play a role in the dynamics of cognitive warfare?
- what are the implications of the acknowledgement of metaphor role in cognitive warfare for defense policy and “counter-metaphor” strategies development?
- what are the main ethical and legal challenges related to this form of non-kinetic conflict?

In this context, we consider it important to provide several definitions of the two terms in the title, namely *cognitive warfare* and *metaphors*, mentioning that definitions are not yet standardized and that mainly NATO documents have been retained as relevant reference points for the CW concept.

Thus, according to NATO Allied Command Transformation, CW includes “the activities conducted in synchronization with other instruments of power, to affect attitudes and behaviors by influencing, protecting, and/or disrupting individual and group cognitions to gain an advantage. These activities vary greatly, and may encompass supporting or conflicting cultural or personalized components – social psychology, Game Theory, and ethics are all contributing factors” (NATO ACT 2023). Some other traits are mentioned as well, like the fact that it “focuses on attacking and degrading rationality, which can lead to exploitation of vulnerabilities and systemic weakening” as well as that “outside the battlefield, influence can also affect law, rule-of-order, and civil constructs” (NATO ACT n.d.), thereby underlining its potentiality to exploit non-combatant domains.

Moreover, the NATO ACT exploratory concept mentions vectors, enablers, and capabilities relevant to CW, as follows:

- *traditional* – broadcast and print mass media, as well as corporate, state and political entities;
- *existing technology* – social media platforms, big data, smart devices, gaming environments, and encrypted communication platforms, avatars, and virtual profiles;
- *emerging* – cutting-edge technologies encompassing synthetic media, AI-driven media, the immersive realm of Metaverse, and the concerning emergence of neuroweapons (NATO ACT 2023 in Deppe, C., Schaal, G.S., 2024).



In addition, the exploratory concept provides a list and description of the intended effects of cognitive warfare, mentioning impeding decision-making and disrupting the OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) loop, dividing and polarizing societies, weaponizing identity and, weaponizing narratives, impacting the will to fight (NATO ACT 2023 in Deppe, C., Schaal, G.S., 2024). Particularly important is the expansion of the concept of identity to encompass individuals' connections with others, namely national, cultural, and societal affiliations. In this regard, narratives can be related to historical memory and collective heritage, being employed, in this particular case, to alter the way individuals, communities, and nations perceive themselves, in order to align these perceptions to strategic objectives. In the same vein, the impact on the will to fight, in the context of cognitive warfare, highlights the fact that it “requires seamless synchronization and coordination to manipulate human cognition” (NATO ACT 2023 in Deppe, C., Schaal, G.S., 2024).

As for definitions, mention should be made that because of the young age of the concept, on the one hand, and of the complexity given by its interdisciplinarity, to which cutting-edge technologies are added, on the other hand, the concept has not been unitarily defined yet. However, regardless of the definition attempt, there are some common characteristics related to the alteration of cognition and the employment of specific technologies to achieve it. In this context, the concept of “cognitics” has also been advanced in the field of warfare, mainly referring to the relationship between the exploitation of rationality errors, the motivated influence, and cognitive disability (Claverie et al 2022). Thus, the main difference between the domains of psychological operations (PSYOPS) and CW, in terms of actual operations and other non-kinetic actions, have been highlighted as follows: the PSYOPS domain is related to “actions on beliefs, distorted perceptions, cultural illusion, anxieties and fears, personality weaknesses or strengths, repression, whereas the CW domain is related to action on cognition itself, through mechanisms such as sensory or perceptive overflow, attention saturation, tunneling of attention, judgement errors of judgement, and cognitive biases” (Claverie *et al.* 2022, 2-4).

As for *metaphors*, they are mainly known as “figures of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). Thus, metaphors function as comparisons between objects that are otherwise unrelated, as elements of different paradigms. Within metaphors, the qualities of one thing are figuratively transmuted to another. However, metaphors are not literary or linguistic devices. Given the interdependence between language and thought has been thoroughly documented, metaphors also play an important role in shaping cognition. In this context, “metaphor induces the hearer (or reader) to view a thing, state of affairs or whatever, as being like something else, by applying to the former linguistic expressions which are more normally employed in reference to the latter”



(Cruse 1986, 41). A metaphor is interpreted as such because there exists “an incongruity or inappropriateness” between the literal meaning and implied one, thus contributing to generating a certain perception (Cruse 1986, 42.).

## 1. Methods

To achieve the established aim of this paper, namely to explore the role of metaphors in cognitive warfare by examining the scientific bases of metaphors as not only linguistic and cognitive tools, the applications in cognitive warfare, as well as the implications for defense, we have developed a research protocol to synthesize findings from interdisciplinary fields. Thus, we have studied and coded information from documents (such as peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in scientific databases, defense concepts/strategy repositories, as well as other relevant literature published between 1970 and 2024), having in view the following domains: *cognitive linguistics* – with emphasis on metaphor theory; *cognitive studies* – including framing, priming, mapping, and persuasion; *military and strategic studies* – mainly from NATO; *communication studies* – particularly discourse analysis in political and military contexts. Moreover, we have also utilized ChatGPT to interrogate and clarify certain encountered concepts. Mention should be made, in this context, that, more often than not, upon verification, we identified some elements of incongruity between the “quoted” definitions or explanations and the indicated source. Following coding information, we have applied further selection criteria to streamline the synthesis, to provide examples, and to make it readable to not only experts, but also to the general public interested in the topic. Last but not least, we have focused on identifying certain suggested or documented response measures pertaining to defense policy or counter-metaphor strategies, as well as on discussing some ethical and legal considerations related to this form of non-kinetic conflict and the tools employed.

Taking into account the research questions, the paper is not mainly aimed at highlighting and addressing the gaps in knowledge, but at streamlining the information in the literature and raising the level of awareness in relation to the topic, so that resilience could be enhanced, especially under the circumstances of increasingly creative hybridity in the realm of warfare.

There are, of course, limitations to the research pertaining to the literature review, on condition of open-source documents, mainly available online, provided examples and response suggestions, which are assumed, considering the relative novelty of the topic, the access to documents, as well as the editorial standards related to the paper length. However, we have paid due attention to the presentation of the content to ensure clarity, accuracy, and consistency, while avoiding bias and promoting fairness and transparency.



## 2. Results

In what follows, we shall provide the outcomes of our research at both theoretical and practical levels, showing that metaphorical language plays a pivotal role in cognitive warfare.

### ***2.1. The Cognitive Function of Metaphors***

Cognitive studies investigate how people use concepts or conceptual categories in order to understand and interact with the world they live in. In this context, metaphors allow individuals to understand complex or novel situations by mapping them onto familiar schemata. “Schemata are truly the building blocks of cognition. They are fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends. Schemata are employed in the process of interpreting sensory data (both linguistic and nonlinguistic), in retrieving information from memory, in organizing actions, in determining goals and subgoals, in allocating resources, and, generally, in guiding the flow of processing in the system” (Rumelhart 1980, 33). Therefore, as “building blocks of cognition”, schemata simplify reality, set expectations, and organize memory. In this context, we have chosen to briefly present two theoretical frameworks we consider relevant to the topic, namely *Framing Theory (FT)* and *Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)*.

*Framing Theory*, introduced by Goffman (1974), is related to the fact that “Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organizational premises – sustained both in the mind and in activity – I call the frame of activity” (Goffman 1974, 247). Thus, while schemata represent types of activity, frames denote the subjects or referents within an activity. “Frames can represent types of person or other animate beings, ... or inanimate objects, ...or processes, ...or abstract concepts” (Fairclough 1999, 159). Therefore, people engage frames to ascribe meaning to their experience. According to Entman, “the concept of framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text. Analysis of frames illuminates the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted by the transfer (or communication) of information from one location – such as a speech, utterance, news report, or novel – to that consciousness (...) Framing essentially involves selection and salience” (Entman, 1993, 51-52). As for the framing, techniques and tools, metaphors have been identified as key to them (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). In fact, a conceptual idea can be framed by comparing it to something else, a process which also entails the mentioned selection and salience with regard to certain aspects of reality. By framing, some of them can be highlighted, while others can be downplayed.



*Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (CMT), developed mainly by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), revolves around the idea of *mapping*, entailing a *source domain* and a *target domain*, with conceptual metaphor thus becoming the basis of rational thinking with all the underlying processes. By mapping from a source domain to a target domain, complex ideas and abstract concepts can be easily understood, making use of more concrete, familiar domains. The mapping process also entails a relationship between the source and target. Moreover, metaphorical mapping is not random, reflecting underlying patterns in our thought and experience, which can be natural or social frameworks, such as those highlighted in framing theory. The most quoted example in this regard is that provided and discussed by Lakoff and Johnson, namely “Argument is war” (1980, 124). The source domain is represented by strategy, attack, defense, victory, and defeat, while the target domain is represented by plan, approach, persuasion, and counterargument. By mapping, we understand that an argument in a debate is like an attack in war. Therefore, winning an argument is like winning a war. Likewise, a source domain (war) can be mapped onto a target domain (terror, disease, corruption). Therefore, we have “war on terror/disease/corruption”. It has thus become obvious that we do not use metaphors just in language, shaping not only how we describe reality, but act in accordance to metaphors.

In this context, *cognitive studies* investigate how people use concepts or conceptual categories in order to understand and interact with the world they live in. Lakoff (1987) argues that *concepts* are mental representations of objects, entities and events kept in people’s memory. People transform thoughts into concepts and, subsequently into language, in order to interact properly with their companions or to adjust their behavior to the environment. Filtering information and sharing representations imply categorization, as the mental activity of grouping things together into conceptual categories or classes. Thus, “most categorization is automatic and unconscious, and if we become aware of it at all, it is only in problematic cases. In moving about the world, we automatically categorize people, animals, and physical objects, both natural and man-made. This sometimes leads to the impression that we just categorize things as they are, that things come in natural kinds, and that our categories of mind naturally fit the kinds of things there are in the world. But a large proportion of our categories are not categories of things; they are categories of abstract entities. We categorize events, actions, emotions, spatial relationships, social relationships, and abstract entities of an enormous range: governments, illnesses, and entities in both scientific and folk theories, like electrons and colds. Any adequate account of human thought must provide an accurate theory for all our categories, both concrete and abstract” (Lakoff 1987, 23).



Consequently, *cognitive linguistics* – a new approach to the study of language develops (in the 1970s) from the premise that language is embedded in cognition. One of the strongest assumptions underlying the field of cognitive linguistics belongs to Lakoff & Johnson (1980): “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Language and cognitive processing are closely interrelated in the human brain, which means that “language is governed by general cognitive principles, rather than by a special-purpose language model” (Croft & Cruse, 2004, i). From the above-presented aspects, that when individuals come into contact with things or facts from reality, they automatically tend to categorize them. Cognitive researchers argue that humans operate within scripts, frames and categories that help us organize experiences (including perceptions, knowledge, and attitudes), and make sense of what is happening around us.

Combining the knowledge provided by the two aforementioned theories, one can speak about the psychological effects of metaphoric framing. Metaphors operate below the level of conscious scrutiny, often shaping intuition and emotion. Studies in experimental psychology show that metaphorical framing can be used as a cognitive shortcut or can influence moral judgments, risk assessments, and political attitudes (Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). For example, framing corruption as a “virus” may entail defensive and recovering measures, whereas framing the experience of a disease like cancer as a “battle” may entail lack of strategy and guilt in case the person fails to recover. In narrative warfare, metaphors can set the stage for public interpretation of complex events, often simplifying moral ambiguities and creating affective resonance. Neuroscientific studies reveal that metaphorical framing engages brain regions associated with emotional processing, memory encoding, and moral judgment (Citron & Goldberg, 2014). This emotional resonance explains why metaphor-based propaganda often outperforms fact-based counter-narratives in persuasive power.

Moreover, while *framing* focuses on the way information is presented (*frame*), namely by highlighting certain aspects and while downplaying others, *priming* entails exposing the audience to specific stimuli in order to shape perceptions and elicit certain responses to meet the agenda. Priming refers to “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations (Iyengar *et al.*, 1987, 63, in Dietram *et al.*, 2007, 9-20). Priming is a tool employed to agenda setting extension, thus including new content, which is based on introduced considering the assumption that information processing is based on influenced both by memory models, on the one hand, and on the most accessible content, on the other hand. Therefore, *metaphors, mapping, framing, and priming are important tools not only in language, but also in cognition*. Thus, they have become key instruments in both hybrid and cognitive warfare.

## 2.2. *Metaphor as a Tool in Cognitive Warfare*

Having shown the importance of metaphors for cognition, as well as the relationship between them and mapping, framing, and priming, we can briefly explain how they can be employed in cognitive warfare to serve the strategic agenda. Considering that metaphor-driven framing becomes a subtle, but potent tool in both hybrid as well as cognitive warfare campaigns, we shall further will provide some examples of the key ways in which metaphors, along with framing and priming, can serve as tools for cognitive shaping. Mention must be made that the corpus of examples was drawn from the media, public discourses and documents, more broadly, from the public sphere, in order to capture representations that are socially circulated and publicly accessible.

- *Framing complex concepts or narratives*

As already mentioned, metaphors can be used to simplify abstract constructs, to make them more salient. Thus, disinformation/misinformation (American Psychological Association, n.d.) and propaganda are framed as contagious diseases, therefore the expressions “a virus of dis/misinformation”/“spread dis/misinformation”/“counter propaganda” (The Conversation, 2024) implicitly suggest that policy responses that mirror physical/healthcare/contagious threats are needed. Likewise, other more or less abstract constructs (e.g., terror/ism, corruption, disease, climate change, etc.) are framed as enemies in the battlefield. Therefore, strict or even extreme measures are required to resist to/combat them. The “war/battle on terror/corruption/drugs/Covid-19” phrases relate the concepts to warfare/time. In the same vein, “war on truth” suggests that truth itself is under siege, thereby legitimizing countermeasures such as censorship, surveillance, or counter-disinformation campaigns. Moreover, narrative environments can be framed as fragile systems needing regulations (e.g., “information ecosystem”, “cognitive pollution”) suggesting the necessity of normalization. Thus, in extreme situations, tactics pertaining to war become legitimized and/or normalized as absolutely necessary for survival (e.g., invasion, surveillance, extrajudicial measures, quarantine-like measures, containment, military force or pre-emptive cognitive interventions).

- *Priming emotional responses*

Metaphors engage moral and affective reasoning. Thus, war-related(like) metaphors (e.g., “battle against climate change”, “fight against terror”) invoke urgency and moral action. In the same vein, describing migration as a “flood” activates fear and a perceived loss of control.

- *Identity construction and polarization*

Using metaphors to cast certain groups, especially opponents, as “invaders”, “parasites”, “infestations”, “zombies”, identity and otherness are reinforced. Metaphors thus help dehumanize and polarize populations, creating in-groups and out-groups. Moral disengagement and even hate are elicited based on depriving



people of human traits. In the same vein, using metaphors belonging to the machine and AI paradigms while framing people, especially adversaries, as “programmed” or “algorithmically influenced”, further helps depersonalize them, thus facilitating digital or social engineering interventions.

- *Mapping*

As previously mentioned, mapping is involved in streamlining the information flow, understanding its impact, and adopting strategies to manage the complex situations. Thus, metaphors related to journey, framing a path, can be employed to help portraying a possible destination, making it thus easily accessible/more salient (e.g., “navigating change”, “mapping information”, “cognitive terrain mapping”). In the same vein, phrases like “building trust”, “strengthen partnership”, “building resilience”, “coalition of the willing” suggest collaboration and will to achieve a set goal, which can be genuine or belong to a specific agenda.

### ***2.3. Implications for Defense***

Having explained how metaphors can become tools in CW, as well as how framing, priming and mapping can be employed in CW to meet the agenda, we intend to highlight some of the implications of the acknowledgement of the role of metaphors in cognitive warfare for defense policy and counter-metaphor strategies.

- *Strategic implications*

Considering that the power of metaphors, in the context of CW, lies in the fact that they shape thought processes before scrutiny can be applied. Strategically deployed metaphors may be intended to root ideologies, justify violence, delegitimize institutions, etc. Thus, metaphors can be employed to undermine trust in governments, institutions, and leaders. Entailing a lot of war-related phrases, they can dilute the civil-military boundaries, since domestic, social or educational aspects can be portrayed security or defense priorities. In this context, mention should be made that, unlike real war, where attacks are not continuous, in CW, they are persistent and difficult to attribute, resulting in severe social damage, which can be too late perceived as such. Moreover, cutting-edge technology, mainly that embedding AI, amplifies the increasing actualization of CW.

- *Defense policy/strategy implications*

Under the circumstances of increasingly prominence and documentation of CW, defense policy must adapt, broadening its scope to encompass the concept of “cognitive security”. Actions in this regard have already been conducted, as is the mentioned case of NATO ACT developments in this field. Such initiatives like this can result in the reconceptualization of national security to include, for example, mental resilience as “critical infrastructure”. The reconceptualization can also entail a higher level of interagency coordination as well as an expanded mandate for the military in the cognitive domain, which may generate some ethical and legal



challenges, especially considering new norms to be adopted to regulate not only the use of AI-based and neuro/nano-technology, but also the prevention of cognitive domain weaponization.

- *Counter-metaphor strategies*

Given the strategies, techniques, and tools employed in CW, of which, more often than not, the subject is not aware, developing literacy in the field is required, so that, on the one hand, they could be easily detected by anyone, and, on the other hand, counter-metaphor strategies for minimizing cognitive distractions could be developed.

