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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

Florian CÎRCIUMARU, PhD 5

POLITICAL-MILITARY TOPICALITY

The Effects of the Ukrainian War on the Legal System and International Order

Mirela ATANASIU, PhD 9

NATO-Israel Cooperation in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine War

Zsolt CSEPREGI 23

SECURITY AND MILITARY STRATEGY

Implications of Defence Resource Management on National Objectives

Simona-Daniela BORDEA 38

Identifying Post-Disaster Psychological Reactions and Possibilities to Reduce Potential Damages

László TEKNŐS, PhD 67

Convergence and Pragmatism in Structuring the EU Defence Planning Process. The Importance of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)

Dragos ILINCA, PhD 92

INFORMATION SOCIETY

Humorous Satirical Meme, Online Influence Tool

Cristian Ionel HAIDĂU 103



MILITARY HISTORY

- Transnistria from the Formation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to its Integration into the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (1924-1940)*
Andi Mihail BĂNCILĂ, PhD 122

BOOK REVIEW

- Conflict and Peace in Western Sahara, edited by János Besenyő, Joseph Huddleston, Yahia Zoubir*
Szilveszter PÓCZIK, PhD 135

SCIENTIFIC EVENT

- WORKSHOP on Lessons Identified in the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict – March 23rd, 2023.*
Raluca STAN 143

- GUIDE FOR AUTHORS** 147



EDITOR'S NOTE

Strategic Impact journal no. 1/2023 is dedicated to a past year marked by challenges and changes involving the geopolitical and geostrategic situation on the eastern border of the European Union, by encompassing seven articles, a book review, followed by the *Scientific Event* section and the *Guide for authors*.

Firstly, in the *Political-Military Topicality* section, the article opening the journal belongs to our colleague, CS II Mirela Atanasiu, PhD, and deals with establishing the degree of resilience of the current international security system and what transformative trends are identified in the international law system and in the global order in general, but also as effects of the development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In the same context, Mr. Zsolt Csepregi analyses the state of NATO's efforts on the southern flank, arguing that, in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, robust NATO cooperation in the South, having Israel as a key pillar, is more important than ever, even though it is a low priority on NATO's agenda in 2023 because of the ongoing war.

Next, in the *Security and Military Strategy* heading, Mrs. Simona-Daniela Bordea aims to highlight the importance of the Black Sea for the Pontic states, having in mind the fact that nowadays, in the context of the new international context, it represents an important cross-border resource both for the security of the states in the region and for the security of NATO and the EU alike. In the same rubric, Mr. László Teknös, PhD, explains that as it is important to deal with the analysis and presentation of psychic phenomena shortly or long after a disaster occurs, identifying and mapping the expected psychic consequences is mandatory in searching for protection options and solutions. The third article in this section, written by Dragoş Ilinca, PhD, aims to deepen the way Common Security and Defence Policy (CARD) contributes to the creation of an integrated framework for the functioning of European defence cooperation and proposes a comprehensive perspective by analysing how CARD contributes to guiding the interaction between Member States on the capability dimension and, last but not least, to strengthening EU-NATO complementarity.

In the *Information Society* section, Mr. Cristian-Ionel Haidău analyses and explains why humorous satirical memes have come to be used in influence actions and campaigns and why they have increased effectiveness, especially among trained people, compared to other techniques encompassing two dimensions: baggage



and genetic programming together with the chemistry of the human body, where hormones play a very important role, and the social, tribal dimension, where man is a being who wants and needs belonging to a group to feel safe, accepted and valued.

In the *Military Society* rubric, Mr. Andi Mihail Băncilă, PhD, explains how in order to theoretically preserve the chance to integrate the former province of Bessarabia into the new empire during 1924, the new Kremlin leader Joseph Stalin decided to form a republic and a new people, the Moldavian SSR and the Moldavian people distinct from the Romanian one, a decision proven to be catastrophic for the Romanians living in Bessarabia over the next 100 years, who in this way could be forced to link their fate to Russia.

The *Book Review* section brings to the readers' attention a book edited by Mr. János Besenyő, PhD, Mr. Joseph Huddleston, and Mr. Yahia Zoubir, PhD, which provides the very first comprehensive analysis of MINURSO (the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara), focused on its activities, composition, purpose, and operational future in Western Sahara, the world's last colony.

The *Scientific Event* rubric briefly presents aspects of interest from the Workshop on *Lessons Identified in the Conflict Management in Ukraine*, held online on March 23rd, 2023, which was based on the events of the year-long Russian massive assault on Ukraine, and specialists in the field set out to identify the most important aspects of the conflict so far.

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

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

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



Starting with issue no. 1/2023, the journal will be published exclusively in English. The decision was taken to support authors in order to avoid duplication of effort and hopefully this will prove to be beneficial.

In terms of international visibility – the primary objective of the publication – the recognition of the scientific quality of the journal is confirmed by its indexing in the international databases CEEOL (Central and Eastern European Online Library, Germany), EBSCO (USA), Index Copernicus (Poland), ProQuest (USA), and WorldCat and ROAD ISSN, as well as its presence in the virtual catalogues of the libraries of prestigious institutions abroad, such as NATO and military universities in Bulgaria, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia etc.

