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EDITOR'S NOTE

The 78th edition of our journal, the first in 2021, comprises nine articles and the ***CDSSS Agenda***.

Thus, under the heading ***NATO and EU: Policies, Strategies, Actions***, General (ret) Teodor Frunzeti, PhD, Professor and Mrs. Violeta Nicolescu demonstrate that the North Atlantic Alliance returns to its roots after 70 years, through an analysis of the similarities of the NATO approach to the security environment – the one that was established to manage the threat of the USSR in relation to Western democracies and the present day NATO.

The rubric ***Geopolitics and Geostrategies: Trends and Perspectives*** includes two articles. The first, belonging to Captain (Navy) Bogdan Țuțuianu, addresses the geostrategic relevance of the Black Sea in the current security context, showing that it is the place of fierce competition in the attempt to expand the spheres of influence, perpetuation and deepening regional tensions and destabilizing actions, which have already generated open conflicts and confrontations. In the second article, Mr. Bogdan Cezar Chioseaua, PhD, leans on the ongoing tensions at the EU's Eastern border, stressed by the fact that Belarus is a vulnerable point and this could be a breach for the Russian Armed Forces, to the heart of Europe.

Under the ***Security and Military Strategy*** rubric, one can find an article written by Mr. Crăișor-Constantin Ioniță, PhD, Researcher, that highlights the latest increments in the field of research-development-innovation, in order to outline the capabilities of the future "mosaic" warfare, this being one of the topics on which our colleague has been focusing since last year.

The second article, co-authored by Mr. Valentin Maxim and Mr. Lucian Valeriu Scipanov, PhD, Associate Professor argues that Russia has changed its modern approach to war, developing a new doctrine that has been tested step by step over the past 40 years, culminating in the annexation of Crimea.

The fourth rubric, ***Concepts of Defence and Security***, is opened by an article elaborated by Mrs. Maria Constantinescu, PhD, Associate Professor who conducts a research on the estimation of military power, using a combination of input-based indicators and result-based indicators, supported by a detailed analysis of other factors that concur to military power, such as strategic approach, combat space, the political systems of each country or the alliances to which it belongs. The second article, written by Mr. Cornel Burete, is complementary to the previous one, as it deals with the issues of power reserve and the general perception of it, emphasizing the methods, tools and techniques by which power paints our existential reality, in a world dominated by skilfully constructed perceptions and representations, through which collective opinions are easily induced, manipulated and directed. The rubric concludes with an article co-authored by Mrs. Irena Chiru, PhD, Professor and Mr. Gabriel Ungureanu, who seek to provide conceptual clarifications on the field of economic intelligence, by exploring and comparing different definitions in the literature, while trying to promote an operational definition for economic intelligence.

In the ***Terrorist Threat*** rubric, one can read an article where Iulian Dinulescu, PhD, aims to highlight the common element of Christianity with the QAnon movement, namely faith, which makes many Christians believe in conspiracy theories.

The current edition also includes the ***CDSSS Agenda***, where we present aspects of interest from the online Workshop, organised on March 19, 2021, with the theme "Adaptation on defence planning documents to security challenges". We would like to bring to your attention that this year's edition of the International Scientific Conference Strategies XXI on "The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment" will be held on December 9th and 10th, 2021.

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 "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-one years and in English for sixteen 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
Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies

NATO – BACK TO ROOTS

General (ret.) Teodor FRUNZETI, PhD*
Violeta NICOLESCU**

The purpose of the hereby article is not to provide a detailed analysis on the existence of the North Atlantic Alliance since its „youth" days until now, but aims to observe the similarities of the approach between NATO – the one that was established to manage the threat posed by the Soviet Union (USSR) in relation to Western democracies, and NATO – the present one. We will be able to conclude, after a review of the main Allied measures during the Cold War, compared to those adopted after the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Crimean Peninsula in 2014, that the North Atlantic Alliance returns to its roots after 70 years. The paper also aims to reveal if, over time, this particular political-military alliance has adapted to the strategic security context. Finally, we shall try to issue an opinion on the future of NATO, in a constantly changing security environment.

Keywords: *NATO; collective defence; Russia; Cold War; deterrence; strategic adaptation.*

1. General Context

The post-2014 timespan, immediately after the illegal annexation by the Russian Federation of the Crimean Peninsula, has shown us how the security environment can change with the same ease with which the coming to power of Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev, in 1990, led to a fundamental change in the paradigm of European security and beyond, ending the Cold War (1947-1991) by

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the wisdom of accepting that, by continuing the arms race, things would inevitably and irreversibly escalate for both sides, without there really being a winner.

If, until 1991, when the Cold War was about to end, the mission of the North Atlantic Alliance and its very existence had been determined by the need to manage the threat posed by the Soviet Union (USSR) to Western democracies, the period that followed 2014 has demonstrated NATO's ability to adapt to an international security environment from which the threat of Russian expansionism had disappeared. Thus, the Alliance "reinvented" itself, by focusing on: concluding partnerships – initially with the states resulting from the dissolution of the USSR and, later, with states around the globe; enlargement efforts by admitting new members through the *open doors* policy; crisis management missions, or participating in the fight against terrorism[1].

After 2014, the measures adopted by the North Atlantic Alliance starting with the *dual-track*[2] policy in relation to the Russian Federation, the commitment to allocate 2% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to defence and security sector; strengthening the Allied deterrence and defence posture; projecting stability measures in an omnidirectional approach (both beyond the eastern flank of the Alliance and in the south), including the fight against terrorism, etc. – all these lead us to think of a new NATO readjustment to the strategic context, as it did 30 years before. A readjustment that resembles, in terms of the central element that determined it (the events of 2014), a return to its primary mission, thus to the origins.

2. NATO During the Cold War

The basic principles of the 1949 Washington Treaty and, implicitly, the position of the Alliance, required during the Cold War to maintain a sufficient level of forces to discourage any attempt at confrontation by the USSR, while exploring all possibilities for dialogue and negotiation, to reduce political tensions and arms levels on the ground, at sea or in the air. We recall that *the signing of the birth certificate of the Alliance, in 1949, was made following the direct threats posed by the USSR against the independence of Norway, Greece, [...] the coup that would impose communism in Czechoslovakia, and of the first blockade of Berlin. […] But subversive or conquest actions against Western positions were not limited to Europe. In the form of support for riots and guerrilla movements, they also reached Southeast Asia: Indochina, Malaysia, Burma, the Philippines and North Korea. The*

[1] A.N.: For instance, NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan, in 2003.

[2] A.N.: Maintaining a strong NATO deterrence and defence, simultaneously with keeping a channel of dialogue with the Russian Federation so as to avoid escalating the situation, but also to solve it.

last one was to invade its southern neighbour, benefiting from Moscow's support[3].

The concept of defence has been affected by the transformations that the elements determining defence itself have undergone over time: *the evolution of threat, vulnerabilities, performance of weapons systems, the balance of power, the credibility and feasibility of doctrines materially and financially, but also politically, and even morally, the implications of the negotiations on arms control and disarmament*[4]. Thus, the imbalance created by the Soviet Union determined two major Allied measures – the first and most important – the American political and military presence in Europe, as a guarantor of the intervention of the United States in crisis situations that could have arisen on the mainland, especially in the central-eastern part. Over time, this presence has undergone changes – reductions or increases. We will see, for example, that in the post-Cold War period, during the two terms of the Obama administration (2009-2017), the number of US troops stationed in Europe was significantly reduced, with two of the four brigades deployed on the continent being withdrawn. However, Washington partially reversed the decision, the USA deploying in Eastern Europe, in 2017, a tank brigade consisting of approximately 4,200 servicemen. And, more recently, the former Trump administration decided in the middle of 2020 to reduce, from 36,000 to 24,000, the American troops deployed in Germany[5].

The second category of measures taken to counterbalance the numerical superiority of the USSR, in numbers and armaments, was to include nuclear weapons among the means that the Alliance could have used in case of conflict. The emergence of a weapon that would have fundamentally changed the management of conflict relations between states would make deterrence a key factor. The balance thus established has allowed Europe to live the longest period of peace in its entire history.

A time when the Alliance's vocation to ensure the security of its members was being called into question was the Euromissile crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Moscow deployed medium-range SS-20 missiles with nuclear warheads, which could have reached all European countries to the west as far as the Atlantic. Eager to avoid another arms race, the Alliance offered a choice between two options – either the USSR gave up the SS-20 program, or NATO would equip itself with Pershing 2 ballistic missiles and cruise missiles capable of striking the USSR. The Kremlin refused to abandon its initiative, and the Alliance went ahead with its

[3] François de Rose, *Al treilea război mondial nu a avut loc. NATO și pacea*, Nemira Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p. 31.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 32.
[5] C. Todd Lopez, "DOD Proposes Removing More Than 11,000 Troops From Germany", 29.07.2020, *Defense News*, URL: https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2292311/dod-proposes-removing-more-than-11000-troops-from-germany/, accessed on 20.11.2020.

own program. Western firmness and the coming to power of Mikhail Gorbachev put an end to this competition, with the USSR finally accepting the "double zero"[6] option, namely the renunciation of SS-20 missiles and, on the Alliance's part, of Euromissiles. These were stipulated in the Agreement on Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF)[7], concluded on December 8, 1987, which prohibited all American and Soviet ballistic and cruise missiles with a ground base and a range of 500 to 5,500 kilometres.

The ensuing period of equilibrium is characterized by arms race control agreements that demonstrated wisdom – by understanding that mutual security is based on a balance of power and a series of control measures effective enough to justify trust in each other's word: the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1963, which banned testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere, outer space and water[8]; the 1967 Outer Space Treaty on the principles underlying states' activities in the exploration and use of outer space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies, prohibiting the launching of nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction into orbit around the Earth, including the Moon or other celestial bodies mass destruction[9]; the Non-Proliferation Treaty[10], signed in June 1968, aimed at preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons; the SALT I agreement[11] and the ABM Treaty[12] on the limitation of missile systems and anti-ballistic protection (both ending the quantitative race in the field of offensive strategic weapons, by

[6] A.N.: Although attributed by the profile literature to the American side, the phrase has its origin (according to a telegram (no. 07693) of the US Delegation to NATO to the State Department) in a formulation of the Dutch Permanent Representative to NATO, Van Voorst tot Voorst, at an Allied meeting on November 6, 1979 on the NATO *double-track* decision, URL: https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb301/index.htm, accessed on November 22, 2020.

[7] ***, *Treaty Between The United States Of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range And Shorter-Range Missiles (INF Treaty)*, US Department of State, URL: https://2009-2017.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm, accessed on 20.11.2020.

[8] ***, *Tratat privind interzicerea experiențelor cu arma nucleară în atmosferă, în spațiul cosmic și sub apă*, URL: http://www.cncan.ro/assets/Legislatie/Tratate-acorduri-conventii/Tratate/tratat03.pdf, accessed on 20.11.2020.

[9] ***, *Outer Space Treaty of 1967*, URL: https://history.nasa.gov/1967treaty.html, accessed on November 20, 2020.

[10] ***, *Tratat cu privire la neproliferarea armelor nucleare*, URL: http://www.cncan.ro/assets/Legislatie/Tratate-acorduri-conventii/Tratate/Tratat-cu-privire-la-neproliferarea-armelor-nucleare.pdf, accessed on November 20, 2020.

[11] ***, *Interim agreement between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on certain measures with respect to the limitation of strategic offensive arms*, URL: https://fas.org/nuke/control/salt1/text/salt1.htm, accessed on November 20, 2020.

[12] ***, Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the limitation of anti-ballistic missile systems (ABM treaty), URL: https://media.nti.org/documents/abm_treaty.pdf, accessed on November 29, 2020.

deciding to freeze the existing levels until more detailed agreements were signed and limiting to one area the location of anti-missile defensive weapons that they could be equipped with); the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty adopted on 19 November 1990 and entered into force two years later; the START I Treaty[13] signed on 31 July 1991, which subsequently replaced the SALT I Treaty; or the 1992 Open Skies Treaty[14], by which the states of Eurasia and North America undertook to open their airspace, allowing their territories to be flown over by armed observation aircraft.

3. NATO in the Post-Cold War Period up to 2014

NATO is a political-military alliance that was initially directed against the threat posed by the USSR in relation to Western democracies. Surviving the end of the Cold War and, therefore, the threat for which it had been practically created (the Soviet bloc being dissolved), the North-Atlantic Alliance had to reinvent itself. And it managed to do that, entering an extensive process of transformation.

Thus, in 2021, we have a NATO with 30 member states, the youngest allies being Montenegro (2017) and Northern Macedonia (2020), while three other states aspire to become full members (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia and Ukraine). In addition, there are 40 partner states (including 20 in the PfP Partnership for Peace[15], seven in the Mediterranean Dialogue[16], four in the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative[17] and nine global partners[18]), which are complemented by partnerships with three organizations – the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The current level of ambition of the Alliance is to maintain the capabilities needed for collective defence against a near-peer opponent in what NATO calls an Extended Major Joint Operation (MJO) or to simultaneously conducts eight less demanding missions – two of which are at the level of an MJO and six smaller Joint Operations (SJO). Thus, from the end of the Cold War until 2014, the Alliance laid brick after brick to ensure that it would have capabilities that could meet such a level

[13] ***, The treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms and associated documents, URL: https://fas.org/nuke/control/start1/text/, accessed on November 20, 2020.

[14] ***, Tratat privind cerul deschis din 24 martie 1992, URL: http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/31354, accessed on November 20, 2020.

[15] Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Malta, R. Moldova, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

[16] Algeria, Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia.

[17] Bahrein, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates.

[18] Afghanistan, Australia, Columbia, Iraq, Japan, R. Korea, Mongolia, New Zeeland, Pakistan.

of ambition. It has thus "built" its role as a provider and guarantor of security in widespread parts of the world: from the International Security Assistance Operation in Afghanistan (ISAF) (2003-2014), or the current KFOR mission to maintain a secure and stable security environment in Kosovo (launched in 1999), to the Active Endeavor (OAE) collective defence operation (2001-2016) – the only one of its kind in the Alliance's history, or Operation Ocean Shield (OOS) to combat piracy in the Horn Africa (2009-2016).

With regard to the involvement of the Alliance in the fight against terrorism, it is useful to remember that the '90s was the moment of proliferation international terrorism acts. *Terrorism has become the weapon of choice of organizations or groups that invoked the legitimacy inherited from the wars of liberation and independence in the 1960s of decolonization and the formation of new states on the world map. It is the extreme form of the identity syndrome, with roots in the tribal structure of some societies, taking as a pretext cultural themes of religion, language, ethnicity and tradition*[19]. What was not anticipated at the time was that it would be a process of continuous expansion and diversification that has lasted until now. The true extent was not correctly estimated with the appearance of the phenomenon, the efforts being focused on the eradication of terrorists and too late on that of the phenomenon itself. The first warning signal in this direction was tragically triggered by the September 11, 2001 al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US Twin Towers, prompting the Alliance to invoke Article 5, according to which an attack on an ally is considered an attack on all NATO members, and they would act accordingly.

In order to appreciate the Alliance's work in the service of peace, we should analyse the strategic concepts it has adopted, but the hereby article does not aim to do so, but to observe the Alliance's course over time so as to identify a similarity in approach, related to the context of the Cold War.

NATO has survived, first and foremost, because it is a natural alliance, which means that its member states have not been forced to join it and have decided to belong, based on a set of common values. Secondly, the Alliance has also resisted due to its ability to adapt to a changed security environment. It anticipated the possibility of enlargement, proposing partnerships to young Eastern European democracies and making it a fundamental security task that would be included as such in the 1999 NATO Strategic Concept[20]. Thirdly, NATO has impressive military

[19] Mircea Malița, *Jocuri pe scena lumii. Conflicte, negocieri, diplomație*, Editura C.H. Beck, Bucharest, 2007, p. 69.

[20] ***, *The Alliance's Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of States and Governments participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Washington D.C.*, NATO, 24.04.1999, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_27433.htm, accessed on November 20, 2020.

capabilities – of course, they do not belong to the Alliance, apart from the fleet of Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft (AWACS), but all troops, missile defence capabilities, air command and control, surveillance and joint recognition are made available jointly by the member states and are committed through an allied medium-term planning.

Thus, in terms of security, NATO has come to play a key role on the international stage, no longer a mere political-military alliance, but a true construction of collective security, which has developed substantial partnerships with a number of international actors – another argument for the survival of the Alliance after the end of the Cold War. The Allies also understood that security is no longer designed exclusively in military terms and must be viewed in a comprehensive way – in a world where security challenges are multidimensional, the approach must be the same. Instruments for political, economic, military and development cooperation must be applied in a concerted approach.

However, the future of NATO is not without uncertainties. In addition to the transatlantic dispute – recently reissued during the Trump administration's term (2017-2021) through debates on the allocation of 2% of the GDP to the defence sector by the member states, the issue of the Alliance's role / relevance in the long-term security architecture is constantly being raised. British Defence Secretary John Reid (2005-2006) was among the first to draw attention to the imperative to adapt NATO to the new security challenges, and he also stressed that the Alliance is *"the greatest force for prosperity and stability in the world"*[21]. But the latest debate over NATO's relevance was raised by French President Emmanuel Macron shortly before the NATO Summit in London in December 2019, when he called the Alliance, in an interview with The Economist, as "*clinically dead.*[22]" The London Summit was to address some allies' reservations about the viability of the Alliance in the context of security challenges in recent years, with a view to launching a process of reflection on strengthening NATO's political dimension.

3. NATO's Adaptation to the Post-2014 Security Context

The year 2014 is the common denominator for directing the North Atlantic Alliance's attention to two major lines of action. The first was to adapt the deterrent and defence posture – by adopting NATO's Readiness Action Plan (RAP) and defining the Allied approach on the relation with the Russian Federation, following

[21] Rebecca R. Moore, *NATO's New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World,* Praeger Security International, Westport Connecticut, 2007, p. 135.

[22] ***, "Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead,", *The Economist*, 07.11.2019, URL: https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warnseurope-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead, accessed on November 20, 2020.

the illegal annexation of the Crimean Peninsula. The second line of action was the fight against terrorism – by recognizing the danger posed by the terrorist organization ISIL. The most interesting aspect, in the context of this article, is represented by the measures NATO has taken to strengthen the security of the allied eastern flank – in the attempt to observe a situation "in the mirror" of the NATO-USSR relationship.

In this regard, the measures taken by the Heads of State and Allied Governments at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales are very relevant, the most "sonorous" being *the Readiness Action Plan (RAP),* a large-scale initiative outlining NATO's strategic adaptation, focusing on ensuring member states' ability to defend the Alliance. The adaptation and assurance measures it proposed, in addition to strengthening the security of the Allied eastern flank, aimed at creating a balance between increasing the military presence in the region and the ability to send reinforcement forces in the event of a crisis or conflict in any part of allied territory. Declared implemented in principle at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, the *Plan* had "checked" objectives such as: a) tripling the NATO Response Force (NRF), from 13,000 to about 40,000 troops, to the size of a division; operationalization of the High Reaction Force (VJTF), which can be deployed in a few days throughout the allied territory; b) operationalization of new command and control structures on the territory of the Eastern Allies with a role in facilitating the training and reception of reinforcement forces, if the situation calls for it (eight NATO Force Integration Units/NFIU on the territories of the Eastern Allies: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary; creation of a multinational division headquarters in Romania and operationalization of an existing one in Poland).

The Warsaw Summit in 2016 came to strengthen previous Allied measures, among others, by creating an advanced presence on the eastern flank, namely an *enhanced forward presence* (eFP) in the northern flank, for the Baltic States and Poland; and adapted in the south of the region (*tailored forward presence*/tFP) for Romania and Bulgaria. The principle of forward forces, by which troops are deployed so that a possible aggression can be stopped immediately, was no stranger to NATO, which had adopted this concept in the posture of its forces during the Cold War. In addition, 1. reaffirming the commitment to allocate 2% of GDP to the defence and security sector (measure initially adopted at the 2014 Summit); 2. improving the capacity to anticipate and strategically assess and strengthen the Allied maritime position; 3. the commitment to cyber defence and strengthening resilience and civilian preparedness of allied states (thus, acknowledging cyberspace as an operational area and demonstrating once again the Alliance's adaptability); 4. reconfirming the role of nuclear deterrence as an essential element of the Allied deterrent posture – all these measures, together with those adopted in 2014, to which we add the NATO Readiness Initiative/NRI), the so-called *Four Thirties,* they form the largest consolidation of the Alliance's collective defence since the end of the

Cold War to date[23].

On the other hand, the Russian Armed Forces now have stronger capabilities than in any other period since the end of the Cold War[24]. The process of modernizing Russian military capabilities after the Crimean episode has included arming existing ships with Kalibr long-range cruise missiles, launching six new Admiral Grigorovich frigates and six Kilo-class submarines. In the summer of 2018, the Russian navy also transferred a series of ships from the Caspian Sea flotilla to the Sea of Azov. To these forces are added anti-aircraft missile systems, strategic bombers and S-400 air defence systems. For the power "show", the Russian side launched in 2008 the series of large-scale annual exercises – ZAPAD 2017 (West), VOSTOK 2018 (East), CENTRAL 2019 (Center) and KAVKAZ 2020 (Caucasus).

Following the 2019 London Summit, which had approved the launch of a reflection process on the Alliance's strategic adaptation to the new post-2014 security context, in November 2020, the report of the Reflection Group appointed by the NATO Secretary General on the process of Allied reform was issued. Named *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations*[25], the document lists the current international security risks and challenges facing the Alliance and on which it would be necessary to strengthen or initiate lines of effort. Among them, relevant to this article, are the Russian Federation and nuclear deterrence. Why also nuclear deterrence? Because the nuclear "peace" that Europe, and not only, enjoyed in the post-Cold War period was shaken by the collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), with the withdrawal of the US and the Russian Federation in 2019, getting the green light for a potential to initiate a new nuclear arms race, this time much more sophisticated in terms of technologically.

Beyond the main recommendation of the above-mentioned report, namely the elaboration in the near future of a new Strategic Concept adapted to the security context of recent years, in terms of addressing the relationship with the Russian Federation, the experts' recommendation is to develop the content of the dual-track strategy already in place, in the sense of more concrete "sanctions" (e.g. allies coordinating to tighten rather than renew sanctions; exposing the facts of Russian covert activities in Ukraine, etc.), while maintaining the political openness to negotiate arms control and associated risk reduction.

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[23] ***, *NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group appointed by the NATO Secretary General*, NATO, 25.11.2020, URL: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf, accessed on December 12, 2020, p. 64.

[24] ***, "Russia's Armed Forces: more capable by far, but for how long?", *Military Balance Blog*, 09.10.2020, URL: https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2020/10/russia-armed-forces, accessed on December 20, 2020.

[25] *Ibidem.*

Conclusions

Comparing the NATO-Russia relationship in the two periods: the Cold War, on the one hand, and the post-2014 period so far, we can argue that the approach and measures taken by each side are similar, respectively increasing Russia's assertiveness by strengthening military capabilities and intensifying activities such as large-scale military exercises; strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defence measures until the effective adoption of a new posture in this regard, with an emphasis on the forward presence on the eastern flank (the concept of forward forces originating from the Cold War); maintaining a dialogue between the two sides, in order to avoid escalating the situation; maintaining nuclear deterrence as an area that has regained its relevance and "urgency" since 2019, with the disintegration of the INF Treaty and the unpredictability of the renewal of the START Treaty, also due to Russian-American dissensions on the subject.

What differs from the 1947-1991 period lies in the increasing complexity and simultaneity of security challenges During the Cold War, the situation was relatively simple – NATO had an adversary and a weapon to deter. We are currently facing an equation with several unknowns. New challenges must be addressed: the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and a constantly assertive Russian Federation, cyber-attacks, China's expansion, or the cessation of essential treaties for humanity, such as the one on intermediate nuclear forces. Added to this are "frozen conflicts" (some recently reactivated – such as the one in Nagorno-Karabakh, in October 2020), or tense situations in some former Soviet states (Belarus, the August 2020 presidential elections, marked by popular protests against President Alexander Lukashenko, who has been in office since 1994). Of course, neither the Belarusian crisis nor the frozen conflicts would have been possible during the Cold War, given that the states in question were all part of the USSR, but we cannot deny the complexity they bring to our equation. Why unknown? Because of the unpredictability of future developments – a feature that defines, in a way, the international security context post-2014 and which is partly determined by the "trend" of autocratic leaders of great powers.

To these, one can add the internal challenges facing NATO, namely its current vulnerabilities: Allied unity and the transatlantic link being affected – both tested during the term of former US President Donald Trump; the discrepancy in the allocation, at allied level, of a budget already agreed in 2014 (respectively 2% of national GDP), or question marks on the viability of the Alliance.

As a way forward, NATO will have to re-adapt – adaptation thus becoming the only constant on the path of this political-military alliance. It will continue to focus its efforts on collective defence, crisis management and partnership policy and the expansion of the Alliance, but will need to include the fight against terrorism more

deeply in its core security tasks. A long-awaited Strategic Concept will be able to do this and will also be the best time to re-establish the transatlantic relationship – put to a test in recent years – at the place it had naturally gained during the Alliance's "making". And although the new US President, Joe Biden, has begun his term in early 2021 in a very active manner, which promises a "return to normality", we cannot help but wonder how deep are the consequences of his predecessor's approach on NATO cohesion and mutual trust between member states. Emmanuel Macron's interview for *The Economist*, in 2019, may ultimately be a direct consequence of the signals that Donald Trump had sent within NATO.

Commitment by all allies to the defence investment pledge – although repeatedly tactlessly highlighted by former US President Trump – remains equally essential for the effective achievement of the objectives associated with deterrence and defence, allied missions and operations, the effective functioning of NATO as a whole. The NATO-EU relationship – which is now in its maturing years – will also play an important role in the mutual consolidation of the two organizations, in terms of the multitude of areas of cooperation it entails: the conduct of operations and missions; development of multinational capabilities; cyber defence and security; support for partners, etc.

In uncertain waters, however, we can rely on one certainty – the 2021 NATO Summit – with the participation of the new US administration – will be one of hope and certainly a milestone in Allied history from the perspective of drawing strategic adaptation lines for NATO, a task that was set in December 2019, in London.

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THE GEOSTRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF THE BLACK SEA IN THE CURRENT SECURITY CONTEXT

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Generally speaking, when approaching the issue of security, at least from a mix of national and regional perspectives, it is rather obvious that the Black Sea does matter. It matters a lot and to a lot of people. Beyond being geographically the focal point of the region itself, this compact maritime basin has continued to be a regional security "hotspot" getting a lot of attention, since it has been a constant arena for increasing competition, expanding spheres of influences, deepening and perpetuating regional tensions and destabilizing actions that have already generated open confrontations and conflicts. Undoubtedly, all of these can be easily perceived as potentially "guaranteed ingredients" for generating at any time a "perfect storm" in the region. Therefore, in terms of security, the Black Sea is hardly a "Black Hole" that can be simply diminished, ignored and/or rejected, either on purpose or unintentionally. The present article brings together some of the most significant arguments in this regard.

Keywords: *Black Sea; strategic relevance and importance; regional security environment; maritime security.*

Given the title we have chosen for this paper and the easily intuitive core of this endeavour, right from the beginning we have to clarify some basic aspects in order to avoid any possible reasons for controversy and ambiguity regarding the paper's content. This desiderate of being clear and precise is also related to a variety of ways in which the Black Sea could be or is really illustrated, perceived, seen and understood. Accordingly, this paper is developed in the spirit of a security-led and security-focused approach, being structurally focused on a logical argumentation

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dedicated to the importance and relevance of the Black Sea. The foundation of that approach constitutes a mix of different possible pros and cons, a sort of "ping-pong" between arguments and counter-arguments, mainly derived from a vast array of intertwined national, regional and even global perspectives and considerations. In the end, this whole construct will be augmented by some open and deductive strategic messaging conveyed through or in the wake of a set of significant statements assessed by us as being solid motives for keeping the Black Sea in the spotlight in the future, too.

1. Generalities

In terms of clarification, first of all, we have to mention that all the ideas, interpretations, respectively the conclusions included in this paper do not represent and do not reflect any official points of view and/or opinions belonging to Defense Staff or to "Carol I" National Defense University or other institutional entities within the Romanian Ministry of Defense. Thus, this endeavor should be seen just only as the manner of interpreting things through the eyes of the authors, starting from and relying on a mixture of analyses, respectively experience and expertise in the overall security domain.

Secondly, we intend to emphasize that the current objective reality comprises pertinent reasons for focusing on a subject like this. Despite the fact that in the preamble of the latest and the greatest Black Sea-focused encyclopaedia[1] it is clearly emphasized that this area is in fact "the least known strategic region", one of our goals is to find arguments whether this is true or not. In this respect, when we started our research, we were seriously considering the possibility that such a theme might have been labelled all too easily as unimportant, inappropriate, irrelevant, misplaced and unsuitable for a serious analysis of the current security context and the ongoing subsequent developments. If that was going to turn out to be true, we might have avoided unwanted waste of intellectual effort and precious time, both implied by the study necessary for elaborating the present paper.

Therefore, right from the beginning, we have to admit that we are completely aware of the fact that this kind of topic could trigger a controversial debate about the real and genuine relevance and importance of the Black Sea itself. Definitely, this indisputable potential dilemma might be generated by the fact that nobody can deny that there could be plenty of those unable to refrain from wondering *What is supposed to be the big deal with this Black Sea region?* or *Are there specific reasons for which we keep hearing about the Black Sea over and over again?*.

[1] Dan Dungaciu, *The Geopolitical Black Sea Encyclopaedia*, Introductory Note, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, URL: https://www.cambridgescholars.com/the-geopolitical-black-sea-encyclopaedia, accessed on 20.09.2020.

Of course, that would be a polite and balanced way of saying that there have already been a lot of bored or disgruntled voices remarking the amount of interest and level of attention that have been specifically given to the Black Sea lately. By that we refer to the existing large number of dedicated organizations, commissions, forums, cooperation platforms, conventions, designated action plans, initiatives and programs, respectively seminars, workshops and conferences, as well as to the specific number of the independent or associated paperwork and products like books, snapshots, strategic papers, studies and articles. Through a simple search on Google Scholar of *the Black Sea security* we were able to find a total of approximately 1.790.000 specific results, from which approximately 19.800 references were attributed only to the current year, 2020.

Even though those figures are supposed to be sufficiently convincing, in fact no one could accurately appreciate or strongly affirm if that number is big enough and satisfy the need for both acknowledging and spreading out the strategic importance of the Black Sea. Therefore, that kind of assessment might be viewed as a simple speculation not as a result of a deep analysis, based on solid and unbeatable facts. For those people who are not so convinced about the strategic relevance of the Black Sea and who can create a non-perceptive, inflexible and not so open-minded audience, unwilling to hear any more of additional supported opinions, it is more than easy to generate that kind of possible questions. That would happen for a simple reason, that of being already suffocated in every way – geographically, historically, culturally, politically, economically, militarily – by this apparently endless matter gravitating towards the Black Sea. Or, in other words, that would mean their way of doubting the relevance and importance of the Black Sea, putting these aspects under a big question mark.