- *Framework for detection and counteraction*

Some of the frameworks include media literacy training, based on metaphor potential to contribute to narrative construction, to raise public awareness of metaphorical manipulation, linguistic scanning and analysis of the metaphors used in the media and social discourse to highlight how dominant metaphors are used to frame public discourse; frame mapping to detect shifts in perception over time, which will help the development of both new metaphor clusters and counter-metaphor strategies; reframe narratives to counter metaphors employed in hostile activities or in conflict exacerbation, namely reframing those containing war, disease, flood, wave, with the constructive ones, such as journey, ground, creativity (e.g., “migration wave”/“journey of resilience”; “battle on disease/war, etc.”/“journey into disease, etc.”; “lay ground for peace, cooperation, etc.”). Such strategies create space for different perspectives to coexist.

#### **2.4. Ethical and Legal Considerations**

The deliberate manipulation of cognition raises significant ethical and legal challenges (c.f. Miller, 2023). The weaponizing of metaphors should thus be a key concern, especially in democratic societies. The challenges are mainly related to the following aspects, some of which having been already mentioned. Thus, metaphors can contribute to creating detachment and lack moral accountability (e.g., “neutralizing targets”), especially by involving AI-enabled technologies. Moreover, they can contribute to dehumanization, by depicting individuals as less than human beings (e.g., “zombies”). Strategic metaphors can be persuasive and may backfire if perceived as propaganda. In this context, the thin line between persuasion and manipulation should be defined, as accurate as possible and oversight mechanisms should be regulated by clear norms. In the same vein, psychological operations should be strictly limited, both nationally and internationally. In this context, mention should be made there have been attempts, especially in democratic societies, including Romania, to develop regulations that also consider the definition of targets of such operations, especially under the circumstances that the balance between national security and civil liberties remains a challenge in developing appropriate cognitive defense strategies.



### 3. Discussion

We have organized this section in line with the research questions to present the main findings related to the following issues: metaphors are only linguistic tools or they are cognitive structures; the extent to which metaphors play a key role in CW; the acknowledgement of the role played by metaphors in CW have implications for defense policy and “counter-metaphor” strategies; and the ethical and legal challenges in this regard.

#### *3.1. Metaphors in language and cognition*

Linguistically, metaphors are comparisons between two classes of objects, without using prepositions such “like” or “as”. It means that metaphors do not directly suggest that an object/something is like something else, which would be a simile, but that an object is another (*e.g.*, “argument is war”). Metaphors are frequently used in everyday language, and, more often than not, users are unaware of the fact that a metaphor is employed. The structure of a metaphor entails both a relationship between two classes of objects and a difference that results in familiarity, clarity, explanation, and, finally, in meaning-making, especially in the case of complex or abstract constructs.

As they help understanding the reality, there is an evident relation between metaphors and cognition, a fact that has been documented by famous cognitive linguists like the ones quoted above. Broadly speaking, we understand the world by use of metaphors. Therefore, metaphors change the way we perceive reality, contributing to cognitive shaping. Mapping, framing and priming are added to metaphors to make the world easily understandable, to persuade or even manipulate people into a specific form of understanding and, consequently, acting, according to certain agendas. Thus, within the critical cognitive linguistic framework, metaphors can be analyzed as cognitive tools that, when integrated with security studies, become not only rhetorical devices, but also key components of strategic communication, shaping strategic narratives.

#### *3.2. Metaphors in CW*

Considering that metaphors are fundamental to both communication and cognition, they are instrumental in cognitive warfare by shaping how individuals perceive threats, evaluate actions, and form collective identities. Thus, metaphors can be easily weaponized to be employed in CW as subtle, yet powerful instruments of psychological influence. Their subtlety consists in the fact that they are often invisible, but profoundly influential. In cognitive warfare, they become operational tools that structure thought and behavior. Unlike overt propaganda, metaphorical framing operates at a subconscious level, reducing resistance and increasing



absorption. Taking into account the two discussed characteristics of framing, namely selection and salience, it has become obvious that once metaphors are embedded in public discourse, it is difficult for them to be displaced often acting mechanically. The mechanical and endurance components make them potent tools for long-term influence, especially when combined with AI-enabled technology, resulting in algorithmic amplification on digital platforms. Mention should be made, in this context, that AI networks can be weaponized themselves, by poisoning the databases used to train algorithms, AI being thus employed as an adaptive strategic weapon.

In strict connection to the above-mentioned aspects, we consider important to highlight the fact that metaphors can easily become entrenched. Thus, once a metaphor succeeds in dominating the discourse, alternative framings are increasingly difficult to introduce. The examples provided in the present paper are eloquent in this respect, especially those related to the idea of war, which make more constructive solutions appear naïve, ineffective, or even dystopic. In this context, another important observation is that the employment of metaphors in cognitive warfare is double-edged – they can ease the understanding of a problem and mobilization towards finding the appropriate response, while they can also constrain cognition, by entrenching ideologies, justifying violence, delegitimizing institutions, eroding trust, containing dissent etc. Therefore, the way metaphors are used is not just a linguistic concern, but also a matter of strategic importance.

### ***3.3. Metaphors and defense policy***

Understanding and critically analyzing metaphor usage is essential to responsibly approaching cognitive warfare. Having acknowledged the key role of metaphor in cognition as well as the mechanisms related to its usage in cognitive warfare, we have presented the main identified implications of such acknowledgement for defense policy along with some counter-metaphor strategies based on the available sources and provided examples. In this context, it is important to point out that understanding metaphorical mapping, framing and priming are also critical for modern defense.

Therefore, military planners and decision-makers should include training in metaphor literacy as well as metaphor analysis into their constant preoccupations. Additionally, metaphors should also be carefully considered while situational awareness-related processes are conducted, having in view the conflicts increasingly target the human mind, being mainly aimed at eroding trust, the human domain becoming thus the sixth domain in warfare (Le Guyader et al 2022, 1-5). Considering the amazing development of AI-enabled technology, as well as the possibility for it



to be easily weaponized, digital literacy also becomes crucial, although not enough in defense, especially in societies that preserve democracy, the rule of law, and sovereignty as core values. In this context, it is worth noting that metaphor analysis is interpretative and context-sensitive. Cultural variations in metaphor usage may complicate cross-border operations.

In addition, countering adversarial metaphors, employing counter-framing techniques, such as narrative inoculation or competing metaphor deployment, presents strategic dilemmas that are related to the risk of over-reliance on the power of metaphors. More precisely, repeated exposure to metaphor-laden narratives can shift public perception and prime behavior consistent with the adversarial metaphorical framing. In this context, more responsible metaphor use in policy discourse has been advocated for, based on metaphor audits, to detect cognitive vulnerabilities in target populations (Haiden 2023, 101-134).

All in all, CW represents a new and transformative domain of operations. That is why, equally transformative shifts should be conceptualized and subsequently operationalized in terms of defense strategies, policies and operations. By targeting the mind rather than the body, it demands integrated, adaptive, and ethically grounded responses.

### ***3.4. Ethical challenges***

Weaponizing of metaphors, as is the case of CW, raises both ethical and legal concerns, particularly in democratic societies that value freedom of thought and speech. Thus, appropriate oversight mechanisms should be in place to ensure transparency in terms of the fine line between persuasion, manipulation and influence, as well as the use of AI and other futuristic and sometimes mind-blowing technologies in this domain.

In the same vein, we consider that the preservation of our humanity is key, despite the undergoing conflicts and the rapid advancement of technology promises. Considering that CW mainly targets trust in oneself and in others, it can easily result in dehumanization and social isolation. That is why, we advocate for the adoption of clear legal norms in the field. In addition, taking into account that exposure period makes the difference between information/psychological warfare and cognitive warfare, we express our concern with regard to the cognitive conditions of the societies worldwide, which may become a serious threat in the future. More precisely, other types of warfare, which entail episodic activities, while in CW the exposure, helped by technology-enabled hyper-connectivity, is permanent, persistent and adaptively enhanced, in order to deny or degrade the cognition, which is a miraculous human characteristic.



## Conclusion

The present qualitative narrative review, presented in the IMRaD format, does not aim to cover the topic extensively, but rather to streamline the existing knowledge in the field and make it more accessible to the general public, including by providing examples considered relevant. Also, it has highlighted the main themes as they have resulted from the study of the literature. Furthermore, some challenges have been identified, especially related to the adoption of appropriate ethical and legal norms to deploy and counter metaphors in CW, while preserving both security and civil liberties that have been embedded in democratic societies.

Building on the present findings, future research could further investigate metaphorical framing, focusing on developing norms to operationalize metaphor in military contexts as well as metaphor resistance strategies. Moreover, the evolving potential of AI-enabled devices to become strategic weapons may be thoroughly examined in sync with technological advancements. Metaphors are not merely literary tools; they are integral to the processes through which individuals construct meaning and make decisions. Their influence is not always benign. However, within the context of cognitive warfare, metaphors function as tools of influence, capable of shaping perception and behavior on a large scale. Consequently, metaphors should be regarded as critical strategic assets in modern defense planning. An intriguing question that arises in this context is whether, when deployed as part of warfare strategies, metaphors affect only adversaries or whether they influence allies and domestic audiences as well.

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# THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN NUCLEAR DETERRENCE. HISTORY, APPLICATIONS AND THE FUTURE STRATEGIC BALANCE

*Mario MARINOV, PhD\**

*Artificial Intelligence is garnering an increasing interest for application within the complex and dynamic state of nuclear deterrence between major global powers. The latent implications of increased incorporation of fully or semi-autonomous functions into key sets of systems within nuclear deterrence capabilities hold the potential for both reinforcing and undermining strategic stability. The paper explores the role of the broad set of solutions falling under the auspices of the general and popularly adopted term of AI in the nuclear deterrence equilibrium with a baseline focus on the largest nuclear powers of the U.S.A., Russia, and China. The historical evolution of automation around the creation of effective deterrence during the Cold War is the first point of analysis in a process of historical deconstruction and extrapolation of key trends, historical understandings and the definition of vital layers of deterrence provision, which can be a subject of improvement through automation. Subsequently, the paper provides for the three general types of AI automation – rule-based AI systems, machine/deep learning and foundation models, and how each relates to specific elements or layers, such as early warning, tracking, response calculation, and targeting, as well as some of the associated challenges. Finally, the paper provides an analysis of the consequences for nuclear deterrence in the sense of probable areas of incorporation, a shifting centre of gravity in nuclear capabilities, and some prospective scenarios of AI integration in both offensive and defensive systems.*

**Keywords:** *AI; nuclear deterrence; nuclear weapons; AI nuclear nexus; strategic balance; U.S.A.; Russia; China.*

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*“Let a sword of Damocles hang over every head,  
and you will witness a miracle – all war will stop instantly”*

Alfred Nobel

## **Introduction**

Well into the third decade of the twenty-first century, “Artificial Intelligence” (AI) has perhaps become the defining buzzwords shaping nearly every level of society. From the lowest social organizational level concerning individual daily life and everyday enquiries to the larger and far more complex structures of the state and its operations, the word “AI” has come to dominate the discourse of current and future development. Within the sphere of nuclear deterrence, AI has been a variable expected with great trepidation for many decades – most often associated with artistic scenarios of the world’s end at the hands of a rogue artificial intelligence unleashing a nuclear holocaust upon humanity either due to its own malevolent designs or due to human hubris and culpability. The popular mind is full of such images, “Skynet”, “WORP” or “AM”, to name but a few. However, the technological “holy grail” of AI had remained elusive for decades and the proverbial AI apocalypse also faded into the background.

Amidst the background of the rapidly changing global security environment characterized by both renewed adversarial relations in a bipolar or tripolar system of security relations between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, and renewed dynamics in nuclear rearmament, the role and implications of the latest and significant new technological civilizational layer of AI has come to again be at the focal point of current and future security considerations.

The main subject of analysis in this paper is the strategic nuclear balance in the twenty-first century, with particular attention to how the object of examination is placed on the incorporation within the specific elements of nuclear deterrence and the broader nuclear balance of advanced autonomous and semi-autonomous data analyses, computation, modelling and machine thinking and learning methods. These technologies, often collectively, but somewhat erroneously, referred to as “Artificial Intelligence” or “AI”, are central to understanding how possible changes can be expected within the state of nuclear deterrence between the major global nuclear powers of the United States of America (U.S.A.), the Russian Federation (Russia) and the People’s Republic of China (China). Moreover, the question of the potential roles and scenarios of artificial intelligence within the elements that make up nuclear deterrence, including detection, tracking, target selection and guidance, will be explored. A broader extrapolation is also made in relation to



possible future developments in both offensive and defensive strategic potential, as well as the implications of large-scale horizontal and vertical integration of AI within the broader strategic nuclear balance. To achieve this, the history and general understanding of automation as part of nuclear deterrence is examined, with the subsequent examination of different contemporary approaches and models of AI.

Within the field of scientific research, the topic of AI and nuclear deterrence has gained increasing attention for less than a decade, concurrent with both the ardent advances made in AI technology and the general state of renewed nuclear rearmament and deterioration of security relations between the major powers. Between 2018 and 2019, the first set of key reports were released into the potential impact of AI on nuclear deterrence – Michael C. Horowitz in “The Promise and Peril of Artificial Intelligence: Understanding the Impact on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk”, provided the first contemporary systematization of AI and nuclear stability, with a focus on the duality of both stabilizing and destabilizing effects, as well as separate fields of AI implementation. Around the same time, Edward Geist and Andrew J. Lohn’s RAND Corporation report, “How Might Artificial Intelligence Affect the Risk of Nuclear War?” (2018), brought forward the possible future escalation pathways under the influence of expanded AI capability up to the year 2040 from the results of a series of workshops; in the 2019 SIPRI publication “The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Strategic Stability and Nuclear Risk”, three articles by authors Vincent Boulanin, John Borrie, Page Stoutland and Petr Topychkanov present a comprehensive review of the historical evolution of automation in nuclear deterrence, the future of machine learning and autonomy in nuclear weapon systems and the potential future evolution of both the US and Russian nuclear arsenals. Concurrently, similar publications were produced elsewhere, such as the 2019 Russian International Affairs Council report “Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear Weapons” by Dmitriy Stefanovich, which puts an accent on optimization and resilience creation in the Russian nuclear forces, but also the risks of escalation and vulnerability. It is reasonable to assume, as is even pointed out in some of the aforementioned literature, that serious consideration, research and even prototyping began long before the publicly released research, and more so as a continuation of Cold War-era efforts at automation with the added enabler of early modern AI technologies.

Between 2022 and 2025, the amount of research produced significantly increased across all major actors. Scholarly scientific discussions focused on whether AI might reinforce or degrade nuclear deterrence, with a broader consensus emerging that while risks are probable, they remain largely manageable. Consensus appears also on the topic of retaining the critical approach of “human-in-the-loop” in any future reconfiguration of future nuclear strike potential with the integration of AI, which is also enforced by official statements of involved state actors. During this same period and with a higher degree of importance, certain divergences in



national approaches can be observed – in U.S. and Western literature, AI is viewed as a capability enhancer to be intertwined within existing systemic layers in order to increase efficiency at key stages of deterrence. Furthermore, a major focus is placed on the coalescence of AI in the nuclear security field with AI capabilities in the other military fields, such as the conventional and cyber, into a common future security paradigm. Whereas in the Russian and Chinese approaches the term “informatization” (информатизация/信息化) of war/ or warfare has gained greater and greater traction, whereby the entirety of the concept of military capabilities, combined with other levers of power assertion (informational, political, economic, financial, demographic), are to be fully transformed into a wholly new structure of state power potential under the influence of technologies such as AI and where the integration of information networks and their operations will be key.

At present, the published efforts at AI integration into nuclear weapons systems showcase integration into the lower systemic levels of unit maintenance, logistics and administration management with a near-term goal of communication and technical support optimization. The Russian approach further takes into account the peculiarities of historical security concerns, such as the perceived threats of strategic missile defense and the vulnerabilities to a decapitation strike combined with conventional and other asymmetric methods. As such, full automation at certain systemic levels to ensure second-strike capability are viewed positively in Russian discourse. However, of note is the general realization that the capabilities of the Russian Federation are limited when compared to those of the U.S.A. and China, which already have a head start in AI technologies, and thus a primary focus is placed on finding solutions to breach existing gaps or to ensure the strategic balance through other means. In 2025, the terminology of the “AI-Nuclear Nexus” has appeared, based on the CNAS report by Jacob Stokes et. al. “Averting AI Armageddon: U.S.- China-Russia Rivalry at the Nexus of Nuclear Weapons and Artificial Intelligence” and has begun to see wider adoption in policy and research papers. As a cumulative and overarching term, the AI-nuclear nexus encompasses the convergence of artificial intelligence technologies with nuclear weapons systems, nuclear strategy, and the operational and strategic infrastructure that underpins nuclear deterrence. The term includes how AI may be integrated into functions such as nuclear command, control, communications, and intelligence (NC3), early warning, target verification, risk assessment, logistics, and decision-support. Further, the prospects of how AI might alter the larger strategic nuclear balance, compress decision timelines, increase ambiguity or false alarms and how the adoption of AI in conventional military systems could become entangled with nuclear risk are encompassed within.