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

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

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





THE EFFECTS OF THE UKRAINIAN WAR ON THE LEGAL SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONAL ORDER

*Mirela ATANASIU, PhD**

Russia's invasion in Ukraine, in February 2022, marked the re-emergence of war as a social phenomenon on the European continent, but it also represented a clear signal of challenging the international order based on the UN legal system. Moreover, the continuation of this conflict, despite the measures taken by the international community, has triggered doubts regarding the system's degree of functionality underlying the international order, in the context of new global challenges. Also, as the conflict in Ukraine prolongs, the policies of the great powers, but also that of small and medium-sized states fearful for their survival, are changing, which will obviously lead to a recalibration of the international order. Therefore, the purpose of this research focuses on establishing the degree of resilience of the current international security system and what transformative trends are identified in the international law system and in the global order in general, but also as effects of the development of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In this respect, the main research method is the content analysis of certain international legal documents and statements of some government officials, the conclusions being later translated into an empirical interpretation that helps to achieve the purpose of the research.

Keywords: *resilience of the international relations system; international order; international law system; legality; legitimacy; trust.*

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Introduction

The international security system represents the structure of relations (general principles, rules, roles and constraints) established at the international level between different types of state and non-state actors¹.

The international order established after World War II, seen as “the hierarchy of states within the international system (of security, A.N.²)” (Jackson and Sørensen 2010, 302), is established on liberal foundations. This order is ensured by a legal system recognized and respected by the international community, materialized in a network of subordinate bodies (General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice and Secretariat) (United Nations 2023), or coordinated by the United Nations (International Monetary Fund, World Bank, UNESCO, World Health Organization, World Trade Organization, International Criminal Court, etc.), and regulations (UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, conventions, treaties, decisions, etc.).

Initially, upon the establishment of the international security system, the liberal order was one “configured on a rules-based multilateralism” (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 282), later, after the 1990s, “the post-World War II liberal international order of liberal multilateralism moved to a post-Cold War international order of post-national liberalism” (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 282). This development of the liberal order included “a significant increase in the authority of international institutions and a strengthening of decisively liberal features (such as human rights, the rule of law, democracy and free movement)” (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 282), transformations that, by their more intrusive character, by requiring nation-states to cede part of their sovereignty to intergovernmental organizations, posed challenges to the liberal international order, but without causing major changes in the liberal structure.

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war without the Russian Federation being in a situation where a military operation would be authorized by the UN Security Council (UN SC) and “in an international society of capitalist democracies where war has been outlawed” (Lebow 2022, 118) shakes the existing status quo and encourages the anarchic tendencies of the component states of an international system that suddenly seems “lacking a central authority that has the means to protect states from aggression” (Posen 2022, 1). Thus, in the presence of an apparent anomie of global governance, intervened after the illegal action of the Russian Federation to attack a sovereign state, states tend to resort to their own resources to ensure their security at the expense of those offered by the organizations of the international system, a phenomenon which, combined with the emergence of new global power poles, reflects a tendency to reorganize the international order.

¹ The category of non-state actors includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), private military companies, media outlets, terrorist groups, organized ethnic groups, academic institutions, lobby groups, organized crime organizations, syndicates, social movements, oligarchs, etc.

² Author’s note.



1. How Resilient is the Current International System?

Francis Fukuyama said, about the Western liberal democracy, that it may represent the “end point of mankind’s ideological evolution” and the “final form of human government”, thus constituting “the end of history” (Fukuyama 1992, xi). Although the author did not see it as an ideal model of government, he viewed it as the ultimate form of human government through its success in universalizing itself at the expense of the main opposing systems of authoritarian government, such as fascism and communism. But currently the global situation tends to contradict his ideas.

To educate ourselves on the question “How resilient is the current international system?”, in an article published in “Strategic Colloquium” no. 9/2022, we carry out an analysis inspired by a study of the British Chatham House Institute in which it was presented that “for a legal system to endure, three interconnected conditions must be met: legitimacy, equity and trust” (Chatam House 2015, 3). Thus, applying this methodological framework to the current international system, the main conclusions resulting from the analysis were (Atanasiu 2022, 5-9):

- the main source of legitimacy in the 21st century for relations between actors in the international system comes from what is permitted by the UN Charter in force since 1945, which clearly prohibits the threat or use of force between states and interference in the internal jurisdiction of other states, other than those initiated in accordance with the right of self-defence of states subject to an armed attack or actions authorized by the UN Security Council;

- the legitimacy of the current international system requires strict compliance with the specific legal regulations by its main promoters, namely the nuclear states, which are also the permanent members with voting rights in the UN Security Council (the USA, the Russian Federation, China, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain, the so-called P5 group) which causes the other members of the international community to accept it and respect its legal elements;

- there is an interdependence between legitimacy and legality, the manifestation of the former strengthening the latter, and legitimacy being undermined by the legal inability to respond to urgent matters. The second interdependent link, which can cause syncopes in terms of the functionality of the current international system due to the accelerated dynamics of global phenomena and the diversification of the types of actors on the international scene, has determined the emergence of the concept of “constructive flexibility of international law” (United Nations University 2008), which, in certain extreme circumstances, some actors resorted to (the USA when it intervened in Kosovo in 1999, the international sanctions against Iraq preceding the 2003 invasion, the legal motivation brought by the USA to the invasion of Iraq, the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, etc.), many experts having different opinions regarding the legality and/or legitimacy of interventions in those circumstances considered extreme;



- ensuring the equity of the international legal framework is achieved if the order based on the recognized rules works to the advantage of the majority and not of a minority but, since the democratic system and respect for human rights have been implemented more in the West than in the East, this condition has suffered in the contexts in which some legal norms began to be interpreted differently in the interest of geopolitically dominant states, such as the USA, the Russian Federation and China³, which also stimulated states outside the P5 to ignore norms of international law, or even previously signed treaties (North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to develop a nuclear capability, Turkey withdrew from a human rights treaty and launched military incursions against the Kurds in Syria);
- the level of confidence in the functionality of the order in the current international system derives from the extent to which the other two aspects (legitimacy and equity) are implemented, its longevity being an indicator of the fact that the way it was established and operated largely reflected the geopolitical reality, only occasional repairs being required.

