STRATEGIC IMPACT

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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

The fourth edition of 2020 (vol. 77) comprises 11 articles, two book reviews and **Scientific Event** rubric.

The journal opens with the section **Dynamics of the Security Environment**, which encompasses four analyses on current issues, carried out by CDSSS researchers. Thereby Alexandra Sarcinschi, PhD Senior Researcher, addresses *the Race for Vaccine and Medical Resources as a New Side of the Struggle for Power on the International Arena*. Hereinafter Cristina Bogzeanu, PhD Senior Researcher, deals with the issue of *Rule of Law in the Context of the Double Blocking of 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework and Next Generation EU*. Mihai Zodian, PhD Researcher, brings under discussion the complex challenges the future US administration will face: *Biden versus Trump: Elections, Disputes and the National Security*. Crăișor-Constantin Ioniță, PhD Researcher, approaches *The Libya Situation and its Impact on Regional and European Security*.

In the **Geopolitics and Geostrategy: Trends and Perspectives** rubric, Mr. Andras Novak presents an analysis on the issue of *ISIS and the 2015 Migration Wave: Motives and Struggles of Migrants on Their Way to Europe*, stating that future policies and communication campaigns should be based on the analysis when handling a potential future wave of migration.

Next, in the **Terrorist Threat** rubric, we invite our readers to discover two articles: the first, written by Colonel (ret) Radoslav Ivancik, PhD, refers to *International Terrorism as an Asymmetric Threat* and presents *its Characteristics and Means to Fight against it.* The second article belongs to our colleague, Mirela Atanasiu, PhD Senior Researcher, and discusses the situation of Islamic terrorist "lone wolves" as non-state actors and their impact on the security policy of the European Union.

In the **Information Society** you can read an article elaborated by Mr. Adrian Victor Vevera, PhD, *Digital Diplomacy as a Management Strategy of Changes in the International Environment*, which is an analysis on how technological innovations in the field of communications have led to changes in the content and ways of manifestation of diplomacy, highlighting the features of digital diplomacy as an emerging branch of general diplomacy. The second article, by Lieutenant Costinel Nicolae Mareși, titled *Offensive Cyber Operations, an Essential Capability of Hybrid Threats*, explains how state or non-state actors, considered hybrid threats, choose to operate in cyberspace, especially through offensive cyber operations. The third article, *Dark Web*, written by Mr. Attila Gulyás, is meant to shed some light on the popular Dark Web applications and the activities of nation state actors on the Dark Web.

In this edition, we have included a new column, **Military History**, in which Mr. Daniel-Mihai Duțu has conducted a research on *USSR Foreign Policy and the Warsaw Pact*. This paper describes the ineffectiveness of the Pact, both as a military alliance and as a political

alliance, as it did not succeed to achieve its original goal of remilitarizing West Germany and dissolving NATO, failing to save the communist regimes it was supposed to protect.

By the **Book Review** rubric, we would like to bring to our readers' attention the work *Rethinking Military Professionalism for the Changing Armed Forces*, coordinated by Krystal K. Hachey, Tamil Libel and Waylon H. Dean and reviewed by our colleague, Crăişor Constantin Ioniţă, PhD Researcher, and the second work, titled *Tunisia: the Island of Peace or a Terrorist Centre? Your Sons Are at Your Service – Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad* by Aaron Y. Zelin, reviewed by János Besenyö, PhD.

The current edition also includes **Scientific Event**, where one may find matters of interest from *Strategy XXI Conference on The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*, organized online on November 5th, 2020.

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

Strategic Impact is being printed in Romanian language for twenty years and in English for fifteen years and approaches a complex thematic: political-military topicality; security and military strategy; NATO and EU policies, strategies and actions; geopolitics and geostrategies; information society and intelligence. Readers may find in the pages of the publication analyses, syntheses and evaluations of strategic level, points of view which study the impact of national, regional and global actions dynamics.

Regarding international visibility − the primary objective of the journal − the recognition of the publication's scientific quality is confirmed by its indexing in the international databases CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library, Germany), EBSCO (USA), ProQuest (USA) and, in addition, WorldCat and ROAD ISSN, but also its presence in virtual catalogues of libraries of prestigious institutions abroad, such as NATO and of universities with military profile in Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia etc.

Strategic Impact is printed in two distinct editions, both in Romanian and English language. 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 would like to encourage those interested to publish in our journal to prospect and evaluate thoroughly the dynamics of the security environment and, also, we invite the interested students, Master Students and Doctoral Candidates to submit articles for publication in the monthly supplement of the journal, Strategic Colloquium, available on the Internet at http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/cs.htm, indexed in the international database CEEOL, Google scholar and ROAD ISSN.

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

RACE FOR VACCINE AND MEDICAL RESOURCES: A NEW SIDE OF THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER ON THE INTERNATIONAL ARENA

Alexandra SARCINSCHI, PhD*

The second half of 2020 brought not only an increase in the number of cases of infections with the new coronavirus, but also an emphasis of the issues whose roots are to be found in a new type of competition for resources and, implicitly, for power. If at the beginning of July 2020, 154,557 new cases of infection per day were registered worldwide, the daily peak was represented by 20th of December, when 841,735 new cases were recorded, with a daily increase of 129,348 cases[1]. There has also been a growing trend in the number of deaths per day worldwide: from 4,095 cases per day, on 1st of July 2020, to 14,043 cases, on 31st of December 2020, which can be considered the peak of the second semester and of the entire year[2]. Thus, at the time of this analysis completion, there are 83,322,449 new cases of SARS-CoV-2 confirmed cases and 1,831,412 deaths due to COVID-19, globally[3].

The evolution of the number of confirmed cases and deaths due to SARS-CoV-2 is caused by the lack of readiness of states and international organizations in the face of the pandemic. It is about the lack of preparedness from the point of view of both the legal framework that regulates the state intervention in such situations, and especially the resources allocated to manage the pandemic.

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[1] *******, "WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard", *World Health Organization*, last updated at 03.01.2021, URL: https://covid19.who.int/, accessed on 04.01.2021.
[2] *Idem*.
[3] *Idem*.

This paper analyses one of the most important elements in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, namely medical resources, in particular the COVID-19 vaccine, in relation to the evolution of international policy, starting from the premise that, globally, there is a strong competition for this type of resources as a new side of the struggle for power.

1. Medical Resources between Soft Power and Hard Power

The competition for medical resources can be included in a Realist logic, in which, according to Hans Morgenthau, international politics is about struggle for power. There are three basic patterns of struggle for power between states: maintaining power (*status quo* politics), increasing power (imperialist politics), and demonstrating power (prestige politics)[4]. Regarding the latter type of politics, Morgenthau states that the goal of the nation that practices it is to impress other nations with the power it has or wants to be believed to have, using two types of tools: diplomatic ceremonial and military force[5].

If at first glance, the current situation does not seem to cope with the Realist theory, the analysis of the events of the last six months of 2020 can lead us to consider this approach as valid. It is important bringing forward the two types of elements that contribute to the configuration of national power: from the stable ones (geography; natural resources, with emphasis on food and raw materials; industrial capacity; military training − technology, leadership, quantity and quality of the armed forces; population − distribution and demographic trends) to those subjected to change (national character, national morale, quality of diplomacy and quality of government)[6]. According to classical Realism, medical resources do not fall into any such category, but taking into account that, over time, the theoretical framework regarding power and power sources has changed, as can be seen from an overview of currents of thought in international relations, *the current international context allows a reassessment and completion of power sources*.

Building on the classical theoretical framework regarding power, which has in its centre the three types extracted from Realism and Neoliberalism − hard power, soft power and smart power − one can frame *medical resources either as a source of soft power or as a source of hard power*.

As a source of *soft power*, medical resources, especially the vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, appear to be used, for example, by China, according to analysts[7]. In

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[4] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politica între națiuni: lupta pentru putere și lupta pentru pace*, Polirom Publishing House, Iași, 2007, pp. 86-90.

[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 116-128.

[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 151-188.

[7] Rebecca Keller, "Stratfor Podcast: Essential Geopolitics: The Global Race for a COVID-19 Vaccine",

fact, even Chinese President Xi Jinping said at the November 2020 G20 Summit that "China will honour its commitment of giving assistance and support to other developing countries, and work *to make vaccines a global public good accessible and affordable to people around the world.*"[8]. In this context, *vaccine diplomacy* appears to be a solution to the negative effects of vaccine *nationalism*, promoting non-discrimination between countries that are either vaccine developers or only users[9]. However, the European Union identifies a major risk in this "diplomatic" approach, comparing it to *mask diplomacy*: some countries may link access to the needed pandemic resources to political compliance or obedience[10].

Thus, medical resources seem, rather, to be used as sources of *hard power*. An example is the case of the USA, where the statements of the President Donald Trump refer to the idea that the medical resources are used, on the one hand, as incentives, to support friends/partners (in common sanctions against China) and, on the other hand, for the purpose of coercion, denying China access to them. Two of the most important and explicit arguments are the suspension of the financial contribution[11] and the withdrawal of the US from the WHO, with effect from July 2021[12] (April and September 2020, respectively), and, on the other hand, the speech of D. Trump at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly (September, 2020)[13]. In the respective documents and statements, the new coronavirus is called

Stratfor, 29.10.2020, URL: https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/essential-geopolitics-global-race-covid-19-vaccine, accessed on 23.11.2020; Alistair MacDonald, "COVID-19 and soft power", *The British Council*, August 2020, URL: https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/insight-articles/covid-19-and-soft-power, accessed on 23.11.2020; Abigail Ng, "Developing nations are first in line for China's Covid vaccines. Analysts question Beijing's intent", *CBNC*, 09.12.2020, URL: https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/10/covid-china-may-be-using-its-vaccines-to-expand-its-soft-power.html, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[8] ***, "Xi: Make COVID vaccines public good", *China Daily*, 12.11.2020, URL: https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202011/21/WS5fb91b2da31024ad0ba959be_1.html, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[9] Helen Ramscar, "Vaccine Diplomacy in Phase 2 of the Covid-19 Crisis", *TippingPoint2020*, 7 April 2020, URL: https://tippingpoint2020s.com/2020/04/07/vaccine-diplomacy-in-phase-2-of-the-covid-19-crisis, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[10] ***, "No to vaccine nationalism, yes to vaccine multilateralism", *EU External Action Service*, 13.11.2020, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/88701/no-vaccine-nationalism-yes-vaccine-multilateralism _en, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[11] ***, *The Letter of the US President, Mr. Donald Trump, to His Excellency Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO*, Washington, 2020, URL: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/ uploads/2020/05/, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[12] ***, *Update on US Withdrawal from the World Health Organization*, Washington, 2020, URL: https://www.state.gov/update-on-u-s-withdrawal-from-the-world-health-organization, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[13] ***, *The Statement of the US President at the Seventy-fifth Session of the UN General Assembly*, Washington, 2020, URL: https://estatements.unmeetings.org/estatements/10.0010/20200922/cVOf-Mr0rKnhR/cJHrXk2KdRU8_en.pdf/, accessed on 23.11.2020.

the "Chinese virus", China is considered to be the main culprit in the outbreak of the pandemic, and the WHO is accused of not taking necessary measures against this actor, but, on the contrary, it depends on it. Moreover, D. Trump stated that certain categories of surplus medical resources have been shared with "friends and partners all around the globe"[14], American vaccines will end the pandemic, and the world will enter "a new era of unprecedented prosperity, cooperation and peace", while "as we pursue this bright future, we must hold accountable the nation which unleashed this plague onto the world: China"[15].

Some important elements that shape the US position in international politics during the COVID-19 pandemic can be summarized as follows: the actor that must be sanctioned for triggering the pandemic is China; the world is seen as divided into friends/partners and China, and friends will benefit from US altruism in distributing the vaccine; due to the fact that medical resources are crucial in the management of the pandemic, the US has a central role in this process, as it possesses medical resources. This is *the new power politics*, as Deborah Avant and Oliver Westerwinter stated, which illustrates the evolution of power relations and emphasizes their expansion beyond the state, in networks where the central nodes have the most power[16]. Paradoxically, if the new power politics refers to networking as a dynamic force that can shape the future of state actors (this is the power that lies in the material or symbolic patterns of association that link state and non-state actors in networks), the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to an inward orientation, which underlies nationalist tendencies.

However, the orientation towards the national level, in this case, is not an inhibitory factor for power politics, but a catalyst that adds a new source of power, the health system, and *a new type of coercive force based on access to medical resources* (such as medicines, especially vaccine, consumables, equipment, facilities, financial funds, human resources and knowledge). *Thus, medical resources will join the category of important resources specific to the traditional Realistic approach to power in international politics*.[17]

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[14] *Idem*.

[15] *Idem*.

[16] Deborah Avant; Oliver Westerwinter, *The New Power Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

[17] A.N.: These ideas are developed and substantiated in: "Security Perception and Security Policy in Romania after 1989 Revolution", in *Defense and Security Analysis, Taylor&Francis*, URL: https://doi.org/10.1080/14751798.2020.1831239, 26.10.2020 and "Potential new sources of power in international politics. Case study: COVID-19 pandemic and health resources", in *Proceedings International Scientific Conference Strategies XXI. The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*, November 5-6, 2020, Vol. 1, pp. 154-162, "Carol I" NDU Publishing House.

2. Beyond Humanitarian Aspirations:
Struggle for Power and Vaccine Race

2.1. Prestige politics and a new implementation tool adapted to the present

The struggle for power on the international arena includes, according to Realism, a component identified as prestige politics or demonstration of power. Again, *the Realist framework seems insufficient to explain the current reality, but it is obvious that moral authority and credibility are important elements, and if humanity seems to have lost confidence in international organizations, states are the actors that regain it, entering again in the logic of classical Realism.* In support of these statements, the Eurobarometer series of the European Commission indicates the most important changes in public trust in state and non-state actors in recent years.
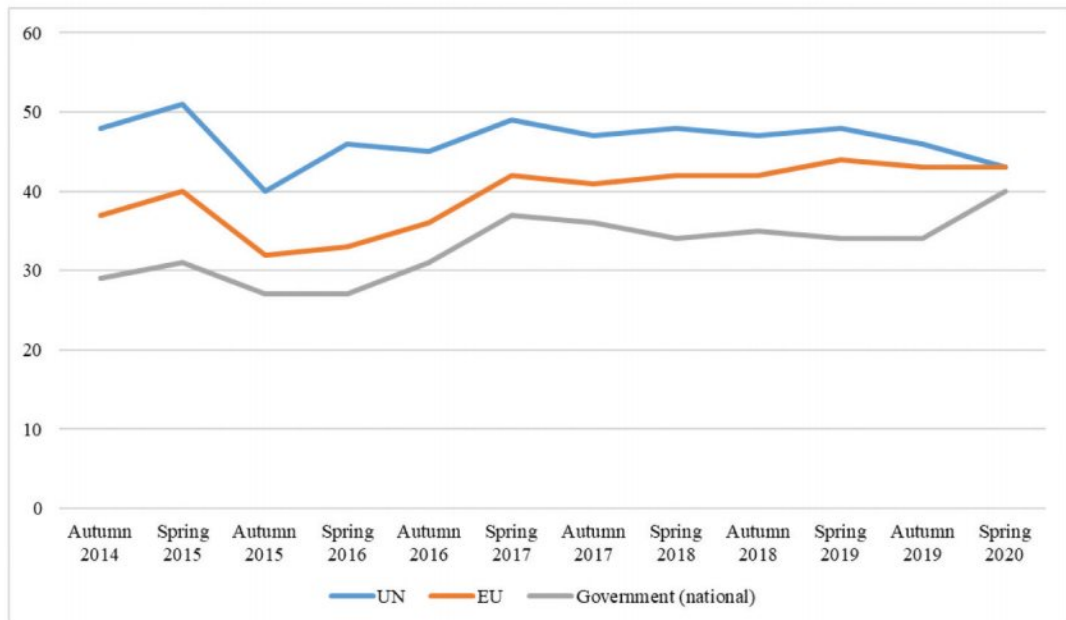
Figure no. 1: Trust in certain media and institutions, according to Standard Eurobarometers No. 92[18] and No. 93[19] (% - tend to trust; the EU level)

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[18] *******, *Standard Eurobarometer 92. Autumn 2019*, European Commission, 2019, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinionmobile/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/surveyKy/2255, accessed on 20.11.2020.

[19] *******, *Standard Eurobarometer 93. Summer 2020*, European Commission, 2020, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2262, accessed on 20.11.2020.
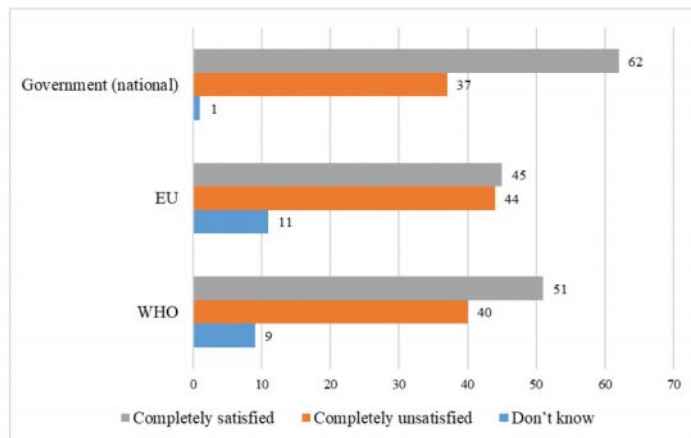
Figure no. 2: Satisfaction with the measures taken to fight the coronavirus outbreak by ... (% - at EU level), according to standard Eurobarometer no. 93 (summer 2020)[20]

It is observed that, while in the case of the UN and the EU there is a decreasing trend in trust of the population starting with the first part of 2019, in the case of national governments, in the summer of 2020 there is a significant increase (Figure no. 1). This is even more visible when investigating the population's satisfaction with the measures taken to fight the pandemic (Figure no. 2): satisfaction with the measures taken by national governments is higher than those with the measures taken by the EU and the WHO, respectively. This trend may seem paradoxical, given that, both in the first part of 2020 and during the period under review, in several European countries there were significant protests against restrictions imposed by national governments (Belgium[21], France[22], Germany[23], Poland[24], Serbia[25]), but they are rather the result of mental

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[20] *Idem*.

[21] Irina Cristea, "Belgia: Prima manifestaţie la Bruxelles împotriva restricţiilor antiepidemice", *Agerpres*, 16.08.2020, URL: https://www.agerpres.ro/mondorama/2020/08/16/belgia-prima-manifestatie-la-bruxelles-impotriva-restrictiilor-antiepidemice--557121, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[22] ***, "În Franţa se accentuează protestele faţă de menţinerea şcolilor deschise. Ciocniri între elevi de liceu şi poliţie", *Hotnews*, 09.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24407394-video-franta-accenteaza-protestele-fata-mentinerea-scolilor-deschise-ciocniri-intre-elevi-liceu-politie.htm, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[23] ***, "Incidente la masivele proteste de la Berlin faţă de restricţiile impuse pentru combaterea pandemiei", *Hotnews,* 02.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-24207223-video-incidente-masivele-proteste-berlin-fata-restrictiile-impuse-pentru-combaterea-pandemiei.htm, accessed on 23.11.2020; Mihai Drăghici, "Violenţe în centrul Berlinului, în cursul unui protest faţă de restricţiile antiepidemice. Aproximativ 200 de oameni au fost reţinuţi", *Mediafax*, 18.11.2020, URL: https://www.mediafax.ro/externe/foto-video-violente-in-centrul-berlinului-in-cursul-unui-protest-fata-de-restrictiile-antiepidemice-19750544, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[24] Mihaela Toth, "Polonia: Mii de oameni au protestat la Varşovia împotriva interzicerii avortului şi împotriva restricţiilor anti-pandemie", *Agerpres*, 13.12.2020, URL: https://www.agerpres.ro/mondorama/2020/12/13/video-polonia-mii-de-oameni-au-protestat-la-varsovia-impotriva-interzicerii-avortului-si-impotriva-restrictiilor-anti-pandemie--627061, accessed on 13.12.2020.

[25] Alexandru Gologan, "Proteste violente erup în Serbia după ce preşedintele a luat decizia de a reimpune starea de urgenţă pe fondul pandemiei de coronavirus", *Mediafax*, 08.07.2020,

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exhaustion (pandemic fatigue[26]) and economic hardships related to the collective effort to manage the medical crisis. Moreover, there are signs that the far-right in various countries is mobilizing the population to protest against the quarantine[27]. Therefore, it cannot be said that there is a direct correlation between protests and trust in national governments and, consequently, the existence of protests does not necessarily imply a decrease in trust in the government.

However, they can be considered as indicators of dissatisfaction with the way the health crisis is managed, especially since the number of cases of infection with the new coronavirus is still on the rise. Thus, an important step in strengthening public confidence in national governments seems to be winning *the vaccine race*. There are various elements that lead us to believe that this is *a race, beyond the obvious need to stop the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible*. First of all, there is *a component of national pride*, in the sense that the symbolism associated with the vaccine development process is directly related to the space race of the 20th Century between the USSR and the US. The Russian Federation has registered the vaccine with by the name *Sputnik V*, its creators (Gamaleya National Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology and the Russian Fund for Direct Investments), stating that "In 1957 the successful launch of the first space satellite Sputnik-1 by the Soviet Union, reinvigorated space research and exploration around the world. The announcement of the new Russian COVID-19 vaccine created a so-called *Sputnik moment* for the global community. The vaccine is therefore called Sputnik V"[28]. At the same time, the US has launched *Operation Warp Speed*, which aims at producing and deliver 300 million doses of safe and effective vaccines, with initial

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URL: https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/proteste-violente-erup-in-serbia-dupa-ce-presedintele-a-luat-decizia-de-a-reimpune-starea-de-urgenta-pe-fondul-pandemiei-de-coronavirus-19408973, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[26] ***, "Pandemic fatigue. Reinvigorating the public to prevent COVID-19", *WHO*, 2020, URL: https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/publications-and-technical-guidan ce/2020/pandemic-fatigue-reinvigorating-the-public-to-prevent-covid-19,-september-2020-produced-by-whoeurope, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[27] Cristina Ariza, "From the Fringes to the Forefront: How Far-Right Movements Across the Globe Have Reacted to Covid-19", *Tony Blair Institute for Global Change*, 01.07.2020, URL: https://institute.global/policy/fringes-forefront-how-far-right-movements-across-globe-have-reacted-covid-19, accessed on 23.11.2020; David Hutt, "Is Europe's far-right using COVID restrictions as a new avenue of agitation?", *EuroNews*, 26.11.2020, URL: https://www.euronews.com/2020/11/26/is-europe-s-far-right-using-covid-restrictions-as-a-new-avenue-of-agitation, accessed on 28.11.2020; Dariusz Kałan, "In the EU's east, the far right seeks to exploit the pandemic", *Notes from Poland*, 09.11.2020, URL: https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/11/09/in-the-eus-east-the-far-right-seeks-to-exploit-the-pandemic/, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[28] A.N.: According to the vaccine's dedicated website, URL: https://sputnikvaccine.com/sputnik-moment/, accessed on 16.12.2020.

doses ready by January 2021[29], with an obvious reference to space and the popular American sci-fi series *Star Trek*[30]. Even Iran, through the company Shifa Pharmed, has developed the vaccine called *Blessed COVIran*, and the Minister of Health, Saeed Namaki, pointed out that this country has been producing vaccines for 100 years, being the first developer in Asia[31].

These are just some of the 56 candidate vaccines for clinical evaluation and 166 in pre-clinical evaluation at WHO, but their names seem to raise questions about two issues: the struggle for power and vaccine nationalism.

2.2. International prestige and vaccine race

In terms of the struggle for power, *the nation that wins the vaccine race will enjoy greater prestige and more reliability on the international arena*. In contrast, the nation that will suffer an unwelcomed public experience, such as China, that is seen as the main culprit for the onset of the pandemic, is more likely to pay the costs of gaining prestige because it wants to minimize the decline in influence; moreover, if this nation has a level of influence closed to that of the dominant state in the system or region, the dominant nation will initiate an international race for prestige, investing in its construction in a manner comparable to that of the "humiliated" state[32].

The case of China is illustrative: its soft power strategy has failed to cope with the blow of the COVID-19 pandemic, fuelling criticism of the authoritarian regime for hiding key information about it, the evolution of the number of COVID-19 cases and crisis management options. Thus, according to an opinion poll conducted by the Foundation for Political Innovation in seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, UK, New Zealand, and Sweden), distrust in China has grown from 43% in 2018 to 63% in 2020[33]. At the same time, the population of the seven countries is almost as worried about the US attitude on the international arena in 2020 compared

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[29] A.N.: According to the website of the US Department of Health and Human Services, URL: https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/explaining-operation-warp-speed/index.html, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[30] Matthew Lynn, "The race to find Covid vaccine has become a global power struggle", *The Spectator*, 10 September 2020, URL: https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-race-to-find-a-covid-vaccine-has-become-a-global-power-struggle, accessed on 15.10.2020.

[31] Borzou Daragahi, "Iran begins human trials of its homegrown Covid vaccine", *The Independent*, 29.12.2020, URL: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/covid-iran-vaccine-coviran-sanctions-b1779956.html, accessed on 30.12.2020.

[32] David Ceasar Wani, "The Struggle for Power, Profits and Prestige in the International System", *Modern Diplomacy*, 13.03.2020, URL: https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/03/13/the-struggle-for-power-profits-and-prestige-in-the-international-system/, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[33] Victor Delage, *COVID-19. United States, China and Russia. Great Powers Worry Public Opinion*, Foundation pour L'Innovation Politique, June 2020, pp. 11-12, URL: https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/publications-ifri/european-public-opinion-china-age-covid-19-differences-and-common, accessed on 16.12.2020.

to 2018 (70% and 68% respectively) and less worried about Russia (56% in 2020 compared to 64% in 2018), which indicates that the latter appears to be seen as a declining power[34]. Also, according to another public opinion poll conducted by the Pew Research Centre in June-July 2020, Americans blame China for its role in spreading the COVID-19 epidemic[35].

The arguments that *a competition for prestige has already been launched on the international arena*, as part of the struggle for power, are provided not only by the mentioned opinion polls. Even the way in which the great powers and the supported companies have chosen to announce the achievements in the vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 delivers important clues.

In early August, Russia announced the approval of the Sputnik V vaccine[36], at the end of October they submitted to the WHO the application for its accelerated registration[37], despite experts' criticism regarding the non-compliance with testing procedures (Warwick Business School, University of London's Genetics Institute, Imperial College London[38], Germany[39], WHO[40], open letter signed by 38 scientists to *The Lancet* journal[41]), and in early December they began vaccinating teachers, doctors and social workers[42]. At the same time, China also announced, on 11th of August,

[34] *Idem*.

[35] Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, Christine Huang, *Americans Fault China for Its Role in the Spread of COVID-19*, 30.07.2020, URL: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/07/30/americans-fault-china-for-its-role-in-the-spread-of-covid-19/, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[36] ***, "Rusia a numit noul vaccin anti-coronavirus Sputnik V, reamintind de Războiul Rece", *Financial Intelligence*, 11.08.2020, URL: https://financialintelligence.ro/rusia-a-numit-noul-vaccin-anti-coronavirus-sputnik-v-reamintind-de-razboiul-rece/, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[37] I.B., "Covid-19: Rusia şi-a prezentat vaccinul pentru precalificare la OMS", *Hotnew*s, 27.10.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24380512-covid-19-rusia-prezentat-vaccinul-pentru-precalificare-oms.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[38] N.O., "Coronavirus: Cum am putea avea încredere în vaccinul anti-Covid al Rusiei fără datele studiului, întreabă cercetătorii", *Hotnews*, 11.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24224977-coronavirus-cum-putea-avea-incredere-vaccinul-anti-covid-rusiei-fara-datele-studiului-cercetatori.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[39] R.M., "Coronavirus: Berlin are îndoieli în privinţa «calităţii, eficienţei şi securităţii» vaccinului rusesc", *Hotnews*, 11.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24224728-coronavirus-germania-vaccin-rusia.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[40] N.O., "OMS reaminteşte că vaccinul rus trebuie să treacă de o serie de proceduri riguroase", *Hotnews*, 11.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24224371-oms-reaminteste-vaccinul-rus-trebuie-treaca-serie-proceduri-riguroase.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[41] Robert Kiss, "Vaccinul rusesc, contestat de cercetători din 5 ţări: «Datele arată valori duplicate»", *Digi24*, 15.09.2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/vaccinul-rusesc-contestat-de-cercetatori-din-5-tari-datele-arata-valori-duplicate-1368762, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[42] S.J., "Coronavirus: Moscova va începe vaccinarea împotriva coronavirusului de sâmbătă", *Hotnews,* 03.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24457212-moscova-deschide-centre-vaccinare-anti-covid-sambata.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

the approval of the first patent for a vaccine developed by CanSino Biologics and stressed out that there will be a third phase that will take place in Saudi Arabia and possibly in Russia, Brazil and Chile[43]. Moderna, a company backed by the US government, is the first to start testing a vaccine on humans (March 2020[44]), but was more reluctant to make its progress public, and the vaccine was approved in the US in mid-December[45], when the company declared it had been conceived in early January 2020, before the Chinese authorities recognized the human transmission of the new coronavirus[46]. Two other major competitors in the area, AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech, also announced the development of two vaccines, AZD1222, respectively BNT162, respecting the testing and approval procedures: the first is the first vaccine validated in a scientific journal[47], and the second was approved by the UK on 2 December[48], despite criticism from EU officials[49], and on 21 December by the European Medicines Agency (EEA)[50].

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[43] G.S., "China a aprobat primul brevet de vaccin anticovid", *Hotnews*, 17.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24234729-china-aprobat-primul-patent-vaccin-anticovid.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[44] D.D., "Cine va găsi primul vaccinul anti-COVID-19. Marii actori şi sumele ameţitoare puse la bătaie", *Hotnews*, 15.08.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24232310-cine-gasi-primul-vaccinul-anti-covid-19-marii-actori-sumele-ametitoare-puse-bataie.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[45] Anamaria Cadis, "SUA a aprobat vaccinul dezvoltat de Moderna. Primele doze sunt deja pregătite", *Mediafax*, 19.12.2020, URL: https://www.mediafax.ro/externe/sua-a-aprobat-vaccinul-dezvoltat-de-moderna-primele-doze-sunt-deja-pregatite-19800096, accessed on 19.12.2020.

[46] G.S., "Vaccinul Moderna, conceput încă de pe 13 ianuarie, înainte ca autorităţile chineze să recunoască faptul că Sars-Cov-2 se transmite de la om la om", *Hotnews*, 13.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24480518-vaccinul-moderna-conceput-inca-13-ianuarie-inainte-autoritatile-chineze-recunoasca-faptul-sars-cov-2-transmite.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[47] Merryn Voysey, Sue Ann Costa Clemens, Shabir A Madhi, Lily Y Weckx, Pedro M Folegatti, Parvinder K Aley et. al, "Safety and efficacy of the ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 vaccine (AZD1222) against SARS-CoV-2: an interim analysis of four randomised controlled trials in Brazil, South Africa, and the UK", *The Lancet*, 08.12.2020, URL: https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)32661-1, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[48] G.S., "Marea Britanie, prima ţară din lume care aprobă vaccinul Pfizer/BioNTech. Acesta va fi disponibil în tot Regatul Unit săptămâna viitoare", *Hotnews*, 02.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24453912-marea-britanie-prima-tara-din-lume-care-aproba-vaccinul-pfizer-biontech.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[49] G.S., "UE critică dur Marea Britanie pentru graba cu care a aprobat vaccinul Pfizer/Răspunsul Londrei", *Hotnews*, 02.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24454947-critica-dur-marea-britanie-pentru-graba-care-aprobat-vaccinul-pfizer-raspunsul-londrei.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[50] V.M., "Vaccinul Pfizer-BioNTech, autorizat în Uniunea Europeană", *Hotnews*, 21.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24497745-vaccinul-pfizer-biontech-autorizat-pentru-uniunea-europeana.htm, accessed on 21.12.2020.

These companies have entered a so-called *vaccine race*, not only to develop first the best solution to combat the pandemic, as a humanitarian mission, but also to increase their symbolic capital and the one of the country that guarantee them, and also to gain markets.

In November 2020, there were launched a series of statements on the effectiveness of the main vaccines in the clinical evaluation phase at the WHO: Pfizer/BioNTech announced that their vaccine is over 90% effective and should be kept at -75°C[51], and Russia raised at 92% efficacy for Sputnik V[52]. A few days later, Moderna announces an effectiveness of almost 95% and storage at -20°C[53] and Pfizer/BioNTech returns with an announcement that promises an increased level of effectiveness, of over 95%[54]. This was followed by AstraZeneca's announcement that its vaccine is about 90% effective, can be stored at refrigerator temperature, is manufactured in 10 units and can be distributed anywhere in the world, and the price for Europe could be 2.5 euros[55]. Russia raises the stakes and announces that Sputnik V will be several times cheaper than those from Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna, can be stored at positive temperatures (2-8°C) and will be produced in countries such as Brazil, India, China or South Korea[56]. However, the Russian vaccine is more expensive than the one produced by AstraZeneca (20 USD/2 doses, compared to 6-8 USD/2 doses), and the storage conditions and the level of

[51] G.S., "«O zi grozavă pentru știință și umanitate» Pfizer spune că vaccinul său are o eficacitate de peste 90%. Este primul caz de succes după testele pe scară largă", *Hotnews*, 09.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24407326-grozava-pentru-stiinta-umanitate-pfizer-spune-vaccinul-sau-are-eficacitate-peste-90.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[52] ***, "Rușii susțin că vaccinul Sputnik V are o eficacitate de 92%", *Hotnews*, 11.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24411815-rusii-sustin-vaccinul-sputnik-are-eficacitate-92.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[53] D.G., "«O zi măreață»: Un nou vaccin anti-Covid produs de compania americană Moderna ar oferi o protecție de 95%", *Hotnews*, 16.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24422469-nou-vaccin-anti-covid-produs-compania-americana-moderna-oferi-protectie-95.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[54] G.S., "Pfizer: Rezultatele finale ale vaccinului contra Covid-19 arată o eficacitate de 95% / Singurul efect advers a fost resimțit doar de 3,7% dintre cei vaccinați", *Hotnews*, 18.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24427038-pfizer-rezultatele-finale-ale-vaccinului-contra-covid-19-arata-eficacitate-95.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[55] G.S., "AstraZeneca anunță că vaccinul său anti-coronavirus are o eficiență de circa 90%. Compania spune că acesta este deja produs în 10 unități din toată lumea. Vaccinul ar putea costa doar 2,5 euro în Europa", *Hotnews*, 23.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24435657-astrazeneca-anunta-vaccinul-sau-anti-coronavirus-are-eficienta-circa-90.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[56] V.M., "Coronavirus: Rusia susține că vaccinul său va fi transportat din februarie la temperaturi pozitive și va fi mai ieftin decât cele americane", *Hotnews*, 23.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24437419-coronavirus-rusia-sustine-vaccinul-sau-transportat-din-februarie-temperaturi-pozitive-mai-ieftin-decat-cele-americane.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

effectiveness seem to be similar[57]; thus the proposal of the Russian developers, at the end of November, to combine the two vaccines to increase their efficiency[58] seems to come naturally. Surprisingly, however, AstraZeneca's acceptance came two weeks later[59], even if the international scientific community dismissed the haste with which Russia approved the vaccine, and the EEA announced that Russia and China had not applied for authorization for their vaccines[60]. In early December, China announced that the SinoVac vaccine, produced by Bio Farma, is 97% effective[61], but it was not registered for authorization by the EEA either. Finally, at the end of 2020, AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot announced in an interview with the *Sunday Times* that the vaccine offers "100% protection" against the disease of severe forms of COVID-19 that require hospitalization[62].

However, it appears that this vaccine competition is currently only winning the markets, in the sense that countries and international organizations have reserved and purchased a huge number of doses, especially from the three major Western manufacturers (AstraZeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech, and Moderna), but the population is becoming increasingly reluctant to vaccination (Figure no. 3).

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[57] G.S., *op. cit.*, 24.11.2020; Thin Lei Win, "Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines could be rolled out early next year. We asked experts to explain the key differences, and which could be the first to reach low-income countries", *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 08.12.2020, URL: https://news. trust.org/item/20201126105058-qbp9c, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[58] N.O., "Ruşii propun companiei AstraZeneca să combine vaccinul său experimental cu Sputnik V", *Hotnews*, 26.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24444813-rusii-propun-companiei-astrazeneca-combine-vaccinul-lor-experimental-sputnik.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[59] Hannah Balfour, "AstraZeneca to test combination of AZD1222 and Sputnik V vaccines", *European Pharmaceutical Review*, 14.12.2020, URL: https://www.europeanpharmaceuticalreview. com/news/136683/astrazeneca-to-test-combination-of-azd1222-and-sputnik-v-vaccines/, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[60] S.J., "Rusia şi China nu au solicitat Agenţiei Europene pentru medicamente aprobarea vaccinurilor anti-Covid dezvoltate de acestea", *Hotnews*, 09.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24473195-agentia-europeana-pentru-medicamente-anunta-rusia-china-nu-solicitat-aprobarea-vaccinurilor-anti-covid-dezvoltate-acestea.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[61] S.J., "Vaccinul chinezesc dezvoltat de Sinovac ar avea o eficacitate de până la 97% - date preliminare", *Hotnews*, 08.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24469227-vaccinul-chinezesc-sinovac-efictatate-97.htm, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[62] ***, "Oxford COVID-19 vaccine has «winning formula», says AstraZeneca CEO Pascal Soriot", *Business Today*, 27.12.2020, URL: https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/trends/oxford-covid-19-vaccine-has-winning-formula-says-astrazeneca-ceo-pascal-soriot/story/426191.html, accessed on 28.12.2020.
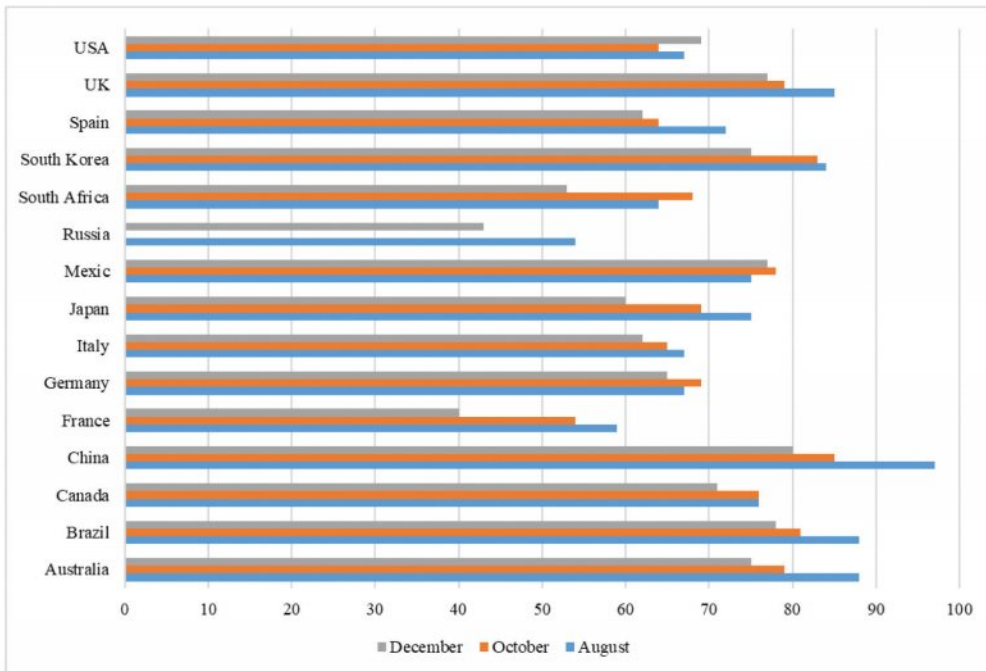
Figure no. 3: Trends in vaccination – Total Agree
("If a vaccine for COVID-19 were available, I would get it"; 15 countries, comparison between August, October, and November 2020), according to Ipsos[63]

It is noted that, although the intention to get vaccinated is high compared to that of refusing the vaccine, the trend is still decreasing in 14 of the 15 countries analysed in the Ipsos survey. Between August and December 2020, in most of the countries subject to analysis, there is both a dramatic increase in the number of new cases of SARS-CoV-2 infection and a decrease in the intention to get vaccinated: the most interesting cases are France and Russia, where the number of new cases is increasing by more than 9 times, respectively more than 3 times[64], and the vaccination intention is dropping below 50%. In December 2020, in each country, more than 50% of those who would not get vaccinated said they were worried about side effects, the highest percentages being in South Korea (80%), Japan (76%) and France (72%). The next reason for refusing the vaccine is its possible inefficiency (in Russia, the percentage of those who choose this option is 45%, the highest

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[63] ***, "Global Attitudes on a Covid-19 Vaccine. Ipsos survey for The World Economic Forum", *Ipsos*, December 2020, URL: https://www.ipsos.com/en/global-attitudes-covid-19-vaccine-december-2020, accessed on 28.12.2020.
[64] According to Worldometer statistics, URL: https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/, accessed on 29.01.2020.

of all countries, probably also due to the approval process that circumvented the international procedure), then the absence of the risk of getting the disease (the highest percentage is recorded in China, 32%, where official statistics show a small increase in the number of cases, as well as the stagnation of the number of deaths caused by COVID-19, between August and December 2020[65]).

Strategic communication of vaccine developers, official statistics and opinion polls show that however, there are discrepancies between the image that countries and companies want to promote, as trusted actors in the fight against the new coronavirus, and the image the public opinion has in regard to the vaccine. The strategy of increasing prestige by winning the vaccine race is risky, primarily because of speculation on the side effects that any of the developed vaccines may have, but also because of the potential disruptions that may arise in the supply chain. Thus, it is possible that the result of the competition will be more the financial profit, not international prestige.

2.3. Risks associated with the race for medical resources

The vaccine race is also complicated by the fact that, in general, the pharmaceutical industry depends on China and India when it comes to the active substances needed to make generic medicines: according to a Pro Generika study, two thirds of these substances are manufactured in Asia and more than 80% of Asian certificates are held by manufacturers in the two countries[66]. Thus, we can identify *another risk factor in terms of race for medical resources*, as Europe's dependence on China has increased over the last 20 years.

From this point of view, the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a new alarm in terms of medical resources because one of the measures taken by governments was to change trade policy towards the export and import of medical products needed to manage the crisis. According to a study by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Global Trade Alert and the World Bank, 85 jurisdictions around the world have imposed export restrictions on medicines from January 2020 to October 2020[67]. Examples are: USA (N-95 masks and PPE, PPE gloves are referred to as "scarce or threatened" materials[68]); Belgium (ban on exports of certain pharmaceutical medicines to non-EEA countries); Czech Republic (export

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[65] *Idem.*

[66] ***, "Majority of generic drug ingredients produced in Asia – study", *Reuters*, 07.10.2020, URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL8N2GW3NC, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[67] ***, "The Covid-19 Pandemic: 21st Century Approaches to Tracking Trade Policy Responses in Real-Time", *The Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, Global Trade Alert, and The World Bank Group,* 2 May 2020, URL: https://www.globaltradealert.org/reports/54, accessed on 10.10.2020; Helen Ramscar, *op. cit.*, 7 April 2020.

[68] ***, "GTA COVID Trade Barrier Data Sheet", *The Covid-19 Pandemic: 21st Century Approaches to Tracking Trade Policy Responses in Real-Time*, 2 May 2020, Global Trade Alert Team.

ban for all FFP3 masks and hand sanitizers); France (wide range of banned drugs, such as antibiotics, analgesics, sedatives and muscle relaxants, as well as several drugs tested as possible treatments for COVID-19, including Hydroxychloroquine, Lopinavir and Ritonavir); Germany (export licensing requirement for certain personal protective equipment, such as protective eyewear, masks, gloves and clothing, as well as visors); Hungary (temporary export ban for Hydroxychloroquine Sulphate and pharmaceuticals containing it); Norway (export ban on pneumococcal vaccines); United Kingdom (ban on the sale of personal protective equipment to non-EU countries), etc. [69]

These measures are part of the trend towards the national level and are completed with US's decision, at the end of June 2020, to purchase 92% of the total production of Remdesivir for the next three months (from the manufacturer Gilead Sciences)[70], the most popular drug treatment for COVID-19[71]. The company announced that by mid-October will be able to meet the demand in Europe, given that the EU countries were facing a shortage of the drug[72], the US Medicines Agency fully authorizes Remdesivir, and Gilead shares immediately increase by 4%[73]. In the chronology of the second semester of 2020, we note an event related to the previous ones: WHO intervenes in the second part of November and urges physicians not to prescribe Remdesivir to patients infected with SARS-CoV-2, but steroids that are administered orally and are widely available, while the US drug is administered intravenously and costs $ 2,340/treatment scheme[74]. One cannot conclude whether or not this recommendation is also related to the US decision to withdraw from the WHO or to the high price of treatment and the increase in the company's profit, but it is certain that it was not openly received by specialists

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[69] *Idem*.

[70] I.B., "Londra şi Berlinul au suficient Remdesivir, în ciuda achiziţiilor uriaşe făcute de Trump", *Hotnews*, 01.07.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24148375-londra-berlinul-suficient-remdesivir-ciuda-achizitiilor-uriase -facute-trump.htm, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[71] Katherine J. Wu, Carl Zimmer, Jonathan Corum, "Coronavirus Drug and Treatment Tracker", *New York Times*, 15.12.2020, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/science/coronavirus-drugs-treatments.html, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[72] G.S., "Ţările europene au intrat într-o criză de Remdesivir. UE nu a semnat încă un nou contract cu Gilead", *Hotnews*, 07.10.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24335139-tarile-europene-intrat-intr-criza-remdesivir-nu-semnat-inca-nou-contract-gilead.htm, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[73] I.B., "Statele Unite autorizează pe deplin Remdesivirul/Acţiunile Gilead au crescut rapid", *Hotnews*, 22.10.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24370082-statele-unite-autorizeaza-deplin-remdesivirul-actiunile-gilead-crescut-rapid.htm, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[74] D.P., "FT: OMS recomandă să NU se prescrie Remdesivir pacienţilor cu Covid", *Hotnews*, 20.11.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-24430499-oms-recomanda-nu-prescrie-remdesivir-pacientilor-covid.htm, accessed on 17.12.2020.

in the area, such as Germany and Canada[75]. WHO has continued its fight against the risk of exacerbating nationalism and the pursuit of profit by pharmaceutical companies, trying to reach an agreement to exempt vaccines against SARS-CoV-2 from intellectual property rights so that they are accessible to everyone at a lower cost, but failed, in part because of opposition from the EU, the US and Japan[76]. This highlights the risk that poor countries will not have access to a sufficient number of vaccine doses. In fact, an Oxfam study shows that only 1 in 10 people in 70 poor countries will have access to vaccines, as most of the doses that will be produced in the near future have already been contracted by rich countries, which, although total only 14% of the world's population, have reserved up to 53% of the most promising vaccines[77]. According to this study, the latter have purchased enough doses to vaccinate their entire population almost three times by the end of 2021 (if all vaccines in clinical trials are approved for use), one such case being Canada which ordered doses to vaccinate each Canadian five times[78].

However, the year 2020 is not exclusively marked by the struggle for power, which is based on the race for prestige and medical resources, but there are also calls for international cooperation and equity in the distribution of medical resources, especially vaccines, made by both state actors (especially G20 countries) and non-state actors (WHO, EU, OECD, Gavi, etc.). Specialists even talk about reforming international cooperation so that there is no danger to be undermined by a single actor who does not want to cooperate[79] or about

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[75] Maia Anderson, "WHO's decision to reject remdesivir based on flawed study, health experts say", *Becker Hospital Review*, 03.12.2020, URL: https://www.beckershospitalreview.com/pharmacy/who-s-decision-to-reject-remdesivir-based-on-flawed-study-health-experts-say.html, accessed on 17.12.2020.; S.J., "Coronavirus: Germania respinge recomandarea OMS de a nu folosi Remdesivir pentru tratarea pacienților spitalizați cu COVID-19 (surse)", *Hotnews*, 02.12.2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-coronavirus-24455329-germania-respinge-recomandarea-oms-privind-remdesivir.htm, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[76] G.C., "Este proprietatea intelectuală o piedică pentru imunizarea în masă împotriva COVID? Ce au decis țările lumii", *Digi24*, 11.12.2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/este-proprietatea-intelectuala-o-piedica-pentru-imunizarea-in-masa-impotriva-covid-ce-au-decis-tarile-lumii-1415987, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[77] ***, "Campaigners warn that 9 out of 10 people in poor countries are set to miss out on COVID-19 vaccine next year", *OXFAM International*, 09.12.2020, URL: https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/campaigners-warn-9-out-10-people-poor-countries-are-set-miss-out-covid-19-vaccine, accessed on 17.12.2020.

[78] *Idem*.

[79] Matiangai Sirleaf, "Capacity-Building, International Cooperation, and COVID-19", *Insights*, American Society of International Law, Volume 24, Issue 17, July 2020, URL: https://www.asil.org/insights/volume/24/issue/17/capacity-building-international-cooperation-and-covid-19, accessed on 17.12.2020.

developing that elements such as internationally coordinated policies aimed at the recovery and sustainable reconstruction of socio-economic systems[80].

Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic reveals two trends in international politics: on the one hand, the stimulation of international cooperation to manage the health crisis and, on the other hand, a state-oriented approach toward national level. The latter highlights issues such as competition for medical resources, with a focus on race for vaccine, and vaccine nationalism. These trends are possible frameworks for developing a new source of power – medical resources, and a new type of constraint based on the access to them. Thus, medical resources will join important resources specific to Realist and Neorealist approaches.

The events of *the last semester of 2020 orient the security analysis towards a new hypothesis according to which medical resources become an important element of defining a new type of struggle for power in this health crisis, similar to the nuclear race or the conquest of territories*. If in previous years, nuclear weapons were regarded as carriers of prestige, in this case, *the issue of international prestige is linked to the health dimension*. It is a type of prestige associated with the scientific domain, with applicability in the medical area, where rapid discoveries in terms of treatment and combating the pandemic lead to acquiring a better image on the international arena, but also influence and a greater control over related resources.