Thirdly, we consider it extremely important to clarify our real perception about the Black Sea and the reasons why it is geo-strategically so important and relevant for us. So, from the beginning, we must state that, for us, the Black Sea is a special area, dually approached, simultaneously viewed and rendered as the maritime areal and the surrounding region itself – the extended Black Sea region – both of them evidently being united by geography and the same name. By that sort of double meaning, almost unanimously agreed and accepted, we understand the common way in which the name has been largely and publicly used, promoted, invoked and disseminated for defining, describing, delimiting and labelling purposes.

About the importance itself, when it comes to security, the Black Sea must be viewed from a large mix of national and regional perspectives. Beyond being geographically the focal point of the extended Black Sea region itself, this compact maritime basin has continued to be a regional security "hotspot" getting a lot of attention, since it has been a constant arena for increasing competition, expanding spheres of influences, deepening and perpetuating regional tensions and destabilizing

actions that have already generated open confrontations and conflicts.

Under these conditions, after this unconventional introduction and all these clarifications made, including the disclaimer, we are going to jump right into the core of the matter and trying to address the concrete aspects we had in mind. According to the title, we are going to provide some pertinent supporting facts and easily understandable explanations regarding the geopolitical and geostrategic relevance and importance of the Black Sea, especially in the current security context.

2. The Relevance of the Black Sea – Essential Issues

Obviously, the reason for that still presumptive, but not impossible type of debate focused on diminishing, questioning, or contesting the importance of the Black Sea could be induced by the current security dynamics perceived at global level, in other significant regions. That motivation would clearly be based on a wider perspective, with a more powerful impact and resonance, with greater and larger recognition in comparison with some simply regional or national perspectives. As we have pointed out before, the main arguments of those hypothetically unconvinced about or even fed up with being exposed to another interminable discussion regarding the Black Sea, could be based on a diversity of reasons. Reasons that could be motivated and based on statistic grounds, the geographical nature and/or a geostrategic fundament of the area or a combination of all the above, and also reasons which could be derived from political-military, economic-financial and/or juridical-legal roots.

In a manner similar to the old tendencies in history when often the power and importance of the states/regions used to be scaled up and down in direct relation to their specific size and positioning, some of those possible basic arguments for contesting the importance and relevance of the Black Sea could be related to these particular characteristics.

This supposed controversy related to its size would be easily justified by comparing the Black Sea's surface[2] (436,402 km^2) with the total surface of the World Ocean[3] (361,100,000 km^2). Obviously, the difference is huge: just to be more precise, the former is approximately only a 0.12 percent of the latter. From a simple

[2] ***, "Black Sea surface", *Google*, URL: https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=NU6tX4zdGoSKlwSo5rOgCw&q=black+sea+surface&oq=bl ack+sea+surface&gs_lcp=-CgZwc3ktYWIQARgAMgIIADIGCAAQFhAeMgYIABAWEB46CAgAELEDEIMBOgUIABCxAzoCCC46BQguELEDUPcTWKJMYLJgaABwAHgAgAGsA4gBqRySAQkwLjcuOC4xLjGYAQCgAQGqAQdnd3Mtd2l6&sclient=psy-ab#spf=1605193393163, accessed on 20.09.2020

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mathematical angle, by referring to the surface ratio depicted here, there is no doubt that the Black Sea does represent a tiny, almost insignificant part of the Planetary Ocean, a part which could be easily assessed from a global scale comparison, as being nearly nothing. So, based on that simple explanation which looks well-grounded enough, any individual could agree that in normal conditions, when you are looking at the bigger picture, there would not be any reason to pay attention to such a minuscule "patch" of water. On the same note, that idea could be further nuanced by another argument stating that despite being called a *sea*, comparing with other sea bodies, the Black Sea is not a sizeable one. Definitely, for instance, it is totally incomparable with the Mediterranean Sea, which by itself comprises a plethora of other more or less well-known seas, among which we can recall the most prominent ones like the Adriatic Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Ionian Sea.

This kind of argumentation could be backed by bringing into discussion the other factor, its positioning. That could be translated into the fact that we are trying in vain to focus on a simple and ordinary sea, an almost isolated and closed one, which obviously is not at all a central piece or a huge chunk of water directly connected to any ocean on the Earth's surface. Automatically, that would imply that a maritime area that looks more-like a lake does not deserve too much or any interest.

Anyway, that possible argumentation and diminishing comparison with a lake does not come out of the blue. Historically speaking, beyond its specific size, due to its geographical configuration and location, the Black Sea was many times perceived and labelled as being just a simple "lake". As if that description was not enough, many times the label came with a descriptive appellative, which was not necessarily very accurate, adequate or appropriate. As a result, the Black Sea was known alternatively as an "Ottoman lake" or "Turkish lake", respectively a "Russian lake" or a "Soviet lake", some more than obvious associations to those distinctive old empires or modern era powers. Apparently that is still the case, if we take into considerations the regional assertive actions of the Russian Federation that seem focused on reviving the same old ambitions of turning the Black Sea into a "Russian lake" once again.

Regarding this type of arguments, we can easily accept and agree that they might be realistic and undebatable to some extent. Yes, of course, a simple regional and peripheral sea cannot be compared in any way with any vast, wide, important and impactful maritime areas like the Mediterranean Sea. In this specific case of an apparently modest sea, just by throwing a glance at a world map, it would be more than common sense to step back and admit that there is no room for any favourable comparison with any of those huge water parts of the Earth surface, so visible and convincing in so many ways.

However, despite all these arguments, as a responsive and supportive

argumentation, we firmly state that nobody can deny the fact that, irrespective of how small or sizably insignificant it could be, the Black Sea is still a constituent part of the World Ocean. Once again, no matter its specific size, every piece of this gigantic aquatic "puzzle" does matter for aggregating and completing the entire picture of the World Ocean as an uninterrupted continuum of seas and oceans without any small "black holes" in it, of no importance and easily ignorable. As it has been clearly presented and proved in a previous paper[4], maritime security is an important component of the overall security of the world. Because of that, at least, the Black Sea should be and really is relevant due to clear maritime security and safety reasons. Formally, that assertion was validated by the direct nomination and inclusion of the Black Sea, in conjunction with the Mediterranean Sea, as a distinct area of interest among those eleven regions covering all the globe, as depicted in the *Worldwide Threats to Shipping (WTS) Reports*[5]. These specialized reports, posted on the online portal of US Office of Naval Intelligence, which are in fact some regularly updated and consolidated lists of threats to shipping, include a section dedicated to monthly incidents by region that explicitly covers the Black Sea.

Moreover, that association with the Mediterranean basin is totally justified and we agree that together they constitute a sort of geostrategic package. Due to its direct physical connection with the Mediterranean Sea through the Turkish Straits, the Black Sea is used by the Russian Federation as a trampoline and a maritime corridor facilitating the spread-out of its military presence especially in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea basin. Despite the diminishing effect of those lexical combinations, at least just because of this distinctive positioning in the close vicinity of some relevant powers would stand as a counterargument against any attempt of denying or diminishing the Black Sea importance. So, according to these points of view, the Black Sea does exist and is relevant, and it should be taken into consideration at least from an expanded regional geostrategic perspective.

Also, another contesting argument could be related to the fact that in terms of great power competition, the strategic relevance and importance of the Black Sea, as a dimensionally small and regionally contained maritime basin, cannot be compared with other maritime areas. Thus, not just for the sake of exemplification, we can emphasize the current relevance of the Persian Gulf, of the Arctic Zone and

[4] Bogdan Ţuţuianu, "The Importance of Maritime Security Given the Dynamics of Broader Security Environment", in *Proceedings. The 16th International Scientific Conference "Strategies XXI". Global Security and National Defense*, June 25-26, 2020, "Carol I" National Defense University, Doctoral School, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 559-566, URL: https://www.strategii21.ro/A/2020-06.%20GLOBAL%20SECURITY%20AND%20NATIONAL%20DEFENCE /Conferinta%20Strategii%20XXI%20Scoala%20doctorala.pdf, accessed on 20.09.2020.

[5] A.N.: Further details on this issue could be found at URL: http://www.oni.navy.mil, accessed on 20.09.2020.

more recently of the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Those geographic areas can be seen as real "hotbeds" since apparently they are mentioned and included in so many current strategies and plans developed by different individual states and multi-state organisations. That happens for a simple reason, namely because these maritime areas are perceived as conflict-prone areas as well as resourceful water bodies with high potential for accessing and exploiting a variety of natural resources which turn them implicitly into real cradles of potential tensions, frictions and confrontations.

As a counter-argument to that assumption which leaves out the Black Sea, we may say that at least since the first decade of this century, that has been the narrative and reality for the Black Sea region as well. If we keep in mind what happened in Georgia in 2008, a clear preamble setting the scene for the next bold and reckless move affecting the Ukraine directly, the Crimea Peninsula illegal annexation, we are talking about a maritime "hotbed". That unconventional intervention universally associated with the "little green men", abundant disinformation, proactive propaganda and a background conventional military pressure or a tacit threat represented a reference point for the hybrid phenomenon, known and labelled as "hybrid warfare" which has spread out of both the Black Sea basin and the Black Sea region. Moreover, that 2014 Crimean episode that transformed the Black Sea into a breeding ground for the hybrid tactics of the Russian Federation proved again that what happens in the Black Sea region does not stay in the Black Sea region, to paraphrase a common saying. Unfortunately, the conventional and unconventional aggressions we mentioned are not some planning hypotheses or premises, but tragically incontestable facts still producing geostrategic effects and having geopolitical reverberations. In addition and in support of our opinion, we can emphasize the fact that in its introductory part, the latest *Report on the implementation of the revised EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan*, the Black Sea is presented as one of the "key maritime hotspots"[6] alongside the Mediterranean Sea.

Additionally, we have another strong supporting consideration for the real weight of this maritime areal that is decided by the number, diversity and the specificity of its coastal countries and, of course, their prominence and relevance for the current strategic context. For the Black Sea, after a counter-clockwise mental visualisation and enumeration, starting from its northern part - Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia and Russian Federation - and quick count, we get a six as the total number of them. Maybe a one-digit figure like that is not very convincing. Yet, despite that non-impressive number, the geo-strategic amalgam of those six distinctive littoral states makes the difference. We do believe that beside

[6] ***, "Introduction", *Report on the implementation of the revised EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan*, SWD (2020) 252 final, Council of the European Union, p. 3, URL: http://europeanmemoranda.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/files/2020/10/ST_12310_2020_INIT_en.pdf, accessed on 27.10.2020.

the composition of that melange of states sharing the shores of the Black Sea, their different political values, governing systems, ideological orientation, organizational belonging and membership status is real heavyweight with respect to regional importance and relevance.

In support of that idea, in order to understand what the regional geostrategic picture really looks like at present, we have to emphasize that from the total number of the Black Sea littoral states, two of them are both NATO and UE member states (Bulgaria and Romania), one of them is a NATO member state that used to have strong EU accession ambitions (Turkey), two of them have both NATO and EU accession aspirations (Georgia and Ukraine), and one of the them is not a big fan or friend either of NATO or the EU or of the other two non-NATO & EU countries (the Russian Federation). The last remark is far from being just a simple speculation for at least four reasons, as follows:

1. for all three regional NATO member states, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, in accordance with point no. 3 of the 2019 London NATO Summit Declaration, in which the Russian Federation is depicted as a threat because of its aggressive actions, this Black Sea coastal state is supposed to be seen as a threat; that is the case at least for Romania, since in the content of Chapter 4 – Threats, Risks and Vulnerabilities of the new *National Home Defence Strategy for period 2020-2024*, at point. 119, the Russian Federation is presented accordingly;

2. for Turkey, it seems that theory differs from practice, as at present we can but infer the existence of a relation with the Russian Federation, both economically and militarily, if we keep in mind the roles played by the two states in the dynamics fo conflicts in Syria, Lybia, the Mediterranea Sea riparian countries, and the recent reactivation of the frozen conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. In addition, there are relevant voices, such as that of fomer USAREUR commander, lieutenant-general (ret.) Ben Hodges[7], speking about a certain reticence manifested by Rurkey in taking definite responsibilites for „opposing and countering Russian aggression in the Black Sea", especially given the deficit of "significant naval infrastructure" in this maritime area;

3. for Georgia, undoubtedly, after the overt Russian forces invasion executed in 2008 and all subsequent implications, the Russian Federation is a clear and open aggressor;

4. for Ukraine, in the wake of the covert interferences in 2014 in Crimean Peninsula and its subsequent annexation, respectively of the overt interventions in its Eastern part, the Russian Federation is definitely more than a simple "culprit";

[7] Sorin Ducaru (Ambasador), Lt. Gen. (Ret) Frederick Benjamin Hodges, Greg Melcher, et al., „Conclusion", *Moscow Does Not Believe In Tears*, p. 13, URL: https://www.newstrategycenter.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Moscow-Does-Not-Believe-in-Tears-Policy-Paper-December-2018.pdf, accessed on 27.10.2020.

5. for the Russian Federation, in accordance with its own *Russian National Security Strategy 2015*[8], at point no. 15, NATO's increasing military potential and the location of NATO's military infrastructure closer to its border are defined as direct threats.

Given these arguments, the lack of homogeneity in the regional mixture of states, subsequently transposed in the combo of strategic interests, objectives, goals and ambitions, portrays a complex if not complicated geostrategic regional "puzzle". Apparently this puzzle, as it has been depicted above, creates an even less promising picture than the one depicted within the last 2019 report[9] on EU's *Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018*. By comparing the current situation and the set of successive regional security developments, we can state with no doubts that we do not completely resonate with that idyllic climate and optimistic tone conveyed by that report over the progress and improvements made in regional cooperation in accordance with the Black Sea Synergy desiderates. According to the composition and international organisations' affiliation of the states mentioned above, at least since NATO and EU enlargements in the region and integration of Romania and Bulgaria in those politico-military and politico-economic security formats, the Black Sea could no longer be regarded as a security "Black Hole" on any overall security map. On the contrary, from a more European & Euro-Atlantic perspective, it can be associated with a sort of buffer zone between European Union & NATO and the Russian Federation.

As both NATO and the EU have been brought into discussion, another disarming argument against the Black Sea relevance could be related to the fact that in the content of the declaration of the latest NATO Summit - *2019 London Summit Declaration*[10] - there is no single remark or reference concerning the Black Sea or Black Sea region. And this could be done in comparison with the Alliance's previous stances towards the Black Sea region as, for example, it was clearly stated in point no. 36 of the 2008 NATO Summit Declaration[11] organized in Bucharest, context in which the Black Sea region was reaffirmed as important for Euro-Atlantic security there is no difference. However, as a counter-argument, we have to recall the well-known NATO "360°-approach", which by default means an integrated approach, indiscriminately

[8] ***, *Russian National Security Strategy*, decembrie 2015, URL: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf, accessed on 04.11.2020.

[9] ***, *Black Sea Synergy: review of a regional cooperation initiative - period 2015-2018*, Council of the European Union, URL: https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7119-2019-INIT/en/pdf, accessed on 28.10.2020.

[10] ***, *London Declaration − issued by NATO Leaders at their meeting in London 3-4 December 2019*, URL: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official, accessed on 20.09.2020.

[11] ***, *Bucharest Summit Declaration*, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed on 20.09.2020.

including all regions of interest, without a particular focus on any of them, approach that tacitly includes the Black Sea region. Therefore, the interest for and relevance of the Black Sea have not diminished despite the fact that the Black Sea region like any other was not at all invoked within the content of the Declaration.

Beyond all those possible perceptions or rather misperceptions, as we have already anticipated, we see the Black Sea as a maritime areal which physically represents a focal area of the surrounding geographical region. Moreover, this combination of sea and land is not at all ordinary since, undoubtedly, during contemporary history, it has been constantly and uninterruptedly marked and affected by a mixture of geostrategic shocks and convulsions. That plethora of geostrategic "earthquakes" has been generated by different if not completely opposite strategic interests manifested in the region. These interests and their correlated objectives do not come out of blue; they are intimately related and directly associated to all instruments of power of the regional state actors. All these interests and ambitions, far from converging, have turned gradually into a number of regional challenges and genuine roots of increased tensions, a good opportunity for some regional actors to gain momentum and challenge or even change the status quo. All of these have amplified the instability and deepened the reasons for various territorial disputes, gradually turning them into conflictual behaviours and violent inter-state clashes. These have then resulted in the perception of a generalized competition driving to overlapping spheres of influence and domination of a regional actor which is apparently looking for continuous expansion. Its reasons are clear and very diverse such as: restoring and increasing the old time influence, regaining and reinforcing prestige, deceiving and distracting the domestic audiences from real internal issues like economic underperformances, difficulties and recessions, gaining control over the Black Sea maritime basin – the East of the Mediterranean and adjacent straits (actually its strategic objective from the military point of view).

Undoubtedly, all of these can be easily perceived as successful "ingredients" for an anytime "perfect storm" in the region. Therefore, in terms of security, from a geopolitical point of view, the Black Sea is not a point on the map that can be simply diminished, ignored and/or rejected, either on purpose or unintentionally. By now, we hope that we have been able to clarify a bit and to emphasize convincingly enough why, in our perception, the Black Sea is extremely relevant in the equation of the region.

3. Predictable Way Ahead

For the sake of consistency, we also consider that is important to see if that would be the case in the future and to make some predictions in the wake of a series of declarations with strategic impact. Thus, we believe that, on short, medium,

and long term, most probably the Black Sea will continue to keep the attention of the media along with strategists, experts in security and defense, military planners and other relevant categories of personnel activating in industrial and economic realms. Among those hard to ignore declarations and easily predictable Strategic Communication messages with future regional impact and consequences, we have tried to stay focused on the most important. So we have built up a sort of at least "top five", in a chronological order, as follows:

1. July 26th, 2020 - Saint Petersburg/Russian Federation: The declaration[12] of the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, made in the context of the annual Navy Day parade – the big piece of news was the upcoming improvement of the already modernized Russian Navy with some new nuclear capabilities (his precise list included the hypersonic nuclear strike missiles meant to arm the surface warships and underwater nuclear drones designed to be carried on board of submarines); willy-nilly, we can predict this Russian Navy "nuclearization" will inevitably subject its Fleet deployed in the Black Sea, a fact that after an accelerated militarization process, an A2/AD (anti-access/area denial) environment continuous development and implementation will look from a military perspective like the "cherry" on the regional security "pie";

2. July 29th, 2020 - Washington DC/United States: The press declaration[13] of US Secretary of Defense, Mark T. Esper, regarding the footprint reduction of the U.S. forces currently deployed in Germany by repatriation and relocation – apparently, as a result of that adjustment of strategy, one of the destination of some portion of the relocated troops will be the Black Sea region (according to the declaration, that announced movement is planned for enhancing deterrence, for strengthening and reassuring NATO member states along Alliance Southeastern flank); definitely, we can assess that would constitute a huge step for consolidating U.S. presence in the Black Sea area, for forging regional deterrence efforts and a good reason for the Russian Federation to amplify its disgruntled rhetoric against the U.S. and NATO.

3. August 18th, 2020 - Kyiv/Ukraine: The declaration[14] of the British Secretary of Defence, Ben Wallace, regarding the launch of a Maritime Training Initiative led by the U.K. designed for training of the Ukrainian Navy – the format of dissemination of the specialized knowledge and skills is supposed to be a complex one, comprising both Royal Navy ships and experts coming from Sweden, Canada

[12] Andrew Osborn, "Putin says Russian Navy to get hypersonic nuclear strike weapons", URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-navy-day-parade-putin-idUSKCN24R0CJ, accessed on 30.09.2020.

[13] A.N.: Further details can be found in the complete statement at URL: https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/secretary-of-defense-mark-esper-press-conference-transcript-july-29-moving-troops-from-germany, accessed on 15.09.2020.

[14] A.N.: See URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-launches-multinational-training-to-enhance-ukrainian-navy-against-threats-from-the-east, accessed on 02.09.2020.

and Denmark (besides countering the threats in the Black Sea, that initiative aims to help the undergoing process of rebuilding the naval component of this Black Sea coastal state); this initiative can be assessed as beneficial for the overall regional maritime security and aligned with the desideratum included in the new Naval Strategy of Ukraine[15]; once again, no one can say that the Russian Federation will be extremely happy with it, and most probably we will continue to witness the same aggressive reactions in the maritime domain as part of their hybrid arsenal;

4. September 04th, 2020 - Bucharest/Romania: The common declaration[16] of Romanian Chief of Defence, Lieutenant General Daniel Petrescu, and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, US Air Force General Tod D. Wolters in which the Romanian official stated and reiterated the necessity of strengthening security on the Alliance South part of the NATO Eastern flank, by implementing similar measures for deterrence and defense in the Black Sea to those already implemented in the Baltic Sea, based on "a comprehensive, integrated and coherent approach" (that statement was further nuanced by the essential need of "increasing the Allied presence in Romania") obviously, from a regional strategic perspective that could be decoded as an urgent need of recalibration between North and South parts of the Eastern flank, in full accordance with Alliance's "360°-approach" by creating a more visible balance, equivalence and equity between the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltic Sea region and the tailored Forward Presence (tFP) in the Black Sea region.

5. October 09th, 2020, Washington DC/United States: The declaration[17] of the U.S. ambassador, Adrian Zuckerman at the event organized for signing the Department of Energy Intergovernmental Agreement between the U.S. and Romania – along the main announcement related to the development of Cernavodă nuclear plant by building two new reactors and refurbishing an old one, mention was made regarding "a new project for Romania, with Poland, to build a highway and railroad from Constanța on the Black Sea to Gdansk on the Baltic Sea", which can be understood as a valuable connection of the Western coast of the Black Sea with the Southern Coast of the Baltic Sea through a dual-use mobility corridor; by *dual use* we mean a highway and a railroad, for both civilian and military purposes additionally, in these circumstances, the Port of Constanța would be transformed in a real gateway for all the goods and products coming by water and being transferred further by that connective highway and railway throughout Europe, and vice-versa.

[15] ***, *Strategy of the Naval Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine 2035*, URL: https://navy.mil.gov.ua/en/strategiya-vijskovo-morskyh-syl-zbrojnyh-syl-ukrayiny-2035/, accessed on 01.11.2020.

[16] N.A.: Details on URL: https://actmedia.eu/daily/general-wolters-in-the-black-sea-area-the-security-environment-is-complex-and-dynamic/88474 accessed on 10.10.2020.

[17] N.A.: Details on URL: https://ro.usembassy.gov/ambassador-adrian-zuckerman-at-the-doe-intergovernmental-agreement-signing-event/, accessed on 10.10.2020.

Conclusions

We do not wish to make definite predictions, but we do believe that this set of declarations is indicative of the future strategic importance of the Black Sea. Hopefully, the implications and the materialization of those declarations will constitute a real game changer for the security of this region and fortunately we will finally be able to witness a sort of a more concrete and credible pivoting to the Black Sea. At the end of the day, this step-by-step reorientation and more accentuated focus and implication will ensure a future rebalancing of the regional power based on the Romania's strategic partner, the U.S. and other instrumental Allies such as the U.K., Canada and hopefully other more.

Regarding the certainty level of this prediction, we can accept that a driving factor will be the consistency in approach and specific policies that are going to be adopted and implemented for the Black Sea region by Joe Biden and his administration, the next 46th POTUS, now still the President elect.

Just by keeping in mind all the above mentioned arguments, we have to admit the fact that yes, generally speaking, at a global scale, maybe the Black Sea is not the most important and relevant maritime basin in the world. Yet, in these conditions, when the stakes are security and stability, no matter if we are thinking in national or regional terms, or beyond geographical coordinates, the ongoing dynamics and their respective effects and implications in the Black Sea region cannot be ignored and are actually really important. Also, in no circumstances and regional security developments, can we diminish, reject, deny or nullify its geostrategic relevance and importance, especially in the current regional security context.

Instead of conclusion, we can say that the already proven continuous preoccupation and obvious interest towards the Black Sea ought not to be seen as some annoying repetition or some non-sense background noise, but the proof of the relevance and importance of the Black Sea region due to its complexity and security dynamics. Definitely, everybody must be sure of one simple fact: Black Sea is far from any prospects of becoming yesterday news.

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BELARUS – THE BREACH POINT FROM THE NORTHEASTERN EUROPEAN BORDER

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The "Great Disintegration", in 1991, of the Soviet Union of Socialist Republics (USSR) "empire" has changed the hierarchy of the most powerful states in the world and has placed the United States of America (USA) on the first position. At the same time, it has sent Russia into a period of reorganization, reform and reaffirmation on the global scale.

USSR's division into twelve countries and their dropping out of the communist regime, followed by the declaration of independence for fifteen former socialist states, has significantly diminished Russia's economic power and military strength, this being the largest state left with the legacy of the Soviet empire. Meanwhile, the US, through NATO and the European Union (EU), has started an expansion, towards the eastern part of the European continent and through this, it has begun a border repositioning of the strongest states, to the detriment of a Russia that is not able to reorganize and fails to respond to the wave of accessions to the two western organizations/alliances.

Almost a quarter of a century after the "great disintegration", the situation is beginning to change. Russia is responding more and more aggressively to NATO challenges and to the economic sanctions imposed by the US and EU and intervenes with force, conquering areas that provide strategic advantages (see the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula). EU's eastern border is under constant pressure from Russian search and recognition aircraft and under the threat of the ballistic missiles and other modern forms of warfare (electronic warfare, hybrid warfare) developed by the Russian Federation. Furthermore, Belarus represents a vulnerable spot which can be a gateway, a breach point for Russian forces to get into the heart of Europe.

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Introduction

After the memorable meeting in December 1989[1], the question that remained was: "Who won the Cold War"[2]?

The answer could be the United States of America (US), because it had no enemies, or maybe Germany, which almost a month before the Malta Summit, had torn down the Berlin Wall and had started the reunification process. Equally victorious could be considered countries such as Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which after protests, demonstrations and revolutions against the one-party regime, managed to overthrow communist dictatorships and tear down the "Iron Curtain"[3]. The answer is yet another dilemma. Thus, the current evolution of risks and threats spreading in Eastern Europe leaves room for many interpretations as to who the winner of the Cold War is.

For the Western European countries that enjoyed the moment of December 1989, this was an opportunity to ease their strategies aimed at counteracting communist expansion and to start the expansion campaign of the European Union and The North Atlantic Alliance towards the eastern part of the European continent.

The tensions in the Baltic Sea calmed down and in the northern part of Europe, although non-NATO members, Finland and Sweden have been treating the Alliance as an ally, not seeing any threat in Russia. As a result, Sweden withdraws most of its troops from the Baltic Sea, demilitarizing the Gotland island.

Thus, the early '90's find a new Europe in the process of reconstruction, with a European Union ready to accept new members, with ex-soviet states and states that came out of the communist influence and set out on the path to independence and democracy, but especially with a sense of safety and security ensured by strong NATO and American partnerships.

The Eastern part of Europe is the area where the most serious threats spread, which undergoes a full political, economic but especially conceptual reform. It is the territory where the Russian Federation exists, still in a state of convalescence and confusion, trying to establish new strategies and courses of action. Thus, as a

[1] A.N.: On 2-3 December 1989, during the Malta Summit, US President George W. Bush and U.R.S.S. President Mikhail Gorbachev decided to end the Cold War.

[2] A.N.: Martin McCauley, "Russia, America and the Cold War, 1949-1991", Polirom Publishing, Iaşi, 1999, p. 9.

[3] A.N.: "Iron Curtain" – Is the name given to the border between Western and Eastern Europe drawn "from Stettin, the Baltic Sea, to Trieste, the Adriatic Sea" as stated by Winston Churchill, British politician, Prime Minister of England, according to URL: https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/viata-din-spatele-cortinei-de-fier, accessed on 24.08.2020.

regional alternative to the European Union, in an attempt to create the impression that there is still control in the former USSR area of influence, the Russian Federation together with Belarus and Ukraine have laid the foundations of the "Commonwealth of Independent States"[4] (CIS).

It is a period of reconfiguration of the dominant geopolitical spaces and areas with strategic interests. Various scenarios and concepts which have a unique constant are implemented. To highlight two of the most important world powers: a rising European Union, fueled by France, Germany and Britain and NATO-endorsed, with a well-defined strategy of enlargement to the east and imposition in the Baltic area, face to face with a new Russia, which was longing for the position of great power owned by the Soviet Union until 1989.

New Russia is launching a campaign to regain geopolitical, strategic and economic influences both globally and within the CIS, with the advantage of gas and oil resources in hand. Economic blackmail is not lacking from the mode of action, and with this strategy Russia imposes on CIS member states different prices for the supply of gas resources, prices that are in line with their approaches, for or against EU policies. Thus, when Georgia has declared its orientations of a pro-European orientation, in reaction to the Tbilisi government's statements, Russia has doubled the prices of natural gas Georgia imports, "from 110$ to 230$ per thousand cubic meters"[5]. Later, the maneuver of economic intimidation was repeated and it has been applied in the case of Ukraine.

The Russian Federation's highly unpredictable and changeable behavior worries Europe, which is dependent on the gas source supplied by the energy giant Gazprom, a company that, perhaps not coincidentally, has begun the process of privatization in late 1992 and has come under the influence of Russian oligarchs.

At the same time, the ex-Soviet states step on the way to independence and democracy, and even though they are still economically dependent on the former Russian economic market, they manage, through the CIS, to adapt to a common economic space with a single currency and stable economic relations. With the consolidation of these countries' positions, as sovereign and independent state structures, the national interest begins to prevail, despite the Community interest, which determines relations spoil within the CIS and bilateral relations development,

[4] A.N.: CIS – Regional organization, which on December 21, 1991, with the signing of the Alma-Ata protocol, had eleven members, as follows: the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine - initiating countries and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - signatory countries of the protocol, according to Moisescu Gabriel-Florin, Chioseaua Bogdan, "Despre Sistemul Naţional de Securitate", Romanian Air Force Academy Publishing, Braşov, 2019, p. 172.

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along with the formation of new alliances that Russia is not a part of (ex. GUAM[6]).

The present brings face to face a fragile European Union, highly affected after Brexit in January and under the siege of COVID-19 pandemic, a Europe that uses NATO services to ensure the security of the eastern border, and a reinvented Russian Federation, which is increasingly pursuing its interest to dominate Eastern Europe and to control, by any action or method, the routes of gas pipelines to Europe. Therefore, Moscow's scenarios include planning and conducting military intimidation in the Black Sea, the Azov Sea, the Baltic Sea and the Barents Sea, and near the routes of transportation to which it can connect, in order to achieve economic exchanges.

These realities put the countries of the "Pan-European Corridor 9"[7] under pressure, and a sensitive point of these realities is the position and decisions of Minsk government on the directions and future orientation of Belarus, a crossroads state that must decide on which side of the border to position itself to in the future.