As we presented in the introductory part of this article, the post-national liberal order after the 1990s also raised overall a series of challenges to its address (Table no. 1).

Table no. 1: Initiatives challenging the post-national liberal order

No.	Initiatives
1	The development of Islamic fundamentalism with the culminating evolution of the Islamic State terrorist organization in 2014
2	Russian policy revisionism culminating in the takeover of Crimea (2014) and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war
3	The rise of the Chinese model of authoritarianism “challenging the ideals of liberal democracy, including individual liberties, the rule of law, and transparency and accountability” (Democracy 2022)
4	Anti-globalization movements (RAND Corporation 2006)
5	The rise of populism and nationalism in Europe and the USA (Baker Institute 2016)
6	Right-wing extremism in Western societies (Counter Extremism Project 2021)
7	Turkey’s military incursions into Syrian territory from 2016-2020

From what has been presented up to this point, it can be seen that the liberal order as a whole is challenged not only by autocratic regimes, but also by liberal democracies. Also, against the background of the fact that international institutions are criticized for not respecting the principle of equality, but “working in favour of Western societies and elites, ... applying double standards” (Börzel and Zürn 2021, 283) there are a number of states that **have not** ratified some international

³ Amid USA’s and Russian preoccupation with the Ukraine conflict, the Chinese leadership has accelerated steps to turn disputed claims over islands in the South China and East China Seas into a fait accompli. For example, in March 2022 it militarized three islands in the respective region.



conventions, **do not** support the initiatives of such organizations or have withdrawn from them, some examples being included in Table no. 2.

Table no. 2: Examples of challenging the liberal order at the global level

No.	Bodies/initiative	Contesting states
1	International Criminal Court (ICC) established in 2002	- China, USA, India, Russian Federation, Ukraine are not members of this organization - 42 states have not signed or become parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC, among them Bhutan, Brunei, Equatorial Guinea, Grenada, Indonesia, Japan, Mauritania, Micronesia, Palau, Qatar, Somalia, Suriname, Turkmenistan (Prevent Genocide International 2005)
2	World Health Organization established in 1948	- Liechtenstein is not a member.
3	World Trade Organization established in 1995	- Aruba, Eritrea, Kiribati, Kosovo, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Monaco, Nauru, North Korea, Palau, Palestinian Territories, San Marino and Tuvalu are not members
4	International Monetary Fund established in 1944	- Cuba, North Korea, Monaco, Taiwan, the Vatican and East Timor, Liechtenstein are not members of it
5	The 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change	- Iran, Libya, Yemen and Eritrea have not ratified the agreement (Climate Home News 2020) - The USA withdrew for a while ⁴
6	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights entered into force in 1976	- China and Cuba have not ratified the pact - North Korea tried to withdraw
7	2007 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	- Bhutan, Cameroon, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Tonga and the USA have not ratified the convention - Eritrea, South Sudan and the Vatican have not signed the convention
8	1992 Rio de Janeiro Convention on Biological Diversity	The USA, Andorra, South Sudan and the Vatican have not ratified the convention (UN 2015)
9	2018 Global Compact on Migration	- A number of states such as the USA, Australia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Czech Republic, Estonia, Switzerland did not participate in its negotiation conference - Brazil withdrew from the pact after one year - Russia signed it with reserves
10	2018 Global Compact for Refugees	- The USA and Hungary voted against - Eritrea, Libya and the Dominican Republic abstained
11	1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child	- The USA and Somalia have not ratified it.
12	The 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons	- India, Israel, and Pakistan never signed the treaty.
13	1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide	- Angola, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Congo, Eritrea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kenya, Oman, Madagascar, Thailand, Solomon Islands, United Arab Emirates had not signed the document by June 2015 (Prevent Genocide International 2005)
14	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, New York, 1979	- The USA has signed but not ratified the convention - Iran, Palau, Somalia, Sudan and Tonga have not signed it.
15	Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Basel, 1989	East Timor, Fiji, Haiti, San Marino, South Sudan and the USA have not signed the convention

⁴ In November 2020, during the term of President Donald Trump, the USA withdrew from the agreement, but with Joe Biden coming to power, they re-joined the pact in early 2021.



The contestations take place regarding various bodies and initiatives, they are initiated when the respective state actor considers that they may harm its national interests. For example, the USA, although they supported the negotiations that went into the establishment of the ICC, currently does not recognize its jurisdiction over USA citizens “considering the prosecution of its citizens before an international body without the consent of the US as a violation of its sovereignty” (Anthony Dworkin 2020). Also, neither Ukraine nor the Russian Federation are parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC, which made it possible to investigate war crimes committed by the Russian military on Ukrainian territory only at the express request of the Ukrainian authorities in accordance with Article. 12, paragraph 3, of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (UN 2002).