At this time, it is not possible to state unequivocally whether this evolution will be maintained, but if the COVID-19 pandemic is just one of a new series of pandemics, it is possible that medical resources' role as sources of hard power will be developed.

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[80] Aida Caldera Sanchez, Shashwat Koirala, "Eight priorities to strengthen international cooperation against Covid-19", *OECD ECOSCOPE*, 12.06.2020, URL: https://oecdecoscope.blog/2020/06/12/eight-priorities-to-strengthen-international-cooperation-against-covid-19/, accessed on 17.12.2020.

RULE OF LAW IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DOUBLE BLOCKING OF 2021-2027 MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK AND NEXT GENERATION EU

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In the second part of 2020, European security dynamics has been marked by the ongoing effort to manage the social and economic effects of the pandemic. Following the approval of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and the Next Generation EU economic recovery plan (July 2020), European leaders had to overcome a new obstacle – Poland and Hungary vetoed the approval the two financial packages, due to the rule of law requirement for Member States' access to these financial sources, accusing Brussels of applying double standards in relation to EU Member States.

This analysis provides an overview of the economic and, especially, political challenges the EU and its Member States are facing. The aim of the research is to analyse the motivation behind the EU's decision to impose the conditionality of complying with the rule of law in order to access the two economic packages and the impact of shaping/presenting distinct views on EU core values has on security. The research hypothesis is that imposing these conditions is justified by the social, political and economic trends outlined at Union level.

1. General Framework

Towards the end of 2020, Europe has entered the second wave of the pandemic. Health systems are once again under greater pressure because of the high number

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of COVID-19 infections, but the experience of the first wave, the existence of crisis management procedures, and the growing prospects of mass vaccination approval and implementation make the situation appear to be more under control than during the first wave of the pandemic, at least until the time of this paper's writing.

The latest European Commission economic forecast indicates an economic contraction of 7.8% in 2020, to subsequently increase by 4.2% in 2021 and 3% in 2022[1], a slightly changed forecast as compared to the summer report (an 8.3% contraction of EU economy in 2020, with a return of 5.8% in 2021[2]). The impact of the pandemic on the European economy is already clear and visible. Moreover, along with the economic consequences of the 2020 health crisis, another phenomenon is expected to have major repercussions in terms of European economic stability – Brexit. On December 31st, 2020, the transition period expires, as does the time available to British and European leaders to negotiate the terms of the deal setting the conditions in which the separation will take place. In this respect, during the negotiations for 2021-2027 MFF and Next Generation EU, the prospects were not among the most favourable, neither for the EU, nor for the UK, all the more so as, at least by the beginning of December 2020, the scenario in which negotiations would have resulted in an agreement seemed very unlikely, and the most likely option was a "no deal" Brexit. However, on December, 24th 2020, international press announced that the two sides reached a compromise on future trade relations, reaching an agreement, thus avoiding the harmful option of a "no deal" Brexit[3]. In this situation, trade relations between EU and the United Kingdom would have been subjected to the rules of the World Trade Organization as of January 1st, 2021,

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[1] ***, "Autumn 2020 Economic Forecast: Rebound Interrupted as Resurgence of pandemic deepens uncertainty", *European Commission*, 5 November 2020, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2021, accessed on 05.11.2020.

[2] ***, "Summer 2020 Economic Forecast: An even deeper recession with wider divergences", 7 July 2020, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1269, accessed on 07.07.2020.

[3] A.N.: Negotiations ended on December, 24th 2020, and on December, 31st was signed the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement. For details, see: ***, *Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the One Part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the Other Part*, 31.12.2020, URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22020A1231(01)& from=EN, accessed on 04.01.2021. At the same time, there were signed two other agreements standardizing EU-UK relations ever since January, 1st 2021−*Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Concerning Security Procedures for Exchanging and Protecting Classified Information*, URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:2 2020A1231(02)&from=EN; and the *Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Atomic Energy Community for Cooperation on the Safe and Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy*, URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:22020A1231(04)&from=EN, accessed on 04.01.2021.

the least favourable option for both parties, which would have attracted negative effects on the economies of both entities involved[4].

Therefore, for Europe, the pandemic is only one of the most acute problems, which requires urgent identification of solutions. Its implications are anchored in the area of maintaining European security and stability, maintaining the cohesion of the European bloc, reducing the economic impact of the pandemic and, further, in its ability to adapt and maintain its relevance as a major player in an increasingly competitive and tense international context. The agenda of the European Council of 10 December 2020 is illustrative in this respect: a) EU response to COVID-19 pandemic; b) climate change; d) security (fight against terrorism and violent extremism); e) external relations (US elections and consequences for EU-US relations, the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean and relations with Turkey, relations with the southern neighbourhood); f) Euro summit[5].

Given the major repercussions for European stability and security, in this analysis we will focus on the implications of blocking the adoption of the 2021-2027 MFF and Next Generation EU economic recovery plan, adopted in July 2020, arguing that non-compliance with democratic values and different perceptions on them can jeopardize the stability and security of the entire European bloc.

2. Escalation and Decrease of Internal Tensions Related to EU Multiannual Financial Planning

If, exactly one year ago, we anticipated extremely difficult negotiations on the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, under pressure to balance out the financial effects of Brexit, in mid-2020, following the strategic shock of COVID-19 pandemic, EU member states showed an unpredictable solidarity at the end of 2019 – not only have they agreed on the 2021-2027 MFF, but also on an economic recovery fund designed to help reduce the social and economic impact of EU health crisis on the medium and long term[6]. The Next Generation EU fund involves loans from the international financial market by the European Commission, amounting to €750 billion, out of which 390 will consist of grants and 350 of loans. Approving 2021-2027 MFF is an essential step not only in the context of post-pandemic economic

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[4] A.N.: According to a RAND Corporation report (2017), in a "no deal" Brexit, UK economy shall have contracted with 4%, while the Union's economy shall fall with 0.7%. For details, see: ***, "Calculating the Economic Consequences of Brexit", URL: https://www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/brexit-economic-implications/calculator.html, accessed on 16.12.2020.

[5] ***, "European Council, 10-11 December 2020", URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2020/12/10-11/, accessed on 11.12.2020.

[6] ***, "Special meeting of the European Council (17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 July 2020) – Conclusions", Brussels, 21 July 2020, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf, accessed on 10.12.2020.

recovery measures, but also in achieving the political goals of transforming Europe, namely the Green Pact, resilience and the digital revolution.

As already mentioned, the negotiation and approval of the two financial frameworks has been among EU's greatest successes in the first half of the year, but also a demonstration of European solidarity in the face of common challenges. The main difficulty at the time was the reluctance of five EU Member States (Austria, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Finland) to increase their financial contribution to EU budget to compensate for Brexit (in the case of 2021-2027 MFF) and to contract common loans on the international market in the case of the economic recovery fund.

After a long and difficult negotiation in a context in which EU Member States already had the prospect of a major global economic crisis, potentially exacerbated at European level by Brexit, severely socially and economically affected by the pandemic, in July 2020, the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (€ 1,074 trillion), together with the EU economic recovery plan (Next Generation EU, € 750 billion) were agreed.

Within the same European Council in which it was decided to adopt the two financial packages, it was also established a conditionality regime for the protection of the two budgets, with a focus on the observance of the rule of law. The approval of the two financial packages was later stopped by Poland and Hungary, joined by Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which vetoed the adoption of the two financial packages in the European Council. The central issue in this context was to make the access to EU 2021-2027 MFF and Next Generation EU funding conditional on respect for the Union's core values, as set out in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty, in order to "protect the Union's financial interests"[7].

Poland and Hungary are among the states for which this conditionality would have had immediate effects as it would have functioned either as a pressure lever for complying with European value standards or it would have prevented their access to the two funds. Brussels has been striving for at least three years to ensure that the two Member States comply with the rules, values and principles assumed at the accession. Both are targeted by infringement proceedings by the EU, Poland for a set of legal regulations that increase the potential for political control over magistrates' decisions, and Hungary for a series of regulations in the field of asylum policy and freedom of expression. As far as Hungary is concerned, one of the most recent such procedures was launched at the end of October 2020 for the "incorrect application of EU asylum law", with Budapest deciding, in the context of the pandemic, that non-EU residents shall submit a declaration stating their intention to seek asylum at a Hungarian embassy outside the EU[8]. Also, in

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[7] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

[8] ***, "October Infringements Package: Key Decisions", *European Commission*, 30 October

Poland, there are significant the street protests over the adoption of controversial laws such as the one banning the abortion[9] or the perception of some political leaders on sexual minorities[10].

When it was time to approve the two financial packages, both Budapest and Warsaw justified their veto on the conditionality of accessing these funds by the fact that, thereby, the EU applies double standards to EU Member States. In their view, the condition to comply with the rule of law principle constituted an instrument to sanction the states pursuing policies distinct from those agreed by Brussels. This despite the fact that rule of law is mentioned as a fundamental value in Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty: "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail"[11]. Moreover, we find the same principles among the Copenhagen criteria, which condition the beginning of EU adhesion process.

Thus, although there is a common legal basis to ensure a unitary understanding of fundamental values (accession criteria and the Lisbon Treaty), in September 2020, the two states, which have been subject to infringement procedures since 2018 for violations on EU fundamental values, announced their intention to set up a joint rule of law research institute, in order to avoid the imposition of double standards by the EU[12].

The issue has given rise to numerous debates on the legitimacy of imposing this conditionality, as well as the exercise of the right of veto over the approval of those financial packages. On the one hand, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, called the states vetoing the approval of the budget to address the European Court of Justice, "the place where differences of opinion on

2020, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/EN/INF_20_1687, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[9] ***, "European Parliament resolution of 26 November 2020 on the de facto ban on the right to abortion in Poland (2020/2876(RSP))", 26 November 2020, URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0336_EN.html, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[10] ***, "EU funding withheld from six Polish towns over 'LGBT-free' zones", in *Euronews*, 30 July 2020, URL: https://www.euronews.com/2020/07/29/eu-funding-withheld-from-six-polish-towns-over-lgbtq-free-zones, accessed on 10.12.2020.

[11] ***, *Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on the European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, Publication Office of the European Union, Belgium, 2010, p. 17.

[12] Laurenz Gehrke, "Poland, Hungary to set up rule of law institute to counter Brussels", in *Politico.eu*, 29 September 2020, URL: https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-and-hungary-charge-brussels-with-double-standards-on-rule-of-law/, accessed on 02.10.2020.

legislative texts are settled"[13], on the other hand, accepting such conditions was described as equivalent to suicide by the Hungarian prime minister[14]. Moreover, there are opinions according to which the expectations regarding the application of the rule of law conditionality for access to 2021-2027 MFF, respectively Next Generation EU were unrealistic[15].

At the European Council in 10-11 December 2020, the second phase of the stalemate in launching the two financial packages was overcome by a compromise solution on the rule of law, namely the application of rule of law conditionality exclusively with regard to the use of those funds. The solution is described in detail in the European Council Conclusions[16], emphasizing that the establishment of a conditionality regime is meant to "protect the Union budget, including Next Generation EU, its sound financial management and the Union's financial interests. The Union budget, including Next Generation EU, must be protected against any kind of fraud, corruption and conflict of interest"[17]. Actually, the compromise does not imply giving up completely to the rule of law condition, but opens the possibility for states that are currently in the process of being sanctioned for previous violations of the rule of law not related to 2021-2027 MFF and Next Generation EU, to access the two financial packages. Moreover, the document states that the rule of law mechanism will apply only where "other procedures (...) would not allow to protect the Union budget more effectively"[18].

The compromise solution weakens the pressure on states subjected to infringement procedures on this issue at European Union level, but allows all the Member States of the Union to benefit from these funds. Additionally, we shall expect Brussels to continue making decisions to ensure that all Member States comply with the common set of rules, values and principles to which they have acceded with the signing of the EU Accession Treaty.

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[13] D.G., "Ursula von der Leyen: Polonia și Ungaria să meargă cu statul de drept la Curtea Europeană de Justiție și să nu mai blocheze banii europeni", in *Hotnews*, 25 November 2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-24441667-ursula-von-der-leyen-polonia-ungaria-mearga-statul-drept-curtea-europeana-justitie-nu-mai-blocheze-banii-europeni.htm, accessed on 25.11.2020.

[14] S.J., "«Suicid»: Viktor Orban cere amânarea discuțiilor privind statul de drept", in *Hotnews*, 25 November 2020, URL: https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-24441496-viktor-orban-cere-amanarea-discutiilor-statul-drept.htm, accessed on 25.11.2020.

[15] Daniel Gros, "The European Council's compromise on the Rule of Law Regulation. Capitulation to Illiberal States or Misplaced Expectations?", *Centre for European Policy Studies*, 2020, URL: https://www.ceps.eu/the-european-councils-compromise-on-the-rule-of-law-regulation-capitulation-to-the-forces-of-evil-or-misplaced-expectations/, accessed on 05.01.2021.

[16] *******, *European Council meeting (10 and 11 December 2020) – Conclusions*, Brussels, 11 December 2020, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf, accessed on 05.01.2021.

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 1.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 2.

3. Conditioning the Access to EU Multiannual Budget on the Compliance with the Rule of Law – Social and Political Perspectives

As far as Budapest and Warsaw position on making access to the budget conditional on the respect for the rule of law is concerned, the motivation is relatively clear, as they are already the subject of Article 7 of Lisbon Treaty precisely because of this – non-compliance with the fundamental values of the EU. However, following the results of the various opinion polls, it is noteworthy that there is a difference, at least at a first glance, between the government's views expressed within the EU and those of citizens towards the European Union, visible in the opinion polls.

The difference between the attitude of Member States' citizens, on the one hand, and, on the other, the official position adopted by their governments during the negotiation of the two financial envelopes is characteristic for both states that played the main role in the second stage of 2021-2027 MFF blocking (veto against the conditionality) and for those having caused the first stage of multiannual budget blocking ("temperate" states, reluctant to increase their financial contribution to the EU budget and to contract common loans under the auspices of the EU).

A recent European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) study shows that for the citizens of "temperate" states, the extent of the expenditure needed for post-pandemic economic recovery is not the major concern. In fact, 8 out of 10 citizens participating in the study believe that Europe does not spend enough in this area. However, the way in which Member States will use these funds is the main source of concern at this level, namely corruption and the possibility of scattering them[19]. Also relevant in this context are the data provided by the Corruption Index, in which, for 2019, the four "temperate" states are in the top 7 (at European level) and the top 15 (at international level) with the lowest degree of corruption perception, while those who vetoed the conditionality of the EU budget are, at a considerable distance, in the second part of the ranking (Figure no. 1).

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[19] Susi Dennison, Pawel Zerka, "The Transformative Five: A New Role for the Frugal States after the EU Recovery Deal, European Council on Foreign Affairs", November 2020, pp. 9, 16, URL: https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/The-transformative-five-A-new-role-for-the-frugal-states-after-the-EU-recovery-deal.pdf, accessed on 26.11.2020.
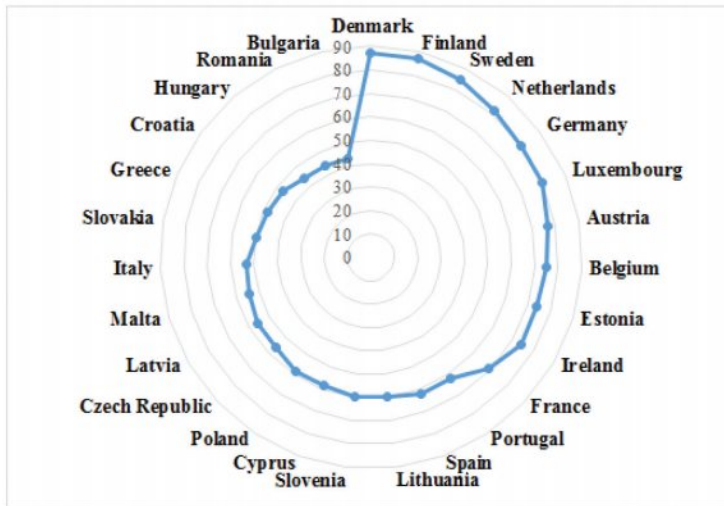
Figure No. 1: EU27 Member States ranking according to the scores in Corruption Perception Index[20]

The same need for guarantees regarding the correct use of EU budget is reflected in one of the latest Eurobarometers on the manner in which European citizens report to the rule of law. In the countries that were in the group of those who initially opposed to increasing the contribution to the EU budget (Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands), the proportion of the citizens responding that this budget should be conditioned on the respect for the rule of law and democratic principles exceeded the EU average. At the same time, it is clear that the citizens of the states opposing the conditioning of the budget by the compliance of the rule of law gave answers indicating, overall, the approval of this conditioning (72% in the case of Hungary and Poland, 59% in the case of the Czech Republic, 69% in the case of Slovakia[21]), although the share of those who totally agreed in this regard tends to be significantly lower than in the "temperate" states and then the EU average (Figure no. 2).

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[20] A.N.: The figure reflects corruption perception in EU27 Member States from the least corrupt (Denmark and Finland, both scored 87) to the ones with the lowest score at European level (Hungary and Romania – 44, Bulgaria). The data was published by *Transparency International* in 2020 and reflect 2019 trends. Nevertheless, as they reflect a long-term trend, we still consider them relevant. For details, see: Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2019, URL: https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2019/results, accessed on 10 December 2020.

[21] A.N.: The percentages include the number of answers revealing their agreement on this condition, including the ones with a firm agreement and the ones prone to agree with the statement in cause (the sum of the first two segments in Figure No. 2).
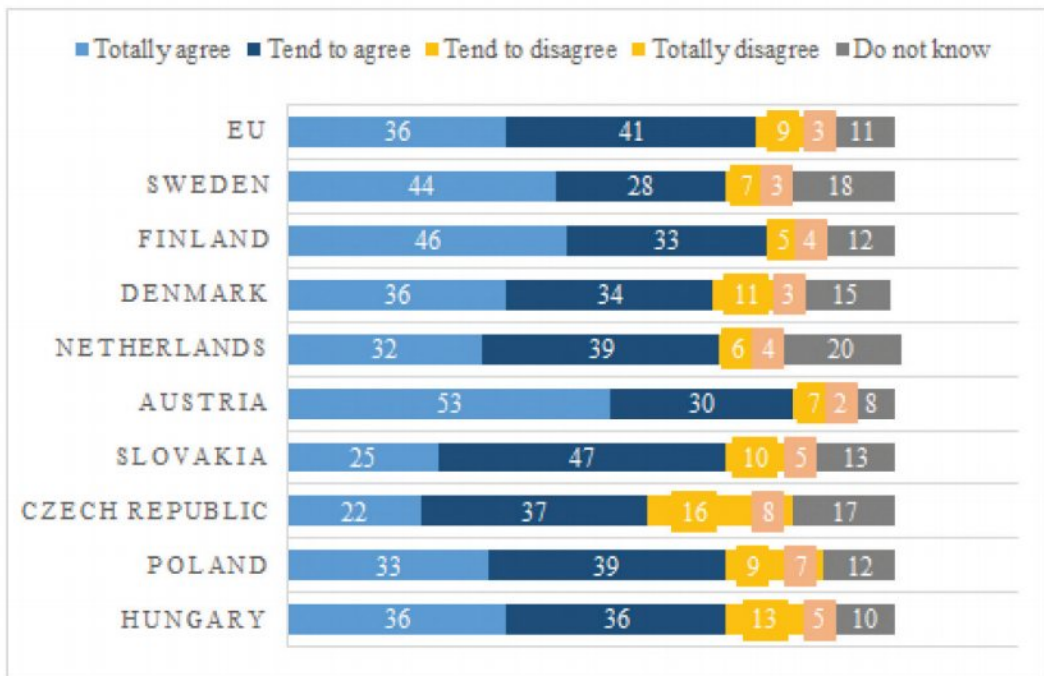
Figure no. 2: EU citizens' response to the question "Do you agree or disagree with this statement: The EU should only provide funds to Member States conditional upon their government's implementation of the rule of law and of democratic principles?"[22]

In this sense, the citizens of "temperate" states seem to have a distinct attitude on the EU from the one expressed at the political level. In their view, EU membership is beneficial, and so is increasing spending to reduce the impact of the pandemic. This statement is supported not only by ECFR study, but also by the latest Eurobarometer on how the EU's response to the pandemic is appreciated by European citizens (Figure no. 3)[23].

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[22] Source: Public Opinion in the EU in times of Covid-19 (3rd Survey), URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/eurobarometer/2020/public_opinion_in_the_eu_in_time_of_coronavirus_crisis_3/en-covid19-survey3-key-findings.pdf, accessed on 21.12.2020.
[23] ***, "The EU and the coronavirus outbreak, Standard Eurobarometer 93, Report, July-August 2020", URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/standard/surveyky/2262, accessed on 10.11.2020.
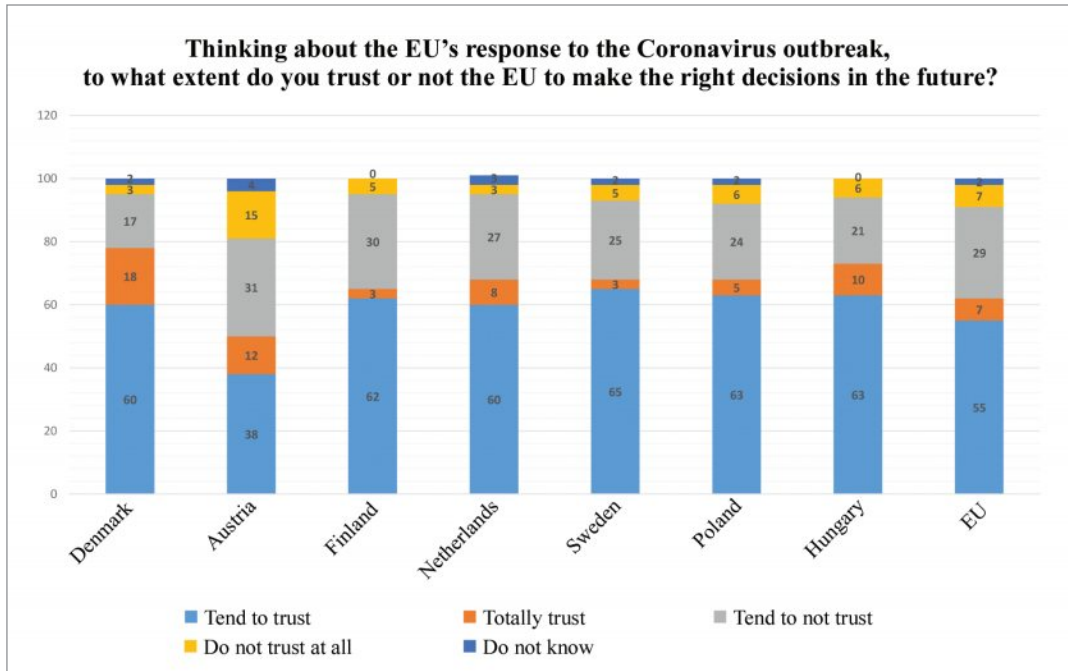
Figure no. 3: EU's citizens' trust in EU's future decisions, given the measures
undertaken for the management of pandemic effects
Source: Standard Eurobarometer 93, July-August 2020[24]

It is also significant that most of the citizens of the Member States who took part in ECFR study gave answers reflecting the belief that their country's influence within the Union has significantly decreased in the last 2-3 years. For example, in Sweden, 43% of responses indicate a decrease in this influence and 25% an increase, in Finland, 48% of responses indicated a decrease in influence in the EU, while 21% a decrease. In Austria, 40% of respondents indicated a view that their state's influence in the EU has decreased, while 37% believe that Austria has more influence in the EU. In the Netherlands, 29% indicate a slight decrease in the country's influence in the EU and 14% a dramatic one, while 43% reflected the image of an increase and 33% of a decrease[25]. Significant in this survey is also the percentage of respondents who either answered "I don't know" or "none of the above", possibly reflecting a low level of information or interest about the EU, or difficulty in understanding how the EU operates. This type of response was given by 32% of the respondents in Sweden, 31% in Finland, 23% in Austria

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[24] *Ibidem*, p. 22.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 10.

and 24% in the Netherlands[26].

Thus, as far as the "temperate" Member States are concerned, at first sight, one could say there is a distance between the position adopted at political level in European fora and the financial commitment within the EU, on the one hand, and, on the other, the vision of these states' citizens in relation to both the necessity of this contribution and their trust in the Union's need and capacity to make favourable decisions in the context of further crises.

In the case of the states causing the first stage of the delay in approving the two financial frameworks (Austria, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark), it is obvious not only the confidence in EU's ability to cope with future crises, but also to the attachment to the EU. Nevertheless, equally important is the fear that the EU budget will not be adequately exploited in the interest of the Union as a whole, because of corruption and the possibility of money dissipation. Therefore, making access to these funds conditional on the respect for the rule of law can be seen as a response to these social trends. In fact, this distance is reduced by the conditionality imposed on the access to these funds – the respect for the fundamental values of the European Union. This response can be all the more important and appropriate as the citizens of the EU Member States who were the cause of the second stage of the delay in approving the two financial frameworks tend to have a position similar to that of the Austrians, the Finns, Swedes, Danish and Dutch.

4. Implications of EU's Internal Crisis on Multiannual Financial Planning on European Security and Stability

The disagreement between Brussels, on the one hand, and Poland and Hungary, on the other hand, regarding the conditions for allocating the 2021-2027 MFF, respectively Next Generation EU, brings back to the table a new "-exit" issue – Polexit[27]. The context is extremely relevant not only in terms of the urgency of implementing the 2021-2027 MFF, but also in terms of approaching the deadline for negotiating EU-UK post-Brexit trade relations. Negotiations on this framework overlapped with the strong social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in early December 2020, the prospect of Britain's exit from the EU under a trade agreement governing relations between the two seemed more distant than ever. However, in our opinion, the probability of a Polexit is extremely low on

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[26] *Ibidem.*

[27] Zosia Wanat, Jan Cienski, "Polexit: 3 Reasons Why Poland Will Quit the EU and 3 Reasons Why It Won't", in *Politico.eu*, 30 November 2020, URL: https://www.politico.eu/article/polexit-poland-veto-kaczynski-morawiecki-polexit-brexit-eu/; ***, "Va ieşi Polonia din UE? Polexit, un scenariu de coşmar", in *Digi24*, 3 December 2020, URL: https://www.politico.eu/article/polexit-poland-veto-kaczynski-morawiecki-polexit-brexit-eu/, accessed on 03.12.2020.

the medium term, given not only the current economic context marked by many uncertainties and strong instability, but also the level of confidence shown by Polish citizens towards possible EU decisions in future crisis situations (Figure no. 3), 69% of them expressing a favourable view in this regard (7 percent above the European average), while 29% have a pessimistic outlook on this issue (7 percent below the European average). The situation is similar in Hungary, where the percentage of citizens showing full confidence in the EU exceeds that of Poland.

Therefore, in our opinion, a new "-exit" of a Central and Eastern European country justified by EU's conditions for accessing the two financial envelopes would not have been supported in a possible referendum. However, in the context in which, at the same time, the EU was negotiating the terms of post-Brexit trade relations, the prospect of a new "-exit" could have been a possible pressure lever on Brussels to waive the rule of law conditionality.

We consider the two stages of blocking medium-term financial planning at EU level eloquent in terms of the distinct vision on some fundamental aspects for the functioning of the EU. The difficulty with which the two financial packages have been adopted at EU level and can be interpreted as symptomatic for the process of democracy quality erosion – in the first instance (the first stage of the deadlock) having to do with an effort to enforce a democratic value, and in the second stage with an effort to impose its own interpretation on the meaning of that value (the rule of law). In our opinion, this second stage can be subsumed to an inter-state example of the post-truth phenomenon which involves challenging the metanarrative of democracy, "using its very weapons, i.e. the democratization of the right to opinion and free expression"[28]. The initiative to create a rule of law research institute is eloquent in this direction[29].

This evolution of EU medium-term budgetary planning negotiation gives a warning sign by the extent of the consequences the failure to approve the two EU financial envelopes would have triggered for European security and stability as this would have meant the impossibility of adopting a set of financial instruments essential in managing the economic crisis generated/amplified by COVID-19 pandemic and, ultimately, an increase in economic and, implicitly, social and political instability throughout the EU.

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[28] Ruxandra Buluc, *Atractivitatea Fake New*s, Top Form Publishing House, Bucharest, 2020, p. 24.
[29] Laurenz Gehrke, "Poland, Hungary to set up rule of law institute to counter Brussels", in *Politico.eu*, 29 September 2020, URL: https://www.politico.eu/article/poland-and-hungary-charge-brussels-with-double-standards-on-rule-of-law/, accessed on 02.10.2020.

Conclusions

The challenges to European security and stability in the second half of 2020 have revolved around the continuous and constant effort to reduce the economic and social impact of Sars-CoV-2 pandemic, but at the same time, older trends have escalated and sometimes called into question the Union's ability to respond effectively in order to manage the internal health and economic crisis, as well as to maintain its regional and international relevance.

If disagreement and negotiation are typical for EU's standard mode of functioning, if compromise and finding the common line and interest have so far been the fine mechanism keeping the Union afloat, the context and evolution of the negotiation of the two financial packages in 2020 have raised the question of whether the European Union has reached the limit of flexibility. Our view supported by the present analysis is that the limit of this flexibility lies in the value foundation of the Union, a framework in which the rule of law occupies a central place. Also, following the study of the context and the evolution, first of all at political level, of the approval of the two financial packages, we can draw the following conclusions:

1. We have a complex European context in which the conditions of a severe economic crisis are being not only determined by the negative evolutions of recent years, but also accentuated by Brexit and the prospect of Britain leaving the EU without a trade agreement[30], as well as accelerated by the measures undertaken especially during the first wave of the pandemic in order to reduce the number of infections, but with a strong economic effect, as well as Europe's entry into the second wave of the pandemic.

2. *European citizens have a high degree of confidence in the European Union's ability to make appropriate decisions in the context of future crises*, and even more, confidence in the need to deepen European integration. Therefore, *we are not necessarily dealing with mistrust in the EU and the European institutions, but between the member states of the organization*.

3. There is a low degree of confidence in the *correctness with which that financial plan will be implemented at EU Member States' level*. Corruption and non-compliance with the rule of law constitute the main hotspots. Therefore, adherence to a common set of values is a key factor in removing major obstacles to negotiating a common path at European level and avoiding a new "-exit".

4. *The decision to condition the access at the two financial envelopes is adapted to the trends highlighted by the main opinion polls at European level with regard to the European citizens' reporting to the European Union*. Apparently paradoxically,

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[30] A.N.: The post-Brexit trade agreement between the EU and the UK was agreed on December 24th, 2020, but during the negotiations the prospect of a "no-deal" Brexit was very likely.

the conclusion applies not only to European citizens in "temperate" or better developed countries, but also to those with poorer economic performance, where most citizens agree that complying with the rule of law shall condition the access at 2021-2027 MFF and Next Generation EU. In our opinion, it is a confirmation that the violation of the rule of law cannot be considered in the interest of any nation.

5. If we take into account the fears of European citizens in the countries initially reluctant to increase their contribution to the common budget, then the imposition of this condition can also be considered a measure to increase the level of *cohesion* at Union level, as it could work as a guarantee that the capitalization of the two financial packages will be done correctly.

6. *Setting a rule of law condition for the access to European funding is a predictable measure, which continues the series of measures previously undertaken for ensuring that this fundamental value of the EU is respected* and which was intended to put more pressure on EU Member States in this direction.

7. The coercive measures implemented by Brussels against *Member States' abuses on values considered fundamental* are, by no means, a novelty. However, unprecedented would have been the effects of EU blocking the access to the two funds in case these fundamental values were abused. The effect of this conditioning would have been unprecedented, especially in the context of the economic and health crisis triggered by the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic. The trend is not new, but the effects of this initiative would certainly have been.

8. Unprecedented, in terms of effects, is the pressure put by Visegard Group states on the EU, capitalizing on the crisis context (health, economic, Brexit) at European level, in order to achieve their own interests.

9. The compromise that overcame the second stage of the financial stalemate at EU level – imposing the rule of law condition as a restriction only with regard to accessing EU funds – suggests that Brussels' efforts in this direction will continue in the short and medium term.

BIDEN VERSUS TRUMP: ELECTIONS, TENSIONS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mihai ZODIAN, PhD*

The former vice-president Joe Biden won the November 2020 elections by defeating the incumbent Donald Trump. A new team is proposed with experience related to the Democratic Party and defined mostly by centrist ideas about national security. The upcoming administration will have to deal with difficult issues and will probably focus on health and welfare, and less on classical themes of international relations which will retain a presence nonetheless.

This paper describes the main events about the recent U.S. elections, trace their consequences, and offers some predictions. The short-term projections will outline the immediate challenges for the new leaderships: internal coherence, the pandemic and economic recovery, the transatlantic relationships, and the policy on China. In the medium term, it will be about the Biden team's security vision, changes of global distribution of power, and reforming the formulas for international cooperation. These perspectives are derived from a combination of internal factors, explaining decision-making, capabilities and interests.

The U.S. elections were controversial. The Democratic candidate, Joe Biden, won the competition of 3 December 2020, defeating the President-in-Office, Donald Trump, with 306-202 grand electors, on a participation rate of over 68%, and with a popular but informal voting advantage of 81,282 million to 72,223[1]. The elections took place in special conditions, in a political polarized society in which over 100 million citizens voted by correspondence. The results were consecrated by the Electoral College (14 December 2020), were contested in court by the defeated faction but probably without significant changes as allegations of fraud by

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[1] ***, "Presidential Election Results", *Fox News*, URL: https://www.foxnews.com/elections/2020/general-results, accessed on 20.12.2020.

Republican leaders were not convincing enough[2].

Several other institutions held elections, of which the U.S. Congress was significant. The results differed somehow in this case. The Republican party seemed to retain its senatorial advantage, while the Democrats obtained a score of 222 to 211 in the House of Representatives[3]. This divergence may enhance the pluralism of American federal politics, but also the risk of a decisional stalemate, similar to the one manifested during the Clinton and Obama administrations, taking into account the intense political polarization which the 3 November elections demonstrated.

The usual swing states were again decisive. Now, they included Pennsylvania, Nevada, Georgia and a few from the Midwest, states in which the difference was small, of a few thousands or tens of thousands votes. Trump team's representatives contested the results, by arguing that the votes by correspondence sent before 3 November, but received after this date should not have been counted; the Republicans invoked suspicion of fraud, taking into account that these votes were seen as potentially in favor of their competitors. In general, the contestations were rejected and the allegations were not confirmed[4].

The results have been thus highly contested, especially by the Republicans. The U.S. President, Donald Trump, initially refused to admit the defeat anticipated by the mainstream estimates, contrary to the custom, while his team filled formal appeals. During December, the seating of the Electoral College was planned (the institution which formally chooses the American chief of state) and the new administration was to be inaugurated on 20 January 2021[5].

One immediate challenge could be the practice of an effective internal diplomacy. The U.S policy is divided between various and often incompatible factions, while the development of means to cope with these issues and transcend divergences would contribute to more reasonable decision-making and evaluation procedures[6]. The U.S. ideological polarization and the Republican majority in

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[2] Michael Martina, Jarrett Renshaw, "Democracy prevailed, Biden says after U.S. Electoral College confirms his win", *Reuters*, 14 December 2020, URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election/democracy-prevailed-biden-says-after-u-s-electoral-college-confirms-his-win-idUSKBN28O0FM, accessed on 15.12.2020; Rachel Dottle, Demetrios Pogkas, "Voter Turnout Hits Historic Levels With States Still Counting Votes", *Bloomberg*, 4 November 2020, URL: https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2020-us-election-voter-turnout/, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[3] ***, "Presidential Election Results", *op. cit.*

[4] Tom Hals, Makini Brice, "U.S. Appeals Court rejects bid to block Georgia win for Biden", *Reuters*, 5 December 2020, URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-lawsuit-georgia/u-s-appeals-court-rejects-bid-to-block-georgia-win-for-biden-idUSKBN28F0MS, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[5] Miles Parks, "Biden's Victory Cemented as States Reach Key Electoral College Deadline", *NPR*, 8 December 2020, URL: https://www.npr.org/2020/12/08/942288226/bidens-victory-cemented-as-states-reach-deadline-for-certifying-vote-tallies, accessed on 15.12.2020.

[6] Jon Meacham, *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels*, Random House, f. l., 2018.

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the Senate could constrain the policies of the Biden administration, as it is often mentioned, and the intensity of these disputes may increase. Nevertheless, we should not expect a precise repetition of the past since the context is different and there are many incertitudes.

The value of international security will depend on influences from other domains. It is to be expected that the tendency in favor of prioritizing domestic issues will continue, a tendency often present, but which grew in importance in the context of the 2007-2008 economic crisis and during the Obama and Trump administrations. Dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and economic issues are important topics for the Biden team, as it was to be expected. A special group has been appointed, led by Jeff Zients and the future executive proposed a plan on vaccination, wearing masks and schools' opening[7].

Is also probable that international cooperation will improve. Under pressure from the Trump administration's rhetoric and policies and by the diversity of the interests involved, the relations with European allies and partners will be among the issues to be considered. For example, the diplomatic expectations; NATO coordination; economic tensions, including the American tariffs imposed in 2018; the Iran nuclear program or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The agendas should be close on topics such as global warming, another priority for the future executive, but also the policy about Russia and China. Experts do not see significant changes in the relations with Romania[8].

The rivalry with China will also continue. Maybe the tonality of statements will change, but there is a wide consensus among the U.S. elite about the increasingly competitive nature of the relations between those two countries and the effects for the American security policy. The talks about pivoting towards Asia belonged to the Obama administration, even if the initiatives were modest in the beginning due to events in the Middle East[9]. Nevertheless, the nuances, type of rhetoric and the relationships with regional allies, such as Japan and South Korea, will change in the next administration, while the policy on North Korea is more difficult to anticipate.

It is also likely a consolidation of the international security regimes. For example, the extension of the New START treaty with Russia, signed during the

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[7] Kate Sullivan, "Biden details plan to combat coronavirus pandemic in first 100 days", *CNN*, 11 December 2020, URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/08/politics/biden-100-million-vaccines-100-days/index.html, accessed on 15 December 2020.

[8] Gabriel Bejan, Interviu cu expertul Antonia Colibășanu, "Alegeri SUA 2020. Românii ar trebui să țină cu Joe Biden sau cu Donald Trump?", *Hotnews*, 8 October 2020, URL: https://www.hotnews. ro/stiri-alegeri_sua_2020-24337306-alegeri-sua-2020-romanii-trebui-tina-joe-biden-sau-donald-trump.htm, accessed on 10.12.2020.

[9] Octavian Manea, "Continuitate și ruptură între Biden și Trump", *Revista 22*, 3 November 2020, URL: https://revista22.ro/opinii/octavian-manea/continuitate-si-ruptura-intre-biden-si-trump, accessed on 02.12.2020.

previous Democratic administration. The document was set to expire in February 2021. The text establishes the limits of 1,550 warheads and 700 deployed vehicles for the nuclear strategic arsenals, and the future President has already announced its prolongation[10].

For now, Joseph Biden is starting to gather his team. He is usually seen as one of the skilled centrist politicians among Democrats, benefiting from a large legislative and executive experience, but at the same time, able to easily interact to electors, even at the risk of slip-ups; this centrism was also a defining trait for the Obama administration[11]. His political partner, Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee for vice-president, symbolizes the idea of moderation, a former prosecutor and legislator and the first woman of African-American and native origins put forward for this job. For these reasons, both were criticized by radicals but less than Hillary Clinton in 2016, when those tensions could have made a contribution to Donald Trump's electoral success[12].

Similar orientations seem to define the top strategic job candidates. For the position of National Security Advisor was designated Jake Sullivan, a former lead planner in the State Department and one of Joe Biden's advisors[13]. The former chief of CENTCOM and of J-3, retired General Lloyd Austin will represent the administration as the Secretary of Defense[14]. Avril Haines is preferred to become the Director of National Intelligence, relying on previous experience in the State Department and C.I.A., and Anthony Blinken, for the Secretary of State, with a career in journalism, but also diplomacy, the legislature and various positions in the democratic administrations[15].

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[10] Lucian Kim, "Arms Control: When Biden Takes Office, Clock Will Be Ticking To Save New Start Treaty", *NPR*, 9 December 2020, URL: https://www.npr.org/2020/12/09/943869767/arms-control-when-biden-takes-office-clock-will-be-ticking-to-save-new-start-tre, accessed on 09.12.2020; „New START Treaty", *State Department*, URL: https://www.state.gov/new-start/, accessed on 09.122020.

[11] Evan Osnos, *Joe Biden: The life, the Run, and What Matters Now*, Scribner, 2020; Barack Obama, *A Promised Land*, Crown, 2020; Octavian Manea, "Ce spun primele numiri făcute de Biden", *Revista 22*, 2 December 2020, URL: https://revista22.ro/opinii/octavian-manea/ce-spun-primele-numiri-facute-de-biden, accessed on 02.12.2020.

[12] Kamala Harris, *The Truths We Hold: An American Journey*, Penguin Press, 2019.

[13] Biden-Harris Transition, "Jake Sullivan", URL: https://buildbackbetter.gov/nominees-and-appointees/jake-sullivan/, accessed on 20.12.2020; ***, "Factbox-The Biden Cabinet: President-elect builds a team", *Reuters*, 9 December 2020, URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/usa-biden-cabinet-factbox/factbox-the-biden-cabinet-president-elect-builds-a-team-idUSKBN28J06A, accessed on 10.12.2020.

[14] Biden-Harris Transition, "General Lloyd Austin", URL: https://buildbackbetter.gov/nominees-and-appointees/general-lloyd-austin/,accessed on 20.12.2020.

[15] Biden-Harris Transition, "Avril Haines", URL: https://buildbackbetter.gov/nominees-and-appointees/avril-haines/, accessed on 20.12.2020; Biden-Harris Transition, "Antony Blinken", URL: https://buildbackbetter.gov/nominees-and-appointees/antony-blinken/, accessed on 20.12.2020.

The main orientations are clear to see. The configuration of the new team suggests preferences in favor of professional, loyal Democrats, with previous positions, usually in the Obama administration. Contrary to 2008 when, for example, Robert Gates continued his Pentagon leadership, there are not many continuities in function with the Republicans. Predictability and reformist orientation seems the main criteria, corresponding with the future president's public image[16].

One can also extrapolate some medium and long term tendencies. In the next few years, it is probable that the Biden presidency will promote a Wilsonian orientation in foreign relations with some inputs from realism, combined with a degree of skepticism about the use of force, and a greater reliance on allies, especially for the policies on China and Russia. The reduced cooperation between American elites and the intense domestic polarization may limit the U.S. ability to define and promote its interests and to design coherent and effective national security policies. Nevertheless, compromise is always possible on issues such as Beijing's military modernization.

The international distribution of power will configure several decisions. The rise of China will continue in the medium term and the consequences of this trend will be felt especially in East Asia and neighboring regions, but sometimes on the global scale, as the current pandemic suggest. But the U.S. should retain its power advantages in this time-frame. The Wilsonian ideology may lead to conflicts with the nationalism shared by Beijing's political elite beyond the present disputes but pragmatism may still prevail.

Modernist foreign policy issues will make a comeback. Security in a traditional meaning will be secondary on the medium term by comparison with the intense demand for health policies and economic recovery. The 2020 reactions to the pandemic shows the need to improve preventive policies while the international coordination has sometimes been intensively politicized especially during the disputes between the U.S. and China. The skepticism towards international organizations is shared by much of the American public[17].

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[16] Evan Osnos, *op. cit.*
[17] Ben Rhodes, "The Democratic Renewal", *Foreign Affairs*, September-October 2020, p. 46.

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The November 2020 elections led to a change of the White House administration and a new liberal-moderate team is gradually being established in leadership position. But the United States remains divided as a society and at the political elite's level, and will probably continue to do so; an intensification of these internal tensions may happen, which will influence the national security policies. Healthcare and welfare will occupy the central stage because of the COVID-19 pandemic, while uncertainty prevails and the possibility of new international conflicts can't be entirely discounted in the medium term.

THE LIBYA SITUATION AND ITS IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

Crăişor-Constantin IONIȚĂ, PhD*

The spring of 2019 marked the restarting of military hostilities in Libya and the resurgence of a Civil War. The belligerent parties, represented by the Libyan National Army (LNA), also known as the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), created by General Khalifa Haftar (also called "Hifter" in some articles[1]) and representing the armed faction of the Tobruk-based Eastern Libyan Parliament, as well as the current UN-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA), led by Prime Minister Fayez Sarrai, have received the support of many European and Asian regional powers in their attempt to restore the rule of law over the entire country and, in particular, to take full control of Libyan oil production, which is the nation's greatest resource.

Thus, General Haftar received external support in arms and ammunition from some regional powers with an interest in the area, such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Russia and France, and Prime Minister Sarraj, in addition to unexpected support on behalf of a newly formed coalition of rival Western fighters and the Tripoli militia, has signed agreements with Qatar, Italy and Turkey.

Islamic terrorists from DAESH-Libya (DAESH-L) and Ansar al Sharia-Libya (AAS-L) also took part in the initial confrontation, having close links to other similar terrorist groups in the region, such as DAESH-Syria, Muslim Brotherhood

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[1] A.N.: This name is used by national publications, such as Associated Press and Deutche Welle.

or Ansar al-Sharia from Algeria. Moreover, Turkey has brought more than 5,000 Syrian mercenaries[2] into Libya to support GNA's actions, most of them being former Ankara supporters in the Syrian Civil War.

The emergence and spread of Coronavirus in North Africa and the Sahel has failed to stop internal fighting or reach a ceasefire agreement. The pandemic further slowed or even stopped the intervention of the international community in the region, as security organisations as well as some regional powers being present in Africa had to reduce their number of participants and activities.

The UN has repeatedly tried to persuade the belligerant parties and the regional powers involved to reach a ceasefire agreement that would allow humanitarian agencies and various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to get involved in the refugee crisis and improve the situation of the civilian population from the conflict zone. The work of the UN Secretary-General's High Representative for Libya was closely supported by the leaders of regional powers with an interest in the region, such as France, Italy, Germany or Turkey, but only at the political-diplomatic level and not at the actional one.

1. The Last Military Actions Conducted by Belligerants in the Libyan Civil War

After General Haftar's repeated attempts to take over the capital Tripoli, the concerted actions of militias loyal to Prime Minister Sarraj, strongly supported by Turkey, pushed LNA forces out of the city earlier this semester, leading to a widespread offensive for recapturing of the Port of Sirte and the Jurfa Airport, two strategic points in the LNA defence. The current situation of the frontline and the areas controlled by the belligerents is according to Figure number 1.

The city of Sirte, located on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea at about 450 km east of Tripoli, with a population of about 130,000 inhabitants, has an essential geostrategic importance in the conduct of Libyan Civil War. First, it is the birthplace of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi, whose tribe became a strong supporter of General Haftar, the dictator's former military commander. As a result, during the Civil War, the city became a strategic operational center for General

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[2] Samy Magdy, "US: Turkey-sent Syrian fighters generate backlash in Libya", *Associated Press*, 2 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-679a6d6fc549bda59f8627d91d9a363c, accessed on 13.10.2020.
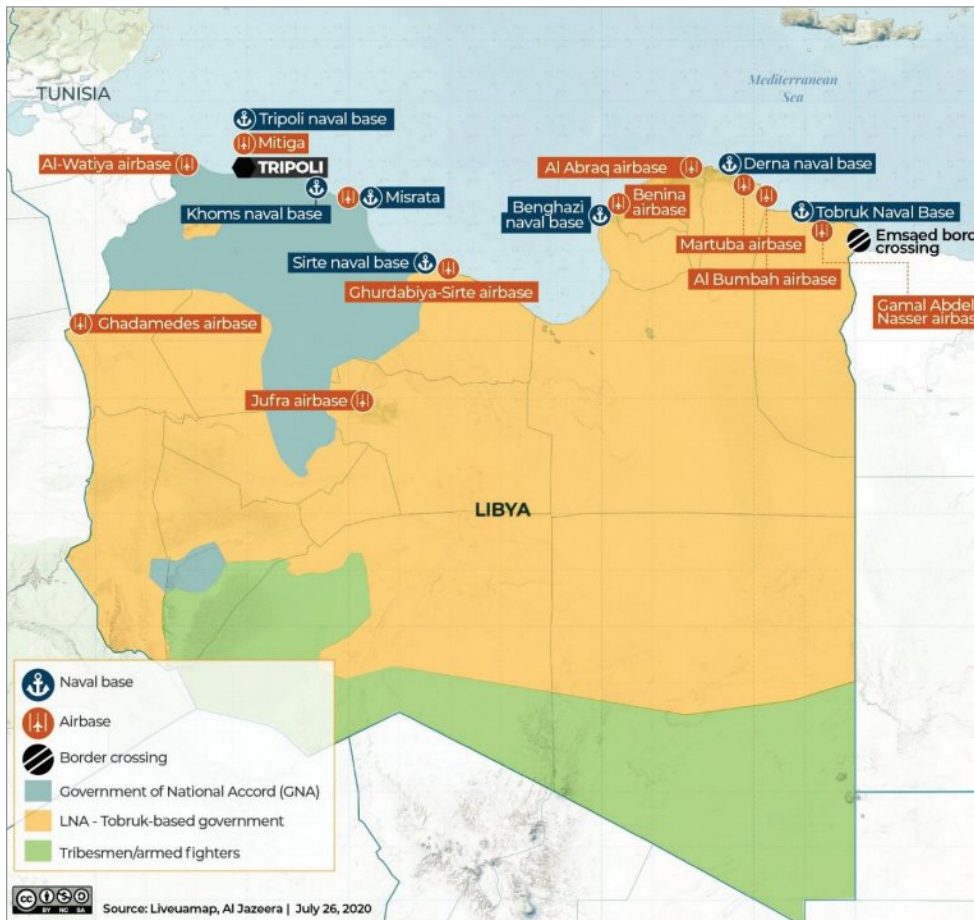
Figure no. 1: The zonal situation controlled by belligerents[3]

Haftar's foreign supporters. Last but not least, the city is part of the "oil crescent"[4] on the Libyan coast and is the "gateway"[5] to the most important oil facilities in the area.