This paper employs a qualitative, concept-driven methodology to investigate the evolving relationship between artificial intelligence and nuclear deterrence. It begins by outlining the foundational concepts of deterrence and situating them within their



historical trajectory, with particular attention to prior phases of automation in nuclear command, control, and related subsystems. Next, the study surveys and classifies contemporary forms of AI according to their underlying methods and capabilities, producing a structured typology. Each AI type is correspondingly mapped onto specific segments of the larger deterrence system to evaluate potential points of integration and impact. On this basis, the study extrapolates how AI integration may alter deterrence dynamics by reshaping stability, survivability, and escalation thresholds. The analysis culminates in a set of forward-looking scenarios, including AI-enabled offensive advantages, the acquisition of an edge in missile defense capabilities via AI integration and the strengthening of deterrence through defensive reinforcement, as well as the destabilizing implications of a major AI capability gap. Throughout, the research relies on secondary sources drawn from strategic studies, historical case analyses, and policy-oriented reports from institutions such as RAND, SIPRI and the Valdai Club, as well as military publications and journals, such as the Russian “Military Thinking”, ensuring a triangulation of conceptual, empirical, and policy perspectives.

Several considerations and limitations in the scope of the paper are necessary. When addressing the subject of nuclear weapons systems and the general topic of nuclear deterrence, it must be acknowledged that the sole utilization of public sources has the implicit condition of outdated information. As strategic nuclear power remains one of the primary tools of ensuring the survival of the state both research and actionable projects are likely to far outpace publicly available information. Consequently, published research should be viewed as affirmation of already existing trends and processes, which have taken place or are taking place now. The role of AI in nuclear deterrence should be viewed through the prism of a single continuing process of expanding the offensive and defensive nuclear potential of the state through automation of processes and subsystems, which has been ongoing since the Cold War and with AI being the next logical step. In terms of the examined scope of nuclear deterrence, the research is focused on the U.S.A., Russia, and China as the primary subject of interest and study due to the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of their nuclear arsenals, as well the underlying potential and intent to integrate AI within the foreseeable future. China is added to the historical and traditional strategic nuclear balance between the U.S.A. and Russia due to both the strides made in developing AI technology and the efforts placed in expanding its nuclear arsenal, which has significantly expanded both in its size and technological sophistication. Regarding the literature base, the paper draws primarily from sources in the English and Russian languages, as the nature of security-related processes within China, aside from the exponential language barrier, offer few publicly available insights. Finally, the paper examines the role of AI in nuclear deterrence chiefly within the context of the offensive and defensive nuclear



balance, thus excluding the discourse on the risks that AI integration poses to nuclear deterrence, when considering both the nuclear and the conventional domains and their interplay with nuclear stability.

## 1. The Historical Context of Automation in Nuclear Deterrence

The integration of semi- or fully-automated solutions into the nuclear deterrence equation is not a novelty of the modern digital era, but a long historical process, which has in fact been a key facilitator of effective deterrence for decades, dating back to the Cold War. To better understand and thus analyse future trends of integration of AI methods, the historical considerations surrounding nuclear deterrence and automation of processes must be considered first.

At its core, “nuclear deterrence” refers to a condition of strategic balance between given nuclear powers, where the possession and credible threat of employing nuclear weapons, particularly strategic ones, prevents one side from initiating large-scale aggression due to the anticipated costs of retaliation outweighing the potential gains. A credible and effective state of deterrence is maintained through a number of factors, such as a survivable and attritable arsenal, providing an assured second-strike capability. Historically, effective deterrence has evolved to a state of strategic nuclear balance in the system of security relations between a set of nation states, encompassing key qualitative and quantitative characteristics of nuclear power.

At its core, a diverse and quantitatively sufficient strategic nuclear arsenal, comprising a nuclear triad of land, sea and air-based strategic nuclear assets, ensures a sufficient second-strike capability, thereby decreasing the possibility of a decapitation strike. The specific doctrinal characteristics of a nuclear triad encompassing launch platforms, be they hardened silos, dispersed mobile launchers, missile-carrying submarines in protected bastions and in undisclosed locations, or strategic bombers in dispersed airfields and constant patrols, provide the conditions for an effective deterrence. Similarly, the technological sophistication of nuclear warhead carriers themselves – intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), (submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and air-launched cruise missiles (ACMs), through the use of multiple independent warheads, decoys, penetration aids, active manoeuvring capabilities, or electronic countermeasures, further ensures a sufficient retaliatory response. In quantitative terms, the strategic strike potential of the nuclear triad must be available in sufficient numbers, dispersed and protected, to ensure that even if any given launch platform or a group of platforms is disabled, a credible retaliatory capability remains intact, to retaliate and incur unacceptable losses to the adversary. Whilst the nuclear triad captures in equal parts public attention, strategic discourse and past treaty regulations, the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence encompasses a broader set of systemic functions and further depends on sophisticated supporting



systems that enable detection, tracking, communication, and targeting capabilities. These systems form the complex architecture of Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications (NC3), which serves as the critical link between launch authority and deployed nuclear forces. The NC3 system performs several fundamental functions: detection, tracking, warning and attack characterization in addition to the combat use of nuclear weapons, including the facilitation of decision-making procedures, preparation of launch orders, and their transmission to the implementation level (Yarynich 2003, 17, US Department of Defense 2020). Throughout the Cold War and the technological evolution of nuclear arsenals, significant efforts were concentrated on enhancing the NC3 process, encompassing both the ability to detect an incoming attack and launch a retaliatory strike, as well as the ability to coordinate defensive measures. From an early stage, these advancements reached towards semi-automated solutions.

### ***1.1. The First Large-Scale Achievement in Automation. The Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) System***

The Semi-Automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) system, developed during the 1950s and deployed in 1963, represented the first large-scale integration of automation and computing technology into strategic defense operations and nuclear deterrence. SAGE emerged from the chief nuclear attack vector of the time, namely strategic bombers, and both the valid and invalid concerns regarding the Soviet Union's potential for bomber-based nuclear strikes (Boulainin, et al. 2019, 44). The exposure of U.S. bombers stationed on strategic airbases, and the inadequacies of existing air defense systems to handle interception on the strategic level, specifically high-speed interception, low-altitude radar coverage, and complex air tracking, led to the demand for a vast undertaking to improve U.S. defense capabilities. The system integrated a network of hundreds of radar stations across North America, with twenty-four direction centers and three combat centers with centralized data processing facilities powered by the IBM AN/FSQ-7 computer systems – among the largest discrete component computers ever constructed. (MITRE Partnership Network n.d.).

SAGE's operational concept pioneered many principles that would later become standard in subsequent nuclear automation systems. The system automatically processed raw radar data to develop target tracking solutions, calculated intercept solutions, and transmitted engagement commands to defense sites via teleprinter. Human operators retained ultimate authority over engagement decisions, however they operated within an automated framework that dramatically enhanced their situational awareness and overall response capabilities (Tobey 1959). By the time the system matured in the early 1960s, with the corresponding ground infrastructure and computing capacities becoming available, the strategic bomber had given way



to the intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and later on also to the submarine-based ballistic missile (SLBM), thus rendering an extensive air tracking and direction system increasingly redundant (Boulanin, et al. 2019, 44). Regardless, the principles and capability enablers of an automated system would be applied in the subsequent evolution of NC3 during the missile era.

### ***1.2. Automation in NC3. The Strategic Automated Command and Control System (SACCS)***

The introduction of ICBMs and SLBMs created the complex conditions of greatly decreased warning times in case of nuclear escalation. Moreover, the lack of effective countermeasures at the time, ensured that any massive attack would result in equally devastating consequences in terms of remaining retaliatory response instruments. Thus, both U.S. and Soviet nuclear doctrines adjusted in the 1960s to include the shortened decision-making timelines of potential nuclear escalation. The emergence of launch-on-warning strategies in both the United States and the Soviet Union highlighted the necessity of automated and semi-automated systems to strengthen early-warning reliability, ensuring decision makers received information promptly and gained crucial time to authorize the launch of nuclear countermeasures (Boulanin, et al. 2019, 44).

Within the evolution of U.S. nuclear deterrence capabilities, a critical stage was the implementation of automation on a system-wide level in NC3. The overarching system of the Strategic Automated Command and Control System (SACCS) achieved operational capability on January 1, 1968. SACCS provided the primary network for transmitting Emergency Action Messages (EAMs) between the National Command Authority and strategic nuclear forces, which included all elements of the nuclear triad – ICBMs, SSBNs and nuclear bombers. The system managed critical secure communications for force status monitoring, intelligence distribution, strategic planning, and post-strike damage assessment functions essential to nuclear operations. Unlike SAGE's strategic air defense mission, SACCS operated at the apex of nuclear decision-making, serving as a processing and distribution node for sensitive information and the coordination of nuclear response options. The system's hierarchical processor architecture and secure communication protocols established templates for subsequent nuclear command systems (Federation of Atomic Scientists 1999, Schance 1998).

SACCS innovations in automated message processing and secure communications became foundational elements of modern NC3 systems. The system's ability to provide full-duplex, secure data communications across dozens of active nodes illustrated the scale and complexity of nuclear command networks. Furthermore, the introduction of SACCS reinforced deterrence at a crucial stage of the Cold War when strategic offensive nuclear arsenals were vastly expanding and



the offensive potential was greatly improved through diverse technical solutions such as enhanced targeting, multiple warheads and decoy deployment.

### ***1.3. Fail-Deadly. Automation of Retaliation and the Soviet “Dead Hand” System***

At the pinnacle of Cold War-era developments lies the Soviet fail-deadly system, often referred to as “Dead Hand” or “Perimetr”, although the actual designation is unknown and whether “Perimetr” is the designation of a subcomponent or the entire system (Boulanin, et al. 2019). Developed during the 1970s and reported to have achieved operational status around 1985, Perimetr encompasses a vertically multilayered system within Soviet and later Russian offensive nuclear strike capabilities. The existence and purpose of Perimetr have been publicly declared (Boulanin, et al. 2019, 72), namely to ensure a retaliatory capability in conditions of degraded command and control, including those arising from a decapitation strike on the political and military leadership. The system encompasses an array of dispersed environmental sensors – seismic, radiation, light and pressure; connectivity checks – whether command and control function remains with designated political and military decision-making centres; as well as inputs from the larger space and land-based detection and tracking infrastructure (Horowitz, Scharre and Velez-Green 2019, 17). The purpose of the sensory layer of the system is to detect if an anomaly has occurred, i.e. a nuclear attack, whether occurring in real time or having already taken place, and to superimpose it with the eventuality and conditionalities of loss of command links and lack of corresponding retaliatory strike commands (Schwartz and Horowitz 2025, 2). Furthermore, the system features an automated signal subsystem, whose primary objective is to distribute launch commands to existing or remaining offensive nuclear assets, thereby enabling a retaliatory second-strike capability. An element of the signal system, namely the contemporary Sirena-M missile system, is publicly acknowledged and has the objective to conduct a launch over Russian territory when activated and transmitting launch orders to nuclear assets whilst in flight. There are numerous ambiguities and uncertainties in relation to Perimetr, particularly concerning its precise level of automation, system architecture and operational modes. A logical supposition is that Perimetr has several modes of operation, which can be activated depending on the general state of the security situation, which range in the level of automation of processes and the degree of human control – from a purely sensory network, which provides additional input to the traditional human-centric chain of retaliatory escalation to a semi-autonomous or fully autonomous detection, tracking, targeting and launch system, which can theoretically bypass different levels of higher and lower commands, if the programmed conditions are met. Considering the numerous instances of automated system failures throughout the Cold War, the introduction of Perimetr at a time of



extreme tension preconditions the existence of either a very robust automated system of checks, or a final “human-in-the-loop” decision making mechanism. Overall, the standout feature of the system is apparent, to ensure second-strike capability under conditions of extreme degradation through a reliance of numerous robust, diverse and dispersed component subsystems, whose information input feeds through numerous verification pathways into a final automated launch solution. Thus, effective nuclear deterrence is achieved through an insurmountable obstacle to any type of first-strike by ensuring that the baseline conditions (loss of leadership combined with multiple sensory confirmations of an attack) would lead to automatic retaliation. Conversely, the interpretation and claim can also be placed forward that the heightened tensions of the 1980s and a perceived capability gap, created the conditions where one side would pursue the creation of a system, whose overreliance on automation could critically endanger deterrence in the case of a technical malfunction or as a result coerce an adversary to pre-empt the system’s completion. Notwithstanding the peculiarities of historical security debates between the U.S.A. and Russia, Perimetr has never publicly entered the realm of discussion and treaty regulation.

For effectiveness, the vastness and complexity of the numerous subsystemic components encompassing and pertaining to nuclear deterrence require the introduction of technical solutions, which logically raised questions regarding varying degrees of automation. Overall, automation of processes during the Cold War was vital to achieving effective deterrence, which, in large part, has relied on and continues to rely on effective detection and early warning, as well as resilient NC3 capabilities. The introduction of automated solutions reinforced the belief that a surprise nuclear first strike could not be effectively achieved and, as in the case of the Dead Hand/Perimetr system, that retaliatory options could remain functional even in case of a decapitation strike. However, the centralization of information streams and processing into singular command and control systems with a large degree of automation predisposed risks and failures, which gave rise to several false-alarm incidents, such as in 1979 and 1980 in the U.S. with NORAD providing false alerts of an imminent attack, and the 1983 incident in the Soviet early-warning system, which similarly provided a false output of incoming U.S. missiles (Boulainin, et al. 2019, 46). It should be noted, however, that such incidents are often historically portrayed out of their original proportions, often to underline the theme of danger stemming from nuclear weapons and the integration of automated systems. In reality, by the time of the listed incidents - and throughout the entirety of the processes of system automation during the Cold War - a critical understanding was reached by both sides for the necessity of “human-in-the-loop” checks and controls, implemented not only at a single level but across numerous hierarchical levels within NC3. This understanding, underlined by some of the technical faults encountered in automated systems, remains in force to this day. Throughout the Cold War, more expansive



levels of automation could potentially have been reached or sought after within several systems. One example is the early Cold War concepts for autonomous intercontinental bombers and cruise missiles, such as the U.S. SLAM and Soviet Burya projects, which could have required on-board fully automated processes (Geist 2023, 70). Another is the U.S. missile defense project Star Wars, which, due to its scale, complexity and technical challenges associated with combined ground- and space-based missile targeting and interception would also have required expansive autonomous modes for rapidly detecting, targeting and neutralizing ballistic missiles in quick succession and in a very limited timeframe.

In the contemporary era, the evolution of different AI-thinking approaches and their translation into a specific set of AI models possesses a vastly expanded transformative potential for the different elements of nuclear deterrence – either through incorporation into known subsystems encompassing NC3 or through enablement of novel capabilities in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). Problems encountered throughout the Cold War and later, which were insurmountable due to the level of processing power required and the complexity of processes could now be easily resolvable and could become pathways to a fundamentally altered landscape of nuclear deterrence.

## **2. Advances in Artificial Intelligence System Types and Models**

Historically, automation provided solutions and improvements for key processes related to nuclear deterrence; however, past systems relied on simplified solutions limited by processing and computing power, providing only limited output to human operators. Revolutionary developments in digital technologies have brought about the prospects of significant changes in a variety of systems, ranging from baseline improvements to existing systems, such as early warning and tracking, to entirely new capabilities in detection, targeting, and simulation. The advances made in modern AI technologies and their further implementation in the nuclear deterrence equation depends on the core understanding and differentiation of the capabilities they afford, which can be subdivided into the different AI approaches, based on the technical methods used to input and process information and the quality of outputs, as well as the different AI models, which are built upon these approaches, and which encompass larger capabilities pertaining to the range of possible functions and quality of outputs.

### ***2.1. AI Approaches***

Artificial intelligence (AI) is often used to describe a wide variety of computational methods and approaches designed to enable machine-based systems to carry out tasks that would otherwise be assigned to humans. Such tasks include



pattern recognition, natural language processing, environmental perception through computer vision, learning from prior experience, reasoning, and taking action. AI systems function in completing set tasks by inferring output from the received inputs - these outputs can be predictions, generated content, recommendations, or decisions. AI systems are generally developed through rule-based approaches and machine learning, including deep learning (Chernavskikh 2024, 2). These approaches give rise to several model types, most notably classification models, analytic and predictive models, and generative AI models (Stokes, et al. 2025, 2). Each AI approach and AI model offers certain capability enablers in the field of nuclear deterrence, and it is the often-accepted method of discussion in policy and research papers of expected transformative processes to occur in the future.