However, even in its form of post-national liberalism, until 2022, the international system managed by the UN has proven its resilience in fulfilling its main purpose established in Article 1 of the Charter of the organization with a global vocation “to maintain international peace and security” (UN 1945) through the established ways of regulating relations between the actors on the global stage, as long as there were no major tensions between the great powers that would give rise to the suspicion of the imminent outbreak of a global conflagration.

2. What has Changed in the Legal System and in the International Order with the Irruption of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict?

In the matter of international law of the liberal international order in which we still find ourselves, the notion of “war” is no longer current, it being replaced by that of “conflict”. This terminological change occurred with the adoption of the United Nations Charter in 1945 which prohibits, under Article 2, the use of force by one state against another (Organizația Națiunilor Unite 1945). Since then, states have avoided declaring war on other states. Later, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 adopted deliberately the more general “armed conflict” term to cover the whole range of situations and to avoid legal arguments about the precise definition of war, a welcome move as non-state actors proliferated, and protracted armed violence between government authorities and organized armed groups, or just between sub-state armed groups, became commonplace on the international scene. Also, since the creation of the Charter, it was known that “the organization will not be able to deal with problems and/or conflicts between great powers or between a great power and a smaller country” (Global Governance Forum 2022), sooner rather than later, so as Cord Meyer, a prominent member of the USA delegation to the San Francisco Conference in 1945, pointed out, “a major power may violate every principle and purpose stated in the Charter and yet remain a member of the Organization by the lawful use of the veto which it has been expressly granted” (Global Governance Forum 2022). Moreover, even before the Russian-Ukrainian war, the UN was facing



problems such as increasing competition between great powers and evolving threats to peace and security.

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war not only represented the reactivation of the concept of “war” in the 21st century, but it was also a brutal challenge to the current global order by an authoritarian power, the Russian Federation, with an important role in shaping the international system regulated by UN, materializing precisely that situation of violation of the principles of the UN Charter, and international law as a whole, by a state with the right of veto in the organization’s Security Council. However, the activity of the UN was not paralyzed by this conflict, it continued to act in the sense of mitigating the crises and conflicts of the world, according to its mission, without neglecting the problem in Ukraine as a series of measures were taken against the Russian Federation to determine it to give up this illegal war (Table no. 3).

But amid the apparent lack of results following UN actions against F. Ruse, a vacuum of legitimacy and a philosophical “aporia”⁵ has been generated among members of the global community regarding the confidence invested in the resilience of the current international system to manage such a military situation, questioning the need to reform it in a new formula.

3. Trends in the Transformation of the International Security System

It is important to point out that since the beginning of the 21st century, experts in international relations have presented the idea of the transition of power in the global hierarchy from the USA to China. Moreover, specialists show that with the emergence of great powers on the global scene, the imminence of a multipolar world order also appears (Wijninga, Oosterveld și Galdiga 2014, 146).

Taking into account the findings of international law, official documents and the actions of global actors, we can identify some perspectives regarding the transition of power at the global level.

Even before the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the current global order, based on the liberal norms of the classical international legal system, advanced towards a bipolar formula as China began to challenge not only the economic and technological supremacy of the USA, but also their presence as power in the Indo-Pacific region, against the background of the development of Chinese economic power. This structural change, due mainly to the intensification of Sino-American confrontation, very different from the bipolarity of the Cold War era, took place at a time when a series of transnational challenges (the 2008 global financial crisis, climate change, accelerated technological innovation, global pandemic, as well as ethnic, racial and political tensions, etc.) were already existing, and the policy of American “withdrawal” from various global initiatives or regions of influence, only increased the perception of “weakness” of this pole of power.

⁵ In philosophy “aporia” represents a conundrum or state of puzzlement.



Table no. 3: Actions undertaken by the UN against Russia in the context of the war outbreak in Ukraine (United Nations Regional Information Centre and Western Europe 2023)

No.	Date	Action
1.	February 25, 2022	United Nations Secretary-General appoints Amin Awad of Sudan as Deputy Secretary-General to Serve as UN Coordinator for the Ukraine Crisis.
2.	February 28, 2022	The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court opened an investigation for war crimes and crimes against humanity in regard to the conflict in Ukraine.
3.	March 2, 2022	United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution deploring Russia's "aggression" against Ukraine (141 votes in favour, 5 against and 35 abstentions).
4.	March 4, 2022	UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution calling for the "swift and verifiable" withdrawal of Russian troops and Russian-backed armed groups from all of Ukrainian territory.
5.	March 5, 2022	The UN Human Rights Council decided to urgently establish an independent international commission of inquiry following Russia's aggression against Ukraine.
6.	March 16, 2022	The International Court of Justice has ordered Russia to immediately suspend its military operations in Ukraine.
7.	March 24, 2022	The UN General Assembly overwhelmingly called for civilian protection and humanitarian access to Ukraine, while criticizing Russia for creating a "horrendous" humanitarian situation (140 votes in favor, 5 against and 38 abstentions).
8.	March 30, 2022	The UN has appointed three human rights experts to investigate possible violations of international law committed during the conflict in Ukraine.
9.	April 7, 2022	The UN General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council. The resolution received a two-thirds majority of those voting, minus abstentions, in the 193-member Assembly, with 95 nations voting in favor and 24 against.
10.	April 2022	The UN Secretary General visited Russia and Ukraine.
11.	April 26, 2022	The UN General Assembly adopted a new resolution asking the five permanent members of the Security Council to justify their use of the veto.
12.	May 6, 2022	The UN Security Council adopted a statement strongly supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to reach a peaceful solution in Ukraine.
13.	May 12, 2022	The Human Rights Council approved a resolution at a special session on Ukraine calling for an investigation into alleged atrocities against Russian occupation troops.
14.	June 3, 2022	As Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its 100 th day, António Guterres marked the grim milestone with a renewed call for an immediate end to the violence.
15.	June 10, 2022	The UN Office for Human Rights (OHCHR) has condemned the death sentence of three foreign fighters in Ukraine by a court in the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic.
16.	June 21, 2022	The UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Wairimu Nderitu, briefed the Security Council and raised concerns about the "increased risks" of sexual violence and trafficking, which "significantly affects women and children".
17.	August 18, 2022	The Secretary General arrived in L'viv, Ukraine, to attend a trilateral meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.
18.	August 23, 2022	The High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern after photos and videos circulated on social media appeared to show metal cages built in the philharmonic hall in the devastated Ukrainian city of Mariupol, apparently to house prisoners of war (POW) during a future "trial-show".