This offensive operation entered in a conflict with Egypt's plans, which threatened with the use of its military power by entering into the conflict. This situation seems to be a remake of the Korean War (1950-1953), when China also

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[3] Source: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/7/27/libya-mapping-areas-of-military-control

[4] ***, "Averting an Egyptian military intervention in Libya", *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)*, 27 July 2020, URL: https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/averting-egyptian-military-intervention-libya, accessed on 13.10.2020.

[5] Fehim Tastekin, "Why is Sirte everyone's 'red line' in Libya?", *Al-Monitor*, 20 July 2020, URL: https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/06/turkey-libya-russia-egypt-why-sirte-everyones-red-line.html, accessed on 12.10.2020.

threatened to enter into the war if US-South Korean troops approached the Yalu River (which marks the border between China and the Korean DPRK). In fact, this happened in 1953, overturning the fate of the war and defeating the American-South Korean offensive.

In fact, in early Summer, the Tripoli Governmental forces, supported by Turkey and other foreign powers, conquered the city of Tarhuna, which was General Haftar's last stronghold in Western Libya[6], marking the official end of the Libyan capital's siege, which had begun in April 2019. The fightings continued to the South, near the town of Sabha, 650 km south of Tripoli, being concluded with deads and prisoners form both sides[7]. Other battles took place in September near the city of Tajoura, home to Tripoli's main civilian airport and other government buildings, between two rival armed groups (the Tajoura Lions and the Daman Brigades), which resulted in death of three soldiers, lot of losses among civilians, which were not clearly stated[8]. In general, the fightings between rival parties have recently slowed down as a result of intensified international efforts to establish a ceasefire agreement and avoid a worsening situation around the strategic city of Sirte, the gateway to exploitation oil tankers off the Libyan coast.

One of the major initiatives of the tribes in eastern Libya, loyal to General Haftar, was the closure of oil terminals and the destruction of major transport pipelines, leading to a oil blockade for more than six months as punishment for the Libyan government accused of illegal using the income obtained from oil bussiness to pay foreign militias and mercenaries. To end this oil embargo, in July 2020, General Haftar called for the transfer of the income from oil sale to a foreign bank with a clearly defined mechanism to equally distribute funds to all Libyan regions, as well as conducting an audit of the Libyan Central Bank in Tripoli. As this request was approved by the Libyan government, after countless international pressures, the General's Libyan Army promised a partial reopening of oil terminals to export stored oil and provide the necessary natural gas in the Eastern part of the country[9].

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[6] Robin Dixon, "Russia's ally in Libya is battered by defeats. But Moscow has wider goals to expand its influence", *Washington Post*, 6 June, 2020, URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/russia-libya-war-putin/2020/06/05/c3956bf4-a109-11ea-be06-af5514ee0385_story.html, accessed on 23.10.2020.

[7] ***, "Libya east-based force: 7 militants, foreign fighters killed", *Associated Press*, 15 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/libya-egypt-islamic-state-group-tripoli-khalifa-hifter-45db03dcf0b7212da3f6f18f089 8241d, accessed on 23.10.2020.

[8] Isabel Debre, "UN: At least 16 drown in migrant shipwreck off Libya coast", *Associated Press*, 25 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-libya-egypt-mediterranean-sea-north-africa-6bec623f9c59260cd1a89f90a4d0 2eb7, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[9] Samy Magdy, "Tripoli and rival parliament announces Libya cease-fire", *Associated Press*, 22 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/international-news-middle-east-117dcf4b44681cbb4b45ddb95cb0080a, accessed on 01.10.2020.

In August, hundreds of citizens protested in front of the UN-recognized Libyan government, accusing it of corruption, economic low conditions and poor living in the areas it controls. Similar protests have taken place in other cities in Western Libya. The protesters, being considered violent, were forcibly dispersed by authorities, firing on protesters with ammunition, which led to an unknown number of dead and wounded participants, and several civilians were detained and taken into captivity, without revealing the place of detention[10].

Moreover, in order to make them stop and not revolt, the UN-recognized Libyan government declared the State of Besiege, under the pretext of fighting COVID-19, which had taken on a special scale in the western part of the country. Thus, the authorities reported more than 11,800 contaminations, including 210 deaths, even though the number was considerably higher due to lack of tests[11]. But demonstrations continued in Western Libya and spread to the Southeast, in the area controlled by General Haftar's forces throughout August and early September. Thus, in September, hundreds of young Libyans invaded the streets of Benghazi and other cities in the eastern part of the country, protesting against corruption and poor living conditions in cities, especially due to lack of electricity. The differences between the Western and Eastern protests were that the latter being more spontaneous and not suppressed by violence, although representatives of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) reported at least one death, three wounded and several arrested among the protesters. However, Abdallah al-Thani's Eastern Libyan government spokesman has resigned, accusing the Libyan Central Bank and the Tripoli government of "robbing" the country and neglecting its eastern part, which has damaged public services[12]. The UN-recognized Libyan government, led by Prime Minister Sarraj, has also promised to hand over power to a new administration in October 2021 after the presidential and parliamentary elections[13].

Also during this period, under international pressure, Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj had announced the start of a ceasefire measure throughout Libya, especialy asking for the demilitarisation of the city of Sirte and the military base in Jufra. This unequivocal action, which would have meant the withdrawal of forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, was rejected by the LNA, being considered "an initiative

[10] Samy Magdy, "Rights group urges release of abducted Libyan protesters", *Associated Press*, 27 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-africa-middle-east-8e76f9a34a65c05ac9318de7208e143e, accessed on 02.10.2020.

[11] *Ibidem*.

[12] Samy Magdy, "Officials say east Libya government resigns amid protests", *Associated Press*, 14 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/tripoli-archive-libya-efc05aa66d2fbb-5e40aed62c26c5a9d9, accessed on 25.10.2020.

[13] Samy Magdy, "Leader of Libya's UN-backed gov't wants to hand over power", *Associated Press*, 17 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-tripoli-libya-united-nations-fayez-serraj-cd12c25bfe2a12f0d3d5f16f4b59b152, accessed on 25.10.2020.

aimed at hiding the true intentions of foreign supporters (Turkey and Qatar) of the Libyan government.[14]" The parliament of eastern Libya (represented, in fact, only by the House of Representatives and an unrecognized international government of the East), an ally of General Haftar, announced that it would only agree with the demilitarisation of the city of Sirte, if the forces supported by Turkey would withdraw from the front line, and a new Libyan government would be settled in this city. Representatives of this parliament confirmed to the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) that they accept the participation in the presidential and parliamentary elections, if they are held after a period of 18 months of transition.

In recent months, the disastrous situation in Libya has visibly worsened, especially as a result of the chaos created by the intervention of 20,000 foreign fighters and mercenaries −Russians, Sudanese, Syrians and Chadians −, who came to fight in support of both belligerent sides[15]. Most of them, being inexperienced, uneducated and motivated only by the considerable promised salaries, have increased the number of thefts, sexual abuses and disciplinary offenses in Western Libya, which could worsen the security situation in the area and generate retaliation from the Libyan public.

If in the second half of 2020 the situation on the front was relatively stable, deterrence and refreshment actions with fighters, weapons and heavy equipment, as well as logistical resources had steadily continued. Thus, both belligerent parties have received reinforcements and logistical materials from the regional powers that support them, despite the UN embargo on illegal arms trafficking imposed on Libya's coastal zone and implemented by the European Union's Naval Operation "Irini".

2. Continuing Regional Powers' Implications in Libya and the Trends of Increasing Security Risks in the Region

Since the restarting of the Civil War in Libya last year, but especially since General Haftar's loyal forces began the offensive to conquer Tripoli, a number of European and Asian regional powers showed their support for one of the belligerent parties. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Libya, Mrs. Stephanie Williams, said in early October that there were nine foreign powers intervening

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[14] Samy Magdy, "Libyan commander dismisses rivals' cease-fire as 'deception'", *Associated Press*, 23 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-f9c678e3bd2f73c2a60f36546a6d30b0, accessed on 03.10.2020.

[15] Samy Magdy, "UN: 20,000 foreign fighters in Libya are a 'serious crisis'", *Associated Press*, 2 December 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-libya-elections-north-africa-united-nations-faa14b50c17d2a462e755bd6 e31f0709, accessed on 03.12.2020.

in Libya[16], illegally introducing weapons, mercenaries and logistical materials and making negotiations to conclude any armistice to fail miserably, and the embargo to be totally ineffective. There is even a risk of escalating the regional conflict, with major situational implications for neighbor states and European security.

Following a report by a team of UN experts monitoring sanctions on Libya, which also was revealed to the Associated Press, it was concluded that 11 foreign companies belonging to five of the nine states involved are the most active in repeatedly violating the arms embargo. These companies belong to the UAE, Russia and Jordan to support the LNA, as well as Turkey and Qatar for the benefit of the GNA[17].

But what are the interests of these foreign powers through their involvement in the Libyan Civil War? Turkey, for example, after its more active involvement in Libya, starting in 2019, expects large economic gains and a stronger political and military presence in the area, to the detriment of Egypt and the UAE. And this refers not only to the influence and control that Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has proposed to have in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Muslim states, but also in the entire eastern Mediterranean basin.

Through the security pact signed with Tripoli, President Erdogan wanted, first of all, to redefine the maritime borders of the two states[18], with the potential natural gas reserves below them, to the detriment of Cyprus and Greece. And it did not matter that, through such an approach, it was about to start a major conflict within the North Atlantic Alliance, between two NATO member states. Or that he has temporarily entered into a military crisis with France and the EU off the Libyan coast.

Moreover, the strong military support given to the GNA during the continous assault on Tripoli by forces loyal to General Haftar, supported by some foreign powers, brought Turkey into an indirect confrontation with Russia, a LNA partisan. Thus, through military support to the two belligerent parties, Turkey and Russia became the main brokers of the Libyan Civil War. Among other things, Ankara sent several hundred Turkish soldiers to Libya and at least 10 types of sophisticated military equipment (electromagnetic combat systems, remote-controlled anti-tank missiles, combat drones, self-propelled anti-aircraft artillery, ground-to-air

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[16] A.N.: The nine foreign powers involved in Libya are the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Russia and France in support of General Haftar, respectively Qatar, Italy and Turkey helping the Prime Minister Sarraj.

[17] David Risisng and Edith M. Lederer, "UN Chief urges Libya cease-fire,warns its future at stake", *Associated Press*, 5 October 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-libya-summits-north-africa-berlin-726b0a3a38ab940eae6207e0 3eda2aad, accessed on 19.10.2020.

[18] Samy Magdy, "Joining the conflict in Libya, Turkey sees economic gains", *Associated Press*, 30 July 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/turkey-ap-top-news-libya-international-news-middle-east-480e59f43041279ca2 8b8f59db259c63, accessed on 18.10.2020.

missile systems, frigates and ground attack aircraft[19]), as well as at least 13,000 Syrian mercenaries (according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights)[20]. It has also repeatedly violated the maritime embargo on Libya's coastal zone, docking at least five merchant ships under various flags (Albanian, Lebanese, Tanzanian and Panamanian) with war materials. Four Turkish airlines companies have been accused by UN experts of providing logistical support in western Libya.

For easier and faster access of its forces in the region, Turkey has built a naval base in the Port of Misrata and a military base at al-Waitya Air Base in the desert area Southwest of Tripoli. Economically, Turkish companies have asked the Sarraj government to return $ 2 billion as war damage[21].

In response to the Maritime Agreement signed between Turkey and Libya and Ankara's declaration on the non-inclusion of the Greek islands[22] in the calculation of Economic Zones of interest in the Mediterranean Sea, Greece and Egypt concluded a similar Maritime Agreement in August, establishing maritime borders between the two states and demarcating the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) for oil and gas exploitation. The Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said the agreement was intended to maintain security and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and counter the threats posed by irresponsible policies that support extremism and terror in Libya[23]. He also threatened Egypt's military intervention inside eastern Libya, leading to a direct Turkish-Egyptian confrontation. At the same time, he persuaded Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Greece and Cyprus to send a joint letter to the UN Secretary-General not to register the Maritime Agreement between Turkey and Libya.

Turks' reaction to the signing of this agreement was immediate. The Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan has deployed the seismic research vessel Barbaros Hayreddin for searching oil and gas exploration in an area considered by Greeks to be near their mainland, leading to the alert and deployment of Greek warships near the Turkish one. Even if Ankara withdrew the ship, under German Chancellor Angela Merkel's pression, the two states' war fleets began a dangerous political

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[19] Edith M. Lederer, "Experts: Libya rivals UAE, Russia, Turkey violate UN embargo", *Associated Press*, 9 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/turkey-north-africa-qatar-libya-united-arab-emirates-20a2ad9c585f40ec291585d bf8e9ed22, accessed on 19.10.2020.

[20] Samy Magdy, "US: Turkey-sent Syrian fighters generate backlash in Libya", *Associated Press*, 2 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-africa-679a6d6fc549bda59f8627d91d9a363c, accessed on 20.10.2020.

[21] Samy Magdy, "Joining the conflict in Libya, Turkey sees economic gains", *op. cit.*

[22] A.N.: Greece has around 6,000 islands and islets in the Aegean and Ionian Seas, of which more than 200 are inhabited.

[23] Noha Elhennawy, "Egypt, Greece sign maritime deal to counter Libya-Turkey one", *Associated Press*, 6 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/turkey-libya-egypt-cairo-middle-east-fc1754ebee8429afd79a4750d6a daa4, accessed on 11.10.2020.

game of probing the maritime area between Crete, Cyprus and Turkey[24]. And the tense situation in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea is only postponed, not resolved.

Russia, the other broker of the Libyan Civil War, but on General Haftar's side, has been accused by the US of sending to Libya, in addition to the 800 military personnel, 1,200 mercenaries from the Wagner Group Russian private company, led by the controversial businessman Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a close Kremlin friend. Mercenarries are equipped with two armored personnel carriers and deployed at five air bases (al-Jufra, Brak, Ghardabiya, Sabha and Wadden) and in the largest oil refinery, Sharara[25], at least two types of military equipment − around 14 disguised aircraft with indistinguishable marks on the fuselage, such as Mig-29A fighter jets operating from al-Jufra air base and Sukhoi SU-24 supersonic attack aircraft at al-Khadim air base, as well as uptated main battle tanks[26]. It is also alleged that General Haftar also received the Pantsir S-1 Air Defence system from Moscow, as well as that the Russians mediated the sending of Chinese drones to Libya. Putin is currently negotiating with the Syrians to send mercenaries in support of the LNA[27]. Four Russian airlines companies from Kazakhstan, Syria, Ukraine and Tajikistan have also been accused by UN experts of providing logistical support to General Haftar via Syria − Eastern Libya.

Officially, Putin said he wanted to maintain a balance of power in the area, as he did in Syria, offering his negotiator for peace services in the area. But Moscow's real goal is to expand its political and military influence in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, waging a close war, like Turkey, but secretly supporting the other belligerent side and thus securing its military bases on the European Eastern flank[28]. Thus, on June 6, 2020, Russian military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer from the Jamestown Foundation said in an interview with the Washington Post that Russia wants a foothold in Libya, but a major intervention in the Syrian style is not expected.

The UAE, which has been actively involved in LNA support since January 2020, has deployed personnel and at least five types of military equipment in the area, including armored personnel carriers and patrol vehicles, Blue Arrow 7 type of missiles, Wingg Loong II lethal drones, and French aircraft Dassault Mirage 2000-9[29]. Wing Loong drones are expected to be moved to Siwa Egyptian Air Base in the Western Egyptian desert, and Mirage 2000 aircraft are operating from Egyptian Didi

[24] Zeynep Bilginsoy, "Turkish president slams Egypt-Greece deal, drilling resumes", *Associated Press*, 7 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/turkey-libya-istanbul-egypt-europe-75e3969d4d2c4f86a0e085c824d 4aecb, accessed on 18.10.2020.
[25] Edith M. Lederer, *op.cit.*
[26] *Ibidem*.
[27] Robin Dixon, *op.cit.*
[28] *Ibidem*.
[29] Edith M. Lederer, *op.cit.*

Barrani Air Base, with color-painted fuselages so they cannot be identified[30]. Also on this airport, there are conducted flights of C-17 and AN-124 cargo planes from Abu Dhabi, to resupply General Haftar's rebels with aircraft gasoline and logistical materials. Following the respective flights, airlines companies such as Kazakh Airlines and Sigma Airlinem were, in turn, sanctioned by the EU for violating the air embargo, flying from the UAE through Western Egypt and Eastern Libya, and a ship under the Liberian flag but belonging to the UAE landed in some Eastern ports controlled by General Haftar. Another ship under the Marshall Islands flag (MV Royal Diamond 7 oil tanker) was intercepted by warships patrolling under the EU Naval Operation "Irini" while transporting oil from the UAE to Libya[31]. Moreover, there is evidence that the UAE mediated General Haftar's purchase of 11 Mi-24 helicopters from the Czech Republic through the AAL Group[32].

Jalel Harchaoui, of the Clingendael Institute, said earlier this semester that the UAE is, in fact, conducting French policy on Libya, and that France is using its diplomatic power so that no one could condemn the UAE's military intervention in the area. To this end, French President Emmanuel Macron has strengthened cooperation with Abu Dhabi.

After trying to restore order in Libya following the death of dictator Gaddafi in 2011 through Operation Harmattan, France continued its involvement in the Libyan Civil War in 2016, conducting a Special Forces operation in the area, in which it lost three fighters[33]. Paris then sided unofficially with the LNA, opposing Italy's policy of supporting the Sarraj government and Turkey's open intervention in support of GNA. The vision of Paris is to enroll General Haftar as Libya's leader and to establish a regional political and economic situation favorable to France. However, following the June naval incident, France withdrew from the EU Naval Operation "Irini" to avoid a possible altercation with Turkey, thus protesting the EU's non-involvement in stopping illegal arms trafficking in the area.

Italy, on the other hand, has strong interests in supporting the UN-recognized Libyan government to ease pressure on Rome from Africa's illegal migration. To this end, it has established a Cooperation Agreement with the Libyan Navy and

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[30] ***, "UAE implicated in lethal drone in Libya", *BBC News*, 28 August 2020, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53917791, accessed on 23.10.2020.

[31] ***, "EU force intercepts tanker with jet fuel headed to Libya", *Associated Press*, 10 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/europe-archive-libya-united-arab-emirates-584f6e838eabe2deed1b3a1a9f58cc51, accessed on 20.10.2020.

[32] ***, "UAE weapon deliveries to Libya's Haftar 'escalated' after it agreed to uphold UN arms embargo", *The NewArab*, 30 September 2020, URL: https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/news/2020/9/30/uae-weapon-deliveries-to-haftar-escalated-since-arms-embargo, accessed on 24.10.2020.

[33] Giorgio Cafiero, "The UAE 'runs' France's Libya policy", *TRT World*, 21 July 2020, URL: https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/the-uae-runs-france-s-libya-policy-38285, accessed on 23.10.2020.

Coastal Guard for finding and returning of migrant ships back to the Libyan coast. Italy is a staunch supporter of a swift Ceasefire Agreement between the belligerents and condemns France's interventionist diplomacy in support of General Haftar as an unofficial intention to destabilise the region[34].

But all these foreign interventions in North Africa[35], even if they helped a lot the actions taken by all belligerents, as well as maintaining a somewhat stable balance of power in the region, prolonged the conflict in Libya, making it even more violent and damaging emigrants and the local population's situation, leading to a real humanitarian crisis.

3. The Last Military Actions' Impact on Local Population

The end of the first half of 2020 brought with it an increase in the number of dead and injured among civil population. Thus, the UNSMIL report of July 30, 2020[36] stated that more than 100 civilians, including women and children, were killed in Western Libya, which meant a 65% increase in the number compared to the beginning of the year, and more than 250 of civilians were injured − an increase of 276%. Civilian casualties resulted from drone strikes, ground battles, but also mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) left by General Haftar's forces during their withdrew to Sirte. Also, attacks on critical civilian infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals or ambulance services, have continued throughout 2020, especially from the LNA. There is also the risk of the national electricity system falling, due to the fact that only 13 of the 27 existing power plants are still operating.

The humanitarian situation of local population in Libya is also exacerbated by the presence of a large number of emigrants in the area, who seek to illegally sail from the Libyan coast to Southern Europe. Many of them are captured by Italian-sponsored Libyan Navy and Costal Guard and returned to overcrowded detention centers under the responsibility of armed paramilitary groups. In addition to the acute shortage of food and water, Arab and African refugees also endure numerous physical abuses. The International Refugee Committee estimates that there would be about 200 children in these centers, aged between 12 and 15, but also younger, of whom 50 are disabled and need urgent medical support and care from specialised

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[34] Mona El-Mahrouki, "France seeks to withdraw legitimacy from the Tripoli government", *The Arab Weekly*, 5 June 2020, URL: https://thearabweekly.com/france-seeks-withdraw-legitimacy-tripoli-government, accessed on 05.01.2021.

[35] A.N.: The Northwest part of Africa is also referred to the Maghreb in the Arab world, including countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and sometimes Libya, West Shara and Mauritania (Greater Maghreb).

[36] Samy Magdy, "UN says over 100 civilians killed in 2nd quarter in Libya", *Associated Press*, 30 July 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/tripoli-khalifa-hifter-libya-united-nations-13b0282ad48c68b58a802b014f108b9f, accessed on 03.11.2020.

International Organisations[37]. In addition, the UN Migration Agency (IOM) reported that 500 migrants and refugees have drowned trying to illegally cross the Mediterranean Sea this year.

The continuation of violent military actions in Libya, supported by some neighbor states and regional powers, amplified by the appearence and rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a drastic decline in the number of tourists in areas that were once frequently visited by foreigners, especially in North African states, such us Morocco or Egypt. This aspect had negative consequences among small entrepreneurs, but also at the macroeconomic level, by decreasing the income obtained from the tourism industry. For example, Morocco has been severely affected by Coronavirus and closed the country's borders, bringing hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs involved in tourism to the brink of poverty.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed that the number of infected cases in Africa has exceeded 1,000,000 diseases, of which more than 22,000 people have died from COVID-19. With the weakest health care system in the world, the realistic number is expected to be several times higher, reflecting the lack of testing capacity for a continent with 1.3 billion inhabitants. Thus, not only is the number of cases considered to be much higher (between 5 and 14 million), but also the number of infections among the few specialists fighting the desease has increased significantly, reaching 35,000[38].

Despite the rapid spread of the pandemic throughout Africa and the growing danger of infections, tens of thousands of African Muslims took part in the annual Grand Magal pilgrimage to the Touba Mosque[39] in Senegal, on 5 October. The same thing happened in Ethiopia, where several thousand members of the largest ethnic group, Oromo, attended the annual Thanksgiving festival Irreecha (end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest)[40], organised in the capital Addis Ababa, near Bishoftu and where more than 500 participants were arrested for possible terrorist acts, and 10 Kalashnikov-type machine guns were confiscated.

But the miserable situation of Libyan people continues to have an alarming trend of deterioration due to the transmission of the SARS-CoV 2 virus to communities in

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[37] A.N.: As per the IRC Report, available at URL: https://apnews.com/article/libya-middle-east-immigration-mediterranean-sea-africa-fb037aeab1ad17eb05472c405cd03a73, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[38] Cara Anna, "Africa poasses 1M confirmed virus cases; true number far more", *Associated Press*, 7 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/459d0bdb228ae9cdf181e063146052c9, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[39] A.N.: Serigne Touba is the founder of the "Mouride Brotherhood", the highest Muslim order in Senegal.

[40] Elias Meseret, "Tight security, many arrests for Ethiopian Irreecha festival", *Associated Press*, 3 October 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-race-and-ethnicity-ethiopia-addis-ababa-thanksgiving-85b09a5b38bb640c1 1d0f19bc47e2eaf, accessed on 04.11.2020.

major Libyan cities, such as Tripoli and Sebha. Although some infection figures are known, the total number of diseases is much higher, due to the lack of tests and the inadequate health system in hospitals. The lack of medicines or the small number of medical staff do not help improve the health situation of the inhabitants of the area. As a result, the UN estimates that 1.3 million Libyans will need humanitarian aid in January 2021.

4. The UN and Regional Power Leaders' Actions
for Stabilising the Region

In September, the UN adopted a new Resolution−UNSCR 2542 (2020)−, calling on all Member States to support the embargo on illegal arms trafficking imposed on Libya, which has been violated repeatedly in the past, and the withdrawal of all mercenaries from the African states participating in the Civil War. The UN Security Council has also called for political talks to begin and a ceasefire in Libya, saying a military solution is inconceivable. During the adoption of this resolution, Russia and China abstained from voting[41]. On this occasion, the mandate of UNSMIL was extended by another year.

In early October, the UN and Germany held a virtual meeting at the level of foreign ministers, attended by regional powers and third states involved in the Libyan Civil War, to support the promotion of a lasting Ceasefire Agreement between belligerents[42]. This meeting took place after recent talks in Egypt and Morocco with the various factions and proxi powers that supported them, which laid the groundwork for an agreement on the 18-month elections and the demilitarisation of the city of Sirte, as well as exchanges of prisoners and opening land and air routes throughout the country.

Based on the new Resolution and the outcome of the meeting, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has stepped up efforts to reach an agreement between the belligerent parties on a temporary ceasefire and the involvement of proxi regional powers in reducing illegal arms exports to Libya. His efforts and those of his High Representative in Libya, Mrs. Stephani Turco Williams, were remarkably successful on 23 October, when representatives of the two rival factions signed, in Geneva, a "complete and permanent Ceasefire Agreement in Libya", with immediate effects[43].

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[41] ***, "Security Council Extends Mandate of UN Mission in Libya for 12 Months, Adopting Resolution 2542 (2020)", *United Nations*, 15 September 2020, URL: https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14302.doc.htm, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[42] David Rising and Edith M. Lederer, "UN chief urges Libya cease-fire, warns its future at stake", *Associated Press*, 5 October 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-libya-summits-north-africa-berlin-726b0a3a38ab940eae6207e03eda2aad, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[43] Bel Trew, "Shaky UN ceasefire betweenrival Libya governments raises hope of peace", *Independent*, 23 October 2020, URL: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/libya-ceasefire-

According to this agreement, a Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (with 75 members) has been set up at the Political-Diplomatic level, and a Joint Military Commission has been established at the Military level to discuss and establish steps to follow for the achievement of prosperity and tresumption of economic activities in the country, as well as the preparation of elections for the end of 2021. From a military point of view, it was agreed that all foreign mercenaries shall leave Libya in three months and their areas of responsibility will be taken over by a Police Joint Force. Foreign analysts believe that the conclusion of this agreement was made possible by the unwillingness of signing parties and their foreign supporters to continue or even aggravate the conflict, through the entry of Egyptian military forces into the battle, but also the need to revive the national economy, especially the energy sector. On the other hand, they foresee that, despite the important step towards concluding a peace agreement in the future, there are skeptical opinions from each side and from the supporting states that this ceasefire agreement will survive in the near future, if not supported by sanctions.

The agreement was signed by the two rival parties as a result of international pressure on the GNA and the LNA, but also on proxi regional powers involved in the conflict. The most involved in the negotiations was the German Government, through its Foreign Minister, Mr Heiko Maas, who conducted numerous visits to both belligerents and proxi countries participating in the conflict, such as the UAE and Egypt. The governments of Turkey and Italy have also been involved in talks with one of the parties to the conflict − the GNA. Ankara's attitude is more to observe activities in the area than to encourage the maintenance of the armistice, while the authorities in Rome really want peace to be established in the region and Libya to take control over illegal migration. In fact, Turkey continues to illegally supply Sarraj's government, especially by sea. Thus, in the second half of November, a new naval incident took place between two allies, when the German frigate Hamburg, participating in the EU Naval Operation "Irini" off the coast of Libya, stopped and searched the Turkish cargo ship Rosaline-A, suspected of involvement in illegal arms trafficking[44].

To alleviate the situation of illegal migration from Southern Europe, a group of European Union Member States, including Germany, launched, last year, a draft "Malta Agreement" to redistribute migrants arriving in Southern European countries to other Member States. But the implementation of this agreement does not seem to be working, except for France, which, in the second half of 2020, agreed together with Italy to take over some of its refugees.

war-un-haftar-gna-b1255038.html, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[44] Suzan Fraser, "Turkey protests German search of Libya-bound Turkish ship", *Associated Press*, 23 November 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/turkey-libya-mediterranean-sea-blockades-berlin-6084893bd5bc8707468e6711a5ef b1e5, accessed on 25.11.2020.

Following the 18 August military coup in the capital Bamako, led by Colonel Assimi Goita and which resulted in the removal of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) has imposed economic sanctions on Mali[45]. However, neither the timid attempts of ECOWAS nor those of the presidents of the Member States, to stabilise the political and military situation in Mali, have yielded the expected results. The failure was mainly due to West African leaders' mistake to take into account the general dissatisfaction with the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region and the poor governance of the region, demonstrating the fear of these leaders not to affect their countries[46]. Failure to take into account civil society and members of the diaspora, the lack of an effective fight against endemic corruption and the lack of improvement in the governance of those states can only lead to population's protests and not to the crisis.

The United States has also been involved in resolving the crisis situation in North Africa, conducting a series of working visits to Libyan neighbour countries. Thus, in September and October, the US Secretary of State for Defence, Mr. Mark Esper, conducted a visit to Tunisia and Algeria, to discuss with the presidents of the two African states a few possible political solutions that would end the conflict in Libya[47].

Despite these positive developments in solving the North Africa crisis, UN representatives believe that the violation of the embargo on illegal arms trafficking to Libya continues, which impedes the peaceful conduct of diplomatic talks and is a serious violation of the country's sovereignty. As a result, the practical application of the agreement's provisions is delayed by at least one month.

5. The North Africa Migrants Situation
and Continuity of Terrorist Actions in Sahel

Although international and regional security organizations involved in the region have believed that the rapid onset and spread of the Coronavirus pandemic in North and Central Africa will reduce and even stop some extremist actions, as

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[45] Baba Ahmed, "West African regional bloc lifts sanctions against Mali", *Associated Press*, 6 October 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-west-africa-archive-mali-6e5109927a20f7d42d2a1bf9b0322b 3d, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[46] Mouhamadou Awal, "Opinion: Mali risk remains after clumsy West African intervention", *Deutche Welle*, 10 August 2020, URL: https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-mali-risk-remains-after-clumsy-west-african-intervention/a-54512583, accessed on 03.11.2020.

[47] Bouazza Ben Bouazza, "US defense chief visits North Africa, World War II cemetery", *Associated Press*, 30 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/north-africa-libya-tunisia-mark-esper-africa-2647948174fa350e996ca3d23d3 e23b4, accessed on 03.11.2020.

well as the phenomenon of illegal migration to Southern Europe, the real situation is opposite and very tense in the region.

Terrorist actions of local extremist groups affiliated to Al Qaeda or ISIS and rebel groups have continued in the second half of the year, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (the Sahel region[48] and neighbour Western and the Horn of Africa states, such as Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia). Thus, in August, the Somali extremist group Al-Shabab, affiliated to Al-Qaeda, detonated a car bomb at the entrance to the Military Base of the "April 12" Land Forces Brigade in Mogadishu, killing eight soldiers and wounding 14 others[49]. The original intention was to interrupt a ceremony to reopen a sports stadium in the Warta-Nabadda district, chaired by the President of Somalia. This attack demonstrated the resilience of the terrorist group which, although hit 63 times by Americans, in 2019, reconfigured itself by making improvised explosives, supporting itself financially by taxing tourists visiting the interior of the country and businessmen. As a result of this terrorist attack and insecurity in the country, the Somali prime minister was ousted.

Also in August, violent armed clashes took place in the town of Tonj in South Sudan, between the country's military forces and a Sudanese armed rebel group, resulting in more than 70 dead and dozens wounded, plus significant property damage in central Romich Square of the city[50]. Many women and children have left their homes, fearing of retaliations. But the clashes were not accidental and did not stop here. They followed tribal fighting in West Darfur in July, killing more than 60 people and forcing 2,500 Sudanese to emigrate to Chad. Also, in August, conflicts between two rival tribes (Beni Amer and Nuba) followed in Sudan, in the area of the Sudanese port on the Red Sea, killing more than 12 people and injuring 40 others[51].

However, the Coronavirus spread in the area also had a beneficial effect. In early October, the Sudanese authorities managed to sign a Peace Agreement with the rebel alliance in Juba, thus ending a long period of Civil War and leaving the

[48] A.N.: The Sahel region is an arid area under the influence of its desert climate, being positioned between the Sahara Desert in the North, the savannah in the South, the Atlantic Ocean in the West and the Red Sea in the East. It includes Southern Mauriana, Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan and Eritrea. It is as large as the European Union (EU) and is usually analysed together with the Maghreb, as a region with a combined potential for both internal and external destabilising shocks.
[49] Abdi Guled, "At least 8 soldiers dead in blast outside Somali army base", *Associated Press*, 8 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/653016b9fa9691848614e2a9e540c8e1, accessed on 27.10.2020.
[50] Edith M. Lederer, "UN says more than 70 killed in clashes in South Sudan", *Associated Press*, 10 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/eefbb4dad468928e9727c8ac32266545, accessed on 27.10.2020.
[51] Samy Magdy, "Sudan imposes curfew in eastern city after clashes kill 13", *Associated Press*, 10 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/b96603033dc2a588eb05a0f8272b48bc, accessed on 28.10.2020.

gates open for a future economic recovery of the country[52]. Through this Peace Agreement, the Blue Nile, South and West Kordofan provinces have gained territorial autonomy, and the rebel forces will be integrated into the Sudanese Armed Forces. The agreement has a duration of six months and will end in February 2021, when the possibility of establishing a permanent peace is envisaged.

The jihadist attacks have been intensifying in Burkina Faso since the beginning of this year, being 75% more numerous than the previous year. In August, for example, 13 such attacks were claimed by the al-Qaeda-affiliated extremist group Ansar al Islam[53]. The attacks took place in rural areas, approaching the last safe haven of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the town of Fada N'gourma. Together with the country's humanitarian crisis and the serious accusations brought against the local security forces in support of jihadists, a terrorist action directed against this city would further increase the degree of unrest and insecurity in the area, especially among the displaced civilians.

Another bloody terrorist attack also took place in August in the city of Koure, located in a giraffe natural reservation park in Niger, resulting in seven deaths – six French citizens and one Nigerian. The attack was attributed to a local extremist group linked to Boko Haram[54]. Thus, it is considered that violence in the Sahel region, carried out by extremist groups affiliated to Boko Haram, Islamic State or Al-Qaeda groups, is increasing compared to last year, even if counter-terrorism operations are already taking place in the area, such as the French Operation Barkhane, G5 Sahel Joint Force (Armed Forces from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger), or the UN MINUSMA mission in Mali. In fact, local security experts consider that foreign military interventions are totally useless in the fight against African terrorism, cutting off any attempt to negotiate with local terrorist groups, more useful being the negotiations that regional authorities could conduct with them.

As a result, in late November 2020, several UN and French multinational military bases in Kidal, Gao and Menaka were targets of a simultaneous jihadist rocket attack conducted by Malian extremist groups, believed to be al-Qaeda affiliated[55]. About the same time, another terrorist attack took place in Nigeria,

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[52] Maura Ajak, Samy Magdy, "Sudan, rebel leaders seal peace deal in effort to end wars", *Associated Press*, 3 October 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/sudan-civil-wars-juba-south-sudan-omar-al-bashir-250d4f0c553060be9a04effd4 326d3fd, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[53] Sam Mednick, "Gunmen kill at least 20 in village in eastern Burkina Faso", *Associated Press*, 7 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/6b57617f46e56e3705b38e3145209bc7, accessed on 09.10.2020.

[54] Dalatou Mamane, Sylvie Corbet, "Niger, French forces in search of gunmen who killed tourists", *Associated Press*, 10 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/dfee182cce4a2d23bed3b195ee30f11b, accessed on 24.10.2020.

[55] Baba Ahmed, "Explosions in 3 Malian cities amid jihadist attacks", *Associated Press*, 30 November 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-united-nations-mali-4c5034c67f8dda7110d92abb926890d8, accessed on 04.12.2020.

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where extremists belonging to the Islamic militant group Boko Haram killed about 60 farmers and fishermen near the town of Garin Kwashebe in Northern Borno region, as a result of people refusal to pay illegal extortion fees[56].

In fact, the actions of armed groups and terrorist attacks have not only caused human loss and material damage but, along with the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, have also destroyed tourism activities in areas often visited by foreign tourists, which has led to a considerable decrease in incomes of local entrepreneurs and a sharp decline in those countries' economies.

Military clashes and terrorist attacks in the Sahel region and neighbour states have been exacerbated by severe floods in Somalia, Sudan and Ethiopia during the rainy season (July-September), resulting in tens of drownings and hundreds of thousands IDPs, plus the imminent danger of an outbreak of communicable diseases in flooded areas and the impossibility of complying with antiCOVID-19 measures.

With the begining of the rainy season, the tense situation in Northeast Africa between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia has significantly deteriorated as the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam began, despite negotiation statements from the Ethiopian authorities. In the absence of a signed agreement between the three states bordering the Blue Nile (which provides 85% of the Nile's total water volume) to replace the old agreement signed with British colonialists, the lives of millions of people living downstream of the dam are in danger of impoverishment[57].

The situation in North East Africa is exacerbated by the Civil War that broke out in Ethiopia on 4 November 2020, in the Tigray province, after the postponement of the elections due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the dissolution of the governing coalition by the new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (winner of the Nobel price for peace, in 2019) and accusing the Popular Liberation Front of Tigray (TPLF), led by Debretsion Gebremichael, of attacking a military base. The siege of Mekele (500,000 inhabitants), the capital of Tigray province, by government troops with tanks and artillery, as well as the 30 November's fighting between the two sides has destabilised the region, forcing more than 45,000 refugees (nearly half of them being children) to run into Sudan and another 100,000 to move to the north of the province, positioning themselves between the two belligerent parties[58]. This in addition to the 96,000 refugees from Eritrea who are already located in camps in

[56] Haruna Umar, "Suspected extremists kill at least 40 farmers in Nigeria", *Associated Press*, 29 November 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/international-news-rice-farming-local-governments-militant-groups-nigeria-83dabb4dc772e 6f09aab862e0677ff25, accessed on 04.12.2020.

[57] Samy Magdy, "Egypt, Sudan suspend talks with Ethiopia over disputed dam", *Associated Press*, 5 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/b8fb2ee6360473cf6c7e28919410ecd6, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[58] Cara Anna, "Ethiopian leader rejects international 'interference' in war", *Associated Press*, 25 November 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-abiy-ahmed-kenya-33e900e057b5921206d579bbf85af991, accessed on 26.11.2020.

the Tigray province in the middle of fights and whose food supply has ceased. The UN only managed to reach an agreement with the Ethiopian government in early December to begin humanitarian support in the Tigray, Amhara and Afar provinces. At the same time, Ethiopian and Sudanese forces have blocked the common border to prevent refugees from the Tigray province to flee in Sudan[59], while Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has blocked talks on the Ethiopian crisis in the African Union.

Together, these major events have led, for the first time in 22 years, to a major increase in extreme poverty[60] for the local population in those countries. Thus, according to a special UN report this year, from a total of 736 million people living in poverty, half live in five African and Asian countries − Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Congo and Bangladesh[61].

The phenomenon of illegal migration has continued to spread in North and West Africa, especially due to the desperate attempt of African refugees and IDPs from conflict areas to reach countries in Southern Europe, such as Spain, Italy or Greece. Not even the antiCOVID-19 measures taken by African countries, along the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean, to reduce these persons' mobility and migration have succeeded in curbing the phenomenon.

Illegal networks of smugglers and human trafficking have increased their room for maneuver to avoid clashes with law enforcement involved in the fight against COVID-19 or with Navies and Coastal Guards of African coastal states. However, a lot of maritime incidents continued to occur during illegal navigation towards European states, resulting in drowning and returning of shipwrecked personnel to the initial refugee camps. Thus, at the beginning of the second half of 2020, a ship transporting migrants from the Sahel region to the Canary Islands, after drifting for almost a week, capsized in West African territorial waters, resulting in a number of 27 drowned. Only 83 passengers survived by swimming back to the coast of Mauritania[62]. In October, a similar naval accident took place off the coast of Djibouti, in the Horn of Africa, where eight migrants drowned and 12 were abducted by smugglers and 14 shipwrecked were rescued[63]. On this occasion,

[59] Fay Abuelgasim, Nariman El-Mofty, "Ethiopian forces said to block refugees from entering Sudan", *Associated Press*, 3 December 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/sudan-ethiopia-bab9935d0f82ff394c435b3d9d9553fe, accessed on 04.12.2020.

[60] A.N.: According to the World Bank, extreme poverty means those people forced to live on just $ 1.90 a day, and their numbers could rise to 100 million due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

[61] Elias Meseret, Cara Anna, "Extreme poverty rises; a generation sees a future slip away", *Associated Press*, 10 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/0a9b306271b3190aa6733e470888c216, accessed on 26.10.2020.

[62] Carley Petesch, "27 dead after migrant boat capsizes off West African coast", *Associated Press*, 7 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/8147825832b81dbf680a7811f1e31b76, accessed on 27.10.2020.

[63] ***, "8 migrants drown, 12 missing while trying to reach Djibouti", *Associated Press*, 4 October

IOM draws attention to the danger posed by the war in Yemen, where thousands of refugees seek to escape the war zone, sailing through the Bab al-Mandeb Strait to Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The same thing happened off the Libyan coast in August, where a boat with 82 emigrants on board sank in the Mediterranean Sea, in the area of Zuwara, after its engine exploded, resulting in 45 drowned, including five children. Only 37 people were rescued by local fishermen and sent back to detention centers on the Libyan coast[64]. The shipwreck occurred just two months after the bodies of ten other migrants were not found in the waters near the town of Zawiya, 48 km west of Tripoli. The Libyan Navy also intercepted, off the coast of Libya, a group of 70 emigrants, including 15 children, whom it returned to the detention center in Khoms. Three of them were shot while trying to flee and return to the coast[65]. In September and October, four other boats capsized off the coast of Libya and the island of Lampedusa, Italy. In the first incident, 16 migrants, men and women, drowned and 22 were rescued by local fishermen in the waters near the town of Zliten, located East of Tripoli[66]. In the second, 11 emigrants, including a pregnant woman, drowned, 10 being rescued by local fishermen. In the next, 15 emigrants drowned, and in the fourth, five people died off the Italian islands.

The Italian government has given a warning over the increasing number of migrants arriving in Southern the cities and islands, estimating that more than 13,000 illegal migrants have arrived in Italy this year, via the Mediterranean Sea, which represents 9,000 more than from last year. Likewise, the Sea Watch refugee rescue organization said that the situation in Southern Italy is deteriorating and becoming increasingly tense. Thus, in the island of Lampedusa alone, 5,500 emigrants have arrived in recent months, 2-3 boats docking daily at the shore[67]. The UN Migration Agency (IOM) has confirmed that more than 7,000 migrants have been intercepted by the Libyan Coast Guard this year, in collaboration with EU Naval Operation "Irini" warships, and have been returned to Libya.

The Spanish authorities also reported an alarming increase in the number

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2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-saudi-arabia-africa-djibouti-yemen-8d268e93771646089a852e361560aca2, accessed on 03.11.2020.

[64] Samy Magdy, "UN: 45 migrants killed when boat capsizes off coast of Libya", *Associated Press*, 19 August 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/africa-middle-east-united-nations-europe-3851ef2b2cac0bd33bc4709668a6db5b, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[65] ***, „Charity urges release of 200 migrant children held in Libya", *Associated Press*, 29 July 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/libya-middle-east-immigration-mediterranean-sea-africa-fb037aeab1ad17eb05472c405cd03 a73, accessed on 02.11.2020.

[66] Isabel Debre, *op.cit*.

[67] Andreas Noll, "Refugee crisis worsening in southern Europe amid coronavirus pandemic", *Deutche Welle*, 2 August 2020, URL: https://www.dw.com/en/refugee-crisis-worsening-in-southern-europe-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/a-54404 455, accessed on 28.10.2020.

of illegal immigrants arriving on the Spanish coasts from Morocco and Algeria, reaching as many as 2,000 per month, the worst situation being in the Canary Islands. According to the reported data, this year there have been more than 20,000 illegally arrived emigrants from North Africa in the Spanish archipelago, of which at least 500 drowned off the Canary Islands[68]. Fearing spread of deseases, the Madrid government did not allow newcomers to be included in the existing permanent refugee camps, some of which were even disbanded and local authorities being forced to quarantine refugees in tents, military barracks (no more than 72 hours), or even in empty hotels, due to lack of tourists. This was also the case of the last 68 African emigrants (all men) who arrived on Maspalomas beach, in the Grand Canary Island, at the beginning of December 2020.

Although the situation in Greece seems rather calm, with the number of newly arrived emigrants not exceeding 244 per month, the Greek authoritiest biggest fear is the overload of refugee camps. For Greeks, proximity to the Turkish coast continues to be the biggest threat, even in terms of illegal migrants. Thus, in early December 2020, the EU Frontex Agency rescued 32 Somali migrants, including three children, from an inflatable boat wrecked off the coast of Lesbos, and two women drowned[69]. The boat had left Turkey, which the Greek authorities accused of not taking the necessary measures to stop illegal migration.

Recently, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Danish Red Cross have drawn attention to the physical abuses made by some employees of the North African states' institutions, resulting in numerous deaths and mutilations on desert roads to the Libyan coast of refugees and migrants towards Europe. Of these abuses, 47% were committed by security forces, police, military, immigration offices and border guards, and 29% by smugglers and human traffickers and organized crime groups associated with them[70].

Thus, one of the African countries most affected by such abuses is Libya, where this year, according to agreements signed with Italy, the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard have intercepted and have returned to the continent about 8,500 illegal migrants, including women and children, who have imprisoned in unofficial detention centers in the Western part of the country, such as the "Tobacco Factory" in Tripoli, run by one of the GNA-affiliated militias. According to Amnesty

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[68] ***, "Migrants arriving in Canary Islands go to barracks, hotels", *Associated Press*, 1 December 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/north-africa-atlantic-ocean-canary-islands-africa-spain-75cb424d8cc846ef185939f1843ea 789, accessed on 03.12.2020.

[69] ***, "2nd body recovered off Greek island after migrant boat sank", *Associated Press*, 3 December 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/europe-greece-96ef991f6ed33e08795f84a8b362be2f, accessed on 04.12.2020.

[70] Jamey Keaten, "UN reprt finds migrants face violence by African officials", *Associated Press*, 29 July 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-libya-international-news-violence-africa-20a4e261131396662e683a3658a09 6cf, accessed on 03.11.2020.

International, thousands of such refugees appear to have been forcibly disappeared from these centers, and thousands more have been physically abused by militias, the military and human traffickers. Some were tortured or raped until their families paid a ransom for their release. Others died in detention, being victims of acts of violence, torture, starvation or lack of medical treatment. For example, throughout 2020, the East Libyan authorities expelled more than 5,000 refugees and migrants, many of them as a result of the danger of transmitting contagious diseases[71].

We can note that, in the last part of 2020, terrorist actions of African extremist groups were intensified, especially in the Sahel region and neighbour states, amplifying the phenomenon of illegal migration and the activity of organised crime groups on illegal trafficking in human beings, weapons and drugs. Thus, out of a total of 35 terrorist attacks that took place throughout 2020 worldwide, nine took place in North Africa and the Sahel region, which represents about 40%.

6. The Impact of the North African Situation upon the European Security

One of the major issues posed by the Libyan conflict and the deteriorating situation in North Africa (economic, pandemic and security) is the increase in the number of refugees illegally arriving in Southern Europe. Amplified by the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, the situation in countries such as Italy and Spain is becoming increasingly tense, especially as a result of the deterioration of local economies in the Southern cities and islands of these countries (based on fishing and tourism only). The support that their capitals could provide is delayed, as is the quarantine of migrants. Even the Maritime Agreement established by Italy with the Libyan Navy and Coast Guard is no longer effective, as the emigrants leave North Africa clandestinely, through Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

Italy has been forced to change its antimigration policy imposed by former Interior Minister Salvini and make some concessions to humanitarian and refugee rescue organisations, reducing taxes on search and rescue ships and reintroducing extended humanitarian protection and easier procedures for the admission of asylum seekers to the country. However, the links between state services and NGOs do not seem to work, nor is planned a common rescue action on their part.

In fact, Italy considers itself threatened not so much by the risk of the spread of Coronavirus by illegal migrants, but by the large number of emigrants from African countries, where the economy is collapsing, such as Tunisia or Nigeria, and who want to permanently stay here. This has brought with it major social tensions

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[71] Samy Magdy, "Amnesty: Migrants face 'vicious cycle of cruelty' in Libya", *Associated Press*, 24 September 2020, URL: https://apnews.com/article/virus-outbreak-libya-middle-east-tripoli-africa-48322c9b1a6c2a533c1114415f53b86a, accessed on 02.11.2020.

between the indigenous population facing the same economic crisis and the risk posed by COVID-19 and migrants arriving from African states.