A **rule-based AI system** is an artificial intelligence approach in which decision-making or inference is governed by a set of explicitly codified rules, most often a form of “if  $x$  input or condition is met”, “then provide  $y$  output”. The system relies on a knowledge base of information and rules in addition to an inference engine to evaluate conditions and triggers for actions. It does not learn from data in the sense of updating rules automatically (though rules can be modified by human input), and it is usually deterministic – for a given input, if a rule’s conditions are met, the outcome is fixed by the rule (Deepgram 2025, Science Direct n.d.). Rule-based AI is the longest-standing approach in AI due to its simplicity and has been a part of NC3 for decades, with Cold War systems such as SACCS and Perimetr being such types of “AI”. In the current era, numerous elements of nuclear deterrence incorporate rule-based AI to provide outputs. For instance, missile early-warning systems utilize rule-based AI to detect ballistic missile launches and track their trajectories through ground- and space-based sensors. Beyond early detection, rule-based AI also plays a role in automated, secure communications, ensuring the rapid and reliable transmission of launch directives, emergency action messages in the event of a nuclear strike or retargeting commands inflight (Horowitz, Scharre and Velez-Green 2019, 15). In addition, rule-based AI applications extend to supporting fast and precise missile targeting, as well as improving missile guidance systems, thereby enhancing both the responsiveness and effectiveness of nuclear command and control (Chernavskikh 2024, 2, Horowitz, Scharre and Velez-Green 2019). Rule-based AI systems provide for predictable and consistent functionality, but suffer in terms of the limits of the core databases provided and the set rules, which would require constant updating by human operators. In the conditions of nuclear deterrence, rule-based AI is a core functionality in several layers, chiefly in detection and early warning, but also in communication, with its inherent redundancy in checks providing for greatly decreased chances of false-positives and misinterpretation of information (Protasov, Shirmanov and Radomanov 2023).



An improvement over rule-based AI, **Machine Learning (ML)** approaches, as well as expanded **Deep Learning (DL)**, provide for expanded potential capabilities. Machine learning refers to methods that enable computers to improve performance on tasks through experience, without being explicitly programmed for each outcome (Mitchell 1997, 2). ML systems include the iterative application of mathematical algorithms to datasets in order to find statistical patterns and reach required outputs. The statistical patterns, once created, form the fundamental basis of the ML system, which can then be applied in analyzing new data and providing output through inference (Chernavskikh 2024, 3).

Within the broader field of ML, deep learning represents a subset of techniques that employ multilayered neural networks to acquire hierarchical data representations and abstractions (LeCun, Bengio and Hinton 2015, 436–444, Goodfellow, Bengio and Courville 2016, 2). These architectures allow systems to perform highly complex tasks faster and can capture more intricate statistical relationships, such as computer vision, natural language processing, signal recognition, and data fusion (Chernavskikh 2024, 3). ML and DL are relatively new technologies, even though conceptually present even during the Cold War. The advances offered are substantial, specifically in the several layers of nuclear deterrence connected with processing vast amounts of sensory data and the construction of discernible patterns within – recognition and classification of objects based on a diverse set of input data, such as radar, visual and infrared feeds, which can allow for the prompt classification of objects such as mobile launchers or missiles in-flight and differentiation between warheads and decoys. To an even greater extent, the differentiation and classification of objects based on sensory data, such as acoustic or electromagnetic signatures, offers the ability to provide pinpointing of nuclear systems such as SSBNs on a limited subset of data (Boulanin, et al. 2019).

## **2.2. AI Models**

Rule-based, machine learning, and deep learning approaches in AI systems represent successive stages in the application of artificial intelligence into specific models, each with implications for nuclear deterrence. Rule-based systems, with their rigidly encoded logic, underpin earlier applications such as missile early-warning systems and secure transmission of launch orders. ML, by contrast, *enables analytic and predictive models* that can learn from both established databases and real-time data inputs, allowing the fusion of streams of intelligence into a real-time common operating picture (COP)/common intelligence picture (CIP) (Stokes, et al. 2025, 2). Applied to nuclear deterrence, such systems could enhance situational awareness, threat assessment, and forecasting; however, they also risk overwhelming decision-makers or accelerating escalation cycles. DL expands these possibilities further



by powering both **classification models**, which can identify objects, signals, or patterns from sensor data relevant to missile tracking and intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting (ISR-T), and **predictive models** that could refine early-warning, tracking or targeting processes. More recently, AI has introduced **generative models** capable of creating new content, such as text, imagery, simulations, or even adaptive so-called “AI advisors”, which offer the possibility of real-time AI assistance in developing nuclear response options or simulating adversary strategies (Stokes, et al. 2025, 2-3). **Foundation models** represent a further technological advancement. Enabled with the introduction of transformer architectures since 2017, these large-scale, pre-trained deep learning systems can process massive quantities of multimodal data, capture complex relationships, and then be fine-tuned to specialize in specific domains. The flexibility of foundation models allows integration across classification, predictive, and generative functions, with potential applications ranging from advanced ISR-T to strategic planning simulations. However, their reliance on extensive datasets, computationally intensive training, and susceptibility to produce erroneous data, false outputs and a known tendency to “hallucinate”, introduces novel risks in potential integration within nuclear deterrence processes, raising concerns about reliability, control, and the erosion of deliberate human oversight in the most sensitive of contexts, including the possible emergence of “black box” processes beyond the full knowledge or awareness of human operators (Chernavskikh 2024, 4, Protasov, Shirmanov and Radomanov 2023).

### 3. Artificial Intelligence in Modern and Future Nuclear Deterrence

Building on historical trends in the automation of vital functions of deterrence enabling processes, and considering the contemporary set of AI capabilities being offered, the following chapter examines some of the approaches of AI implementation into the larger nuclear balance and explores the evolution of the impending AI-nuclear nexus. Two specific subsets or vectors of development are presented – the more probable, relating to low-risk and attainable points of AI integration in the near future, which could have a limited impact on deterrence; the less probable, pertaining to two possible scenarios of expansive AI integration into either strategic offensive strike potential or strategic defensive capabilities (i.e. missile defense). Both scenarios, however, are examined as possessing a far greater degree of negative potential in undermining future deterrence over the medium to long term.

In the assessment of current developments, scientific thought and research being publicly disseminated, the strive towards integration of AI is widely recognized as a necessary advancement, with the key limitations of maintaining established “human in the loop” controls. Within Western literature, near-term applications



of AI are seen as a continuation of preceding efforts, namely the incorporation of improvements to NC3 and ISR-T subsystems, where AI could serve as a significant capability enhancer, with a future set of capability enablement, once AI technologies have matured enough and have been tested within deterrence architecture. More specifically, focus is placed on improving ISR-T capabilities through a fusion of sensor data within AI matrices, thereby providing human operators with a more precise overall picture at expedited timeframes. Thus, the detection, early warning and response chains could be vastly improved, reinforcing deterrence. Furthermore, complex predictive and simulation AI models are seen as an improved measure to provide simulation studies and, thus, test both hypothetical adversary capabilities, but more importantly, own response measures (Boulanin, et al. 2019, Horowitz, Scharre and Velez-Green 2019, Stokes, et al. 2025). Overall, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into nuclear deterrence systems presents a complex array of both stabilising and destabilising effects, which together fundamentally challenge traditional deterrence paradigms. In one subset of examined functions of nuclear deterrence, AI possesses significant transformative potential for ISR-T, as well as NC3 capabilities, enhancing early warning, threat detection, and decision support. By processing vast and complex flows of sensor data rapidly and with greater accuracy, AI can reduce false alarms and bolster the reliability of second-strike capabilities, thereby strengthening deterrence credibility (Chernavskikh 2024, Schwartz and Horowitz 2025). However, the compression of decision-making cycles caused by AI acceleration poses serious risks, especially in the conditions of a “launch on warning” posture.

In the offensive side of the AI-nuclear nexus, the prospects for integrating AI within specific platforms and delivery systems are examined. Specifically, within Russian military thought and theory, the aspects of semi- or fully autonomous AI-driven systems are placed as focal points of future deterrence. This is particularly evident within the operations of certain systems such as the 9M39 Poseidon unmanned underwater nuclear-powered strategic nuclear system and the prospective 9M730 Burevestnik intercontinental nuclear-powered cruise missile – with both systems projected to have varying degrees of automation (Fatter 2020). Russian strategic thinking views such systems as affording an assured second-strike capability in the context of potential degradation of the effectiveness of the traditional nuclear triad, and the implementation of AI technologies is seen as a key enabler.

Within the more mundane aspects of nuclear deterrence and nuclear forces operations, the permeation of AI technologies is also observed. In the context of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces, the complexity of introduced modern systems places the requirements for high-quality technical support, with the reliability of new systems not significantly reducing maintenance demands or failures, which in turn increases workload on support officers and technicians. With the complexity



of systems increasing exponentially, both horizontally and vertically within the force structure and beyond to other connected sectors, the day-to-day operations and reliability of nuclear deterrence forces are placed under increased strain. Thus, AI automation is presented as a necessary step to maintaining readiness under heavy informational and operational burdens. The proposed Technical Support System (TCO), which appears to be at a certain limited levels of introduction includes AI process integration across management organs (control points, command structures), automated command-and-control (C2) systems, support units, and extending to the demands forwarded to defense industry enterprises with the main goal being to maintain readiness of missile units by ensuring the supply of technical components, data, instructions, reports of problems and the communication of changing operational requirements (Skiba, Kovalev and Brizhan 2022).

### ***3.1. Strategic Offensive and Defensive AI Dominance***

Beyond the probable scenarios of AI implementation previously discussed, several others are also presented. The scenarios take the assumption of expansive AI integration across multiple system levels and the handing of either direct control or the placement of extreme trust in AI proposed solutions. Both scenarios presented would have extremely detrimental effects for nuclear deterrence, as they would constitute an entirely new centre of gravity within the strategic nuclear balance. Perceived superiority in offensive and/or defensive capabilities could enable a potential effective first-strike scenario or could elicit adversaries to conduct pre-emptive strikes. The broader scientific consensus opposes the proposed scenarios, as they would, as previously stated, lead to extreme, unpredictable, and difficult-to-manage changes in the nuclear balance and the erosion of deterrence.

In the first scenario centred on an AI-driven offensive edge, the prospects for an effective first-strike scenario are explored. Under this scenario, AI is utilized to provide solutions where the entirety or vast majority of an adversary's retaliatory potential, both conventional and nuclear, is neutralized, the so-called "splendid first strike" (Geist 2023, 193). AI is explored as an instrument, integrated across NC3 and ISR-T architectures, which can significantly degrade the survivability of an adversary's retaliatory capacity. An example, often provided, is the theoretical ability for AI-driven processes to fuse vast amounts of incomplete or otherwise ambiguous sensory data to detect and track the locations of highly survivable assets such as SSBNs or ICBM transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) and, thus, provide location and targeting solutions for their neutralization in a coordinated strike (Chernavskikh 2024, 5, Johnson, Inadvertent escalation in the age of intelligence machines: A new model for nuclear risk in the digital age 2022, 348-349). Elevated further, the proposition is made that AI could enable, through vast simulations, an



attack scenario, which circumvents an adversary's ability to effectively retaliate (Fatter 2020). Fully AI-enabled strategic offensive nuclear capabilities would, thus, fundamentally challenge the architecture of nuclear deterrence by endangering the assured second-strike capability and the primacy of human control. The full-scale deployment or the credible perception of such a scenario as imminent could catalyse pre-emptive strategies, accelerate crisis dynamics, degrade decision-making quality, and become the harbinger for a further destabilizing arms race in offensive and defensive AI systems through perceived AI capability gaps. The possible integration of AI into offensive strategic potential is inseparable from advances in defensive systems, creating a dynamic of escalating strategic competition. Major powers seeking to maintain credible deterrence under an increasingly AI-driven strategic environment are likely to invest heavily in AI-enabled defense architectures, which themselves pose substantially similar challenges for deterrence.

The second scenario examines the concept of AI-driven strategic defensive systems. Chiefly, the focus is placed on the ability of a strategic missile defense system to effectively counter an adversary's full-scale strike. Some elements of such a prospective AI-enabled capability derive from the previously discussed offensive AI edge, such as the ability to track in advance certain mobile and hard-to-detect offensive assets. Other elements focus on AI-driven interception of attack vectors, which is traditionally complicated by a number of factors – tracking and telemetry of an incoming strike, differentiation between warheads and decoys, overcoming electronic measures (EW) measures, targeting and guidance of own interceptor assets, retargeting in case of failed interceptions (Savelev 2023). The increased potential of offensive means, such as maneuverable exo- or endo-atmospheric hypersonics, combined in the future with on-board AI-driven guidance presents further challenges (Fatter 2020), which AI has the potential to provide a solution for – an example of this is the extremely difficult to predict (random) changes in the flight path of legacy maneuverable re-entry vehicles or novel hypersonic glide vehicles. In a hypothetical scenario, an AI-driven and controlled system, supplied with sufficient strategic and operational assets, from sensory to kinetic effectors, could be capable of efficiently coordinating defensive measures, with fewer resources and within a shorter timeframe than current systems. The effects of such AI-enabled strategic defensive superiority on nuclear deterrence would be both significant and double-edged. On one hand, an effective missile defense system capable of reliably intercepting incoming missiles could undermine the doctrine of assured retaliation that lies at the heart of deterrence theory. If one side comes to the acceptance that it can successfully neutralize most or all of an adversary's retaliatory potential, the mutual vulnerability essential to deterrence could be eroded. Conversely, under the conditions of an own “no first strike” policy, a credible AI-enhanced missile defense could also serve as a stabilizing factor, by raising the costs and risks of offensive nuclear strikes, thereby dissuading adversaries from initiating conflict (Savelev 2023).



Regardless, some key considerations arise regarding the overarching processes of technological incorporation into the security field, especially when considering a novel technological layer with many variables. Such considerations extend beyond AI itself and align with general procedures and best practices in military technology integration. The introduction of new technology into the broad set of systems in the military field is an expansive and time-consuming process, where a given technological instrument or piece of equipment may require many years of testing and evaluation to ensure its performance, resilience, availability, and that potential shortcomings meet ever-changing requirements and parameters – examples of such cases can be found in the level of processing power used in units of otherwise modern military equipment, where technology is generations behind what is available for commercial processors; to an even greater degree, the successive iterations and improvements of SACCS utilized floppy disks well into the twenty-first century in order to ensure system reliability and survivability (Boulanin, et al. 2019). General challenges associated with the full potential of AI, such as physical limitations of processing capacity in individual units of equipment, or overconcentration in singular hubs, as well as the increasingly vast power requirements for the functioning of advanced AI models also weigh in heavily in considerations about the mass integration of AI. The potential critical vulnerabilities associated with such expansive additions to overall nuclear deterrence capabilities further underline a potentially slower and more limited scope of future incorporation.

In examining certain cases of future evolution of deterrence, AI can be conceptualized as a threat to the survivability of second-strike capabilities by enhancing the tracking and targeting of survivable assets, such as SSBNs and TELs. This degradation of assured retaliation could motivate an effective first strike scenario, adversary pre-emptive strikes or facilitate changes in nuclear postures (Chernavskikh 2024, Fatter 2020). Overall, AI-enabled effective first-strike capacity and advanced missile defense capabilities introduce destabilizing incentives by eroding the cornerstone of nuclear deterrence expressed in mutual vulnerability. The perceived possibility of neutralizing an adversary's retaliatory capacity may prompt aggressive strategies and undermine crisis stability. This creates a security dilemma as states escalate both offensive and defensive AI applications, thereby increasing strategic uncertainty and distrust (Horowitz, Scharre and Velez-Green 2019, Schwartz and Horowitz 2025, Fatter 2020). As the AI-nuclear nexus expands and attracts ever greater attention and resources perceived capability gaps, an "AI gap", could develop and erode deterrence in similar ways to past instances of Cold War-era capability uncertainty. Despite these risks, the scholarly consensus suggests outcomes depend heavily on policy decisions and governance frameworks (Stefanovich 2019). Retaining human control over nuclear use while leveraging AI's analytical advantages is crucial. Clear international norms and transparency can also



assist in risk mitigation and harness AI's stabilizing potential to bolster deterrence through improved situational awareness and system reliability (Stokes, et al. 2025, Scharre and Depp 2024, Dooling 2025).

### Conclusions

The convergence of artificial intelligence and nuclear deterrence represents both a continuation of Cold War-era processes of automation and a qualitative transformation of deterrence in the twenty-first century. Historical vectors of development from the Cold War demonstrate that automation has long been integral to maintaining credible deterrence. However, the context of modern AI approaches and models introduces a far more complex technological layer. Rule-based AI has already proven its utility in early-warning and secure communications, while machine learning and deep learning promise to enhance classification, prediction, and decision-support across ISR-T and NC3. More recently, the development of transformer-based foundation models suggests the possibility of highly generalizable AI systems, able to fuse multimodal data and provide real-time support for strategic decision-making. These advances hold the potential to reinforce deterrence through improved resilience, accuracy, and situational awareness.

Nevertheless, the same capabilities may destabilize the strategic nuclear balance and undermine deterrence. The acceleration of decision-making cycles, the opacity of “black box” models, and the possibility of false outputs or “hallucinations” raise profound risks. Concurrently, the integration of AI into offensive systems, or into strategic missile defense architectures threaten to erode the mutual vulnerability upon which deterrence rests. A credible AI-enabled first strike or effective defensive shield could undermine assured retaliation, encourage pre-emption, or entice a first-strike scenario. Furthermore, the emergence of an “AI gap” between nuclear powers could replicate the uncertainty and arms race dynamics of prior eras, heightening mistrust and strategic competition.

The analysis thus underscores an unfolding security paradox – AI may bolster deterrence by reducing uncertainty and enhancing second-strike reliability, but also risks undermining stability, if integrated in ways that compress human interaction and oversight or alter significantly the balance between offensive and defensive capabilities. What ultimately matters are the choices states make in adopting, constraining, and governing AI applications in nuclear systems and whether future approaches towards maintaining a strategic nuclear balance synchronize across major global powers, similarly to preceding historical processes of nuclear deterrence provision. Retaining meaningful human control, ensuring transparency, and developing international norms or informal models of mutual understanding will



be decisive in mitigating risks. In this respect, AI should be seen not as an inevitable destabilizer or guarantor of stability, but as a contingent variable – its impact will depend on the policies, doctrines, and safeguards that accompany its deployment. How the major nuclear powers of the U.S.A., Russia and China manage the AI–nuclear nexus will determine whether AI becomes a stabilizing force reinforcing deterrence, or a disruptive catalyst for renewed instability.