No.	Date	Action
19.	September 7, 2022	The UN's Head of policy and peacebuilding, Rosemary DiCarlo, informed the Security Council that 5,718 people had been killed, including 372 children since the start of the war. Registered Ukrainian refugees across Europe have exceeded seven million.
20.	September 29, 2022	The UN Secretary General said Russia's plan to annex four occupied regions of Ukraine would be an illegal move, a violation of international law and should be condemned.
21.	September 30, 2022	Russia rejected the UN Security Council resolution condemning the attempted annexation of Ukrainian regions.
22.	October 12, 2022	The UN General Assembly passed a resolution by a large majority calling on countries not to recognize the four regions of Ukraine that Russia wanted to illegally annex.
23.	November 14, 2022	The UN General Assembly passed a resolution demanding Russia to pay war reparations to Ukraine as ambassadors met to resume their special emergency session on the conflict. 94 countries voted in favor of the resolution and 14 against, while 73 abstained.
24.	November 23, 2022	Addressing the UN Security Council, Rosemary DiCarlo, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Peacebuilding, warned of the devastation caused by Russia's "relentless attacks" against civilians and critical infrastructure in Ukraine.
25.	November 25, 2022	The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, has expressed his shock at the human suffering in Ukraine, as evidenced by Russia's continued large-scale missile and drone attacks against critical infrastructure and recent allegations of summary executions of POWs.
26.	December 4, 2022	The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights began a four-day official visit to Ukraine at the invitation of the Government.
27.	January 16, 2023	The UN Secretary-General has strongly condemned the rocket attack on a residential building in the city of Dnipro, Ukraine, in which at least 40 people were killed, with many more injured and dozens missing.
28.	January 24, 2023	The UN children's agency (UNICEF) said eleven months of war in Ukraine had disrupted the education of more than five million boys and girls.
29.	January 25, 2023	The historic center of the Ukrainian port city of Odessa has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, 11 months after the full-scale Russian invasion.

Moreover, under the influence of recent developments on the international scene, especially the diplomatic and military actions of Russia through which it wants to become a pole of global power, we find that the tendency is to transform the system of international relations as a whole from one unipolar to multipolar. Moreover, Vladimir Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007, when he declared that he was convinced that it was reached "the decisive moment when we have to think seriously about the global security architecture", foreshadowed his desire to move from the unipolar world, dominated by the USA, to a multipolar one in which Russia would play a major role.

As the conflict in Ukraine lingers, the policies of major powers such as Russia, China and the USA are undergoing changes, which will obviously lead to a recalibration of the international order as a whole, where small and medium-sized states can approach one of two possible solutions:



- adopting a neutral position towards the Ukrainian conflict and focusing on increasing their national resilience to crises resulting from the competition of great powers for global supremacy;

- the obvious positioning on one or the other side of the barricade in this competition, namely on the side of Ukraine supported with priority by (especially Western) states with democratic regimes or on Russia's side, supported by authoritarian regimes (China, Iran, North Korea, etc.), to have some subsequent benefits from the winning global powers.

The end of American hegemony gives small powers greater opportunity to pursue divergent political and economic patterns, sometimes through targeted actions at the expense of democratic values and the spread of repression. Small and middle powers, democracies or not, can only take advantage of this if they can control their domestic fragility. We see this in Turkey and Hungary, which are trying to maximize their benefits by maintaining relations with both sides in the war in Ukraine.

What is also interesting to point out is the fact that in a modified international order, in which China and Russia, two authoritarian regimes, will come to hold a central role, if we take into account the principles of the theory of power transition as it was defined by Organski (Organski 1968, 361), the construction of a new international order will be achieved by taking over the governance model of the dominant nation/nations. Thus, in this context we can expect major changes in the style of global governance, in the sense that they can be directed at the detriment of the rule of law and democratic governance. To prevent this, large liberal powers should outdo autocratic leaders in gaining the support of small powers under the condition of continued democratic rule.