1. EU-NATO Eastern Border and Security Environment

Geographically, Europe stretches from the Atlantic Ocean, in the west, to the Ural Mountains and the Caspian Sea, in the east and southeast. However, the geopolitically approach places Europe's Eastern boundary at the western edge of the Russian Plain, in the area of European Russia, where the demarcation alignment between European and Russian-Asian doctrines and ideologies is positioned. On this alignment, at land level lie the Baltic States: Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and Bulgaria. In terms of water, there are the Baltic Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Azov Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

Over time, the strip of land between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea has been a barrier between East and West. Here, an imaginary wall was drawn over which the Huns invasions passed, and later, it was a demarcation line of the expansion of the Russian Empire. At the meeting point of the Christian, Orthodox and Catholic religions with the Asian ones, there is the alignment to which the German Empire had stopped expanding and over which the Napoleonic Empire could not expand. Today, in this region, the border between the European Union and the Russian Federation is drawn, two other new empires with different visions, strategies and ideologies.

[6] A.N.: G.U.A.M. – Organization for Democracy and Economic Development – GUAM consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova, according to the text of the "Kiev Declaration", URL: https://guam-organization.org/en/guam-history-and-institutional-formation, accessed on 24.08.2020.

[7] A.N.: Important European network of roads, railways and sea routes for the transportation of people and goods between northern (Helsinki - Finland) and southern (Alexandroupolis - Greece) Europe.

With the EU and NATO's eastward expansion, it is also necessary to secure Europe's eastern and south-eastern border. Thus, the two structures have started an extensive decision-making process, with effects at strategic and tactical level, by supporting the recommendation to allocate 2% of GDP for defence, by NATO member countries, and by designing and implementing elements meant to deter any aggression attempts, such as the "Missile Shield"[8]. The shield is composed of land structures in Romania at Deveselu, in Poland at Redzikowo, in Turkey at Malatya and in England at North Yorkshire, and it is supported by AEGIS[9] naval systems, located in the Aegean and Mediterranean, thus describing an extremely clear alignment between EU and the Russian Federation. Last but not least, this entire disposition is also supported by a relatively new policy, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), in an extended and strengthened version for the whole eastern flank.

All these measures and actions do not remain indifferent to the Russian Federation, which, in turn, in addition to the resounding interventions in the international press, where it criticizes the actions carried out by NATO member countries, begins and carries out a series of strategic level major exercises, staff exercises involving between 70,000 and 120,000[10] militaries and equipment from all military branches.

One of the most intensely discussed exercises, "Zapad-2017", took place between 14-20 September 2017, and it was based on an extremely belligerent scenario, in which the state of Belarus is invaded by forces from 3 virtual states, Veishnoria, Vesbaria and Lubenia, with the mission of undermining the governmental power in Minsk and turning western Belarus into a separatist fortress. A Russian-Belarusian coalition formed of about 12,700 militaries, 70 planes and helicopters, 250 tanks, 200 pieces of artillery and 10 warships responded to the aggressor forces[11].

The scenario seems to be detached from reality, and if instead of the three fictitious states, the real Baltic states had been involved (Estonia, Latvia and

[8] A.N.: Missile shield – Defence system for detecting, tracking, intercepting and combating intercontinental ballistic missiles and those with medium or short range launched by the enemy, according to URL: https://www.descopera.ro/stiinta/11347340-scuturile-antir missete- and-the-challenges-of-the-wars-of the future, accessed on 12.08.2020.

[9] A.N.: AEGIS System Is integrated radar and surface missile system produced by Lockheed Martin that is designed to track and combat short, medium and intermediate range ballistic missiles, according to URL: https://www.lockheedmartin.com/en-us/products/aegis-combat-system.html, accessed on 12.08.2020.

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Lithuania), the maneuvers and training exercises would have turned into real combat actions. As a result, NATO and EU have taken the necessary measures to ensure the security environment, taking into account the way Russia operates, which, through its actions, intimidates, takes over and imposes control in areas of strategic interest. Examples that support this statement are confirmed by the "Kavkaz-2008"[12] exercise, when Russia sent troops and strengthened the South Ossetian border with Georgia, immediately after the Russo-Georgian war, or the deployment of forces and technical means of combat, in February-March 2014, when "more than 40,000 Russian soldiers"[13] entered and took control of the Crimean Peninsula, newly annexed to the Russian Federation.

As a result, EU's and NATO's reactions are justified. At the same time with the military exercise of the Russian Federation, "Zapad-2017", the two organizations initiated the alert of the multinational battalions from Poland and from the Baltic States, forces which are part of the Northeast Multinational Division[14], with the command centre in Elblag, Poland. Subsequently, these structures organized and conducted large-scale joint military exercises, where, together with their troops, subunits of American soldiers also participated.

Russia's way of doing things also causes non-NATO countries, such as Sweden, to carry out exercises that imitate tactical maneuvers generated by strong offensive actions. Furthermore, the military equipment and troops' redeployment on Gotland Island outlines the Stockholm government's concerns about Russians air and naval maneuvers in the Baltic Sea.

The pressure of demonstrations of force that is being initiated and developed on both sides of the Eastern European border is pressing on all this security environment, and the situation is not about to be defused, creating instability and insecurity in the area.

Another source of insecurity is generated within the state of Belarus, a country trying to move from autocracy to democracy and where street demonstrations are being suppressed by force, and the Minsk government seems more concerned with criticizing NATO military exercises at the Belarus border with Lithuania, rather than to restore the public order.

[12] A.N.: Military exercise carried out by the Russian Federation between 15 and 20 July, 2008, after the Russian-Georgian War, when Georgia had failed to regain control over the pro-Russian separatist region of South Ossetia.

[13] According to *Deutsche Welle (DW)*, "Criza din Ucraina: O cronologie a evenimentelor", URL: https://www.dw.com/ro/criza-din-ucraina-o-cronologie-a-evenimentelor/a-17613460, accessed on 16.09.2020.

[14] A.N.: The Tapa Multinational Battalion in Estonia under British command, the Adazi Multinational Battalion in Latvia under Canadian command, the Rukla Multinational Battalion in Germany under German command, and the Orzysz Multinational Battalion in Poland under US command. all of which make up the Northeast Multinational Division in which forces from 15 NATO states operate.

The EU position in this case is affirmed by the voice of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who stresses that "the EU is on the same side with the people of Belarus and with the protesters in the Independence Square, in Minsk"[15], which calls for new elections and new government who can build a democratic and free Belarus.

On the other hand, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who has been president for more than a quarter of a century, claims that the elections were fair and were based on the political and military support provided by President Vladimir Putin, who claims that in case of a security and independence threat to the state of Belarus, he agrees to supplement the military forces of the Belarusian army with Russian military elements and structures.

If the decision to deploy troops and equipment from the Russian Federation to Belarus is reached, action will be taken on the established pattern, and the framework is already ensured by organizing together with the army in Belarus and Serbia, in September 2020, the Russian-Belarusian-Serbian military exercise, "Slavic Brotherhood 2020". This exercise has two directions of influencing the actions of the Eastern European flank. The first in the area of the international community, where Russia's interest in gaining control in Belarus and the Baltic Sea area is reiterated, and the second, in a national attempt to intimidate the Belarusian people who marches on the streets, to suppress demonstrations and popular movements, securing President's Lukashenko position, a trusted ally of Moscow. The situation in Brussels is disturbing the UE forum, therefore on their recommendation, Serbia will not participate in the "Slavic Brotherhood 2020" exercise this year[16].

Above these tensions is the global alert caused by the coronavirus pandemic, a risk that influences regional security in Eastern Europe and adds to the already extensive list of risks and threats that shape the fragile Eastern European security environment.

2. About Belarus

Contemporary Belarus consists of six regions, each with regional executive and legislative authority, chaired by an Administrative Committee run by the country's president.

The nationalities that are established on the territory of the Republic of Belarus

[15] A.N.: Speech on the state of the European Union in the European Parliament, Brussels, September 16, 2020, according to URL: https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/eveniment/ursula-von-der-leyen-sustine-primul-sau-discurs-despre-starea-uniunii, accessed on 16.09.2020.

[16] According to *Mediafax*, „Frăția slavă-2020 se destramă. Serbia renunță la exercițiile militare din Belarus", URL: https://m.mediafax.ro/externe/fratia-slava-2020-se-destrama-serbia-renunta-la-exercitiile-militare-din-belarus-19538513, accessed on 16.09.2020.

are: Belarusians (83.7%), Russians (8.3%), Poles (3.1%), Ukrainians (1.7%)[17], nationalities that have in common Slavic ethnicity and populates the over 100 cities and over 100 rural localities, and the demographic density in the urban area is 70%.

The history of Belarus is extremely interesting and sprinkled with significant events that have tilted the pendulum of the Belarusian nation to the west of the European civilization, to the east of the Eastern and Asian culture and civilization. The territory of the current state of Belarus was the area where Slavic tribes came into contact with "Varangian merchants and warriors"[18], assimilating them and forming the state of Kievan Ruthenia[19]. It is the first state entity built on the structure of a federation, from which were formed three important nations, Belarusians, Ukrainians and Russians; they all have in common the same ethnic group, the Slavic ethnic group.

The annexation of several regions/principalities of Kievan Russia to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania[20], after the Mongol invasion of the 13th century, outlines the multinational character of this federation formed by Orthodox and Greek Catholics, Jews, Armenians, Germans and brings some political, economic and cultural stability in the area.

Later, the participation of the Grand Duchy, together with Poland, in the military campaigns against the Teutonic Knights appointed to preach the Catholic religion facilitated the achievement of the Polish-Lithuanian Union[21], which took control of the northwestern borders of Eastern Europe and began to prosper due to monopoly on the commercial route which connects the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea and to the Orient.

The Grand Duchy's expansion was possible due to the Mongol state's decline and due to the existence of a Slavic culture, a common culture, for the peoples that formed this principality.

[17] ***, "Republica Belarus", *Ministerul Afacerilor Externe*, URL: http://www.mae.ro/node/4507, http://www.mae.ro/node/4507, accessed on 16.09.2020.

[18] A.N.: Name given (by the Eastern Slavs, Byzantines and Arabs) to the Germanic populations of the Scandinavian Peninsula which, between 9th and 11th centuries, entered eastern Europe, reaching Byzantium − according to URL: https://dexonline.ro/definitie accessed on 16.09.2020.

[19] A.N.: Kievean Ruthenia or Kievean Russia was the first state of the Eastern Slavs dominated by the city of Kiev, from 880 until the middle of the twelfth century according to URL: https://dexonline.ro/definitie, accessed on 16.09.2020.

[20] A.N.: Between the 12th and 18th centuries, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a state in Eastern Europe that expanded by conquering parts of Kievan Russia occupying territories that are now part of Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland and Russia.

[21] A.N.: The Polish-Lithuanian State Union, officially called the "Republic of the Two Nations" or the "Federation of the Two Nations" according to *Istoria*, „Uniunea statală Polono-Lituanuiană (1569-1795)", URL: http://istoria.md/articol/126/Uniunea_statal%C4%83_Polono_Lituanuian%C4%83, accessed on 16.09.2020.

Part of the Grand Duchy, with its population on the territory of Kievan Russia, represents the state of Belarus today, which was also called White Russia, a name given to the fact that this territory was not conquered by the Tartars and escaped the destructive invasions of the Mongols an area populated by free people living in an independent state.

The establishment and expansion of the Russian Empire brings from the first reign, that of Ivan III the Great, also called Tsar of All Russia, all territories from north to south between the Arctic Ocean and the Black Sea and from east to west between the Pacific Ocean and the Baltic Sea, in the same form of a monarchical state. Thus, White Russia had been part of the Russian Empire until 1918, when the new state of Belarus declared its independence.

Located between Poland and Soviet Russia during the Bolshevik War[22], Belarus is divided into Lithuanian-Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic in the eastern part, which was on the Russian influenced part and the western part that Poland annexes, much more open to economic, social and cultural freedoms.

The end of the Second World War establishes new borders between the states of the world and new lines of demarcation and of influences in the areas of interest. The Soviet Socialist Republic of Belarus begins a period of reconstruction alongside the USSR, developing as an important industrial center in which workers from all over Russia were posted and where Belarusian nationalists are promoted by the socialist system in important government positions and leadership state structures.

The communist period removes Belarus from Western Europe due to restrictions imposed by Moscow and submits the population of the former White Russia to excessive Sovietization in parallel with the dissolution of all the values that meant local culture, education and society. It is a time for a policy of cultural assimilation aimed at impeding the free development of the Belarusian nation. The socialist party will begin to impose itself by force, while fraudulent elections take place with the participation and support of the Russian secret police and the Red Army, which sow terror through their way of action. People's goods are confiscated and nationalized, and at the national level, economic and living conditions are worsening. Agricultural lands are nationalized and individual farms become collective farms. People of West Belarus bow their heads in front of the communist roller coaster, and if they opposed these measures, the socialist control bodies would have reacted immediately with arrests, deportations and even executions.

The '90's bring Belarus' first pro-independence actions followed by the declaration of independence, the name change from Belarus to the Republic of

[22] A.N.: The Bolshevik War or the Polish-Soviet War took place between February 1919 and March 1920, put face to face the Russian army against the armies of Poland and Ukraine, and had as its stake the control of the territories that today belong to Belarus and Ukraine, according to Rex A. WADE, "The Bolshevik Revolution and Russian Civil War" Greenwood Publishing House, 2001, Michigan.

Belarus and participation in the agreement with Russian and Ukrainian leaders that provided for the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CSI).

The new state of Belarus is on the path to a fragile democracy, and its position between Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Ukraine and the Russian Federation gives it a special geopolitical importance, especially because it is located on the main access road to the Russian enclave Kaliningrad and ensures the exit to the Baltic Sea, which is one of the great strategic interest of the Russian Federation.

3. Belarus, a Possible Regional Insecurity Pole

Security in Eastern Europe is one of the biggest challenges facing UE and NATO, and, at the same time, a vulnerability, due to the poor development of a defence structure designed to ensure the common security, especially of the newly affiliated states to the two structures.

The UE and NATO political accelerated eastward expansion was achieved relatively quickly, but could not be achieved in parallel with the implementation of defence elements designed to ensure regional security, and, as a setback to this deficiency, forms of hybrid warfare and actions of repeated intimidation appeared and intensified, carried out by the Russian Federation in the ex-Soviet states, still economically and politically dependent on Moscow.

However, in recent years there has been a more active involvement of the two structures (NATO and EU), with US's significant participation, based on strategic partnerships, which has reduced the gap between words and deeds and has materialized by intensifying specific military, economic and political actions in countries that share a border with the Russian Federation or are situated on EU and NATO's eastern periphery.

Russian Federation's interest to gain power and influence in Eastern Europe has been demonstrated since 2014, by the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, followed by intense military demonstrations, actions specific to hybrid aggression and interventions, more or less revealed, in organizing and conducting elections in former USSR satellite states.

The situation of the Soviet Union's former member states, as well as those who belonged to the Warsaw Pact, is not an easy one. The acquisition of modern equipment and weapons systems is still pending or if it has already been done, it is still in the process of being operational. States' security and safety is still dependent on the old Soviet systems, and in addition to this precarious endowment of the armies, the lack of defence infrastructure in the region, transport routes, airports, roads, bridges, and poor management of oil pipelines and gas or electrical installations have profound implications for both civil society and economic development in the region.

Thus, many Eastern Europe areas are included in the strategic plans with Anti Access/Area Denial[23] codes, and NATO undertakes the mission to eliminate these areas and to achieve collective defence, in parallel with the implementation of military infrastructures and with the reconstruction and consolidation of civilian infrastructures. This requires time and especially money, and the large gap between the economies of Eastern European countries is creating more and more obvious differences and complicating the process of achieving interoperability. All this is happening while the military exercises and hybrid actions of the Russian Federation are ongoing, without being disturbed by the obstacles and deficiencies of the precarious infrastructure on the eastern flank, so necessary for the alliance to organize and implement collective defence operations.

To all these, the current situations can be added. It can generate security crises, situations identified by Turkey's uncertain position (NATO member country), which prefers combat systems in the Russian Federation, the resurgence of conflicts considered frozen as between Armenia and Azerbaijan, escalation of military tensions between Israel and Syria and economic tensions between Cyprus and Turkey or between Greece and Turkey, activation of the territorial defence and command-control system in Ukraine and last but not least, anti-government demonstrations and demonstrations in the capital Minsk and from other major Belarusian cities, brutally repressed by security and police forces.

The Republic of Belarus's future and the directions it will guide its development policies and strategies are still in question. Geopolitically, however, the realities present a Belarusian state in the "buffer zone" between the Russian Federation and the EU, a state supporting the strategies and projects designed in Moscow and focused on building and consolidating the access corridor to the Kaliningrad enclave and from there to trade the routes on the Baltic Sea, in parallel with having total control of gas pipeline routes from Russia to Europe.

Thus, Russia's strategic objectives do not allow it to keep Belarus out of its sphere of influence. Moscow supports Lukashenko's government and needs the influence of this controversial president to support cooperation, and thus control in many areas such as politics, economics or finance, and in addition, the two states jointly manage airspace and air defence in the Belarusian area of responsibility.

However, the protests in Belarus originate elsewhere. The economy in recession and under US sanctions generates social problems at the level of the lower and middle classes of society and determines anti-government movements. The government is at a standstill and largely dependent on Russia's economy, which

[23] A.N.: Anti Access/Area Denial −A2/AD is an area where there are military systems or devices and where a strategy is applied to prevent an opponent from occupying or crossing that area by land, sea or air. According to *Defence Matters*, "A2/AD explained in three minutes", URL: https://www.defencematters.org/news/a2-ad-explained-three-minutes-vid/1073/, accessed on 16.09.2020.

is in an awkward position due to EU economic sanctions, falling oil prices on the international market and the devaluation of the Russian ruble, which has led to the collapse of the Belarusian ruble.

The Minsk leadership is seeking solutions and financial support from the Eurasian Stabilization and Development Fund[24], but the borrowed funds are unlikely to reach Belarus, and the government is forced to start negotiations with the EU and the International Monetary Fund. Thus, the EU lifts economic sanctions and paves the way for exports from Belarus to the West, but also imposes conditions on economic restructuring and permission to closely monitor all plans and projects aimed at rebuilding infrastructure.

The conditions imposed by EU do not comply with the Russian-Belarusian relations levels and determine Moscow to put pressure on the Minsk government, taking into consideration that Russia is the main sale market for Belarus. At the same time, under President Putin's pressure, the Russian Federation is launching promises to reduce oil and gas prices and promises to identify solutions to reschedule Belarus's debts to Moscow.

Nowadays, Belarus has to deal with strong internal and external pressures. President Lukashenko, unrecognized by Brussels' chancellery, continues to use force in establishing internal order and security, a method strongly condemned by EU, which supports the Belarusian opposition in its efforts to overthrow the totalitarian regime imposed by the "last dictator of Europe"[25].

The extremely tense situation in the region worries the EU decision-making forums and determines the adoption of new sanctions to be applied to the Minsk regime. These reactions will cause an even more pronounced cleavage between Belarus and EU and will facilitate the strengthening of Russian-Belarusian relations.

The future will soon show us whether the Russian Federation is still able to economically and financially support Belarus in a deep internal political crisis, which if not achieved will lead to the end of the Lukashenko's dictatorial regime and the reorientation of Belarus to the west.

[24] A.N.: Eurasian Stabilization and Development Fund – a financial agreement coordinated by Russia between Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia and Tajikistan to combat the negative consequences of crises, to ensure long-term economic support and to encourage the economic integration of member countries. According to *Eurasian Fund for Stabilization and Development*, URL: https://efsd.eabr.org/en/about, accessed on 16.09.2020.

[25] M. Teodorescu, "Povestea „ultimului dictator al Europei". Ascensiunea lui Lukaşenko de la şef de colhoz la preşedinte al Belarusului", *Adevărul*, URL: https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/cine-ultimul-dictator-europei-ascensiunea-lukasenko-sef-colhoz-presedinte-belarusului-1_5f3c50ec5163ec427119cd75/index.html, accessed on 16.09.2020.

Conclusions

History has shown us that it repeats itself. Any expansion of an empire ended with a decline and a return to the national and individual values of each culture.

EU and NATO expansion to the east of Europe has generated the creation of a regional security climate that can hardly be managed.

Internal political problems and the significant economic gap between the countries members of the two structures responsible for ensuring regional security and stability, superimposed over the COVID-19 pandemic, make it even more difficult to achieve the suggested strategies, and EU admits itself weak and fragile in front of new challenges.

The security environment is constantly changing. The positions of the "Member States" become more and more oscillating when it comes to being EU or NATO members (a few examples would be Britain with Brexit or Turkey in relation to the North Atlantic Alliance), and political tensions and social movements in areas of strategic interest do nothing but reconfigure positions and influences the geostrategic map of the world.

Going back to national values and identifying solutions for improving the defence infrastructure of each state require security investments and funds allocation from national budgets in the field of defence, for the development of capabilities and mobility of military forces. The field of critical infrastructures also requires special attention and by modernizing and digitizing the energy and transport sector, the economic stability and security of a state can be outlined.

Belarus's position in this variable and extremely complex environment can be decisive for both EU countries and the Russian Federation. The decision of the Minsk government is not the one that will matter, Belarusians' attitude will be important. It is the one that, if succumbs to external pressures from the east, stays true to the directives issued in Moscow, and if it yields to pressure from the west and turns its back on the Russian Federation, may turn into a theater of operations through which Russia will try to maintain its influence in the area of Eastern Europe.

The situation, which is still uncertain and unclear, is on the agendas of international and regional organizations, including the Riga Conference on 12-13 November 2020, where regional and international experts in foreign policy and defence, university teachers, journalists and business representatives will discuss, analyze and evaluate possible directions for the evolution of the regional security environment.

Regardless of the identified solutions and the agreed decisions, the state of Belarus will be the one to decide whether to represent a "bridgehead" in the Russian Federation's offensive to conquer regional influences in the Baltic Sea area or whether to establish in an advanced redoubt of EU common defence policy, supported by NATO, on the Eastern Europe flank.

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THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE MOSAIC WARFARE

Crăișor-Constantin IONIȚĂ, PhD*

In the past years, we have been witnessing huge steps taken in the field of research-development-innovation (RDI), in which our images from fiction films and researchers' predictions have exceeded all expectations, getting closer and closer of what we imagined many years ago. The possibility of teleportation has become a reality, even if today it can happen just in quantum space. Scientists claim that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become conscious and can fly military aircraft.

Officially, the programme to provide security of American military bases with robot dogs has already been presented, and the soldier-type humanoid robots are still in the experimental phase. It will not take long and robots will replace humans in many areas, including the multi-domain operational space. In addition to the US, France has announced the start of its research to develop "improved soldiers".

As a result, this paper aims to present the progress recently made in the RDI, in terms of developing the capabilities of the future Mosaic Warfare.

Keywords: *Mosaic Warfare; Quantic Network; Artificial Intelligence Model GPT-3; ARTUμ algorithm; robot-dog; Advanced Warfighting Systems; "improved soldiers".*

Introduction

Modern Armed Forces have always tried to use new devices and innovative weapon systems to reduce the risk of their own losses and defeat their enemies.

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With the development of sophisticated technology, forces are mainly based on weaponry or high-tech machinery, which have recently come into use. Robotics is one of the hot spots of the modern age, where nations are focusing on military purposes during peacetime, preparing for war. Robots have already been used for demining and rescue operations, but are now being tested for combat or espionage missions.

Currently, in the military field, specific types of robots are used for different applications, from mine detection, surveillance, logistics, to rescue operations. In the future, they are expected to be used for reconnaissance and surveillance, logistics and support, communications infrastructure and even in offensive operations, carried out before the mission and as a misleading, to hide the manoeuvre of military capabilities.

In fact, there is already the issue of developing humanoid or android military capabilities that supplement and support human military capabilities. In this regard, in the laboratories of the military defence research agencies, investigations are underway, in different stages of implementation, to develop certain robots necessary for the unpredictable operational space, which will be able to carry autonomously out their mission and with the same efficiency as man-piloted combat systems. The latest techniques for making robots are evaluated and considered in order to create technologically advanced and intelligent machines for various operations.

So far, the market sales competition of high-tech military products is huge, reputable companies or new entrants in this field struggling to develop robots and Artificial Intelligence systems, increasingly close to the needs of national security and defence. The degree of secrecy that these military products have makes it more difficult to analyse the status of their development and experimentation, in order to determine the extent of human research and inventiveness. Such an analysis is also difficult due to the fact that many achievements in robotics and autonomous technology are used to mislead competitors or potential opponents, through unrealistic or even false propaganda ads.

Following the decision of American leaders to develop a new strategy for future wars, a few years ago the US Army launched the "Multi-Domain Battle 2017" concept in order to change the way of thinking and conduct future conflicts, for the penetration of the Russian and Chinese Anti-Access Arial Denied systems (A2/AD) and the restoration of freedom of strategic action in the regions controlled by Moscow and Beijing. One year later, in 2018, scientific researchers from the US Government's Agency for Advanced Defence Research Projects (DARPA) proposed a new strategic approach, called "the Mosaic Warfare", to bring together all battle platforms to establish a complete picture of a quick and decisive victory

against any aggressor, as well as to develop an appropriate package of skills. Both initiatives presented new operational concepts that would allow all joint weapon systems to work together, thus massing the fire and not the forces, in order to solve the complexity of the modern operational space and transform it into an asymmetric advantage.

The paradigm of these new strategies is the understanding and acceptance of the "man-machine" binomial, as a sine-qua non condition for achieving complete victory in any type of conflict. The approach of the US Army aims to achieve a synergy between domains of action, by ensuring the complementarity of defence capabilities and not increasing their number, leading to the efficiency growth of their use and covering existing vulnerabilities, achieving a joint action of all integrated forces, as a unitary whole. But here comes the risk of competitiveness and not the achievement of complementarity between the two types of military capabilities – humanoid/ android and human, because large companies producing developed technologies need firm orders and huge investments to survive the fierce battle on the arms market sale.

The strategy proposed by the American researchers from DARPA, regarding the future Mosaic Warfare, would like to eliminate this risk, ensuring the possibility of all weapon systems working together, acting together and simultaneously, in a System-of-Systems (SoS), which ensures the discovery/warning, decision making and action/hit (sense-decide-act).

1. Quantic Technology and the Revolution in Artificial Intelligence

Teleportation has been analysed and discussed since 1943, during the "Philadelphia" experiment on hiding a battleship (the American destroyer USS Eldridge/DE-173) from the opponent's radars, by implementing the electromagnetic force. Considered the first successful experiment on teleportation[1], it was stopped due to the consequences of the human disaster that occurred both during and after its realisation, with the disappearance of all secret files of the scientific research activity, called "Rainbow", even though famous physicists such as Albert Einstein and Nikola Tesla contributed to its execution. The fact that mankind has conducted such an experiment, with immeasurable advantages for time and space travel, has ignited the spirits of scientific researchers to achieve a teleportation that contains fewer risks. Some of the theories that followed this experiment referred to the conjecture of chronological protection (closed temporal curve or

[1] Mike Dash, "Borderlands: The Ultimate Exploitation of the Unknown", *Overlook Press*, 2000, New York, p. 22.

the so-called "wormhole")[2], Novikov's principle of self-consistency[3], and even quantum mechanics of time travel.

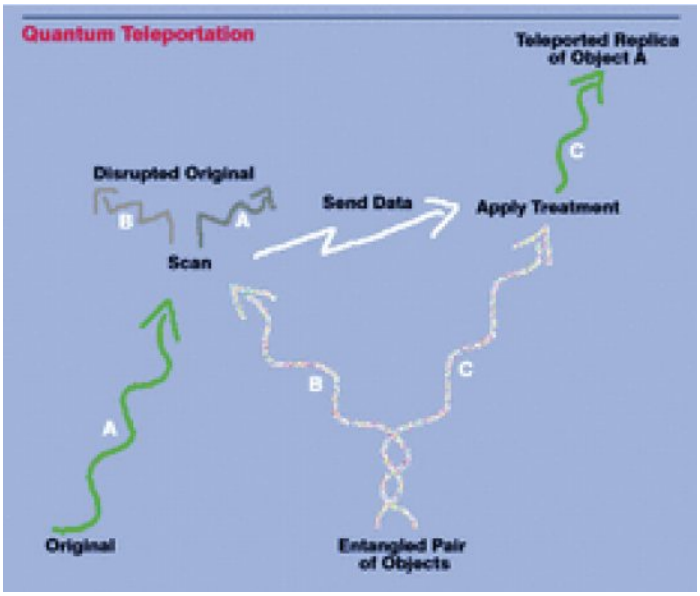

Figure no. 1: Quantic teleportation[4]

Teleportation is not a scientific activity in itself, but the name given by fiction writers to the disappearance of an object or a person from one place and its appearance elsewhere. One of the first theorists to approach the Quantum theory was the American physicist David Joseph Bohm, but his 1951 theory of the "wrapped" order appeared in a pioneering period and was not very well understood. Recently, however, a group of six IBM researchers took up the ideas of Bohm's Quantum theory, which they combined with the famous Einstein-

[2] A.N.: *The conjecture on the protection of chronology* is an assumption originally proposed by Stephen Hawking in 1992, who says that the laws of physics are likely to prevent time travel on all scales, except sub-microscopic ones. The permissibility of time travel is mathematically represented by the existence of closed temporal curves in some exact solutions of general relativity.

[3] A.N.: According to Eng. Nicolae Sfetcu, in his paper "Causal paradoxes in time travel", from May 2, 2019, the physicist Igor Dmitriyevich Novikov discussed the possibility of *closed time curves (CTC)* in his books of 1975 and 1983, offering the opinion that only back self-regulated trips would be allowed. In his 1990 paper, he states "The Cauchy Problem in Space-Time with Closed Time Curves", the author suggesting the principle of self-consistency, which says that the only solutions to the laws of physics that can locally occur in the real universe are those that are globally self-consistent. Later, the author concluded that this time travel must not lead to incomprehensible paradoxes, regardless of the type of object that has been sent in the past. MultiMedia Publishing House, Drobeta Turnu Severin, 2019, p. 5.

[4] *Source:* Fizica 2000.

Podolski-Rosen (EPR) effect[5], proving that perfect teleportation is indeed possible in theory, only if the original is destroyed. Thus, they managed to find a way, according to Figure no. 1, "to measure a part of the properties of object A, which is to be teleported, while making the other part of the information, unknown, of object A, pass – through the EPR effect – to another object, C, object which has not been in contact with A. Later, by applying to object C a treatment according to the 'read' information from A, it is possible to change the state of C so that it becomes identical to A, in the state in which it was before the scan. Object A is no longer in that initial state since it was scanned, so what was obtained is teleportation, not replication. The rest of the information that was not scanned from A, is transmitted from A to C through a third object, B, which interacts, first, with C and then with A. Here? Is that correct? You mean 'first with C and then with A'? Of course, usually, in order to get something from A to C, we must first access A and then C, and not the other way around[6]".