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# FEMALE CONTRIBUTION TO INTELLIGENCE IN CORRELATION WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

*Alida Monica Doriana BARBU, PhD\**

*The female contribution to the world of espionage and Intelligence had to struggle for acknowledgement in an environment traditionally dominated by men. Today, integrating women into the Intelligence agencies and creating mixt groups of operatives and analysts is an ideological imperative, in line with the principle of gender equality, equity, and equal opportunities, as part of the human dimension of security. The motivation for choosing the topic lies in the fact that ignoring female agents' warnings has caused wars and humanitarian catastrophes.*

*This article entails three research questions: "Is there a difference between the professional quality of women in the field of Intelligence compared to that of men?"; "What features make women working in the world of espionage unique and irreplaceable?"; "How does the Intelligence Community treat female employees from the gender equality and equal opportunities point of view?" The purpose of these questions is not only to raise the issue of gender (in)equality in Intelligence services, but, above all, to raise awareness among security institutions of the need to have both men and women employed in Intelligence.*

*The main objective of this research work is to provide an analysis of the application of the principle of gender equality and equal opportunities to women working in the world of espionage. The second objective is to present the perception of civil society, the media, and Intelligence institutions, such as OSS, CIA, NKGB,*

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*MI5, MOSSAD, and the former Romanian security service ('Securitate' from the Communist times) of female contribution to espionage from a gender perspective. This research offers not only a general perspective on equality between women and men, but also a specific one, oriented towards the presence of women in Romanian, American, Soviet, Israeli, and British Intelligence operations and towards the way in which the integration of women is an indicator of the level of equality achieved within military institutions and alike.*

*In order to achieve the established objectives, the research employs the qualitative research method of discourse and content analysis, as well as the case study method. The sources of documentation are specialized works in the field of Intelligence that discuss gender equality and equal opportunities.*

**Keywords:** *gender equality and equal opportunities in Intelligence; female contribution to Intelligence; Maria Tănase; Martha Bibescu; CIA; NKGB; MI5; MOSSAD.*

## **Introduction**

Women have always influenced the world of Intelligence. By marginalizing the female contribution to the field of espionage, damage is caused on an international scale that is difficult to quantify. Not only many of women's achievements remain unknown and unrecognized, but also the lessons, the methods and the successes that the Intelligence environment would benefit from.

This article, whose research topic lies at the intersection of security studies and gender studies, aims to analyze how the principle of gender equality, equity and equal opportunities (Di Bella et al. 2023) is applied to women spies in Romania, the USA, The Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and Israel, using a time frame that begins from the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century and focuses on the twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first century. A string of examples is given, both from Romania as well as from the Western world, in order to illustrate successful tales of women working either as spies or analysts, in order to further the greater good of their employing agency or country.

Let us begin by offering some examples of women with notable contributions in Intelligence throughout the ages, in various contexts. One of the first spies acknowledged by the Western world was the English writer Aphra Behn, sent by Charles II in 1666 to Antwerp to persuade a Dutch spy to become a double agent for the English monarchy. Later, within the American context, Elizabeth Van Lew formed a huge network of spies for the Union during the American Civil War, infiltrating the home of Confederate President Davis Jefferson through the assistance of an enslaved person. Working for the North as well, Harriet Tubman managed an



operation to exfiltrate enslaved individuals from the South through the underground railroad network (McIntosh 2009). In the twentieth century, Josephine Baker used musical scores to transmit messages written in invisible ink outside Paris, messages useful to the Allies in North Africa during World War II. Many British women serving in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) ran shelters, interacted with agents and parachuted into occupied France, with at least twelve of them dying in concentration camps. American-born Virginia Hall, posing as a journalist in occupied France, built a network of agents, arousing the suspicions of the Gestapo and, eventually, crossing the Pyrenees on her escape, her wooden leg resulting from a hunting accident posing no hindrance to her efforts. Anthropologist Cora Du Bois, who was working for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, mapped fortifications along the shores of possible amphibious landings in the South Pacific, also using information gathered from missionaries and sailors. The courageous missions of the American Intelligence Agency – the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – during World War II have become history, but the contributions made by the 4,000 women – including Marlene Dietrich and Julia Child, who served in the OSS – remain unfamiliar to the general public. To highlight their efforts, McIntosh, an OSS and CIA veteran, draws on her own testimonies and interviews with more than one hundred OSS women who served in diverse operations worldwide (McIntosh 2009).

The fact that women have always made a substantial contribution to Intelligence has not automatically led to their recognition or reward. Journalist and historian Liza Mundy admits in “The Sisterhood: The Secret History of the Women of the CIA” that women in the CIA were used, without necessarily being rewarded (Woodward 2023).

### **1. The Evolution of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities in Romanian Civil and Military Society**

Women have been involved in Intelligence long before the concept of gender equality was defined. This study focuses on analyzing the status of women working in espionage, identifying how the OSS, CIA, NKGB, MI5, MOSSAD, and the Romanian security institutions, including the media, have perceived female contribution to espionage operations from a gendered perspective. The research offers not only a general perspective on equality in rights for both men and women, but also a specific one, oriented towards the presence of women in Romanian, American, Soviet, Israeli and British Intelligence, and towards the way in which the integration of women is an indicator of the degree of achieving equity in this type of institutions.

The principle of gender equality, equity and equal opportunities, a principle largely debated in Springer’s “Measuring Gender Equality: A Multidisciplinary Analysis of Some EU Countries” (2023) is part of the human dimension of security. Security refers not only to political or military stability, but also points to respecting



human rights, lack of discrimination and equal opportunities for both men and women, in order to assure inclusive institutions. Women and men have qualities which cannot be brought to light at their true value but by working together; likewise, their respective limitations cannot be exceeded by working separately. Although in the last century, equality of opportunities for both women and men has experienced encouraging developments, the inequalities that still exist in security institutions raise concerns.

Internal audits should ascertain the degree of inclusion and professional satisfaction of women in the field, without transforming gender equality into an end in itself. The main objective is to avoid increasing resentment, especially at a time when complaints are being filed by women working in the military institutions, as many sources claim (Beale 2021; Preston 2023; Davies, Sabbagh, Mason 2023; Davis 2023; DoD 2025). As an illustration, fifty-four women working for the CIA in the past decade have confessed to being victims of misconduct and sexual assault by colleagues. Although they reported to their superiors, they were warned not to address to law enforcement, with the threat that doing so could jeopardize their careers within the agency. Since January 2023, however, at least three women have addressed the House Intelligence Committee, arguing that the agency discourages women from filling complaints of sexual abuse (Lippman 2023).

Objectification of women, harassment and a sexualized undercurrent have not escaped the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the UK. December 2023 marked two years since the government's response to the wide-ranging parliamentary inquiry into the lives of women in the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. More than 4,000 serving women, reservists, veterans and active personnel provided testimony before the House of Commons Defence Subcommittee, chaired by Sarah Atherton, a former soldier and Conservative MP, about misogyny, discrimination, intimidation, harassment and criminal behavior, sexual assault, gang rape, sex for favors, abuse of power by commanding officers, much of which had gone unreported due to fear of repercussions on their careers (Roberts 2023).

In 2012, the Romanian Minister of Internal Affairs, Radu Stroe, published the results of an internal investigation about harassment and discrimination against women within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), concluding that "We cannot speak of a phenomenon of discrimination or harassment at work in the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs" (A.A.S. - R.S. 2013). The assessment found a maximum of ten cases of possible harassment among 6,200 women interviewed, with the remaining women, up to a total of 8,800 employed by the MIA, not responding to the questionnaires. The investigation followed the scandal that broke out in December 2012, when policewoman Melania Renghea from the Balș Police stabbed her former superior, Gheorghe Barbu, in the abdomen several times, the woman claiming that the policeman had raped her. Within other structures of the Ministry of



Interior, such as the Border Police, the Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, and the Romanian Gendarmerie, there were no complaints regarding acts of harassment or discrimination among female employees (A.A.S. - R.S. 2013).

Romanian feminist literature addresses topics such as feminist theories, the history of Romanian feminism, gender and politics, gender and the media. Some examples we consider worthy to mention are the doctoral thesis entitled “Gender, the Politics of Equal Opportunities and International Security. Case Study: the Visual and Aesthetic Construction of Romania’s Participation in Operation Resolute Support Mission from a Gender Perspective” authored by PhD Candidate Novăcescu Elena, coordinated by Professor PhD Adrian Liviu Ivan from Babeș-Bolyai University and by Professor PhD Mihaela Miroiu, from the National School of Political and Administrative Sciences (Novăcescu 2021), the works of Ștefania Mihăilescu on the history of Romanian feminism (Mihăilescu 2002), the studies of Mihaela Miroiu on feminist political theories, gender policies in the communist and post-communist eras, but also the efforts through which women in Romania have tried to access “democratic citizenship” (Miroiu 2004) and, last, but not least, Oana Băluță highlighting that women are either unrepresented in the media or portrayed to correspond to gender stereotypes (Băluță 2015, 105–119). Also, the status and impact of women in military institutions is addressed by Cristina Rădoi, who presents a feminist perspective on war (Rădoi 2011).

With the new momentum brought by the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, women tried to obtain economic and political rights equal to those of men. The women’s emancipation movement in the Romanian Lands at the beginning of the nineteenth century was in line with those of the feminist movements in the United Kingdom, France, and the USA. The principles of equality from the French Revolution of 1789 were adopted by the Romanian society, and during the interwar period they experienced an unprecedented spread (Mihăilescu 2006). The 1948 Constitution, although adopted during the Communist era, proclaimed the equality of women and men, even though the violation of this principle was not legally sanctioned. It is stated by the 16th article of the 1991 Romanian Constitution, revised in 2003, that “(1) Citizens are equal before the law and public authorities, without privileges and without discrimination; (2) No one is above the law; (3) Public functions and dignities, civil or military, may be held, under the conditions of the law, by persons who have Romanian citizenship and reside in the country. The Romanian State guarantees equal opportunities between women and men for the holding of these functions and dignities” (The Constitution of Romania 2003). Mihaela Miroiu explains feminist political theories such as socialist and Marxist feminism, liberal feminism, ecofeminism, communitarian and radical feminism, in her work “The Road to Autonomy” (Miroiu 2004), also referring to the evolution of feminism and gender relations during the Communist era. “Birth of Democratic



Citizenship. Women and Power in Modern Romania” (Bucur and Miroiu 2018), co-authored by Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu, reveals that although attempts were made to achieve democratic citizenship by Romanian women between 1945 and 2010, men still set the direction of the country’s political, economic and social development, while achieving gender equality not being a priority on their agenda.

Regarding the relationship between gender and the media, Oana Băluță notes in her work “Gender, politics and media: stereotyped representations. How do we draw the line?” (Băluță 2015, 105–119), that more importance is given to women’s appearance than to their actions. “Mass-media about genders” (Grünberg 2005) examines the way women and femininity are described by the Romanian media, the female role being mostly complementary in contrast to the political world, which was considered the prerogative of men. In her doctoral thesis *Defense and war from a feminist perspective. Case study: the impact of women in Romanian military institutions*, Cristina Rădoi emphasizes the obligation of military institutions to integrate women’s interests and needs into their policies and regulations. However, perceptions of male Romanian military personnel in the Land Forces suggest that women are better suited to office work, unlike women’s opinion that they can perform any role in the armed forces (Novăcescu 2021). The low number of women in the military, coupled with men’s cultural perceptions of gender equality, do not provide them with the opportunity to make significant changes in the system.

Complementary to the academic voices mentioned above, data from 2024 show that 78% of Romanian women believed that too few women were involved in politics, while 75% believed that a greater political presence would help reduce discrimination. In the same year, women accounted for only 22% of parliamentarians, and only two women held positions as county council presidents in 2024 (Centrul Filia 2025). Following the elections of December 1, 2024, women made up only 21% of elected members of Parliament, below the European average of 25%. Of the 101 women, most came from the PSD (Social Democratic Party) and AUR (Alliance for the Unity of Romanians) parties, while the PNL (National Liberal Party) was represented in Parliament by only nine women. The project initiated by Alina Gorghiu (Minister of Justice and former PNL president), along with other colleagues, according to which women should occupy 33% of eligible seats in the elections, received a vote in the Senate in May 2022, but is still awaiting a vote in the Chamber of Deputies in 2025 (Bularcă, Roșu 2025). In 2023, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) reported that Romania ranked second to last in terms of women’s political power and last in terms of gender equality. The report “Representation of Women in Romanian Politics”, published in 2021 by Friedrich of Naumann Foundation, Expert Forum and Women in Politics, assessed a growth of the presence of women in the Romanian Parliament from 0.8% in the first legislature after the 1989 Revolution, when the Romanian Senate included only one female senator) to 19% after the



2020 elections (Bularcă, Roșu 2025). However, in 2021, Romania ranked second to last, after Cyprus, in terms of the number of women elected to the European Parliament. In October 2023, 56 non-governmental organizations and academics requested the Parliament's Legal Committee to respect gender quotas on candidate lists for parliamentary elections, not only to correct historical inequalities regarding women's political representation, but also for the progress of the political decision-making process, ensured by the diversity of experiences, reasoning, innovation – the prerogative of both genders (Bularcă, Roșu 2025).

Over time, policies have been adopted to regulate gender equality, but the goals have not automatically meant that these policies were effectively implemented. The communist regime in Romania promoted equality in treatment rather than gender equality, as it did not prioritize the specific needs of the two genders, demanding identical treatment for both women and men. Following the Romanian Revolution of 1989, respect for women's rights and gender equality became mandatory due to accession negotiations to the European Union and NATO.

Making a reference to the EU, Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997 (EUR-Lex - 11997D 1997, 1–144), imposed gender equality at the level of all organizational processes, as part of the Community acquis. The EU *Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025* aims to: “eliminate gender-based violence, eliminate gender inequalities in the labor market, achieve equal participation in different economic sectors, achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics” (European Commission 2020). Following Resolution 1325 Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 30th of October 2000, which recognized the importance of the presence of women in security institutions (United Nations Security Council 2000), NATO has also included women in its operations.

However, Lana Obradovic notes that, in Italy, women represented only 3.9% of the Armed Forces in 2016 (Obradovic 2016, 3). Other interesting facts from this study, conducted nearly ten years ago, show that Turkey only allowed women to hold non-commissioned officer or officer positions, usually only in the medical or administrative units, that France, Denmark, and Belgium did not provide gender consultants, while Greece established the position of Minister of Defence for Gender Equality in 2004 (Obradovic 2016).

In Romania, after 1990, the “Statute of Military Personnel” was revised, guaranteeing women in the Romanian Armed Forces equal rights with men regarding access to public positions, whether military or civilian, and not prohibiting their eligibility for high-level appointments. Interest in gender equality within military and security institutions crystallized in 2001, when recruitment of female personnel into the armed forces resumed and an attempt was made to revise the organizational charts to balance the representation of men and women. Since 2017, women have gained unrestricted access to higher military education institutions, however they



are not considered suitable for a military career (Novăcescu 2021). Romania lacks specific programs for the recruitment and retention of women in the military services and, along with Poland, demonstrates the lowest level of commitment to achieving gender equality in the Armed Forces (Obradovic 2016).

It is important to remember that Maria Tănase, nicknamed “The Master Bird” by Nicolae Iorga, was an artist who made significant contributions to the country through exchanges of critical intelligence with American diplomats and French agents before and during World War II. Despite this, the *Securitate* did not even acknowledge her the title of “singer”, but the pejorative label “the Jay” (Iamandi 2019). Also, there is worth mentioning a series of notable actions of the artist: she refused to become an informant for the German Abwehr, the military Intelligence Service of the Wehrmacht, according to data from the Romanian Special Intelligence Service, just as she refused the Governor of Istanbul, Sulfi Kidar, when he proposed her to stay in Turkey, offering her the title of honorary citizen, a permanent commitment to Radio Ankara, a villa on the island of Buyuk-Ada, and a research position at the Ethnographic Institute in Istanbul; and also Ben Smith, the world’s leading aluminum magnate, who was in love with her and wanted to take her to the United States. Nevertheless, none of these actions earned her the gratitude of the *Securitate*. In File I 157076, vol. 1, f. 10-12, currently in the CNSAS (National Council for the Study of Security Archives), she is portrayed as “a hardworking element, ready to help anyone in need, without any ideological training, [...] loves and respects her job. She has an impulsive character, is quarrelsome and not very fair in financial matters, with a lot of personality, unstable. [She] has an excessive personality, lacks consistency, is undisciplined; she is not a friend of our regime and [...] is not sincerely attached to the working class, although she knows it and lived among it in her childhood. She is ready for any self-sacrifice towards friends, for whom she gives her last penny. [...] even when she was sick, she sang [...]. From a professional point of view, she has declined, however she still has a great public appeal/.../ she can still be used, considering that in production she is correct and necessary, being, with all her weaknesses, the best folklore singer”, according to Coman Ion, director of the Capital’s Variety Theatre (Iamandi 2019).