Conclusions

With the challenge of the international legal system and the current global order, against the background of the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war, a philosophical *aporia* began to manifest among the larger or smaller international actors; this may be the reason why some of the international actors hesitated to stand firmly on the side of Ukraine, an independent and sovereign state, recognized as such by the international community and attacked by another state that was not in one of the situations recognized in the UN Charter as legitimate to use the armed force.

In time, this *aporia* can lead to a global reorganization both by establishing alliances between the world's authoritarian powers and by repositioning small and medium-sized states vis-à-vis potential aggressors or stronger allies by resorting to the "bandwagoning" or "balancing" policies in relation to them, a fact reflected in



the firm support of one or the other of the parties in the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, or an oscillating attitude towards them.

Although the Russian-Ukrainian war was not the triggering element of the global reorganization, it has the potential to fundamentally transform, with its prolongation, the way the actors of the international scene relate to each other, this being one of the current factors driving us apart from an international order centered on the liberal characteristics of the West, a phenomenon known as the “de-Westernization” of the world. That is why this war must be seen as a wake-up call for the civilized world to develop a new security architecture and strengthen international law to protect democracy against dictatorship and terror.

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NATO-ISRAEL COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

*Zsolt CSEPREGI**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shifted NATO's attention to its eastern flank and raised the importance of collective defence. However, the transatlantic alliance has spent long years to build up its reputation as a security provider in the Middle East as well, in the southern strategic direction. The current paper analyses the state of NATO's efforts on the southern flank, using its partnership with Israel as a case study. It argues that, in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, robust NATO cooperation in the South, having Israel as a key pillar, is more important than ever, even though it is a low priority on NATO's agenda in 2023 because of the ongoing war.

Keywords: *NATO; Israel; Middle East; Russia-Ukraine war; security policy; security cooperation; alliance theory.*

Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is undergoing a constant transformation to adapt to the current security environment and serve its members' interests. In the post-Cold War era, with the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a superpower adversary, the importance of the southern strategic direction has elevated compared to the eastern one. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has refocused NATO's attention to its eastern flank. However, this paper highlights that the eastern and southern threats are once again interlinked to a degree unprecedented since the early decades of the Cold War. NATO provides different answers on the differing challenges from the two main strategic directions, and, in those answers, the role

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of partnerships is varying as well. While the eastern flank is under threat in terms of collective defence, in the south, cooperative security and crisis prevention and management present the main tasks. This paper analyses what role the southern strategic direction plays in the security environment which has developed after the start of the 2022 Russia-Ukraine war. The paper argues that, since the security threat presented by Russia will not dissipate even with an envisioned end of the war in Ukraine, NATO needs low-cost solutions to achieve its security goals in the south and partnerships are exactly the tools for that.

The study utilises the case of the NATO-Israel partnership to demonstrate the opportunities in southern security partnerships, while also highlighting the limitations of the partnerships' scope in the south. Israel aims at defending itself on its own as much as possible, maintaining its freedom of decision, while also reaping the benefits of being part of a wide and deep security partnership. The paper employs the alliance theory to explain Israel's approach *vis-à-vis* NATO. The theory explains the main factors that indicate whether a state is interested in forming treaty alliances or solely maintaining flexible partnerships. The paper demonstrates that it is the type of "threat" that motivates a particular state to choose one or the other, creating in effect a mid-tier security partnership scope, between formal alliances and ad-hoc cooperation. Beyond the theoretical approach, the study highlights the practical importance and the potential future of NATO's developing partnership with Israel in limiting threats coming from the southern direction by focusing on the last three decades of the NATO-Israel partnership. The paper demonstrates that NATO's best solution to guarantee its security is to support the self-interests of its southern partners, such as Israel, both on a bilateral and multilateral basis. This way, the partner states can themselves provide security in their region, and, by extension, stabilise and guard NATO's southern flank. This is true both in mitigating instability and the threat stemming from terrorism and lack of state control, while also balancing potential regional hegemony that could present an eventual threat to NATO members as well.

1. NATO's Southern Strategic Direction in the Context of the Russia-Ukraine War

NATO emerged in 1949 as the main security alliance to confront the Soviet Union and its allies and safeguard Western democracies from the threat of a Communist invasion. While this eastward-facing security perception might have dominated, NATO was never solely looking only in one direction. The Soviet Union was also threatening to directly attack the North American NATO allies through the North Pole and to expand its reach in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region, which could have led to a situation potentially enveloping the



European NATO allies. A hypothetical “grand alliance” of the Warsaw Pact states, and an Arab Socialist bloc never became a concrete fact, which does not mean that strategic planners in the West did not have to concern themselves with the possibility. As this paper highlights Israeli role in NATO’s south, it is interesting to note that one reason that the threat of a unified Arab Socialist bloc never manifested on an existential level is the role Israel played as a bulwark against an emerging Egyptian-Syrian alliance during the first 25 years of the Cold War. As the bipolar world order came to an end, the existential threat from the east subsided for almost a generation. Soviet troops were withdrawn 1,500 kilometres and the borders of Russia, the core successor state of the Soviet Union, were also 1,000 kilometres further to the east than before. NATO became an alliance of like-minded states furthering the rules-based world order and membership expansion became a vehicle for democratising Central and Eastern European states. While the threat presented by Russia subsided, the southern strategic direction manifested worrying trends with the gradual dissolution of certain Arab states and persistent intercommunal fighting and radicalization in the MENA region. The civil war in Algeria and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict all showed to NATO allies that, after the Soviet Union’s collapse and the expansion of the Western democratic bloc, security threats emerging from the south gradually became more pressing priorities for NATO (Lesser 2019, 1). Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait also demonstrated that, however unlikely, the emergence of a Middle Eastern regional hegemon, or at least the intent from some states, can never be considered impossible.