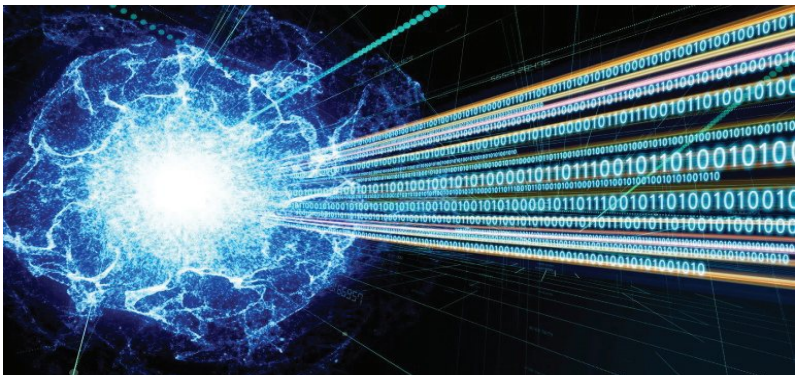

Figure no. 2: How the Network Quantum is realised[7]

[5] A.N.: The EPR effect (after the names of the three great physicists who discovered it) speaks of such subtle information which cannot be scanned or read or measured, unlike any other material properties of objects. But it has been partially understood since the 1930s, when it was discussed in a famous material by physicists Albert Einstein, Boris Podolski and Nathan Rosen. In the 1960s, John Bell showed that two "paired" particles that were once in contact but were too far apart to exchange information in any way would act individually in identical ways, randomly, manners that cannot be explained by statistics. Experiments with photons and other particles have demonstrated these correlations, thus validating quantum mechanics. Another feature of the EPR effect is that the information provided cannot be understood and controlled in the classical way. It is exactly that part of the information that cannot be extracted in ordinary, classical ways. Exactly what makes object A teleportable and becomes object C.

[6] Suciu Alexandru Alin, "Teleportarea cuantică", *Fizica*, 2020, URL: https://asfizica.weebly.com/teleportarea-cuantic259.html#, accessed on 03.02.2021, author's translation.

[7] Sursa: Fuliver/GettyImages.

However, the Quantum teleportation does not refer to the movement of objects from one place to another, but to the movement of Quantum information, which must be transmitted through light particles, called photons (see Figure no 2). Earlier this year, a Fermilab team from the US Department of Energy, along with NASA and researchers from the University of Calgary, were able to teleport Quantum bits of photons along 44 kilometres of fibre, which represents a first in the World science and a major achievement for the IT field[8]. It is the first step that leads to the connection of Quantum computers, already existing in the World, so that they can communicate with each other in the future. The ultimate goal of these experiments, as stated by the Romanian physicist Cristian Prescură, is to create a Quantum Network, which will ensure the transport of Quantum data from one side to the other, so that all Quantum computers work in unison. Work is already underway on such a network, near Chicago, which will become the first Quantum internet Web in the World, and the finalisation period is expected to be in the next 50 years.

Figure no. 3: GPT-3 Artificial Intelligence System[9]

Another world premiere is the statement of American professor David Chalmers, from New York University, an expert in mental mechanisms, who states that Artificial Intelligence has become conscious, analysing the Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3 (GPT-3) System of Artificial Intelligence, which excels in language. This system (see Figure no. 3), developed by Elon Musk's American

[8] Luana Pavaluca, "Realizare majoră pentru știință: prima teleportare cuantică pe distanță lungă. Ce va însemna internetul cuantic pentru omenire", *Digi 24*, January 3, 2021, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/sci-tech/descoperiri/realizare-majora-pentru-stiinta-prima-teleportare-cuantica-pe-distanta-lunga-ce-va-insemna-internetul-cuantic-pentru-omenire-1427473, accessed on 01.02.2021.
[9] Source: Fuliver/GettyImages.

OpenAI research laboratory, in June 2020, "generates text with minimal human intervention, at an extremely fast pace. It can recognize and reproduce word patterns, even before estimating what will follow, due to its incredible power, obtained with the help of 175 billion linguistic parameters[10]".

The GPT-3 machine learning system, considered the first forerunner of general Artificial Intelligence, has attracted worldwide admiration for its remarkable ability to generate text with minimal human interference, and can process, according to the Financial Times, 45 billions of times more words than a person perceives in his/her entire life. In addition, the AI system has learned to post comments on the Reddit Internet network, design a satirical poem about Musk, compose an entire article for The Guardian, translate and solve math problems, and recently wrote a three and a half minutes of a film scenario[11].

Nowadays, artificial intelligence is developing rapidly in the World and can be used outside the military in deepfake technology – falsified content with the help of Artificial Intelligence –, which can be so realistic that even computers cannot detect it. It can be also used in the artistic field of design, where the multidisciplinary Russian company Art.Lebedev Studio already created a computer designer called "Nikolai Ironov", which they included in over 20 different projects involving the construction of brands' logos and the manufacture of brands' identities. The same approach is taken by Mailchimp, which uses AI to allow companies to invent marketing campaigns without human contribution, and Adobe has launched "Sensei", an AI design assistant[12]. Other areas of use of various AI applications are: voice assistance, voice and facial recognition systems, robots, autonomous cars.

As a precautionary measure, following the heavily disputed discussions after the respective scientific premiere, in which they discovered that AI systems have outperformed people in many ways – do not sleep, do not get sick, have no creative blockages and can complete a task in seconds –, the EU reacted by calling on Member States to strengthen their legislation to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, in the context of an increased use of AI-type applications, which could become a source of errors and discrimination. The fact that the Coronavirus pandemic has accelerated the adoption of AI at European level (42% of European companies use applications that have incorporated AI: the Czech Republic 61%, Bulgaria and

[10] Anca Grădinaru, "Revoluția AI. Un om de știință susține că inteligența artificială a devenit conștientă", *Digi 24*, January 1st, 2021, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/sci-tech/revolutia-ai-un-om-de-stiinta-sustine-ca-inteligenta-artificiala-a-devenit-constienta-1424650, accessed on 04.02.2021, author's translation.

[11] A.N.: The students who made the film during the laboratory tests used a tool derived from GPT-3, named "Shortly Read". They wrote the first lines, then let the Artificial Intelligence go wild. Everything that follows is based on 175 billion parameters – that is, the associations that the algorithm draws between words and phrases, depending on the data with which it was trained.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Lithuania 54%, being the most advanced) and that it has started to be used also by law enforcement agencies, as well as the medical sector, the private sector and intelligence agencies, have raised the issue of the risk of unlimited adoption of new technologies, without assessing the social impact on their use and the possibility of violating people's privacy and creating discrimination in employment, if certain criteria exclude categories of the population, based on surname or address[13].

Also for the first time, at the military level, the US Air Force tested, on December 15, 2020, the possibility of co-piloting a "U-2 Dragon Lady" type spy plane by an Artificial Intelligence system. The AI algorithm, called "ARTUμ", was developed by researchers from a US federal laboratory to execute specific missions and tasks that a co-pilot would normally perform[14]. Considering that we already are in an AI arms race, the Deputy Secretary for Procurement, Technology and Logistics of the US Air Force, Dr. Will Roper, said in an interview with CNN on the same day, that "it is the first such flight, a huge leap forward in national security in the digital age. The safely use of Artificial Intelligence during such a flight represents the transition to a new era of the relationship between humans and robots. If we had not fully realised the potential of Artificial Intelligence, this would have meant giving up an important advantage to our opponents". The statement comes in the context of a recent Pentagon report that in the past five years, China has managed to use unmanned Surface-to-Air AI-piloted surface vessels to make its known claims in the China Sea and tested unmanned tanks as part of research efforts to integrate AI into Chinese Land Forces equipment[15].

Considered a real potential for economic growth, improved communications and strong technologicalisation of military decision-making systems, the huge achievements in Quantum physics and Artificial Intelligence are not infallible, considering how they work and how automated decisions can be challenged. In their development and implementation, those companies must respect all fundamental human rights and provide guarantees to ensure that the human factor can challenge the decisions made by machines, clearly explaining how their systems make and transmit automated decisions.

[13] Adrian Dumitru, "Uniunea Europeană vrea să își apere cetățenii de inteligența artificială. Care este motivul", *Digi 24*, December 14, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/uniunea-europeana-vrea-sa-isi-apere-cetatenii-de-inteligenta-artificiala-care-este-motivul-1417574, accessed on 04.02.2021.

[14] Adrian Dumitru, "Un avion militar de spionaj a fost co-pilotat pentru prima oară de un algoritm de inteligență artificială. Cum s-a desfășurat zborul", *DigiTv*, December 18, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/un-avion-militar-de-spionaj-a-fost-co-pilotat-pentru-prima-oara-de-un-algoritm-de-inteligenta-artificiala-cum-s-a-desfasurat-zborul-1420102, accessed on 03.02.2021.

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 2.

2. The Application of Robotics Innovations in Military Actions

All US Military Services, as well as other modern Armed Forced, are interested in procuring/purchasing robots and automated systems for future wars. The US Army has also developed a strategy for this. Their great interest in the latest technological developments is logical and normal for several reasons. First al all, these systems act as a force multiplier, allowing the use of a smaller number of fighters in an operation, with greater effects, reducing possible human losses and ensuring a wider robots intervention in areas considered, initially inaccessible. Moreover, robots can replace human fighters in dangerous or cumbersome actions, allowing decision makers not to worry too much about destroying robots by enemy fire or sending them to contagious areas. As the Chief of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley affirmed in two independent speeches, robotics and artificial intelligence will play an important role in the future of military conflict over the next 10 to 15 years.

We are already witnessing the deployment of autonomous military equipment to replace military personnel in certain positions being considered dangerous or with exhausting physical obligations and high mental consumption. Thus, at the level of modern Land Forces, combat vehicles operated by robots were made, which would engage the opponent without endangering their own troops. To this end, the Russian company Rosoboronexport revealed, in 2019, the existence of the autonomous "Uran-9" 10 tons tank, being piloted by a single person, with the possibility to act autonomously, under certain conditions. The tank has an advanced target detection and identification system, a 30 mm cannon and missile launch capabilities, being designed for urban combat and counter-terrorism actions. It is much larger and more advanced than the American "Talon" robot, designed in 2000, to carry out anti-mining actions and execute fire with small arms. At the same time, South Korea has developed, since 2006, a Samsung SGR-A1 sentry cannon system, capable of autonomously monitoring and firing targets, as well as a 127 mm DoMaam Super aEgis II horsepower system, which can detect people at 3 km during the day and 2.2 km at night, verbally warning them and then opening fire, after obtaining approval from a human operator. These autonomous systems were deployed in 2010 on the common border with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea[16].

At the level of the Naval Forces, in addition to protecting the human factor, autonomous ships have the advantage that they do not have to feed, supply water, heat or entertain the human crew. As a result, they do not even need to be equipped with sleeping cabins, dining rooms or bathrooms, which makes them much smaller

[16] Jon Walker, "Military Robotics Innovation – Comparing the US to Other Major Powers", *AI Emerj Reaaserch and Councelling Company*, November 22, 2019, URL: https://emerj.com/ai-sector-overviews/military-robotics-innovation/, accessed on 04.02.2021.

and able to operate for longer periods of time. Such an achievement was obtained by the American research agency DARPA, which has developed, since 2010, the autonomous anti-submarine battleship "Sea Hunter", designed to track classic submarines in immersion, but also to test the possibilities of a fully autonomous ship. The operating costs of such an autonomous ship, which entered into the US Navy's service in 2018, are 15,000-20,000 dollars/day, while a traditional destroyer costs 700,000 dollars/day[17].

The Air Force is much more advanced in the use of military robotics technology, starting with military drones and ending with Unmanned Aerial Combat Vehicles (UCAVs). The first military use of an unmanned aerial vehicle was made by Israel in 1969, when it installed simple cameras on remote-controlled toy planes to obtain information from the border with Egypt. Since then, their use in operations has amplified and even diversified, reaching to directly engage the opponent's targets, in order to destroy them. This is the case of the American Predator drone, equipped with the Hellfire missile, which has performed thousands of air strikes since 2002, and which has been replaced by the newer MQ-9 Reaper, capable of flying both remotely and autonomously, on longer distances, faster and carrying a larger load of ammunition. American company General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. recently won a contract for the production of 36 such drones, at a total cost of $ 400 million[18].

The researchers and builders of military surveillance drones' intention is to reduce their volume as much as possible, turning them into micro-drones, which can act in swarms/networks, such as the American micro-drones "Perdix", developed by the MIT Lincoln Laboratory, starting with September 2014. This network of micro-drones, still in the testing phase and considered by some specialists as AI, demonstrated, in October 2016, that it can act as a collective body in "swarm"-type of combat, sharing a "single distributive brain" for decision making, communicating and collaborating with each other without having a designated leader[19]. Another example is the ultra-tiny "Black Hornet" drones, the first military personnel search system, originally produced by the British and used in Afghanistan in 2012, later developed by Norway, Australia, Germany and the United States, to allow fighters to scan the nearby area with sight or infrared cameras and obtain information about the local presence of opponents. We must not forget that, in terms of declining costs, miniaturised robotics systems also provide easy access for non-state actors to this technology, which they can arm in various ways and tactically use, to charge them

[17] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 4.
[19] ***, "DoD ramps micro-drones after successful 'swarm' test", *Defense Systems*, September 3, 2017, URL: www.defensesystems.com. Defense Systems. Archived from the original on 2017-09-04, accessed on 04.02.2021.

with improvised explosive devices (IEDs), such as trap-cars or other non-suicidal actions, but with lethal effects.

At the same time, some Governmental agencies and companies are working to develop humanoid robots and "guard dogs" (see Figures no. 4 and 5), which can walk, run, jump or use their hands, in order to possibly replace everything people can do, especially in niche areas. This robotics technology has a dual purpose – its products can be used in both commercial and military spheres. Reduced production costs, less liquid fuel used, and increased accuracy in projects such as the autopilot or delivery drones are just as effective in civilian life as they are in the military. Military robots designed to replace personnel in dangerous situations are just the beginning of this vast scientific research. They will be followed by the digitisation of logistics, because the autonomous systems of land, air or sea transport are already being developed through civil applications, in which defence research agencies/ laboratories also participate. This is the case of the remote controlled car, in which DARPA also participates with the "Grand Challenge" project.

One of the first advanced combat systems the US Armed Forces will be equipped with is the semi-autonomous quadruped land vehicle "Vision 60 UGV" or "AlphaDog", produced by the Ghost Robotics in Philadelphia Company, in collaboration with DARPA and officially tested in November 2020, at the Tyndal Air Force Base in Florida, in the 325th Security Squadron. These "robot- dogs" can

Figure no. 4: The DARPA's "ATLAS" Biped Robot[20]

Figure no. 5: The Robot-Dog for Patrolling inside American Military Bases[21]

[20] Source: Armed_with_Science.
[21] Source: PhProfimedia Images.

travel in difficult places for both humans and patrol vehicles, at 32 km distances, they can carry 180 kilograms and can swim into at least 1.5 m deep waters[22]. They are also equipped with mobile cameras and various sensors, through which they can present images to the accompanying person and can calculate and interpret large amounts of data from different locations. They are controlled by a 1 W microprocessor and powered by a lithium-ion battery, with a range of 10 km. Also, the manufacturer wants to build "dogs' special cages" for recharging[23].

Advanced combat systems, being in various stages of development and experimentation, have the ability to operate in any space or environment, and can be adapted to transport a wide range of sensors and devices, to evaluate local tactical data in nanoseconds, supporting fighters in the modern operating environment. Thus, these systems are as important as satellites or aircraft fuel, becoming one of the keys to the next generation war.

3. The Satellite War and the "Improved Soldiers'"

Developments in the field of gravitational satellites are huge and difficult to understand, due to the classification of information that precedes them. They are both used in the field of communications and decision-making, but also for supervision and warning. We must not lose sight of the fact that there are also killer-satellites dealing with the opponent's satellites, which use laser beams to destroy them. But how far has it come in terms of the accuracy of information transmission and target acquisition?

At the end of last year, some international news agencies, such as AFP and Agerpres or local "Mehr and Fars", launched the idea that the killing of the head of Iranian nuclear program, Mahsen Fakhrizadeh, on 27 November 2020, near Tehran, was based on an satellite automatic remote-controlled machine gun, mounted on a pick-up truck[24]. Although he had his wife by his side and was escorted by 11 members of the Revolutionary Guards, the device used was controlled via the Internet, through a satellite and used a sophisticated camera and Artificial Intelligence to find its target, shooting only at the specific person.

It is worth mentioning that the satellites find excellent military use at strategic

[22] ***, "Robotic dogs unveiled by the US military", *BBC News*, 12 September 2012, URL: https://www.bbc.com/news/av/technology-19567351, accessed on 04.02.2021.

[23] Mihnea Lazăr, "Bazele militare ale SUA vor fi păzite de câini-roboți", *Digi Tv*, December 20, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/bazele-militare-ale-sua-vor-fi-pazite-de-caini-roboti-1420883, accessed on 05.02.2021.

[24] Bogdan Păcurar, "Ipoteză nouă: Șeful programului nuclear iranian a fost ucis cu o mitralieră controlată prin satelit. Cum a fost comis asasinatul", *Digi Tv*, December 6, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/ipoteza-noua-seful-programului-nuclear-iranian-a-fost-ucis-cu-o-mitraliera-controlata-prin-satelit-cum-a-fost-comis-asasinatul-1413564, accessed on 05.02.2021.

distances and in hostile environments, being linked to decision-making and execution systems equipped with sensors and Artificial Intelligence. In the communications field we can already speak of a "Satellite War", as a result of the competition between Elon Musk's Starlink Satellite Constellation, SpaceX, Amazon's Kuiper Satellite Fleet and the recently entered British-Indian OneWeb Company, which has also the intent of establishing a fleet of 648 satellites to occupy the sky. Currently, the company has 110 satellites in low Earth orbit, at an altitude of about 1,200 kilometres, with which it wants to provide high-speed wireless internet and services for many consumers in sectors such as aeronautics, maritime, emergency response , but also for household consumers[25].

In this fierce battle, the SpaceX company did not let itself be outdone either. Elon Musk has signed a $149 million contract with the US Armed Forces to launch satellites capable of tracking ballistic missiles that could pose a threat to national or collective defence. In addition, the company has committed to building a missile capable of reaching about 12,000 km/h speed and carrying 80 tons cargo, which can be delivered in less than 60 minutes, anywhere in the World[26] (for example, in Afghanistan). By comparison, a C-17 Globemaster military transport aircraft achieves the same performance in 15 hours.

Modifying human performance is of similar importance by achieving "improved soldiers". The existing and evolving risks and dangers in the multi-domain operating environment bring new challenges to the fighters and require them new skills and increased efforts of military logistics to equip them to face a simultaneous attack in several areas. As a result, it is believed that modifying human performance will increase the efficiency, safety, resilience and survival of one's own forces, while counteracting the opponent's attempts to impair that performance.

After the American Armed Forces, the French ones have also announced the beginning of research in this field, for the realisation of implants or other "invasive" technologies, intended for combat capability. But here comes the antagonism between the desire to maintain operational superiority and embraced national values. Thus, research could provide improvement systems introduced into the bodies of fighters to change brain capacity or help them to distinguish an ally more quickly from an enemy, and make commanders to locate more easily fighters or read their vital signs from a distance. On the contrary, it is considered essential to set ethical

[25] Bogdan Păcurar, "Războiul sateliților. Încă o companie lansează o constelație de sateliți pe orbita Pământului, la concurență cu SpaceX și Amazon VIDEO", *Digi Tv*, December 18, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/sci-tech/razboiul-satelitilor-inca-o-companie-lanseaza-o-constelatie-de-sateliti-pe-orbita-pamantului-la-concurenta-cu-spacex-si-amazon-video-1420481, accessed on 05.02.2021.

[26] Adrian Dumitru, "Cum s-ar putea realiza călătorii oriunde pe glob în mai puțin de o oră: SpaceX începe construcția unei rachete capabile în 2021", *Digi Tv*, October 10, 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/sci-tech/cum-s-ar-putea-realiza-calatorii-oriunde-pe-glob-in-mai-putin-de-o-ora-spacex-incepe-constructia-unei-rachete-capabile-in-2021-1382144, accessed on 05.02.2021.

limits or even to ban genetic modification and any practices "that would endanger the soldier's integration into society or return to civilian life"[27].

All these achievements in the military field are often based on developments in the civilian one, which are progressing much faster. This is also the case with neurological implants and "invasive" technologies, which are very advanced, as well as civilian communications satellites, launched long ago on the Earth orbit, in large numbers. Therefore, military leaders believe that it is easier and cheaper to take over what already exists on-the-shelf, than to invest in the implementation of such technologies starting with the research and development phase.

Conclusions

The implementation of new technologies will decisively contribute to the Mosaic Warfare approach, being focused on obtaining a decisional advantage over an opponent. The aim is to increase the complexity and confusion of potential opponents by using the most sophisticated and developed AI platforms, unmanned autonomous systems, robots, satellites or improved soldiers, allowing the discovery, identification, decision making and execution of attacks focused on key targets. Thus, the emergence of a possible strategic paradigm on the preparation and conduct of future operations will be decision-centred and decentralised execution.

A new conceptual approach to succeed in future confrontations and conflicts, such as this Mosaic Warfare, requires not only the use of existing high-tech capabilities, adapted to the military field, but also investing in new specific capabilities, such as humanoids/androids ones, AI technologies and autonomous systems. As the next important step in global competition seems to be gaining and maintaining information and decision-making supremacy, there are modern Armed Forces, such as the American ones, that can benefit from the current Hi-Tech achievements to meet the constraints of increasing tax rates. The fact that potential adversaries also have easier access to these technological developments does not help the US Armed Forces to regain its dominant position by simply buying more and more powerful systems for the current approach to the concept of "smart" scale strike, but by investing in the exploitation of disruptive technologies of AI and autonomous systems.

At the same time, we face moral and ethical issues regarding the freedom we provide to these robots and autonomous systems to replace the human factor, in the modern multi-domain operating environment, or to make their own decisions during a military operation. Not only can some fundamental human rights be violated, but

[27] Vlad Mironescu, "Franța începe cercetările pentru a dezvolta 'soldați îmbunătățiți'", *Digi Tv*, 10 December 2020, URL: https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/franta-incepe-cercetarile-pentru-a-dezvolta-soldati-imbunatatiti-1415636, accessed on 05.02.2021.

the very possibility of a human error that could be detected and removed before a decision being put into practice by such a system is denied. Thus, there is a need for well-defined national laws, supported by human values, in order to establish the degree of independence of robots and autonomous systems.

As a result, large multi-functional manned-platform systems may become disadvantageous and inefficient in the future, and they can be easily and cheaper replaced by robots and autonomous systems, which can be used in smaller units but in a large number, having a smaller multi-functional sphere and acting mainly on the adverse decision-making system. Thus, by combining human command with machine control, their own decision-making systems will stimulate human creativity in task development, force allocation, and mission transmission, and machines will transmit and implement them on the spot as part of a military operation.

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE RUSSIAN DOCTRINE FOR A NEW WARFARE MODEL IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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The purpose of this paper is to bring arguments in order to proof that Russia has changed its modern warfare approach by developing a new doctrine which has been tested, step by step, in the last 40 years, culminating with Crimea's annexation as a masterpiece of deception and disinformation.

The beginning of the 21th century brought a new security paradigm. The old 20th century approach proved more often than ever to be obsolete and a change was needed to keep the pace with the new reality and ideology. Russia as the "defeated" Cold War era belligerent needed to restate its world power and regain its influence in the world but most around its borders. There are voices that diminish or cancel the evidence of the Russia's resurgence and argue that there is a new way to conduct wars but the outcome of this hybrid warfare stands still as a living proof in Ukraine/Crimea, Georgia/North Ossetia and Moldova/Transnistria.

In this article we will pursue the research objectives through a comprehensive methodology in order to identify the Russian's military leadership response regarding this issue, international environment (both civilian and military) reaction to this new Russian approach and main characteristics description of this doctrine.

***Keywords**: Gerasimov; new doctrine; hybrid; warfare model; Black Sea; Russia; Crimea.*

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Introduction

The point of this paper regards to whether Russia has changed its military way of conducting wars or accepting that it is acting randomly, opportunistically and takes advantage of a particular situation. Nevertheless, regardless of the various arguments presented, the result of Russia's new policy places it in an aggressive posture towards NATO and EU. A sum of events has to be taken into consideration prior to any statement on Russia's actions to maintain its position and return as a major player, militarily and economically. Valeri Gerasimov, Chief of General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, it is believed to be the mastermind behind the concept of combining military, technological, information, diplomatic, economic, cultural and other tactics for the purpose of achieving strategic goals known as the "Gerasimov's doctrine".

The paper has three parts where we display premises and fundaments as the roots of this doctrine along with facts and events depicted in order to support our opinion against some arguments that claim the doctrine does not exist. Further, within this article, we will bring more arguments as a support, in order to prove that this is the Russia's new military doctrine despite some opinions that argue against. In order to fulfill our task, we will use some research techniques used in military science and intelligence area such as direct observation, facts description, straight forward analysis and formulations of conclusions.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, along with economic failure, made Russia step back from the position of a global power to a regional power. Moreover, the ex-communist countries, together with the countries of former Soviet Union, moved towards the western business model, within the ex-Soviet bloc as well as outside this sphere of influence. These facts and the lack of leadership have put major political pressure on Kremlin's policies. Military power weakened and almost overnight many troops were found stationed outside Russia's borders, with poor logistical and financial support. Despite some agreements in place to keep the military forces on their posts/harbours/ airbases, after a decade from the fall of USSR, the situation has worsened and the danger to lose some strategic positions has become reality. One of these locations is the Crimean Peninsula, with its Black Sea overview and control over old commercial routes. Even though an agreement was signed between Ukraine and Russia to lease military facilities in Crimea, immediately after the USSR collapsed, there was an increased anxiety level of losing access to the Black Sea.

NATO's enlargement towards the East was the trigger that made Russia react and find ways to counter what they say it is encirclement of mother Russia and a threat to its very existence and interests.

1. The Background and the Premises of Russia's New War Doctrine

The last decade of the 20th century was seen as a humiliation for the former Soviet Empire, due to the tacit result of the Cold War and the USSR collapse. It took more than 10 years to the Russian Federation's nostalgic rebirth, after a clarification of the situation and start thinking about how to retake the place in the world as a superpower, not only military, but also economically. If this planned end state has become a reality, it is subject to further debate.

Here in this part, we will highlight the fundamentals and premises that drove Russian's military leadership to develop a new model of warfare, supported by facts and events. There are many instruments of power that Russia has it in its hands, but the new 21st century requires something smoother than brute force of a military machine or nuclear strikes. After the Cold War, Russian politicians (in reality, the former second echelon of the communist party in lead during Gorbachev's perestroika and KGB) had to find ways to cope with the economic failure, plunging posture of military and influence in the world. What did the most painful stance of those times consist in loss of control and influence over the former Soviet countries, and the loss of its military power.

On the other hand, on the European side, former Warsaw Pact member states have moved towards EU and NATO integration, and the danger of some ex-USSR members, such as Ukraine and some of the Caucasian nations (e.g. Georgia and Azerbaijan) to have the same faith made Russia react and find ways to impede or even make such a reality impossible. Thus, since the in-place president took over the power in Russia, the resurgence emerged in internal/external politics as well as in international businesses and military actions. The outcome of this it is now called "Gerasimov's doctrine".

The events around Russian borders and within former Soviet countries (stirring the nationalist spirit among Russian minorities populace outside motherland), have strengthened its position in the hydrocarbon market, the monopole stance over Europe's natural gas and oil recipients, together with small wars and frozen conflicts in its vicinity, shaped and tested the new approach regarding hybrid threats and war. It took a few years until the Western world and NATO reacted to this new and covert threat, mainly because within the Western world Russia's actions are not perceived the same as in Eastern Europe.

Previous military Russian operations gave the Armed Forces the opportunity to test new tactics. Some lessons were learned by the Russian military during the war in Afghanistan. Even though the war was lost, the Kabul's takeover was quite similar, on a smaller scale, however, to what happened in Crimea. A mixture of instruments of power used to overcome the Afghan security forces and political system, sustained by covert actions of apparently uncoordinated men and insignificant fighters and a

joint military action made by them, proved to be one of the most successful ever operations of Russian's special forces. It is a well-known fact that 700 USSR's special forces soldiers overthrew the Afghan regime within days, facing a force of 2200 men, representing the personal guard of the Afghan president. This operation was coordinated through army's branches, at joint level and other instruments of power such as economic influence and propaganda. All of this together brought an amazing success. It was a lesson learned, which was applied and refined at the doctrinal level of what Gerasimov stated as the new way of conducting war.

Not only recent events should be seen as a trigger of Crimea's annexation, but the historical context has to be taken into consideration. Crimea has been a valuable strategic objective to the former Russian Empire since the 18th century. The peninsula provides to Russia not only strategic control over the Black Sea, but also access to the Mediterranean Sea and a place from where the Russian Federation can project military power towards the south and exert full control over natural resources of the Black Sea offshore. Throughout history, Crimea has been subjected to fierce conflicts between Western powers and former old empires, to control the Black Sea or to deny Russia's control of the area. If the peninsula would have been lost again, Russia's economic and military objectives would have been jeopardized, as well as its influence in the area. From this perspective, Crimea's annexation was a matter of when it would happen, rather than why or how. Crimea's control leverages Russian's military power to fulfil and contribute to achieving strategic objectives in order to maintain influence in the area.

The next section will present the columnist Mark Galeotti's opinion[1] with regard to the Russian's new doctrine. In addition, some opinions developed, based on the analysis of factual events will be presented, to counter his statement and prepare for a conclusion.

2. The Backlash and Opinion of Some Analysts on the New Doctrine

In March 2018, Mark Galeotti wrote an insidious point of view in the online version of foreign policy magazine as well as on his blog, in which he stated that from the very beginning the Gerasimov's doctrine is not a doctrine at all but a hoax. His arguments displayed in the article constitute a sum of beliefs and assumptions poorly supported by facts or real events regarding Gerasimov's capacity to theorize and implement a doctrine, as well as such a vision of future wars. Moreover, these presumably arguments are the only opinions of some radio station interviewees. In addition, his references are from a Russian newspaper "Military-Industrial

[1] A.N.: Mark Galeotti is a London-based lecturer and director of the consultancy Mayak Intelligence; a Senior Associate Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute; analyst and observer of post-Cold War space; author of works appreciated worldwide; authors' notes.

Courier", whose journalists interviewed General Gerasimov regarding this modern way of conducting a war by inducing chaos, disorder, civil war and humanitarian catastrophe into the enemy country before the first bullet was fired. Hence, his belief is that this way of conducting a war is how the Kremlin understood the "Arab spring" momentum or the "color revolutions" against corrupt governance in Ukraine. In other words, he implies the idea that Kremlin was just a spectator to a political show orchestrated by foreign powers and just took notice in this regard. Later on, Mr Galeotti goes further with his assumptions, noticing that *there is no single Russian "doctrine." If anything, their campaign is dangerous precisely because it has no single organizing principle, let alone controlling agency. There is a broad political objective – to distract, divide, and demoralize – but otherwise it is largely opportunistic, fragmented, even sometimes contradictory*"[2], which is a very dangerous assumption because it underestimates and diminishes Kremlin's actions. Indeed, there are some opportunistic actions, but seen in the context of what has happened in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, it looks like a long-term campaign of social disruption, ethnic separatism and induced chaos. In fact, the outcome of this campaign is more visible over time, and the effects are the ones that Kremlin is expecting in line with its political agenda to maintain influence in these areas and an illegal advanced military position outside borders.

Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, all former soviet countries, have asked Kremlin to withdraw its troops from their territories and swing to a Western political approach. This political move was the trigger and the real reason that made Kremlin react. First in Moldova, by keeping its army in Transnistria as a peacekeeping force, striking in Georgia in order to protect the Russian minorities in Abkhazia and North Ossetia, and in the end taking over the Crimean peninsula and Donbass region. All these actions had something in common and that was the combined actions at all levels in the targeted society. Aggressive propaganda, political bribery, economic dependency, and an artificially divided civil society have created the perfect environment to intervene for peacekeeping-type operations, in order to protect Russian minorities or even to maintain a favourable situation for a justified intervention. The military leadership exploited and executed a very well-known successfully tested recipe in seizing key buildings and key terrain, but to a different level, however, similar to that one in taking over Afghanistan.[3]

[2] According to Mark Galeotti, „I'm Sorry for Creating the 'Gerasimov Doctrine' ", *Foreign Policy*, URL: https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/03/05/im-sorry-for-creating-the-gerasimov-doctrine, accessed on 11.01.2021; Mark Galeotti, „Controlling Chaos: How Russia manages its political war in Europe", *The European Council on Foreign Relations* (ECFR), URL: http://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/controlling_chaos_how_russia_manages_its_political_war_in_europe, accessed on 11.01.2021

[3] ***, „Soviets take over in Afghanistan", *History*, December 26, 2019, URL: https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/soviets-take-over-in-afghanistan, accessed on 11.03.2021

To argue against Mr. Galotti's, we may say that, by looking back in time and analysing the facts, it is more than obvious that it was a coordinated campaign to induce political disruption, ethnics tensions, economic dependence on hydrocarbons, seeding chaos and inflicting civil wars in the countries with large Russian minorities. These coordinated actions justified the military presence and the need of having these forces in those areas. Actually, Kremlin never had any intent to withdraw its army from former Soviet countries. Inflicting chaos and artificial crisis, using corrupt politicians, exploiting nationalism and the minorities' fears, was the perfect environment to act covertly in order to prevent the so-called "encirclement of Mother Russia" by the neo-fascists from the West. What is missing in Mr. Galeotti's analysis is the historical data to which we must refer. Russia exploits the outcomes from its previous military campaigns, refines the concept and uses them again once the results are the expected ones.

The "Crimea" case started long before the military invasion, somewhere around the year 2000, where it is believed that Russia developed response options to a potential situation of losing access to the Black Sea by foreclosure of its bases in Crimea. Actually, the induced natural gas crisis in the winter of 2006 had the purpose to disrupt the gas flow towards Europe's recipients and observe the reaction of European Union. A secondary objective was to create political divergences within the EU, as well as inside NATO, and eventually exploit them in the future. Since a large number of European countries have a critical dependency on Russian hydrocarbon resources, the leverage over these had a tremendous political and economic effect. What Mr Galeotti forgets again to observe or mention is the political context in Ukraine at that time and the will of people to adhere to EU values and principles, which were never in line with the Kremlin's messages through state media control, even on Ukraine's territory.

In the last part of this paper, will be developed a supported opinion to claim and argue against Mark Galeotti's point of view and proof that Russia has changed its way to conduct wars.

3. Evidence and Facts Supporting the Claim that the Doctrine is True and Accurately Applied

In our opinion, the *modus operandi* in Crimea has been to its full extent in proving that the Gerasimov's doctrine is real and has worked to its fullest effects. Thus, if in Georgia and Moldova there were just rehearsals or drills on a smaller scale, what happened to Ukraine was the climax of this "war" effort where all the instruments and means that Gerasimov stated would be involved, worked together to fulfil the mission in keeping Crimea under the Russian domination as a military bastion at the Black Sea and Caucasus gates. Not only military position had driven

Russia to act, but access and control over enormous hydrocarbon resources offshore Crimea and the Black Sea.

Bearing this in mind, we may consider that Russia's objective is to keep and preserve its monopole position through which it can leverage its political will long before military actions starts. Natural gas and oil are tools that Russia uses to influence the political decisions in the EU and fracture the cohesion within NATO. Many European countries are highly dependent on Russian hydrocarbons, and to change this *status quo* will require massive expenditures regarding alternative sources. These are the facts that Russia exploits successfully and where the environment is permissive, they will prevail. Thus, Ukraine, as a former USSR member state and historical under Kremlin's influence, with a large Russian minority within its borders, was a perfect target, with all the premises for success. Large state Russian controlled media campaign managed to inflict and stir ultra-nationalistic behaviour into the Russian minority to create fractures inside the Ukrainian society.

The climax of this propaganda and its effects were greatly exploited during the "orange revolution", the Euromaidan movement, where the cleavage within society was exposed, as well as the Kremlin's control over the former Ukrainian president at that time. Within months Russia, after the political subversion phase, deployed covertly special forces on Ukrainian territory to create militias, destroy Ukrainian government infrastructure, train "volunteers" in order to prepare them to control and seize designated areas/key terrain. A large logistical training to support this effort commenced by sending the so-called humanitarian aid convoys. In fact, these were supplies to build up military logistical bases in the preparation for the invasion.

To dismantle Mr Galeotti's theory that the Kremlin just acted randomly, opportunistically or uncoordinatedly in its vicinities, we must clarify the following:

- Kremlin had clear objectives to achieve, such as:
  - Preservation of its military projected forces outside borders by any means.
  - Maintaining its political influence in neighbouring countries, especially in the former Soviet Union ones.
- The string of events followed a long-term campaign plan as described below (Figure no. 1):

Figure no. 1: Russian style hybrid warfare in Ukraine[4]

- The so called unidentified 'green men' were coordinated and precisely guided in their actions by holding key terrain and seized main government's buildings in the area.
- A long-term propaganda was in place addressed towards to Russian populace in Crimea.
- Insurgents and separatists were backed up and supplied with weaponry, ammunition and intelligence by Kremlin in order to fight against local authorities.
- Kremlin had already a leverage over the former Ukrainian president.
- Ukrainian political establishment had been divided and controlled by Kremlin through local oligarchs.
- The local population in areas where Russian ethnics are massed influenced and indoctrinated with fake news and instigated to civil unrest.
- Controlled, filtered and limited access to other sources of information in order to make people believe what the Russian media presented as the new attempt of the neo-fascists to take over.
- The illusion of a saviour as Mother Russia that protects its children sold to

[4] Source: Phillip A. Karber, Vladimir Zamana, "Hybrid Warfare in Ukraine - Lessons Learned", The Potomac Foundation, 12.04.2015, URL: https://nssp.unm.edu/tegnelia-november-21-presentation.pdf, accessed on 15.01.2021.

Russian people, in and outside Russia, in order to cover the real objectives of the invasion.

- Control over natural resources that Russia would have lost access to and ownership, as shown in Figure no. 2.

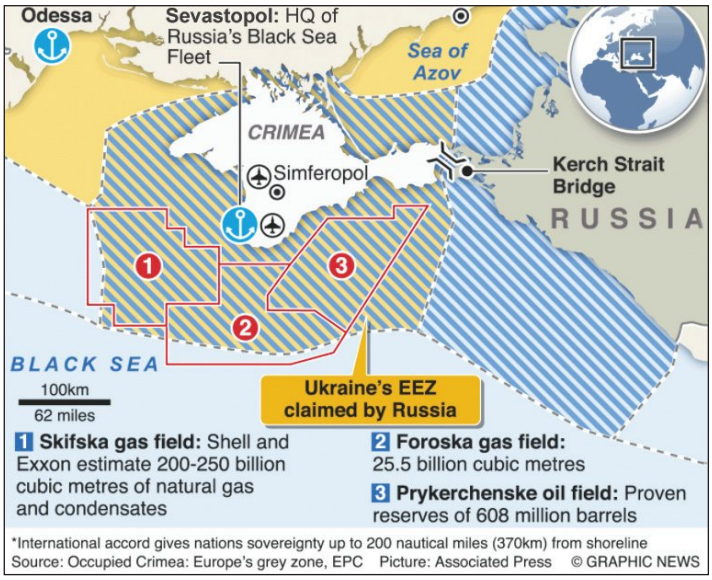

Figure no. 2: Gas fields offshore Crimea's shoreline and their potential cubic meters deposits to be exploited[5]

This pattern was used before in Afghanistan, Moldova and Georgia.

However, the invasion of Crimea also had some particular features regarding the *modus operandi*. Despite the original plan of annexation some events did trigger actions in Russia too that were used by Kremlin to its advantage in order to justify future actions or cover their internal issues.

The swap of power in 2011, between President Medvedev and then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, triggered protests in Russia, which sent the Kremlin into a state of panic. Also, what came to be known as the "Revolution of Dignity"[6] had every chance to weaken the president's political position. This would have been seen as Russian's orange revolution or something similar to Ukraine's Euromaidan, where Russian people would have switched the political establishment to, hopefully,

[5] Source: Duncan Mil, "How Russia annexed Crimea's gas", *Graphic News*, URL: https://www.graphicnews.com/en/pages/38908/politics-russia-annexed-crimeas-gas,According to URL: accessed on 16.02.2021.

[6] According to „Revolution of Dignity", *Harvard.edu*, URL: https://gis.huri.harvard.edu/contemporaryatlas/revolution-of-dignity.html,URL: accessed on 11.03.2021.

a real democracy and led to free elections. A country connected to Russia by a myriad of not just cultural and economic connections, but also family links (a 2011 poll showed that 49 percent of Ukrainians have relatives in Russia[7]), Ukraine could have become a successful role model for Russians unhappy with the status quo and eventually pull both countries towards freer society and greater integration into the EU. However, Kremlin succeeded in turning the situation on its head.

Immediately the Russian state-controlled media launched aggressive propaganda against Ukraine to buy time for the regime and present the annexation as an act of salvation. News items on Ukraine became very prominent as what happened there would be more important and dangerous than what happens in Russia itself. The purpose of this propaganda was to show Russians how precious the stability in Russia is and what could happen to them – compared to the Ukrainians – if they choose a revolutionary path. By doing this, Kremlin has manipulated its own citizens to cover internal political issues in order to justify an illegal annexation sold as an act of bravery and democratic action, to support Russian ethnics in choosing their path.

Conclusions

That being said, in line with the obvious facts from Crimea and some other places near Russian borders, it is proved once again that this was a coordinated campaign, with an operational design clearly defined in order to achieve strategic objectives and military dominance in the area, maintaining economic dependence and creating a buffer zone between Western world/NATO, and Russia. All this under the propaganda slogan to protect motherland from neo-fascism and Western decadence, as well as protecting captive Russian citizens outside borders.

Given that the course of action is similar in the last major conflicts in which the USSR and Russia became involved afterwards, as well as from the analysis of the factors regarding the circumstances and political-economic situation, we can conclude that Russia has adapted its war doctrine and successfully tested it. The effects at the strategic level, as well as the new position that Russia displays, lead to the conclusion that the way of waging war has evolved in terms of approach and what Clausewitz defined as total war has now become everyday reality and involves absolutely all instruments of power available. Nowadays a war starts a long time before the first bullet is fired.

In the end, we can conclude that this is a real doctrine supported by facts and events. In addition, we can state that this is the Russian strategic path regarding

[7] According to Leonid Ragozin, „Annexation of Crimea: A masterclass in political manipulation", *Aljazeera*, URL: https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/3/16/annexation-of-crimea-a-master-class-in-political-manipulation, accessed on18.02.2021.

its relationship with its neighbours, in order to enhance the political and military influence. Thus, Russia reasserts its place as a major player in the world with some devastating effects in its vicinity, especially within the so-called buffer zone, consisting of former USSR member or former Warsaw Pact countries. Nevertheless, this ideology has no explicit description but is more like a guideline to be followed by Kremlin's policymakers, keeping in mind its aftermath in the world politics and events.

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MEASURING MILITARY POWER – APPROACHES AND CHALLENGES

Maria CONSTANTINESCU, PhD*

Measuring a country's military strength cannot be done in an absolute and abstract manner, as it will always be influenced by the external environment (the threats, risks, operational environment) and also by internal vulnerabilities. Consequently, an accurate estimation of a country's military strength has to be achieved by comparison with other countries. Military power can be assessed by using outcome (effects) indicators, such as the operational effects of using a specific military capability, or by using input (resource) based quantitative indicators. Quantitative indicators are easier to calculate and use in support of defence related decisions, but they have specific limitations that need to be understood, in order to avoid significant fallouts. Outcome based indicators are more difficult to calculate and estimate, as they include non-material factors such as morale, leadership or doctrine. The best approach to estimate a country's military strength is a mix of input based indicators with outcome based indicators, in combination with a detailed analysis of other factors that contribute to military power, such as strategic approach, the geography, the political systems of each country, their alliance system.

Keywords: *military power; input indicators; outcome indicators; limitations; strategic approach.*

Introduction

Defining and measuring a country's military strength is the foundation of its defence planning and force design/development processes, as it offers a view on

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the current situation of the armed forces as compared to the desired future state. It also underlines a country's ability to use all its instruments of power to achieve its national interests, considering that national power derives both from real strength and the perception of strength.

Measuring a country's military strength cannot be done in an abstract manner, as an absolute indicator, as it will always be influenced by the external environment (threats, risks, operational environment) and also by internal vulnerabilities. As such, an accurate estimation of a country's military strength has to be achieved by comparison with other countries – allies or foes. This comparison is of utmost importance in developing future strategies and force structures, but at the same time is a difficult undertaking.

Methodology

This paper is an exploratory qualitative research, based on investigative techniques such as content analyses, collection, interpretation and comparison of data related to defence indicators. The aim is to identify the main approaches to determining a country's military power and to analyze their main advantages and limitations.

1. Approaches to Measuring Military Power

The purpose of military power is to support the achievement of a country's political objectives, as an instrument of power, along with the other components of the DIME concept (diplomatic, information, economic). In other words, the aim of having military power is to "express and implement the power of the state in a variety of ways within and beyond the state borders, and is one of the instruments with which political power is originally created and made permanent"[1]. The reason why a country needs military power in our troubled world is obvious, but how to measure the actual size of that military power is less obvious, as it would require a complex and dynamic comparison of multiple national interests, actions and influence over an infinite number of circumstances in the security environment.

The military power is an instrument of the state, and as such is subordinated to the achievement of specific goals and effects. Achieving superiority over an adversary derives from a combination of factors: the balance of power at a particular moment and circumstance and all the conditions that shape the environment in which the confrontation takes place.

[1] Peter Paret, "Military Power", *The Journal of Military History*, 53 (3), 1989, p. 240.

There are two main approaches to measuring military power[2]:

- one way is to focus on "outcomes" – the achievement of the desired effect, often expressed in terms of capabilities: strategic mobility, expeditionary combat air capability, strategic ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance), intervention capability, etc. Military strength is viewed in this approach as the ability of a country to prevail upon an adversary and to shape the operational environment according to its interests.

- the other way is to focus on the "inputs", the resources used to generate the capabilities and the effects: defence budgets or expenditures, active personnel, military equipment, military infrastructure, etc. Financial inputs (a thriving economy and a large defence budget) allows a country to invest in state of the art military technologies and modern equipment, while military inputs (troops, equipment, infrastructure) can be used for deterrence, offering protection and defeating enemies. The input based approach can focus on quantitative measures (such as existing inventory, modernization, acquisitions) or qualitative measures (the mixture of various types of equipment, availability of logistic support, reliability of equipment, the age of an equipment, etc.).

The concept of military readiness is a well-known qualitative indicator of estimating a country's military strength, based on the input approach, used to determine if a country's armed forces have an adequate amount of functional equipment, an adequate personnel fill with adequate skills to meet the requirements[3].

In terms of estimating a country's military power in comparison with other countries, one of the most widely used approaches is the one provided by the Military Balance, issued annually by the International Institute for Strategic Studies – IISS. In the words of Leo Panetta, former US Secretary of Defence, the Military Balance is the "best unclassified source of defence information on personnel, equipment and budgets for every country"[4]. This statement outlines the reason why the information in the Military Balance, although extensively used, is not enough for defence planning purposes. The information provided refers to data on the military forces, personnel numbers, equipment inventories and defence economics of the 171 countries featured and the defence developments in various countries (such as China, Russian and the US) and regions.

Although the Military Balance does provide regional military and defense

[2] Ashley Tellis, Janice Bially, Christopher Layne, Melissa McPherson, "Measuring Power in the Postindustrial Age", *RAND/MR-1110-A*., Santa Monica, CA, 2000, pp. 12–24.

[3] Jason Forrester, Michael O'Hanlon, Micah Zenko, "Measuring U.S. Military Readiness", *National Security Studies Quarterly*, VII (2), 2001, pp. 99-120.

[4] See : A se vedea: Military Balance, *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, URL: https://www.iiss.org/publications/the-military-balance, accessed on 05.01.2021.

economic analysis, the indicators used are mainly input-based, quantitative indicators that do not allow for an accurate estimation of military capabilities or the analysis of the specific national defense environment, national interests or threats.

Based on the data from the Military Balance, Meisel, Moyer and Gutberlet propose the Military Equipment Index[5] for measuring the relative quantity, modified by technological capabilities, of military hardware by domain for all countries, from 1970 to 2015. The authors propose the use of this general, weighted, relative measure of total medium and heavy equipment stocks possessed by each country's military in a given year for determining which country has the greatest military capability across time, if some countries exhibit relative preferences for greater capability in certain domains (e.g., air, land, sea) and the evolution of this preference overtime, but also to explore the relation between military spending and the accumulation of military capabilities.

A modern outcome-based approach to estimating military strength uses the concept of defence capability, defined as mix of measures and actions built upon elements of doctrine, organization, training, materials, leadership, personnel, facilities and interoperability required for the achievement of an objective and sustaining the desired effect[6]. It provides a more comprehensive and refined manner to measure a country's military strength, as it takes into consideration both input and outcome indicators.

Giegerich, Childs and Hackett[7] propose a more comprehensive outcome-based approach, based on a list of crucial differentiators in measuring military power:

- combat capability (war fighting in pursuit of national interests);
- the potential to conduct operations across the spectrum of (and increasingly below) actual war fighting;
- maintaining balanced combat, combat-support and combat-service-support capacity;
- the range or distance at which operations can be conducted away from home territory;
- the ability both to surge for rapid intervention and to support enduring operational requirements over extended periods of time.

Their effects based approach, focused on the operational level, has the advantage of outlining the various aspects of a country's military strength, but is

[5] Collin Meisel, Jonathan D. Moyer, Sarah Gutberlet "How Do You Actually Measure Military Capability?", *Modern War Institute at West Point*, 2020, URL: https://mwi.usma.edu/how-do-you-actually-measure-military-capability/, accessed on 29.12.2020.

[6] ***, *Ghidul Strategiei Naţionale de Apărare a Ţării Pentru Perioada 2015-2019*, p. 8, URL: http://old.presidency.ro/static/Ghid%20SNApT_2015-2019_AP.pdf, accessed on 29.12.2020.

[7] Bastian Giegerich, Nick Childs, James Hackett, "Military capability and international status". *Military Balance blog,* 2018, URL: https://www.iiss.org/blogs/military-balance/2018/07/military-capability-and-international-status, accessed on 04.01.2021.

less suited for cross-country comparisons, as it requires extensive amounts of data (mostly classified) that is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain regarding a potential adversary.

Hanson[8] proposes an econometric, output based model of estimating the effectiveness of the armed forces, based on scenarios related to long term defence planning. Adapted from the economic theory of measuring public sector effectiveness, the model consists of four steps:

- identification of the defence policy and strategic military objectives;
- identification of the environmental variables z relevant to the objectives;
- defining the scenarios, each of them composed of a relevant combination of fixed environmental variables (such as relevant actors, their forces and capacities, geographical areas of possible conflicts) and objectives;
- identifying the way the outputs (force structure, readiness) affect capabilities and how the fixed environmental variables, together with outputs, implicitly through capabilities, affect the outcomes. This is achieved by using an outcome mapping function. Given the fixed levels of environmental variables, all stochastic elements are then removed from the scenarios, resulting in a purely deterministic outcome mapping function, from which continuous outcome indicators are constructed for each scenario.

The model is useful for analyzing the trend of the armed forces effectiveness over a period of time and for identifying the underlying causes for a potential drop in effectiveness, such as an inefficient mix of outputs by decision makers.

This survey of the literature is not an exhaustive one, as other outcome-based methods of estimating the military power of a country are in use.

2. Benefits and Limitations of Using Input Indicators of Military Strength

The use of the inputs based approach to determining a country's military strength has the undeniable advantage of a greater availability of data for international comparisons and ease in calculations, but has the significant drawback of offering a very simplified (and sometimes misleading) picture of a country's military strength.

The reason for this drawback is that such indicators are not exclusively used inside the ministry of defence, by experts and decision makers that have a clear understanding of the indicator's strengths and disadvantages, and of the need to correlate the information provided by such indicators with wider-context considerations. Political decision makers, other stakeholders (representatives of the defence industry) may use strong statements such as "the United States has the best

[8] Torbjørn Hanson, "Estimating output mix effectiveness: A scenario approach", *Memorandum*, No. 14/2016, University of Oslo, Department of Economics, Oslo, accessed on 19.01.2021.

military in the world today, by far. US forces have few, if any, weaknesses, and in many areas… they play in a totally different league from the militaries of other countries"[9] based on input indicators of military strength.

Such statements may have the purpose of supporting a specific defence or acquisition policy, promoting the importance of the armed forces, satisfying a specific electoral base, promoting a sense of national pride and importance, etc. Still, the implications of these statements are not limited to the intended audience, and they have serious consequences, as they shape public opinion and consequently the decisions taken at political level in regard to the budgetary allocations for defence. For example, in case the public opinion considers that national armed forces are well equipped and trained, with a high level of modernization, it may legitimately question the need to increase the defence budget. Samuelson[10] considers that the focus on the use of quantitative indicators to estimate the military strength in the US gives rise to a certain complacency regarding the US military power, especially compared to potential contenders such as China.

A significant challenge for the input based approach is that it needs significant amounts of data, for example on the number of existing and operating equipment (the detailed types of platforms a country has, their age and the level of modernization), on the resources required for their operating and maintenance (consumption of ammunition, spare parts, etc). These numbers can be obtained from maintenance and logistic units and eventually aggregated into a nation-wide database, helping to provide a reasonably accurate picture of the inputs available for the military, but not all countries are interested or can afford the effort of implementing such a system.

In his classic paper, Marshall argued more than 50 years ago that: "estimating the military power of the United States or any other country can only be done relative to that of another country, or set of countries viewed as an alliance…useful estimates of military power relate to the capability of the military forces of one country to deal with the military forces of another country in a variety of interesting contingencies"[11]. In an era of changing paradigms regarding warfare, dominated by proxy wars, hybrid warfare and planning on capabilities rather than on forces, the issue is more present than ever. Nonetheless, there are significant challenges for cross country comparisons of military strength, which leads to the preference for using input-based indicators.

[9] David Petraeus, Michael O'Hanlon, "America's awesome military", *Brookings Institution Washington, DC.* , 2016, URL: https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-awesome-military, accessed on 27.12.2020.

[10] Robert Samuelson, "Defense Spending Is Less Than You Think - Here's Why". *RealClearPolitics,* 2019, URL: https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2019/01/28/defense_spending_is_less_than_you_think_--_heres_why_139285.html, accessed on 29.12.2020.

[11] Andy Marshall, "Problems of Estimating Military Power", *RAND Corporation* P-3417, Santa Monica, CA., 1966, p. 2.

In some cases, serious and in-depth comparative analyses are avoided for political reasons (the reluctance to designate a country as a potential foe) or doctrinal reasons (the use of capabilities based planning in one country versus the use of force based planning in another country that makes comparisons of capabilities difficult). Information about another country's capabilities (even when focusing on inputs, without approaching the full the DOTMLPFI acronym range is not readily available even for an ally, let alone for a perceived adversary.

The result is that political decision makers favor sometimes straightforward input-based benchmarks (such as the percentage of GDP allocated for defence), in order to assess a country's military power.

The size and composition of a country's defence expenditures is a quantitative, input indicator that is widely used in cross-country comparisons as a proxy for military strength. This indicator has the undeniable advantage of facility in use and relative availability (data can be found relatively easy), but is also plagued by a number of significant limitations.

One of these limitations derives from that fact that all the official comparisons (which exclude the data obtained through intelligence sources) depend on the numbers supplied by the states and these may not be accurate. Defence is a sensitive area and even the most democratic countries are reluctant to share all the relevant information regarding their level of spending and the types and destination of expenditures. Numbers may be underplayed (to prevent a potential adversary to accurately estimate the country's military strength) or exaggerated (as a tool of hybrid warfare, in order to deter a potential adversary from engaging in a conflict). Sometimes data is simply missing, as countries are not obliged to report these numbers to international institutions. A particular country may experience internal conflict that makes the estimation of its military expenditures very difficult (for example Syria, since the start of the conflict), or may have a tradition of secrecy (for instance North Korea, or to a lesser degree, China), which makes the available information on defence expenditures at international level not very reliable.

The use of the level of defence expenditures as an indicator of military strength has its usefulness when related to the size of a country's economy and its potential to ensure the resources for defence. But we have to be cautious about using this indicator indiscriminately and not correlating it with more detailed and qualitative indicators of military strength, as it may become a dangerous simplification of an extremely complex reality, leading to under/over-estimation of a foe's military strength and to potential frictions between allies. For instance, the emphasis placed on the level of defence expenditures as an indicator of military strength, combined with the reluctance of political decision makers in EU countries in respect to increases in the defence expenditures generated a lot of criticism from the US towards its European NATO allies.

Defence analysists and military decision makers may warn against the erosion of real capabilities generated by insufficient financing, but political decision makers are often primarily interested in pleasing their electorate. Cutting social expenditures in order to increase the funding of the military will always be unpopular, unless there is a clear and menacing enemy, so this type of decision needs to be based on more convincing indicators than the sheer size of the defence budget or the number of military equipment and personnel.

Respected think tanks and defence research institutes, such as Stockholm International Peace Research Institute SIPRI or the International Institute for Strategic Studies IISS, periodically publish analyses offering comparisons based on various quantitative indicators, in order to allow cross country comparisons over the years. The comparison with past trends for the same country can indeed provide a hint on the importance given to the defence area by the successive governments and may help provide an insight in the strategy of a particular country.

According to Figure no. 1, based on the data provided by Global Security[12], the trends over a period of 16 years show an interesting evolution for the countries with the highest defence spending in the world: US, China, Saudi Arabia and Russia. While the United States military expenditures experienced a visible downward trend from 2011 until 2017 (during a perceived peaceful period covering mainly the Obama administration), China's strategy to develop as a military power is quite obvious in the steadily increasing slope. In a lesser degree, considering the difference in economic development between the two countries, the same strategy of increasing military power is visible in Russia's growing trend of military expenditures.

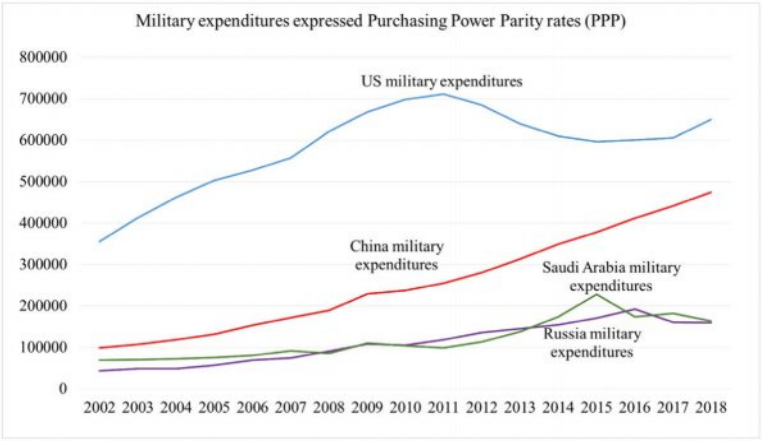

Figure no. 1: The evolution of the military expenditures 2002-2018, expressed in purchasing power parity rates

[12] See: *GlobalSecurity.org Database*, Washington DC, URL: https://www.globalsecurity.org/, accessed on 25.12.2020.

A more detailed analysis related the real strength of the armed forces in these countries would require looking at the share of various expense categories (especially procurement and R&D) in the total defence budget. Generally speaking, a large number of military personnel and low operating and maintenance expenditures, coupled with low procurement and R&D expenditures signals an oversized military establishment, with obsolete equipment and low readiness level.

This approach was also the basis of the recommendation made at NATO level as a result of the Wales Summit that reiterated the guideline for NATO member countries to allocate a minimum of 2% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for defence, but also to spend more than 20% of their defence budgets on major equipment, including related Research & Development expenses. For the allies not meeting these guidelines, the recommendations aimed towards their achievement within a decade[13]. This recommendation was the result of the intense pressure exerted by the US President Trump on the European NATO allies to increase their defence spending, with Germany especially singled out as for not spending "enough" on defence by failing to fulfil the 2% guideline[14].

The inclusion on the 20% of defence expenditures for defence investment (procurement and R&D) is an attempt to move beyond the arbitrary quantitative indicator of 2% of GDP for defence, political established and not very relevant to a country's actual military power. Still, while the percentage of a country's defence investment in total defence spending can be useful as an indicator (albeit a very simplistic one) of the degree of modernization of an armed force, it is by no means an accurate indicator just on itself, without correlating it to the country's total amount of defence expenditures, to the size of the country's economy, to its level of ambition and the size of its military forces.

Comparing the componence of NATO countries' defence expenditures for the year 2018 presents an interesting picture on the usefulness of this quantitative indicator (based on numbers provided by the European Defence Agency[15], in order to facilitate the cross country comparison using the same calculation methodology).

[13] A.N.: London Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in London 3-4 December 2019, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_171584.htm, accessed on 02.01.2021.

[14] Amanda Macias, Nate Rattner, "Here's what each NATO country contributes financially to the world's strongest military alliance", *CNBC*, 2019, URL: https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/03/each-nato-countrys-financial-contribution-to-the-military-alliance.html, accessed on 03.01.2021.

[15] A.N.: See European Defense Agency Data Portal, URL: https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/defence-data-portal, accessed on 29.12.2020.

Table no. 1: Defence expenditures of selected NATO countries, 2018, in million EUR

	Total Defence Expenditure	*Defence Investment*	*Defence Equipment Procurement*	*Defence (R&D)*	*Investment % of total expenditures*
Belgium	4101	424	416	7	10.3
Bulgaria	814	83	79	4	10.2
Croatia	818	28	27	0	3.4
Czech Republic	2298	302	285	17	13.1
Estonia	514	171	170	1	33.3
France	42748	10116	5439	4676	23.7
Germany	42127	5373	4406	967	12.8
Greece	4560	518	503	16	11.4
Hungary	1564	320	316	4	20.4
Italy	21702	4152	4094	58	19.1
Latvia	613	192	191	0	31.3
Lithuania	895	294	285	9	32.8
Luxembourg	301	137	136	1	45.6
Netherlands	9000	1862	1800	62	20.7
Poland	10052	2839	2591	248	28.2
Portugal	2626	259	259	0	9.9
Romania	3692	1245	1234	10	33.7
Slovakia	1098	251	245	6	22.8
Slovenia	463	28	27	1	6.0
Spain	11172	2545	2415	130	22.8
United Kingdom	50491	11431	9065	2366	22.6

Of the selected countries, 11 met the benchmark of 20% of total defence expenditures to be allocated for investment: France, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and United Kingdom. The results are hardly surprising for France and the UK, which both have a defence policy oriented towards a higher level of ambition, but for smaller countries, such as Latvia or Slovenia, the numbers may be misleading.