According to historian Cristian Troncotă, Maria Tănase was not an intelligence agent, but a liaison and influence agent (Popescu 2007). Another historian, Mihai Pelin discovered that in 1941, when Maria accompanied Grigore Dinicu’s orchestra in Turkey, she declined a position at London Radio offered by Alfred de Chastelain, head of the South-East European branch of British espionage, who had worked in Romania for 14 years (Popescu 2007). Maria Tănase was involved in espionage and information exchange, documented by the aforementioned Mihai Pelin in his book “A Century of Espionage, Counter-Espionage and Political Police” (2003). In the late 1930s, Tănase had very close relations with Maurice Negre, the Bucharest



correspondent of the Havas press agency and a member of the French special services. Historian Cristian Troncotă further argues that Maria Tănase helped Eugen Cristescu a lot in the period 1940-1945, by exchanging information with several American diplomats (Popescu 2007). The famous singer played an important role in World War II, serving as a liaison between Romanians and the British who worked to remove Romania from the alliance with Germany, like Martha Bibescu during World War I.

Novelist, poet, and memoirist, Martha Bibescu wrote under the pseudonym Lucile Decaux no less than 40 volumes, and was nicknamed by Ghislain de Diesbach “la dernière orchidée” (The Last Orchid) (de Diesbach 1986). Considered by Francois Mauriac “the most admirable woman intelligence I know” (Popescu 2014), she became a member of the Royal Academy of French Language and Literature in Brussels in 1955. Mircea Eliade thought that she played an important role in the encounter between the cultures of Eastern and Western Europe (Popescu 2014). Her stunning beauty attracted numerous admirers, and she was courted by the Crown Prince of Germany and King Alfonso XIII of Spain. Martha Bibescu also became involved in intelligence activities, her meeting with Christopher Birdwood Thomson, a British intelligence officer sent to Bucharest to convince Romania to enter the war as an ally of the Entente being decisive. In September 1915, the princess agreed to hide secret documents of the British Legation in the Posada castle, but within ten days the castle was set on fire by the Central Powers. Valentin Bibescu, Martha’s husband, collaborated with Colonel Thomson in the destruction of oil wells from the Prahova Valley in 1916, so as not to fall under enemy control. During the German occupation of the same year, the princess ran a hospital in Bucharest established in the building of the Royal Romanian Automobile Club, belonging to her husband, who had taken refuge in Iași with the Moldavian front after the fall of Bucharest. In spite of her being a source of Intelligence for the Romanian Government besieged in Iași, because of her arrest by the occupation authorities, after the war, she faced the accusation of collaboration with the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians. However, the officers she cared for in the hospital during the German occupation defended her, and King Ferdinand himself publicly thanked her for her services to the country. Yet, women working in the CIA did not receive similar recognition for their services to the country.

## 2. CIA Heroines

Liza Mundy (Woodward 2023) makes the chronicle of three generations of CIA women - from the heroines of covert operations in the 1960s and 1970s, to the female analysts of the 1980s and 1990s, up until to the generation of women fighting in the war on terror. According to Mundy, all these eras share persistent discrimination,



sexism, a refusal to take their work and observations seriously, and, last but not least, crude misogyny. Lisa Mundy aims to convey a much deeper point of view than simply drawing attention to discrimination. By directing women from CIA into jobs that diminished their value and did not take their opinions seriously, American National security was harmed, such as the inadequate response before the 9/11 al-Qaeda attacks. However, Mundy argues that it was precisely the reassignment of women to lower-status roles that led to the transformation and improvement of the CIA's culture.

A small group of women at CIA headquarters were the first to notice and begin to track the jihadist group that would become al-Qaeda. The painstaking, but unglamorous jobs that involved data collection were assigned to women who were pejoratively called "vault women" or "ladies in sneakers" (Woodward 2023). These women analyzed vast amounts of data, including biographical information on politicians, scientists, foreign agents, and military commanders. They analyzed operations, tested the quality of sources, turned agents into double agents and managed them properly, a unique skill set to counterterrorism intelligence.

However, when the all-female unit began to warn of the danger in the late 1990s with reports detailing al-Qaeda's personnel, structure and financial flows, it was ignored. Their analysis revealed that al-Qaeda was planning to bomb a naval destroyer called USS *The Sullivans* on January 3, 2000, while the ship was anchored in the port of Aden, Yemen. The women were ridiculed by their colleagues when the attack did not take place; it was not until after September 11 that it was discovered that the attack plan really existed, but the suicide bombers had failed to install the grenade in the ship's hull, causing the malfunction to sink their own ship before it could reach the destroyer. Although women in the counterterrorism team have suffered a tarnished reputation, after the September 11 attacks, their expertise in counterterrorism has taken on a similar scope to human resource recruitment, with women becoming a much more important presence within the CIA (Woodward 2023).

Susan Gordon, the second-highest ranking official in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, has said that the war on terror would have been a fiasco if the 9/11 attacks and the hunt for Osama Bin Laden had been conducted without the expertise of women. That doesn't mean women are better professionals, but their perspectives can make a difference. Observing the Abbottabad compound during the search for Osama bin Laden, aerial surveillance revealed laundry hanging on a line, which led to accurate estimates by female analysts of the number of adults and children in the terrorist's hideout.

The growing role of women in the CIA owes its success to the sacrifice and work of the agency's early pioneers: the founding members of the Sisterhood. In the 1960s and 1970s, the CIA's clandestine operations abroad were the prerogative of men, but women began to complete the picture as well. We zoom in the story of



Lisa Manfull, a 1966 graduate of Brown University, a native Spanish and French speaker and the daughter of a diplomat who had lived in France, Vietnam and Mexico, wanted to work abroad as a spy, but she was not allowed to complete the training course for case officers. It was not until 10 years later that another chance arose, when she applied for the training program and completed it in first place. After other 10 years, she was appointed head of the Latin American Division. A woman's entry into the all-male fiefdom did not go unpunished, being ostracized and ignored. More so, according to Michael Sulich, the head of the clandestine service, she was "treated like garbage" (Woodward 2023). Exhausted, divorced and in failing health, Manfull Harper retired. Fortunately, she was recalled to the agency in 2000 to contribute to the CIA's counterterrorism team as an analyst on Bin Laden and al-Qaeda (Woodward 2023).

Another story belongs to Heidi August, who wanted to become a case officer herself. She applied to the CIA in 1968, but was only hired as a clerk in the map folding room. She then went to Libya, also as a clerk, during the coup d'état of Muammar Gaddafi. In 1974, in Cambodia, she was awarded a medal for meritorious service in emergency evacuation, which gave her the opportunity to take the case officer training course. She completed the course and later became a section chief. She served in Iraq and retired in December 2003 as a senior executive director (Woodward 2023).

As we move from the traumatic decades of Vietnam to Reagan's 1980s, the CIA analyst position was still reserved for men, but the trio of Barbara Sude, Cynthia Storer and Gina Bennet stood out for their expertise and skill. Barbara Sude, with a PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University, needed more than a decade in an off-campus support unit before obtaining a position as an analyst at CIA headquarters. Cynthia Storer joined the CIA in the mid-1980s, becoming an analyst at CIA headquarters after three years and being assigned to Afghanistan. Gina Bennett, a 1988 graduate of the University of Virginia with a double major in foreign policy and economics and a minor in religion, applied unsuccessfully to the CIA, being hired at the State Department as a typist (after passing a typing test where she was required to wear a skirt). Promoted to the State Department's intelligence analysis unit, she wrote the first warning about Osama bin Laden in 1993 and was admitted to the CIA in 1997 as a counterterrorism analyst. The three women formed the al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden Task Force in the 1990s. Jennifer Matthews, the newest member of the group, had started at the CIA as an imagery analyst, tracking money, communications, travel patterns, and terrorist affiliations. Matthews spent fifteen years tracking bin Laden. In 2010, she took over as head of the CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan, getting a job as an analyst at CIA headquarters. Cynthia Storer joined the CIA in the mid-1980s, reaching the CIA headquarters after three years as an analyst and being assigned to Afghanistan, providing information



on drone strikes in Pakistan, when she and six other CIA colleagues were killed in a suicide bombing.

In the late 1990s, even after the establishment of the Counterterrorism Center (CTC), the office was still considered a professional dead end, with a reputation for “women in sneakers” frugal resources, and a small staff. The fact that only women were working on al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden diminished the credibility of the threat they posed. Thus, their warnings about the attack on the USS Cole, the African embassy bombings, 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were ignored. The intelligence community’s pre-9/11 failures were due to the fact that the warnings of the women of The Sisterhood were ignored because their bosses saw them as “a bunch of chicks”. (Woodward 2023). The Israeli Defence and Intelligence was taken by surprise by the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, among the causes being the dismissive attitude of male commanders towards the work of female intelligence officers, who had warned about Hamas in the weeks before the attack (Cuddy 2024).

### 3. Not just *Honey Traps*<sup>1</sup>...

Despite the differences between Americans and Russians, American and Soviet media consistently reduced spies to their sexuality and gender roles, in an attempt to maintain control over increasingly independent women (Fusick).

The Soviets saw sexuality and emotions as weaknesses in spies, while Americans saw emotions only as a weakness and sexuality as a weapon. Nevertheless, concern for the emotions and sexuality of female spies was present in both cases.

American stereotypes of spies were abundantly fed by spy novels and magazines, as well as popular movies in the first half of the 20th century. During the third and fourth decades of the last century, the espionage press depicted the strong male spy alongside a helpless young woman in need of support, thus building upon the medieval figures of the armoured knight saving the lady in distress. Therefore, women were frequently depicted either powerless or traitorous, whereas women in the communist male vision hated men and felt nothing (Olmsted 2004, 79, apud Fusick).

These stereotypes served to shape the portrayal of Elizabeth Bentley and Judith Coplon by the American press. In 1945, Elizabeth Bentley, the “Red Queen Spy”, entered the FBI’s Washington D.C. office wearing a plain floral dress, her aim being to provide Intelligence that filled a 115-page file (Sulick 2012, 185, apud

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<sup>1</sup> A.N.: “Honey trapping” involves obtaining information through sexual or romantic relationships, for political (espionage) or economic purposes. The aggressor (usually female, but not exclusively) seeks to involve the target in a false relationship (with or without physical contact) in order to manipulate the target into providing information. Subsequently, after being photographed or recorded, the victim is blackmailed into acting according to the aggressor’s instructions, otherwise the photos and recordings will be made public (Chalastaras 2024).



Fusick), claiming to have run an extensive Soviet espionage network in the United States. The “Red Queen Spy” provided the FBI with enough information to disrupt Soviet operations for several years, but because she had no documents to prove it, her network was saved from arrest. Another spy, Judith Coplon, was arrested for stealing American information in 1949, drawing media attention (Sulick 2012, 211-214, apud Fusick).

Coplon and Bentley were psychologically portrayed by both American lawyers and prosecutors and their Soviet handlers, allowing us to compare them as spies. Bentley and Coplon contrast because Bentley turned herself in, while Coplon was caught red-handed. Although Judith Coplon tried to use the media image of female spies to avoid conviction, her endeavour proved to be in vain.

Elizabeth Bentley, a graduate of Vassar College, was an independent woman with anti-fascist leanings that turned into communist sympathies (Sulick 2012, 185-186, apud Fusick). Bentley entered the world of espionage as a courier, but she acquired more and more responsibility as she confirmed. Jacob Golos was her liaison to the NKGB until his death in 1943, when her devotion began to waver (Sulick 2012, 188, apud Fusick). Elizabeth Bentley’s epic story appeared in the press in July 1948, before her testimony at the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA), popularly known as the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The article described her as a “striking blonde”, a description far from the truth, as she was a middle-aged brunette (Frank and Mockridge 1948, apud Fusick). Elizabeth Bentley’s sexualization to fit the image of the female spy, played by the blonde Marlene Dietrich in the 1931 film *Dishonored* (von Sternberg 1931, apud Fusick), along with her love story with Jacob Golos, reported by the press to highlight her capacity for deep feelings and justify her espionage, transformed her into a “self-proclaimed agent for a network of Communist spies” (Knowles 1948, apud Fusick) as her physical appearance was discovered to be common. The *New York Times* described her as “middle-aged” rather than a sexy young woman (Knowles 1948, apud Fusick). Elizabeth Bentley did not fit the public’s image of how a spy should look like or behave. When newspapers could not transform her into an alluring presence, they began to portray her as mentally unstable, in an attempt to exploit the subject and keep readers’ interest alive.

Also, in the Soviet files *Vassiliev*, she underwent a transformation from “an intelligent, sensitive, and mild-mannered woman” (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 1, apud Fusick), when she was under the control of Jacob Golos, to “an unbalanced and erratic personality” (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 5-6, apud Fusick), when she was her own master. After Golos’ death, her contacts changed their narrative, describing her as “exactly the kind of person who shouldn’t be involved in this group, let alone controlling it” (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 18, apud Fusick). Soviet agents wanted to create the impression that Elizabeth was only acting



rationally under the guidance of a man, worried that a woman could wield so much power. Her drinking prior to a meeting with “Vadim” in September 1945 automatically made her a “foreign element” and a new enemy (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 23-24, apud Fusick). Fearing the disruption of the network, Bentley’s Soviet agents decided that the only solution was to marry her in order to prevent her from reacting negatively to loneliness (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 8, 15, apud Fusick). The solution to Elizabeth’s possible rebellion was a combination of male control by her spy husband and sexual liberation (Vassiliev White Notebook #2, 2009, 8, apud Fusick). Soviet intelligence agents viewed women as irrational, impulsive creatures who could not control their sexual impulses and needed a strong man’s hand. The pages dedicated to Elizabeth Bentley’s love life demonstrate that the Soviets, as much as the Americans, were concerned with the romantic side of female spies (Vassiliev White Notebook #2, 2009, 12, apud Fusick).

On the other hand, Judith Coplon was no stranger to the American press either. A graduate of Barnard College with notable results, her position in the Foreign Agents Registration Section of the Justice Department in Washington DC in 1945 gave her access to FBI information on Soviets operating in the US and American communist leaders, sparking the NKGB’s interest in recruiting her. Bentley’s defection caused irreparable damage to the NKGB’s carefully constructed espionage network over a decade, as the Soviet service needed to quickly regroup by recruiting new agents, and not just any agents, but those with access to FBI information spies (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 211, apud Fusick). Judith Coplon perfectly fit the profile sought, but after many years, she raised FBI suspicions following a mention of her transfer to Washington D.C. At the beginning of 1949, a fabricated FBI document containing information that a spy in Soviet service would have had difficulty resisting transfer was placed at her disposal. On March 4, 1949, Judith Coplon fell into the trap and went to New York to hand over the documents to her Russian contact, Vladimir Gubichev (Vassiliev White Notebook #2 2009, 213, apud Fusick). The FBI arrested her because she was carrying the sensitive documents, but her defense argued that Coplon had met with Gubichev for romantic reasons, not to transfer American secrets (Blinkley 1949, apud Fusick). For two decades, with two trials, two convictions, two sentences, and not a single day in prison (Sulick, 214, apud Fusick), the public’s attention remained focused on her.

Judith Coplon fit the stereotype of the American press regarding the physical appearance and behavior of a spy, while being sexualized and demonized. In the early months of the case’s media coverage, Coplon was depicted as having “sensual eyes” and “straight white teeth that shone when she smiled” (London 1949, apud Fusick). Towards the end of the trial, a reporter noted that “her blouse was quite thin, inadequate to hide her figure when she sat forward, as she frequently did” (Brinkley 1949, apud Fusick). The journalistic language in her case relied on her gender and



sexuality to describe her as a *femme fatale* spy. But the information that appeared in the press on June 22, 1949, about Coplon's relationship with Howard Shapiro being consummated at the same time as her relationship with Vladimir Gubichev (Brinkley 1949, apud Fusick) was a fatal blow to Coplon's defense, which was based on the fact that Coplon had given information to Gubichev not as a result of treason, but because she had fallen in love.

When Shapiro made their relationship public, Coplon angrily denied it (Associated Press 1949, apud Fusick). The press transformed her into a hysterical, vindictive, insane figure. Following the guilty verdict on July 1, 1949, and Judith's lack of reaction, the press described her "unwavering to the end" (Associated Press 1949, apud Fusick). The public had formed the belief that Judith Coplon was spying for the Soviet Union, and the press was quick to build on this belief, going through three phases in which she was described either as an attractive spy or as a woman dominated by emotions, culminating in the image of an insensitive communist.

Soviet documents depicted her as "a serious, modest, attentive young woman, ideologically close" to the Soviets (Fusick). Attentive to Coplon's love life, as they were to Bentley's, Soviet agents sought to have Judith marry a spy as dedicated to communism as she was. The Soviets considered sexuality and emotions to be the hot spots for female spies, while the Americans saw emotions as a vulnerability and sexuality as a means to an end. The sexuality and feelings of female spies were at the heart of the concerns of both camps.

The 1931 film "Dishonored" featured the female spy who used sex to obtain information from men (von Sternberg, 1931, apud Fusick), while the 1940 MGM film "Ninotchka" featured the cold and emotionally intangible Soviet agent who could only become human through love and capitalism (Lubitsch, 1940, apud Fusick). American stereotypes of spies who were highly effective through sex appeal created distrust of intelligent, emotionless women and influenced perceptions of Bentley and Coplon.