France's geopolitical position in North Africa and the Sahel region is deteriorating, and the control that Paris would like to maintain in the former colonies is becoming increasingly derisory. French President Emmanuel Macron's attempt to hold a summit with all French-speaking African governments in 2020 failed as a result of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic. The intention was to massively urbanise cities and regions in Africa, in order to change the trends and the paradigm of giving up "Francophone Africa / Françafrique" (see Figure no. 2).
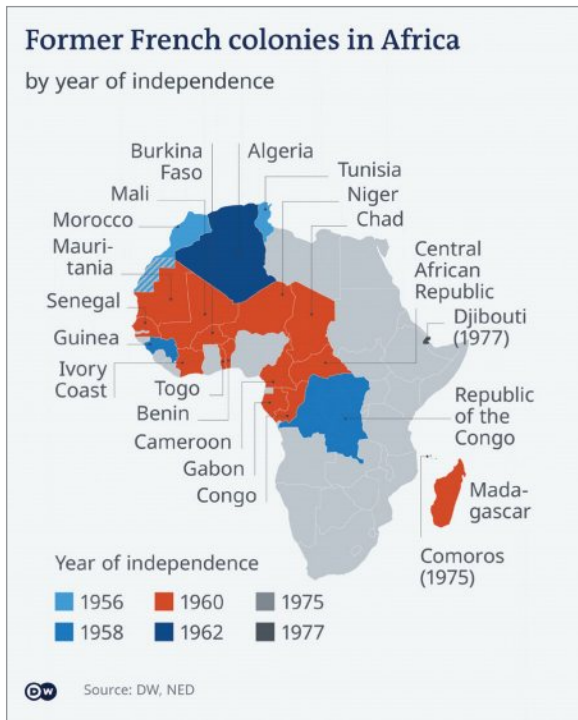
Figure no. 2: Former French colonies in Africa[72]

But Macron's policy of maintaining strong political and economic control in these states has distanced relations with them, even if his efforts have been to launch economic and financial projects approved by African elites, but not by young people who want to truly achieving the independence of their states. The most recent example is France's signing of an agreement with eight ECOWAS member countries to replace the Central African Franc (CFA) with a single West African currency called the Eco[73]. Even if it relaxes African bank deposits,the agreement does not bring with it a monetary policy independent of the French financial system, but France's attempt to project its power in the region.

Another major danger that illegal migration brings to the European Security is the increase of extremist actions' supporters, whether they are members of international terrorist organisations or becoming followers/sympathisers. This danger is represented by the latest violent terrorist attacks that have recently taken place in France and Austria.

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[72] Source: www.dw.com/en

[73] Silja Fröhlich, "Africa and France: An unfulfilled dream of independance?", *Deutche Welle*, 3 August 2020, URL: https://www.dw.com/en/africa-and-france-an-unfulfilled-dream-of-independence/a-54418511, accessed on 02.11.2020.

Thus, on 25 September, two people were stabbed and seriously injured in front of the former French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo Headquarters, in Paris, by an Islamist suspect, supporter of the Islamic extremist movement in Europe. October was full of such radical events that took place in Germany, Croatia, France, Turkey and Austria − starting with the 4 October's knife attack in Dresden, Germany, by a Syrian suspect requesting asylum against two German homosexuals, continuing with the shootings in Zagreb, on 12 October, against the Croatian government building, then the knife attack and beheading of a Northwest teacher in Paris, carried out on 16 October by an Islamist militant, the suicide attack with bombing of PKK fighters in Iskenderun, Turkey, on 26 October, directed against Turkish law enforcement unit, the same day with the knife attack of an Islamist sympathizer on three French citizens at Notre Dame Cathedral in Nice, France, and culminating with the bloody armed attack in Vienna on 2 November, in which an Islamic State supporter killed four civilians and wounded other 22.

All these events taking place across Europe in the second half of 2020 demonstrate that the risks and threats to the European Security are real and increasing. The illegal migration, in addition to being a risk in itself, is also a multiplier for other risks and threats, such as international terrorism and cross-border organized crime.

Conclusions

The second half of 2020 has began with an increase in military action in the Libyan Civil War, not in number but in intensity, exacerbated by the withdrawal of General Haftar's loyal forces and the military intervention of regional powers such as Turkey, the UAE and Russia, as well as the threat posed by Egypt with the use of military force. As a result, unwilling to extend this conflict to other North African states, the belligerents have reached a ceasefire agreement under continued pressure from the international community.

Thus, on October 23, the belligerent parties signed in Geneva, under UN and Germany coordination, a ceasefire agreement in Libya, which immediately entered into force. The agreement was the beginning of a basis for political-military discussions and negotiations, including the regional powers involved, for the achievement of prosperity and the resumption of economic activities in the country. From a military point of view, it was agreed to give up foreign mercenaries, whose responsibility will be taken over by a mixed of police forces.

The signing of the agreement and the temporary ceasefire help, in addition to stabilising the internal situation and taking control of the country by future elected Libyan authorities, some regional powers that have supported the belligerents' military actions. Thus, Egypt and Italy are two big winners of this situation, in

addition to the other North African neighbour states. That is because Egypt has never wanted to be directly involved in this Civil War, and Italy hopes that the newly elected Libyan leadership will end the growing flow of emigrants. France, on the other hand, wants to stop Turkey's involvement in both Libya's land and sea areas, leaving room for its military action in the Sahel region and maintaining control over French-speaking Africa.

The massive increase in the number of SARS CoV-2 virus infections in North Africa and the Sahel region, together with the constant pressure exerted by the international community, has also had some positive aspects, succeeding in temporarily freezing the Civil Wars in Libya and Sudan. Those in Somalia and Mali remain active, along with terrorist activities in the respective area by extremist groups affiliated to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, which cooperate with and support the illegal activities of local cross-border organised crime groups on trafficking human beings, weapons and drugs.

Illegal migration to Europe has been also on the rise since last year, fueled by refugees from conflict zones, plus the war in Yemen and extreme poverty in Africa. The fact that the African states' economies are on the verge of collapse leads to the increasing desire of emigrants arriving in Southern European states not to return, immediately demanding and doing everything possible to obtain political asylum.

Neither the start of the EU operation NAVFOR Med "Irini" off the Libyan coast nor the agreements reached between Italians and the Libyan Navy/Coast Guard have led to a decrease in the number of emigrants. On the contrary, they have made impossible the intervention of non-governmental organizations specialised in rescuing and recovering illegal migrants from the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, increasing the number of drowned and shipwrecked personnel.

The recovery and return of refugees to the shores of North African states has had negative effects on the humanitarian situation in the region. The abuses to which they were exposed by the authorities, together with the lack of food, water and necessary medicines, led to many deaths among them. Many were sent back to their home countries, refusing to stay in those areas for longer time.

The conflict situation in Libya, amplified by the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic and the sharp decline of the local economy, has had and continues to have a detrimental influence on the European Security. Illegal migration has continued to increase, despite measures taken by Southern European states to prevent refugees from reaching the shore. At the same time, terrorist attacks carried out by members of extremist groups or their sympathizers have increased. There have also been situations of violent protests by immigrants stationed in illegal camps in some cities and their supporters, even leading to armed clashes with the police, as was the case of the forced relocation of the illegal tent camp in Republic Square in Paris, on 24 November 2020. However, all these actions have been secondary to the agenda of

European leaders' meetings, with the main concern of common security being the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. And Africa, in order not to become a new threat to Europe in the future, this time of a biological type, needs international support in vaccinating at least 60% of the population in the next 2-3 years.

All of these disastrous events occur at a period when, for the first time since the '90s, extreme poverty is rising worldwide, life expectancy is declining, and the annual death toll from diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria doubles, as well as because of starvation. Thus, the year 2021 will be a year of regression of the last 40 years of progress, if we do not decide to find a common sollution to escape this pandemic.

ISIS AND THE 2015 MIGRATION WAVE: THE MOTIVES AND STRUGGLES OF MIGRANTS ON THEIR WAY TO EUROPE

András NOVÁK*

In 2015, an unprecedented number of migrants passed through the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkan route in hope of reaching Western Europe. The underlying reasons behind the phenomenon are complex: unstable political systems of origin countries, terrorist attacks carried out by organizations such as ISIS, and scarce water resources are among the potential root causes. In order to better understand the underlying reasons, motives and struggles of migrants from three different regions, 300 journalistic interviews conducted in 12 countries, between 2015 and 2019, were analysed using an inductive content analysis. It can be concluded that the majority of migrants interviewed are not aware of the illicit nature of their border crossings and are determined to reach the destination country even if it entails violence. The efficiency of smuggler activity, Germany's favourable news and the fact that the refugees have not heard of anyone having been sent back to their home country are all contributing factors. Future policies and communication campaigns should be based on these findings when handling a potential future wave of migration.

Keywords: migration; terrorism; ISIS; refugee; border crossing; smuggler.

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1. Terrorism, Migration and Refugees: Conceptual Definitions

Prior to discussing the context and the potential underlying reasons of the 2015 migration wave towards Europe, it is imperative to define the conceptual realm this study operates under. First, terrorism is defined; second, migration as a phenomenon is described; finally, the people participating in migration – migrants or refugees – are taken under brief scrutiny.

Early terrorism research focused on the concept of urban guerrilla warfare, which originated from actions of groups such as the Red Brigades in Italy. Later, researchers argue that there has been a transformation compared to terrorism of the 1960s and 1970s, therefore they talk about a new type of terrorism with religious and cultural roots.[1] After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States, there has been a significant growth in publications about the topic. While a single, widely-accepted definition among researchers does not exist, this paper defines terrorism as the use of violence by a non-state organization to intimidate a target audience.[2] However, it is also important to note that most terrorist attacks are planned and carried out by larger groups – instead of single individuals – that have some underlying political agenda.

Migration is a phenomenon in which humans have engaged for centuries. While the reason behind people's movements varies greatly (economic opportunitity, terrorism, persecution, human rights violation etc.), migration is a constantly present phenomenon in our world.[3] The United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration defines an international migrant as any person who has changed his or her residence country. They distinguish between short-term and long-term migrants (those who changed residence countries in the past year).[4] The number of international migrants have greatly increased since 1990: the estimated number that year was 153 million, while in 2019 it rose to 272 million,[5] out of which more than 1.3 million people applied for asylum in Europe as part of the 2015 migration wave.[6] The growing tendency of international migration as

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[1] Aureo de Toledo Gomes, Michelle Mitri Mikhael, "Terror or Terrorism? Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in Comparative Perspective", in *Brazilian Political Science Review*, URL: https://www.redalyc.org/jatsRepo/3943/394357143003/html/index.html, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[2] Pape A. Robert, *Dying to win: the strategic logic of suicide terrorism*, Random House, New York, 2005, p. 352.

[3] United Nations, "Migration", URL: https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[4] ***, *World Migration Report 2020: Chapter 2*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 2019, pp. 21-22, URL: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020_en_ch_2.pdf, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[5] *Ibidem.*

[6] ***, "Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015", *Pew Research Center*,

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well as the record number of asylum seekers in 2015 highlights the importance this research project bears.

In terms of people engaging in migration, the UNHCR differentiates between refugees and migrants. The former are defined as persons fleeing armed conflict or persecution.[7] Another definiton provided by the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention states that a refugee is a person "who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion".[8] On the other hand, migrants choose to move not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, or in some cases for education, family reunion, or other reasons.[9] While this study acknowledges the importance of distinguishing between refugees and migrants, the terms here are used interchangebly, as both migrants and refugees had been part of the 300 interviews analyzed in this study. Where appropriate, comments are made separately about the two groups.

2. ISIS − Main Cause of the 2015 Migration Crisis

The 2015 migration wave is the result of various and complex occurrences that took place in the Middle East. Given the convoluted nature of events, it is impossible to highlight one main cause that brought about the migration crisis with a record number of migrants as mentioned earlier. The establishment of the Islamic State (Iraqi and Levant Islamic State or the Iraqi and Syrian Islamic State, henceforth ISIS) and the brutal attacks that followed needs to be addressed, as these occurrences certainly had a significant role in the events that followed. While some define ISIS as a pseudo-state led by a conventional army and thus refuse to call it a terrorist organization,[10] RAND terrorism experts classify the violent actions carried out by the

URL: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/08/02/number-of-refugees-to-europe-surges-to-record-1-3-million-in-2015/, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[7] ***, "UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – Which is right?", *UNHCR*, URL: https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[8] ***, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees", *UNHCR*, Geneva, 1951, p. 3, URL: https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[9] ***, "UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – Which is right?", *UNHCR*, URL: https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html, accessed on 29.05.2020.

[10] Audrey Kurth Cronin, "ISIS Is Not a Terrorist Group", URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/24483485.pdf?casa_token=62fTXqAf2aYAAAAA:smguynfcLUkwV7P6xAj6lYkSYYDvvQXNZe9zSJg-vGCftGHgDbl2R216LcodmYjd0gDYk_iE_IUCw-11F4JU1o6T1u3glTEmYgiNDgTt0oxMjG3xh 0Y, accessed on 29.05.2020.

organization as terrorism.[11] Consequently, this research paper regards ISIS as a terrorist organization.

ISIS emerged from the group Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in 2003, under the leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[12] ISIS's original goal was to establish a Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, having a Sunni majority and subsequently unifying Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Cyprus and the southern part of Turkey. The Caliphate that ISIS temporarily established has not been officially recognised by any countries or international organisations as an existing, independent state. At the same time, it is an undisputed fact that we are talking about a *de facto* existing religious and social formation with territory and population that carries out state functions as well.[13]

After the Caliphate was proclaimed by the head of ISIS on June 29th, 2014 in Mosul, ISIS was able to occupy key positions in Syria and Iraq. As a result, they were able to finance their operations. Moreover, the organization had a strong social media presence with deliberate propaganda, which further contributed to their expansion in the region. The main goal of their campaigns were recruitment and collection of donations and aid. The extremely rapid success of ISIS was the parallel occurrence of the previously mentioned factors.[14]

Among the additional underlying reasons contributing to the 2015 migration wave were the consequences of ISIS's military actions and the uncertainty surrounding them. On top of that, the political situation of the Middle East has been uncertain for decades: it has become the scene of continuous armed conflicts in the last 50 years. This was also a factor that triggered people's need to leave the region from time to time.[15] Beyond armed conflicts the social and healthcare situation, issues caused by scarce water resources and malnutrition, have also contributed to the emergence of the migration wave.[16] Again, the phenomenon of the 2015 migration wave is multifaceted and complex, thus a single root cause cannot be determined; rather a group of interdependent occurrences and circumstances should be considered.

[11] ***, "The Islamic State (Terrorist Organization)", *Rand.org*, URL: https://www.rand.org/topics/the-islamic-state-terrorist-organization.html, accessed on 30.05.2020.

[12] Michael Weiss, Hassan Hassan, *ISIS, Inside the Army of Terror*, Regan Arts, New York, 2015, p. 13.

[13] Péter Háber, "The terrorist organisation named „Islamic State" and the security risks presented by it", in *Szakmai Szemle* no. 3/2016, Military National Security Service, Budapest.

[14] István Resperger, *Basic Knowledge of National Security*, Dialóg Campus Publishing House, 2018, pp. 23-25.

[15] Dr. Ferenc Probáld, Dr. Nándor Szegedi, *Economic geography of the Middle East*, Tankönyvkiadó Publishers, 1986.

[16] Dr. Tamás Dezső, "Demography and Migration, Reasons and Consequences of the Population Explosion of the World", in *Institute of Migration Research*, URL: https://www.migraciokutato.hu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Demogr%C3%A1fia-%C3%A9s-migr%C3%A1ci%C3%B3_MKI_20181211.pdf, accessed on 12.09.2019.

3. A Perilous Journey: Cases of Migration Leading to Tragedy

According to data published by Frontex, the most important migration route is the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2015, over 885,000 migrants arrived in Europe via this route.[17] In the same year, most people arrived from Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia. In 2018, after Syrians and Afghans, Iraqis and Turkish were the most common nationalities using this route.[18] Besides this route, many of the interviewed migrants in the current study went through the Western Balkan route via the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia into Hungary and Croatia and, then, towards Western Europe. While this route also saw an unprecedented number of illegal border crossings in 2015, the numbers have dropped significantly by 2017, following coordinated restriction measures.[19] Figure number 1 demonstrates the number of illegal borders crossing on both of these routes and showcases the popularity of the Eastern Mediterranean route as well as the quick decline in illegal border crossings on the Western Balkan route after 2015.

According to UNHCR, over 1 million migrants arrived by sea in 2015 only.[20] The number of people arriving by land was a little over 34 thousand in 2015, which points to the importance of sea routes .[21] The unprecedented numbers and the unseaworthy boats, however, led to catastrophes. In October 2013, in the vicinity of Lampedusa, more than 300 migrants had drowned. As a response to this tragedy, in harmony with the resolution of the European Council coordinated by Frontex, financed by the EU and with the involvement of the Italian authorities and their navy, the „Mare Nostrum" action was launched. [22] The essence of it was that they were patrolling the sea not before the Italian shores but close to African shores on international waters in order to avoid international legal conflicts and in an attempt to prevent refugees from drowning. They were meeting the smuggled people, called the pull factor, and as a result, the refugees did not have to spend days adrift the sea before reaching Italian territory. The Italians (and later, other EU member states) picked them up following a five-hour trip and carried them to Italian (Schengen) territory. Recognizing this, the smugglers squeezed in more and more people into

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[17] ***, "Migratory Routes", Frontex, URL: https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/eastern-mediterranean-route/, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[18] *Ibidem.*

[19] *Ibidem.*

[20] ***, "Refugees and Migrants Sea Arrival in Europe", *UNHCR*, URL: https://data2.unhcr.org/ar/documents/download/53447, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[21] ***, "EU Migrant, Refugee Arrivals by Land and Sea approach 1 Million", International Organization for Migration, URL: https://www.iom.int/news/eu-migrant-refugee-arrivals-land-and-sea-approach-one-million-2015, accessed on 27.05.2020.

[22] *Council of the European Union in 2013*, Council of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2014, p. 80, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21290/qcao13001huc.pdf, accessed on 30.05.2020.

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many small rickety boats, promising the refugees that they were going to reach „nearby" EU ships.

Sensing the adverse effects of the pull factor, the international action was gradually terminated between September and December 2014. As a consequence, in the last quarter, the number of captures, or of those rescued on sea, dropped to half of the previous quarter and kept falling by the beginning of 2015. Meanwhile, the number of captures on land increased in the two mentioned quarters. Therefore, the typical „channelling effect" was working. If one migration route proved to be non-viable, the pressure was diverted to another one. As the weather improved, in 2015, the smugglers tried again to launch new boats, however, by then the „EU ships" were not at the African shores anymore. Tragedy hit again, when other 900 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea.[23]
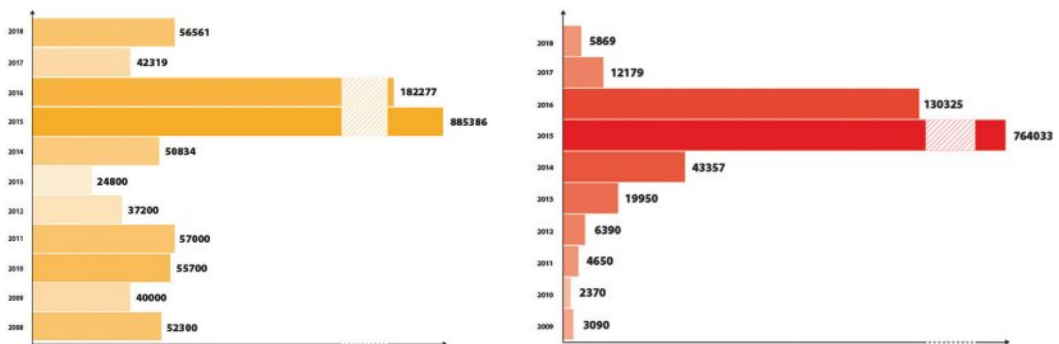
Figure no. 1: The number of illegal border crossing on the Eastern Mediterranean Route (left) and on the Western Balkan route (right)[24]

4. Research Methodology and Aims

The current study utilizes content analysis to further understand the root causes of the 2015 migration crisis from the Middle East, Africa and Asia towards Europe. Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages.[25] There are two main types of content analysis: conceptual and relational analysis. The current study uses the former methodology to examine the occurrence of themes within the material aspects. In this case, audio-visual materials have been

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[23] György Ritecz, "Migration trends – and what's behind it", in *Regio*, URL: https://regio.tk.mta.hu/index.php/regio/article/view/115, accessed on 30.05.2020.

[24] ***, "Migratory Routes", *Frontex*, URL: https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/western-balkan-route/, accessed on 25.07.2020.

[25] Frank L. Cole, "Content analysis: process and application", in *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, no. 2(1)/1988, pp. 53–57.

analysed; they have been recorded over the course of four years. The researcher travelled to 12 different countries where 300 interviews were conducted, between 2015 and 2019. The 12 countries are: Syria, Kurdistan, Iraq, Turkey, North Macedonia, Greece, Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Italy, Libya and Lebanon. It is important to note that many of these countries served as transit countries, as in almost all cases, migrants wanted to go further to Western Europe[26]. During these encounters, the researcher had the opportunity to approach the refugees and ask them questions about their journey to Europe, their reasons and their struggles. Although all 300 subjects have agreed to air their interviews on television, their names and identities are not disclosed in this paper due to ethical considerations.

As far as the demographic structure of the interviewed refugees goes, 90% are men between the ages of 30 and 40. Over 60% of the people interviewed can be considered an economic migrant, however, as stated before, this paper does not seek to separately analyse this group.

Given that interviews were recorded with a journalistic purpose, this study takes an inductive approach when performing a content analysis on interviews with 300 migrants. Three main phases can be differentiated in the inductive content analysis process: preparation, organizing and reporting[27], which are followed in this research study. The researcher first transcribed all 300 interviews, followed by coding the responses. During this phase, general patterns have emerged, which was expected given that the researcher asked migrants similar – if not the same – questions. Once having compiled and coded the data, the researcher determined the percentage of certain groups of answers and wrote a scientific analysis based on such data. Groups of answers are not mutually exclusive; they have simply been derived from the participants' responses. It is also important to note that due to the random selection of the sample (N=300), the results presented cannot be deemed representative.

Regarding the goals of the study, the researcher aimed at further understanding the root causes of the 2015 migration wave as well as bringing forward the refugees' reasons, goals and potential struggles. Considering that it is rare for a correspondent to interact with migrants throughout several years, it is a unique opportunity not only to seek to better understand the phenomenon, but also to provide insights for policy makers and activists for the handling of future crises. In the following section, the results of the study are presented.

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[26] János Besenyő, "Security preconditions: Understanding migratory routes", in *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues*, pp. 5-26, 2016, URL: http://jssidoi.org/jssi/uploads/papers/21/Besenyo_Security_preconditions_understanding _migratory_routes.pdf, accessed on 26.05.2020.

[27] Satu Elo, Helvi Kyngas, "The qualitative content analysis process", in *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, URL: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x, accessed on 26.05.2020.

5. Findings

The results of the analysis are presented through six themes or areas of questions that emerged in the interviews. Responses are classified into three groups based on the respondents' region of origin, which are the Middle East, Asia and Africa, respectively.

The first area of inquiry regarded the perception of migrants about border crossing. The researcher was interested whether refugees were aware of the illicit nature of some of their border crossings. Therefore, he asked the following: *Did you know that the European borders were closed and entering was illegal?* Based on the responses, it is clear that the majority of refugees were not aware of the attempt of the European countries to prevent migration by shutting down their borders. They simply did not hear this information neither from mass media nor from their families or other social groups. It is interesting to point out the discrepancy in awareness between migrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. People arriving from Africa or Asia were less informed than refugees from the Middle East. 90% of Asians and 89% of Africans did not know about the closed borders compared to 77% of the people from the Middle East. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that there is a lack of information regarding the standpoint of European countries and their policies about border closure among migrants, which is highlighted by an interview excerpt with a Syrian man: *We didn't know anything. My friends, who are already in Germany told me that we can get in. But then, I didn't have any other choice, my house was completely destroyed, I have nothing left, that's why I'm here. Now, I'd like to go to Munich too.*

Table no. 1: Migrants' awareness of European border closure

Question #1: Did you know that the European borders were closed and entering was illegal?				
	Middle East	Asia	Africa	Overall
No	77%	90%	89%	87%
No, and does not believe it even now	1%	1%	2%	4%
Yes, but he knew that despite this it is possible to enter	11%	6%	1%	2%
Yes, but his life was in danger	11%	3%	8%	7%

Some migrants, particularly from the Middle East, were aware that what they were doing was illegal. Moreover, they knew they might be facing dangerous situations while on the way. These questions are further explored in later themes.

Secondly, refugees reported about their planned destinations. Among the countries mentioned were Germany (44%), France (18%), Italy (12%), Sweden

(5%), Great Britain (4%) and other countries, such as Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands or the UK (17%). Based on the numbers, it appears that Western European countries with strong economies were the most favoured destinations among refugees, especially Germany, as almost half of the respondents wanted to start a new life there. One of the reasons for this finding might be the fact that migrants were hearing positive news from this country. They heard that refugees were being treated humanely in Germany and that the approval of applications for asylum were high. Additionally, the monthly allowance for refugees in Germany is relatively high, which might have been another contributing factor to their decisions. Even during the asylum process, the federal state of Berlin pays for refugees' food and accommodation should they seek shelter in Berlin.[28] Some differences among people from different regions emerged in terms of their destinations, (see Table number 2), however, overall, the majority of refugees set the goal of reaching either Germany or France.

Table no. 2: Migrants' planned destination countries

Question #2: Where would you like to go?				
	Middle East	Asia	Africa	Overall
Germany	44%	66%	33%	44%
France	12%	10%	47%	18%
Italy	10%	12%	9%	12%
Sweden	5%	3%	2%	5%
Great Britain	6%	5%	4%	4%
Other	13%	4%	5%	17%

The third area of inquiry explored the underlying reasons why people decided to leave their home countries. Based on the responses, three main categories emerged: some feared for their lives because of terrorist groups' activities, such as ISIS or the Taliban, others left with the hope of having better living conditions and opportunities in Europe and some others already had relatives in European countries, which served as their primary reason for leaving. It is important to note that these responses are not mutually exclusive, they simply refer to the primary reason why one decided to emigrate. The first group of respondents could be classified as refugees; an Iraqi male respondent is one of these people, he stated: *ISIS killed all members of my family. I'm alone. I have nothing to lose that's why I came. I'd like to start a new life in Europe. Either in Germany or in Italy.*

While people in the second group are best described as economic migrants, sometimes they also have other reasons that contributed to their decision, which

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[28] "Benefits", *Berlin.de*, URL: https://www.berlin.de/fluechtlinge/en/information-for-refugees/benefits/, accessed on 26.05.2020.

makes the phenomenon more complex. This is exemplified by the following excerpt: *We were starving, there is no job in the neighbourhood and my husband was killed. I left with my four children and I'm going to France. This here is a Greek refugee camp, but the conditions are terrible. As soon as we can, we are on our way.*

Table no. 3: The underlying reasons why people decided to leave

Question #3: Why did you leave?	
His life was in danger by one of the terrorist organisations, (the Taliban or the Islamic State)	67%
Would like to have a better life and get a job in Europe	21%
His relatives are already there, he's on his way to join them	10%
Other reasons	2%

The next line of questions regarded whether migrants had to face atrocities during their journey and if so, in which country? Almost half of respondents (45%) reported that they endured some kind of violence in one of the transitory countries. The countries mentioned were Bulgaria (33%), Croatia (19%), Iran (11%), Northern Macedonia (11%), Turkey (9%), Hungary (8%) and Romania (5%). A male, originally from Afghanistan, provided an account on the brutalities he had experienced*: I was beaten several times, the police let dogs loose on me. I was bitten on both arms and my leg. They were treating us like animals. This happened in Bulgaria.*

While more than half of the migrants (55%) that had been asked did not report any atrocities, the fact that 45% of refugees went through some kind of physical or verbal abuse is alarming and, therefore, deserves attention.

When asked about smugglers and their 'services' provided to migrants, 68% of refugees reported that they left their home countries with the assistance of smugglers. These findings show how dependant migrants were on these traffickers. Not surprisingly, these services were at a high cost. While over third of the respondents did not pay to the smugglers at all, 31% of them paid between €5000 and €10,000. These are significant amounts of money considering the often poor living conditions these migrants come from. However, especially for economic migrants, the prospect of a better future is oftentimes worth the money ultimately feeding the illicit smuggling 'industry'. *There are hardly any jobs in Pakistan. I was earning 7 EUR/day; you cannot survive from this amount. I have some friends who were smuggled in. That's how I arrived in Bosnia. Now I'm waiting for the opportunity to continue my journey.*

Table no. 4: The amount of money refugees paid the smugglers

Question #5: How much did you pay the smugglers?	
Did not pay the smugglers	32%
Less than €5000	27%
Between €5000 and €10,000	31%
More than €10,000	10%

The last area of inquiry regarded migrants' perception about the possibility to turn back and return to their home countries should the situation change, or should they be sent back. 99% of respondents said they did not even consider returning home when they found out about the closed European borders. Furthermore, still a sweeping majority, 95,5%, reported they would not go back to their home countries even if the situation changed. The excerpts provided earlier in this section offer an explanation: they are scared, worried and hopeless. Their lives are not only being threatened economically but often also physically which fuels their determination of leaving and starting a new life in another country. Moreover, the fact that 98% of migrants asked did not hear of anyone having been sent back further enhances their motivation and determination.

Conclusions

The current study aimed at better understanding the underlying reasons, motives and struggles of people that left their home countries as part of the 2015 migrant wave from three different regions: The Middle East, Africa and Asia. 300 interviews conducted in 12 different countries with a journalistic purpose have been analysed using an inductive content analysis. Six main themes emerged after compiling and coding the data providing insight about migrants' reasons to leave, their planned final destinations, their awareness about European border closures, the atrocities faced during the journey, the financial background of such journeys as well as their perception about a potential return to their home countries.

One can conclude that a great majority of refugees asked in this research are not aware of the illicit nature of migration and perceive the journey to Europe relatively easily attainable. The services offered by smugglers are very successful, which might contribute to migrants' perception. However, there is a price for that. Nonetheless, refugees are willing to pay thousands of euros in the hope of arriving to Western Europe (primarily Germany or France) where – according to their expressed hopes – they will be treated humanely and have better job opportunities. News from these countries are favourable which is in huge contrast with the violent turmoil many Middle Eastern countries have gone and are still going through due to

organizations such as ISIS. Since data was collected over the course of four years, it can be concluded that while early refugees referred primarily to ISIS as the main reason for their departure, later, migrants mentioned mostly economic reasons. This distinction of refugees and economic migrants was not tackled by this research paper in detail, however, it should be explored in future work.

Based on the current research, it can be concluded that as of 2019, trafficking routes in the Balkan and the Eastern Mediterranean region are working so well that if someone decides to spend between €5000 and €8000, they will most likely reach a European country. The efficiency of smugglers, the favourable news from Germany and the fact that refugees have not heard of anyone having been sent back to their home country are all contributing to their firm determination of carrying through with the journey even if it entails violence. Policy makers and activists might be able to utilize some of these findings to devise better communication and action plans when it comes to the handling of a potential future migration wave. For example, considering that migrants are not aware of border closures, information campaigns could be launched in the most affected countries so that they are able to make fully informed decisions and repossess control over their lives as much as possible.

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INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AS AN ASSYMETRIC THREAT. CHARACTERISTICS AND MEANS TO FIGHT AGAINST IT

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Terrorism is without any doubt one of the most serious asymmetric security threats to human society in the 21ˢᵗ century. No country, despite the political, security, legislative, organizational, and other measures taken, is currently fully resilient to terrorist attacks. Terrorist activities are carried out worldwide and pose a threat to society in many developed and under development countries. At present, unfortunately, terrorism can also hit anyone, anywhere, anytime. Terrorist attacks cause not only incalculable financial and material damage, but also considerable loss of life and very difficult mental disorders. These are the reasons why the author, using relevant methods of scientific research, deals with the trends in the motivation for terrorism, which is based on rational choice, and religious and cultural aspects and on the terrorism changes. In the second part of the article, he examines starting points of counter-terrorism measures, discusses the principle of asymmetry, describes the pre-emptive strategy and explains the concept of the just war theory.

Keywords: terrorism; motivation for terrorist acts; goals; asymmetry; security; counter-terrorism measures.

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Introduction

The unprecedented dynamic development of today's human society brings along a huge number of changes that fundamentally affect people all over the globe. On the one hand, any changes are positive, beneficial to human as an individual and to society as a whole, but on the other hand, many changes are negative, very unfavourable to individual aspects of people's lives and also to the functioning and development of society.

Implemented or ongoing changes in the economy, for example, have brought jobs, development, and improved living standards to people in several regions of the world, but, also, these changes have further widened disparities between some regions of the world and increased inequalities between people themselves, regardless of their country of residence. In terms of environment, many changes have brought increased protection for rare, unique species of animals and plants or for certain areas, but they have also exacerbated deforestation, desertification, water and land pollution or plunder of scarce resources and other incalculable damage.

In the security sphere, it seemed that the end of the Cold War and the elimination of the world's bipolar division and of the threat of a missile-nuclear apocalypse between former antagonistic military-political groups will also mean the end of several active or frozen conflicts, eliminate hostilities between hitherto hostile and rival countries and replace it with several mutually beneficial cooperation used to build and consolidate international peace and security. Instead, while some conflicts have indeed been resolved, other armed conflicts have erupted, many more hotspots have emerged, and more crises have arisen. Until then, especially military threats have been largely replaced by non-military asymmetric security threats, of which terrorism is one of the most serious.

Due to the fact that terrorist attacks are carried out in all regions of the world and pose a threat to society in many developed and under development countries, while at present terrorism can also hit really anyone, anywhere, anytime due to globalization and the so-called reducing distances, we speak of it as a global security threat. It is highly probable that even at the time of this article's reading, somewhere in the world, a terrorist group is planning attacks that will result in innocent victims, financial and material damage, as well as psychological and spiritual damage.

State and local governments' representatives, diplomats, members of the states' military and security forces, intelligence service, the police, and many other anonymous people are trying to take counter-terrorism measures, or at least to prepare for them. From a certain point of view, it is a duel that civilized society should not lose. The terrorists' victory can have catastrophic consequences for each of us and for society, in general. Therefore, it is necessary to employ scientific approaches, systematic, detailed analytical and synthetic work, to help clarify the

problems associated with terrorism and the various strategies to counteract it and to suggest possible solutions.

As long as terrorism has existed, there has been an effort to solve this serious problem. People have used various methods and procedures to annihilate it, some with greater success and some with less success. The Iraq war has exacerbated the issues of access to a contemporary solution to the global approach for counteracting terrorism. During the discussions on whether or not to start a pre-emptive war, two strategies (Clinton's counter proliferation initiative and Bush's concept of pre-emptive strikes) came into conflict and it has been affecting the global fight against terrorism to this day. However, terrorism is such a serious security threat that the fight against it cannot be based only on a single strategy and led by a single country or coalition. It should be based on the experience and cooperation of all countries that are willing to counteract it. If we want to fight it effectively, it is essential to first understand the enemy − the perpetrators of terrorist acts. Therefore, the paper deals with issues of motivation for terrorism and, subsequently, the basis for combating its manifestations.

1. Trends in Terrorism Motivation and Change

Why do some people turn to terrorism? In this context, we must not forget that we are talking about both men and women. Although it may seem doubtful that women have a significant role in carrying out terrorist attacks, we should not be misled by this assumption.

The likelihood of a woman committing a terrorist attack is relatively high.[1] There are several reasons − women who turn to terrorism have the same reasons as men and therefore there is no excuse to exclude them from this equation. On the contrary, history has proven to us that several successful terrorist attacks were carried out by women who managed to arouse no suspicion. In conclusion, could women become terrorist leaders? Although this is not common, it does not mean that it is impossible.[2]

Women who choose to join a terrorist group usually come from the middle or upper classes of society, have a good education, managerial skills, and philosophical thinking. They become an intellectual part of a terrorist organization. The policy of profiling potentially suspicious men from certain states, aged 16-35, established by the United States after September 11, 2001, gives women a great opportunity to

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[1] Jessica Davis, *Women in Modern Terrorism: From Liberation Wars to Global Jihad and the Islamic State*. Rowman & Littlefield, New York, 2017, p. 142.
[2] Katherine E. Brown, *White Widows: The Myth of the Deadliest Jihadi Women*, The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 17th September 2018, URL: https://institute.global/policy/white-widows-myth-deadliest-jihadi-women, accessed on 12.08.2020.

become terrorists. After a few weeks, this profiling has been shown to be zero-successful, but at the local level it has given officials the opportunity to report an activity and sell it as a means of "effectively" counteracting terrorism. However, this policy completely ignores the fact that terrorist groups are extremely flexible and that they are adapting very quickly to the new conditions and the new measures that have been taken against them.

In this light, the war in Iraq was a real misunderstanding of the basic attributes of terrorism, as not only did not increase US's security, as the US administration sought to claim, but, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Al Qaeda has become much more insidious and dangerous than at any time before September 11, 2001.[3] However, a longer stay by US troops in Iraq, which was desirable for the country's stabilization, apparently paradoxically led to an increase and deepening of hatred against the "occupying power", paving the way for recruitment to Al Qaeda.

1.1. Rational Choice of Terrorism Motivation

As far as personal motivation is concerned, resorting to terrorism is usually a rational choice of terrorists that consider the costs, benefits, risks, dangers and, at the same time, the consequences of the attack. A rational terrorist compares the defence capacity of an entity with his ability to attack, evaluates the impact of the message he wants to publish by this act, assesses the probability and strength of retaliation against the organization, public reaction, etc.

In addition, by exceeding a certain tolerance limit, terrorists risk losing the support of part of the public. Sometimes terrorists can lose their supporters because it is essentially "elite". Although they fight for the "common good", for example in the form of national liberation groups, the ordinary population is not involved in this struggle and may thus express misunderstanding or even disagreement with the objectives of terrorist activities. One of the reasons why these groups resort to terrorism is precisely the fact that they are failing to gain more support within society. It does not matter whether members are reluctant to devote the time and resources needed to mobilize the population or because the population does not really share the ideological views of terrorists.

A terrorist act may have a meaning in pointing out the reality that the current regime may be threatened, and that illegal opposition is possible. In such a case, the terrorist attack acts as a catalyst, not as a substitute, for mass revolts.[4] Terrorism can thus serve as a shortcut to revolution. The organizers of the revolutions are trying to save time-consuming organizational work associated with the mobilization of

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[3] Paul Krugman, "Path of Glory", *New York Times*, 2003, p. 27.

[4] Martha Crenshaw, *The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behaviour as a Product of Strategic Choice*, McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, Guilford, 2002, p. 57.

the population. Much of the success of such an attack depends on the government's response to the "atmosphere of fear".

In the case of Al Qaeda, it was first an attempt to resolve the situation within the despotic regimes of the Middle East through internal resistance, which was, however, severely suppressed. In a situation where it has not been possible to express one's opposition to the functioning of a society through the usual democratic procedures, such as elections or civic initiatives, frustrated members of these societies resort to terrorism.[5] At first, the target is the corrupt regimes themselves, but later also those who helped them and kept them in power. And then, the anger of radical Islamists turned against the United States.

Generally, counter-terrorism security measures face the following problem: a strong emphasis on security paradoxically increases the symbolic value of violence. This leads to their counterproductive consequences. It is also not uncommon for governments themselves, either consciously or because of ineffective policies, to increase the "security threat". The result of a similar situation is the adoption of repressive measures against its own population. An atmosphere of fear helps the legislature to pass laws that would normally be uncompromisingly rejected by the opposition. A typical case in the United States was the adoption of a series of controversial repressive laws after the declaration of the "war on terror", which had been waiting in the drawers of Congress for a suitable opportunity for many years. Their acceptance under normal circumstances was unthinkable.

The speed with which Patriot Act appeared after 11 September 2001 (within one month) necessarily raises doubts about the origin of the measures taken under that law without any discussion. It is no longer a secret today that, in fact, these measures have little to do with the effective fight against terrorism. However, an atmosphere of fear was used to take otherwise impassable measures. Despite being a democratic state, all Congress members, except one, were afraid to express any doubts about the law being passed. The situation in repressive regimes is much more complicated, as fear is ubiquitous, and mere suspicion of supporting opposition groups can lead to harsh sanctions. The paradox is that it is precisely this inability to disagree with the country's leadership that leads opposition groups to decide to use terrorist tactics.

1.2. Religious and Cultural Goals of Terrorism Motivation

As already mentioned, terrorism mostly serves to achieve certain political goals, however, its goals can also be religious or ideological. The very question of rationality depends on its different understanding in different cultures. In fact, culture plays a very important role in supporting terrorism. In a collectively tuned society,

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[5] Aaron Y. Zelin, *Your Sons Are at Your Service - Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad*, Columbia University Press, 2020, pp. 47-87; 97-99.

unlike an individualistic society, recruiting potential terrorists is much easier. The willingness to self-sacrifice, which is valued as a personal virtue in some cultures, can be another incentive to engage in a terrorist organization. A society's value system that prioritizes higher goals over personal ones, or the generally accepted view that resolving conflicts through violence is acceptable, can contribute to the growth of potential candidates for terrorist organizations.

One of the important factors is the fear of cultural exclusion in contrast to the dominant culture and the feeling of "disinheritance". The most important cultural values that everyone strives to preserve and defend include language, religion, territory, and group affiliation.[6] Religion is perhaps one of the most sensitive values, as the threat to religion is a threat not only to the present but also to the past and future. Terrorism in the name of religion can be very violent, as religious fanatics tend to be adamant about their truth and try to impose it on others. In some religions, the fight against unbelievers is encouraged and justified, sometimes directly required. In the eyes of religious extremists' supporters, this gives them the legitimacy to commit acts of violence, even though most religions reject violence.[7]

Terrorists' psychological motives can range from dissatisfaction with one's own life and possible future, through the perception of a terrorist act as a "religious duty", to the perception of other people as the cause of their failure. The essential meaning of a terrorist act is the psychological impact on the population and government – the spread of feelings of fear and terror.

1.3. Changes in the Terrorism Model

Some essential elements of terrorism are changing, others remain. Those that remain include the basic reasons for using terrorism as a weapon of the weak, the effort to increase publicity for one's own cause and the effort to change the system. What is changing is the way terrorist acts are prepared and carried out, the way terrorist organizations are managed, the way their members communicate with each other, etc. In the age of information technology, there are three fundamental changes that characterize the "new generation of terrorism" – organization, doctrine and strategy, and technology.[8]

1) *Organization* – moving from a hierarchical structure to a network structure. There are these basic types of networks:

– Chain network – people, goods or information move from individual end users through intermediaries;

– Star-shaped network – works similarly to franchising or cartel structure;

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[6] David J. Whittaker, *The Terrorism Reader*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 21.
[7] Rastislav Kazanský, *The Theory of Conflict*, Banská Bystrica, Belianum, 2015, p. 97.
[8] John Arquilla, David Ronfeldt, Michele Zanini, *Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism*, McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, Guilford, 2002, p. 111.

the individual members are connected to a central node through which all communication and cooperation passes;

− A network where each cell is connected to all other cells − these are mostly small organizations;[9]

− Cluster model − in the case of the existence of many cells whose members do not know each other, so if one cell member is captured, the other cells are not endangered and continue to operate; the members of one cell never meet in one place and often do not know each other at all. Communication is provided in an electronically undetectable form − mostly in the form of human couriers (this is how Al Qaeda works, for example).[10]

2) ***Doctrine and strategy*** – due to the new possibilities for committing terrorist acts, terrorists resort to larger-scale acts. They can attract more attention and reach a wider audience (for example, US military dominance may continue to motivate some state and non-state adversaries to use terrorist tactics as an instrument of asymmetric conflict). The terrorists focus on destroying symbolic targets (the Eiffel Tower, the UN building, the World Trade Centre, the Sears Towers in Chicago, etc.). As well as the destruction of the building, the goal can be the systematic disruption of the normal course of life (by attacking the electricity network and electricity supplies to large cities, endangering motorways, tunnels, pipelines, ports and their decommissioning, etc.)

3) ***Technology*** − an increase in the use of information technology for the needs of attack or defence of a terrorist group, as well as to support its organizational structures. Independent, autonomous, geographically remote cells have been created to communicate with each other via mobile phones, e-mail, websites, and computer conferences, while lacking the central management of such an organization. At the same time, old methods of communication are used, such as the human courier, which of course makes it difficult to detect similar groups. Today's terrorists have developed a network of collaborators and informants that is comparable in its organization and performance to state security forces and secret services. In some countries in the Middle East, they have even managed to infiltrate the government, the police and, in some cases, the military.

2. Background to the International Fight against Terrorism

When developing a strategy to combat terrorism, it is necessary to take into consideration its specific features. Terrorist organizations are non-state actors in international security relations, which differ in many respects from classic

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[9] *Ibidem*, p. 102.
[10] Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda. Global Network of Terror*, Hurst Publishers, Bloomsbury, 2002, p. 76.

actors − states. Terrorism is a tactic of struggle that is incomparable to the tactics of a traditional conventional military conflict between two or more states. While preparations for the war cannot be hidden and, therefore, its outbreak is expected, terrorists attack without first declaring war. Their training takes place in secret and their blows are unexpected, surprising. Terrorists use an indirect strategy, avoid direct combat, and completely bypass the strongest elements of their opponent's defence.[11] This indirect strategy cannot usually be answered with a direct attack. It is not unusual of terrorist attacks that, at very low cost and with the number of people involved, terrorists achieve great destructive effects with enormous psychological consequences.[12] This asymmetry of capacities is one of the most important features of terrorism.

2.1. Asymmetric Conflicts

The principle of asymmetry in armed conflicts is not a product of the last two decades, it is basically a natural strategy, where a weaker adversary tries to take advantage of the weaknesses of a much stronger adversary, whom he cannot cope with. A classic case is the biblical story of David, who, with the help of primitive means, had defeated Goliath, who was several times stronger. In the theory of contemporary international relations, the concept of asymmetric conflicts has been adopted in connection with the struggle of weak, often colonized countries against much more developed, stronger, and better militarily equipped countries. Gradually, this characteristic began to be attributed to various national type of actions such as guerrillas, and most recently has become a typical feature of analyses of terrorist attacks.

The asymmetry of conflicts developed after the end of the bipolar system, which had kept the main adversaries and their allies in relative force balance. With the end of the Cold War, a number of "small" wars broke out, which began to threaten the stability of the international system but were not a direct threat to a particular world power. Their reach was mostly regionally limited, and the conflict became international only after the decision to intervene, which was made by the United States or an international organization such as UN, NATO, EU and AU. The United States followed a "just war" strategy, in which it felt justified in certain situations to intervene in favour of international security. However, this strategy, strongly influenced by another feature of American foreign policy, which is the effort to spread democracy and the American model in the world, only provided

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[11] Stefan M. Aubrey, *The New Dimension of International Terrorism*, Zurich, Hochschulverlag AG, 2004.

[12] János Besenyő, "Low-cost attacks, unnoticable plots? Overview on the economical character of current terrorism", *Strategic Impact*, no. 62(1)/2017, pp. 83-100, URL: https://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf_periodicals/si62.pdf, accessed on 14.08.2020.

a justification in the event of intervention, but did not commit to any action. According to some notable authors, the United States had no solid security strategy from the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989 until the attack on the World Trade Centre, in 2001.[13]

The use of asymmetric warfare is characteristic of non-state actors who intend to achieve goals in this way, which they fail to achieve in the classical way. Their goals are often very high −in the case of guerrilla groups, it is, for example, a coup d'état and the establishment of a new regime, or in other cases it is a matter of gaining the independence of a certain territory. In the case of terrorists, these were originally similar goals, the fulfilment of which was to change the foreign policy of the attacked state, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory, or the end of support for a corrupt regime that rules in the state territory. However, this era of politically motivated terrorism is a thing of the past, and global terrorism, with a global reach and global goals, is on the scene. Its demands are extremely high, often only vaguely worded as a change in the world order, and virtually no act can contribute to their satisfaction.

Asymmetric warfare threatens five areas of purpose: central and governmental bodies; energy sources and connection systems; infrastructure − industrial and transport network; population and Armed forces.[14] What is interesting in this context is the disparity between means and objectives. For example, on the one hand, United States as a world power with huge military assets usually has clearly defined, but relatively limited goals: the Gulf War − the goal was to liberate Kuwait, but not to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime; the war in Afghanistan − the goal was to destroy the terrorist network, but not to eliminate the Taliban regime (which was more of a pretext for an attack).[15] On the other hand, there are non-state actors with minimal resources but disproportionately high goals.

Asymmetry is becoming an urgent and direct threat and will manifest itself on three main levels:

a) Asymmetry of interests − the goal of the perpetrators of this threat in the near future will not be the military defeat of the US and its allies, but rather the opportunity to influence their decisions on political and military involvement outside NATO;

b) Asymmetry of values − the perpetrators of the threat of asymmetric wars do not share the values of Euro-Atlantic civilization, do not follow any rules of warfare or war, their goal is to cause the greatest possible damage to human lives (it is likely

[13] Leslie H. Gelb, *Foreword. A New National Security Strategy in an Age of Terrorists, Tyrants, and Weapons of Mass Destruction*, Council on Foreign Relations, New York, 2003, pp. 5-6.
[14] Barthélémy Courmont, Darko Ribnikar, *Les guerres asymétriques. Conflits d'hier et d'aujourdhui, terrorismes et nouvelles menaces*, Iris, Paris, 2002, pp. 38-39.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 20.

to use weapons of mass destruction);

c) Asymmetry of tactics and strategy − terrorists avoid direct armed confrontations.[16]

Asymmetry is understood as a lack or absence of symmetry. If both actors have approximately the same military means, the conflict is perceived as symmetrical. If one of the actors tries to gain a qualitative or quantitative advantage over his opponent, it is dissymmetry. Asymmetry is the exact opposite − one of the actors tries to take advantage of all the weaknesses of his opponent and intervene there with as much destructive force as possible.[17]

One of the typical examples of dissymmetry is the use of the atomic bomb by the United States at the end of World War II. In this case, the actors are mostly states, and their aim is to demonstrate a force in which they do not hesitate to reach for the latest means. The strategy includes huge investments in the development of new types of weapons whose effectiveness exceeds the enemy capabilities, excellent cooperation between the secret services, support for research in various fields and efforts to obtain the world's best scientists whose results can be used in the military. It is therefore a comprehensive strategy whose goal is not only to lead the fight, but to deter before the fight. If the fight still occurs, its course is short and successful due to the absolute technical superiority. The question remains in terms of actions that succeed the fight.

One of the typical examples of asymmetry is the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, in which terrorists used the American belief about the impossibility of being attacked on their own territory and the unpreparedness of all components to respond to a similar situation. The fact that the US is not immune to international conflicts and that the attack on US territory is real has been confirmed in several previous terrorist attempts, but this threat had clearly been deeply underestimated. The devastating effect that terrorists have achieved by exploiting this weakness in state security, combined with a moment of surprise and the use of civilian objects as weapons against civilian targets is completely disproportionate.

Globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon which affects all areas of human activities, including violence, war, and terrorism. Technical means are not a defence against this ubiquitous danger and fear of survival. The solution lies in the field of politics and diplomacy. Although some politicians oppose this concept of a modern security strategy in every possible way and try to prove that the solution still lies in the military and technological field, events confirm that such an approach is not a long-term solution.

Defence against future conflicts is an effort to understand the causes and

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[16] Rod Thorton, *Asymmetric Warfare: Threat and Response in the 21st Century*, Polity, Malden, 2007, p. 72.
[17] Barthélémy Courmont, Darko Ribnikar, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

consequences of past conflicts, as a necessary step to anticipate future conflicts. Of course, similar considerations do not guarantee that we will estimate the development of the situation. Development is often a matter of chance. This will surprise not only the population, which deals with similar issues only marginally, but also the most well-known experts. Just as no one expected the Iron Curtain to fall at the end of 1989, none of the experts anticipated an action of a similar style and scale to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre.

The driving force of those involved in the attacks was indoctrinated Islamism. Only a few months before the attacks, it was described by one of the experts − Gilles Kepel − as a "gone" driving force. He claimed: "We believed that violent movements would flood the planet, that Bin Laden had started a war against the West. These exaggerated reactions are only a consequence of the fact that radical Islamism has lost much of its social base. Terrorist groups are unable to mobilize the masses or gain the support of one of the powers. Occasionally there is an explosion of violence here and there, but radical Islamism is no longer a threat to world peace"[18]. Only a few months later, it was possible to realize how wrong these words were. Radical Islamism has not disappeared. Unfortunately, it is not even in retreat. On the contrary, its ideology is experiencing an unprecedented renaissance. However, similar mistakes happen, and their existence is no reason to reject all attempts to analyse or predict future world conflicts. The book of Pascal Boniface, Director of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations in Paris, "Wars of Tomorrow" (*Les guerres de demain*) may be a topic for reflection.[19]

2.2. Pre-emptive Strategies

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a year later, Bush administration issued a new National Security Strategy (NSS) for the United States of America. It was a long-awaited strategic document that attracted a lot of attention both at home and abroad. In it, the US government was to outline its security strategy at a time of growing global terrorism. Of great concern was the formulation of a new way of defending national security − a pre-emptive attack. It was a shift from the original concept of preventive attacks. Many critics have called it the new Bush doctrine, which sets a dangerous precedent. The United States thus reserves the right to "act pre-emptively against terrorists in order to prevent them from harming our people and country". They thus consider a "good attack" to be the "best defence".[20]

It was not the very definition of a pre-emptive attack that sparked a heated debate among European allies of the United States, but the rationale for such an

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[18] Gilles Kepel, *L'islamisme est fini*, Editions du Felin, Paris, 2001, p. 158.
[19] Pascal Boniface, *The Warriors of Demain,* Le Seuil, Paris, 2001.
[20] ***, National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2002, p. 7.

attack. The definition itself does not give reason for an attack. To start it, certain conditions must be met. One of the most important is the existence of an immediate threat. However, this immediacy is very difficult to prove. The definition of the so-called "rogue states" gives an idea of which countries the United States would be willing to use this strategy against. The US National Security Strategy defines them as states that "brutalize their own populations, show no respect for international law, threaten their neighbours, are committed to acquiring weapons of mass destruction, and sponsor terrorism around the world"[21]. According to the US, this group includes Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. Iraq thus became a hot candidate for a pre-emptive strike, although its ownership of weapons of mass destruction has not been proven and the main condition for pre-emptive strike − an imminent threat − has not been met.[22] Experts have raised serious concerns that the use of a pre-emptive attack on Iraq could, in turn, force Saddam to use weapons of mass destruction if he did own them. In fact, such a pre-emptive attack could endanger the people and the country it was supposed to protect.

2.3. Theory of Just War

In his defence of the pre-emptive attack, President Bush often referred to the theory of just war, which in certain circumstances justifies an attack on the enemy. This theory, based on the teachings of St. Augustine (354-430) and the interpretation of St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is one of the few areas of contemporary philosophy of morality where the basic theoretical constructions of the Middle Ages are still valid.[23] The basis for the theory of just war is sovereignty doctrine, on the basis of which, in an anarchic system of international relations, each state has to assess the legitimacy of its own decision to go to war (*ius ad bellum*). At the same time, it requires that international law, which sets limits on the conduct of war (*ius in bello*), to be respected.

War is seen as a continuation of politics by other means[24] and in certain circumstances states cannot be denied the right to resort to war. Still, they must abide by certain rules that have become part of international law. However, the problem of the international community is the lack of a superior authority to act as a judge

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[21] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[22] A.N.: In this context, it is interesting to note that in the 1980s, during the Iraq-Iran war, when Iraq demonstrably used chemical weapons against the Iranian population, the United States remained completely unperturbed by this fact. As for the states that support terrorism, even in this criterion, the United States cannot come up with a clear shield - it is enough to recall their support for the Afghan Mujahedeen in the fight against the Soviet Union. At the same time, their tactics did not differ from terrorist ones.

[23] Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, p. 64.

[24] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2008, p. 87.

and prosecutor in disputes between states. War is therefore a kind of substitute for court proceedings in a process where force is used to defend the rights of the state.[25] According to Thomas Aquinas, for war to be qualified as just war, the following conditions must be met: the war must be waged by a legitimate monarch; it must have a just cause; it must be guided by a right intention.[26] Later, these requirements were supplemented by others: war can be used only after exhaustion of all peaceful methods of conflict resolution (last resort); it must have some probability of success; the damage caused by war and its costs should be proportional to the benefits of war (proportionality).[27]

The condition of proportionality applies not only to the damage caused by the war and to the cost-benefit ratio of the war, but also to the extent of the military attack. The strength of the attack and the used means should be commensurate with the threat to the state.[28] In this context, it is necessary to distinguish between deterrence policies, which deliberately emphasize the state's readiness to respond by all possible means, including nuclear weapons. The resources used are important. In connection with the attack, it is also necessary to observe the addressability of the attack. It should be aimed at the aggressor and not at innocent people. Waging war with a legitimate ruler in today's international environment means waging war with a legitimate authority, which is the United Nations, or more precisely, the UN Security Council. The legitimacy of unilateral attacks that have not been approved by the UN Security Council is debatable. Such a step is a dangerous precedent that denies the principles of multilateral diplomacy.

Conclusions

Today, we very often come across the term "terrorism" and the phrase "fight against terrorism". If this fight is to be successful, it is essential to engage in systematic research into the causes of terrorism, to analyse the motivations of terrorists, and to explore possible and appropriate approaches to mitigate the consequences of terrorist acts or contribute to terrorist detection.

In the first part of this article, selected information on terrorism is systematically classified. It deals with the conditions for terrorism, motivation based on rational

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[25] James E. Dougherty, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, Pearson College Division, London, 2008, p. 201.
[26] Mark V. Kauppi, Paul R. Viotti, *The Global Philosophers: World Politics in Western Thought*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 1992, p. 134.
[27] James E. Dougherty, Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, *Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey*, Pearson College Division, London, 2008, p. 207.
[28] Deen K. Chatterjee, *The Ethics of Preventive War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2013, p. 155.

choice, religious and cultural aspects of motivation and recent changes in the use of the "model" of terrorism in terms of organization, doctrine, and strategy, as well as technology.

The second part of the article is focused on the description of the fight against terrorism, starting from the classification of terrorism as asymmetric warfare. The principle of asymmetry was discussed up to the consequences for the states' approach to its solution. It also describes the pre-emptive strategy and theory of just war. All this points to a set of knowledge that should help solve the practical problems associated with the new phenomenon of the international security environment – terrorism –, and terrorist groups as non-state entities. Its perception should correspond to the level of its significance. The reactions of states and the international environment, and thus forms of the fight against terrorism, should eliminate the causes and not just "extinguish" the consequences.

At present, unfortunately, the fear that a terrorist group somewhere in the world is planning attacks in which the use of chemical, biological or nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out, or some catastrophe in cyberspace, banking, water, and electricity supplies cannot be stopped, is certainly real. And this no longer affects "only states", but also the global population.

In conclusion, all terrorist activities, all types and forms of terrorism, bring a huge damage to the world as a whole and to people as individuals, both physically and mentally. That is the reason why terrorism is considered today one of the most pressing problems of humanity and at the same time one of the most serious current non-military asymmetric security threats. For this reason, it requires broad cooperation not only at the practical level in the adoption and implementation of specific measures and tasks in the fight against it, but also at the academic level in the search for theoretical approaches to its elimination.

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"LONE WOLVES" ISLAMIST TERRORISTS AS NON-STATE ACTORS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SECURITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Mirela ATANASIU, PhD*

A series of Islamist terrorist attacks have taken place in Europe over the past two decades. Although, in the meantime, the EU has formulated policy responses to prevent and counter terrorism, the proliferation of terrorist attacks, initiated by "lone wolves", such as those in France and Austria, in 2020, shows that this specific threat is difficult to optimally address only at the political level. This category of terrorists acts as non-state actors, which not only shape EU's security policy, but also have the potential to disrupt the substrata of the European social environment (generating fear, radicalization, de-socialization, etc.), and the need for a comprehensive cause and effect approach is felt in society, by preventing extremism and radicalization facilitating the individual terrorism apparition.

Starting from the work hypothesis that the tendency in Islamist attacks is to be carried out individually, independently of terrorist organizations, by self-radicalized individuals, the paper contains a theoretical analysis of the tendencies of Islamist terrorist acts in the EU27 (in terms of frequency, victims, type of attacks, means of organization, categories of attackers and aimed targets), recorded in the last 20 years, based on initial clarifications, brought by the author to the concept of "lone wolf" terrorist, as an emerging European non-state actor, starting from a typology proposed by Raffaello Pantucci.

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Furthermore, some political acts and mechanisms developed by the EU for terrorism prevention are presented and some proactive measures and actions to reduce extremism and radicalization in society are considered, in order to counter individual actors' terrorist actions.

Keywords: lone wolves; non-state actors; radicalization; threat; EU policy; terrorism.

Introduction

The terrorist phenomenon is not new, but it has an essential constant that it poses a threat to the security of individuals and communities, regardless of their form and level of aggregation, causing people's physical and mental destabilization and weakening the resilience of public systems.

Once they felt threatened, following the 9/11 attacks in the US, Western democracies began to reform and strengthen their supranational and national security systems by introducing new organizational structures and implementing policies in order to reduce the incidence of terrorist acts carried out by violent extremist organizations through actions to secure the spaces between their borders. In the same context, Westerners, including the EU Member States, have launched the fight against terrorism, manifested in its forms, antiterrorism and counterterrorism, as activities to combat this scourge, for which purpose security strategies have been drawn up for preventing and combating terrorism in homeland states for terrorist groups, especially Islamists, which pose a threat to European security.

Since then, however, terrorism has also developed its forces and means of action. Specialists have classified it according to the manifested categories, "ethnic, nationalist, ideological, pathological"[1] or "ordinary, political and of state"[2] and have identified it according to its methods of action ("suicide bombers, techno-terrorism, terrorism cybernetic"[3]), or to the field pursued through its actions (political, economic, religious, etc.). Also, the increased complexity and violence of terrorist acts itself has gone beyond mere violent crime, becoming a virulent side of human manifestation similar to war, a primitive one, opposed to the balance of democratic society and Western civilization. This determined that as the specialized structures (intelligence, law enforcement, anti-terrorism) used to combat this civilization vice, have become increasingly adept at detecting and hijacking large-scale terrorist

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[1] Chalmers Johnson, *Interpretation of Terrorism, in Terrorism Reader*, Meridian, New York, 1978, p. 274.

[2] Vasile Simileanu, *Asimetria fenomenului terorist*, Top Form Publishing, Bucharest, 2003, p. 111.

[3] Mirela Atanasiu, Lucian Stăncilă, *Terorismul – răul din umbră al începutului de secol*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, 2014, p. 38.

plots, potential attackers have begun to target more restricted and less sophisticated attacks and, as a result of the massive promotion of Islamist extremism on social networks, the radicalization of individuals and groups, maladapted in the European societies that host them or even marginalized by their members, be much more possible. This resulted today in the success of the fight against terrorism in Europe to be overshadowed by the growing incidence of terrorist violence proliferated by self-radicalized *individual actors or individualized groups[4]*. These actors, without being directed by a specific terrorist organization in initiating attacks, referred to in Western media by the phrase "lone wolves", are much more difficult to identify than terrorist cells or groups between which there is a wider communication that makes it possible to counter them.

1. "Lone Wolves" Islamist Terrorists, Subcategory of Non-State Actors Operating in Europe

Non-state actors are a special category of international relations theory; they are of different types, playing different roles in transforming the world system and having the potential to influence national, regional and international policies, depending on their area of manifestation.

This category includes several groups and individuals that are not affiliated or funded by governments, such as: non-governmental organizations, multinational or transnational corporations, transnational financial institutions, foundations, private for-profit or non-profit entities, representatives of civil society (activists in various fields, practitioners of some religions, political or other organizations' sympathizers, lobbyists who support certain social, economic, cultural agendas, etc.), financially powerful individuals, international personalities (athletes, journalists, artists, analysts, politicians, etc.), but also organizations or individuals who have links with secessionist, paramilitary, insurgent or terrorist groups. A special subcategory of non-state actors is therefore also represented by individuals who act according to their own ideology through specific means of terrorism, affecting European society.

In this context, in Western specialized literature, individuals who carry out terrorist activities using as a pretext the Islamic religion and as a foundation the

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[4] A.N.: This phrase characterizes a group of individuals that differ from other groups by a common characteristic of the group. For example, during the paper, in the context of the action of "lone wolves packs", in community attacks, but especially domestic (family) carried out by Muslims, with violence against individuals, they unite in order to punish or eliminate the victim on the basis of common motive/s which all attackers agree "violation of the moral precepts of Islam", "display of religious symbols other than those of Islam", "belonging to another religion, ethnicity, etc.", "renunciation of Islam by some Muslims", "revenge for actions considered to blame Islam", etc.). The initiators of these types of attacks, in order to achieve similar goals and based on the same motive/s, may be individual actors acting alone.

Islamist ideology according to which the practice of an extremist form of Jihad (Holy War) is considered an optimal means of eliminating or converting "infidels"[5] are called "Islamist terrorists"[6], "Islamist militants"[7] or "jihadist terrorists"[8], and if they act individually, without obvious coordination of any terrorist organization, they are presented as "lone wolves"[9].

Islamist terrorists fall, in principle, into the following categories:

- *Actual members of Islamist terrorist' organizations* who are recognized as part of that structure, can be identified within the terrorist cells, fully pursuing its ideology, objectives and mission and organizing coordinated attacks to cause as many victims as possible to the targeted human group;

- *Affiliates* to the established terrorist organizations that may be branches of it (Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula −AQAP in Al-Qaeda) or other smaller organizations self-affiliated with that organization (for example, Ansar al Islam in Al-Qaeda[10]), whose ideologies and objectives converge to some extent with the purpose of the parent organization, although they are not necessarily recognized by it as members;

- *Radicalized individuals or groups* who adopt the ideology of a terrorist organization and initiate more or less organized attacks, without the coordination of the members of that organization;

- *Self-radicalized individuals* without direct links to any terrorist organization, *maladapted, frustrated or mentally ill,* who use the religious purpose to justify acts of extreme violence against others in the community or domestic space, respectively in society, against unknown people or against people being part in their private life, in the family.

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[5] David Bukay (ed.), *Islam and the Infidels. The Politics of Jihad, Da'wah, and Hijrah*, 1st Edition, Routledge, New York, 2016, pp. 8, 14, 23.

[6] A.N.: A series of specialised works include this phrase. See: Hannah Stuart, *Islamist Terrorism. Analysis of offences and attacks in the UK (1998-2015)*, The Henry Jackson Society, London, 2017; Ed Hussain, *The Islamist*, Penguin, London, 2007; Alex P. Schmid, "Moderate Muslims and Islamist Terrorism: Between Denial and Resistance", *ICCT Research Paper*, August 2017.

[7] According to: Shafi Md Mostofa, Natalie J. Doyle, "Profiles of Islamist Militants in Bangladesh", *Perspectives on Terrorism*, volume 13, no. 5, 2019; Andre Le Sage, "The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats", *Strategic Forum*, National Defence University, September 2014.

[8] See: Edwin Bakker, "Jihadi terrorists in Europe", *Clingendael Security Paper*, no. 2, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, December 2006; Petter Nesser, "Structures of Jihadist Terrorist Cells in the UK and Europe" (paper given at the joint FFI/King's College London conference on The Changing Faces of Jihadism), London, 28 April 2006.

[9] Florian Hartleb, *Lone Wolves. The New Terrorism of Right-Wing Single Actors*, Springer Nature, Switzerland, 2020.

[10] ***, *U.S. Report: ISIS and Al Qaeda Threats in 2019*, Wilson Center, June 30, 2020, URL: https://www.wilsoncenter.org/ article/us-report-isis-and-al-qaeda-threats-2019, accessed on 20.11.2020.

A special category of non-state actors, affiliated to terrorist organizations is represented by terrorist financiers[11] (radicalized individuals or groups, who although not directly involved in organizing and initiating attacks financially support their materialization, organized crime organizations, which through corruption, fraud and money laundering have economic and/or political benefits from this activity). Nor should it be neglected that individuals in Europe fund terrorist organizations. For example, the EU Terrorist Trends Report for 2020 states that "in 2019, Denmark noted that Islamist and jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria remained the primary beneficiaries of individual terrorist financiers in that country"[12]. However, this category is not the subject of the present analysis.

Returning to our basic issue of *lone actors, lone wolves*[13], in mass-media, single-person terrorist attacks have often been labelled as such attacks, whether or not they have been inspired and/or managed by a terrorist group, which is quite difficult to identify. Even in the context of claimed attacks (which can be claimed by certain organizations without being initiated by them, only because they have resonated and can be used for the purpose of increasing the visibility of the organization itself), but especially in the case of suicide attacks, kamikaze-type (where attackers can no longer be interrogated), the traceability of terrorist acts is quite difficult to investigate.

Also, in the media, terrorists acting in Western societies are considered to be, as a matter of priority, Islamists, given that, in specialized works, it is stated that far-right terrorists, representatives of domestic terrorism, are much more active in the last period, in Europe[14]. Moreover, although far-right terrorists often act individually, opinions are expressed that they do not fall into the category of "lone wolf", as their actions are considered to denote "an increasingly better organizing and arming of the far right"[15], therefore, they cannot be considered as singular, independent acts. This approach can be considered double-standard in the present situation, of a Europe facing extremist Islamist manifestations (anti-Semitic,

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[11] A.N.: Although there are also states considered by the US to be financiers of terrorism, for example, Iran - designated a sponsor of terrorism since 1984, Sudan since 1993, Syria since 1979. See Chapter 3 al *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, US Department of State. URL: https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2015/257520.htm, accessed on 15.11.2020.

[12] ***, *Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2020*, European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), 2020, p. 23.

[13] ***, *Lone Actors & Terrorist Groups*, International Center for Counter-terrorism – the Hague, URL: https://icct.nl/topic/lone-actors-terrorist-groups/, accessed on 03.11.2020.

[14] Gabriel Weimann, Natalie Masri, *The Virus of Hate: Far-Right Terrorism in Cyberspace*, International Institute for Countering Terrorism, March 2020, p. 3.

[15] Julia Ebner, Cécile Guerin, "Far-right terrorists aren't lone wolves", in *Politico*, 7 August 2019, URL: https://www.politico.eu/article/far-right-terrorists-not-lone-wolves-white-supremacy-racism-crime/, accessed on 07.11.2020.

anti-racist, anti-ethnic, anti-gender, etc.), which take place with or without direct contact with a terrorist organization, by the radicalization some European citizens (born or converted to the Muslim religion, some of them followers or fighters of terrorist organizations, such as Al-Qaeda or ISIL, and returned to the EU[16]) and some Muslims on the Union territory (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, tourists, etc.).

To identify the source of acute social representation of Islamist terrorism in Europe, we compared information from a report by the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which states that "between January 2009 and February 2020, in Europe (excluding Albania and Kosovo) there was a total of 2,241 terrorist incidents"[17] with the information from the *Religion of Peace*[18] database, where approximately 340 Islamist attacks are registered in the same period. It turns out that Islamist attacks account for about 1/7 of the total recorded, so the view of Islamist attacks as serious security risks does not come from their frequency. A closer look shows that the difference is made by the number of victims registered in different types of attacks. Thus, 69.3% of the deaths from terrorist attacks in Europe, between 2009 and 2020, came from jihadist attacks, compared to only 21.8% caused by right-wing extremists[19]. It is possible that the vision of the danger of Islamist attacks will be more acute as most of the attacks in Europe have been committed by individuals and decentralized cells, rather than by centralized groups, which creates a psychological problem of the "invisible enemy". Mass-media, which presents such attacks in detail, also fully contributed to this image, helping terrorists to achieve one of the main goals of initiating such an attack − popularizing their action.

These ambiguities and media reiterations have led terrorism experts to try to create typologies of terrorists classified as *Lone Wolves*, by identifying similar characteristics. For example, Raffaello Pantucci makes a typology of individual terrorists[20] by dividing them into the following categories[21]:

[16] A.N.: Approximately 5,300 citizens from the European Union were active as foreign terrorist fighters in Syria and Iraq in 2019, and 1,351 such returned terrorists were registered in European states in the Schengen Area (398 - France, 303 - Germany, etc.). To be seen: Liesbeth van der Heide, Reinier Bergema, *Terrorism Threat Assessment 2018 – 2019*, International Center for Counter-Terrorism Threat – The Hagues, p. 8, URL: https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2019/ 12/ICCT_Terrorism_Threat_Assessment.pdf, accessed on 15.12.2020.
[17] Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, Nicholas Harrington, *The Right-wing Terrorism Threat in Europe*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington DC, SUA, March 2020, p. 2.
[18] See: URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx, accessed on 21.11.2020.
[19] Seth G. Jones, Catrina Doxsee, Nicholas Harrington, *op. cit.*
[20] Lone Wolves.
[21] Raffaello Pantucci, *A Typology of Lone Wolves: Preliminary Analysis of Lone Islamist Terrorists*, International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR), London, March

- *"Loner"*: he/she acts alone, unrelated to any extremist group;
- *"Lone Wolf"*: although he/she seems to be acting alone, he/she has a certain level of contact with extremists;
- *"Lone Wolf Pack"*: constituted as a group of auto-radicalized individuals;
- "*Lone Attacker*": an individual who although acts alone, has clear command and control relations with extremist/terrorist groups.

A first problem in this classification would be that one of the subcategories has the same name as the category itself, which can create conceptual confusion. Another malfunction would be that the typology names two different categories of actors with the same term (*Lone Wolf* and *Lone Wolf Pack*), although the characteristics exposed by Pantucci regarding them do not eliminate each other (for example, the singular action does not exclude self-radicalization).

A conceptual classification will be made in the following starting from the nature of the organizational structure of terrorist groups, consisting of decentralized cells that include a small number of individuals, thus establishing, as a research premise for the present analysis, that *all members of international terrorist organizations who do not have command centres in Europe, but undertake attacks on European territory, are in fact individual attackers or individualized groups* (although they may have different degrees of interaction with such an organization). Therefore, traditional non-state actors based in the EU that propagate internal terrorism in its forms −ethno-nationalist and separatist, extreme left and anarchist, extreme right and singular[22] − are excluded from this category, but *Islamist extremists who do not claim any terrorist affiliation, as well as those who are inspired or have a certain degree of coordination with a terrorist organization based outside the Union, are individual attackers, through the characteristic of autonomy of their action.*

Moreover, based on this premise, by developing the ideas taken from Pantucci's typology, namely that, in order to consider that an actor falls into the category of individuals, the defining feature is not the action performed by a single individual, as the attacker can be both an individual or an individualized group[23], on the account of a common motivation or purpose (see Pantucci's *Lone Wolf* and *Lone Wolves Pack* categories) and by corroborating with the qualitative analysis of the database on the *Religion of Peace* website, which contains details of extremist acts (successful attacks or failed attempts), initiated by Muslims in Europe[24], we propose a new thorough typology of individual Islamist actors − *Lone Actors* − (listed in

2011, pp. 14-31, URL: https://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/1302002992ICSRPaper_ATypologyofLoneWolves_Pantucci.pdf, accessed on 08.11.2020.
[22] *Terrorism Situation and Trend report 2020*, *op. cit.*
[23] See the detailed description provided in footnote 4.
[24] ***, *Islamic Terror in Europe (Since 2001)*, Religion of Peace, URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks /europe-attacks.aspx, accessed on 11.11.2020.

that database as terrorists[25]) based on their degree of autonomy or connection to terrorist organizations and complemented by common features identified for types of different attackers, such as:

- *When the connection of the actors with a terrorist organization is non-existent, the promoters of this kind of attacks can be called "Loner/s".* Some of their characteristics and actions are: self-radicalization achieved ad-hoc, or in a relatively short time; their extremist acts are aimed at family members or close friends and/or acquaintances in the community and are usually triggered by a personal motivation (revenge, punishment, pressure from the community − ethnic, religious, etc.), on the background of future victims desire to gain autonomy from the traditions of the Muslim religion (intention to divorce or change their religion with another, adoption of a Western lifestyle and clothing, violation of Islamic precepts, etc.); the attacks are disorganized, singular and without a long-term action strategy; the form and means of attack are rudimentary (physical strength, handy weapons on the spot, less often firearms); most of these are not terrorist attacks for the purpose shown, but are "honour crimes" or so-called vindictive criminal acts, but their execution (multiple stabbings, beheadings, arson, mutilation, etc.) and religious justification for the acts of extreme violence are of a terrorist nature;

- *When the actors act inspired by the actions of an Islamist/terrorist organization, without being affiliated to it, they fall into the category of "Lone Wolf, Lone Wolf Pack".* Among their characteristics are: self-radicalization is achieved in a longer time; the attacks are clearly of a terrorist type, being generated by a political-religious purpose, respectively the promotion and implementation of the Islamist ideology by specific means; their actions are relatively organized (they use surprise techniques and methods, such as ambushes in crowded places, combined variants of attack, etc.); attacks are aimed at individuals or groups of people directly known or identified as belonging to a different social category (another ethnicity, another religion, another race, another sexual orientation, etc.); predilection to attack exponents of democratic public institutions (police, guards, military, etc.) in order to shake confidence in state institutions; they often vocally motivate their act as being performed in the name of the Islamic religion and Allah, which is a statement of radicalization.

- *When the actors belong to or are affiliated with an international Islamist terrorist organization, they fall into "Lone Attacker/s".* This category also includes terrorist fighters who have arrived or returned to the West from terrorist camps (*returnee foreign terrorist fighters* − RFTF[26]), but are not limited to them because the

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[25] A.N.: There are situations where a violent act is framed by the law in one EU member state as terrorist and in another EU member country a similar act is framed differently.

[26] See: *Manual 'Responses to returnees: Foreign terrorist fighters and their families'*, European Commission, July 2017, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/

command-control action, although limited, can be done remotely by cyber means. The degree of autonomy in the acts undertaken by them is quite high, enough to include them in the category of lone attackers. Characteristics: they can be directed and/or financially and materially supported to initiate organized attacks (for example, there are chosen very crowded places or with special symbolism for the respective community, the way of attack is to maximize its negative consequences, there are aimed moments or events in which larger masses of the population are present together, etc.); the methods used arouse terror (ambushes in the crowd, hostage-taking and terrorization, massacres in churches or synagogues, cries of struggle in the name of Islam, beheadings and mutilations rendered live on websites dealing with terrorist propaganda, etc.; high number of victims for a resounding balance for the mass-media and achieving the goal of inspiring fear among the population; the pronounced symbolic orientation of the attacks, for example, targeting representatives of democracy-specific freedoms (freedom of expression − teachers, journalists; sexual freedom − homosexuals; women's rights − women who express their emancipation in the community through Western clothing style; religious freedom − individuals wearing religious symbols other than Islam, Muslims who want to link their destinies with members of other religious communities) to determine the future self-limitation, out of fear, of the free public expressions; the attacks are subsequently claimed by the terrorist organizations in this case.

2. The Evolution of Terrorist Acts Committed by Individual Islamist Actors in the European Union in the Last Two Decades

Visions of humanity shows that in the West "the proportion of unaffiliated attacks or attacks committed by individuals unrelated to a terrorist group increased from below 5% in the mid-1970s to over 70% between 2014-2018"[27]. In order to identify this trend, but summarizing the segment of Islamist terrorism, after the 9/11 moment in the US, in Europe, a series of terrorist attacks of unaffiliated self-radicalized Islamist individual actors (*loners* and *lone wolves*) started to be registered, some of them being identified and presented on the *Religion of Peace* website, the respective data being the basis of analysis (Figure no. 1) in the present study, to identify the evolution trend of Islamist attacks, as a whole, and those initiated by extremists not affiliated with a terrorist organization, in particular.

radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/archive/ returnees-manual-july-2017_en, accessed on 14.10.2020.

[27] *******, "Increase in self-radicalised 'white terrorist' attackers", *Vision of humanity*, 2020, URL: https://www.visionofhumanity.org/increase-in-self-radicalised-lone-wolf-attackers/, accessed on 11.11.2020.
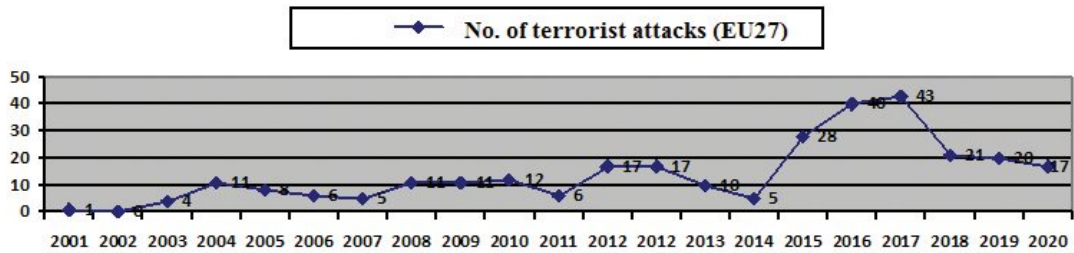
Figure no. 1: Number of incidents of extreme violence caused by individual Muslim attackers between 09.11.2001-15.12.2020, on EU27 territory[28]

At first glance, we see an increase in the number of Islamist terrorist attacks in the EU after the 9/11 moment, confirming the hypothesis initially presented. Also, another observation is that, during the period when the immigration flow from the Middle East and North Africa was very pronounced towards Europe, the number of terrorist attacks was also high (2015 - 28, 2016 - 46, 2017 - 43). We will further study the trend in terrorist attacks initiated by refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers and other non-European Muslims of uncertain status, in order to identify a possible link between the increase in the number of terrorist acts in the EU and them.

From the series of extremist Islamist attacks registered in the European space, we subject to analysis, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the 202 identified as taking place in the EU27 member states. For this purpose, we considered, in Table no.1, a number of indicators, such as the number of attacks in the target-states, the extent of attacks in terms of registered casualties (dead and injured), types of attacks (domestic and community), the degree of the attacks organizing, the type of individual actor involved (loners, lone wolf and lone attacker) and the targets aimed by the attackers (family, identified/ identifiable and random), in order to identify some trends in their evolution in time and space.

If we consider the total indicators in the EU, it results that most of the attacks were of a community nature, partially organized, initiated by loners, with identified or identifiable targets and had as general motivations xenophobia, anti-Semitism, racism, and hate against other genders, sexes, Western civilization, etc.

One of the definitions given by the *Global Terrorism Database* considers terrorism as "the accumulation of violent acts proliferate by non-state actors, committed against civilians and intended to provoke fear, achieved to reach a political

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[28] Source: ***, "Islamic Terror in Europe (Since 2001)", *Religion of Peace*, 2020, URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx, accessed on 21.12.2020.

Table no. 1: Typology of violent attacks initiated by Muslims in the EU27, which took place between 09.11.2001-15.12.2020[29]

EU27[30] Member States on which territory undergone terrorist attacks	Number of attacks	Number of deaths	Number of injured people	Type of attack[31]		Degree of organization			Type of individual attacker (Lone actor)			Targets		
				D[32]	C[33]	U[34]	PO[35]	O[36]	L[37]	LW[38]	LA[39]	F[40]	I[41]	R[42]
Austria	8	12	58	2	6	3	4	1	5	2	1	2	4	2
Belgium	18	47	238	3	15	4	9	5	10	3	5	3	12	3
Bulgaria	2	7	31	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Denmark	7	3	12	1	6	0	4	3	3	2	2	1	6	0
Finland	1	2	6	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
France	85	285	757	4	81	23	28	34	36	28	21	5	49	31
Germany	44	39	161	12	32	15	17	12	27	16	1	11	17	16
Ireland	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Italy	13	17	11	5	8	4	6	3	9	4	0	5	7	1
Netherlands	5	5	10	5	0	1	2	2	3	2	0	0	3	2
Spain	6	219	**1994**	0	6	1	1	4	1	3	2	0	0	6
Sweden	12	11	12	6	6	4	3	5	11	1	0	6	4	2
TOTAL	**202**	**648**	**3280**	**39**	**163**	**55**	**77**	**70**	**106**	**63**	**33**	**32**	**103**	**67**

[29] See: URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx

[30] The Czech Republic, Cyprus, Croatia, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary did not register such attacks until 15 December 2020.

[31] A.N.: The author identified two different categories of such attacks: domestic and community, the definitions of which are set out in notes 33 and 34.

[32] By domestic attack (D) we mean a violent attack against a family member, a blood relative or other persons being close to the family members. For example, terrorist acts registered in the Religion of Peace database include fratricides, matricides, but also attacks on individuals who, although unrelated to the attacker, had ties to or frequented family members (friends, colleagues, employers, etc.).

[33] By community attack (C) we understand a targeted terrorist attack on certain victims (see note 36), or randomly on another member of the community who is not part of the attacker's domestic (family) environment. Attacks of this type are organized or partially organized.

[34] Unorganized (O) - the attack takes place unorganized, unprepared, being done with bare hands or easily procured weapons, such as knives, swords, jumpers, etc.; radicalization is ad-hoc, or occurs in a short period of time.

[35] Partially Organized (PO) - the attack is partially organized (white arms and/or firearms can be prepared, methods of action can be established, the target and/or place of the attack can be identified in advance).

[36] Organized (O) - the attack is organized (firearms are procured, the place of the attack is studied and chosen according to the symbolism, the targets are pursued, escape plans are made after the attack, etc.).

[37] Loner/s (L).

[38] Lone wolf/lone wolves (LW).

[39] Lone attacker(s) (LA).

goal"[43]. However, a detailed analysis of the *Religion of Peace* database − which contains information on the violent attacks initiated by Muslims (European or non-European citizens on EU territory) that took place during that period −shows that a large number of them are a series of domestic or community acts of violence, proliferated by individuals or groups, radicalized ad-hoc or almost ad-hoc, but which did not directly pursue a political goal, but a personal goal, maintaining or forcing awareness of those around them to identify with roles and social statuses corresponding to practicing Muslims (approximately ¼ of these are initiated by Muslims against other Muslims for personal, not political reasons).

Situations of domestic attacks were initiated by one or more individuals (usually lone, but also lone wolves, attacks, less often, on family members, acquaintances and neighbours). So *the victim is known*. These attacks have been classified as terrorist acts in the Religion of Peace database, due to the cruelty and means of the attack used, which reflect the degree of extreme violence that occurred during the process of implementing Islamic religious practice in Muslim families, members influenced by European lifestyles (first, second or even third generation immigrants who show a high degree of resistance to the process of integration into Western societies, based on strict religious practice and fail to adapt themselves and allow members of their families learn the civil, behavioural and clothing practices of the host society).

The general motivation for these attacks is related to the social statuses and roles sought to be maintained or achieved by Muslims, some interpreted as extremely radicalized groups, by initiating acts of domestic violence. These statuses and roles include: identification in the religious community with the role of a fervent practitioner of Islam (a Muslim mother in Wales beats her 7-year-old child to death because he failed to memorize the Qur'an[44], a father stabs his wife and three daughters because they came "improperly" dressed for breakfast[45]); the reflection

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[40] Family (F) - family relatives or close to the family members (friends, acquaintances), victims of targeted attacks.

[41] Identified or identifiably (I) – namely, they are identified or identifiable targets in the community, or individuals with different typologies. This category includes people identified due to distinctive signs as representatives of other religions (Catholics, Jews, Orthodox, etc.), other ethnic groups (including tourists), or people who stand out in society (police, guards, priests, teachers, embassy representatives, etc.), who are the victims of so-called targeted attacks.

[42] Random (R) - Random attacks, it doesn't matter who, but just how many, the targets being the victims of more or less organized attacks.

[43] ***, *Global Terrorism Database (GTD)*, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism (START), January 2020. URL: https://www.start.umd.edu/research-projects/global-terrorism-database-gtd, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[44] ***, "List of Islamic Terror Attacks Islamic Terror in Europe (Since 2001)", *The Religion of Peace*, 12.07.2012, URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx, accessed on 23.11.2020.

[45] *Ibidem*.

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of a "clean" image of personal and family life (a Muslim is assaulted by his family because he smokes in public during Ramadan[46]), the "cleansing" of his own image in society reflected by the actions of his family members by initiating "honour crimes" on family members suspected of violation or violating Islamic precepts (a woman is strangled because she baptized her child in the Christian religion[47], another woman is attacked with an axe for wanting to divorce[48], a Muslim woman is killed because she gave up the veil[49]). Therefore, acts of extreme domestic violence within Muslim families (crimes, beheadings, mutilations, etc.) are criminal acts, but not terrorist acts. Most of them are generated by the violation of Muslim precepts by a family member and not by acceding to a terrorist organization. They are not politically motivated acts, but usually materialize the fear of exclusion and the pressure felt by Muslims to prove to the religious community that they are part of that they are good practitioners of Islam, because refusing to punish their relatives can lead to the repudiation of the whole family in the community, so their actions have personal motivation, but indirect religious or ideological purpose. Obviously, there are exceptions.

Community attacks were carried out by all three categories of actors (loners, lone wolves and lone attackers). Most of the time, they were carried out on identified or identifiable targets, respectively, people from the community known to have certain characteristics considered opposite to Islam (other religion − Christian, Jewish, atheist, different sexual orientation, accusation of blaming Islam, etc.), or strangers identified as "enemies of Muslims" (signs of another religion worn − crucifixes, kipa, etc. −, Western style of women's clothing, American tourists, representatives of Western institutions − police, public guards, teachers, etc.). These are often accompanied by the loud utterance of words (e.g., "Allah Akbar") that present to witnesses their action as one in the name of Jihad, with religious symbolism, not just simple aggression without purpose. However, there have also been situations of random targeted community attacks by extremists, initiated mainly by lone attackers (affiliated with a terrorist organization), usually characterized by a partial or more detailed organization (use of firearms or explosive material, the use of ambush-type actions in crowded public places, hitting crowds of people with the sole purpose of making as many victims as possible). The motivations for these community terrorist attacks are diverse, sometimes incredible (an Austrian woman is stabbed while reading the Bible in a public place[50], a writer of a book about Jihad and his

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[46] 01.06.2017, Germany, Oldenburg. *Idem*.
[47] 14.02.2020, Germany, Rendsburg. *Idem*.
[48] 25.10.2019, Germany, Limburg. *Idem*.
[49] 26.06.2016, Sweden, Stockholm. *Idem*.
[50] 29.12.2016, Germany, Berlin, URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx

son are physically assaulted[51], a 16-year-old student is killed in class by a Muslim colleague, in a racist attack[52]) or even for no apparent reason. Symbolism plays an extreme role in attacks organized under the control or coordination of terrorist cells, which is reflected in the choice of crowded places of importance to Western communities (train or subway stations, bistros, museums, churches, Christmas markets, newspapers, embassies, main streets of pedestrian traffic, promenades, entertainment venues, etc.), trying to harm law enforcement officials at the crime scene and claiming attacks in the name of the Islamic religion.

From a brief characterization of the attacks according to the typology of the actors who initiated them, emerges the following:

Lone attacks are the most frequent (both domestic and community), and focus on known or identifiable targets. They usually occur ad hoc or with very little organization, and the mode of operation is primarily raw physical violence ("bare-handed") or common sharp weapons (knives, axes, swords, etc.);

Lone wolves attacks are the most diverse and unpredictable. These are both domestic and community-based, usually conducted by online self-radicalized individuals and inspired by the actions of Islamist organizations, such as the Islamic State or Al-Qaeda, or their affiliates. The attacks were most often partially organized and aimed primarily at affecting identifiable targets or symbols identified in society as being of importance to Western style and civilization;

Lone attackers assaults are the most organized. In fact, they were only community attacks, with random human targets, using more sophisticated means (firearms, explosives, attack scenarios with combined means, escape plans, etc.). The targets were crowded places and not certain individuals and the motivation is certainly political, their most important purpose being to ensure the highest possible visibility of the terrorist organization (large number of victims, symbolism of the place of attack, extreme operation methods, claiming the terrorist act).

Analysing the presented data, it appears that Germany recorded the highest number of domestic attacks in the EU (12), of which 11 were carried out within Muslim families, by first or second generation immigrants, refugees, stateless persons, etc. Also, France is European Union's most affected state, post-9/11 Islamist terrorism (85 attacks in total, 285 deaths, 81 community attacks), most with some degree of organization, most attacks (64) being initiated by self-radicalized, loners and lone wolves. A growing feature of these attacks is that of the targets pursued, 49 of the attacks having targets identified and identifiable with the ethos of Western civilization. Therefore, for many of the attackers, the symbolism of their actions increases in importance, this may represent a stronger temptation of the already self-radicalized individuals to initiate terrorist actions. For example,

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[51] 08.09.2016, France, Boussy-Saint-Antoine. *Idem*.
[52] 22.06.2012, France, Rennes. *Idem*.

many analysts believe that the new series of attacks in Europe, in 2020, is a consequence of the recent reprint in France of the Prophet Muhammad cartoons. In fact, the attacker of the two employees of Charlie Hebdo in Paris, a Pakistani who came to France for three years, confirmed that this is his motivation[53]. In fact, the republishing of cartoons by Charlie Hebdo magazine has prompted protests in some Muslim-majority countries (for example, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemned the republishing by Charlie Hebdo of "abusive" cartoons in September 2020[54]). The statement of French President Macron, who stated that he was "fighting against Islamist separatism"[55],[56], also contributed to the escalation of the tense situation, in the context in which it is known that in Islam, the representation of the prophet is strictly forbidden, and the ridicule or insult of Muhammad is liable with the death penalty"[57]. In fact, the first edition of these cartoons was one of the motivations for punitive terrorist attacks, on January 7-9, 2015.

The analysis of the situations in which the attacks' initiators were non-European Muslims (refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, tourists or people without an identified status) shows that out of the 11 terrorist acts in the EU, in 2020, 7 were carried out by this category of people (approximately 70%). Moreover, analysing the evolution of such attacks during the escalation of migration to Europe (2015-2018) we discover that, compared to a similar period before (2011-2014), there was a clear increase. Thus, if for the period 2011-2014 only two attacks were registered (2014), in the period 2015-2018, there were 24 attacks carried out by this category of people (2015 - 5, 2016 - 7, 2017 - 5, 2018 - 7)[58]. Perhaps the correspondence

[53] ***, "Charlie Hebdo: Stabbings suspect 'was trying to target magazine'", *BBC*, 26 September 2020, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-54307820, accessed on 02.12.2020.

[54] ***, *OIC: Republishing of Abusive Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, by French Charlie Hebdo Newspaper, is an affront to Islam and a Provocation to Feelings of Muslims,* Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2 September 2020, URL: https://www.oic-oci.org/topic/?t_id=23831&t_ref=14161&lan=en, accessed on 02.12.2020.

[55] Alistair Walsh, "France Muhammad cartoon row: What you need to know", *Deutche Welle*, 27 October 2020, URL: https://www.dw.com/en/france-muhammad-cartoon-row-what-you-need-to-know/a-55409316, accessed on 03.12.2020.

[56] A.N.: French President Macron views Islamist separatism as the action of Muslims who have created their own culture in France that rejects French values, customs and laws. More details in a letter signed by Macron and published by the Financial Times. ***, "Letter: France is against 'Islamist separatism' - never Islam. From Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic", *Financial Times*, 4 November 2020, URL: https://www.ft.com/content/8e459097-4b9a-4e04-a344-4262488e7754, accessed on 23.12.2020.

[57] Vasile Damian, "Charlie Hebdo publică din nou caricaturile cu Mahomed în ziua în care începe procesul atentatelor din ianuarie 2015", *RFI România*, 1 September 2020, URL: https://www.rfi.ro/special-paris-124475-charlie-hebdo-publica-din-nou-caricaturile-cu-mahomed-ziua-care-incepe-procesul, accessed on 03.12.2020.

[58] See URL: https://www.thereligionofpeace.com/attacks/europe-attacks.aspx, accessed on 21.12.2020.

between the increasing number of such attacks, on the one hand, and the period of the European migrant crisis, is just a coincidence, but not a negligible subject for the European security community. It is also worrying that women are beginning to be identified among the perpetrators of terrorist attacks (in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2020, such attacks pursued by woman were registered). Another category that is beginning to be present in the attacks is represented by Westerners converted to Islam (2020 - 1, 2019 - 1, 2016 - 1, 2014 - 1), some of them returning from Muslim countries known to have intense terrorist activity. Three of these attacks took place in France and one in Switzerland.

Finally, reiterating that the analysis of this database was empirical in nature, with indicators proposed according to the author's personal grid, the working hypothesis confirmed by its results is: *the phenomenon of self-radicalized individual actors (individuals and individualized groups) is a growing one, which makes it necessary to combat extremism and violent radicalization as sources of terrorist activity in the European Union, by all political, legal and social means.* Also, once the most common ways to carry out individual attacks (given that a poorly organized attack will cause fewer casualties than an organized one) are identified, one can understand that to discourage the organization of such attacks, implicitly to reduce this risk, some activities need to be better controlled and restricted much more effectively (population access to firearms and explosives; freedom of movement of individuals known to have extremist tendencies; the possibility of financing such attacks, especially with income from criminal activities; access to means online information of terrorist and extremist origin), and criminal sanctions for violating them must be tightened. Simultaneously with the imposed restrictions, it is necessary to increase the resilience of public goods, such as those already identified as being targeted by attacks (both critical infrastructure −schools, places of worship, embassies, means of transport, etc.), as well as exponents of order, police, gendarmes, military, etc., or vulnerable persons subjected to religious pressure by family or community, to the detriment of their will). The punishment of individual terrorism is another activity that must be facilitated by the most uniform national legislation in all EU countries, necessary to criminalize terrorist offenses and by digitizing legal cooperation to facilitate cross-border access to electronic evidence used to detect and convict terrorist offenders.

3. Some Elements of the EU Policy Framework Built in the Last Two Decades to Combat Terrorist Attacks by Lone Actors

Activity to combat terrorism involves a series of actions that include defensive measures, specific to antiterrorism, taken to increase resilience to terrorist acts, but also offensive counter-terrorism-specific measures to prevent, deter or react to terrorist acts.

EU's first institutional response to the 9/11 attacks of 2001, which demonstrated awareness of the terrorist threat in the West and was a beginning of commitment in this area, represented the development of the Guide to a Common Approach to the Fight against Terrorism[59], which was intended to be a working tool in the internal political dialogue as well as in EU's external relations. Within it, terrorist acts and persons who commit terrorist acts have been defined. Subsequently, the *Council Framework Decision on Combating Terrorism*, adopted on 22 June 2002, outlined the European Union's internal policy in this area.

EU's more cohesive responses to international terrorism have been built around *EU's Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, adopted by the European Council in 2005, in which the organization is committed to fighting terrorism globally, while respecting human rights, in order to give its citizens the opportunity to live in an area of freedom, security and justice (AFSJ). Based on this strategy, a number of documents were issued addressing international terrorism as a whole, but not individual terrorism.

Although the frequency of individual terrorist attacks has increased, the idea that a lone actor can cause major damage to a European community through his actions began to be realized much later, at the political level, which emerged from its marginal role on public agenda. Individual terrorism was approached in context at the time of such attacks, but without this specific threat to individuals being analysed for traceability in society and optimal preventive measures being taken. Therefore, for a long time, individual terrorist attackers have been ignored as non-state actors by terrorism experts, intelligence service and policy makers.

If we consider a chronology of the most important political initiatives in the field of combating individual Islamist terrorism, we include the following milestones:

● *28 June 2013* − The Justice and Home Affairs Council discusses the issue of foreign fighters and returnees in Syria, based on a report by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, which identifies four areas where EU action needs to be targeted in its Member States: prevention; the exchange of information on the identification and detection of movements; criminal justice response; cooperation with third countries;

● *20 October 2014* − The EU Council adopts the *Counter-Terrorism Strategy for Syria and Iraq, with a particular focus on foreign fighters*, as an element of the Union's foreign and security policy, based on a complex criminal justice approach to combating terrorism while protecting human rights, whose priority areas are identified as[60]: the political dimension by supporting the authorities of

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[59] A.N.: This guide was made immediately after the events of September 9, 2001, by updating the *Guide to the Common Approach to the Suppression of International Terrorism*, which had been issued in 1986, subsequently revised twice (in 1996 and 1999).