The sole use of quantitative economic indicators, such as the percentage of defence investment expenditures out of the total defence expenditures, would present Luxembourg as a model, with an impressive 45.6%, followed by Lithuania with 32.8% and Latvia with 31.3%. By comparison, one would be tempted to point the finger to Germany, with a mere 12.8% of the defence expenditures allocated for investments, while France narrowly exceeds the guideline with 23.7%. That would be of course incorrect, considering the total amount of financial resources

actually allocated: Germany spends 39 times more on defence investments than Luxembourg, while France spends 74 times more.

Achieving or exceeding the guideline of 20% of defence expenditures allocated to investments is a political statement of goodwill, that a particular country is aware of the need to modernize its armed forces and is taking steps in that direction, but should be viewed as just one of the many indicators of a country's military strength.

Another challenge in estimating the military strength based on quantitative indicators derives from the fact that such approach ignores the importance of the strategic approach, of the military and political context that characterize the security environment.

The post-WWII global landscape has been characterized by the hegemony of the United States, which aimed at ensuring its global influence by projecting its massive military power from Europe to Asia-Pacific and Middle East. The years after the end of the Cold War and especially the last decade have signaled a different strategy from countries such as Russia, China or Iran. Russia's example is especially relevant in this context, as it does not want (nor can afford) to engage in a new arms race against the US (tanks versus tanks, aircraft versus A2AD, etc). Instead, Russia's strategy is to achieve its objectives through a flexible approach, by maximizing the impact of the adversary with a minimum cost. The strategic approach has a direct influence on the size of the defence expenditures, but also on the composition of the expenditures and the type of equipment/forces/technology favored.

A comparison of the military power of some of the biggest defense spenders (US, UK, France, Russia, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia), using selected quantitative indicators, can provide some information about their military strength, but this should be complemented by a more in-depth analysis that takes into consideration the strategic approach, the geography, the political systems of each country, their alliance system and all the other factors that contribute to military power.

For example, Russia's military power is difficult to estimate without an in-depth analysis of the context. Dobbins, Shatz and Wyne[16] consider Russia as a "well armed rogue state", not as a potential competitor that could challenge US interests. Roblin[17] considers that "Russia's military is powerful, but its tanks can't stand up to America's Javelins", emphasizing the US technological superiority.

[16] James Dobbins, Howard J. Shatz, Ali Wyne, "Russia Is a Rogue, Not a Peer; China Is a Peer, Not a Rogue: Different Challenges, Different Responses", *RAND Corporation*, Santa Monica, CA, 2019, URL: https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE310.html, accessed on 06.01.2021.

[17] Sebastien Roblin, "Russia's Military Is Powerful, But Its Tanks Can't Stand Up To America's Javelins", *The National Interest*, Washington, DC, 2019, URL: https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/russias-military-powerful-its-tanks-cant-stand-americas-javelins-105921, accessed on 07.01.2021.

Examining some selected indicators regarding the land power provided by Global Firepower World Military Strength Comparisons 2020 Database, Russia, China and the US appear to have the biggest military strength, with Russia showing superior power in all indicators (combat tanks, self-propelled artillery, field artillery, rocket projectors), except one (armored vehicles). These numbers are clearly correlated with the strategic approach, historical context and the geographical location; the US has no need to invest so heavily in land power, as its strategy is more about mobility than posture.

A more in-depth analysis should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, taking into account the specific types of equipment, and their level of modernization and readiness. Having 100 tanks in the inventory does not exclude the fact that 50 of them may not operate due to lack of maintenance, 40 of them may be 30 years old and the manning level may be 40%, resulting in a low overall readiness.

But at the same time, dismissing a country's military power just on the grounds that it may not have enough tanks, ships or aircraft compared to another one may also be a mistake. Russia may not be an equal match to the US military power, but nor does it aspire to become one. It can be a serious challenger on the international stage by using a different strategy, that of imposing strategic costs on the opponent with less resources, through asymmetric warfare, damaging the opponent's decision making process, enhancing the divisions and diminishing the social cohesion through information warfare, etc.

3. The Outcome Based Approach Benefits and Challenges

The outcome approach to measuring military strength has the advantage of emphasizing results (what is actually achieved) over what has been spent (trying to achieve) and taking into consideration non-material factors such as training, discipline, leadership, integration of forces. Throughout history, countries or forces with apparently lower strength have been able to prevail through a wise use of strategy, by concentrating their scarce resources in the time/context where they produced the highest outcome, or by accepting bigger risks or losses.

The outcome-based approach has a few weaknesses that sometimes prevent its wider use in estimating the military power. Although more comprehensive than the input-based approach, the outcome-based approach still depends on quantifiable indicators (capabilities, readiness) and ignores the political context (a country's internal politics, its defence and foreign policy) and social context (a country's culture regarding the use of force and the willingness to incur losses) in which power is asserted. Throughout history, countries perceived to be more powerful have been defeated in conflicts against adversaries perceived to be weaker from a

military and even economic point of view (United States by North Vietnam, France in Indochina, USSR in Afghanistan).

The concept of military capability is a useful way to attempt to quantify outcomes, but it too can be subject to improvement. Some of the components of a capability can be more easily quantified, such as the force structure (the number, type and performance of a particular weapon system) or the effectiveness of a weapon system, which can be compared against an enemy system by using quantitative indicators related to technical characteristics. Other components of a military capability, such as doctrines, training readiness, morale, leadership are less objective and a lot more difficult to quantify.

Similar to the input-based approach, the output-based approach to determining military strength suffers from the weakness of requiring a lot of data, which is even more difficult to obtain. Data about defence budgets and expenses breakdown on categories, or information about number of operational tanks and ships are easier to obtain and calculate than quantifiable data on training levels or levels of readiness and sustainability.

Also, a significant issue in quantifying and comparing defence capabilities arises from the fact that achieving a desired operational effect means the interaction with an enemy in all the components of a capability. War gaming, simulations, are useful tools in estimating military strength without getting involved in a real conflict, but they have the major drawback that planners can never anticipate with 100% adequacy how the enemy might act and what real life issues may occur (equipment break down, low morale, etc). Real life training exercises may be more realistic, but they entail significant costs.

Conclusions

The biggest challenge in choosing a reliable indicator to assess military power appears when attempting to compare the military strength of different countries, as the size, composition and strength of an armed force is not decided by the decision makers in a mathematical vacuum, based on abstract calculations related to economic and budget indicators. These decisions are made based on a national and military strategy, which takes into consideration both internal factors, such as the size of the country's economy, demography, geographical situation, and external factors, such as the geopolitical context and the identification of the main foes and allies.

While both the input based and the outcome based approaches have their advantages, focusing on the effects produced by capabilities serves to underline one of the key aspects regarding the concept of military strength: no country can have absolute military power over its adversaries, in all aspects and on all time-frames.

Military strength (and assessing if a country's military capabilities are adequate for the achievement of the goals and tasks established) depends on the type of threats, the adversary's capabilities, and the intensity of the conflict and is shaped by short, medium and long term considerations.

The challenges presented in this paper in regard to the indicators currently used to assess the military power are not necessarily intrinsic, derived from the specifics of each method (the requirement of significant amounts of data, data accuracy and availability, the underlying assumptions, etc.). The problems may also derive from the lack of understanding from the decision makers of the purpose of these methods and their indiscriminate use in the wrong setting.

Estimating a country's military power is just the starting point of an analysis and decision making process through which the defence goals and objectives are achieved and should not become a goal in itself. In case the decision makers have a low level of understanding of the complexity and limitations of the process of estimating the military power, the result could be a disproportionate focus on the achievement of performance targets and less on the achievement of defence objectives. An increase in acquisition expenses is a positive indicator, but if the acquired equipment is not interoperable with the existing ones, or if the manning and training levels remain at low levels, the defence objectives will not be achieved. The experience of different states has shown that the adoption of a resource management system based on the use of performance indicators does not automatically generate an increase in military effectiveness, nor the automatic achievement of defence objectives. Performance indicators can be calculated, the strategic defence review can identify a number of issues, but decision makers need to act upon this information and corrective measures should be implemented at the level of the entire military system. Also, using the wrong metrics can have the opposite effect to the one sought, by decreasing performance, increasing bureaucracy and inertia or creating a false sense of security and encouraging complacency. For instance, it is not enough to allocate 2% of GDP for defence if there are no mechanisms through which these financial allocations to be spent effectively, in correlation with defence objectives and the specific situation.

A second situation may occur when decision makers reject the use of metrics of military strength on the grounds that all current indicators and approaches are imperfect leads to an environment where decisions become very subjective and biased, disconnected from the realities of the operational environment and based on outdated or self-congratulatory assumptions. With all their drawbacks, a carefully chosen mixture of indicators measuring military power can be calculated and they are essential for defence planning, on the condition that their purpose and limitations are understood, that the methods, the framework of the analysis, the collection system and the underlying data are updated and optimized, taking advantage of the

technological (such as big data collection and analysis).

Finally, power is a complex and volatile concept, context dependent and difficult to estimate and anticipate with 100% accuracy. Power is never static, as it is determined by a combination of material (resources) and non-material factors, placed in a specific historical, political, military, economic and social context. Determining a country's military strength with 100% accuracy can only be achieved after the occurrence of a particular event (war, conflict, negotiation) and it is relevant only in relation to that particular event and in a specific operational environment. Everything else is estimation, and input-based and/or outcome-based indicators of military strength are tools for military and political decision makers to make the best decisions in order to prepare the armed forces and the country for a potential future situation, in the best possible way, but they have to be taken as they are, with their advantages and limitations, as there has not yet been identified an optimum solution to estimating military power.

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THE RESERVE OF POWER AND THE PERCEPTION ON IT

Cornel BURETE*

Without being aware, we live in between realities: the existential reality, which most of us cannot describe, and the perceptual reality, modelled by the collective interpretation matrix. The perceptual reality that is delivered by those who hold the power – more or less legitimately – at a given time, is influenced by two cognitive factors: expectations, emotions and group interests, on the one hand, and the perceptual image delivered by the power factor, on the other. The extent to which we manage to have a clear, real image of our existence, or a deformed one, is dependent on the way in which we manage to balance what we desire and what is conveyed to us. The methods, instruments, and techniques through which power defines our existential reality have become so much more complex, that they constitute academic research fields in their own. The world of today is dominated by perceptions and carefully crafted representations, by which collective opinions are easily prompted, manipulated, and directed.

Keywords: *power; reserve of power; hard power; soft power; perception.*

Introduction

Without attempting to academically define the concept of *reserve,* we could state that, from the perspective of the Romanian explicative dictionary[1], this is the *action of conserving or preserving something with the intent of a later use, for the benefit of the depository.*

The perspective of our study will focus on addressing the reserve of power, seen and analyzed in light of the perception of well-established power forms (hard

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[1] ***, „Definiție rezervă", *Dexonline*, URL: https://dexonline.ro/definitie/rezerva, accessed on 21.01.2021.

power and soft power), as an instrument of contemporary international relations.

From a personal outlook, the reserve of power represents a form of power, regardless of its source of manifestation, taken out of its usual circuit, and preserved for a well-planned time period, with the intent of being used in either unforeseen or predictable situations, that were not yet materialized. In our definition, power represents the potential of exercising control, of imposing one's own will-power, that is at the disposal of a state-owned entity, that has earned the status of an actor on the international relations stage.

The question from which we begin is: Could reserves of power be established in all forms of power recognized in political science, sociology, geopolitics or military science?

1. Hard Power Reserve

Military thinking, from the perspective of assembling and developing armies, and the art of war, has been a permanent preoccupation of military strategists, regardless of the historical era. The global balance of power dynamics, influenced by the contribution of technology in the military field, and the major impact of the economic factor, imposed a constant update and modernization of the notions on organizing, equipping, and training armies[2]. Such strategies, that managed to have a common view on geopolitics and geoeconomics, highlighted that maintaining a strong army, that is capable of promptly responding to challenges, is necessary, but it must not be oversized, as it thus becomes expensive and economically regressive[3].

1.1. *Armed forces reserve*

The viable solution, that specialists proposed, for having a strong, inexpensive army, was to build a reserve force, trained and organized in the same paradigm as the active ones, thus achieving the hard power reserve.

From both an economic and a security standpoint, it is beneficial that active forces manage crisis situations, whereas the efforts of a potential armed conflict be supported by the enhanced effectives, resulting from the *in extenso* use of army reserves. This hypothesis is mostly generated by the economic thinking, postulating that to support an oversized active army would slow economic growth, causing economic challenges that are impossible to overcome, especially in planning and

[2] Cristian Băhnăreanu, *Puterea Militară în secolul XXI. Modalități de realizare și manifestare a puterii militare în societatea democratică românească*, "Carol I" National Defence University, Bucharest, 2005.

[3] Viorel Stoica, "Rezerva de forțe și mecanismul completării pierderilor în acțiunile militare", *"Carol I" National Defence University Bulletin*, vol 2, no. 3, 2015, URL: https://revista.unap.ro/index.php/revista/article/download/196/168/, accessed on 10.01.2021.

providing weapon systems, technology, and equipment. More so, military strategy analysts chose to emphasize the real power instrument represented by military alliances, working towards relieving the pressure that supporting an oversized active army places on national economies.

Regardless of the names used, military reserve, reserve forces, mobilization units, this category obviously blends two distinct perspectives, depending on the international situation, as well as the position in the geopolitical context of the respective actor on the world stage. Thus, the status of a social citizen bestowed on everyone during peacetime, converts to a military citizen status, for reserve forces, during armed conflicts. However, both perspectives are characterized by the individual's obligation to have both a perception and an attitude according to the status that they have accepted, be that temporarily, i.e. to work or fight, depending on the requirements of a specific situation.

Without a doubt, the issue of the reserve of power constitutes a priority preoccupation of every state or non-state actor. However, for state actors that benefit from a power legitimacy, this comes with concepts and defence strategies that are developed, based on a legal grounds, and meant to ensure a rapid intervention of the reserve or voluntary military citizens, in case of an armed conflict. Within the last decade, an even more favorable alternative has emerged, that makes the active/reserve ratio profitable both economically and military, by using volunteers. This option seems to most effectively combine the necessity of having a well-trained army, with the use of limited financial resources, when compared to supporting an active army, that consists exclusively of professional soldiers.

Perhaps the main argument for having a hard power reserve, that is well organized and trained, is that modern warfare has taken forms that are vastly different from the well-established ones of the past.

The thin red line that divides war and peacetime has become increasingly fragile, even unclear at times, in a way that allows us to state that war and peace coexist naturally, as long as we speak about combat forms with a strong unconventional character, such as the hybrid warfare, intelligence and cyberwarfare, that give the impression that are constantly fought, without a clear, real, or official declaration, from one of the belligerents. Consequently, we can state that, in most analysts' perception, in the contemporary world, the classical forces and means of warfare are practically a reserve of power, playing second fiddle to intelligence in all its specific forms. This contemporary war could be much more expensive, from an economic-financial standpoint, but it is also more peaceful, as it does not predominantly imply the cost of losing human lives. Physical confrontation is replaced by an intelligence one, taking place, quite often, far from the conflict zones. Intelligence confrontations are characterized by an undetermined timeline, where military decisions turn into political ones, and executing such operations with pinpoint accuracy brings, more

often than not, the expected results.

In this context, consolidating a power reserve – reservists, from a human resources standpoint – ensures the possibility of complementing the active military force, in a way that allows for combat actions to be carried out efficiently, without operational pauses, and by individuals who are well prepared and trained using identical principles and strategies, from a learning perspective. Thus, the reserve becomes a natural extension of the professional active forces.

Considering a perceptual interpretative instrument, as a tool to address power and, implicitly, the power reserve, we assess that the interpretation matrix has a decisive influence on perception, in this case as well. Consequently, according to the collective interpretation grid in relation to the armed forces, the public would perceive the reserve of power as being both a necessary and a defining feature of a strong state.

According to the individual interpretation matrix, however – that being the specialized grid of analysts and geopoliticians – the brute force reserve has played a diminished role, since the weapons and means of contemporary warfare have increasingly become instruments of perceptual coercion, and less so physical.

Advancing this argument, we identify a series of questions, stemming from the existential reality, while being reflected in the perceptual reality, as molded by the common interpretation matrix: who can confirm that the high-performance weapons the Russian Federation is said to possess actually exist? Who can accurately evaluate the military potential of North Korea – as long as cardboard buildings that emit thermal radiations, capable to simulate the existence of a community, have been discovered close to the Chinese border?

Intelligence analysis revealed that *fake news* related to military actions, possible terrorist threats, or the emergence of super-weapons, was used to justify either arming or military or economic aggressions done by superpowers in certain strategic areas and regions. Warfare shifted towards the area of perceptions and representations, where the main actors aim to be interpreted as guarantors of democracy, equality, and liberty, while smaller states strive to build an image for themselves as eligible actors on the stage of international relations. In fact, for most political-military decision makers, Denis Wailtey's quote "Losers see icy streets, while winners put on ice-skates" [4] becomes increasingly true.

According to the individual matrix, that we consider to be the matrix used by specialists, the power itself is not as decisive as the perception of power and the interpretation of strength that an actor can generate in relation to the interpretation of their opponents.

[4] Denis Waitley, *The psichology of wining*. *Ten qualities of a total winner paperback*, Berkley Books, October, 1986.

1.2. *Economic power reserve*

Theorists in the field of power have been analyzing the balance between military versus economic power, since the end of the Cold War, leaning towards the supremacy of the economic, that ultimately generates military power. In this paper, we will not analyze the importance of economy in building and developing the armed forces, choosing to focus on the power reserve that is generated by the existence of economic reserves, i.e. state strategic reserves.

The matter of material reserves and their importance in aiding the success of military actions has not been addressed in detail in the literature, with most theorists relating *hard power* to the armed forces, and the power reserve to the reserve of human resources.

Since antiquity, the conduct of a war required efforts towards ensuring food and weapons reserves, corresponding to the estimated conflict duration. While aggressors relied on resources that they could access on the way, the defendants ones being attacked had to build plentiful and well-hidden warehouses, that would allow them to resist for as long as possible.

Historically, the Turks were among the first to build supply warehouses, implementing daily rations and logistical convoys that would follow the effectives. Later on, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the French realized the necessity of having material reserves for the army, and they offered a substantial reward to whomever managed to develop an efficient method for preserving food, in order to support campaigning soldiers.

Following these rather shy beginnings, logistics became an important military branch in the twenty-first century, when perfecting warfare and combat techniques includes optimizing logistics. Today, we speak of aircraft capable of in-flight refueling, aircraft carrier warships, and logistic bases that are located within the influence zones of state actors, or military alliances.

It is not by chance that the United States manages its own military bases in Europe, Turkey and Asia – independently from NATO – as well as logistical bases in Germany, Romania, Greece, Asia and South America, to name a few. During the Yugoslav wars, NATO asked Romania for logistical support, consisting of the permission for American aircraft to cross national airspace.

Consequently, the economic component, seen as an instrument of power, began to be increasingly sought after, in the context of armed forces development, both towards increasing effectives, as well as because of the need to improve technology. In this context, the economy of developed countries has established a new term, one of *defence industry,* mostly because the mere gathering and warehousing of raw materials did not constitute a viable alternative any longer, under the circumstances of modern warfare.

Similarly, the evolution of combat techniques led to the notion of the *back of the front, backline*, not to be exclusively related to logistical support, as logistics

bases and supply centers are now located in pre-determined areas, sometimes thousands of kilometers away from the actual forces.

From a strategic perspective, we can affirm that in modern warfare, one of the main objectives shifted from destroying the enemy's human resource, to destroying the economic potential of one's opponents, that is seen as a power reserve, because that automatically incapacitates the armed forces as well, when left without material support. With this, we look back at the first decade following the end of the Cold War, and the thesis that most theoreticians support, which states that the economy and not the military strength would shift the contemporary power balance. Still, we need to emphasize once again the truth in the statements of the well-known political scientist Joseph S. Nye, who nuanced the theory from the beginning, by saying that "an economically dominant power does not automatically become a military power"[5]. There are a number of factors, including the international context, national interest, and the regional interest equation, that could directly influence this balance of power. The Netherlands, for instance, has a thriving economy, among the best in the world in regard to living standards and household saving rates, while not being ranked among the top ten global military powers.

In this paper, we have chosen not to focus on the interdependency between military strength, economic power, and the international context, that were masterfully highlighted by Joseph S. Nye. Instead, we wanted to reiterate the idea stating that there is a complementary correlation between the two instruments of power, that is dependent on the national interest factor, mostly because a flourishing economy does not only lead to the development of brute strength, but also that of social welfare and evolution. The extent to which the economic development is reflected in the increase of military power depends exclusively on the political decision makers.

Following this statement, we consider that the answer to the question that some theoreticians posed – regarding the extent in which geoeconomics would have the potential to replace geopolitics in the current context – can only be a negative one[6]. The economy has been and will remain a main factor of power, but the extent to which this instrument of power can be translated into increasing military power, or into expanding geopolitical influence, is exclusively linked to political decisions, the international context and the overall goals of the individual states. Before becoming a military power, a state with an average economic power would aim to become an influential economic power, that is capable to seal economic-military alliances.

To conclude, we assess that the power reserve that a state actor can constitute includes, but is not limited to, two main elements: the armed forces reserve and

[5] Joseph S. Nye, *Viitorul Puterii*, Polirom Publishing, Iași, 2012.
[6] Antonia Colibășanu, *Geopolitica și geoeconomie contemporană*, Tritonic Publishing, Bucharest, 2020.

the economic strategic reserve, with both representing classical *hard power* components.

2. The Dilemma on the Existence of a Soft Power Reserve

Developed and academically established as a concept in the beginning of the 1990s, soft power highlighted the usefulness of socio-cultural instruments, as a means to avoid utilizing brute power[7]. Further on, new concepts were added to the power of words, cultural and religious symbols, such as cultural diplomacy, strategic communication, political values, public relations, or intelligence, revealing a form of power that lies exclusively within the cognitive zone.

We are not challenging in any way Nye's statement in regards to economic resources being able to generate soft power behaviors[8], however, we hold the idea that the economy falls largely within the scope of hard power, seeing that as long as constraints and economic sanctions exists, the main actors are able to make use of the economic instrument as a power instrument. Actually, Nye's statement includes a degree of probability, meaning that, at a certain point in time, depending on the international context, the economy could be used towards consolidating soft power as opposed to hard power[9]. We consider the aforementioned part to be an encouragement of the political scientist to make use of any opportunity to manifest soft power.

Hard power was and still is relatively easy to measure, since it can be quantified in the number of active soldiers, aircraft, tanks, missiles, etc., which in turn allow to more accurately establish the necessary power reserve.

On the other hand, soft power is better represented by qualitative indicators, being initially defined as having three major components: a cultural component, an ideological or political values component, and an institutional or an internationally legitimate external policies component.

The obvious question asked is whether state or organizational reserves can be consolidated, while making use of elements that are exclusively cognitive. Soft power was thought of and defined as an active form of power manifestation, meant to facilitate, in an equal manner, both the avoidance of power escalation and the promotion of national values. Going forward, we will briefly analyze the three defining components of soft power, in order to answer the aforementioned question, regarding the possibility of consolidating state or organizational soft power reserves.

[7] Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politic*, Editor Public Affair, New York, 2004.
[8] Joseph S. Nye, *Viitorul puterii*, Polirom Publishing, Iaşi, 2012, pp. 37-47.
[9] *Ibidem*, pp. 9-14.

Diplomacy, considered by most political scientists to straddle the boundary between art and science, generates significant effects in international relations, through its three well established forms: political diplomacy, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy.

Falling exclusively within the realm of soft power, cultural diplomacy is in fact a form of public diplomacy, that includes the exchange of ideas and information, arts, culture, languages, and technology. It has an equally important role in establishing and supporting the political and economic diplomacy, as elements of achieving national security. Besides the activity of non-statal organizations, one of the main objectives of cultural diplomacy is to develop international relations through culture, education, tourism, science and technology. The most important instruments that support cultural diplomacy are educational programs, cooperation programs, regional cooperation, and cultural institutes.

In order to highlight the importance of this area, we will mention that, in Romania, the activities of such sort are undertaken by cultural institutes that fall under the management of the Ministry of External Affairs, and their way of functioning is established by law[10]. Romania has 20 institutions of this type, located in countries and cities where it was politically decided that cultural exchanges and the promotion of national values were beneficial for the national interest[11].

The state ideology or political values, that are listed as the second functional element of soft power, consist of the multitude of relationships, ideas, and political institutions that manage to efficiently correlate the ideals and realities of the society. In practice, these are norms and organizational principles of the political system, that are either accepted or imposed (in totalitarian states), in order to ensure, control and consolidate political power.

The political community was founded on the basis of principles, such as respecting the rule of law, liberty, dignity, and human rights. These elements can all be found, although not always respected, in the legislation of totalitarian states as well. In such cases, there is a difference in perception between social ideals and social reality, generated by the discrepancy between the individual expectations and the reality in which one lives. This perception is mediated by referring to societies that seem to be ideally democratic, and that are generally interpreted as societal models.

External policies or institutional values, that are generally appreciated to be the third pilar of soft power, detail in fact the political attitudes of the state administrative

[10] ***, *Legea nr. 356/2003 privind înființarea, organizarea și funcționarea Institutului Cultural Român*, published in Monitorul Oficial, Part I, no. 529, in July 23, 2003 and republished in Monitorul Oficial, Part I, no. 555, in September 02, 2013, URL: https://legislație.just.ro/public/detaliidocumentafis/165434, accessed on 20.07.2020.

[11] *Ibidem*.

power, within the context of international relations and treaties in which it is involved. External policies as an element of soft power can only be manifested in a productive way, within the complex world of international relations.

Regardless of the country size, its system of government or the level of democracy that characterizes its political regime, external policies are ever-present, because a state that does not promote an external policy aligned with the global ideals, will sooner or later become isolated.

One of the most striking examples of regional external policy is the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that was introduced by the Treaty on European Union, also known as the Maastricht Treaty, which became effective on November 1st, 1993[12]. The purpose of this treaty was precisely maintaining peace and promoting international cooperation and, implicitly, regional cooperation within Europe. Moreover, the European Security Strategy[13] was adopted in 2003, expressing European Union's vision on the regional and global security. At a later stage, the Treaty of Lisbon brought a series of changes to the institutional structure of CFSP, without altering its scope. In 2016, following both security developments and a succession of internal and external crises, the European External Action Service – under the coordination of the European Commission and with the approval of the European Parliament – developed an international strategy, primarily meant to ensure the security of the EU and its member states, and to establish a general approach towards conflicts and regional cooperation[14].

As previously stated, we do not intend to thoroughly analyze any of the three major components of soft power, but we have briefly addressed them in order to elaborate an answer to the question that resulted from the topic, in regards to the possibility of consolidating a reserve of power.

In this context, the rationale once more generates a series of questions. Is it possible to consolidate a reserve in the field of sciences, of culturally promoting the national values, languages and tourism? Could we consolidate a reserve of national political values, or one of external policies of regional cooperation? Who would use the reserves of power in acting towards promoting peace, equality, and individual liberties?

In line with a personal perspective on shaping and enhancing power through intelligence and building on the hypothesis that modern intelligence actions fall under soft power as well, we wonder whether at least intelligence could be consolidated as a power reserve.

[12] ***, *Treaty on European Union (TEU)/Maastricht Treaty*, URL: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/maastricht-treaty, accessed on 20.07.2020.

[13] ***, *Strategia europeană de securitate*, 2003, URL: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30815/qc7809568roc.pdf, accessed on 24.03.2021.

[14] ***, *O strategie globală pentru politica externă și de securitate a Uniunii Europene*, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf, accessed on 20.07.2020.

The answer is provided by specialists in the field, who consider that national security intelligence should be current, transmitted in a useful time frame, and actionable[15]. We assess that attempting to convert intelligence to an element of power reserve that can be exploited, is deemed to fail. In the intelligence battle, information is considered to be time sensitive, hours and minutes are valuable, and the time factor routinely decides the fate of nations. Although from a perceptual and interpretative standpoint, having access to information could constitute a major advantage in organizing and exercising both hard and soft power, we consider that consolidating reserves of intelligence power is not possible.

As previously shown, information shapes power, including soft power components, ensuring that whoever holds it has multiple decisional alternatives. However soft power, as an immaterial component of power, can never be preserved or stored, with the intent of a later use. The impressive diplomatic, political, and military abilities of the late British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, were not preserved during the Second World War, but they were efficiently exploited in order to solve the challenges that the country faced. Even though his work earned him a Nobel Prize in Literature, and it is still used today in relevant cultural and historical exchanges, the actual content cannot be considered to be a reserve of information or intelligence power, in the sense that we had previously described.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have not discussed a potential smart power reserve because, being a result of intelligently combining hard and soft power, it would be impossible to quantify, even as a percentage, in such a way that could determine to which extent it could be consolidated as a power reserve, as long as there is no universal formula that calculates the efficiency of the aforementioned ratio. Smart power is either more or less efficient depending on the circumstances, and even then, only from the perspective of the results and the perception of power created by the actor who chooses to use a combination of instruments in order to exercise it.

Similarly, the choice was not to include the concept of sharp power, which is considered to be an alternative of soft power, exercised by states that are apparently democratic, such as China and Russia, and that rely on subversion, obvious manipulation and a censorship of their own society. We do agree with the idea that sharp power is an equivalent of intelligence warfare, which would categorize it as hard power. Naturally, an analysis of this idea, focused on the concept of sharp power, could be the topic of further studies.

By addressing power reserve from a perceptual interpretative standpoint, we

[15] Ionel Nițu, *Analiza de Intelligence, o abordare din perspectiva teoriilor schimbării*, RAO Publishing, Bucharest, 2012, pp. 120-140.

could conclude that only hard power is able to generate an image of classic power, which includes the consolidation of both military and economic reserves. According to a specialized interpretation matrix, soft power could be perceived as an advantage, a potential of state actors, but it lacks a form that facilitates the consolidation of a power reserve, in the way that this is represented through collective perceptions.

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ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE. IN SEARCH OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

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In the last decade, we have witnessed a significant shift in the way local, regional, or global confrontations are performed with specific roles being attributed to the economic intelligence systems. By executing intelligence and counterintelligence operations, the economic intelligence systems are operating in confluence areas bringing together intelligence communities, governmental and diplomacy apparatus, and the business actors. Also, recently, revamped forms of warfare have illustrated how economic leverage is frequently used in combined and versatile hybrid interventions against democratic state stability and legitimacy.

Despite this intense employment of economic advantage, economic intelligence represents one of the concepts that is still looking for conceptual clarity as it is frequently used in conjunction with other proxy terms (i.e., business intelligence, industrial espionage, competitive intelligence, economic security, and economic espionage), while its meaning ascribed in different contexts is rarely explicit. Starting from the premise that when lacking clarification, concepts become broad, ambiguous, and difficult to apply, the paper aims to bring forward conceptual clarifications by exploring and comparing various definitions existing in the literature while seeking to advance an operational definition for economic intelligence.