NATO is a political and military alliance in which its members are primarily sworn to provide collective defence guarantees to each other. However, the above security environment during and after the 1990s, on the one hand, enabled and, on the other, forced NATO to adopt two more core tasks; that is, cooperative security and crisis prevention and management in its neighbourhood (Keil 2022, 2). These are tailored to provide stability in regions plagued by insecurity, such as MENA, and do everything in their power to avoid a situation in which a collective defence threat might emerge from these areas. Collective defence is the strongest type of binding commitment that any country can have towards another, which is why it is the backbone of NATO as a political and military alliance. However, in terms of crisis prevention and cooperative security tasks jointly undertaken with states outside of NATO, these are flexible partnerships adjusted for the needs of the common security threat. NATO cannot have members beyond the North American and European areas, but it must have partners in the MENA region to fulfil the goals set in the post-Cold War era to stabilise or at least create a bulwark against the threats emerging from the region. In the east, in terms of strong states, Russia is posing a military threat to the alliance, but, from the south, non-traditional security challenges persist because of the lack of strong states. Therefore, state stability and the provision of security



is needed in strategic locations to counterbalance the instability encompassing the MENA region. In a second step of course, an instable region can be dominated by an emerging regional hegemon, may it be an existing anti-status quo state such as Iran or a non-state radical entity as the so-called Islamic State. This is why the two main strategic directions required different NATO approaches, one built on collective defence of its members with a secondary role to partners in the east, while in the south, collective defence is of secondary importance, but partnerships are vital.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has made the security environment and NATO's strategic planning much more difficult, as the renewed existential threat from the east was coupled with the persistent instability in the south, aggravated by Russian military presence both in overt (as in Syria) or covert (various Wagner Group deployments) forms. The threat gradually expanded from Russia's invasion in Georgia in 2008, as well as the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and proxy warfare in the Donbass region.

NATO has steadily developed its defence and deterrence posture focusing on the eastern strategic direction and shifting back to collective defence as the main focus (Smura and Oleksiejuk 2021, 35). However, the launching of the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, was, without a doubt, the dawn of a new era in the global security architecture. There can be important arguments regarding the feasibility of a victorious Russia expanding its military conquest to Baltic States or beyond in the future. Regardless of feasibility, the possibility is undoubtable and military planning must take such possibilities into consideration, even while NATO members first of all support Ukraine to defend itself from the Russian aggression.

NATO had its *raison d'être* renewed in 2022 and collective defence came again to the forefront in the agenda. How to align this core task with the persistent importance of crisis prevention and management and cooperative security in the south? NATO's answer is that these goals can be achieved through strong partnerships with regional states. This intention is clear from the 2022 Strategic Concept even if, for understandable reasons, the southern strategic direction receives much less attention in the document than the effects and response to Russia's invasion on Ukraine.

It is clear from the Strategic Concept that NATO still does regard the threats from the south a vital security interest and aims at countering them through crisis prevention and management jointly with regional partners (NATO 2022, 9-10.). It is also pointed out in the document that Russia's threat also manifests itself with various activities conducted in the Mediterranean, including military build-up. However, the document lacks a consolidation of the various partnership frameworks NATO has built over the previous three decades. Before the eruption of the Russia-Ukraine war, this was one expectation from the 2022 Strategic Concept, naturally overshadowed by the war. The unsettled nature of parallel cooperation platforms makes it more difficult to align security interests and actions with the partners but



creating a “global blueprint” for aligning interests should be considered a key task for the alliance (NATO Reflection Group 2020, 58.). NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept did not make a step towards these goals, as much more urgent tasks needed action, but this does not mean that the southern strategic direction is not relevant, only that these tasks will need to be completed in the following years.

2. The Interests of Southern NATO Partners in the Current Security Environment

Firstly, it is important to address the question of why this study utilises alliance theory to explain NATO’s partnerships in the MENA region in general and the NATO-Israel cooperation in particular. Alliance theory can be applied on the higher end of the spectrum to treaty alliances encompassing mutual security guarantees, when each country in an alliance commits itself to defending the partners in case of an armed aggression waged on any member. For NATO, this commitment is enshrined in its founding Treaty in Article 5, which extends to alliance members, but not to the organisation’s partners. However, we argue that alliance theory can be utilised even without a security guarantee, as cooperation and support short of a security guarantee can be enough to fulfil the goals of a security partnership.

Nations build alliances and cooperate in the security domain in order to safeguard against a more powerful state or coalition of states and to deter the potential aggressors. The goal is security, and collective defence is a tool to achieve that, but not the only one available. Security partnership frameworks signify an intermediate level of commitment between *ad hoc* cooperation and formal alliances. Security partnerships also have the benefit of creating less tension and need to counterbalance than an extension of formal alliances. In addition, they are more flexible in their nature in terms of constraining the foreign and security policy of the participating actors (Snyder 1990, 108). This is a vital factor when it comes to Middle Eastern security environment. The study, therefore, analyses what level of security cooperation is suitable for the NATO-Israel partnership and whether such a framework can serve as a model for the broader southern partnerships.