[60] ***, *Punctele principale ale strategiei de combatere a terorismului pentru Siria și Irak, cu un accent*

those states; prevention by cooperating with source countries of foreign fighters and strengthening strategic communication; observation in order to identify recruitment networks and foreign fighters; protection by developing regional aviation security capabilities; the response provided by the development of regional counter-terrorism capabilities; cooperation with key partners, regional or not;

● *19 January 2015* – debate organized following the terrorist attacks in Paris on how foreign policy can complement the fight against terrorism in the EU, including measures to improve the exchange of security information with partners, strengthen cooperation with Arab and Mediterranean states and step up efforts to address crises and open conflicts in the neighbourhood;

● *29 January 2015 – Riga Joint Declaration on Combating Terrorism*, stressing the need to strengthen the response to the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters[61];

● *9 February 2015 − Council conclusions on combating terrorism*, a document which includes, among other things, external action to step up measures to combat radicalization and violent extremism (in particular in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, North Africa, the Gulf and the Sahel);

● *12 February 2015* – in the Declaration of the Heads of State or Government, following the informal meeting, among the concrete measures proposed by EU leaders in the fight against terrorism are[62]: the adoption of a directive on the European Passenger Name Record (PNR); use of the Schengen framework by carrying out systematic checks on EU citizens at the external borders; stepping up cooperation in combating firearms trafficking and terrorist financing; detecting and removing content from the internet that promotes terrorism or extremism; addressing crises and conflicts and stepping up cooperation with third countries on security issues; promoting cooperation with the UN and other global and regional initiatives;

● *20 September 2016* – the Council adopted, in addition to those imposed by the UN, an autonomous regime of sanctions against ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda, as well as against persons and entities associated with or supporting them[63];

● *18 November 2016* – the Commission presents its proposal for the *European*

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deosebit asupra luptătorilor străini, Anexă, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, Bruxelles, 16 January 2015, pp. 3-6, URL: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5369-2015-INIT/ro/pdf, accessed on 07.12.2020.

[61] ***, *Riga Joint Statement following the informal meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers in Riga on 29 and 30 January*, Annex, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 2 February 2015, p. 7, URL: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/ doc/document/ST-5855-2015-INIT/en/pdf, accessed on 02.12.2020.

[62] ***, *Calendar: lupta UE împotriva terorismului,* Consiliul Uniunii Europene, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/ policies/fight-against-terrorism/history-fight-against-terrorism/, accessed on 12.12.2020.

[63] *Idem*.

Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS)[64], an automated system designed to identify any risks associated with a visa waiver for a visitor travelling to the Schengen area, thus strengthening EU's internal security;

● *21 November 2016* − the Council adopted some conclusions on preventing violent radicalization, stressing the need to[65]: undermine and combat existing violent extremist ideologies; counteracting them with attractive non-violent alternatives; supporting parents, siblings and other people who come into contact with young people at risk of violent radicalization; the service providers' involvement in combating illegal hate speech in the online environment, as well as collaborating with them in this regard;

● *7 March 2017* – the Council adopts a directive amending the Schengen Borders Code to strengthen checks by consulting relevant databases at the external borders, in order to address risks to internal security, "including those posed by foreign terrorist fighters returning to their countries"[66];

● *7 March 2017* – the Council adopts a directive strengthening the EU legal framework to prevent terrorist attacks and to combat the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters, by criminalizing travel inside, outside or to the EU for terrorist purposes, organizing and facilitating such travel, providing and tracking training for terrorist purposes, granting or raising funds in connection with terrorist offenses or activities[67], but also by strengthening the rights of victims of terrorism;

● *9 June 2017* – the Council adopts the revised guidelines on the *EU Strategy to Combat Radicalization and Recruitment for Terrorism*, which were agreed in 2014, recognizing the importance of addressing "radicalization and violent extremism leading to terrorism at European level"[68];

● *22 June 2017* – the conclusions of the European Council for Security and Defence include reaffirming the commitment to cooperate, at EU level, on the following dimensions: the fight against online radicalization; preventing and combating violent extremism; counteracting terrorist financing; improving the

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[64] ***, *COM (2016) 731 final, Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and amending Regulations (EU) No 515/2014, (EU) 2016/399, (EU) 2016/794 and (EU) 2016/1624*, Brussels, 16.11.2016.

[65] ***, *Calendar: lupta UE împotriva terorismului, op. cit.*

[66] ***, *Codul frontierelor Schengen: Consiliul adoptă reglementări de consolidare a verificărilor la frontierele externe,* Comunicat de presă, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, 7 March 2017, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ ro/press/press-releases/2017/03/07/regulation-reinforce-checks-external-borders/, accessed on 11.11.2020.

[67] ***, *UE consolidează normele de prevenire a noilor forme de terorism*, comunicat de presă, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, 7 March 2017, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2017/03/07/rules-to-prevent-new-forms-of-terrorism/, accessed on 11.11.2020.

[68] ***, *Proiect de orientări revizuite privind Strategia UE pentru combaterea radicalizării şi a recrutării în scopuri teroriste*, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, Bruxelles, 24 May 2017, p. 2, URL: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/ document/ST-9646-2017-INIT/ro/pdf, accessed on 07.12.2020.

exchange of information and the interoperability of databases[69];

● *6 December 2018* – Council approves proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the prevention of online dissemination of terrorist content;

● *6 June 2019* – the conclusions of the Council of the European Union on "preventing and combating radicalization in prisons and solving the problem of terrorist offenders and violent extremists after release"[70];

● *7-8 October 2019* – members of the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) of the EU Council held a debate on terrorism and violent right-wing extremism with a focus on: creating a better overview of terrorism and right-wing violent extremism; continue to develop and exchange best practices on how to improve the prevention, detection and approach of terrorism and violent extremism; addressing the broadcasting of illegal right extremist content online and offline; cooperation with major third countries[71];

● *30 July 2020* – the Council renews EU list of terrorist organizations, which includes individuals, groups and entities subject to the freezing of their funds and other financial assets in the EU;

● *29 October 2020* – EU leaders have adopted a joint statement following the terrorist attacks in Nice;

● *13 November 2020* – adoption of the *Joint Declaration on Terrorist Attacks in Europe* (focusing on the most recent in Paris, Dresden, Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, Nice and Vienna);

● *9 December 2020* – adoption of *the EU Counter-Terrorism Agenda: Anticipation, Prevention, Protection and Response*, which points out that the nature of attacks is changing and that "most recent attacks have been carried out by individuals acting alone −often with limited training and readily available weapons – aiming crowded or symbolic spaces"[72].

Preventing violent radicalization is the responsibility of every EU Member State. The EU Strategy to Combat Radicalization and Terrorist Recruitment is part of EU's broader counter-terrorism strategy and action plan, approved by the

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[69] ***, *Concluziile Consiliului European privind securitatea și apărarea*, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, 22 June 2017, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2017/06/22/euco-security-defence/, accessed on 07.12.2020.

[70] ***, *Radicalizarea în închisori: Consiliul adoptă concluzii*, Comunicat de presă, Consiliul Uniunii Europene, 6 June 2019, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/press/press-releases/2019/06/06/radicalisation-in-prisons-council-adopts-conclusions/, accessed on 08.12.2020.

[71] ***, *Calendar: lupta UE împotriva terorismului*, *art. cit.*

[72] ***, *COM (2020) 795 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions a Counter-Terrorism, Agenda for the EU: Anticipate, Prevent, Protect, Respond*, Brussels, 9.12.2020, p. 1.

European Council in 2005. Its revised version in 2014 has as main goal the fight against radicalization that can lead to terrorism.

An important role among the practical European mechanisms for countering individual terrorism is the Radicalization Awareness Network (RAN), founded in 2011, representing, collectively, all EU Member States. It comprises more than 6,000 practitioners (civil society representatives, social workers, pedagogues, psychologists, teachers, local authorities, health professionals, police officers and prison officers) engaged in the prevention and combating of violent extremism, but also in the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremists[73].

Among the RAN's working tools to prevent extremism, radicalization and individual terrorism, are those dealing with foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) returning from conflict zones, such as Syria and Iraq, but also with their families. In this regard, the handbooks published in July 2017 and then in July 2020 are intended to be practical recommendations in the process of rehabilitating radicalized criminals and terrorists returned to Europe, with a focus on security measures by ensuring criminal justice and optimum administrative response. In fact, RAN Collection includes over 200 practices for preventing and combating violent extremism, among which are illustrated types of measures that can be taken in various areas to, for example, establish an appropriate general framework for comprehensive preventive activity, improve awareness and competence of front-line practitioners through their closer involvement in communities, families, victims of terrorism or former terrorists, addressing new forms and advances of radicalization (for example, through increased use of the internet and social networks).

A mechanism used in the Union to counter online radicalization is the EU Internet Forum, launched in December 2015, supported by the recommendation on tackling illegal online content, with a specific focus on terrorist content. Thus, in 2017, the Forum promoted the development of automatic tools for the detection and automatic elimination of online terrorist speech[74], in order to combat the spread of illegal online content, including online terrorist propaganda and xenophobic, racist or hate speech, and the identification of infringements of intellectual property rights.

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[73] About RAN, Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran_en, accessed on 08.12.2020.

[74] A.N.: On this forum, Twitter presented the fact that only between January and June 2017, ¾ of the 300,000 extremist propaganda accounts identified were deleted before the first post; YouTube announced that since June 2017, more than 150,000 videos with this type of content have been deleted, and Facebook removes 83% of harmful content files within an hour after their upload. To be seen: ***, *Fighting Terrorism Online: Internet Forum pushes for automatic detection of terrorist propaganda*, press release, European Commission, Brussels, 6 December 2017, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/ commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_17_5105, accessed on 08.12.2020.

Therefore, EU actions in the field of combating individual Islamist terrorism include some general ones (improving the exchange of information between EU states, strengthening external border controls, reducing access to firearms, digitizing judicial cooperation, criminalizing terrorist offenses, reducing terrorist financing, harmonizing the use of air travellers data, strengthening cooperation with non-EU countries), but also specific ones (preventing online radicalization of vulnerable segments of the population − immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, detainees, people with mental health problems, young people, women, unemployed, etc. −by using education and social inclusion, combating the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Europe, stopping their movement to join jihadist terrorist groups and recycling them and their families on their return to the EU.

Conclusions

Islamist terrorism has changed in the last 20 years, and if its incidence is initially discussed in the Middle East, North Africa and East Asia, regions with predominantly Muslim populations, it is now an emerging threat in Europe as well. It is carried out in particular, individually or by individualized groups, by different categories of self-radicalized or radicalized Muslims under the influence of terrorist organizations (Europeans born Muslims or converts to Islam, but also immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers practising an excessive Islam, who feel excluded in the host society and/or cannot adapt to the European democratic style). However, in practice, with the development of free communication and information and the possibility of "hiding" from everyone's eyes, it is quite difficult to differentiate between self-radicalized individuals, those inspired by the actions of a terrorist organization or those who actually belong to a terrorist organization.

Political terrorism manifested by lone actors appears in the context of several ideologies, not being limited to the Muslim belief system, although in the mass-media, references to this type of actor are made mainly to Islamist terrorists, as a result not of the number of acts initiated by these, but of the number of victims compared to those produced by other types of terrorism, such as, for example, the extreme right. Therefore, Islamist terrorists, even in the individualized form "Lone Wolf" in the formulas presented by Pantucci, through their violent actions in the EU, which generates fear and panic among the masses, acquire the role of non-state actors who have the ability not only to damage the European security environment, but also to distort the social structure and democratic values of society.

The individualized actor ("Lone Actor") does not reflect the number of individuals involved in a terrorist attack, but their mode of action, respectively the level of connection with a terrorist organization. Therefore, although this paper started from the premise that all Islamist terrorists operating in Europe are

individual actors, however, loners and lone wolves self-radicalized, autonomous, not affiliated with terrorist organizations fall more precisely into this criterion, and lone attackers with some degree of coordination from a terrorist organization are, in fact, members of decentralized terrorist cells across the EU.

The analysis presented in the paper shows that lone attacks are the most common; attacks by affiliates or terrorist cells account for about 16% of the total, but they register more victims (as a result of better organization and partial coordination of an organization terrorists) than acts committed by loners or lone wolves.

Therefore, a pattern of the most common types of Islamist terrorist attacks, namely those initiated by lone actors, includes the following characteristics: they were predominantly ad-hoc, less thoughtful, disorganized or very poorly organized, manifested as: *domestic violence against Muslims* who are considered to have violated Islamic precepts, usually materialized in domestic "honour" attacks by spouses, siblings or other family members on women and children (opposition to arranged marriages, adoption of Western lifestyle, desire to give up Islamic religion, expression of desire to divorce, etc.); *community violence materialized in attacks on Muslim men* (imams who expressed anti-radicalization views, individuals who expressed a desire to renounce to Islamic religion or whose vices were exposed, homosexuals, etc.), but also spontaneous *violence on non-Muslim people in the community* (representatives of law enforcement, military, guards, journalists, priests and prelates, etc.).

Beyond the political instruments built at EU level, among the measures that would ensure the traceability of individual terrorist acts is the monitoring of individuals who: have manifested violent, deviant or extremist behaviour in society; frequently accesses dark websites (where terrorist organizations advertise to recruit new followers or explicitly present means of attack); frequents groups suspected of having links to radical or terrorist movements; they were released from prison with a prison sentence for the proliferation of violent acts of xenophobia, racial hatred or sexual hatred; have come relatively recently from conflict regions with a massive Muslim population (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, etc.) and may exhibit extreme violent behaviours due to trauma in war zones or lack of adaptation to a democratic environment characterized by diversity and freedom such as European society (multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multinational) etc. And, as operational tools for carrying out these measures can be: the use of innovative solutions based on artificial intelligence to identify people, drones to track potential aggressors in crowded spaces and cyber means to verify and select harmful content from online spaces, especially from social media networks for young people.

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DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AS A MANAGEMENT STRATEGY OF CHANGES IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Adrian Victor VEVERA, PhD*

With the translation from traditional to non-military forms of power, the power of a nation has been conceptualized according to the level of influence it can exert, the perceived value, social norms and the image it has, and diplomacy was considered an essential tool for ensuring the national interest. In this article, we aimed at analysing how technological innovations in the field of communications have led to changes in terms of content and manifestations of diplomacy, highlighting the characteristics of digital diplomacy as an emerging branch of diplomacy. We will also analyse the context of the manifestation of digital diplomacy from the perspective of social practice theory to provide a better understanding of how individuals' routines intervene in its effective manifestation as a strategy for managing change in the international geopolitical environment.

Keywords: *diplomacy; cyberspace; digital diplomacy; geopolitical change; strategy; social practice.*

Introduction

The specific interdependence of the globalized contemporaneity we live in is also found at state level, regardless of the field of activity we are looking at. Diplomacy is no exception because, as the degree of interconnection increases, so

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do global integration trends. The defence of the national interest through diplomacy remains an important factor in foreign policy at the international level. As the great problems of mankind diversify and become unmanageable in the absence of international cooperation, the diplomatic agenda is becoming increasingly congested. Experts acknowledge that the transformations in the way states interact have changed faster and more profoundly than ever before, as demonstrated by specialists such as Melissen[1] or Kissinger[2]. Diplomacy has continued to change over time, and the national interest has continued to be defended in forms influenced by the socio-economic changes the world is going through. Thus, against the background of the unprecedented development of technologies in the field of communications and information, a new form of public diplomacy has emerged and developed − digital diplomacy. At the same time, global and foreign policy developments are associated with digital diplomacy, while the actual changes that have occurred in diplomatic practice due to the influence of technology are difficult to specify. The new technologies have required the promotion of a distinct field of diplomacy, defined as digital diplomacy, which should include all considerations related to previous attempts to define it in the form of e-diplomacy, web 2.0 diplomacy, cyber diplomacy, responsive diplomacy.

1. Digital Diplomacy − Conceptual Demarcations

With the advent of means and methods of securing national interests without the use of force, forms of power have been nuanced by the inclusion of *soft power* specific tools[3]. *Soft power* labelled a reality in which the a state's power is conceptualized and depends on the level of influence it can exert, the perceived value, social norms and the image it has[4].

The term was conceptualized by Joseph S. Nye Jr., who defines this concept as a state's ability to set the agenda in global politics by influencing the actors involved through beliefs, values and ideas, and not through military or economic constraint[5]. Subsequently, the same author refers to *smart power* as a balancing factor between *hard power* (traditional military power) and *soft power* and argues that in international politics balancing the two types of power in an intelligent

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[1] Jan Melissen, "Introduction", in Jan Melissen, J., (ed.), *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, United Kingdom, 1999, p. xiv, URL: https://www.worldcat.org/title/innovation-in-diplomatic-practice/oclc/183338161, accessed on 17.06.2020.

[2] Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, p. 806.

[3] Jan Nye, "Soft power", in *Foreign Policy*, 80, 1990, pp. 153–171.

[4] Guy J. Golan, Sung Un Yang, Dennis Kinsey (eds.) *International Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Communication and Engagement*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York, 2015, p. 2, URL: https://1lib.eu/book/2565381/84ccd5?regionChanged, accessed on 23.06.2020.

[5] Jan Nye, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-171.

manner will lead to achieving national goals.[6] Joseph S. Nye Jr. and William A. Owens point out: "Knowledge is, more than ever, power… In assessing power in the information age … the importance of technology, education, and institutional flexibility has increased, while that of geography, population and raw materials has declined."[7] On the other hand, the specific of this source of power require a number of transformations in the case of the actors involved, as information and knowledge are widely distributed, and the governments' role as central authorities cannot be the same. The information and knowledge that a state actor benefits from is constituted in its soft power capital, and the way of using them at the interstate level has migrated from coercion to attraction.[8] For the present paper, it is important to specify that, with the increase of the role and the importance of soft power, the importance of diplomacy has also increased.

With the translation of the way of modelling the preferences of state actors from coercion to seduction, new concepts such as social diplomacy have emerged generated by this new reality. Therefore, the two classical forms of diplomacy, the traditional and the public, were supplemented with a third form called social diplomacy, as a form of contemporary diplomacy. A defining feature of social diplomacy is its association with the ability to treat with kindness, discretion and wisdom a delicate and complicated situation or a special way of dealing with people[9].

Social diplomacy allows the sovereign state authority to move from formal addressing to direct addressing to common citizens and provides appropriate mechanisms for the involvement in the diplomatic process and other international actors, such as non-governmental organizations or multinational corporations. One strong impact form of social diplomacy is lobbying, which can be done by joining NGOs. Lobbyists are a kind of diplomat who try to exert influence on the design or policy implementation of particular interest.

As the emergence of soft power determined the emergence of social diplomacy, information technology has changed, perhaps more than anything else, the way states negotiate and the content of power sources, once again leading to a diminishing role of military power. This is the social context in which a new form of diplomacy is taking place − digital diplomacy.

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[6] Jan Nye, "On the rise and fall of American soft power", in *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 22, 2005, URL: 75-77.10.1111/npqu.2005.22.issue-3, accessed on 23.06.2020.

[7] Joseph Nye, William Owens, "America's Information Edge", in *Foreign Affairs*, 75, March/April 1996, p. 22, URL: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1996-03-01/americas-information-edge, accessed on 16.06.2020.

[8] Joseph Nye Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, Basic Books, New York, 1990, p. 19.

[9] Blerim Reka, Bardhok Bashota, Ylber Sela, *Marrëdhëniet Ndërkombëtare*, Shkup, Instituti për Studime Politike dhe Ndërkombëtare, 2016, p. 15.

The roots of digital diplomacy can be found at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992), when, for the first time, e-mails from civil society were used by lobbyists. Also in 1992, the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies in Malta set up a department dedicated to the development of computer applications for diplomacy.

However, the literature indicates the Arab Spring (2010-2012) as the event that imposed the practice of digital diplomacy. During these events, the revolutionaries used social media to make their message known, to gain support and to inform the global public opinion. Also, to combat terrorist groups' massive online recruitment of young people, President G.W. Bush Jr. administration (2001-2009) launched the concept of public diplomacy 2.0, which aimed for better visibility on social media and the specialization of staff tasked with combating jihadist recruitment online.

Digital diplomacy has proven to be a difficult and slippery concept, because it includes a set of technological, social, economic and political changes that are difficult to grasp in the definitional template of proximate gender and specific difference.

Currently, references to digital diplomacy are two-dimensional. On the one hand, digital diplomacy is considered to be the pursuit of national interests by diplomacy using modern technologies. In the popular sense, digital diplomacy is reduced to social media. But the approach that reduces the functions of diplomacy to social media is far from correct, because diplomats' role cannot be reduced to feeding LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook accounts. An alternative discussion, from whose point of view we agree, is focused on the diplomatic transformations generated by the evolutions of all technologies.

On the other hand, cyber-diplomacy involves the mobilization of diplomatic resources to achieve national interests in cyberspace. Thus, topics such as cyber security, cybercrime, internet freedom and internet governance appear on the agenda of digital diplomacy. In turn, diplomats are characterized by varying degrees of acceptance of the blessings of technology, from technophile diplomats to technophobic ones. As well as other branches of diplomacy, cyber diplomacy requires the development of strategic partnerships, multilateral involvement and cooperation against global threats, as well as information exchange agreements.

These ways of understanding diplomacy are also found in the literature, where digital diplomacy is considered to be characterized by:

1. Incorporating the changes produced by technology in different fields where diplomacy is involved (geopolitics, economy, sovereignty, cooperation);

2. Enriching the traditional diplomacy agenda with topics such as internet governance, cybersecurity, cybercrime and more;

3. Inclusion of new ICT tools (social media, big data and more) in the practice of diplomacy.[10]

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[10] Nicholas J. Cull, "Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories", in *The Annals of the American*

With the imposition of digital diplomacy on the international political stage, a series of new imperatives have emerged, such as digital prioritization, known by the urge of *Digital First!*[11]. Therefore, diplomacy needs to prepare communication plans in which messages are given priority over digital channels and the target audience identified in this area. Diplomatic activities such as information gathering, knowledge management, negotiation and consular services must be organized according to this imperative.

Public's proactive and accurate information on digital channels can neutralize the masses manipulation, with disastrous effects on the national security of any state. But digital diplomacy is not reduced to that. A very important dimension of soft power, as Joseph Nye pointed out, is the promotion of values. The global most powerful nations excel in this respect, and the role of diplomacy in this field is not negligible at all. Influencing public opinion can be achieved through serious, reasoned messages, with a load of important information, but also through funny messages, which are simpler, but accepted and remembered to a greater extent.

Today, most diplomatic campaigns have an important digital component and manage to mobilize public opinion more than any other means. In cyberspace, collaborative messages are being built that address interstate issues or threats, and, as the Portland Communications expert report shows, the aim is to reach a new level in digital diplomacy: motivating states to cooperate in collaborative policy making.

Beyond the changes it incorporates or determines in the current international context, in which soft power is more relevant than any other form of power, digital diplomacy has the capacity to be an important tool for managing change in the international environment. Next, we will argue that digital diplomacy is more than a form of public diplomacy, a promising concept for the theory and practice of the 21st century diplomacy.

2. Theory of Social Practices and Digital Diplomacy

Traditionally, the structural theories of international relations have sporadically included diplomacy in areas other than the distribution of power and capabilities[12]. Being studied mainly by practitioners of diplomacy oriented towards practice and pragmatism, diplomacy failed to emerge a solid theoretical body, which would give it independent disciplinary rights, as shown by C. Jönsson and M. Hall in their

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Academy of Political and Social Science, 616(1), 2008, pp. 31-54.

[11] Jonathan McClory (ed.), *The soft power 30 - A Global Ranking of Soft Power*, Portland, 2016, p. 75, URL: https://portland-communications.com/pdf/The-Soft-Power-30-Report-2016.pdf, accessed on 14.08.2020.

[12] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1979, p. 192.

book, *Essence of Diplomacy*. Theoretical research in the area of international relations remained distant from the practice of the field, the division of the two spheres blocking in-depth scientific knowledge.

The end of the Cold War was a moment that determined the reorientation towards diplomacy as a decisive element for the evolution of international relations. Experts have suggested that direct, bilateral meetings between Mikhail Gorbachev and his counterparts in the United States, Ronald Reagan and then, George H.W. Bush, have significantly influenced the evolution of the international context since then[13].

The emergence of the theory of social practices conceptualized by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu[14] did not remain without echo in the field of international relations, which hastened to use it to better understand the international context. Practices are material issues in the sense that they are things that happen in social life, involving the environment and structuring it at the same time. In this way, international practices change the ideas that the individual or the collective has about the world[15]. Thus, the impact of people's habits on interpersonal relationships was, finally, considered by specialists.

The theory of diplomacy has benefited from the theory of social practices from several points of view. According to it, diplomacy is transformed, from an instrument of power, into a productive practice for the evolution of the international system.

Ted Hopf took another step forward and applied the concepts of neuroscience to the theory of social practices to examine the habit influence at the workplace in the international system[16]. Hopf argues that the role of workplace habits in structuring international social practices is far greater than expected. The difference is that habits are routine, automatic, thoughtless processes, opposed to the reasoning and hyper-processed analytical approaches that were traditionally considered to be specific to international actors' behaviour[17]. Understanding these mutual conditionings has shaped the theory of the diplomatic field, to draw attention to the fact that, when interacting, people share information, both consciously and unconsciously[18].

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[13] Todd Hall, Keren Yarhi-Milo, "The Personal Touch: Leaders' Impressions, Costly Signaling, and assessments of Sincerity in International Affairs", *International Studies Quarterly* 56(3), 2012, pp. 560–573, URL: https://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/ISQ-KerenYarhiMilo%26ToddHall-Sept2012_0.pdf, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction : Critique sociale du jugement*, Minuit, 1979/2016.

[15] Todd Hall, Keren Yarhi-Milo, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

[16] Ted Hopf, "The Logic of Habit in International Relations", *European Journal of International Relations* 16(4), 2010, pp. 539–561, URL: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1354066110363502, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[17] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York, 2011, pp. 58-63.

[18] Todd Hall, Keren Yarhi-Milo, *op.cit.*; See also, Keren Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder: How

Accumulation of knowledge by gathering information, automating values and work routines, disseminating information and cultivating knowledge are important elements of diplomatic activity because they allow the objectives of negotiations to be achieved[19]. But information is not enough to be collected and stored, but they must be also efficiently managed. This is the segment in which modern information technologies have led to substantial changes in the connection between knowledge management and public diplomacy[20]. The use of Facebook, Twitter (which has also led to the emergence of the *Twitter diplomacy* concept) are just a few examples.

3. Digital Diplomacy and European Policies

Following its enlargement, the European Union has attached particular importance to good neighbourly policy in its foreign policy, as set out in the Treaty of Lisbon[21]. For example, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) regulates the relationship mechanism between Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, and in North Africa and the Middle East, the EU has taken several steps to promote democracy and human rights[22]. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty established what is now known as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which outlines common guidelines for Member States in international affairs. Subsequently, the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam launched the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

These developments allow for even more focused questions on how diplomacy, in general, and digital diplomacy, in particular, can contribute to the EU's strategy for managing international relations. It is undeniable that modern technologies have been taken over and used by diplomacy. After the first decade of social networks, approximately 90% of the UN member states' leaders use Twitter and Facebook accounts, thus managing to address an audience of 325 million and 255 million

Leaders and Intelligence Communities Assess the Intentions of Adversaries", *International Security* 38(1), 2013, pp. 7-51, URL: https://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1162/ISEC_a_00128, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[19] Jovan Kurbalija, *Knowledge and Diplomacy*, DiploProjects, Msida, Malta, 1999, URL: https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/general/knowledge-management-and-diplomacy, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[20] Fergus Hanson, *Revolution@State: The Spread of Ediplomacy*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Sydney, Australia, 2012, URL: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/revolutionstate-spread-ediplomacy, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[21] ***, *Treaty Of Lisbon Amending The Treaty On European Union And The Treaty Establishing The European Community*, 17 December 2007, Official Journal of the European Union, URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12007L/TXT, accessed on 29.06.2020.

[22] Stefania Panebianco, "The constraints on EU Action as a "norm exporter", in the Mediterranean", in *The European Union's roles in international politics: Concepts and analysis*, edited by Ole Elgström and Michael Smith, Routledge, London, 2006, pp. 136-154, URL: https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780203086414, accessed on 30.06.2020.

people, respectively[23]. This year brought to the public scene a new way of conducting negotiations−social distance diplomacy, as a consequence of the COVID- 19 pandemic. In this context, diplomatic meetings really took the form of digital diplomacy, being carried out on platforms such as Zoom. The world's leading personalities have engaged in virtual conferences and streamlined social media posts (Minister Boris Johnson referred to his government as the first ever digital cabinet[24]). Currently, there are estimates that by next year about 40% of the world's population will be active on social platforms[25], amid the acceleration of this penetration by 5G technology.

Both the EU External Service Action (EEAS) and embassies, consulates, and foreign ministries have developed smartphone dedicated consular applications[26].

Therefore, digital diplomacy is a reality of diplomatic policies, but in order to strengthen its position and become more relevant, it is necessary to go beyond public communication, by taking a EU strategic position, by revealing how technology can influence interstate relations and identify ways in which it can capitalize on the opportunities it offers.

The development of sound European policies is dependent on a correct understanding of digital diplomacy, with its opportunities and limitations. The conclusions obtained by thoroughly dissecting the concept must be agreed at Community level and applied uniformly. Therefore, the first step in this direction is to understand the concept and analyse the status quo of digital diplomacy.

Unlike people who are driven by their values and beliefs, digital platforms are lacking such characteristics and can be hijacked and used for propaganda purposes. In fact, in the last election campaigns in Europe and the United States, there were disinformation campaigns attributed to Russia, which support this point of view[27]. Indeed, the easy way to produce digital media makes it easy to use for propaganda purposes. The algorithmic dissemination of content and the circumvention of traditional media filters and opinion formers make misinformation spread faster, penetrate deeper, become even more emotionally charged and, most importantly, become more resilient[28].

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[23] ***, *Twiplomacy Study 2016*, May 31, 2016, URL: http://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2016/, accessed on 03.07.2020.

[24] ***, *Twiplomacy Study 2020*, July 20, 2020, URL: https://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2020/, accessed on 12.01.2021.

[25] ***, *Statista. Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021*, URL: https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/, accessed on 05.07.2020.

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[27] ***, *Putin's asymmetric assault on democracy in Russia and Europe: implications for U.S. national security*, U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Jan 10, 2018, URL: https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/FinalRR.pdf., accessed on 04.07.2020.

[28] Corneliu Bjola, "Propaganda in the digital age", *Global Affairs*, no. 3 (3), 2018, URL: https://www.

Conclusions

In this article, we have extensively analysed the main changes that diplomacy has undergone in the contemporary period, especially under the influence of modern technologies in the field of communications and information. If changes in global geopolitics, such as the Cold War, have brought diplomacy back to the attention of state actors, web 2.0 technologies have managed to nuance the way diplomatic negotiations are conducted to the point where some voices have hypothesized the replacement of traditional diplomacy with the digital one.

Therefore, we have tried to show a complete picture of this concept, by indicating the context that generated its appearance on the international stage and its main features. At the same time, we have analysed the most important ideas existing in the public space regarding digital diplomacy and have argued for or against them, having as a theoretical basis the social practices theory, formulated by Pierre Bourdieu. If the digital impact is imminent in all areas, it has obviously had an influence on the field of diplomacy, which is at a turning point, in the sense that it will succeed as much as it will manage to adopt current technologies and the ones of the future (5G, IoT, etc). As well as any other technology (the most relevant case being nuclear fission) technologies specific to the field of communications and information can be used dually, the responsibility always falling on the human factor involved. Now, in its infancy, we can say that digital diplomacy harbours the germs of global peace or its disaster.

As long as the benefits of its use are optimally complemented by risk management capacity, digital diplomacy is a state instrument that can and must be used to ensure national interest.

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OFFENSIVE CYBER OPERATIONS, AN ESSENTIAL CAPABILITY OF HYBRID THREATS

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Physical reality is connected to cyber reality, any action in cyberspace ultimately produces a kinetic effect. States have understood this relationship and while the US's hegemony of physical reality is still difficult to dispute, intense fights are carried out for reaching the leading position in cyberspace thinking that by winning the cyberwar means winning on both realms.

In order to cause as much damage as possible, in the context created by the information era in which we find ourselves, state or non-state actors, considered hybrid threats, choose to operate in cyberspace mainly through offensive cyber operations.

Offensive cyber operations are unconventional and sometimes asymmetric operations that allow a hybrid threat to operate anonymously, to use forces belonging to proxy actors, to avoid symbolic triggers while producing devastating kinetic effects, without time and space limitations, combined with other unconventional operations such as psychological operations, information or electronic warfare.

Keywords: hybrid threat; offensive cyber operations; opportunities; cyberweapons.

Introduction

Because a hybrid threat seeks to achieve, strengthen and maintain influence in third countries, particularly through actions aimed at civil society, and that according to telecommunications experts, at the end of 2018 around 51.2% of global

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population, approximately 3.9 billion people, were using the Internet[1], number much higher nowadays, offensive cyber operations (OCO) can provide all of these goals as they bring many advantages for military forces who use them.

Among the specialists who study or even operate in this field, some recommend the organizational integration of offensive cyber capabilities into the military system[2], as *cyberspace operations can allow freedom of action for activities in other areas*[3].

Starting from the synthesis of the defining aspects of offensive cyber operations, in other words the definition of the concept, structure, effects and how certain states considered hybrid threats have developed these capabilities, we have continued this scientific article with the analysis of the OCO's importance for any hybrid threat.

The purpose of this scientific research is to highlight OCO's military potential for hybrid threats as it is equally important to thoroughly understand the means by which an opponent acts and to determine the reasons for choosing a particular course of action.

1. Offensive Cyber Operations (OCO)

The research object of this scientific article is offensive cyber operations (OCO), cyber operations launched by military and paramilitary forces, at the command and/or under the control of states or non-states, aimed at *exploiting immediate vulnerabilities (zero-day exploit), implementing various cyberspace disruption techniques, the ability to overload hard-to-reach cyber targets and the enforcement of targeted malicious cyber products*[4] that affect adverse forces. In the USA military doctrine OCO are defined in much modest but comprehensive terms as *operations in cyberspace designed to project power through force application in or through cyberspace*[5].

In conceptual terms, OCO and cyberattacks are differentiated by the way they are organized, the magnitude of the effects and the reasons behind them. OCO

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[1] ***, "Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2018", *International Telecommunications Union (ITU)*, p. 6, URL: https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-d/opb/str/D-STR-GCI.01-2018-PDF-E.pdf, accessed on 22.09.2020.

[2] Max Smeets, "Organizational integration of offensive cyber capabilities: A primer on the benefits and risks", in *9th International Conference on Cyber Conflict (CyCon)*, IEE, Tallinn, 2017, p. 3, URL: http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8240326/, accessed on 26.08.2020.

[3] ***, "Cyberspace Operations Concept Capability Plan 2016-2028", The United States Army's, p. 8, URL: https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/pam525-7-8.pdf, accessed on 18.08.2020.

[4] Max Smeets, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

[5] ***, *FM 3-12 C*, USA Army, Washington, 2017, p. 18, URL: https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN3089_FM%203-12%20FINAL%20WEB%201.pdf, accessed on 28.09.2020.

are carefully planned cyberattacks (possibly integrated into an operational plan) which, through the significant damage caused to targets, aim at obtaining national advantages for states or for a certain population in the case of non-state attackers. To distinguish between the two concepts, have a look at two examples: the launch of the Stuxnet virus (discovered in June 2010) was an OCO because it destroyed essential equipment (centrifuges) in Iran's uranium enrichment facilities in Națanz[6] by suspending their progress in obtaining nuclear weapons (which served the interests of other states) while the 2017[7] WannaCryptor ('WannaCry') ransomware was just a cyberattack launched by hackers who encrypted information on infected computers in order to get some personal rewards for decrypting them (we are not convinced that it was a North Korean OCO as claimed by several foreign officials[8]).

As for the structure of OCO, it takes the classic form of a cyberattack and sequentially it involves the same steps:

● *Reconnaissance*, i.e. obtaining data about the target's data traffic, the level of cybersecurity, the possible accounts it can hijack;

● *Intrusion*, which may be at the user level or with administrator rights of the computer system;

● *Obtaining privileges*, by exploiting the vulnerabilities of the operating system or software package;

● *Achieving the goal*, installing backdoor, cyberespionage, corrupting files, and so on.[9]

Starting with the three-dimensional model of the information environment, proposed by Jelle van Haaster in his doctoral thesis (see Figure no. 1), we want to draw attention to the fact that OCO aims at compromising the logical cyber layer (data, software) and/or the cyber infrastructure layer (networks, hardware, terminals), but the destructive effect achieved is a wave effect that spreads across all layers of the information environment.

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[6] ***, "Stuxnet – computer worm", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, URL: https://www.britannica.com/technology/Stuxnet, accessed on 22.09.2020.

[7] ***, "WannaCry: o nouă amenințare de tip ransomware cu victime la scară globală", *Centrul Național de Răspuns la Incidente de securitate cibernetică - CERT-RO*, URL: https://cert.ro/citeste/wannacry-ransomware-alerta, accessed on 22.09.2020.

[8] ***, "Cyber-attack: US and UK blame North Korea for WannaCry", *BBC News*, 19.12.2017, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-42407488, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[9] Max Smeets, *op.cit.*, p. 6.
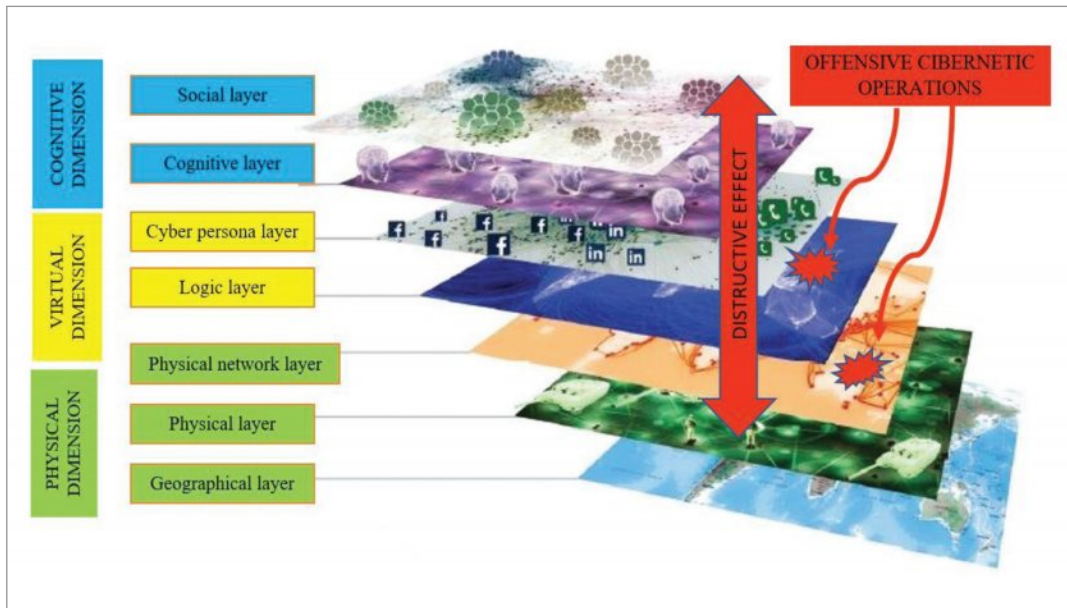
Figure no. 1: Design of cyber force in the information environment
(the layered three-dimensional development)[10]

OCO's effects may be *denial* (cancellation of control over the resources held by the enemy), *degradation* (decrease of the enemy's operational capacity), *disruption* (complete but temporary blocking of the enemy), *destruction* (permanent, complete and irreparable denial of access or action of a target) or *manipulation* (control or exchange of information, computer systems and/or enemy networks in a way that supports its own objectives)[11].

In 2020, researchers at Harvard University's Belfer Center in the U.S., in their efforts to build a top of the most powerful states by cyberpower, proposed the next ranking of the most offensive states in cyberspace (see Figure no. 2).

In this ranking, it can be seen that states known as hybrid threats to NATO security are also positioned, namely Russia (position 3), China (position 4) and Iran (position 7). The policies and actions of these states regarding OCO can be summarized in a few words as follows:

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[10] Jelle van Haaster, P.A.L. Ducheine, T.D. Gill, "On cyber: the utility of military cyber operations during armed conflict (thesis)", p. 184, URL: https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/37093787/Thesis.pdf, accessed on 28.09.2020.
[11] *Ibidem*, p. 195.

Russia

In Russian military doctrine the concept of OCO is not theorized because cyber operations are considered information operations[12]. However, Russia best understood the potential of OCO and used them successfully against other states, against Estonia (2007), Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014). Moreover, in the last two cases, Russia used OCO combined with kinetic operations and other informational operations[13]. Like many hybrid threats Russia uses forces belonging to proxy actors to launch OCO, a notorious example of this is the Russian Business

Figure no. 2: The most offensive states of 2020 in cyberspace[12]

Network (RBN) hacker group involved in the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict[14]. In recent times the Russian OCO aimed at favoring certain presidential candidates, wanted by the Kremlin, for instance Russia's involvement in the US presidential election (2016), when hacker groups APT 28 (also known as Fancy Bear) and APT 29 (also known as Cozy Bear) hacked the servers of the National Democratic Committee and leaked the information over the Internet[15].

China

As reaffirmed in China's 2019 Defence White Paper, China's military strategy is based on the military concept of active defence (introduced by Mao Zedong), a concept that adopts the principles of strategic defence in combination with offensive action at the operational and tactical level.

China sees the field of cyberspace as a platform that provides opportunities for influence operations and integrates OCO into the newly established bi-departmental

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[12] Michael Connell, Sarah Vogler, "Russia's Approach to Cyber Warfare", URL: https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DOP-2016-U-014231-1Rev.pdf, accessed on 27.09.2020.

[13] ***, "Emerging Cyber Forces to the United States", *Center for Cyber & Homeland Security*, p. 5, URL: http://cchs.auburn.edu/_files/emerging-cyber-threats-to-the-united-states.pdf, accessed on 27.09.2020.

[14] ***, "Expert: Cyber-attacks on Georgia websites tended to mob, Russian government", *LA Times Blogs - Technology*, URL: https://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2008/08/experts-debate.html, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[15] Michael Connell, Sarah Vogler, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

military organization of theatre-level operations, The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force that brings under sole command missions and strategic capabilities in the space field (Department of Space Systems) and also cyber, electronic and psychological fields (Department of Network Systems)[16]. This new structure was created in 2015 and is seen as a response to the development of the US Cyber Command – CYBERCOM in 2010[17]. The People's Liberation Army Strategic Support Force brings with it a great advantage, that of integrating cyber espionage with OCO into strategic information operations, thus both types of missions share information gathered, information which can ensure faster identification of enemy vulnerabilities on which OCO can be launched.[18]

Iran

Like Russia and China, Iran is a top player in cyberspace operations. Unlike the two states, Iran is openly encouraging and sponsoring hackers to launch cyber-attacks against its enemies[19]. Iran has established a strategic cyber structure, since 2012, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace *(shora-ye ali-efaziee majazi)*, which governs all national cyber operations[20]. Gradually in Iran, private companies that recruit professional hackers and collaborate with the armed forces to train them to run OCO have emerged, and in some universities such as Sharif University of Technology (Teheran) hacking competitions have been organized to identify talent, the winners being then employed by the Iranian forces[21]. Among the most important Iranian paramilitary forces operating in cyberspace is the Iranian Cyber Army (ICA) an extension of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps[22] and the Ashiyane Digital Security Team. In addition to the OCO launched against the oil company Saudi Aramco (2012), the Iranian administration is accused of attacks against American banking institutions (2013) and the Sands Casino in Las Vegas (2014).

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[16] ***, "Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China 2020 (annual report to Congress)", *Bureau of the Secretary of Defense of the United States*, URL: https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF, p. 12, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[17] John Costello, Joe McReynolds, "China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era," URL: https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/china-perspectives_13.pdf, p. 9, accessed on 27.09.2020.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 42.

[19] Dorothy Denning US The Conversation, "Following the Developing Iranian Cyberthreat", *Scientific American*, URL: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/following-the-developing-iranian-cyberthreat/, accessed on 27.09.2020.

[20] Michael Connell, *Deterring Iran's Use of Offensive Cyber: A Case Study*, Defense Technical Information Center, Fort Belvoir, VA, October 1, 2014, p. 9, URL: http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA617308, accessed on 27.09.2020.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 15.

[22] ***, "Iran's Hacker Hierarchy Exposed", *Recorded Future*, URL: https://www.recordedfuture.com/iran-hacker-hierarchy/, accessed on 27.09.2020.

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2. Oportunity Offered by OCO to Hibride Threats

Hybrid offensive actions that incorporate OCO offer multiple opportunities for force engagement. In the following we argue with examples the main advantages obtained by hybrid threats that manifest themselves in cyberspace.

Cyberweapons – multiple, accessible and immeasurable

The cyberweapon is the source code that is used or designed for use with the purpose of threatening or causing physical, functional or mental damage to structures, systems or living beings[23] and can take many forms: viruses (self-replicating programs that require human action to spread), worms (a sub-class of viruses that can spread without human action), trojans (malicious software hidden in a legitimate program), denial of service attacks (bombing servers with messages to cause them to crash) and phishing (fake emails and websites that trick people into revealing information about their password).[24]

In terms of hybrid threats, the use of cyber weapons can offer alternatives that other means or methods of war do not provide, in particular because they are not physical instruments and cannot be spotted easily, measured or prohibited from trading. Cyberweapons are accessible to any hybrid threat. These can be purchased from the Dark Web (a collection of websites that can only be accessed through certain search engines), with prices ranging between $70 and $6,000[25].

Flexibility and a high degree of freedom in how they can be operationalized make cyberweapons very useful for hybrid threats.

Force protection

A hybrid threat through OCO can affect the way the target engages its force by hijacking its capabilities to detect attacks, for example by cancelling or falsely triggering some sensors and how to respond to them by affecting communications. Inevitably, all this contributes to strengthening the protection of their own troops[26].

An example of force protection carried out with the help of OCO during an offensive response is the intervention claimed by the State of Israel, in which it

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[23] Tim Stevens, "Cyberweapons: an emerging global governance architecture", *Palgrave Communications*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 10 January 2017, Palgrave, p. 2, URL: https://www.nature.com/articles/palcomms2016102, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[24] ***, *Global trends 2030: alternative worlds*, National Intelligence College (U.S.), December 2012, p. 85, URL: https://info.publicintelligence.net/GlobalTrends2030.pdf, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[25] ***, "Dark Web Price Index 2020. Check all 2020 Dark Web Prices", *Privacy Affairs*, URL: https://www.privacyaffairs.com/dark-web-price-index-2020/, accessed on 10.10.2020.

[26] Frank J. Clluffo, Joseph R Clark, "Thinking Through Cyber's Role in Ground Combat", *Military Review*, 2015, pp. 3-4, URL: http://cchs.auburn.edu/_files/shoot-move-communicate.pdf, accessed on 10.10.2020.

destroyed an alleged Syrian nuclear reactor in Deir al-Zour province in 2007[27]. Israel, by engaging OCO at the operational level, launched air operations without losses caused by the Syrian air defence[28].

Russia's 2008 attack on Georgia is an example of OCO's synchronization with conventional actions, whereby, in addition to the offensive (destructive) objectives for which the Russian armed forces operated offensively in cyberspace, a greater degree of protection of Kremlin's military troops was achieved. The websites of the Georgian authorities and the media in Gori along with the communications were suspended by denial attacks (DDoS attacks) before Russian planes entered Georgia's airspace[29], thus Russian troops had valuable time in which they were able to occupy positions without a solid response from opposing forces.

In the same vein, we note that "cyber warriors" have a high degree of protection from possible retaliations of their targets because they can operate from remote and protected areas.

Anonymity of the aggressor

Due to the nature of cyberspace, attackers can often hide the origin of their attacks or may cause the attacks to look as if they are belonging to a third party. An example of a fake flag attack was in 2014, when North Korea (through the cybercrime organization known as the Dark Seoul) was accused of orchestrating massive OCO against Sony Pictures, *but Sony's attacks were conducted from command and control centers around the world, including a Convention Center in Singapore and Thammasat University in Thailand*[30].

The possibility of OCO being launched from other states makes any retaliation avoidable, because this may lead to an unwanted conflict.

Although the source of OCO may be located, it is difficult to prove that the aggressor acted at the orders of a state's authorities, especially since the states blame criminal organizations and patriotic hackers[31] for the attacks or totally deny the accusations, while issuing conspiracy theories such as manipulation of data to incriminate them.

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[27] ***, "Israel admits stasking suspected Syrian nuclear reactor in 2007", *BBC News*, March 21, 2018, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43481803, accessed on 28.09.2020.

[28] Frank J. Cilluffo, Joseph R Clark, "Thinking Through Cyber's Role in Ground Combat", p. 2.

[29] David Hollis, "Cyberwar Case Study: Georgia 2008", in *Small Wars Journal*, 06.01.2011, p. 5, URL: https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/639-hollis.pdf, accessed on 22.09.2020.

[30] David E. Sanger, Nicole Perlroth, "U.S. Said to Find North Korea Ordered Cyberattack on Sony," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2014, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/world/asia/us-links-north-korea-to-sony-hacking.html, accessed on 22.09.2020.

[31] Richard Andres, "Cyber Gray Space Deterrence", *PRISM, the journal of complex operations*, No. 2, 2017, p. 94, URL: https://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism_7-2/8-Cyber_Gray_Space_Deterrence.pdf?ver=2017-12-21-110642-813, accessed on 22.09.2020.

Devastating kinetic effects

It is difficult to predict the extent of the losses that may be caused by an offensive cyber operation. The devastating effect can range from human losses (e.g. as a result of stopping the electricity supply to hospitals or nuclear power plants) or huge material losses (the destruction of servers or computers in the bank/stock market system, the breaking of corporate accounts and the disclosure of trade secrets).

Certainly, past events are strong arguments to support this capability. The most relevant example we can offer happened in August 2012, the day before a major Islamic religious holiday, when a virus, later called *Shamoon,* had destroyed the hard drives of 30,000 computers belonging to Saudi Arabia's national oil company Saudi Aramco, considered critical infrastructure. The virus erased the memory of infected computers while inserting images of a burning American flag on them[32].

History abounds in examples that appear to be offensive cyber operations, not just isolated cyber-attacks and which have produced notable losses.

Homogeneity with other unconventional operations

The power of a hybrid threat is given by the unconventional operations that it launches. These must be synchronized, used combined with other operations and in an innovatively manner. The unconventional elements of a hybrid threat constitute a homogeneous body, in which the complementarity of the elements also becomes a force multiplier for conventional elements.

Although they are specific to the information environment, we exclude the theory that OCO are informational operations and consider that they can be easily used in combination with all operations specific to the information environment: informational, psychological, electronic warfare operations.