The Soviet view of Bentley and Coplon stems from deep-rooted stereotypes. Although in 1930, 1.6 million women were recruited by the Communist Party to fill the Soviet Union's labor shortage (Lubitsch 1940, 209, apud Fusick), they never received management positions or stable, well-paid jobs, citing "family responsibilities, poor education, and physical weakness" (Lubitsch, 1940, 213, apud Fusick). The NKGB emphasized the backroom skills of its agents.

American stereotypes came from another source. Six million women took over the jobs of men mobilized on the battlefields of World War II, managing to fulfill their tasks with flying colors (Olmsted 2004, 80), which led to the reaction of men to restrict the feminine roles again to the domestic sphere when they returned from the front, for fear of losing their jobs to women, and their ascendancy over them. In the book "The Feminine Mystique", Betty Friedan writes that women were indoctrinated



not to yearn for college, career or political rights, for they would become undesirable to men, so that by 1958, the percentage of female students had plummeted to 35% from 47% in 1920 (Friedan 1963, 18) and 68% of women in the 1950s had dropped out of college to get married (Friedan 1963, 16). The reduction of educated spies like Bentley and Coplon to the destitute status of sexualized women in need of a lover's control reassured the male view that their dominance was not in danger.

Coplon attempted to use American stereotypes in her defense, claiming to love Vladimir Gubichev to evade conviction, and Elizabeth Bentley's story, which involved a similar love affair between an American spy and a Soviet superior, also served her well. Using the Cold War era "domestic isolation" of women in the home and boudoir to win their case in court was a compromise for an educated and sexually independent woman, but a necessary one.

#### 4. Why are Women Better Spies?

Maseena Ziegler believes that women are born spies, not made spies (Ziegler 2012), and seem to have an additional DNA sequence that gives them intuition and a very fine, antenna-like perception, which offers them an advantage over men. Men are technically inclined and are good at handling gadgets, but women excel at successfully multitasking, according to statements by Tamir Pardo, the head of Mossad, to the Israeli publication *Lady Globes*. He believes that women are better actresses, perfect for playing different roles, and can keep their egos in check to carry out their tasks, unlike men. The female ability to decipher situations, understand the terrain and perceive space cannot be contested. The idea that the best spies are men, propagated by film characters such as *James Bond* and *Jason Bourne*, and that women only contribute to the world of espionage in the form of honey traps – their characters bearing suggestive names like *Pussy Galore* and *Strawberry Fields* – is contradicted by the reality on the ground. Women excel not only in intellectual capacity, but also in courage, an aspect highlighted by former Mossad chief Tamir Pardo (Ziegler 2012). Simon Cohen noticed that the vast majority of Israeli instructors were women; intrigued by the choice of women for this job, he found that men react positively to a female instructor, being motivated to learn better.

One of the CIA's secrets is that women are the best recruiters of foreign agents, according to Lindsay Moran (Ziegler 2012), trained at the CIA's "Farm" famous for survival and surveillance techniques, and posted to Eastern Europe to recruit agents who would relay information back to the CIA. People skills, street IQ that outweighs physical strength, a nurturing instinct, and being good listeners are the qualities that make women top recruiters. Women socialize, make friends and read people easily, scanning their motivations and weaknesses by default. Identifying and evaluating sources is second nature to women. In addition, women are always



looking for security and the security of their environment, which is why they are always on the lookout for potentially dangerous situations and suspicious people. Scanning the environment to identify hazards is the quintessence of survival and a testament to intelligence that surpasses physical fitness to fight the enemy, because avoiding confrontation by preempting it is always preferable to fighting in the field, which comes with not only casualties or material losses, but also with the disclosure of suppliers. Maternal instinct is necessary in managing sources that must be protected from any threats, often protected against themselves. Women come naturally to listen to the grievances and pains of sources, while men need hours of training on how to listen and obtain information. And last but not least, female recruiters benefit from cover in cases where they meet a man at night in a hotel, in a car or restaurant, because a woman is always suspected of having an affair, while a recruiter's meetings with men in the same situations would not enjoy a similar alibi (Ziegler 2012). An MI5 report highlights that female spies, if not overly sexual, are more effective secret agents, as they obtain more information than men when they resist the temptation to have sexual relations with the enemy (Bowcott 2004). Maxwell Knight, an MI5 agent responsible for infiltrating communist and fascist organizations in Britain during World War II, addressed the issue of equal opportunities, arguing that the reluctance to recruit women is unfounded, because in the history of espionage and counter-espionage, the largest number of important coups d'état have been carried out by women. His experience in MI5 contradicted the bias that women are more indiscreet than men, that they would act more under the influence of emotions than reason and that sexuality would be a destabilizing factor in their work. (Bowcott 2004). MS, Knight's department of MI5, investigated hundreds of cases and found that those guilty of *faux pas* (missteps) were overwhelmingly men. Male vanity makes them susceptible to indiscretion, in the desire to gain the admiration of their peers or to conquer a woman; ladies, on the other hand, are vain about dresses and appearance, but not about gaining admiration by committing indiscretions. Neither men nor women should be recruited if they are overly emotional or if they demonstrate too much appetite for sex, traits that are not exclusively feminine. Normality and balance must characterize Intelligence agents, neither oversexualized, as their mental processes will be dominated by desire, nor undersexualized, as they will not be mentally alert enough, and their other faculties will suffer (Bowcott 2004).

A smart female agent uses her power of attraction judiciously, gaining a man's trust by expressing a moderate amount of sympathy, which an undersexed woman fails to do. But Mata-Hari's methods are equally unprofitable, since, in Knight's opinion, agents obtain most information by avoiding giving in to the man's conquering impulses. A man who is physically, but superficially interested in a woman will quickly lose interest once intimacy has been achieved, whereas if he is



bound to the woman by her qualities, and not just by physical attraction, the couple will last longer. Although there was a risk that an agent could fall in love with an enemy, he had not encountered any such case in his 20 years of experience. Knight worked for the British Fascist Party in the early 1920s, before being admitted to MI5. His best agents were Olga Grey, who infiltrated a Soviet espionage network, and was bent on obtaining British weapons plans, and Joan Miller, his secretary and second wife, who infiltrated the “Righteousness Club” and dismantled a German spy ring. Miller’s memoirs were published posthumously under the title “One Girl’s War: Personal Exploits in MI5’s Most Secret Station” (Bowcott 2004). The most effective method of gathering information, according to Knight, was to provide an agent with a secretary position in the targeted organization, since “no other person has the same opportunity to obtain information covering such a wide range as a clerk or secretary” (Bowcott 2004).

### Conclusions

The “Daughters of Eve” made a contribution to Intelligence that was often disregarded, despised, trivialized and mocked, although if their warnings had been taken seriously, the 9/11 attack or the Hamas attack on the 7th of October 2022, could have been avoided. Osama bin Laden was caught after decades of effort by female analysts within the CIA, pejoratively called “women in sneakers” or “ladies in the vault”. Female artistic personalities from Romania such as Maria Tănase or Martha Bibescu were agents of influence and liaison who remained not only in the history of their country of origin, but also in the European history. The most important and numerous coups d’état were carried out by female spies, because, according to MI5, women do not commit indiscretions, as men do out of a desire to impress. The sexualization and objectification of women in Intelligence is an attempt to diminish their personal power and deny their analytical and intuitive qualities. The secret front of espionage is a field in which women also excel as agent-recruiters, for their natural inclination to listen and comfort, as well as to decipher characters and determine sources to collaborate. Honey traps is a soothing reduction of women to the male imaginary, when the prospect of a comprehensive feminine vision can be considered threatening to male hegemony, instead of recognizing that feminine approaches come to enrich and complete the masculine vision, which leads to closing the circle and achieving perfection.

The research design proposed here would be useful for internal audits of Intelligence services. The limits of these audits would consist of the possible concealed answers, for fear of disclosing information that could harm the speaker. Surveys, focus groups and questionnaires should be carried out within each institution, and the measures taken as a result of them should not be just formal responses



or initiatives with presentable, yet ineffective wording. Adopting a normative framework regarding the integration of women in Intelligence is not sufficient for the efficient and sustainable achievement of gender equality at the level of security institutions. Female spies continue to be described according to gender stereotypes, invalidating their work. Eliminating gender inequalities and taking into account female and male particularities continues to represent a challenge for today's society. The perception that women's role consists of taking care of the family and home persists in the collective mind, with traditional gender norms having to be overcome by both sexes.

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# THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE GENERAL STAFF IN THE PERIOD 1944-1948 – A NECESSARY ELEMENT IN THE CREATION OF THE NEW “ROMANIAN PEOPLE’S ARMY”

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*The change of a political regime can occur only as the result of a convergence of multiple factors. The end of World War II found Romania under Soviet military occupation. This situation, combined with the lack of interest shown by the Western powers regarding Romania’s fate, sealed the destiny of our country for nearly 50 years. The most challenging task for the Soviet occupiers, supported by opportunists who quickly emerged, was to establish a climate of public order that would make any mass uprising impossible. To this end, the communists who had seized power devised a comprehensive plan to take control of the most important institution capable of maintaining order within the state – the Romanian Army.*

**Keywords:** *communism; Romanian Army; USSR; reform; political purges.*

## Introduction

After the fall of the Antonescu regime, Romania’s political landscape underwent a radical transformation. Numerous political groups, representing various ideologies, advanced their own solutions for the reform of the state. The traditional political parties, which had gone through a process of reorganization,

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placed their hopes in the Western Allies believing they would allow the organization of free elections by means of which they could regain power. Despite the optimism expressed by their leaders, the communists were seen as having the greatest chances of taking over the main positions within the state apparatus. Their major advantage came from the direct and firm support of Soviet representatives, who had been appointed as advisers throughout Romanian state decision-making structures. With the Red Army stationed on Romanian territory, the Soviets could exert pressure on both political leaders and voters, thus enforcing a specific line of conduct. In this manner, the communists rapidly gained not only popularity but also a large number of new members (Dobre 2004, 21)<sup>1</sup>, some of whom had prior experience in public administration. This allowed the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), later renamed the Romanian Workers' Party/PMR (Congresul Partidului Muncitoresc Român 1948)<sup>2</sup>, to create the necessary conditions to move into the next phase of consolidating its political power.

The absorption of new members took place at a rapid pace, with their number increasing during 1945 from only 1,150 people before August 23, 1944, to more than 140,000 individuals (A.N.I.C. 1959, File No. 40). Among the party members, two major categories of personnel can be easily distinguished. The first and most important from the perspective of Soviet occupiers consisted of the Comintern members, trained in Moscow to be dispatched to the occupied states for the purpose of facilitating the takeover of control over the administration and the most important state institutions. The second category, commonly referred to as the “insiders”, was composed of opportunists who came both from the group of former members of the Romanian administration and from the lower strata of society, most of them being in a precarious economic circumstances. Members of the former administration possessed the necessary knowledge to enable the communists to seize control of the main state structures. One of the main objectives that could ensure a smooth transition of political power was co-opting of the Romanian Army into the circle of power that was intended to be created. The “insiders”, most of whom were opportunists, had all the necessary knowledge to help the communists take control of the key structures of the state. One of the main objectives that could ensure a smooth transition of political power was the integration of the Romanian Army into the new power structure that was being established. This important force structure

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<sup>1</sup> Miron Constantinescu, one of the key members of the Political Bureau of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), stated that on January 1, 1946, the Romanian Communist Party had over 325,000 members registered (see A.N.I.C., fond CC al PCR – Cancelarie, file no. 37/1946, f. 3). Other estimates also point to this sudden increase in party membership. In the volume *Membrii CC ai PCR 1945–1989*, coordinated by Florica Dobre, it is noted that between October 1945 and February 1948, the number of party members grew to 1,057,428.

<sup>2</sup> Starting in February 1948, the Romanian Communist Party formed a political alliance with the Social Democratic Party under the name of the Romanian Workers' Party.



– a true bastion of stability – had successfully resisted, four years earlier, an attempt to be subordinated to another political group supported externally by a state with its own strategic interests regarding Romania’s fate. The attempt to impose loyal figures in key military leadership positions, orchestrated by leaders of the fascist movement *Legion of the Archangel Michael* (at the time under the protection of Nazi Germany), had been successfully dismantled by military officers loyal to the Romanian state (Buzatu et al 1998-1999, 185).

### **1. The Communist Takeover of Political Power**

Beginning on November 19, 1946, when the first elections were held in Romania after the end of World War II, a new political regime was installed in the country. Through the so-called “national unity” government formed by Dr. Petru Groza, the first in a long series of political transformations took place, which ultimately led to the complete takeover of political power by the Romanian Communist Party. Although this government was officially presented as a national unity government, it was composed of representatives from the program platform of the Bloc of Democratic Parties (Scurtu 1996, 196-206), a political formation that included members from all Romanian political parties. Alongside the communists, the bloc included their allies – the Social Democrats, members of the Ploughmen’ Front, the Patriotic Union, the Hungarian Popular Union – as well as members from traditionally significant parties such as the National Peasants Party – Anton Alexandrescu wing–, and the National Liberal Party – Tătărescu wing (Țurlea 2007, 22-26).

Despite an initial agreement regarding the allocation of a different number of seats in the future parliament based on the position of each party on the bloc’s list, the organization of the elections proved to be the final blow to the credibility of Romania’s traditional parties. The group of communists trained in Moscow – soon joined by numerous opportunists – successfully rigged the elections, securing a significant number of parliamentary seats. According to the signed protocol, the seat distribution was supposed to be as follows: Social Democratic Party – 81 seats; National Liberal Party (Gh. Tătărescu) – 75 seats; Ploughmen Front – 70 seats; Romanian Communist Party – 68 seats; Patriotic Union – 26 seats; and National Peasant Party (Anton Alexandrescu) – 21 seats (Cioroianu 2005). However, the initial agreement was violated, thereby paving the way for the consolidation of a deeply anti-national political regime.

Unfortunately for Romanian democracy, in the process of reconstruction after 1944, Moscow could not tolerate any deviation and sought, through various methods, to undermine the credibility of the traditional parties and to ensure the hegemony of the Romanian Communist Party within the new political order. There are several records of negotiations held between the Romanian Communist Party



leaders and Soviet representatives in Romania, in which the former requested not only permission to create moments of internal political tensions but also significant material support to influence Romanian voters. During a conversation at the Soviet Embassy in Romania, Emil Bodnăraș told Ambassador Iakovlev that, despite all their efforts, the communists and their allies would not be able to secure more than 55–65% of the vote, adding that “we hope to obtain 55–65% of the vote by securing real votes during the election, but we need to get 90%, and this will be achieved with the help of the possibilities offered by the electoral law and a certain ‘technique’” (Comisia prezidențială pentru analiza dictaturii comuniste în România 2006, 130). This testimony reveals not only the decision-making dependence of the PCR leadership on Moscow but also the deeply manipulative nature of the postwar electoral process in Romania. The elections were thus transformed into an instrument for legitimizing the communist regime, in a context where democratic structures became mere façades intended to confer a semblance of legality on Soviet domination.

These political maneuvers resulted in the complete seizure of political power by the Communist Party on November 23, 1946. Through Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the traditional parties were allocated only a symbolic number of leadership positions. For example, the National Peasant Party was given only one ministerial post – the Ministry of Religious Affairs – and two deputy secretary positions in the Ministries of Communications and National Education (Proces-verbal nr. 2 al Ședinței Biroului Politic din 23 noiembrie 1946, 498-499).

Shortly thereafter, in order to gain total control over the Romanian state, Gheorghiu-Dej accused members of these political formations of involvement in subversive activities and actions aimed at challenging public order, charges that served as a pretext for their arrest and political neutralization.

## **2. “The Democratization of the Army” – The Key Element in the Romanian Workers’ Party’s Full Seizure of State Power**

None of these developments would have been possible without the direct support of the state’s coercive institutions. As a result, subordinating the decision-making structures within the armed forces became a primary objective of the Romanian communists. In this regard, the new political leadership of Romania declared that the army must become “an instrument of the single party”. The new Prime Minister, Dr. Petru Groza, noted that “one of the great tasks of the Romanian people and of the current government is the democratization of the army” (Groza 1973, 233), and this process was to be carried out with the support of Soviet advisers, whose main objective was to minimize the military power of the Romanian state.



All these developments had been anticipated by General Mihail Racoviță, who became the new Minister of War immediately after the arrest of General Antonescu. Realizing the danger that could arise from the army's involvement in supporting any political group, on August 30, 1944, he issued General Order No. 50, which strictly prohibited military personnel from expressing any political sympathies: "I strictly order all officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers that they are forbidden from participating in any political party activities" (Chiriac 2018, 220).

Unfortunately, in the new political context, the army – previously the sole guarantor of public order – could not remain outside the political games and the diversions orchestrated by the communists for long. Control over the army allowed the political actors who influenced its actions to safeguard the privileges they would acquire, regardless of the methods employed. This goal became the main objective of political figures, irrespective of whether their rise to power came through free elections or by acting as proxies for a foreign power. The events that followed clearly demonstrate that the Soviets sought to eliminate any sources of resistance within the upper echelons of the Romanian military leadership. In this regard, on October 6, 1944, the Soviet Command in Romania ordered the removal of General Gheorghe Mihail from his position as Chief of the General Staff after he voiced his disapproval of the measures taken to disarm the Romanian army (Duțu 1995, 56). The restructuring of the Romanian Army's leadership continued at a rapid pace, so that by March 6, 1945, General Racoviță's fears had come true. Political groups supported by Moscow began pressuring military decision-makers to fulfill their demands in creating a favorable climate for the complete takeover of power in Romania.