Keywords: *economic intelligence; economic security; economic espionage; competitive intelligence; business intelligence; industrial espionage.*

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1. Economic Intelligence and Intelligence Systems

Over the years, world states have adjusted and advanced at different paces their development of own economic intelligence (EI) systems. Currently, some states have already in place well-structured EI systems, others are developing them, while other states only have a conceptual approach of such matters. The category of world geo-economic actors includes states such as USA, France, China, Great Britain, Canada, Japan and Germany. The category of states that develop these systems at a pace conducing to efficiency includes Russia and Italy[1]. The states being in a preliminary phase, such as Romania, can build their own systems relying on the already learnt lessons and the successful practices that had been validated by the EI systems of the above-mentioned states. This development depends on each state's macro-strategy setting the general objectives, the economic policies following said strategy and promoting or not certain objectives of economic nature, as well as on the maturity of intelligence services and the resources that the state has invested in building an economic intelligence community.

Over the past years, after the end of the Cold War and upon the emergence of hybrid conflicts, the importance of EI has grown exponentially. Considering the five types of synchronous threats occurring in a hybrid conflict and aiming at the vulnerabilities of a state with various intensities over certain time intervals[2], the weight of economic and cyber threats increases year on year as compared to that of the military, political or intelligence ones[3]. Geo-economics is one of the scenes where the competition between states is present, and the information warfare is one of the main threats. All world economic powers use strategic instruments, such as commerce, commodities exchanges, energy, capital markets, investments, tax and monetary policies, immigration and human resources policies.

The aim of economic intelligence is to bring added value by understanding and anticipating the external environment, detecting the threats, counteracting the risks and exerting economic influence. The economic intelligence approaches various topics, including resources, policies, production, commerce, consumption, labour, finance, taxation and other aspects of the national and international economic system. It involves both state and private actors, creating hence an extremely complex ecosystem, with an anisotropic mix of entities, which leads to a high degree of volatility.

[1] Simone Pasquazzi, "Economic Intelligence", in Virgilio Ilari, Giusepe Della Torre, *Economic Warfare*, Roma, Società Italiana di Storia Militare, 2017.

[2] Pauline Cullen, *Leading the debate for the business case for gender equality, perilous for whom?*, 2018, pp. 4-6.

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The national economic intelligence system is formed of all government and non-government entities[4], and is intended, through correlated efforts relying on effective processes and efficient communication, to detect and anticipate the threats against the national economy and critical economic entities, in order to provide decision makers with all information they need to substantiate their strategic decisions or draft plans of countermeasures. The economic intelligence systems include intelligence services, diplomatic apparatus, state administrative apparatus and private business entities. The coordination role rests with the intelligence services which centralise, process, analyse and disseminate the information.

Beyond the obvious use of economic information to gain and exert a dominant position worldwide, the research in this field is at an incipient phase and the specialised literature is less developed compared to other areas of intelligence. Due to the proximity of meaning, the demarcation line between EI, economic security, economic espionage, competitive intelligence and industrial espionage has not been clearly defined by the specialised literature. Moreover, the concept of economic intelligence seems to also embed other concepts and practices: competitive information, risk management, lobby, public diplomacy, soft power – when referring to governments, cultural and economic influence, business diplomacy (in the case of companies), etc. The conceptual framework is also blurred as states and private entities concomitantly participate in the collection of economic intelligence and there is not always a clear distinction made between the terms describing government actions and those referring to private entities (e.g. the confusion between the economic espionage – a prerogative of the intelligence services working for a state and the industrial espionage – coordinated by private business organisations). Moreover, the interpretation given to the offensive and defensive roles of intelligence, the collection framework (domestic or external ÷ inside or outside the organisation) and the type of collection practices used (correct or incorrect) makes it even more difficult to clearly delimitate and use the concepts.

2. Economic Intelligence and its Proxy Concepts

For a proper conceptualisation of economic intelligence, we have studied several scientific works having dealt, in the past eight decades, with economic intelligence concept and subsequent practices. We have analysed the specialised literature to identify the common or distinct elements defining the concept, but also

[4] A.N.: Non-intelligence entities mean those structures, organisations (economic, non-governmental, state administration) that are part of the national economic intelligence system. For example, a private actor specialising in competitive intelligence can provide (free of charge or against payment) databases (e.g. key persons in corporations) or well-substantiated analyses (e.g. development trends of certain markets or companies), which can be useful for the purpose of intelligence operations.

to understand the contextual elements having led to the definitions ascribed. The study focused on the existing primary literature, published in the USA and Europe, and we have considered the period from the end of World War II until present. More reference works have been studied apart from the works cited in the text[5], but we have found, in most cases, that they were not reserved *per se* to definition and as such, they needed to be left aside. We have also found that the specialised literature contained confusing information on economic security, economic intelligence, economic espionage, industrial espionage or incorrect practices.

Historically, one of the first definitions of EI was set forth in a CIA's declassified report, dated November 1953, whereby the agency set the limits of information framework (collection base) and the methodology for strengthening the system of sources intended to deliver data to the personnel of economic intelligence division. The concerned definition was: "economic intelligence is analysis and evaluation of a foundation of economic information, mostly quantitative, with the object of solving problems related to national security. Since the problems are varied and in large measure unpredictable, the foundation of information must have a broad base"[6]. In 1995, in "A Consumer's Guide to Intelligence", CIA redefined EI as being focused on: "intelligence regarding foreign economic resources, activities and policies including the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, labour, finance, taxation, commerce, trade and other aspects of international economic system"[7]. We note that the focus is on foreign information and actors operating on foreign markets in order to protect domestic economy.

In order to reflect the various interpretations reserved to the concept, Encyclopaedia Britannica[8], defines EI as managing "[…] information concerning the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, as well as labour, finance, taxation, and other aspects of a nation's economy or of the international economic system. Economic intelligence allows a nation to estimate the magnitude of possible military threats and is also valuable in estimating the intentions of a potential enemy. In wartime, economic intelligence is a prime indicator of an enemy's ability to sustain a war".

The above-mentioned definition provides a restrictive way of approaching economic intelligence, mainly from a military standpoint, that of an armed conflict, even though economic information causes its greatest impact in peacetime, when national economies report the highest growth.

[5] See *Bibliography*

[6] ***, *Economic Research. Report 25X1A*, CIA, Washington, 1953.

[7] ***, „A Consumer's Guide to Intelligence", DCI, USA, Washington, Office of Public Affairs – CIA, 1995.

[8] ***, *Enciclopedia Britannica*, URL: www.britannica.com/topic/economic-intelligence, accessed on 10.12.2020.

With regard to the object of economic intelligence, Martin J. Manning[9] mentions that economic intelligence refers to "materials and resources that are developed, produced, or managed outside the state as well as to raw information or unpublished data to reports or analyses that inform policy makers and consumers". What can be inferred from this approach is the focus of intelligence on data from and about outside territories, as EI also collects and manages data on the foreign markets and the actors operating and influencing such markets in order to support the expansion of the national economy. However, as we will holistically prove hereinafter, EI manages both domestic and foreign information.

From another standpoint, considering its aim, EI can be defined as that instrument ensuring the "access to reliable information and the ability to analyse it which are increasingly important factors in avoiding impulsive decisions with a high level of uncertainty. The objective is to make the organization more competitive, to increase its influence, and to defend its tangible and intangible assets"[10].

This interpretation outlines the similarities between EI, competitive intelligence and industrial espionage. The same conceptual overlapping is noted to a great extent in the paper "Economic intelligence in a global world", published by the Spanish Ministry of Defence (2014), which describes the EI as "a set of coordinated actions for investigating, processing and distributing information in order to make economic decisions". Considering the crucial role of companies in market globalization, these actions focus on domestic economy as well as on the entire business sector. The driving force for the development of powerful tools that gather economic information at the service of national interests and of transnational companies controlling the global economic scene is given by the "defence of economic interests, on the one hand, and the need to achieve economic advantages against competitors – at state or business level"[11].

In Claude Revel's view[12], EI means "the intelligent information management

[9] A.N.: Martin J. Manning is one of the authors (contributors) of the encyclopaedic portal www.encyclopedia.com. URL: https://www.encyclopedia.com/politics/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/economic-intelligence, accessed on 10.12.2020.

[10] A.N.: Héctor Izquierdo Triana published numerous articles in "The International Journal of Intelligence and Public Affaris", UNISCI, GESI Analysis, Army Magazine and is author of the "Manual of Economic and Competitive Intelligence" and co-author of "Concepts of Intelligence". URL: https://www.ie.edu/insights/articles/competitive-and-economic-intelligence/, accessed on 02.12.2020.

[11] Eduardo Olier Arenas, "Strategic intelligence and economic security", *Economic intelligence in a global world*, Madrid, Spanish Ministry of Defence – Spanish Institute for Strategis Studies, 2013, pp. 09-31.

[12] The definition was taken from *Financial Times'* Lexicon, URL: https://www.ft.com/content/0f3942fc-5333-11e1-8aa1-00144feabdc0, accessed on 10.05.2019. The definition belongs to Mrs Claude Revel, a profesor of economic intelligence and director of the masters programme in Economic Intelligence and Competitive Intelligence at Skema Business School of France (in 2019,

making it possible to know, understand and anticipate the foreign environment (key competitors, rules, steaks, trends…) to prevent the risks, especially in the intangible areas, and to exercise ethical influence". The author treats information as an intangible energy source, which, however, produces effects, just like oil and gas. Nowadays, in the information era, the easy access to economic information equally gives rise to opportunities and threats. In this context, economic intelligence is closely related to the management of knowledge and the human resources. The internationally competing entities, be they states, large companies or non-state organisations, regard economic intelligence as both a necessary tool for handling competition and a tool for governance and national security. As such, EI brings value added by turning information and knowledge into sustainable added value. This definition also suggests that overlapping points exist between economic intelligence and competitive intelligence (or industrial espionage).

Thus, economic intelligence is a systemic and systematic process, being specific to intelligence services, whereby economic information is collected to ensure the information base for decision makers within the governmental apparatus. The same practices, referred to as competitive intelligence, can be found within the private business organisations, which collect, by ethical and legal means, economic information to substantiate their strategic decisions. The same practices, which fail however to comply with ethical or legal principles, are referred to as industrial espionage.

An approach which clearly differentiates between these related notions is that of Samuel Porteous. In the article "Economic/Commercial Interests and the World's Intelligence Services: A Canadian Perspective"[13], he defined key concepts, explaining what EI is and is not. The author defines economic security, a widely used term, defining then the EI, indicating differences and underlining the defensive features of security and the preponderantly offensive characteristics of intelligence.

The economic security is seen as "the maintenance of those conditions necessary to encourage sustained long-term relative improvements in labour and capital productivity and thus a high and rising standard of living for a nation's citizens, including maintenance of a fair and dynamic business environment conducive to innovation, domestic and foreign investment, and sustainable economic growth"[14]. Thus, from the standpoint of responsibilities incumbent upon intelligence services, the economic security involves the maintenance of those defensive measures which are able to build and strengthen an information framework that counteracts

ranking 4th in the European Business Schools ranking), see URL: www.skema.edu.

[13] Samuel D. Porteous, "Economic/Comercial Interests and the World's Intelligence Services: A Canadian Perspective", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, volume 8, 1995, nr. 3, pp. 275-306.

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 299.

and discourages all hostile actions of foreign or domestic entities, whose interests diverge from those of the target state and aim to weaken or undermine the national economy.

Moreover, Porteous refers to both areas of confluence and differences between espionage and EI, clarifies the industrial espionage and how it differentiates from economic espionage. EI includes both policies and commercially-relevant information (including technological data, financial, commercial and government information), "the acquisition of which by foreign interests could, either directly or indirectly, assist the relative productivity or competitive position of the economy of the collecting organization's country"[15]. Implicitly, the collection of economic information is a national security concern because the acquisition of such information by foreign organisations causes economic disadvantages, jeopardising jobs, research and development, investments, relative productivity, competitiveness, or economic growth. Concerning the responsibilities of intelligence services in the field of economic intelligence, we can infer that they include both defensive and offensive measures, aimed at collecting necessary information for growing competitiveness and productivity of strategic entities which are part of the national economy.

Another concept that needs to be defined due to its proximity of meaning with the EI is industrial espionage. In order to create and strengthen their competitive advantages, private entities also collect information from and about the competitive environment. These activities are considered to be part of industrial espionage. Therefore, one may easily overlap economic espionage (carried out by state entities or their agents) and industrial espionage (carried out by private entities). An example of overlapping economic espionage with industrial espionage can be found in "Counterintelligence and National Strategy", where economic espionage actions are carried out by businessmen, for the interests of private businesses[16]. Likewise, "Economic Intelligence and National Security", by Carlos Seiglie, advances an interpretation of industrial espionage seen as close to economic espionage, arguing that industrial espionage increases the economic capabilities of a company as well as those of a state. In other words, national interests are not exclusively achieved through economic espionage, and industrial espionage is not exclusively feeding private purposes[17]. These overlapping definitions and interpretations make it even more complicated to understand the particularities of economic versus industrial espionage concepts and practices. A comparative analysis needs additional

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 300.
[16] Michelle K. Van Cleave, *Counterintelligence and National Strategy*, Washington University Press, 2007, p. 19.
[17] Carlos Seiglie, Steven Coissard, *Economic intelligence and national security*, September, 2008, p. 243.

interpretations because given the technological development and the accessibility of open data, companies using industrial espionage are often excluded from trade exchanges and interactions. Implicitly, industrial espionage commonly gets negative connotations which can also impact its proxy concepts. As an alternative clarifying definition, industrial espionage involves *the use of, or facilitation of, illegal clandestine, coercive or deceptive means by a private sector entity or its surrogates to acquire economic intelligence*[18].

Very frequently private organisations use these practices to target other private organisations. And sometimes their actions interfere with actions pertaining to national security: influence exerted over a strategic sector (e.g. energy), depreciation of national currency exchange rate, influencing investors' perception on a public company having the state as a shareholder. These interferences are relevant due to their impact. As such, considering the turnover of a transnational company (the total amount of sales of goods and services carried out by a company over a period) and comparing it to a country's gross domestic product (the total amount of end prices of all goods and services produced by a country using its own resources over a period), over the same time interval, we can conclude that the economic capabilities of a company can be higher than those of a small or average state[19]. It is only an example that illustrates how private entities can raise significant threats to the security of a state (economic or other threats).

Another practice of private entities for acquiring economic information is competitive intelligence. Competitive intelligence is defined as a nodal point of organisational teaching and transformation[20]. Competitive intelligence consists of: (1) proactively assessing the need to know of an organisation, and (2) systematically and continuously covering these needs through ethical and legal collection of information, that is capitalised in intelligence products delivered to domestic and/or foreign clients to support their strategic decisions. This information concerns products, clients, competitors, environment, trends, reference values, intents,

[18] Samuel D. Porteous, "Economic/Comercial Interests and the World's Intelligence Services: A Canadian Perspective", *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995, p. 301.

[19] A.N.: The World Bank reported in 2016 ("The world's top 100 economies: 31 countries; 69 corporations") that 31 of the world's top 100 economies belong to the state and the other 69 are corporations. See URL: https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2018/oct/17/69-richest-100-entities-planet-are-corporations-not-governments-figures-show , accessed on 10.05.2019.

[20] A.N.: The organisational transformation is specific to those companies seeking to achieve the desired outcomes, continuously developing new ways of learning (collective and individual) and communication, up to a point where these evolutionary processes become systemic and systematic. The easy transfer of knowledge and proper communication allow the companies to easily adjust their processes so as to efficiently deal with the challenges of an increasingly challenging business environment, specific to the 21st century.

technological advances and the overall economic climate. When the organisation collects information from databases, via various technical means, another concept reflecting the practice of private entities enters the scene, that of business intelligence.

The information relating to environment, trends, technological advances and the overall economic climate is also of interest for the states, each state wishing to be as competitive as possible. Such information is often obtained by means of economic espionage. Porteous defines the economic espionage as "clandestine or illicit attempts by foreign interests to assist their economic interests by acquiring economic intelligence which could be used to sabotage or otherwise interfere with the economic security of another country"[21]. In this case, the actors represent the interests of another state, being in most cases state actors or agents, and their actions directly aim at undermining the national economy through illicit actions. Economic espionage is considered to be part of a set of "sharp practices" or "illegal, clandestine, coercive, or deceptive means"[22], used by foreign governments or entities with the aim of supporting their own economic or commercial interests. Apart from economic espionage, these practices include bribery and sabotage.

Another leverage that is likely to weaken a country's economy is the economic warfare. Because it is specifically used in open conflicts between the states, economic warfare is erroneously approached in the literature as part of economic intelligence. Although economic warfare develops strategies consisting of measures aiming at weakening the economy of the enemy state both during wartime and peacetime, it uses tools that are transparent, rarely coinciding with those used in economic intelligence. The economic warfare measures can include blockades and/or fragmenting of supply lines, sanctions, blacklisting, prohibition of investments and capital flows, control or capturing of enemy assets, freezing of capital assets and/or expropriation or tariff discrimination[23].

3. Discussion on an Emerging Conceptual Framework

Business intelligence, competitive intelligence, industrial espionage, economic security, economic espionage or economic intelligence actions share the same purpose: to enhance the competitiveness of a state or of the economic entity it serves.

After investigating various conceptual approaches of EI and its proxy concepts, we can advance four major classification criteria that may be useful in an enhanced understanding of conceptual nuances of EI: 1) the practices – correct

[21] Samuel D. Porteous, *op. cit*.
[22] *Ibidem*.
[23] *Ibidem*.

versus incorrect, 2) the level – state versus private, 3) the role – offensive versus defensive, and 4) the area information is collected from – inside versus outside (see Figure no. 1).

	LEVEL		PRACTICES		ROLE		AREA	
	STATE	PRIVATE	INCORRECT	CORRECT	DEFENSIVE	OFFENSIVE	INSIDE	OUTSIDE
Business intelligence		✓		✓	✓		✓	
Industrial espionage		✓	✓			✓		✓
Competitive Intelligence		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Economic security	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Economic Espionage	✓		✓			✓		✓
Economic intelligence	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure no. 1: Comparative analysis of economic intelligence proxy practices

Hence, business intelligence is specific to private entities. It involves correct practices, has mainly a defensive role and uses internal sources. Private entities also resort to industrial espionage. The usage of incorrect practices has an offensive role, mainly targeting sources outside the entity. The private entities also make use of competitive intelligence. It has a mixed role, both offensive and defensive, collecting, through correct means, information from both inside and outside the company, with the aim of supporting the growth of organisation competitiveness.

Being a governmental prerogative, economic security has a defensive role, mainly collecting inside information, using both correct and incorrect practices. An action that is carried out by the state, the economic espionage has an offensive role, is mainly focused on outside sources and uses incorrect practices to collect the necessary information. Moreover, the state also makes use of economic intelligence. Economic intelligence has a mixed role, both offensive and defensive. The information is collected from both types of sources, internal and external, using both correct and incorrect means.

"Secret Agencies" by Loch K. Johnson (1996) presents a highly similar classification. The author argues that Business Intelligence[24] refers to the practice of a business gathering information on other business. If such information collection is covert (by means of espionage), the generally accepted term is industrial espionage. By comparison, economic intelligence involves the governmental structures. Two

[24] A.N.: The author discusses Competitive Intelligence the Business Intelligence as a whole, without differentiating or dissociating based on the nature of practices: offensive or defensive.

dimensions are involved here[25].

The first dimension is commonly referred to as microeconomic intelligence, microeconomic espionage, commercial (competitive) intelligence, or more broadly, industrial espionage (a departure from the usual meaning of the term to refer to the espionage between companies). In this case, the government collects information in order to support a certain company or business sector, hence setting up a partnership between the business sector and the government within a competition with certain rival foreign companies. The intelligence services provide hence a competitive advantage to domestic industries by acquiring information on international trade transactions and negotiation strategies of certain international competitors[26]. At the micro level, the government can also support the local companies by counteracting the foreign espionage actions against them (a form of government counterespionage) or can secretly intervene abroad in order to disturb the activities of competitor companies. As such, the distinctive mark of the microeconomic intelligence is the presence of a secret government service seeking to support a local company in its efforts to expand and strengthen its trade operations on the international market[27].

Similarly, the second dimension of economic intelligence, which can be defined as macroeconomic intelligence or macroeconomic espionage, involves the secret actions of government services. In addition, it must be noted that this definition of macroeconomic intelligence does not entail that its actions (i.e. counterespionage or covert operations) should be directed against foreign corporations with the aim of supporting local companies. What significantly differentiates macroeconomic intelligence from microeconomic intelligence is its focus on strategic national interests. The collection of macroeconomic information can rely on exploiting open sources or on the clandestine acquisition of information (macroeconomic espionage). Regardless of sources and methods, the intelligence services collect information on global economic trends, international financial and commercial matters, global technological breakthroughs and the negotiation strategies, which are suitable for use in multinational conferences of interest for the government[28]. The macroeconomic intelligence also includes counterespionage and covert operations. These activities, which can be carried out at a large scale – will not be directed against foreign companies, but (in case of counterespionage) against the entire set of hostile economic operations carried out by the foreign intelligence services (in case of covert operations) against the economic bases of an opponent government[29].

[25] Loch K. Johnson, *Secret Agencies: US Intelligence in a Hostile World*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 147-148.
[26] *Ibidem*.
[27] *Ibidem*.
[28] *Ibidem*.
[29] *Ibidem*.

As such, economic intelligence comprises all offensive and defensive measures carried out by a state with the aim of defending and supporting its local regional and global economic interests. Within this analytical framework, economic security is regarded as a component of economic intelligence and focuses on the defensive measures intended to protect the local and external economic interests. Certainly, there may be cases where offensive measures help to strengthen the local economy, precisely by ensuring new sales markets and weakening a competitor's capacities.

In order to operate within this analytical framework including various definitions of economic intelligence, economic espionage, industrial espionage, competitive espionage and economic security, the offensive-defensive criteria are highly relevant. Consequently, we can conclude that economic intelligence can be successfully defined via the various offensive and defensive measures it applies:

1. Offensive measures of governmental intelligence services seeking to support the economic development of the state;

2. Offensive measures of non-intelligence entities (entities that are part of the economic intelligence system) seeking to support the economic development of the state and other entities;

3. Defensive measures of governmental intelligence services seeking to secure the economic security at a national state level;

4. Specific defensive measures of non-intelligence entities seeking to acquire economic security at a national and organisation level.

Implicitly, economic intelligence actions target the following categories of information:

● *Economic information on foreign markets and actors*

This information supports the national economic development that involves both public and private entities. The acquisition of such information is part of the offensive measures carried out by intelligence services and private actors (sections 1 and 2 above). The role of intelligence services is to integrate collection efforts and coordinate them to an extent which is dependable on the private actors involved and the legal frameworks in place.

● *Economic security information on national markets and locally operating actors*

This information is intended to protect the state's economic stability involving both public and private entities. The acquisition of such information is part of defensive measures carried out by intelligence services and private actors (sections 3 and 4 above). The role of intelligence services is to integrate collection efforts and coordinate them to an extent which is dependable on the private actors involved and the legal frameworks in place. Another role is to support the efforts aimed at protecting the (state's or private) international investments and the (government or private) personnel working abroad. In achieving this purpose, an important role

is played by the offensive economic intelligence concerning the foreign markets and entities. Another situation in which offensive economic intelligence supports economic security is when one or several foreign actors initiate local operations posing a potential risk for the national economy.

The offensive side and the defensive one complements one another and are mutually correlated. At a macro level, such correlation can be described using the example of a cycle including three successive phases:

- phase 1 – defensive – we protect what we have;
- phase 2 – offensive – we collect information and expand by internal and external economic operations;
- phase 3 – defensive – we protect all that we have at the moment (what we had during phase 1 as well as what we collected during phase 2);

The cycle continues (continuous expansion and security) to the maximum extent required by the national interest.

To further illustrate the foregoing, we shall provide the example of a critical national economic entity (national company). In the first phase (defensive), the intelligence services protect the national company against any possible attack that can be initiated by certain foreign competitors. If and when the national company aims to expand internationally, the second phase (offensive) will be implemented. It now becomes necessary to collect information on the foreign markets and the competitors acting on these markets so as to identify opportunities and the best way to enter the markets and take advantage of their potential. Once the strategy for entry on the target market is established, the diplomatic and administrative apparatus can provide operational and tactical support to the national company. As soon as the foreign operations are initiated and stabilised, the third (defensive) phase is to be implemented. At this point, the intelligence services protect the national company, including both the local (domestic) assets and personnel and those from abroad. Once the operations are stabilised, on a case-by-case basis or on a continuous and structured basis, the intelligence services can also provide information, operational and tactical support to the national company, with an overlapping between phases two and three[30].

In conclusion, economic intelligence can be defined as a systemic and systematic process performed by intelligence services and related (non-intelligence) entities using coordinated actions and specific means for collecting, assessing, analysing, disseminating and managing economic, technological, financial, commercial and government information and knowledge, directly or indirectly supporting the decisions needed in the process of building and consolidating economic productivity, and strengthening the competitive position of the national economy and security.

The final aim of economic intelligence is to bring added value to decisions

[30] A.N.: Sometimes these phases overlap as the supervision of a competitor can reveal certain vulnerabilities of the latter, which can translate into opportunities for the national company.

by transforming information into knowledge, by rightfully understanding and anticipating the external environment, and by preventing risks and exerting economic influence. It focuses on various and volatile topics, such as resources, activities and policies, production, distribution and consumption of goods and services, labour, finance, taxation, commerce, trade exchanges, etc.

Conclusions

Business intelligence, competitive intelligence and industrial espionage are all practices conducted by private entities. While business intelligence uses correct practices, has a defensive role and mainly uses internal sources, industrial espionage resorts to incorrect practices, it is offensive and it mainly exploits external sources. Based on correct practices, competitive intelligence advances a comprehensive approach, using all categories of sources and performing a mixed role, both offensive and defensive, depending on information request.

In a similar way, economic intelligence, economic espionage and economic security are practices carried out by the governmental entities – intelligence services. Economic security has a defensive role, by collecting information mainly from internal sources, and using both correct and incorrect practices. With an offensive role, resorting to incorrect practices, economic espionage exploits mainly external sources. Having an integrative approach, economic intelligence plays a mixed role (both offensive and defensive), and exploits both internal and external sources, while using both correct and incorrect means.

All practices described above share a common aim of increasing state competitiveness or increasing the competitiveness of specific economic entities. However, economic intelligence is the most complex one, integrating both intelligence services and non-intelligence entities, jointly contributing to the sustainable growth of productivity comprehensively seen at a national level, and thus building and/or consolidating the competitiveness of a given national economy and security.

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THE INTERFERENCE OF THE FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGY QANON WITH CHRISTIANITY

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The new far-right movement, known as QAnon, strongly interferes with the churches and the communities of Christian believers, as highlighted by both the behavior of Christians who adopted QAnon conspiracy theories and the exponential spread of this phenomenon within religious congregations. The QAnon movement is seen by religious people as a new religion developed on the pillars of Christianity but beliefs are intertwined with conspiracy theories.

For both Christians and followers of the QAnon movement, faith is the common element that makes them submit to ideology, doctrine, or dogma. Christians believe in Jesus Christ, and followers of the QAnon movement strongly believe in conspiracy theories. In such a context, the idea of the emergence of a new religion or denomination, a new type of religious belief, was advanced.

This article highlights the common element of Christianity with the QAnon movement, namely faith, which makes many Christians believe in QAnon conspiracy theories.

***Keywords**: follower; QAnon; Christianity; right-wing extremism; conspiracy; church.*

Introduction

QAnon originally appeared on October 28, 2017 on the "4chan" *imageboard* web forum as a marginal movement, its followers promoting conspiracy theories that the world is controlled by the "Deep State" or "Shadow State" and an epic battle

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is being waged against it[1,2]. Adherents of the QAnon movement[3] have mastered conspiracy theories that made it be seen as a religious cult, and an ideology that is based on the idea of fighting good against evil, the latter being represented by the "deep state". In fact, through the Internet, QAnon promotes ideas such as "America is run by a cabal of pedophiles and Satan-worshippers who run a global child sex-trafficking operation"[4], and the information is apparently coming from a high-ranking government official, who signs himself as a "Q" and posts on the 4chan and 8chan web forums.[5] In fact, the Swiss company OrphAnalytics presents the fact that "Q" posted between October 27, 2017 – November 13, 2020, 4,952 messages on the 4chan and 8chan web forums.[6] Proponents of the QAnon movement also promote a conspiracy to assassinate former US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the "Truther" movement following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, known as the "9/11 Truth movement" and the existence of extraterrestrial civilizations, as well as their visit to Earth.[7]

This interplay between religious beliefs and conspiracy theories has given rise to a true QAnon ideology that has expanded aggressively and has been adopted by many people, including practicing Christians whose violent actions have begun to manifest beyond the virtual realm. For example, in the US, in 2019, a QAnon supporter killed a major New York mobster because he believed he was a member of the "shadow state" and in February 2020, another QAnon supporter was accused of terrorism and pleaded guilty to blocking a bridge near Arizona's Hoover Dam

[1] A.N.: According to Kristen Doerer, managing director of the non-profit organization *Right Wing Watch*, an entity specializing in monitoring far-right groups.

[2] ***, "Qanon Movement", in *PlexPage*, October 16, 2020, URL: https://plex.page/Qanon_Movement, accessed on 20.12.2020.

[3] A.N.: The motto of the followers of the QAnon movement is „where we go one, we go all", used under the acronym WWG1WGA, this being in fact a motivational replica of the adventure movie „White Squall" since 1996, starring Jeff Bridges, which members of the movement erroneously attribute to former US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The acronym was launched on June 20, 2018 by a certain "Roseanne Barr", the date she posted the message "we r the army of truth-wwg1wga". See: ***, "What is the QAnon conspiracy theory?", November 24, 2020, in *CBS NEWS*, URL: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-is-the-qanon-conspiracy-theory/, accessed on 20.12.2020 and ***, "Twitter account "Roseanne Barr", URL: https://twitter.com/therealroseanne/status/1009330826553667584, accessed on 24.12.2020.

[4] *Idem*.

[5] *Idem*.

[6] Claude-Alain Roten, OrphAnalytics, "QAnon Is Two Different People, Shows Machine Learning Analysis from OrphAnalytics – An algorithm-based stylometric approach provides new evidence to identify the authors of QAnon conspiracy theories", in *Cision – PR Newswire*, Dec. 15, 2020, URL: https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/qanon-is-two-different-people-shows-machine-learning-analysis-from-orphanalytics-301192981.html, accessed on 29.12.2020.