In relation to other unconventional operations a hybrid threat can use OCO in three ways:

● *In support of other unconventional operations*. At the tactical level, OCO can be carried out by teams integrated into the tactical units of the special operations forces. For example, a special operations microstructure which also includes an OCO specialist can infiltrate an opposing military structure and through OCO can gain access to the private data network, from which it will be able to initiate informational operations.

● *Supported by other unconventional operations*. OCO can be supported by information operations, in particular social-media operations in cyberspace. We support this argument on the fact that the latter allow easy collection of data and

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[32] Emilio Iasiello, "Are Cyber Weapons Effective Military Tools?", *Military and Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2015, p. 8, URL: https://www.inss.org.il/publication/are-cyber-weapons-effective-military-tools/, accessed on 22.09.2020.

metadata[33]. Metadata obtained through social-media operations in cyberspace is important to the success of OCO because they can provide the time of day in which the target is active, target's social group, the specific applications that the target uses, the type of device from which it connects even its hardware and software configuration[34].

● *In parallel with other unconventional operations*. A hybrid threat that seeks to induce fear (terror) among the civilian population of a target state through various psychological operations can in parallel pursue the same result by using OCO as cyber terrorism, by damaging critical infrastructure elements such as cancelling the control over a dam which may cause devastating flooding.

Without spatial and temporal limitations

Designing the power of a hybrid threat in or through cyberspace means the freedom to act outside the physical and temporal barriers imposed by geographical space, geopolitical context and/or time requirements of operations.

This opportunity is quite obvious and as valuable as it is obvious. With OCO you can prepare the battlefield from the shadows long before hostilities begin, keeping untouched the principle of strategic surprise, rapid action and synchronization with other planned forms of attack. A cyberweapon introduced into the cyberspace in which the enemy operates can be triggered at the most appropriate time for planned operations.

Operating in cyberspace does not entail significant logistical costs, such as the costs of transporting troops and materials, nor are they time-devouring as other conventional military actions.

Ambiguity of the legal regime

Although there are some notable mentions regarding the legal institution of sanctioning cyber-attacks: The Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest, 2001) and the Tallinn Manual which has already reached its second version, a product of NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) dealing with OCO from the point of view of jus in bello, the desired effects were not achieved. One of the obstacles to sanctioning OCO is that it is not possible to determine when OCO is the use of the force of a nation state or merely a criminal activity, because of the difficulty of establishing the connection between the attacker (real person) and the possible nation state controlling the operation. Moreover, strict regulations of OCO require an international consensus (including

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[33] Drew Herrick, "The social side of 'cyber power'? Social media and cyber operations", in *2016 8th International Conference on Cyber Conflict (CyCon)*, IEEE, Tallinn, Estonia, 2016, p. 108, URL: http://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/7529429/, accessed on 26.08.2020.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 10.

that of non-NATO or EU countries), which is impossible to obtain, as some developed countries (USA, China, Russia) use such unconventional operations in hybrid actions.

Up to the present time, there has been no armed intervention against a hybrid threat that has used OCO because this legal ambiguity leaves any possible armed reaction without legal validation. It should be noted that this did not happen even in 2007 when Estonia wanted NATO to declare that its sovereignty had been breached, which would have triggered the application of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty on Collective Self-Defence[35].

Hybrid threats speculate this opportunity in the most effective way and through OCO they prepare the cyberspace for combat when it is still peacetime, without retaliation from targets.

Exploitation of forces belonging to proxy actors (third-party actors)

This advantage translates into the possibility of a cyber aggressor state to hire cyber mercenaries or to attract "free cyber fighters".

When it comes down to it, a hybrid threat uses significant numbers of paramilitary actors and/or criminal organizations.

In order to change unconventional methods according to the requirements of the fight a hybrid threat needs rapidly renewable forces which can be easily disposable during operations. Forces belonging to proxy actors cover these needs.

Johan Sigholm tried in his work to centralize the most important non-state actors who can be temporarily active in cyberspace, and continued with their analysis in terms of the reasons behind the attacks, targets and methods. Adjusting his ideas to the chosen scientific research subject, we have identified those who can partake in OCO and grouped them as follows:

● *First-class cyber-attackers*, authors of malicious content and hackers (hacktivists, "black hat" hackers, patriotic hackers or members of a cybercrime organization). They are very experienced and are able to inflict the most damage.

● *Niche cyber-attackers*, cyber intruders and cyber scammers.

● *Cyber-soldiers*, amateur hackers (script kiddies) and *zombie computers* (included in a botnet that launches DDoS attacks)[36]. This group is very useful due to the fact that it is the most numerous. It is also the easiest to control and can effectively support OCO without high resource consumption.

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[35] P.W. Singer, Allan Friedman, *Cybersecurity and Cyberwar (What Everyone Needs to Know®)*, 1st Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, 2014.

[36] Johan Sigholm, "Non-State Actors in Cyberspace Operations", *Journal of Military Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, December 1st, 2013, URL: http://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/jms/4/1/article-p1.xml, accessed on 19.09.2020.

Efficiency against ultra-technological states

Ultra-technological states rely heavily on cyberspace for reasons related to the management of a large population. The population of these states is concentrated in dense urban areas (mega cities), with millions of inhabitants, which are usually economic, administrative centers. These dense urban areas work with big data[37] (huge data sets) and interconnected sensors, devices and software systems. Together these aspects shape a great vulnerability of ultra-technological states, that is dependence on cyberspace.

The interconnection of systems (surveillance, alarm, road infrastructure control etc.) in cyberspace creates the risk that a hybrid threat through OCO can speculate the weakest system in terms of cybersecurity, penetrate and cause chain damage or disruption throughout the whole system network. The potential crises generated can be even more serious as these dense urban areas are also centers of power, which once affected pose problems for the stability and security of ultra-technological states.

Avoiding symbolic triggers

It is also worth mentioning the fact that through OCO it can be avoided symbolic triggers[38], as Richard Andres calls them in his work. Contrasting situations where the Japanese military instead of attacking Pearl Harbor in 1941 or al-Qaeda destroying the twin towers in 2001 (which attracted the effervescent support of the American population for later US military efforts) would have opted instead for OCO to achieve its goals, he highlights a great advantage of OCO, that it does not trigger emotional reactions to the civil society (blind support or irrational act of violence).

Civil society is not as interested in OCO's technical aspects or devastating effects as it is sensitive to images of destroyed buildings or people suffering (symbolic triggers). Information on OCO that has been launched against a nation do not have a high degree of transparency for reasons relating to the level of information classification, explicitly no one would want a lot of people to know what vulnerability has been exploited, what cyberweapon were used, and so on.

The success rate of offensive actions launched by a hybrid threat is linked to the level of passivity or support it holds among the population of the targeted state and OCO do not negatively influence this equation.

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[37] Robert Dixon, "Bringing big data to war in megacities", *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2016, pp. 61-62, URL: https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/Military-Intelligence-Professional-Bulletin-July-to-September-2016.pdf, accessed on 10.10.2020.
[38] Richard Andres, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Conclusions

Whether information supremacy is obtained through OCO or their target is denied access to information, the results obtained have the same weight in achieving victory.

Looking back at what has been documented in this paper in terms of how certain state or non-state entities developing hybrid tactics (Russia, China, Iran) have focused on the operationalization of OCO and understanding the opportunities they have achieved in this way, it is necessary to draw the idea that OCO may be a critical requirement for their success in a hybrid war.

The opportunities offered by OCO to a hybrid aggressor are multiple and concerted. To mention a few, OCO: are not limited by geographical space and time, they allow anonymous operation, international interdiction is ineffective, they are not symbolic triggers and above all, they can be carried out in combination with other unconventional operations.

In conclusion, we would like to note that the National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024, approved on 30 June 2020, recognizes the "risk of adapting hybrid offensive operations to technological developments"[39], thus it comes in line with what we have assumed in this article.

The unknown that remains is how much will those who undertake hybrid actions orient themselves towards offensive cyber operations? Whatever the answer might be, cybersecurity is essential to avoid surprise and the inconveniences that come with it.

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8. ***, "Israel admits stasking suspected Syrian nuclear reactor in 2007", *BBC News*, March 21, 2018, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43481803

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12. ***, "WannaCry: o nouă amenințare de tip ransomware cu victime la scară globală", *Centrul Național de Răspuns la Incidente de securitate cibernetică - CERT-RO*, URL: https://cert.ro/citeste/wannacry-ransomware-alerta

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DARK WEB

Attila GULYÁS*

As it is widely known, the World Wide Web has a dark layer that is called the Dark Web, Dark Net, Dark Internet and so on, which is unreachable for traditional search engines such as Google or Bing. The Dark Web can only be accessed via special protocols such as TOR, I2p, or Freenet that provide pretty good anonymity for the users on these networks. The Dark Web in criminal news reports is referred to as some diabolical dark place where paedophiles, hustlers, arm and drug traffickers play their filthy games. Unfortunately, it is partly true, but it has a positive side as well. Because of the anonymity in strictly censored countries, it is the only place where opposition parties, human right activists can exchange information, share their opinion and communicate with each other in a clandestine way. Nevertheless, there are states that recognize the advantages of the Dark Web where they can carry out their activity under the cloak of anonymity. The Dark Web is an ideal environment for conducting intelligence collection, espionage, procuring exploits, for exploit development, exploit testing, and geopolitical influence, not to mention the critical infrastructure disruption and financial gain. The author tries to shed some light on the popular Dark Web applications and the activities of nation state actors on the Dark Web.

***Keywords:** Dark Web; TOR; I2p; Freenet; espionage; privacy; censorship; exit node; network.*

Introduction

The World Wide Web has also a dark layer that is called Dark Web, which can be accessed through overlay networks that use the Internet but involve using special protocols such as TOR or I2p that provide pretty good anonymity for the users on the network. Because of the anonymity in strictly censored countries, it is the only place where opposition parties, human right activists can exchange information, share their opinion and communicate with each other in a clandestine way. This study aims

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at demonstrating the installation and the use of three different software products designed to access a special segment of the Dark Web. It is presented their strong and weak points and compares their main features. In the second part of the study, the reader is given an insight into the activity of nation-state actors on the Dark Web.

1. Research Methodology

This research provides a perspective where it has been studied the related professional literature and researches as well as the documentations of the above mentioned software packages. In addition to TOR, I2P and Freenet, there are some other software products in the wild designed to access the Dark Web. The author's choice is not arbitrary; it is instead based on the popularity of these applications. In order to get real experiences, the author installed and used these software products in MS Windows 10 pro 64 bit, and Kubuntu 20.04. featured Plasma 5.18. environments. The resource consumptions of these software products (processor time, hard disk activity, network bandwidth) were measured.

The current research is based on *Dark Owl* sources (a Denver-based company that provides the world's largest index of Dark Web content and the tools to efficiently find leaked or otherwise compromised sensitive data) in making the second part of this study because this company is one of the leading DARKINT data providers, but the author corroborated its data by other information sources as well.

2. Partition of the World Wide Web

Clear Net

The Clear Net is a term that refers to the part of the World Wide Web that is accessible for everyone without any special means or applications. This part consists of webpages, databases, web services that can be indexed by search engines such as Google, Bing and many others. The content of the clear net can be reached either by typing an URL in the address bar of the web browser or giving some keyword or search expression in the search box of one of the search engines and by following the links in the result pages. The indexed pages are only the small portion of the Internet, although according to Google the number of the Google indexed pages was accessed more than 130 trillion in 2016.[1]

Deep Net

The term Deep Net refers to another part of the World Wide Web that is only

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[1] Barry Schwartz, "Google's Search Knows About Over 130 Trillion Pages", *Search Engine Land*, 2016, URL: https://searchengineland.com/googles-search-indexes-hits-130-trillion-pages-documents-263378, accessed on 02.08.2020.

accessible after some authentication (e.g. username and password); that is why they are hidden from the index robots of search engines. These pages may include healthcare system-related sites, internet banking, educational and social media pages but the list is virtually endless. Surfing on the Deep Net does not require any special knowledge or software compared to Clearnet. Practically, everyone who has basic knowledge on Internet browsing can access it. Due to the fact that there are some overlapping communication protocols between the two kinds of nets, it can be hard to navigate from one to another. It is easy to see that the size of the deep web is much bigger than the Clearnet and its size is inestimable.

Dark Net

The rest of the World Wide Web is called Dark Net or Dark Web. What is the Dark Web itself? It is an overlay network within the internet and can only be accessed with specific applications (such as TOR or I2p and Freenet), configuration, authentication and uses customized communication protocol. There are two Dark Web types such as social networks (micro world networks) and anonymity proxy networks. The social network (e.g. the Freenet) used for file hosting with peer to peer connection while Tor and I2P are the series of anonymized connections.

Originally, the Dark Net was a hidden layer on ARPANET established in the '70s with the aim of providing hidden and secure communication between workstations for security purposes. The Dark Web was able to receive data from ARPANET but was invisible for the ARPANET networks. Since then, the ARPANET has evolved to World Wide Web and the Dark Web has gained much more popularity due to its anonymity. Today the size of the Dark Web is inestimable. According to the experts, the World Wide Web is like a floating iceberg on the surface of the ocean. The visible part is the Clearnet while the Deep Web and the Dark Web are under water.

Figure no. 1: The structure of the World Wide Web[2]

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[2] Source: https://www.webhostingsecretrevealed.net/wp-content/uploads/our-web.jpg, accessed on 31.07.2020.

In contrast with the picture above and the widespread belief, the Dark Web is not a unified entity. It consists of several different parts and each belongs to a method on how they are accessible. These parts are not fully compatible with each other and there is no penetrability between them. In the current study, TOR, I2p and, last but not least, the FREENET are presented in details.

3. TOR

TOR is a free and open source software that protects user privacy, keeps anonymity against network traffic analysis. Its name derives from the acronym *The Onion Router*. The word *onion* refers to the way it works, discussed below. TOR directs the network traffic through a free, worldwide volunteer overlay network which consists of thousands of relays to hide the users' location and traffic from network surveillance and network analysis. TOR protects user privacy and freedom but does not hide the usage of TOR network, so an ISP or a connected online service, for example, can see that the user is on the TOR network. Some online services do not let the users join via TOR for different reasons.[3]

TOR installation
The installation of TOR is a very simple step which implies that, after downloading the setup file from the https://www.torproject.org/download/ link and running the setup.exe and answering some simple questions, it creates a map (default path is the current user's desktop) with all of its dependencies in it. It does not copy any files into the system maps or somewhere else. The application runs after double clicking on the "Start TOR Browser" shortcut in the "TOR Browser" map. Firstly, TOR configures itself and runs the special Mozilla Firefox browser which is tailored to TOR.[4]

How does TOR work?
As an example, the user joined the TOR network and wants to visit a website. The TOR client obtains a list of nodes from the directory server and picks a random path (called circuit) through the relays on the network. It encrypts the data into multiple encrypted layers and sends to the next relay. It decrypts the outer layer but can only see the packet header which shows the sender and the next IP address but cannot see the data payload. Then it sends the packet to the next relay and so on

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[3] ***, "The Tor Project | Privacy & Freedom Online", *Torproject.org*, 2020, URL: https://www. torproject.org/, accessed on 01.08.2020.
[4] *Ibidem*; Janeth Kent, "How to get into the Deep Web: a guide to access TOR, ZeroNet, Freenet and I2P", *MA*, 06-May-2020, URL: https://www.ma-no.org/en/security/how-to-get-into-the-deep-web-a-guide-to-access-tor-zeronet-freenet-and-i2p, accessed on 14.08.2020.

until the last relay (special one called exit node) sends the payload to the website. The website is not aware of the original IP address as it communicates only with the exit node. The answer travels back the same way but backwards. The package is like an onion; it has multiple peel able layers. During the whole communication no individual relay knows the payload and the original IP address together. The TOR software uses the same circuit for efficiency if the next request happens within 10 minutes.[5]
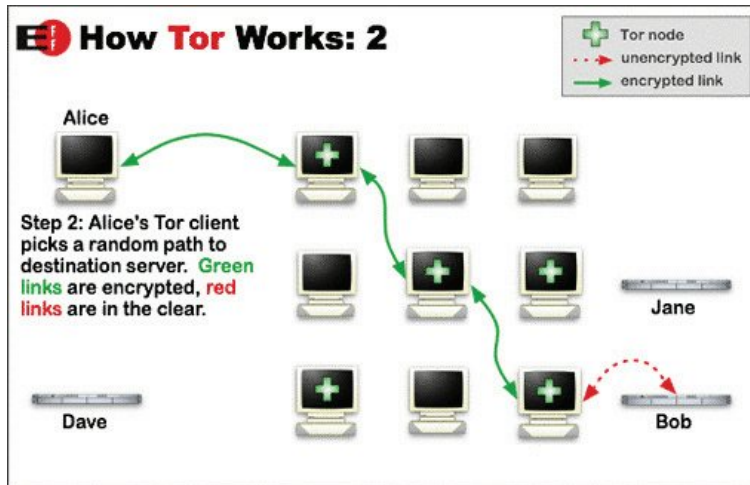
Figure no. 2: How TOR works[6]

TOR does not solve anonymity problems. It only focuses on the transport of data. It keeps websites from tracing one's activity. In order to improve anonymity (according to some experts), it is recommended to use any reliable VPN network, but anonymity in the TOR network or on the Dark Web is a very complicated matter and it is out of the scope of this study.[7]

The onion services
TOR is not only for anonymously browsing on the Clear Net. It allows users to hide their location and identity when publishing on the web various web services or instant message servers by its hidden services or as it is called - onion services. Any TOR user can create onion services. The simplest onion service is a basic HTML page. The TOR documentation provides detailed step by step instructions on how to set up

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[5] ***, "The Tor Project | Privacy & Freedom Online", *op.cit.*
[6] Source: TOR project, URL: https://2019.www.torproject.org/about/overview.html.en, accessed on 31.07.2020.
[7] ***, "Tor And VPN | Using Both For Added Security", *The Tin Hat*, 2020, URL: https://thetinhat.com/tutorials/darknets/tor-vpn-using-both.html, accessed on 14.08.2020.

hidden web services. One of the interesting features is that the service is available until the user is on the TOR network, because the service is stored on the user's computer.

After completing the onion web service its existence needs to be advertised on the TOR network before clients are able to access it. The service randomly picks some relays and builds circuits to them and asks those relays to act as introduction points and tells them its public key. On the TOR network it is almost impossible to associate an introduction point with the IP address of the onion server. The service assembles the onion service descriptor containing its public key and the summary of each introduction point and signs it with its private key and uploads it to the distributed hash table. The descriptor will be found by clients requesting the xyz.onion service, where the xyz is a 16-character-name that is derived from the service's public key. With this step the onion service is set up.

When the client wants to visit the onion service, they have to download the descriptor table at first so they will know the introduction points of the service and its public key. Then they have to create a circuit to a randomly picked relay that asks to act as a rendezvous point. The next step is sending a cookie through its circuit to one of the introduction points. The cookie contains the parameters of the rendezvous point and is encrypted with the service's public key. The hidden service receives this message from the introduction point and gets the address of the rendezvous point from the message. After that it builds a circuit to the rendezvous point and sends a rendezvous message to it. The rendezvous point notifies the client of the connection with the hidden service. After receiving the message, both the client and the hidden service are able to communicate with each-other through their own circuits via the rendezvous point. The onion service's address could be for instance "stormwayszuh4juycoy-4kwoww5gvcu2c4-tdtpkup667pdwe4qenzwayd. onion" where the first part in front of the dot is the public key of the hidden service. The hidden services can only be visited in the TOR system.[8]

E-mail service

Of course there is the possibility to connect to clear net email providers on the TOR network, although some providers do not support the TOR network. Apart from this, there are email service providers that are only related to TOR like Torbox (https://torbox3uiot6wchz.onion.sh/) or Mail2Tor. Both are for sending and receiving emails within the TOR network.[9]

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[8] ***, "The Tor Project | Privacy & Freedom Online", *op.cit.*; ***, "Hosting Onion Services", *Riseup. net*, URL: https://riseup.net/en/security/network-security/tor/onionservices-best-practices; ***, "ONION SERVICES | Tor Project | Tor Browser Manual", *Tb-manual.torproject.org*, 2020, URL: https://tb-manual.torproject.org/onion-services, accessed on 17.08.2020.
[9] ***, "TorBox mail service", *The Tor Box*, URL: https://torbox3uiot6wchz.onion.sh/index-en.php /, accessed on 17.08.2020.

The main features of the TOR application
Pros:
- cross-platform availability (Linux, MS Windows, Android and so on);
- easy to use;
- portable – no need for installation, it can even run from a well configured USB key;
- complex data encryption;
- open source software;
- provides anonymity;
- variety of onion services.

Cons:
- very slow;
- hidden services are less spectacular with less functionality because of the lack of java script, and other services like Google.

4. I2P Network

I2P means invisible to the Internet and this network is another part of the Dark Web. I2P is an anonymous project which is similar to the TOR network, but there are some vital differences between them, which are discussed in details below. The software is free and its open source is written by some volunteers from almost every continent. The network consists of thousands of routers and the communications are end to end encrypted among them.[10] The installation and the setup process are a little more complicated than the TOR setup. At first, make sure that Java Runtime Environment version 7 or higher is installed on the computer because the I2P software is written in Java language. After downloading the operation system dependent setup file from the official site of I2P (https://geti2p.net/en/download)[11] run the setup file and the wizard takes the user through the installation steps of the software. The setup process did not come to an end. The last step is the manual proxy configuration in the default browser. Of course, there are detailed step by step instructions for the different browsers, such as Chrome, MS Edge and so on. (see Figure no. 3).

Upon the completion of the last step the I2P configuration is ready and with a double click on the shortcut on the desktop the software starts running and a few seconds later the user is in the network.[12][14] The dashboard is similar to the one

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[10] ***, "I2P The Invisible Internet Project", *Geti2p.net*, URL: https://geti2p.net/en/, accessed on 03.08.2020.

[11] *Ibidem.*

[12] Masayuki Hatta, "How To Set Up Untraceable Websites (Eepsites) On I2P", *Medium*, 29.10.2018, URL: https://medium.com/@mhatta/how-to-set-up-untraceable-websites-eepsites-on-i2p1fe26069-271d, accessed on 24.08.2020.

in Figure no. 4. There are different icons for the services and configurations on the dashboard but the detailed presentation of the whole system is out of the scope of this study.
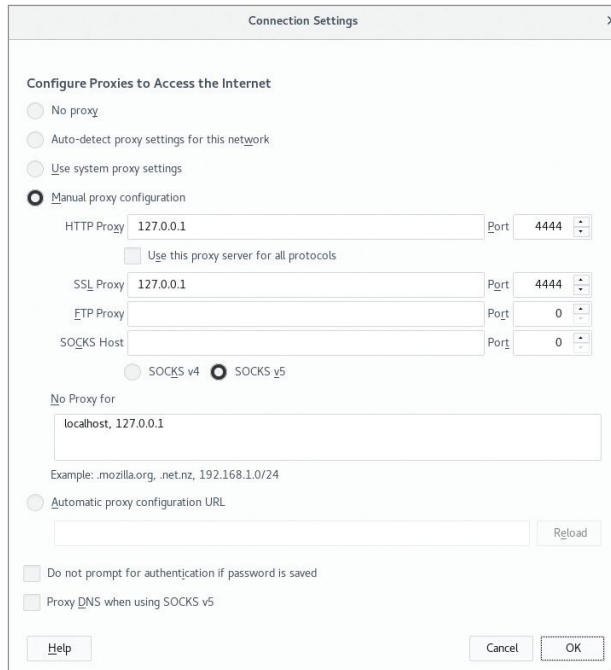
Figure no. 3: Manual proxy configuration of the Firefox browser[13]
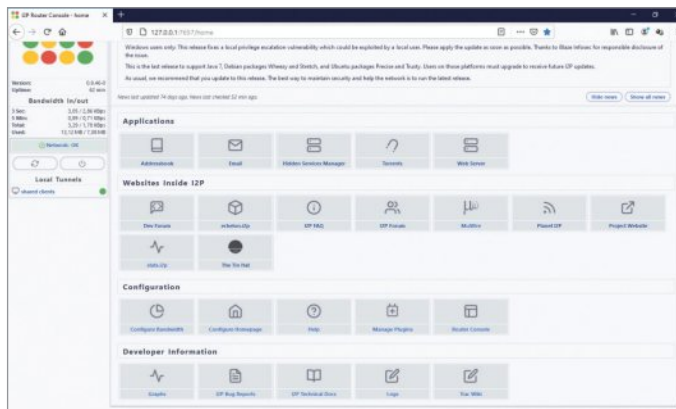
Figure no. 4: The I2P dashboard[14]

[13] Source: author's screenshot.
[14] Source: author's screenshot.

How does I2P work?

There is no central point in the network on which pressure can be exerted to compromise the integrity, security or anonymity of the system. The network supports dynamic reconfiguration in response to various attacks, and has been designed to make use of additional resources as they become available. Unlike many other anonymizing networks, I2P does not try to provide anonymity by hiding the originator of some communications and is not the recipient, or the other way around. I2P is designed to allow peers using I2P to communicate with each other anonymously − both the sender and the recipient are unidentifiable to each other as well as to third parties.[15]

I2P provides a wide range of typical Internet activities such as anonymous web browsing, chat, web hosting, file sharing, email, blogging.

The main parts of the I2P network are:
- endpoints;
- participants;
- gateways;
- tunnels;
- database.
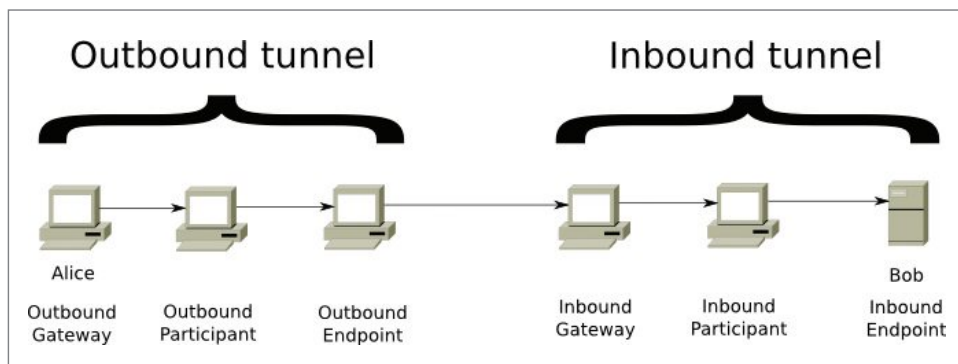
Figure no. 5: There are two tunnels[16]

The inbound tunnel is a path to receive messages while the outbound tunnel is a path to send messages. Every router has many inbound and outbound tunnels at the same time but the router does not know the content of the traffic if it is not the addressee.

Alice wants to send a message to Bob on the I2P network. The main steps of the communication are outlined below.

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[15] ***, "A Gentle Introduction to How I2P Works", URL: http://i2p-projekt.i2p/en/docs/how/intro, accessed on 03.08.2020.

[16] Source: https://geti2p.net/en/docs/how/tech-intro, accessed on 08.08.2020.

1. Alice's computer joints the network and downloads a part of the network database from a designated router. In the network database there are router info and Lease Sets. The former is about the routers in the networks and latter is the way they are accessible.

2. Alice creates her own inbound and outbound tunnels, which consist of at least two hops (routers) and uploads her inbound channel address (Lease Set) to the network database.

3. Bob does the same.

4. Alice requests Bob's inbound tunnel address from the database then sends him the message through her outbound tunnel.

5. There are two possible ways to answer Alice's request. In the first case, Alice sent her inbound tunnel address to Tom in the message or Tom gets it from the database (it depends on technical reasons), but in both cases Tom answers to Alice's inbound tunnel through his outbound tunnel.

Of course it is a very simplified outline of communication but it shows the basics of I2P. It is easy to see that unlike TOR, communication between the peers goes in different routes back and forth, therefore four channels are required for a single round-trip message and reply.
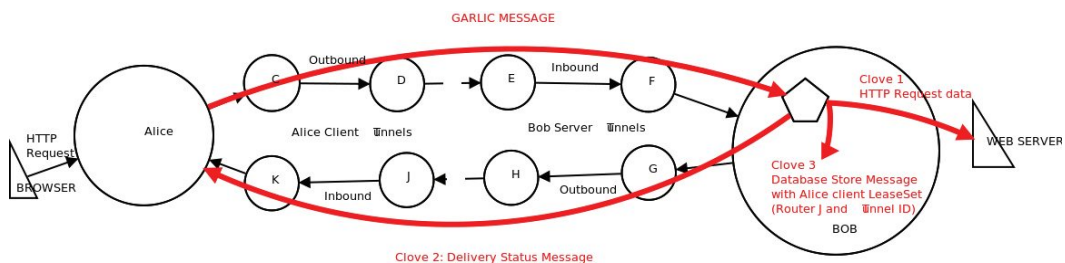
Figure no. 6: Communication on the I2P network[17]

One of the most important differences between TOR and I2P is the type of message they use. As it has already been mentioned, TOR uses the so called onion type messaging while I2P uses the garlic type messaging. The latter is similar to onion messages but in the garlic message the sender bundles more than one message in one packet. Of course, each is encrypted and a package is multi-layered like a TOR message. The package is similar to garlic gloves. All messages are bundled with their delivery instructions and are exposed at the endpoint. Using the garlic messaging increases data transfer and makes traffic analyses more difficult for an attacker.[18]

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[17] Source: https://geti2p.net/en/docs/how/garlic-routing, accessed on 08.08.2020.
[18] ***, "I2P: A Scalable Framework For Anonymous Communication", *Geti2p.net*, 2020, URL:

Anonymous webserver

The anonymous webserver (its popular name is eepsite) is the backbone of the I2P realm. The visited websites in the I2P network are actually anonymous webservers. There are detailed "How to" instructions in the user manual. Follow the instructions only a few steps to public one's own webserver. The address of the eepsite is "something.i2p". After completing the basic steps, the user can create their own website. The eepsite is similar to the Tor onion site in that regard that both are accessible while the user is on the network. The two networks are not compatible with each other. There is one more thing that makes the use of the I2P network a bit cumbersome. Sometimes after trying to navigate to a website, the user gets a message saying the address is not in the address book. In this case the user is supposed to download the address of the destination site from one of the public address books. The address book is a vital part of the I2P installation. It regularly updates the users' host.txt file from subscripted sources. The address book related detailed help is also available in the documentation.[19]

Figure no. 7: Website not found in the address book[20]

File sharing (I2Psnark torrent service)

The other very useful function on the I2P network is file sharing. I2P has an anonymous BitTorrent client called I2PSnark. This application only works with torrents created within the network, so, for example, PirateBay will not work. It has own trackers and it is just as easy to browse, download and upload the users' own content as it is with conventional BitTorrent trackers. For downloading a file, navigate to one of the trackers, i.e. http://tracker2.postman.i2p, and then click right on the link of the chosen file and copy the torrent link into the address bar of the I2Snark. Click on the play button and the file is downloading.[21]

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https://geti2p.net/en/docs/how/tech-intro, accessed on 06.08.2020.
[19] Masayuki Hatta, "How To Set Up Untraceable Websites (Eepsites) On I2P", *op.cit.*
[20] Source: author's screenshot.
[21] Martin Brinkmann, "Anonymous Bittorrent With I2psnark", *Ghacks Tech News*, 2007, URL:

The email service

I2P also provides the user with a built-in anonymity email service. This service, besides the anonymity, is capable of working together with open internet mail providers. The service is maintained by a private person in their free time. That is why there are some courtesy rules that should be taken into consideration, for example, delete the account if it is not used anymore. Unfortunately, for this reason it can happen that the service is unavailable for a certain period of time.

The other dark email system is Bote on I2P. This is a messaging platform, which is similar to email, however, it has some special features. These are security, anonymity and resilience.

Security: unlike email services Bote does not have email addresses. Instead, the address is a long string with random characters in it. This cryptographic key is actually the receiver's public key. Thus, the email is automatically encrypted with this key and only the receiver can decrypt with their private key and that is why no clear-text are ever sent or stored. Besides, unlike standard email, it has no traditional email header which gives away information about the sender.

Anonymity: Bote is protected in a number of ways. The first is that it operates over the I2P network. The second is that the user can select the number of nodes through which the messages will be bounced around before going to the Distributed Hash Table (DHT) to be stored for 100 days. The system includes some random amount of time delays between each node as the message is bouncing around. This makes it possible to send a message without any correlation between the time when it was sent and received. Moreover, there is a possibility to send a message to the recipient without any return address, so the addressee cannot answer in this case. The user can create as many identities as they want.

Resilience: It is another special feature of Bote. The system is not centralized; the message is stored in a DHT which is spread across the i2pBote users so there is no clear target for an attack.[22]

The main features of the I2P application:
Pros:
- cross-platform availability (Linux, MS Windows, Android and so on);
- it has its own services;
- faster than TOR;
- open source project maintained by volunteers;
- no restriction on websites features, more spectacular webpages.

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https://www.ghacks.net/2007/06/06/anonymous-bittorrent-with-i2psnark/, accessed on 04.08.2020.
[22] ***, "I2P-Bote email service", *I2P-Bote*, 2020, URL: https://i2pbote.xyz/, accessed on August 8, 2020; ***, "I2P-Bote Introduction And Tutorial | Darknet Email", *The Tin Hat*, 2020, URL: https://www.thetinhat.com/tutorials/messaging/i2pbote.html, accessed on 08.08.2020.

Cons:
- complicated settings, less user-friendly;
- navigation to eepsites is complicated;
- limited access to clear net.

5. The Freenet

The Freenet is software which allows the user to share files anonymously, browse and publish the so called "freesites". These sites are accessible only through Freenet. This application also lets the user chat on forums and email without the fear of censorship. Freenet has a multilevel security mode. The decentralization makes it less vulnerable to attacks and in "Dark Net" mode, where the users only connect to their friends, it is very difficult to detect. Communication between Freenet nodes is encrypted and is routed through other nodes to make it extremely difficult to determine who is requesting what. By using Freenet, the users contribute to the network by giving bandwidth and a portion of their hard drive (data store) for storing files. In the user's storage the files are kept or deleted depending on how popular they are in order to make room for more popular or newer content. The files are stored in chunks and they are even encrypted so the user cannot discover what is in the datastore, and, generally speaking, they are not accountable for it. What is more, the software has a unique feature as it was mentioned above, which is the "Dark Net" mode. In this function the users only connect to people who they trust and in such way they greatly reduce their vulnerability and yet, they still connect to the global network through their friends' friends' friends' and so on. By using the "Dark Net" mode, Freenet can be even used in countries where it is illegal and prohibited.[23]

The Freenet software is also written in Java language so Java Runtime Environment version 7.0 or higher should be installed on the computer. There are different installers for different platforms such as MS Windows, MAC OSX or GNU/Linux & POSIX. Freenet is free and open source software available under GPLv2+. The source code is on the GitHub. After downloading the platform dependent setup file from the https://freenetproject.org/pages/download.html page and double clicking on the installer file the wizard helps in the installation process. During this process the user is supposed to give, for example, the size of the data store, the maximum bandwidth and last but not least they have to choose one of the security options. The last one is a very important step. Taking into account the user's threat-model there are four options.[24]

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[23] M. Godwin, "Freenet", *Freenetproject.org*, 2020, URL: https://freenetproject.org/, accessed on 02.08.2020.
[24] *Ibidem*; Ian Clarke, Oskar Sandberg, Brandim Wiley, and Theodore Hong, *Snap.stanford.edu*, URL: http://snap.stanford.edu/class/cs224w-readings/clarke00freenet.pdf, accessed on 16.08.2020.

● Low: maximum performance, the identity is discoverable.

● Normal: modest privacy at some performance cost. Ideal for relatively free countries.

Dark Web mode (connected to at least 3 friends, but 10+ for good performance)

● High: It is difficult to monitor the users' communications for ISPs and governments.

● Maximum: Life threatening situations and very sensitive content although this option does not guarantee full security and anonymity.

The Dark Web mode is a so called "small world network". By connecting to the nodes of people you already know and the people you know in turn connect to people they know, all nodes should be able to be reached in a Freenet network.

An interesting feature of the application is that if the user has no friends and connects to strangers and the user's data store is empty, it takes hours or days for the system to get up to speed. During this period some requests time out before retrieving anything. The user can browse on Freenet during the setup process, but the performance is very poor, not to mention that if the system is turned off, the peer to peer setup process starts from the beginning. The user should have at least three or more nodes connected, but the ideal number is five to seven. Since some of the nodes may be unreachable at times it needs more nodes to be connected to get the expected number.

Among the dozens of options, there are four more to protect the uploaded and downloaded files and the file cache depending on whether the disk is fully encrypted or not. Without going into details it is easy to see that system installation is a complicated process.

All in all, setting up a secure and anonymous Freenet application takes a well prepared user and a lot of time. However, even an IT expert, who has no trusted friends, cannot enjoy the full advantages of the Freenet system.

Figure no. 8: Freenet Proxy homepage[25]

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[25] Source: author's screenshot.

How does Freenet work?

The Freenet system is an adaptive peer-to-peer network of nodes that query one another to store and retrieve data files, which are named by location independent keys. The system can be regarded as a cooperative distributed file system incorporating location independence and transparent lazy replication. The system enables ordinary users to share unused CPU cycles on their machines. Freenet enables users to share unused disk space.[26]

The basic model requests keys to be passed along from node to node through a chain of proxy requests in which each node makes a local decision about where to send the request next, in the style of IP (Internet Protocol) routing. Depending on the key requested, routes will vary. The nodes only have knowledge of their immediate upstream and downstream neighbours in the proxy chain, to maintain privacy. No node is privileged over any other node, so no hierarchy or central point of failure exists. Joining the network is simply a matter of first discovering the address of one or more existing nodes through out-of-band means, then starting to send messages.

Figure no. 9: Typical request sequence[27]

Freenet keys

Each file on Freenet has a key associated with it. There are various types of keys that are used for everything on the network. A key looks like KSK@sample.txt. To access a particular file you need to know the key to the data, and enter it as follows: http://localhost:8888/[Freenet Key] (or click on a link containing the key).

[26] Ian Clarke, Scott Miller, Theodore Hong, Oskar Sandberg and Brandom Wiley, "Protecting Free Expression Online With Freenet", *IEEE Internet Computing*, January – February 2002, URL: https://freenetproject.org/papers/freenet-ieee.pdf, accessed on 08.08.2020.

[27] Source: Theodore W. Hong, Brandon Wiley, Scott G. Miller, Oskar Sandberg, Ian Clarke, "Protecting Free Expression Online with Freenet", *IEEE Internet Computing*, p. 44, accessed on 08.08.2020.

There are four types of keys
- CHK − Content Hash Keys.
- SSK − Signed Subspace Keys.
- USK − Updateable Subspace Keys.
- KSK − Keyword Signed Keys.

CHKs are the most fundamental. All files over 1kB are ultimately divided into one or more 32kB CHKs. CHKs' filenames are determined only by their contents. SSKs are the other basic type. These combine a public key with a human-readable filename and therefore allow for freesites. KSKs are a variant of SSKs, where everything is determined by a simple human readable filename (e.g. =KSK@ sample.txt). These are spammable, but convenient in some cases. USKs are a form of updatable keys especially useful for freesites and Address Resolution Keys.

An Address Resolution Key (ARK) is an Updatable Subspace Key (USK) inserted by the node whenever its IP address changes. It contains the reference for the node − its cryptographic details, and in particular its IP address(es).[28]

Those who are interested in keys please refer to the detailed documentation by following this link https://freenetproject.org/pages/documentation.html[29].

Freenet Social

The default settings for Freenet installation are not optimal for this usage, so in order to take advantage of the system there are some plugins to be installed. These provide email, blog, chat, forum functions in the network.

Web of Trust plugin

The first and most important plugin is WebofTrust. The plugin and some others can be downloaded from FProxy (http://localhost:8888) "configuration-> plugins" page. This plugin is created with the aim of excluding spammers from the system. Most of the plugins can only be used with WebofTrust identity, which guarantees that the user is not a spammer. In the WebofTrust identity each user has a trust index that is maintained by other users. If this index is low the user cannot use the service (i.e. forums, chats and others). Those who have this user in their trust network will no longer be able to download messages from that identity. It is very important in a censor free system. Of course, not everybody will agree what does or does not constitute spam. That is why every identity has its own trust list to mark other identities as they see fit.[30]

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[28] ***, "Freenet", *Freenetproject.org*, 2020, URL: https://freenetproject.org/, accessed on accessed on 02.08.2020.

[29] Ian Clarke, Scott Miller, et al, "Protecting Free Expression Online With Freenet", *op.cit.*

[30] ***, "Freenet Social Networking Guide - Step 2", *Freesocial.draketo.de.* URL: http://freesocial.draketo.de/wot_en.html, accessed on accessed on 08.08.2020.

Freemail plugin

The installed WebofTrust and a created identity are the prerequisites of the freemail plugin installation. After downloading the plugin an account should be created, where the account name is the identity created in the WebofTrust plugin. An email address looks like this: brucv_flood@ bscjxorbs4raxr7ysm7qjawqgvdjtp4ossiwtww55zfqsqixh37a.freemail". The freemail system is not compatible with traditional clearnet email providers, so there is no possibility to send or receive email messages from outside Freenet.[31]

Microblogging

The SONE plugin is very popular among Freenet users, because the developer keeps this forum clean of paedophiles and child pornography providers. Everything else is open for discussion here. Users can share their thoughts and can follow other users or can be followed by others. The installation method is similar to the Freemail plugin installation, and without the WebofTrust identity, the SONE will not work.[32]

Forums

Unlike the above mentioned, FMS (Free Message Service) is not a plugin, it is an application that can be downloaded by following this link: https://d6.gnutella2. info/freenet//USK@0npnMrqZNKRCRoGojZV93UNHCMN6UU3rRSAmP6j NLE,~BGedFtdCC1cSH4O3BWdeIYa8Sw5DfyrSVTKdO5ecAQACAAE/ fms/150/download.htm

The setup process is more complicated because the FMS identity needs to be linked to the WebofTrust identity. However, they are not fully compatible with each other. After completing the installation process the user still has to announce their identity on the network like they did in the case of WebofTrust and then they can post anything and/or subscribe to any news channel. The content on the FMS portal is not filtered, so it is like a real Dark Net web space.[33]

Chat

The official website of FLIP contains a Freenet plugin that allows users to send instant (nearly instant) messages to one another. After the installation of the plugin, the user cannot see any changes, because it has no visual interface. Before joining the chat, an IRC client should be installed (e.g. KVirc). Upon the first use of KVirc,

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[31] ***, "Freenet Social Networking Guide - Step 3", *Freesocial.draketo.de* URL: http://freesocial. draketo.de/freemail_en.html, accessed on accessed on 08.08.2020.

[32] ***, "Freenet Social Networking Guide −Step 4", *Freesocial.draketo.de*, URL: http://freesocial. draketo.de/sone_en.html, accessed on accessed on 08.08.2020.

[33] ***, "Freenet Social Networking Guide −Step 5", *Freesocial.draketo.de*, URL: http://freesocial. draketo.de/fms_en.html, accessed on accessed on 08.08.2020.

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in the options menu, the server settings should be set on local host and the network to FLIP, while the port should be set on 6667. After connecting to the server, the user can choose different channels to join the network. The system has a thirty-second-latency and that is why it is called a "nearly" instant messaging service.[34]

Freesites

Freesites are actually simple HTML pages with some restrictions. The pages should be small in their size without the possibility of video or music streaming. A further restriction is that the HTML pages cannot contain any Java Script, CSS styles and so on. Also, the built-in content filter filtrates them out before they get into the browser for privacy reasons. If the user wishes, they can create a HTML page using any HTML authoring tool. Nevertheless, there are some guidelines and conventions that should be followed by the user and this is where the Jsite application comes in sight. The Jsite wizard with its step by step instructions helps the user upload a file to meet the requirements of the Freenet network. The last step for the user is to advertise the site because there is no search engine for Freenet, so users find sites in indexed link collections and in forums such as SONE, FMS or IRC channels.[35]

The main features of the Freenet application:
Pros:
- multiplatform application;
- decentralized, resilient;
- not vulnerable to manipulation or shutdown;
- censorship-resistant communication;
- protects the publisher and the reader;
- friend to friend mode.

Cons:
- complicated system settings;
  - no search engine;
  - no streaming possibility;
  - high resource consumption;
  - does not hide users' identity on Clearnet.

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[34] ***, "Freenet Social Networking Guide –Step 6", *Freesocial.draketo.de*, URL: http://freesocial. draketo.de/flip_en.html, accessed on accessed on 08.08.2020.

[35] ***, "Freenet Project Documentation", *Freenetproject.org*. URL: https://freenetproject.org/pages/documentation.html#jsite, accessed on accessed on 03.08.2020.

6. Nation-State Actors on the Dark Web

It is widely known from the news and criminal reports that the Dark Web is paradise for drug dealers and scammers, arm and human traffickers, not to mention terrorists, but it is a shelter for the politically motivated and those who try to avoid state censorship. There are states that recognize the advantages of the Dark Web where they can carry out their activity under the cloak of anonymity. The Dark Web is the ideal environment for conducting intelligence collection, espionage, procuring exploits, for exploit development, exploit testing, and geopolitical influence, not to mention critical infrastructure disruption and financial gain.[36]

The primary nation state actors are the United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, Israel, and North Korea.[37] They lead in the cyber-focused financial resources and manpower, although there are less well-known nation state actors that have been rising lately.

There are special requirements for successful cyber warfare; first of all skilled personnel, software solutions, financial resources and test environment for the development process and, last but not least, a great amount of time. It takes years even for a well-trained computer scientist to master hacker skills.

Since the summer of 2016 the security landscape has totally changed, because the "Shadow Brokers" hacking group released a set of toolkits used to collect intelligence on adversaries by the US National Security Agency (NSA). The tools included "UNITEDRAKE" a "fully extensible remote collection system" that was mentioned by Edward Snowden, the infamous whistle-blower. The software toolkit is modular, extensible, it has the ability to access of microphones, web cameras, IP cameras, external drives, keyboard inputs, and it also has the capability to disguise the origin of attack.[38]

The next important event took place almost a year later when WikiLeaks released the documentation of the CIA's Vault 7 and Vault 8 top secret projects. The most notable release was HIVE as a part of Vault 8, a multiplatform malware suite with the associated control software. Apart from the above mentioned software solutions, their documentation and even their source codes are available on the Dark Web.[39]

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[36] ***, "Nation State Actors on the Darknet", *DarkOwl | Dark Web Search Engine*, URL: https://www.darkowl.com/blog-content/nation-state-actors-on-the-darknet, accessed on 26.10.2020.

[37] Shannon Vavra, "The World's Top Cyber Powers", 2020, *Axios*, URL: https://www.axios.com/the-worlds-top-cyber-powers-1513304669-4fa53675-b7e6-4276-a2bf-4a84b4986fe9.html, accessed on 25.10.2020.

[38] ***, "Shadow Brokers Leaks Another Windows Hacking Tool from NSA", *Haxf4rall Hacker Repository*, 2017, URL: https://haxf4rall.com/2017/09/08/shadow-brokers-leaks-another-windows-hacking-tool-from-nsa/, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[39] ***, "Vault7 – Home", *Wikileaks.org*, 2017, URL: https://wikileaks.org/ciav7p1/ accessed on

These "leaks" made it possible for smaller nation state actors with less resource capacity to build up their own cyber capability. They saved a big amount of money and time and they could shorten the developing process by reverse engineering and studying the technics and tactics.

Detection of nation state actors' presence on the Dark Web

It is obvious that nation state actors are not apparent on the Dark Web. They launch campaigns against their enemies, or collect confidential or critical information and when they achieve their goals they will not upload it to either the open net or the Dark Web unless it is in their interest. Nevertheless, *Dark Owl* analysts have successfully identified some nation state actors' fingerprints according to their indications and motivations on the Dark Web.[40]

a. *Nation state actors use the Dark Web to purchase or steal cyber exploits*

Nation state actors often purchase exploits to reverse engineering for developing software applications to protect their own critical or confidential infrastructures or to carry out actions against their enemy by the use of the modified exploits. Their most characteristic feature is outstanding budget. They buy exploits in bulk for significant amounts of money.[41]

b. *Nation state actors obtain credentials on hostile governments or other geo-political or military interest*

The Dark Web is filled with US and other *.gov email addresses that could be exploited or brute force attacked or targeted for spear-phishing. Obtaining and comparing the different kinds of credentials could be a significant information resource, and a lot of information can be harvested from these sources.[42]

c. *Elaborate spear-phishing campaigns*

Not only do criminals bring into force this kind of attack, targeting corporate or governmental networks but nation state actors use it as well for achieving their political and military goals. A team of Iranian hackers stole more than 2000 credentials – including U.S. government officials – by operating a fake news website, in 2014. It was the infamous "NEWSCASTER" campaign which went on undetected for 3 years.[43]

October 21, 2020; ***, "Vault8 – Home", *Wikileaks.org*, 2017, URL: https://wikileaks.org/vault8/, accessed on 21.10.2020.
[40] ***, "Nation State Actors on the Darknet", *DarkOwl*, *op.cit.*
[41] *Ibidem.*
[42] *Ibidem.*
[43] Michael Pizzi, "Iran Hackers Set Up Fake News Site, Personas To Steal U.S. Secrets", *America. aljazeera.com*, 2014, URL: http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/29/iran-newscaster-hackers.

d. *Critical infrastructure disruption*

Nation-states fuelled cyber campaigns have become more widely spread in the last few years. The targets are sensitive government, corporate networks or data storages, and critical infrastructure systems, such as power grids, telecommunication networks and so on. During the conflicts over the Crimea allegedly Russian state, supported hackers shut down one part of the Ukrainian power grid[44]. The US Department of Homeland Security also reported numerous cyber based attacks against US critical infrastructures.

e. *Nation state actors use the Dark Web to gain political influence*

A Russian hacker who called himself "Guccifer 2.0" successfully breached the Democratic National Committee during the 2016 campaign and released the stolen information to influence the US elections. This hacker later was identified as a GRU (Russian Military Intelligence Service) officer.[45]

f. *Dark Web propaganda*

The propaganda is one of the prerequisite of the successful information operations. Malicious information about political or military enemies released on time can be the key to success. Many of the Dark Web services contain malicious information on nations leaked by governments on hidden forums.[46] According to The New York Times, at least 70 countries hired paid or volunteered supporters who support their government interest according to the instructions.[47]

g. *Intelligence and espionage by the nation state actors on the Dark Web*

It is a well-known fact that originally TOR was created by U.S. Naval Research Lab (NRL) for clandestine communication. Later the NSA used it for covert intelligence collection from foreign adversaries. Strictly controlled countries, such as China, use it for collecting information on their own opposition citizens who

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html, accessed on 14.10.2020.