Contrary to the provisions issued by General Racoviță, who had forbidden military personnel from showing support for any political parties or party affiliation, the new political leadership in Bucharest held the exact opposite view. Members of the Communist Party supported the need for the political training of military personnel and openly spoke about the necessity for officers to become members of the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR), presenting this measure as an essential stage in the process of "democratizing" the armed forces and subordinating them to the new political power: "Educating officers in the democratic spirit is the first step that must be taken. In addition to their role as instructors, officers also serve as educators of the youth, and the officer of the democratic army must adopt for himself and instill in the soldiers – not only the many military virtues but also civic ones, namely the high democratic ideals" (Chiriac 2018, 226). The most important provision imposed by the new political leadership regarding the functioning of the army was the so-called "democratization movement" of the military. According to Petru Groza's vision, "one of the major tasks of the Romanian people and the current government is the democratization of the army" (Chiriac 2018, 228). Furthermore,



they proposed the mandatory establishment of party cells within military units and the creation, following the Soviet model, of the positions of political commissars. These initiatives aimed to ensure the ideological leadership of the units, thereby effectively duplicating the command structure of major military units. Additionally, military personnel had to demonstrate loyalty to the PMR rather than to the Romanian state, as they had pledged through their oath of allegiance. The first decision regarding the transformation of the army was taken on May 8, 1945, when, through General Order no. 29, the Directorate for Education, Culture, and Propaganda was established. This structure had the clearly defined role of “re-educating the army’s active personnel” in accordance with the principles of the new political leadership.

The end of the war and the imminent return of Romanian troops from the front prompted the leadership of this directorate to send a group of propagandists, called “Team 1005”, to the front in Czechoslovakia on May 11 – just three days later. Their mission was to begin the “education” of soldiers from the 1st and 4th Armies stationed there, who at that time were preparing to return to the country. In doing so, the authorities aimed to prepare the ground so that this large group of returning soldiers would not pose a threat to the party activists already installed in various administrative positions throughout the country. On the contrary, part of the plan was to have some of these soldiers join the new political system. The main targets were soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and junior officers who were willing to make compromises in terms of conduct and thereby provide the support that party members needed. Eager to prepare in advance the new generation of cadres for the people’s army, between 1945 and 1947, the communists ordered the introduction of political training courses for teachers in military high schools, military academies, training centers, and even for personnel from the Higher War School (Chiriac 2018, 228).

Between May and August 1945, following the conclusion of military operations on the Western Front<sup>3</sup>, the Allied Control Commission (in Romania’s case, decisions were made almost exclusively by Soviet representatives) ordered the disbanding of many of the large units that had been formed to participate in these operations. The General Staff was required to revise the military policy of the Romanian state, aligning it with national legislation and the recommendations of Soviet military advisors. These changes were to be implemented in accordance with Decree-Law No. 1909 (Giurcă 2012, 277) on the organization and functioning of the Ministry of War, which had been approved by King Michael I on June 15, 1945.

Subsequently, through Law No. 452 of June 15, 1946, upon the proposal of the Ministry of War, it was established that the General Staff would prioritize actions aimed at increasing operational readiness and preparedness for war. Among its assigned responsibilities, particular emphasis was placed on matters such as army

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<sup>3</sup> The major units of the Romanian army had successfully contributed to the liberation of Northwestern Transylvania, Hungary, a significant part of Czechoslovakia, and Austria.



equipment, recruitment, training, and mobilization of human resources, preparation of war plans, organization of intelligence and counterintelligence activities, drafting of general regulations, ensuring consistency among regulations issued for various branches of the armed forces, organizing military transport and communications, management of funds allocated through the state budget or credit lines, and organizing a historical service responsible for documenting the actions carried out by the Romanian army in the various campaigns it had participated in (Giurcă 2012, 277). Unfortunately, the responsibilities set for 1946 could be altered at any time based on the “advice” received from Soviet advisors.

The next stage in the politicization of the army was carried out with great haste and caution so as not to provoke unrest among military personnel. With the assistance of Emil Bodnăraș, the new head of the Communist Party’s military section, several measures were implemented, aimed at eliminating from the ranks of active officers those loyal to the monarchy and the former political leadership. Thus, on October 2, 1945, through General Order No. 113, the Ministry of War ordered the creation of the General Army Inspectorate for Education, Culture, and Propaganda (E.C.P.), which was later renamed the Army’s Higher Political Directorate (Centrul de Studii și Păstrare a Arhivelor Militare Istorice Centrale „General Radu Rosetti”). This structure, composed mainly of soldiers who had served in the divisions Tudor Vladimirescu and Horea, Cloșca și Crișan, was tasked with identifying those officers who were to be removed within all units of the Romanian army. These measures were implemented by obedient and ambitious party members. During the Central Committee Plenary of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), held between January 25 and 28, 1946, Dumitru Coliu, head of the Military Affairs Section of the Central Committee, justified the need to purge hostile elements from the ranks of the army’s active personnel, citing the potential threat they posed to the stability of the system to be implemented: “the need to isolate and neutralize the reactionary elements within the army’s ranks and then strike with a purge” (Pleșa 2006, 732).

Between 1945 and 1948, all military personnel who had participated in the campaign against the USSR, as well as those who had expressed opinions contrary to the communist political regime or were suspected of harboring anti-Soviet sentiments, were removed from the ranks of active duty. It is estimated that during this period, approximately 32,000 active members of the Romanian army were eliminated from its structure through various methods (Ștefănescu 2013, 732). The legislative framework necessary for this endeavor was implemented very quickly through Laws No. 128 and 186 of 1945, 433 of 1946, and 293 of 1947, which permitted to formulate accusations such as “anti-democratic behavior” and “connections with reactionary circles” (Ștefănescu 2013, 732). A truly dramatic situation was found among the senior officers who held leadership positions within the structures of the Royal Army. By decree issued on August 8, 1946, approximately 8,000 officers



were dismissed from their positions – 5,404 from the land forces, 1,996 from the air forces, and 200 from the navy – (Legea privind trecerea în cadrul disponibil a 40% dintre ofițeri publicată în Monitorul Oficial” 1946), many of whose service records had been filled with negative evaluations downplaying their activity, along with a significant number of soldiers who had been wounded on the front. Additionally, another 1,543 officers submitted resignation requests to avoid being dismissed based on suspicions that, through their proven or alleged behavior inferred from denunciations, they were reactionaries (Legea privind trecerea în cadrul disponibil a 40% dintre ofițeri publicată în Monitorul Oficial” 1946).

On November 5, 1946, the political leadership of Romania – at that time composed mostly of members of the Romanian Workers’ Party (PMR) – moved to the next phase of the “democratization of the army” process. Through General Ordinance No. 18, they outlined four key points that needed to be met in order to achieve the proposed objective. The authorities, installed in Bucharest with Soviet support, sought to bring the Romanian army under their control and to fundamentally transform the way it operated. They demanded that the army’s operational standards align with the concept of people’s democracy, which required the army’s solidarity with the “current democratic regime”. Additionally, they aimed to provide political and social education to all military personnel and to increase focus on “the many and the low-ranking” (Chiriac 2018, 221). The “democratization” movement of the army initiated at this time continued without interruption over the following three years, until the proclamation of the republic and the establishment of the new people’s army.

### **3. The Reform of the General Staff of Defense – an “Ideological Necessity”**

In the hope of obtaining a favorable opinion from the United Nations (UN), on October 20, 1946, the Operations Section of the General Staff drafted a document proposing the transformation of the Romanian army into a modern force organized in accordance with the principles underlying the functioning of Western armies. According to the directives issued by the General Staff on August 10, 1945, the future Romanian army was expected to ensure the “maintenance of sufficiently strong, well-structured and, well-equipped forces capable of meeting national defense requirements and fulfilling any operational missions that may arise” (Istoria Statului Major General 1994, 537). Many experienced officers within the departments of the General Staff believed that Romania should have its own military doctrine, adapted to the national context. The head of the Operations Section actively supported the idea of drafting a doctrine based on the “armed nation concept”, which, in his view, would have allowed for the preservation of Romania’s sovereignty and independence.



He firmly rejected the notion of adopting another nation's doctrine, specifically the Soviet one, arguing that: "it would be entirely wrong to apply the old method of creating a Romanian military doctrine by copying or adapting the regulations of another army" (Istoria Statului Major General 1994, 55).

However, this transformation could only be possible with the approval of the Allied Control Commission, which in Romania was represented by the Soviets. In anticipation of the signing of the Peace Treaty with the USSR<sup>4</sup>, the Soviets undertook "necessary measures" to limit any potential threats that might lead to political destabilization in Romania. As early as the autumn of 1946, they ordered the restriction of the General Staff's prerogatives. On January 15, 1947, shortly before the signing of the Peace Treaty, the Chief of the General Staff drafted the document titled "Planning the Activities of the General Staff," which officially established the future organizational model of the Romanian army based on the structure and doctrine of the Red Army (Giurcă 2012, 279). An important step toward the implementation of this project was taken on March 10, 1947, when the Studies and Doctrine Section was established, with the purpose of eliminating from the Romanian Army's doctrine and regulations any "provocative" ideas that might contradict the model of organization and operation promoted by Moscow.

One of the provisions of the Peace Treaty stipulated that the Romanian state would adopt a new doctrine for the organization and functioning of the Ministry of National Defense. This was formalized through Law No. 205 of June 21, 1947, which stipulated that the General Staff would become the supreme leadership body, responsible for organizing studies, formulating concepts, and planning the organization and training of the armed forces. Regarding the determination of the scale of the new army after the reorganization was complete, several factors were taken into account: the characteristics of the national terrain, the size and specific features of the front that might need to be defended, the country's industrial potential, the army personnel's capacity to operate modern weapon systems, and last but not least, the lessons learned from participation in the war. Although these principles were sound and could have created an efficient army, all efforts made by the General Staff to maintain a higher level of preparedness met firm opposition from Soviet advisors, who advocated the disarmament and dissolution of the large Romanian units that had participated in the two military campaigns and enjoyed a superior level of training. An example of this was the disarmament of the General Staff's

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<sup>4</sup> On February 10, 1947, in the Clock Hall at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, Romania was forced to sign the Peace Treaty with the Allied Powers. Despite the efforts made by our country and the human sacrifices during the anti-Hitler campaign, the Romanian state was declared a defeated nation, condemned to pay an enormous war debt, to lose significant territories, and to accept a military occupation regime. The Romanian delegation—which consisted of Gheorghe Tătărescu, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ștefan Voitec, and Dumitru Dămăceanu - was forced to accept oppressive provisions that foreshadowed the establishment of a long dictatorship. See (Agrigoroaie 2013, 100).



guard battalion (Giurcă 2012, 280), a clear demonstration that the Romanian state and army were undergoing a major crisis.

Preparing for the complete change of the political regime required the adoption of radical measures that would allow the abolition of the monarchy without encountering any resistance. In this regard, through Order of the Day No. 250 dated December 27, 1947, Army Corps General Costin Ionașcu was relieved from his position as Chief of the General Staff and replaced by Division General Septimiu Pretorian. However, Pretorian proved useful to the new regime only for a very short period. On February 1, 1948, General Pretorian fell victim to chance and political intrigues aimed at the total decapitation of the Romanian army's leadership. The official and total change of the political regime occurred on December 30, 1947, with the abdication of King Michael I, an act that was signed under the pressure of Soviet-appointed proxies leading Romania. According to the new constitution officially adopted on April 13, 1948, Romania became a People's Republic, thus sealing its fate for the following forty years. The role of the new People's Army was regulated by Law No. 114 of 1948, which explicitly stated the leading role of the Romanian Workers' Party (PMR). In accordance with the new organization of the General Staff established on April 1, 1948, the head of this structure was appointed directly by the PMR leadership. Under these circumstances, the Romanian Army and its command had to comply with the new political directives, and the transformation that followed almost entirely erased its institutional individuality.

### **Conclusion**

The subsequent period was marked by a multitude of transformations that infiltrated the military system with political activists and opportunists, of both Romanian and foreign origin, whose sole purpose was to gain petty political and economic advantages. The army came under the direct control of the Political Directorate, a structure subordinated to the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party, which, through its political activists, carried out a large-scale transformation of the military institution, distorting the original purpose for which it was created. The new People's Army had to adopt the organizational, planning, and especially ideological model of the Soviet Army, which served as its model during the early postwar years.

A second transformation of the Romanian Army took place in the mid-1960s, following the publication of the famous "April 1964 Declaration" (Băncilă 2015, 250), and especially after the Romanian state's refusal to participate with troops in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. At that moment, the Romanian Communist Party and, implicitly, the Romanian state distanced themselves from the policies imposed by Moscow and ordered military leaders to organize the Romanian Army



according to the principle of the “armed nation”, ready at any moment to defend the state – even against an attack from the USSR and other members of the Warsaw Pact, which Romania was a part of. The absence of any form of political affiliation, and the Romanian state’s inability to join the group of non-aligned states between the two politico-military blocs isolated Romania and, implicitly, its army – a fact that became evident by the late 1980s.

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# INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

## *“LESSONS IDENTIFIED FROM THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE”*

May 16, 2025

The Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies (CDSSS) within “Carol I” National Defence University (NDU) was the host of the third edition of the International Seminar on *“Lessons identified from the conflict in Ukraine”*, which took place on 16 May 2025.

The event was conducted in a hybrid format, in accordance with the Plan of Major Activities of CSSAS for the 2024-2025 academic year and it provided a forum for the exchange of ideas, the multidimensional analysis of conflict, the identification of major threats at the national and international levels, as well as the examination of significant consequences for regional and global stability and security.

In his opening remarks, the Commandant (Rector) of the “Carol I” National Defence University, Mr. Brigadier-General Eugen Mavriş, PhD, outlined several key aspects related to the current security environment. He emphasized the highly complex situation in Southeastern Europe, driven primarily by the unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by the armed forces of the Russian Federation. The session was moderated by Colonel Florian Cîrciumaru, PhD, Director of CDSSS, and Colonel Dan-Lucian Petrescu, PhD, Head of Strategic Analysis and Evaluations Office. The organizing committee included senior personnel from the Centre, along with members of the specialized micro-structure – the Scientific Secretariat, Events and Collaborations Department.

The seminar brought together participants from the national and international academic community, including representatives of military and civilian educational institutions from Poland (Lieutenant Colonel Zbigniew Ostrowski, Doctrine and Training Center of the Polish Armed Forces), Hungary (Tamás Csiki, PhD, Senior Research Fellow at the John Lukacs Institute for Strategy and Politics, Ludovika University of Public Service), and Bulgaria (Flotilla Admiral Kalin Kalinov, PhD, Professor at the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy). In addition, institutions of the Romanian Ministry of National Defence – such as the Cyber Defense Command and the Institute for Defence Policy Studies and Military History – were represented,



alongside members of the Romanian Reserve Officers Association, representatives of the National Defence, Public Order and National Security System, and researchers from CDSSS.

The event featured sixteen scientific presentations, which formed the foundation for the subsequent debates and offered a multidisciplinary examination of the conflict in Ukraine. The presentations addressed military, political, economic, social, informational, and humanitarian dimensions of the conflict. Among the titles presented were:

- “Lessons Learned from the War in Ukraine”
- “12 Military Lessons Learned from the Russia-Ukraine War”
- “Lessons Learned Regarding Military Organisation and Training”
- “Lessons Identified Regarding the Use of Artillery and Missiles in the Russo-Ukrainian War”
- “The Volatile Security Environment that Will Follow the War in Ukraine: Lessons Learned from History and How We Prepare”
- “The Impact of the War in Ukraine on European Security Unity”
- “Cyber Actors Active in the Ukraine-Russian Federation Conflict. Lessons Learned”
- “Regime and Order in the Nuclear Issue - Area”
- “Russian Military Aggression in Ukraine. Impact Upon International Security and the Rule of Law”
- “National Defence Industry Resilience – Lessons Learned from the Conflict in Ukraine”
- “The Ukrainian Lesson on Social Cohesion During the War”
- “Managing the Refugee Inflow Arising from the Conflict in Ukraine”
- “Public Communication Landmarks in the Third Year of War in Ukraine”
- “Russia-Ukraine Conflict – Lessons Identified/Learned”
- “Humanitarian and Sanitary Lessons Identified in the Conduct of the Current Conflict in Ukraine”
- “Three Years of War in Ukraine – Economic Effects”.

At the conclusion of the seminar, the main findings were synthesized, highlighting the lessons learned and contributing to the development of a comprehensive perspective on the regional and global implications of the conflict. Through the scientific quality of the discussions, the diversity of participants, and the relevance



of the thematic focus, the event represented a significant success for CDSSS, and the “Carol I” National Defence University.

Further information regarding the scientific activities organized by CSDSSS may be accessed through the website: <http://cssas.unap.ro/en/events.htm>



**Event photo: *Workshop with the theme “Lessons Identified in the conduct of the conflict in Ukraine”***

***Otilia LEHACI , PhD\****

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- ✓ **Originality** of the paper – own argumentation; novelty character – not priorly published;
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(Grazer and Fishman 2015, 12)

(Smith 2016, 315–16)

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<sup>1</sup> URL: [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html)



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

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