[7] Kevin Roose, "What Is QAnon, the Viral Pro-Trump Conspiracy Theory?", in *The New York Times*, Oct. 19, 2020, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-qanon.html, accessed on 30.12.2020.

in 2018, urging the federal government to release an official report urged by the QAnon movement.[8]

According to the *Network Contagion Research Institute* (NCRI) "The process of radicalization into QAnon is much more rapid than that of other cults and extremist groups"[9], and CNN quoting an NCRI report subscribes that "QAnon believers can get radicalized very quickly, sometimes in a matter of weeks".[10] Moreover, in one analysis, a few researchers (Farah Pandith[11], Jacob Ware[12] și Mia Bloom[13]) concluded that the QAnon movement behaves like a religious "cult", with its followers promoting beliefs such as that of former US President Donald Trump "was divinely elected to save the world from a Satan-worshipping cabal of blood-drinking pedophiles that controls many in the media, Hollywood and the Democratic Party".[14]

Thus, after entering the mainstream of social networks with access to large masses of people in 2020, the risk to society and people posed by this movement is highlighted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) which warns that "fringe conspiracy theories like QAnon pose a growing domestic terrorism threat".[15] For this reason, of identifying the risk that this movement presents, starting with August 2020, Facebook began deleting accounts that spread messages of QAnon followers, initially starting from a ban on accounts that propagated violent messages of the movement, but starting in October of the same year it extended the ban on all accounts belonging to its supporters and followers. Twitter took action against the spread of the phenomenon, but on a smaller scale, deleting or suspending about seven thousand accounts in July 2020[16] that spread messages subsequent to the QAnon ideology formed by conspiracy theories. And small platforms such as

[8] Rob Kuznia, Curt Devine and Drew Griffin, "How QAnon's lies are hijacking the national conversation", in *CNN*, December 16, 2020, URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/15/us/qanon-trump-twitter-invs/index.html, accessed on 28.12.2020.

[9] Alex Goldenberg et al, "The Qanon conspiracy: Destroying Families, Dividing Communities, Undermining Democracy", *Network Contagion Research Institute (NCRI)*, Rutgers – Miller Center for Community Protection and Resilience, p. 17, URL: https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/NCRI-%E2%80%93-The-QAnon-Conspiracy-FINAL.pdf, accessed on 29.12.2020.

[10] Rob Kuznia, Curt Devine and Drew Griffin, *art. cit*.

[11] Adjunct senior fellow, Council on Foreign Relations.

[12] Research associate for counterterrorism, Council on Foreign Relations.

[13] International security fellow, New America.

[14] Farah Pandith, Jacob Ware, Mia Bloom, "Female extremists in QAnon and ISIS are on the rise. We need a new strategy to combat them", in *Think*, Dec. 11, 2020, URL: https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/female-extremists-qanon-isis-are-rise-we-need-new-strategy-ncna1250619, accessed on 28.12.2020.

[15] ***, "What is the QAnon conspiracy theory?", November 24, 2020, in *CBS NEWS*, URL: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/what-is-the-qanon-conspiracy-theory/, accessed on 20.12.2020.

[16] ***, "Qanon Movement", *op. cit*.

Discord, Pinterest and Etsy "have also taken steps to limit QAnon's influence".[17]

But, according to Dan Patterson, QAnon is not an organization that can be closed or deleted as an account on social networks.[18] Therefore, although in the second half of 2020, Facebook, Twitter or YouTube began to take steps to eliminate accounts and pages that propagate messages subsequent to this ideology, it is difficult to completely eliminate the movement, as social platforms are strongly driven by algorithms, so that as users search for information about movement, they appear more often in the foreground.

1. Christianity, QAnon Theories and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Several clerics and researchers have studied QAnon and observed the impact that the actions and propaganda of this movement have on Christians, especially in the context of COVID-19. Thus, the Chief Pastor of Calgary's Journey Church, Jessica DiSabatino, concluded that QAnon "is like a religious fervour about it" (QAnon) because "it seems like a replacement religion, where everything has a reason". Specifically, "people want to feel like they're [connected to] the inner workings of something, particularly when we don't have a lot of power".[19] Marc-André Argentino, a researcher affiliated with the Global Network on Extremism and Technology, says that since February 23, 2020, he has conducted a scientific study of the religiosity of QAnon movement followers through observation method over time, so that the results are conclusive and credible. Thus, for this research, for 3 months, he participated online every Sunday in the public services of the first QAnon church which is connected with the Omega Kingdom Ministry (OKM), a Christian-evangelical congregation.[20] Thus, Argentino deduced that the church is part of the so-called neo-charismatic churches in which "the QAnon conspiracy theories are reinterpreted through the Bible" and "the QAnon conspiracy theories serve as a lens to interpret the Bible itself".[21]

There are even Christian pastors who claim that the QAnon movement "rise in their flocks" and "it is taking on the power of a new religion that's dividing churches and hurting Christian witness" a phenomenon that will have major negative effects

[17] Kevin Roose, *art. cit.*

[18] CBSN correspondent and main producer of CNET.

[19] Joel Dryden, "How conspiracies like QAnon are slowly creeping into some Canadian churches", in *CBC News*, October 27, 2020, URL: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/marc-andre-argentino-qanon-john-van-sloten-ambrose-1.5766756, accessed on 30.10.2020.

[20] Marc-André Argentino, "The Church of QAnon: Will conspiracy theories form the basis of a new religious movement?", in *The Conversation*, May 18, 2020, URL: https://theconversation.com/the-church-of-qanon-will-conspiracy-theories-form-the-basis-of-a-new-religious-movement-137859, accessed on 12.10.2020.

[21] *Ibidem*.

on Christian congregations.[22] For example, Pastor Seth Brown, editor-in-chief of *The Biblical Recorder*[23], publicly signaled, in August 2020, that many Baptists in the southern United States had mastered QAnon conspiracy theories and propagated movement-specific messages through socialization.[24] He also warned of the risks posed by QAnon conspiracy theories and called on Christians "to reject the movement's fanatical and dangerous messages".[25] Milwaukee Suburban LifeBridge pastor Jon Thorngate also said that members of his congregation viewed and shared on Facebook a video called "Plandemic" promoting the QAnon theory that the COVID-19 pandemic is just "a moneymaking scheme by government officials and others".[26] Likewise, Pastor Jessica DiSabatino says she noticed how the video Plandemic "was shared and watched hundreds of times" by her own parishioners, who pointed it out and recommended it to her, and talked to her about QAnon conspiracy theories.[27]

In the 25-minute video of "The Plandemic", Judy Mikovits, a former researcher and doctor specializing in "chronic fatigue", says that "the federal government is behind a "plague of corruption" to inflate profits from a potential vaccine even as COVID-19 threatens lives".[28] Infringing the terms of use, YouTube decided to remove the video, but Facebook did not, and, on May 5, 2020, it accumulated over 1.4 million views.[29] Subsequently, on October 6, 2020, Facebook also announced that it was banning any posts associated with QAnon, and Twitter had been eliminating such groups since July of the same year.[30]

Supporters of the movement do not accept the existence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which they consider a mega-conspiracy, for which they refuse to wear

[22] Katelyn Beaty, "QAnon: The alternative religion that's coming to your church", in *Religion News Service*, August 17, 2020, URL: https://religionnews.com/2020/08/17/qanon-the-alternative-religion-thats-coming-to-your-church/, accessed on 23.10.2020.

[23] Baptist Newspaper of Cary, North Carolina, USA.

[24] Sarah Posner, "The Evangelicals Who Are Taking On QAnon – Some leaders are trying to save their flocks from the lure of the online conspiracy theory", in *The New York Times*, September 17, 2020, URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/17/opinion/evangelicals-qanon.html?auth=login-google, accessed on 22.10.2020.

[25] *Ibidem*.

[26] Katelyn Beaty, *art. cit.*

[27] Joel Dryden, *art. cit.*

[28] Geoff Herbert, "YouTube removes 'Plandemic' video with coronavirus claims by Dr. Judy Mikovits", May 7, 2020, in Syracuse.com, URL: https://www.syracuse.com/coronavirus/2020/05/youtube-removes-plandemic-video-with-coronavirus-claims-by-dr-judy-mikovits.html, accessed on 30.10.2020.

[29] *Ibidem*.

[30] Jillian Cheney, "An Evangelical's Guide To QAnon: Inside One Of The Most Talked About Internet Groups", in *Religion Unplugged*, October 13, 2020, URL: https://religionunplugged.com/news/2020/10/13/an-evangelicals-guide-to-qanon, accessed on 02.12.2020.

protective masks, and the vaccine is considered a great danger to human health, they say they will refuse to accept it.[31] Also, the followers of the movement linked and interpreted the QAnon theories on mass control of the population through advanced technology, through biblical verses from the book of Revelation. For example, according to such a "scenario, before Jesus returns, believers will be raptured to heaven and will be spared a period of tribulation, during which the Antichrist will attempt to rule via a "one world government" and force people to adopt the "mark of the beast".[32] It is true, in the Book of Revelation, chapter 4 – "The Throne in Heaven", in verse 1, describes the call to heaven of people on "a door standing open": "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. And the second verse of the same chapter says, At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it".[33] However, the two verses do not show the prophecy of any single world rule under the influence of the Antichrist, but only Christian beliefs that at the end of the ages people "will be lifted up to Heaven" in order not to suffer.

And yet, the European Union and the United Nations (UN) are seen by supporters of the QAnon movement as the predecessor of such a global body. Among the identifiers of the "mark of the beast" are "social security numbers" – although these are simple identification numbers through which people relate to the state, *barcodes* – existing on all goods produced and marketed in order to keep records and management and *vaccines* – used to immunize against diseases, including COVID-19.[34] For example, supporters of the QAnon movement have linked conspiracy theories to the *deep state*, a "new world order", anti-globalism and the pandemic of the SARS-CoV-2 virus by a UN program called *Agenda 21*, which is in fact a "non-binding action plan for sustainable development".[35] The texts invoked by the followers of the QAnon movement to support their theory are found in the Bible, the Book of Revelation, chapter 13 – "The Beast out of the Sea", verses 15-18: "The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people… to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This calls for wisdom. Let

[31] *Idem*.
[32] Sarah Posner, *art. cit.*
[33] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Revelation, chapter 4, verses 1-2, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+4&version=NIV, accessed on 27.10.2020.
[34] Sarah Posner, *art. cit.*
[35] WT.Social, "#Agenda21 – Other keywords relating to politics", in *Fighting Misinformation – A WT.Social subwiki*, August 28, 2020, URL: https://wt.social/post/nvrqyhu5325591624484?revision=50, accessed on 30.12.2020.

the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666".[36]

A group called "Intercessors for America", "encourages followers to engage in *spiritual warfare*, an urge that is not limited to spiritual warfare but also violent warfare.[37] In fact, in November 2019, the group published a guide called "The Deep State Problem"[38], asking to "use this Prayer Guide to give strategy to your prayer time".[39] The guide begins with "Prayer Against the Deep State and for Truth" based on the biblical precept recorded in the Gospel of John, chapter 3, verse 20,[40] which says that *Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed*[41]. At the same time, in the guide made by "Intercessors for America" was highlighted a "Prayer Agenda" which indicates: Ask God to bring "light to the darkness" in our government and in positions of power involving our nation. Pray for the people on the reverse side who are alleged to be a part of deep state activities, and pray for those who are leading the effort to unveil them. ... Pray for truth, justice and restoration of integrity in our government and leaders. Continue to pray about this struggle for power that is so obviously a spiritual issue.[42] Moreover, from the very beginning, "Intercessors for America" instructs people in the guide how to pray and their obligation to note the revelations they will receive as a result of their religious conduct, in order to share them with others.[43]

Such indications that promote conspiracy theories amalgamated with Christian religious precepts and rituals cause "many evangelicals may still be sharing QAnon content unwittingly"[44], a fact identified by some clerics. For example, Christian Pastor Thorngate said the QAnon movement is "a real problem in their churches" because, although only a few members of his congregation post videos on social media promoting conspiracy theories, "many more are open to conspiracy theories

[36] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Revelation, chapter 13, verses 15-18, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+13&version=NIV, accessed on 27.10.2020.

[37] Sarah Posner, *art. cit.*

[38] A.N.: Deep State is considered by the Intercessors for America to be a body of people, usually influential members of government or military agencies, who are believed to be secretly involved in political manipulation or government control. See: Intercessors for America, *The Deep State Problem - An Intercessory Intel Report by Intercessors for America,* November 2019, p. 1, URL: https://ifapray.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Deep-State-and-General-Flynn-Brief.pdf, accessed on 28.10.2020.

[39] *Ibidem*.

[40] *Ibidem.*

[41] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, John, chapter 3, verse 20, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+3&version=NIV, accessed on 27.10.2020.

[42] Intercessors for America, *op. cit.*

[43] *Ibidem*.

[44] Sarah Posner, *art. cit.*

than those who post".[45] The cause, according to Thorngate, is the "death of expertise", such as distrust of the authorities, which causes some Americans to underestimate the measures taken by them.[46] The pastor points out that more serious in this context is the attitude of congregation members to use the church for pleasant things, to ignore it for unpleasant things, and to find their own truth, this conduct causing concern among Christian clergy in America as church authority disappears.[47]

Christian-evangelical pastors who made religious television shows, called themselves "apostles and prophets were claiming to receive divine messages about current events many decades before QAnon" were also involved in the spread of conspiracy theories.[48]

Russ Wagner, the OKM leader in Indiana, officiated religious services at his Christian church, after which he conducted an hour of Bible study in which he explained and commented on materials promoted by followers of the QAnon movement.[49] Through such actions, in which pastors say in Sunday services that "Bible prophecies confirm Q's messages", asking parishioners attending religious ceremonies to watch only "QAnon YouTube channels and the Qmap website" as the rest of the media stream misleading[50], QAnon movement infiltrates "American politics, internet culture and now – religion"[51], says Parker Neff, a former pastor and researcher of the phenomenon. Therefore, the QAnon Church is used by pastors to indoctrinate followers, and participants in religious ceremonies, through the Christian religious faith, with the goal of expanding the movement by creating new QAnon communities. For example, at such a service, a QAnon theory was approached about a military project known as the *Looking Glass Project*, which consisted of time travel, which was explained and justified by various verses in the Bible.[52] In fact, the OKM goes even further and promotes the union of Christianity with QAnon theories, in religious services, along with biblical precepts, and QAnon texts are read. This church even declares that it is the place where people can find out about QAnon and the Great Awakening.[53]

Adherents of QAnon conspiracy theories are also religious people, and religious beliefs combined with those of the movement, related to various issues,

[45] Katelyn Beaty, *art. cit.*
[46] *Ibidem*.
[47] *Ibidem*.
[48] Sarah Posner, *art. cit.*
[49] Marc-André Argentino, *art. cit.*
[50] Katelyn Beaty, *op. cit.*
[51] Daniel Burke, "How QAnon uses religion to lure unsuspecting Christians", in *CNN Religion Editor*, October 15, 2020, URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2020/10/15/us/qanon-religion-churches/index.html, accessed on 19.10.2020.
[52] Marc-André Argentino, *art. cit.*
[53] Daniel Burke, *art. cit.*

such as the current health crisis, make people express themselves, regardless of context and people they interact with. For example, the refusal to wear a mask on the grounds that they do not believe in the existence of COVID,[54] corroborated by the idea that the divinity will protect them even if the virus existed. Moreover, among the conspiracy theories of QAnon are the religious ones. Thus, one of the most important is that the president of the United States of America will not be Donald Trump, "the leader will be someone who both parties can agree on and follow".[55] They were convinced before the US elections that Donald Trump would not win the November 2020 presidential election, but the winner will be a person elected by the global elite. One such leader is identified by followers of the QAnon movement in the Antichrist of whom St. John the Apostle speaks in Revelation:[56] ... The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. … And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.[57]

Jillian Cheney draws a parallel between the beliefs promoted by QAnon and the religious ones. Thus, she claims that many evangelical Christians in the United States are encouraged by the precepts of the Holy Apostle Paul recorded in the Epistle to the Romans because they justify their beliefs:[58] *But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe*[59] and that a similar thought process is specific to QAnon members, their faith being directed to help their family and friends understand the truth, for the purpose: that the actions of the cabal will come to light[60]. The same author says that the mode of action of the followers of the QAnon movement is strikingly similar to that of the biblical command to evangelize and spread Christianity, as St. Matthew the Evangelist says.[61] In fact, the Gospel of Matthew records the commandment of

[54] Jillian Cheney, *art. cit.*
[55] *Ibidem*.
[56] *Ibidem*.
[57] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Revelation, chapter 13, verses 5 - 8, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation+13&version=NIV, accessed on 12.12.2020.
[58] Jillian Cheney, *art. cit.*
[59] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Romans, chapter 3, verses 21 - 22, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+3&version=NIV, accessed on 12.12.2020.
[60] Jillian Cheney, *art. cit.*
[61] *Ibidem*.

Jesus Christ, which says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you".[62] Consequently, followers of the QAnon movement preach and disperse "what they believe to be the Gospel truth" but "it's just an entirely different message".[63] Another similarity identified by Cheney between the two would be that, like Christians, adherents of QAnon conspiracy theories focus their faith on their own feelings and affections, that is, strong feelings toward something, a higher "moral imperative" or supreme and when their desire to do good is amalgamated with the belief that the government and the media are working to silence them, an unshakable mentality is created for them.[64]

Thus, the QAnon conspiracy theories have been appropriated by some Christians, who have further propagated them to others, and who have amalgamated them with biblical precepts to ensure a solid argument, the biblical spring being considered the standard that cannot be set in doubt. The attractiveness of QAnon theories has multiplied exponentially amid the COVID-19 pandemic as people have turned to religion because of the deadly danger posed to them and tried to find culprits for this threat, identifying them in a cabal of pedophiles who lead *the deep state* and who are representatives of the Antichrist, consequently this is devil's work.

2. The Attraction of Christians to QAnon Conspiracy Theories

The QAnon movement has rapidly spread across the planet, quickly crossing US borders, and its nature is seen as religious. This is highlighted by the pastor of *Red Church in Melbourne*, Australia, Mark Sayers, author of the book *Reappearing Church: The Hope for Renewal in the Rise of Our Post-Christian Culture*, which considers the QAnon movement to be "it's the first great internet religion" although it is not the only virtual church or Christian congregation.[65] Sayers says he followed QAnon adherents and concluded that "it's really a new religious movement"[66] for the more he studies them, the less he regards them as followers of a cult. By the way,

[62] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Matthew, chapter 28, verses 19-20, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028%3A16-20&version=NIV, accessed on 12.12.2020.
[63] Jillian Cheney, *art. cit.*
[64] *Ibidem*.
[65] Morgan Lee, "Why Someone You Love Might Join QAnon – For Christians broaching conversations with those persuaded by an increasingly popular conspiracy theory", in *Christianity Today*, September 9, 2020, URL: https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/september-web-only/qanon-evangelicals-global-conspiracy-theory.html, accessed on 12.12.2020.
[66] Morgan Lee, *art. cit.*

the evangelical pastor Ed Stetzer[67] also warned Christians that "right now QAnon is still on the fringes of evangelicalism" this is "a pretty big fringe".[68] Following research into the QAnon movement, Pastor Morgan Lee of Australia says people are attracted to the conspiracy theories it propagates because it highlights that "people have lost power" and explains that for Christians, what can give them a support is the Holy Gospel as this is the revelation of the divinity in which they strongly believe and can be the foundation of their balance.[69] Thus, American evangelical clergy describe the QAnon movement as "a belief system comparable to organized religion" because its followers link the messages posted by Q to biblical precepts, Jesus Christ, or divine providence, that is, the divine work in the world. They view QAnon's messages as revealing truth in the world and believe that a spiritual battle to reveal the truth is about to take place.[70]

The conspiracy theories of the QAnon movement were appropriated by both secular and religious people, without being attracted to this movement only by practitioners of Christianity[71], but many followers of the QAnon movement "describe their mission in religious and quasi-religious terms"[72]. In fact, the conspiracy theories of QAnon are being appropriated by Christians in increasing numbers, precisely because their promoters have made a connection between them and the Christian teachings. For example, conspiracy theories were connected by the teachings of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians in the Second Epistle: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"[73], their belief that "see a different reality that no one else sees"[74], QAnon followers interpreting that "to take every thought captive" means accepting that "addressing conspiracy theories is part of that work". Even Q's "command" to QAnon followers to do their own research when in doubt is very similar "with how evangelicals learn to read

[67] Evangelical pastor and dean at Wheaton College in Illinois.
[68] Daniel Burke, *art. cit.*
[69] Morgan Lee, *art. cit.*
[70] Katelyn Beaty, *Interview with Ari Shapiro*, *How QAnon Conspiracy is Spreading in Christian Communities across the U.S.*, in National Public Radio (NPR), August 21, 2020, URL: https://www.npr.org/2020/08/21/904 798097/how-qanon-conspiracy-is-spreading-in-christian-communities-across-the-u-s?t=1603407436571, accessed on 19.10.2020.
[71] Joel Dryden, *art. cit.*
[72] Ed Stetzer, "Evangelicals need to address the QAnoners in our midst – QAnon has been making headlines but Evangelical Christians should not be swept up in the bizarre movement", in *USA Today*, September 04, 2020, URL: https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/09/04/qanon-and-evangelicals-its-time-address-qanoners-column/3446756001/, accessed on 12.12.2020.
[73] Holy Bible, New International Version®, by Biblica, Inc.®, *2 Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 5*, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians%2010%3A5&version=NIV, accessed on 27.10.2020.
[74] Katelyn Beaty, *art. cit.*

and interpret the Bible, being essentially a "the kind of literacy".[75]

The beliefs of Christians followers of QAnon conspiracy theories are highlighted by scientific research such as that conducted by specialists at Wheaton College "Billy Graham" Center Research Institute in 2018 which revealed that "46% of self-identified evangelicals and 52% of those whose beliefs tag them as evangelical strongly believes the mainstream media produces fake news"[76], which leads to reactions such as the theological interpretation of wearing a mask by resembling the masking by Jesus Christ of their own divinity, which were very vehement and aggressive, both in the virtual environment on the Facebook account of Pastor John van Sloten, of the *Marda Loop Church* congregation in Calgary, Canada, and physically through the classic mail or by protesting in front of his own church.[77]

QAnon followers consider Q to be "a messianic figure" and, like the heresies of early Christianity, promise those interested the possibility of finding the truth, known only to them, while giving them a sense of identity and belonging with phrases code like: "Where we go one, we go all"[78], which is why many "active" Christians are strongly "attracted" to such religious ideas.[79] The language used by the QAnon movement is a religious one, specially designed to attract practicing Christians.[80]

At the same time, followers of the QAnon movement believe in the coming of an extraordinary storm or awakening, after "a cosmic battle between God and Satan" takes place, and the rejection of the measures imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fight against the Deep State are seen as part of the apocalyptic war. Such a religious attitude is determined by the fact that the basis of Christianity is the belief that Jesus Christ always has a plan, and Christians pray to it to be revealed to them. The same pattern is followed by followers of the QAnon movement who are waiting to be revealed by Q "the plan in this cosmic struggle of good against evil".[81] In fact, on the *Omega Kingdom Ministries* website there is a video called "Q – The Plan to Save the World Remastered" which unequivocally highlights the amalgamation of Christian religious precepts with the conspiracy theories of the QAnon movement and their subsequent spread. Since its uploading to the YouTube platform on March 5, 2019, by the user with the pseudonym *Joe M*, until October

[75] Abby Ohlheiser, "Evangelicals are looking for answers online. They're finding QAnon instead", in *MIT Technology Review*, August 26, 2020, URL: https://www.technologyreview.com/2020/08/26/1007611/how-qanon-is-targeting-evangelicals/, accessed on 19.10.2020.
[76] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*
[77] *Ibidem*.
[78] Acronym: WWG1WGA
[79] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*
[80] *Ibidem*.
[81] *Ibidem*.

14, 2020, the video was viewed 5,139,323 times, received 123,807 likes and had 15,586 comments.[82] Moreover, the comments posted on the video are edifying in revealing the type of faith adopted by followers and their predisposition to violence. Thus, the user named *Dwayne Wood* posted on October 3, 2020 the message "The storm is here. Red October. Let the power fall"[83], or a certain Raquel Cabrera Bazan posted in August 2020 "This is a war between God and Evil"[84]. Although Facebook and YouTube have taken steps to ban and remove more of the conspiracy theory used to justify real-world violence, including videos promoted by QAnon, this has not stopped some "conservative Christians" from adopting their theories.[85]

Jillian Cheney says that many followers of QAnon's conspiracy theories keep their basic beliefs and interpret the evidence in such a way as to justify their position. As a result, Christians who adopt these theories consider the revelations received from Q as clues to the future, identical to Armageddon provided in the Bible by St. Matthew the Evangelist.[86] He says of knowing the future, "that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man".[87]

Ed Stetzer believes that the QAnon movement has created waves in Christian communities and caused significant mutations "in ways that will particularly impact churches"[88], and the biggest problem is the naivety of Christians who cause them to think critically instead of about the world around them becoming followers of QAnon conspiracy theories without realizing it.[89] Therefore, it is necessary and imperative to manifest a rational thinking of religious people in order not to fall victim to QAnon conspiracy theories. Stetzer insists that such an attitude can differentiate between "conspiracy theories that have risen to the level of messianic religion" and "seekers of truth" Christians who "need pastors, leaders, and

[82] ***, Website *Omega Kingdom Ministries*, URL: https://omegakingdomministry.org/equipping-the-ekklesia/ şi ***, "Q – The Plan To Save The World Remastered", *YouTube videoclip*, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVeDKuHPDK8&feature=emb_logo, accessed on 14.10.2020.

[83] Dwayne Wood, "Comment on the video "Q – The Plan To Save The World Remastered", 03.10.2020, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVeDKuHPDK8&lc=Ugx9vrWixxJqx8lMzTd4AaABAg, accessed on 14.10.2020.

[84] Raquel Cabrera Bazan, "Comment on the video "Q – The Plan To Save The World Remastered", 07.10.2020, URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KVeDKuHPDK8&lc=Ugw_5el9Onvo-ofvaJZ4AaABAg, accessed on 14.10.2020.

[85] Daniel Burke, *art. cit.*

[86] Jillian Cheney, "An Evangelical's Guide To QAnon: Inside One Of The Most Talked About Internet Groups".

[87] Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, by Biblica, Inc.®, Matthew, chapter 24, verses 36-37, URL: https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+24&version=NIV, accessed on 12.12.2020.

[88] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*

[89] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*

everyday Christians to address this conspiracy".[90] They can and must preach and enlighten other potential Christians adherents of QAnon conspiracy theories about this and against it, regardless of who promotes such ideologies, ordinary citizens or influential people in society, even a country's president.[91]

Christians followers of the QAnon movement essentially consider Q to be a kind of Messiah who reveals sacred truths hidden to people by evil people represented by a cabal of pedophiles who run the world occultly. Christians are attracted to such ideas because they are manipulated by the promise of truth, and the history of Christianity reveals several cases in which followers were attracted to heresies because they were promised the revelation of the supreme truth.

Conclusions

The fundamental element that can make Christians master the conspiracy theories of the far-right QAnon movement is faith. Without it, any such theory remains a simple idea invented without anchor in reality and without support in logic and reason.

Although the QAnon extremist movement emerged in late 2017, it has spread rapidly, both in the United States and in other countries around the world where Christian culture and spirituality are manifesting. Moreover, the conspiracy theories of the QAnon extremist movement have been appropriated by both non-religious people and Christians, active or non-practitioners.

Based on this growing manifestation, in several Christian churches and congregations, especially through online activities, QAnon conspiracy theories began to be preached in solemnly officiated religious ceremonies, along with specific Christian teachings and traditional biblical precepts.

The interference of the far-right QAnon movement in the Christian religion by exploiting the faith of the followers, in the sense of interpreting Christian religious writings to converge with conspiracy theories, so as to strengthen the latter, is a reality. The alarm signal about this interference is sounded by the Christian clergy themselves, spiritual leaders of some congregations within which the phenomenon is gaining momentum.

Adherents of the QAnon movement have carried out and are carrying out a feverish propaganda in the virtual environment, and due to the messages inciting violence and large-scale manipulation of people, social platforms, large or small, have begun to ban the transmission of such messages to block the aggressive expansion of the phenomenon. As a result, QAnon messages will continue to be transmitted on imageboard, 4chan and 8chan platforms, used by right-wing

[90] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*
[91] Ed Stetzer, *art. cit.*

extremists, but will also massively move into the dark web, an unindexed internet space that allows any type of manifestation.

The far-right QAnon movement will not be suppressed by social media blocking and deletion of accounts, but will continue to expand because any cantonment measure taken against such a phenomenon will be seen by followers as persecution. Consequently, the effect will be the opposite of what is expected, as their belief that all conspiracy theories are true will be strengthened (because otherwise not so much effort would be made against the followers of the QAnon movement), without seeing the basic idea of fighting them by governments, as a result of their harmful effects on national security. In fact, the QAnon movement is an element of insecurity because it poses a threat to the religious identity of individuals, diverting true Christian values to conspiracy theories such as the non-existence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the SARS-CoV-2 virus or the existence of a global pedophile elite, trafficking children and that triggered a non-existent pandemic for the simple purpose of controlling humanity.

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CDSSS WORKSHOP ON *"ADAPTATION OF DEFENCE PLANNING DOCUMENTS TO SECURITY CHALLENGES"*

March 19, 2021

In March 2021, the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies held an online workshop on *"Adaptation of Defence Planning Documents to Security Challenges"*, where valuable contributions were made, together with useful debates for teaching and research.

The activity was honoured by a broad audience, represented by specialists from the structures of the Ministry of National Defence, such as: Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History; Defence Staff; Land Forces Staff; Regional Department of Defense Resources Management Studies (DRESMARA); Ministry of Internal Affairs; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; academic staff, researchers, as well as students with concerns in this field. Also, two generals, members of the Reserve Officers Association in Romania (AORR) together with another reservist gave lectures in the workshop.

The theme of the event included discussions on: Strategic Defence Analysis – an essential process for defence planning; National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024. Strategy Implementation Plan; Government Program 2020-2024 – objectives, priorities and directions of action in the field of defence; the 2017 Defence White Paper and the draft of 2021 Defence White Paper – comparative analysis, continuity and predictability; the project on the Military Defence Strategy; defence capabilities and priorities for achieving them. Major endowment programs; the strategy for developing the capabilities of the Romanian Armed Forces – 2024 and the Reserve Forces and territorial defence.

Within the event, the topics debated aimed at nationally underlying and adapting security and defence policies and strategies related to the new challenges of the security environment, taking into account the following objectives: defining the political and institutional framework in the field of security and defence, as well as the stages and results of the strategic defence analysis; determining the correlation regarding the content of the main defence planning documents;

identifying the hypotheses and scenarios, analysing the missions and requirements of the Romanian Armed Forces, as well as the necessary capabilities and resources for their development; establishing the role, location and missions of the reserve forces regarding their participation in territorial defence and achieving resilience; description of major factors and trends with the potential to influence the security environment, with emphasis on the relationship between the threat-risk-vulnerability triad and national resilience; description of legislative changes on national defence, preparation of the population, territory and economy for defence and the status of the voluntary reservist.

The next objectives in the CDSSS agenda are represented by the organization of two scientific events, namely the *International Seminar on the Effects of the pandemic on international security*, organised on May 20, 2021, and the *International Scientific Conference Strategies XXI*, on the *Complexity and Dynamics of the Security Environment*, December 9-10, 2021.

More details regarding the scientific activities organised by CDSSS can be obtained by accessing the website http://cssas.unap.ro/en/events.htm

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