[44] ***, "Analysis of the Cyber Attack on the Ukrainian Power Grid", *Ics.sans.org*, 2016, URL: https://ics.sans.org/media/E-ISAC_SANS_Ukraine_DUC_5.pdf, accessed on 26.10.2020.

[45] Joe Uchill, "Go deeper: The Russian intelligence agents behind Guccifer 2.0", *Axios*, 2018, URL: https://www.axios.com/the-russian-intelligence-agents-behind-guccifer-20-271044ab-8768-4b79-ae87-bb4e36f5c9 92.html, accessed on 18.10.2020; Kevin Poulsen, Spencer Ackerman, "Exclusive: 'Lone DNC Hacker' Guccifer 2.0 Slipped Up And Revealed He Was A Russian Intelligence Officer", *The Daily Beast*, 2018, URL: https://www.thedailybeast.com/exclusive-lone-dnc-hacker-guccifer-20-slipped-up-and-revealed-he-was-a-russian-intelligence-officer, accessed on 25.10.2020.

[46] ***, "Nation State Actors on the Darknet", *DarkOwl*, *op.cit.*

[47] Davey Alba, Adam Satariano, "At Least 70 Countries Have Had Disinformation Campaigns, Study Finds", *The New York Times*, 2019, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/26/technology/government-disinformation-cyber-troops.html, accessed on 26.10.2020.

try to avoid censorship.[48]

Basically there are three main areas of intelligent collection by nation state actors on the Dark Web:

- Information collection on terrorism, organized crime, child pornography, drug and arm or human trafficking and so on.
- OSINT information collection in terms of countries of interest from forums, chat rooms, social media services.
- Information collection on homeland enemies, opponent parties, or political dissents.

h. *Exploit acquisition and development*

Nation state actors and their supported nation state proxy actors obtain exploits from the Dark Web. The "black hat" forums and sites provide source codes and complete software packages either for money or for free and detailed manuals for the use of these software solutions. The hackers can share their experiences with others or one can hire hackers for special purposes.[49]

i. *Profitability*

Some countries utilize the Dark Web to circumvent US or UN sanctions. Last year, the American Virgil Griffith was arrested because he helped North Korea circumvent US posed sanctions and money laundering.[50]

Nation-state proxies and cyber terrorism

Depending on the security landscape, nation state actors often turn to proxies to remain incognito. It is widely known from different open source reports that the US, China, and Russia have private cyber contractors who act on behalf of their governments. Edward Snowden and Realty Winner were both employees of a private contractor of the NSA. Of course, the exact number of intelligence and cyber security specialist who work for their governments or their contractors is inestimable, but we can be sure that countries will continue to increase the number of contractors.

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[48] ***, "Nation State Actors on the Darknet", *DarkOwl*, *op.cit.*

[49] *Ibidem.*

[50] Bob van Voris, "Crypto Expert Charged with Helping North Korea Evade US Sanctions", *Aljazeera*, 2019, URL: https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2019/11/30/crypto-expert-charged-with-helping-north-korea-evade-us-sanctions, accessed on 01.11.2020.

Conclusions

This study is written with the aim of demonstrating the use of three Dark Web related software products, and how nation state actors are present on the Dark Web. The author gave an outline of how these applications work and what their main characteristics are. The topic is so complicated that many interesting issues remained untouched, such as their vulnerability against different kind of attacks, de-anonymizing pursuits, forensic artefacts and so on.

The other part of the study is dealing with the presence of nation state actors on the Dark Web, because from the news and criminal reports one can think that this realm is only for criminals and terrorists.

Nation-state actors realized the new horizons of the Dark Web and they enjoy the advantages of this new realm where they can carry out their clandestine activities under the cloak of anonymity. They often turn to private contractors to avoid attributing to "hot" operations. The leak of the top secret projects, applications and solutions of the NSA and CIA made it possible for countries with limited resources to improve their cyber capabilities. It has changed the security landscape dramatically and this process is far from its end.

Nation state actors leave so called fingerprints on the Dark Web by which, in some cases, they can be identified. It is not a secret that different kinds of nation state agencies establish honeypots, and sign up on forums or chat rooms. On the forums of the Dark Web, experienced users tell stories about when they found some nation state actors.

There is a significant duality in the activity of nation state actors. On one hand, they enjoy the advantages of the Dark Web, which is mainly the relative anonymity but on the other hand, they try to disclose the identity of its users. In 2019, hackers behind the name of "ov1RU$" breached the SyTech Russian intelligence contractor and revealed a number of secretive programs targeting TOR anonymity. The contractor is working closely with Russian Air Force and FSB.[51] This case together with the above mentioned activities of nation state actors and the state sponsored proxies is a good example of the duality that is the main feature of cyber war waged on the Dark Web.

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[51] ***, "Nation State Actors on the Darknet", *DarkOwl*, *op.cit.*; Paganini, Pierluigi, "0V1ru$ Hackers Breach FSB Contractor Sytech and Expose Russian Intel Projects", 2019, *Security Affairs*, URL: https://securityaffairs.co/wordpress/88657/intelligence/fsb-contractor-sytech-hacked.html, accessed on October 21, 2020.

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USSR FOREIGN POLICY AND THE WARSAW PACT

Daniel-Mihai DUȚU*

After the World War II, the political international context remained as volatile as it was during the war. Once NATO emerged, the Soviets needed to tip the balance in their favour, so the Warsaw Pact was the natural response, emerging as a reflection of the North Atlantic Alliance. Although the Warsaw Pact was meant to have a short life and to represent a bargain chip regarding the disintegration of NATO, the newly formed alliance lasted for over three decades. It is safe to say that the Warsaw Pact failed to achieve its original goal, namely the remilitarization of the West Germany and the dissolution of NATO, and ultimately failed to save the communist regimes it was supposed to protect, with the organization proving ineffective both as a military and as a political alliance.

__Keywords:__ alliance; treaty; international context; political regime; foreign affairs.

Introduction

Thomas Hobbes offers a definition of war, stating that "war consists not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time, where the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known."[1]

Although the United States walked out from World War II as the strongest country in the world, its future depended on an active policy both within its own sphere of influence and in relation to the Soviet bloc. The Soviet Union was Americans' biggest issue, but they had the opportunity to increase their influence, because in 1945, the USSR's domination over Eastern Europe was incomplete and

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[1] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, Abacus, London, 1995, p. 226.

continued for almost three years after the war. There was no doubt on the Soviets' desire to dominate Eastern Europe, but it was not known when and how the USSR would impose its hegemony in the region.

The so-called "Iron Curtain" was a propaganda tool used to generate support for the Western initiative against the USSR, because at the time Winston Churchill put this notion on the map[2], the Soviets were still struggling to impose their domination. The Soviet army had already occupied much of Eastern European territory, but maintaining permanent control was a complicated matter and required a political strategy to establish Moscow-friendly governments. The Soviet goal was to ensure that the right leaders controlled the communist movement in the European states.[3] However, the desire for domination created a great possibility for the national and anti-socialist spirit to revive. Once the USSR began to conquer Nazi territories, new members joined the communist parties, which, however, did not have enough influence at that time to represent a majority in the national governments, because government institutions were too complex, so it was impossible for these systems to be changed abruptly. Thus, communist parties had consolidated their power slowly, allowing other parties to operate freely and making coalitions with other non-communist parties. In the meantime, communists began to take the lead of ministries, especially economy, judiciary and administration. In other words, the Soviets had to prepare the way for total supremacy, which gave Americans the much-needed time to expand their sphere of influence.[4]

Having in mind this international context of the time, this paper aims to analyse the foreign policy of the USSR during the Cold War and also the Warsaw Pact as an extension of the Soviet foreign policy.

1. NATO and the Warsaw Pact

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on April 4, 1949 in Washington D.C., and created a military alliance founded by the Americans with the stated aim to "safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded

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[2] A.N.: Winston Churchill gave his memorable speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946. In his speech, he stated: "A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organisation intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytising tendencies. […] From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent.", in "Winston Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech", *ThoughtCo.*, URL: https://www.thoughtco.com/winston-churchills-iron-curtain-speech-1779492, accessed on 08.11.2020.

[3] T.E. Vadney, "The United States as a Global Power" in *Idem*, *The World Since 1945*, Penguin Books, London, 1992, pp. 50-52.

[4] *Ibidem*.

on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law."[5] NATO member states aimed to "promote stability and well-being"[6] and direct their efforts towards "collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security"[7]. Thus, the NATO Treaty respects the principles of the UN Charter and urged member states to resolve their disputes peacefully, to help each other and individually (*self-help*) to improve both individual and collective military capabilities, to consult each other on issues concerning the territorial integrity, political independence and security of the member states, and it established the principle that "an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all"[8] (Article 5).

Following the Marshall Plan, which involved US economic support towards European states to restore national economies, NATO's establishment was perceived by the Soviet leaders as an American attempt to consolidate and expand their influence in Europe. Thus, the USSR refused to accept the benefits of the Marshall Plan and forbade other Eastern bloc states, such as Poland and Hungary, to accept American aid. Moreover, in order to counterbalance the American imperialism in Europe, the USSR suggested signing the Warsaw Pact.

The Warsaw Pact, officially named the *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance*, was signed on 14 May 1955 in Warsaw, with the aim "to safeguard (…) security and in the interests of preserving peace in Europe"[9] as a consequence of NATO emergence and the remilitarization and accession of West Germany to NATO. The Western states had invited West Germany to join NATO under the Paris Agreements of 1954; thus, West Germany joins NATO just 4 days after the ratification of the Agreements, which motivated the states in the communist bloc to sign the establishment of the Warsaw Pact.[10] West Germany's remilitarization was perceived as a threat to national security of the European states by the Soviets , thus, in the Soviets' view, the Warsaw Pact represented the Eastern European states' natural attempt to defend themselves against a possible war.[11] However, contrary to Soviet statements, West Germany's entrance into NATO has not led to a change in

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[5] ***, "The North Atlantic Treaty", *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 4, 1949, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/ en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm, accessed on 08.11.2020.
[6] *Ibidem*.
[7] *Ibidem*.
[8] *Ibidem*.
[9] ***, "The Warsaw Security Pact: May 14, 1955", *The Avalon Project*, May 14, 1955, URL: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/ 20th_century/warsaw.asp, accessed on November 08.11.2020.
[10] Malcolm Mackintosh, "The Warsaw Treaty Organization: A History" in David Halloway, Jane M.O. Sharp (edit.), *The Warsaw Pact – Alliance in Transition*, The Macmillan Press, Great Britain, 1984, p. 41.
[11] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955–1991*, Central European University Press, Budapest and New York, 2005, p. 3.

the existing military balance in Europe.[12] The Warsaw Pact promotes the principles of UN Charter, the independence and sovereignty of states, as well as the non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states. The signatory states were the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Romanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the Czechoslovak Republic.

The Pact provided the establishment of a system of collective defence in Europe, the reduction of armaments and the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction, which represented "leitmotifs of Soviet diplomacy at the time"[13]. The pact set up new institutions which, at first, "had little substance beyond the articles of the treaty"[14]; however, the Pact became more than just a mechanism used by the Soviets to impose their domination on Eastern Europe, and it started to have its own policy.[15] The Pact's policy has not always been coherent and unified, as the member states had different interests and their positions were often at odds.[16]

The Warsaw Pact was drafted after the model of the NATO Treaty, providing for the peaceful settlement of international disputes, cooperation and mutual consultation of member states, deterrence of nuclear arms and mutual assistance in the event of an armed attack (provision equivalent to the Article 5 of the NATO Treaty). Thus, the Warsaw Pact established a military alliance of the states from the Eastern Bloc, an alliance that promoted the same principles and values as NATO, but which officially and directly opposed it. At the "Conference of European Countries for the Preservation of Peace and Security in Europe" (July 1955, Geneva) inaugurating the Warsaw Pact, the Soviets told the European powers that they were willing to dismantle the Pact if, in turn, NATO structures were also abandoned.[17] In reality, Moscow had bilateral arrangements with the states in its sphere of influence, therefore the Soviet proposal was, in fact, empty of substance, and in NATO's absence, the USSR would have been free to maximize its power in Europe.

After this conference, Khrushchev announced the reduction of Soviet troops to 640,000 men, by the end of 1955.[18] Khrushchev hoped for a peaceful dismantling of NATO, and yet this did not happen. The adoption of the *Secret Statute of the Unified Command* increased the powers of the Soviet leaders in Eastern Europe

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[12] *Ibidem*, p. 3.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[14] David Halloway, "The Warsaw Pact in Transition" in David HALLOWAY, Jane M.O. SHARP (edit.), *The Warsaw Pact – Alliance in Transition*, The Macmillan Press, Great Britain, 1984, p. 20.
[15] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm BYRNE (edit.), *op.cit.*, p. 19.
[16] David Halloway, *op.cit.*, p. 21.
[17] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op.cit.*, p. 4.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

by establishing Soviet advisers and various Soviet officers in key positions in the Eastern European states, but also brought a first wave of misunderstandings between the states from the Soviet bloc, because the Statute had been adopted without consulting any of the Eastern European leaders.[19]

2. Soviet Foreign Policy and the Warsaw Pact

At the party leaders' meeting in Moscow, in January 1956, the Foreign Minister Molotov spoke of the most recent successes of the Soviet foreign policy: "the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, (...) the establishment of diplomatic relations with West Germany, and the opening to the Third World"[20]. These were, in fact, Khrushchev's achievements that Molotov had tried to prevent, which shows the internal power struggle between Molotov and Khrushchev. While Molotov publicly stated the importance of the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev did not share the vision of an imminent conflict between the two spheres of influence, emphasizing, however, the importance of cooperation in economic and industrial matters, as well as in the production of military weapons.[21]

Khrushchev's foreign policy of disengagement continued throughout 1956, creating "nervousness and uncertainty" among the Soviet army, which perceived the cuts as a "terrible blow to our defence capabilities."[22] In the same year, Joseph Broz-Tito was received at Moscow, where he suggested that the Pact should be disintegrated, a suggestion which Khrushchev did not take into consideration. However, the national-communist leadership adopted by Poland and the Hungarian Revolution of the same year led the Soviets to consider dismantling the Pact due to the abandonment of the alliance by the member states.[23]

Within the first eighteen months, the Warsaw Pact faced "its first major rebellion within its East European buffer zone −the Hungarian rising of October 1956."[24] This uprising was spontaneous and based on economic concerns, but developed to also include political demands.[25] Soviet military intervention in Hungary has been considered to be the result of the Budapest government to leave the Warsaw Pact; in fact, the Soviet troops were ready to invade Hungary before Imre Nagy addressed this

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[19] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

[21] *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6.

[22] Gen. Ivan Tretiak, quoted in Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[23] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[24] David Halloway, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

[25] F. Stephen Larrabee, "Soviet Crisis Management in Eastern Europe" in David Halloway, Jane M.O. Sharp (edit.), *The Warsaw Pact – Alliance in Transition*, The Macmillan Press, Great Britain, 1984, p. 114.

aspect to the population.[26] However, the full-scale invasion was not the Soviet's first choice of action, and they rather waited to see how this uprising evolved; initially, the Soviets adopted a more diplomatic approach, sending officials to discuss with the Hungarian leadership.[27] Only after Imre Nagy proclaimed "the establishment of a multiparty system based on the coalition of parties that had emerged at the end of World War II", the Soviets decided to intervene in a more violent way.[28] After the October 30 declaration was issued, the Romanian government wanted to forbid the free passage of the Soviet troops on the national territory, but having in mind that the Soviet troops were already passing through the country, it was too late.[29]

Khrushchev preferred to use the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) as a means of approximate member states, so that economic and not military rapprochement made bilateral arrangements with Eastern Europe to become multilateral arrangements.[30] However, the Soviet Union did not try to "recognize the needs or traditions of the East European peoples or to treat the countries as anything but Stalin's colonies."[31], and this can be seen in both military and power relations. At that time, Soviet military doctrine provided for the need to defend the "buffer zone", which could have served as a bridgehead to quickly attack NATO forces in the event of a conflict.[32] Also, since its establishment, the Warsaw Pact "acquired all the characteristics of a typical Soviet political and defence organization and High Command"[33], all actions and decisions of the Pact being surrounded by Soviet-specific secrecy.

In November 1957, during the communist leaders' summit held in Moscow, Khrushchev's opinion that *socialism* would prevail over *capitalism* through non-military means was endorsed, this position representing a rejection of the Chinese's view that advocates for the use of violence.[34] The Chinese position also provided for a strategic plan in the event of a direct conflict with NATO, so the Soviets would have to retreat behind the Urals and wait for the help of the Chinese troops. Mao said that in the event of a nuclear conflict, half the world's population would die, but the remaining half would become socialist. This view did not match Khrushchev's standpoint, but he did not reject the idea of arming Eastern European states with nuclear weapons in the event that the United States did the same with

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[26] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[27] F. Stephen Larrabee, *op.cit.*, pp. 116-117.
[28] *Ibidem*, pp. 117-118.
[29] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 8.
[30] *Ibidem*, p. 11.
[31] Malcolm Mackintosh, *op.cit.*, p. 42.
[32] *Ibidem*, pp. 42-43.
[33] *Ibidem*, p. 44.
[34] Vojtech Mastny, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

NATO member states.[35] However, towards the end of 1957, the Soviet leader resumed his campaign to promote the simultaneous dismantling of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.[36] In support of this position, Khrushchev announced the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Romania and proposed a summit at which the leaders of the two spheres of influence to negotiate issues related to "the cessation of nuclear tests, the creation of nuclear-free zones in Europe, the German question."[37]. However, the international context made Khrushchev's proposal to not materialize, because, around the same time, Moscow proposed the division of labour within the COMECON, thus meeting Romania's opposition, this moment representing the foundation of the tense relations between the USSR and Romania in the coming decades.[38]

The Missile Crisis in Cuba was the moment that showed the world that nuclear war is a real possibility, so the Eastern European states began to prepare for the fight in the conditions of a nuclear war. This necessitated a closer rapprochement of the Eastern European armies with the Soviet army, with cooperation between the member states of the Pact becoming much closer in the military sphere as well.[39] Romania was one of the USSR's main allies during the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, encouraging the military intervention of the Soviet troops stationed on its national territory. Officially, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej considered the Soviet military intervention in Hungary to be "necessary and correct", and the role that Romanians played in October and November 1956 led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania two years later (this being, in fact, the goal pursued by the Bucharest regime). Thus, Romania was seen as a valuable ally by the Soviets, thus the troops withdrawal from its national territory was a facile decision, aimed at obtaining a similar response from NATO.[40] However, motivated by the withdrawal of the Soviet troops (35,000 Soviet troops left Romania in July 1958, although Soviet naval and air bases remained on Romanian national territory[41]), the Romanian leaders had begun a policy of independence from the USSR, refusing the status of agricultural provider for the more industrialized states within the COMECON, such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia.[42] If this COMECON policy had continued, Romania would have given up industrialization, which would have had serious

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[35] *Ibidem*.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 12.
[37] *Ibidem*, p. 12.
[38] *Ibidem*.
[39] *Ibidem*, pp. 20-21.
[40] Dennis Deletant, Mihail Ionescu, "Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989", *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*, Washington D.C., April 2004, p. 15.
[41] *Ibidem*, p. 15.
[42] *Ibidem*, p. 16.

economicrepercussions.[43] Thus, the attempt to obtain autonomy by exploiting the anti-Soviet feeling assured Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's popularity and internal support. Also, a series of anti-Soviet measures, such as closing the Russian Institute in Bucharest, prohibiting Russian as a language learned in school and replacing Russian street names with Romanian names made Romanian-Soviet relations even more tense, which led to an apparent destabilization of the Pact's unity.[44]

During the same time, the concern of the two blocs for the use nuclear weapons had increased, being augmented by the Berlin crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Thus, the Soviets ability to deliver nuclear bombs on American territory had increased enormously, while the Americans were promoting the concept of *flexible response*, doctrine which replaced the one of *massive retaliation*, which was meant to reassure the European allies by expanding the range of combat options.[45] The Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Commission (PCC) was given the task to coordinate the allocation of defence resources, thus member states were asked to support the collective defence effort and "participate actively in building a new, more integrated defence system."[46]. Among the member states of the Pact, only Romania was not pleased with the new Soviet demands. Moreover, in 1978, the Pact states had to increase their defence contribution to 5% of GDP, a value that Eastern European states could not reach (Romania allocates just over 2% of GDP after 1965).[47]

In January 1966, Moscow launched a *top-down* reform project to clarify the powers of the supreme commander during peacetime, as well as to set up a committee on technology to "supervise research and development"[48] (thus facilitating equipment modernization and standardization) and a military council for defence planning (which would have led to a more efficient management of the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact member states).[49] These new structures were inspired by NATO, but the way in which they could be implemented created dissension among Pact members. At the same time, an important aspect was the control over the nuclear arsenal, an issue that became relevant after the missile crisis, when the Soviets almost started a nuclear war without consulting their allies.[50] Although the final text of the new statute had been amended by the member states (the Soviets accepted the Polish proposal that the armed forces remain under the command

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[43] *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17.
[44] *Ibidem*, pp. 18-19.
[45] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[46] Condoleezza Rice, "Defense Burden-Sharing", in David Halloway, Jane M.O. Sharp (edit.), *The Warsaw Pact – Alliance in Transition?*, The Macmillan Press, Great Britain, 1984, p. 60.
[47] *Ibidem*, pp. 61-63.
[48] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 28.
[49] *Ibidem*, p. 28.
[50] *Ibidem*, pp. 30-31.

of national governments in peacetime and that the supreme commander issue recommendations, not directives[51]), the new Romanian leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, initially opposed the reform of the Pact.

Nicolae Ceausescu's regime continued the policy of distancing itself from the Moscow regime. A moment that proved to be particularly important for the popularity of the Bucharest regime was the denunciation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact's forces (1968) and the Romania's refusal to participate in this military operation, gestures that brought Ceausescu respect at the international level[52] and which were based on the 1964 Declaration of the Romanian Central Committee on Romania's autonomy to the Warsaw Pact and COMECON; this declaration represented the foundation of the Romanian foreign policy until 1989[53]. The refusal to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia was no surprise, given that Romania had adopted the policy of *non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states*, but denouncing the invasion and mobilizing forces to respond to a possible aggression on the national territory came as a surprise for the Soviets, being considered a gesture of courage on the part of Ceausescu by other states. Moreover, at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact leaders in August 1968, it was decided to invade Romania as a result of the latest anti-Soviet policies, but discussions between Ceausescu and Brezhnev had led to the avoidance of such military action on the Romanian territory.[54] Soviets justified the use of force in Czechoslovakia by the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine, which stipulated that USSR had the right to define the sovereignty of the communist states from its own sphere of influence, and therefore the Soviets had the right to intervene *manu militari* to defend the interests of the whole communist bloc.[55] Thus, after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, Romania considered its allies in Warsaw Pact as "the most likely military threat"[56] and adopted an independent defensive strategy, similar to the one of Yugoslavia.

Thus, according to a 1984 CIA report, Romania refused to participate in joint military exercises with its allies, rejected the Soviet proposal to join the Pact's military forces during peacetime, refused to let its allies know about it or to consult with them in order to reorganize the ground forces in 1981, refused to send their officers to be trained in Soviet military schools[57], developed a domestic defence

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[51] *Ibidem*, p. 31.

[52] Dennis Deletant, "New Evidence on Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1989", *Wilson Center*, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/new-evidence-romania-and-the-warsaw-pact-1955-989?fbclid=IwAR06g6W NKCXc34Oq0m2ym3DtZ_8pVq4Jl9mcSwzibMjzOhOjrBSIQuNwHQU, accessed on 08.11.2020.

[53] Dennis Deletant, Mihail Ionescu, *op.cit.*, p. 28.

[54] *Ibidem*, p. 27.

[55] Malcolm Mackintosh, *op.cit.*, p. 50.

[56] ***, "The Romanian Ground Forces – An Intelligence Assessment", *CIA*, February 1984, p. iii.

[57] *Ibidem*, p. 1.

industry (ranked 3rd in the Pact in terms of arms production[58]) and bought Western and Chinese weapons to reduce its military dependence on Pact allies (tanks, radars and surface-to-air missiles[59]).[60] At the same time, the CIA report states that Romanian troops were "among the worst equipped and trained units for offensive operations in the Pact"[61], being able to support only defensive regional military operations.

Despite internal disputes, the Warsaw Pact became an efficient war machine and intensified its preparations for war in the late 1970s, becoming less dependent on weapons of mass destruction.[62] This phenomenon was the effect of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Western military technology came into contact with Soviet one (*proxy war*). Thus, Brezhnev's policy of military deterrence was replaced by the idea that, by 1979, the two blocs would reach strategic nuclear parity.[63] This direction of foreign policy was maintained until Gorbachev came to power in the USSR. However, the Eastern European arms exports to countries in the Middle East has increased exponentially during 1978-1981 and the total of all Eastern European arms exports in this period was around $101 million.[64] Thus, in March 1986, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, stated that the ultimate goal was "the abolition of weapons of mass destruction."[65] Gorbachev's vision also enjoyed Romania's support, because the Soviet leader promoted ideas that had been supported over the years by the Bucharest regime: "allied input into disarmament negotiations, cuts in defence budgets, radical reductions of conventional forces, abolition of nuclear armaments."[66] Gorbachev was trying to use the structures of the Warsaw Pact to implement radical measures to control nuclear weapons; this new foreign policy direction aimed at improving relations with the Western states.[67]

With the outbreak of revolutions in Eastern European states, both Gorbachev and the Western powers wanted to preserve the structures of the Pact: Gorbachev wanted to keep the remnants of Soviet power together and prevent the unification of the two Germanys and the accession of a unified Germany to NATO, and the Western powers wanted to maintain the structures of the Pact in order to be able to negotiate the reduction of troops and nuclear weapons.[68]

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[58] *Ibidem*, p. 14.
[59] *Ibidem*.
[60] *Ibidem*, p.iii.
[61] *Ibidem*.
[62] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 44.
[63] *Ibidem*, p. 45.
[64] Condoleezza Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
[65] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 58.
[66] *Ibidem*, pp. 58-59.
[67] *Ibidem*, p. 65.
[68] *Ibidem*, pp. 68-69.

Conclusion

The states of the Soviet bloc are not known for their foreign policy differences; with the exception of Romania, the Eastern European states supported the USSR's foreign policy during the Cold War.[69] Thus, the threat of remilitarization of West Germany and, more broadly, the threat of the West, led the members of the Warsaw Pact to cooperate in support of the Soviet foreign policy objectives.[70] However, there were differences of opinion between the Eastern European states, both politically and economically, thus ensuring the stability of the policy and economy of the Soviet bloc was a priority of the USSR's foreign policy.[71]

Soviet foreign policy also sought to prevent the emergence of the national policies of Eastern European states that would prevent a possible USSR military intervention in these states and, thus, give them political independence from the Soviet bloc.[72] Yet, one of the aims of the Warsaw Pact can be seen as to prevent the sovereignty of national governments over their national armed forces.[73]

However, the Warsaw Pact failed to achieve its original goal of remilitarizing West Germany and dissolving NATO, and ultimately "failed to save the regimes it was supposed to protect"[74]; the organization proved to be ineffective as both military and political alliance.[75]

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[69] Edwina Moreton, "Foreign Policy Goals" in David Halloway, Jane M.O. Sharp (edit.), *The Warsaw Pact – Alliance in Transition?*, The Macmillan Press, great Britain, 1984, p. 141.

[70] *Ibidem*, p. 142.

[71] *Ibidem*, p. 143.

[72] David Halloway, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

[73] *Ibidem*, p. 22.

[74] Vojtech Mastny, Malcolm Byrne (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[75] *Ibidem*.

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Rethinking Military Professionalism for the Changing Armed Forces
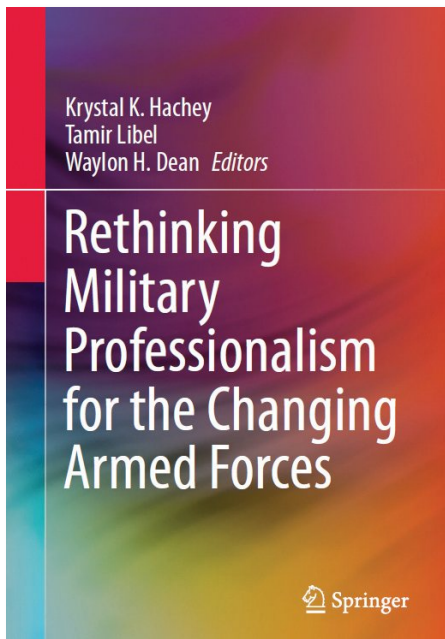
We are pleased to share with our readers a recently published book that will make an interesting reading. This is the latest publication edited by Tamil Libel, together with Krystal Hachey and Waylon Dean − two experts affiliated to the Canadian Department of Defence, titled *Rethinking Military Professionalism for the Changing Armed Forces*. We remind our readers that another work of Tamir Libel's was reviewed in *Strategic Impact* journal No. 1/2017 − *European Military Culture and Security Governance: Soldiers, Scholars and National Defence Universities*, where the author's interesting biography is presented in detail. From the latter one can see that he is a fine connoisseur of military education and, at the same time, an expert in comparative studies on civilian-military relations, air power, Israeli military doctrine and intelligence studies, as well as EU security policies.[1]

The other two editors of the book, Krystal Hachey, PhD and Waylon Dean are advisers of the Director General for Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA) of the Canadian Department of National Defence, and are experts in human resources research.[2]

As the editors state, the book comprises 14 chapters that aim to make "a first contribution to identifying gaps in current military practices" and to provide "alternative mechanisms to conceptualize professionalism that reflects the changing

[1] The official site of *Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals Institute (IBEI)*, URL: http://www.ibei.org/en/tamir-libel_14540, accessed on 25.11.2020.
[2] According to URL: https://www.canada.ca/en/defence-research-development/services/research-centres.html, accessed on 23.11.2020.

demands, culture and demographics of the contemporary military force"[3].

To reach these objectives, Mrs. Hachey starts from the fact that the theory of military professionalism has not been developed enough to take into account gender and cultural diversity issues, which led to the establishment, by NATO, of a Research Group (RTG) having the purpose of examining military professionalism and establishing a model that includes the two features. As a result, some key aspects of the RTG report are presented, including the military ethos, socialization, the relationship of military professionalism throughout the career and the different levels (individual and organizational), concluding with the contribution of the book to displaying some deficiencies in current practice and with some clarifications regarding the recent debates regarding the changes in the needs of professionalism, culture and demography of the modern Armed Forces.

Next, Tamir Libel presents the results of a study conducted by the Institute of International Studies in Barcelona, in 2019, on changing the sociological paradigm of the military profession, from a societal occupation to a security expertise. The military profession promotes the development, support and embodiment of ethos, which guides conduct in operational contexts, in times of national and international crises and security challenges. Therefore, it is imperative that military leaders understand how ethos and doctrine shape professional frames, guiding the conduct of military personnel. In the end, the author proposes a framework for the theoretical concept of the sociology of security expertise, which facilitates the understanding of the process of comparing the military profession with that of military professionalism.

The book also contains many examples of changing military professions and the prospects for military professionalism in NATO and partner Member States, such as Bulgaria, Canada, Ireland, France, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, presenting the basic competencies and the dynamics of capability development, the way of implementing the UN Security Council Resolution no. 1325 of October 31st, 2000, on women, peace and security, as well as human resources in the Armed Forces of these countries. A special chapter is addressed to the role and importance of civilian experts in ministries of defence, who can bring a degree of expertise from outside the military field, but can also present the public interest in military issues and how they are perceived by civilian leaders.[4]

The impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and new developments in science and technology on the military profession is very well outlined and described in

[3] Krystal K. Hachey, Tamir Libel, Waylon H. Dean: *Rethinking Military Professionalism for the Changing Armed Forces*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Cham, Switzeland, 2020.
[4] *The Survey of American Military Experts (SAME 2017)*, issued bi-annual and focalised on military-media-civilian leaders connection.

one of the book's chapters.[5] The developments in modern technology, especially the advent of AI, have led to significant changes in the military profession, affecting military professionalism at various levels. In order to understand and fathom these changes, the editors propose certain directions to continue this research, especially for establishing the "human-machine" relationship in the recruitment, training and education process, as well as the limitations of using AI in the military.

In the end, the editors have highlighted the contributions that the book makes to the re-examination of the concept of military professionalism, emphasizing the research undertaken by different nations and presenting some innovative ideas on the relevant aspects of this concept, which should be reviewed. The conclusions of the research undertaken are useful proposals, regarding the future framework theories and directions in the implementation of military professionalism.

The book, which is intended to be a development of the RTG report on achieving a model of military professionalism based on gender and cultural diversity, has been highly appreciated by both NATO experts at the Bureau of Standardization (STO) and representatives of the Canadian Department of Defence. These experts suggested that the editors continue the research in order to operationalize the theoretical models of military professionalism presented in the paper, from which to collect data and information for the validation of a single model. They have also proposed to the allied political-military leaders to initiate a new RTG that would continue the excellent research work carried out by the book's editors.

After reading this book with interest, we consider that the theoretical and empirical approach of the volume is aligned with the topics of our journal. Therefore, we invite you to discover a well-argued and logically constructed research paper, which presents a concept little approached in the Romanian Army − military professionalism, with an emphasis on creating a model that incorporates gender and cultural diversity.

Colonel (Ret.) Crăişor-Constantin IONIȚĂ [*]

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[5] This chapter is based on the framework-analysis made by de D. M. Snider and G. L. Watkins in 2002, entitled *The future of the army profession*, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Tunisia: The Island of Peace or a Terrorist Centre?

Your Sons Are at Your Service – Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad
by Aaron Y. Zelin
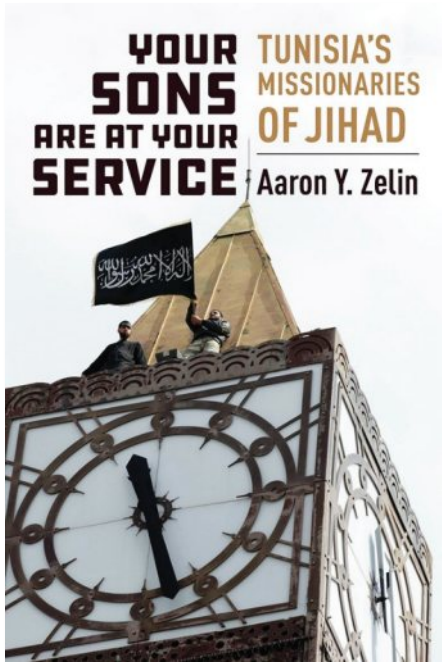
Recently, more and more news has come to light that the Islamic State (IS), which everyone considered defeated, has risen again, and carried out new successful attacks on several continents. Some of the attacks were not conducted by Iraqi or Syrian militants, but by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) affiliated with the terrorist organisation, most of whom came from Tunisia.[1] Despite this, so far only a few researchers have paid attention to Tunisians' role. The reason for this was that Tunisia, which was very popular with Western tourists, seemed for a long time an island of peace run by a secular regime that successfully kept radical Islam at bay. However, those close to the government have settled on the economy at such a level that, for ordinary people, the country has become almost uninhabitable, well-educated young people have not been able to find work and the economy has stagnated. As a result, dissatisfaction was generated from which the suicide of a desperate street vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, sparked a revolution. The Jasmine Revolution of 2011 not only removed local leadership but swept across the Arab world as the "Arab Spring" and brought many, often negative, changes that still have an effect today.[2]

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[1] ***, "Guidelines for Addressing the Threats and Challenges of "Foreign Terrorist Fighters" within a Human Rights Framework", *OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)*, Warsaw, 2018, pp. 12, 29, URL: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/7/393503_2.pdf, accessed on 06.11.2020.

[2] János Besenyő, "Can the „Arab Spring" present a real threat to Europe?", *Strategic Impact*, No. 50, 1/2014, pp. 32-44, URL: https://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf_periodicals/si50.pdf, accessed on 06.11.2020.

In Tunisia, after the fall of the provisional government, the Muslim Ennahda (Renaissance Party) came into power, which, however, was unable to stabilise the country, and became fragmented to the extreme. Various Islamist groups have strengthened their power, and more and more radicalised young people have joined the Islamic State or other terrorist organisations. Although some studies have been carried out on Islamist groups in Tunisia and among them on the organisation of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia (AST),[3] Aaron Y. Zelin's[4] book *Your Sons Are at Your Service – Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad* is so far the only one that provides an elaborated view on this topic, and in great detail.

The eleven-chapter volume is the culmination of a nine-year study in which the author presents the transformation of a formerly stable, seemingly secular state, as well as the rise of radical Islamic organisations.[5] The book is structurally divided into three major sections.

In the first section, which contains the first four chapters, the reader can learn about the historical context since the state has become independent in 1956. The author shows that Tunisian society was never actually secular, neither under the rule of Habib Bourguiba (1957-1987), nor Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali (1987-2011). Moreover, from time to time, Islamist groups tried to gain power with armed force, but failed one after the other. This happened in the early '90s when Ennahda militant groups clashed with government forces on several occasions, and in December 2006 and January 2007 when government forces successfully liquidated the short-lived insurgency of Sulayman Group militants.[6] Some members of Jama'at al-Tabligh and Ennahda were imprisoned, others fled abroad, while the majority went

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[3] A.N.: These include: János Besenyő and Zoltán Prantner, "The emergence and activity of Tunisia's most fearful terrorist group", *Strategic Impact*, No. 1/2015, pp. 137-150, URL: https://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf_periodicals/si54.pdf, accessed on November 05, 2020; ***, Jihadist Violence in Tunisia: The Urgent Need for a National Strategy, *Crisis Group Middle East and North Africa Briefing*, No. 50, 22 June 2016, URL: https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/jihadist-violence-in-tunisia-the-urgent-need-for-a-national-strategy.pdf, accessed on November 05, 2020; Anne Wolf, "Religious Violence in Tunisia Three Years after the Revolution", *Africa Special Issue*, Volume 7, Issue 2, February 2014, pp. 19-22, URL: https://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/CTCSentinel-Vol7Iss2.pdf, accessed on November 05, 2020.

[4] A.N.: Aaron Y. Zelin is the Richard Borow Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) and a visiting research scholar in the Department of Politics at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. He is the founder of *Jihadology.net*, a fundamental source and archive of global jihadi primary materials. Zelin's research focuses on Sunni Arab jihadi groups in North Africa and Syria as well as the trend of foreign fighting, online jihadism, and jihadi governance. He is the author of a number of influential studies.

[5] A.N.: The author also wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Tunisian jihadism in 2017 that he defended at War Studies from King's College London, which was partly the basis of the now-reviewed volume.

[6] Aaron Y. Zelin, *Your Sons Are at Your Service - Tunisia's Missionaries of Jihad*, Columbia University Press, 2020, pp. 108-109.

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into illegality, but, despite this, their influence have still prevailed in various strata of society. Islamists fleeing abroad have become increasingly active in the events of the international jihadist movement, sending fighters to Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Yemen and other battlefields, and have actively participated in the American and European terrorist attacks planned and conducted by Al Qaeda.[7] The book traces the growing influence of Tunisians in various terrorist groups and their impact on Tunisian Islamists.

In the second section, which comprises chapters five through seven, one learns about the rise and the activities of the AST. From this, it can be seen that they did not take part in the 2011 Jasmine Revolution in an organised manner, but re-positioned themselves, taking advantage of the fall from power of Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and the tacit support of the ensuing Islamist-friendly government. This was facilitated by the new Tunisian government relaxing previously restricted freedoms and granting universal amnesty to prisoners, regardless of whether they were political prisoners or common law criminals or had a terrorist background. Thus, Islamists who were released from prisons and returned from exile were completely free to reorganise themselves.[8] Taking advantage of the division of governmental and political forces, the AST has been significantly strengthened and has taken an increasingly more active role in the Tunisian society. Learning from their previous mistakes, unlike other similar radical organisations, they prioritised missionary activity (*dawa*) as well as social, charitable activities for which they were able to obtain important resources and gain significant social influence.[9] Similar successes in this area have been achieved only by Hezbollah in Lebanon, where the terrorist group is a state within a state.[10]

The third section, which covers the last three chapters, presents the period since the ban on AST. As the AST tried to build a parallel state and participated in the liquidation of left-wing politicians against Islamists such as Shukri Bila'id and Muhammad Bakri, the Tunisian government declared the group a terrorist organisation and banned it in August 2013. This, however, did not mean that the radicals retreated, although some of them left the country and joined IS at their terrorist cells operating in Syria, Libya, or Europe.[11] By studying their activities, the reader gets information about the global and transnational context of jihadism, the functioning and everyday life of the "radical Tunisian migrant community".

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[7] Zelin, pp. 47-87.

[8] Zelin, pp. 97-99.

[9] Zelin, pp. 128-128.

[10] More on this: James Love, "Hezbollah: Social Services as a Source of Power, Joint Special Operations University Press", 2010, p. 50, URL: https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/attach/14/14771_ JSOU10-5loveHezbollah_final-1.pdf, accessed on 05.11.2020.

[11] Zelin, pp. 220-232.

Those who stayed in Tunisia either hid or started a fight against the government. Al Qaeda's Katibat 'Uqbah Bin Nafi militants have carried out several brutal terrorist attacks against foreign tourists (Bardo National Museum and Sousse Beach), who provide a significant part of the country's revenue, and the Tunisian government has been unable to take effective action against those.

Indeed, as the author rightly points out, terrorist organisations operate much more easily in newly formed, relatively fragile democratic systems than in democracies that have been stable for decades or in authoritarian, repressive systems. This is clearly visible in the post-AST ban, which Zelin follows until the mid-2019; therefore, readers of the book have up-to-date information on radical groups in Tunisia. This makes it clear that there is no common position among Tunisian political forces on how to take action against radicals. There are those who would persecute them, those who would tolerate them for "their social usefulness", and some who even view them as allies. Moreover, the rise of radicals is reinforced by the fact that in the post-Jasmine revolution period, no government has been able to stabilise a country whose economy has not only not developed but has been in an even worse position than before because of COVID pandemic.[12]

The future is not foreseen very bright either, unless major changes are made, the economy might weaken, which could further strengthen the radicals.[13] In this respect, the last chapter of the book, *The future of the Tunisian Jihadi Movement*, which is also a sort of strategic analysis for the Tunisian government and the international community, is also forward-looking. Zelin addresses issues such as the social re-integration of Tunisian militants fighting in Syria and Iraq and returning from there, the domestic political situation in Tunisia, the risk of young people's radicalisation, or the increasingly worrying situation of overcrowded Tunisian prisons, over which the jihadist movement has almost taken control and where prisoners can be more radicalised than out of prison.

The value of Zelin's book is enhanced by the fact that the author did not write it sitting at his desk, but travelled to Tunisia several times, interviewing members of various social groups and the AST, and even militants who fought for IS in Syria as part of "jihad imports", then successfully returned to Tunisia. The author has also researched and processed more than 18,000 Arabic-language and other lesser-known

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[12] Zouhair ElKadhi, Dalia Elsabbagh, Aymen Frija, Thouraya Lakoud, Manfred Wiebelt, Clemens Breisinger, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Tunisia's Economy, Agri-food System, and Households", *International Food Policy Research Institute*, Regional Program Policy, Note 05, May 2020, URL: http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/133737/filename/133947.pdf, accessed on 05.11.2020.

[13] Stellah Kwasi, Jakkie Cilliers and Lily Welborn, "The rebirth – Tunisia's potential development pathways to 2040", *Institute for Security Studies*, North Africa Report 4, July 2020, URL: https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/nar-4-1.pdf, accessed on 05.11.2020.

primary sources – biographies, investigative and court documents, etc. – that no one has published so far.[14] The highly detailed diagrams and charts in the book has also helped readers take their bearings. Also, the vast amount of scientific literature used is impressive and complements very well the results of the author's fieldwork over the years. The book is therefore worth reading not only by academics (of political and social sciences, historical sciences, Islamic sciences, regional sciences, etc.) or by members of organisations dealing with terrorism *ex officio* (armed forces and law enforcement bodies, NGOs etc.), but also by all those interested in the past, present, and possible future of the Middle East and North Africa and, within it, Tunisia.

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[14] Zelin, pp. 18-19; 135.

CELEBRATION OF 20 YEARS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CDSSS ON NOVEMBER 1ST, 2020, AND STRATEGIES XXI INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON NOVEMBER 5TH, 2020
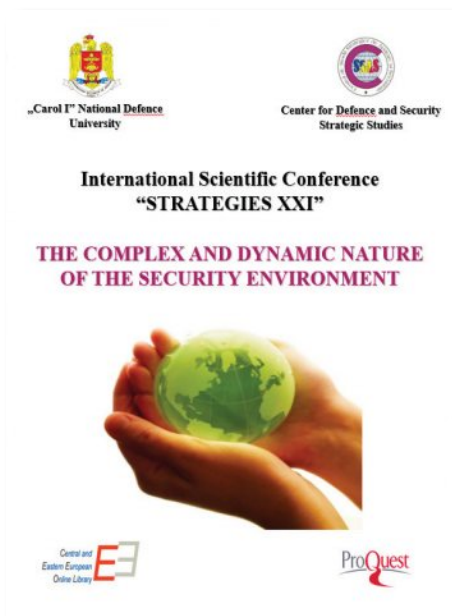
We would like to share with our readers that November 1st marks the CDSSS 20th anniversary, in other words, two decades of research in the security environment and disseminating results to decision makers and academia. On this occasion, we have elaborated and promoted a brochure presenting the Centre, an extract of which can be found at the end of the Conference volume. Also, *Certificates of Excellence* were offered to "Carol I" NDU leadership, former commandants (rectors) and CDSSS directors, researchers who have been a part of the CDSSS since its establishment, as well as to the current research team.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Lieutenant General Daniel Petrescu has awarded a *Certificate of Excellence* to Colonel Florian Cîrciumaru, CDSSS Director, in recognition of the Center's research activity carried out for the last two decades, during the *Romanian Military Thinking* awards Ceremony.

On November 5th 2020, the annual STRATEGIES XXI International Scientific Conference on "*The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*" was organised online for the first time, given the pandemic context. The event was held under the auspices of celebrating 131 years of Romanian military higher education at "Carol I" NDU.

The conference was conducted in excellent technical conditions, on the ILIAS platform, with the support of the Advanced Distributed Learning department within the University.

The event enjoyed consistent participation, representatives of the national and international academic environment, generals and officers, active or retired, researchers, PhD students, MA students from "Carol I" NDU and other universities in the country and abroad. This year, foreign participants from Bulgaria, Georgia, Spain and Hungary honored us with their presence and contribution.

The papers presented in the online session and included in the conference proceedings were divided into six sections: *COVID-19 impact on security; State and non-state actors in power relations; Security transformation; Military history. Strategic concepts and theories; Strategic defence review − national perspectives and Areas of Strategic Interest*.

During the online session, two awards were announced, one for the conference's best paper and one for the best article published in the scientific journal *Strategic Impact* (from the first three editions of 2020). Thus the paper that obtained the highest score after the evaluation was *Cyber Activities in the Gray Zone: An Overview of the Russian and Chinese Approaches*, elaborated by Guillem Colom-Piella, lecturer in political sciences at Pablo Olavide University of Seville, and the best article was the one published by Cristian Istrate in co-authorship with Maria Mădălina Bulancia, entitled *The Role of Mind Maps in Intelligence Analysis*.

The conference papers were published in the Conference proceedings in English language, indexed in ProQuest and CEEOL international databases, and can be downloaded in PDF format, at URL: https://www.strategii21.ro/index.php/ro/conference-proceedings-3.

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- ✓ the quality of the scientific content;
- ✓ originality of the paper;
- ✓ novelty character – it should not have been anteriorly published;
- ✓ a relevant bibliography comprising recent and prestigious specialized works, including books;
- ✓ the text must be written in good English (British or American usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these);
- ✓ adequacy to the editorial standards adopted by the journal.

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ARTICLE STRUCTURE
- ✓ Title (centred, capital, bold characters, font 24);
- ✓ A short presentation of the author, comprising the following elements: given name, last name (the latter shall be written in capital letters, to avoid confusion), main institutional affiliation and position held, military rank, academic title, scientific title (PhD. title or PhD. Candidate – domain and university), city and country of residence, e-mail address;

✓ A relevant abstract, which is not to exceed 150 words (italic characters);
✓ 5-8 relevant key-words (italic characters);
✓ Introduction / preliminary considerations;
✓ 2 - 4 chapters (subchapters if applicable);
✓ Conclusions;
✓ Tables / graphics / figures shall be sent in .jpeg / .png. / .tiff. format as well. In the case of tables, please mention above "**Table no. X:** Title", while in the case of figures there shall be mentioned below (e.g. maps etc.), "**Figure no. X:** Title" and the source, if applicable, shall be mentioned in a footnote.

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Example of book: Joshua S. Goldstein; Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations*, Longman Publishing house, 2010, pp. 356-382.

Example of article: Gheorghe Calopăreanu, "Providing Security through Education and Training in the European Union" in *Strategic Impact* no. 2 /2013, Bucharest, "Carol I" National Defence University.

Electronic sources shall be indicated in full, at the same time mentioning what the source represents (in the case of endnotes, the following mention shall be made: accessed on month, day, year). *Example of article:* John N. Nielsen, "Strategic Shock in North Africa", in *Grand strategy: the View from Oregon*, available at http://geopolicraticus.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/strategic-shock-in-north-africa/, accessed on 10.03.2015.

BIBLIOGRAPHY shall contain all studied works, numbered, in alphabetical order, as seen below.

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Example of article: CALOPĂREANU, Gheorghe, "Providing Security through Education and Training in the European Union" in *Strategic Impact* no. 2 /2013, Bucharest, "Carol I" National Defence University.

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