The study explains the logic of the NATO-Israel partnership based on the Realist theories of alliance formation. A state has three options to answer a security threat; that is, it can balance the aggressor, pass the responsibility of balancing to another state or coalition (buck-passing), or it can join the potential aggressor utilising a bandwagoning strategy (Mearsheimer 2014). In the classic theory of Realism, the behaviour of states is defined by the relative distribution of power. Based on this pattern, the countries build corresponding alliances and develop their military power. The example of Israel, however, clearly demonstrates Stephen M. Walt’s point that global or regional order is not defined by the allocation of raw power, but by the



threat that each country (or alliance) presents to another (Walt 1985, 9). This threat is constructed by multiple factors, including power, offensive intent, and capability and distance. These factors decide in the end how big a threat one country perceives another. Utilising this theory, the NATO-Israel partnership is decided from the Israeli side, by the perceived security threats, and what kind of support and guarantees they intend on getting from a partner like such as NATO. The complication arisen from those threats can originate directly from malign regional states or indirectly as well from the actions benign partners, meaning that the later could drag Israel into unwanted conflicts or limit freedom of decision through alliance/ partnership entrapment (Lanoszka 2015, 242).

The ultimate goal of all nations is guaranteeing the security of the state and its population, while maintaining a nationally accepted degree of sovereignty. No state is completely sovereign; as external constraints limit their freedom of decision. Some countries have greater freedom, such as the great powers, and some have less, such as small nations, or virtually none when they are under occupation by a foreign power or have disintegrated. Sovereignty, however, can be limited not only by external hostile forces, but, apparently, well-meaning foreign partners or allies as well. This is the reason for which a distinction must be made between alliances and partnerships. In general, alliances provide greater security guarantees than partnerships, but they also carry greater costs in constraints. Therefore, the decision has two variables that each country or coalition must answer: what degree of security support it requires and what level of freedom of decision it is willing to sacrifice in order to obtain and keep those guarantees. The highest level of commitment resides in the form of a mutual defence, which is the core task of collective defence in NATO. This also signifies the most serious obligation for a participating country. However, more flexible forms of cooperation exist, these partnerships cover cooperative security and aid in crisis management and prevention. The security support is lesser than in a formal alliance, however, the obligation is also much less constraining. The goal is the same; that is, balancing against a more powerful country; the question is whether a security partnership with NATO can be a sufficient solution for a Middle Eastern country. This paper's answer is a resounding yes.

The security environment of the Middle East in 2023 is a complex structure, dominated by five regional great powers (Turkey, Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt) and a number of middle and small powers. Interconnected with the state level, persistent instability and extremism is affecting all actors, even the most powerful countries in the region. Countries waging overt and/or covert battles against competing states and sub-state actors in a constantly shifting balance of power. Unlike more traditional security threats that NATO can counter through defence and deterrence, Middle Eastern states require flexibility, because threats are flexible as well. While this paper does not aim to provide a detailed analysis of



the Middle Eastern regional power struggle, from a NATO perspective, the threats are twofold: a state level threat presented by an anti-status quo power, Iran, and a sub-state level by terrorist organisation, such as the so-called Islamic State. The Iranian threat is vital, as it has four different but interlinked aspects: the nuclear threat, conventional forces, sub-state proxies' activities, and the Russian efforts to undermine the rules-based world order and the security of Western states. NATO can employ tools connected to its cooperative security and crisis prevention and management core tasks to support Middle Eastern states to balance against these common threats. It does not require anything in return, only the logical outcome that the southern partners follow their own national interests. By demonstrating how the above logic works in the case of NATO-Israeli partnership, we argue that this is the prime model to secure NATO southern flank.

3. Israel's Case as a NATO Partner

During the Cold War, Israel played an important role in the competition between the two superpowers. Israel was firmly on the side of the transatlantic alliance while its enemies (Syria, Iraq and until the 1970s Egypt) were supported by the Soviets. Regardless, we cannot speak of intense NATO-Israel relations (unlike US-Israel cooperation) in this era, as the alliance was focusing on collective defence and the direct threat presented by the Warsaw Pact. With the end of the Cold War, NATO launched a more robust Middle East policy. In 1990, just as the threat from the Soviet Union was rapidly unravelling, Iraqi aggression on Kuwait signified an initial attempt to form a Middle Eastern regional hegemon. This development was alarming not only to regional states, but also to the members of the transatlantic alliance. During the war, the United States called on Israel not to react to Iraqi ballistic missile attacks in order not to alienate the US's Arab partners from cooperating on defeating the Saddam regime. The complex dynamics between the Western states and the uneasy Israeli-Arab relations still shape the NATO-MENA cooperation. In 1994, NATO established the Mediterranean Dialogue in order to facilitate security cooperation and political discourse in the region. The Oslo Process enabled Israeli participation in Middle Eastern multilateral initiatives, however, the need to accommodate the Arab states' misgivings to publicly associate with Israel always served as a cap on relations. NATO followed this rule by not advancing relations faster with Israel than with other regional states, effectively establishing a "greatest common denominator" policy in developing partnerships in the south (Steiner 2017). The Mediterranean Dialogue naturally had its achievements in the field of practical cooperation, however, after two and a half decades, the level of political consultation is low and was reduced to ambassadorial level, as such the hopes were not fulfilled.



Given the constraints on multilateral cooperation framework, both Israel and NATO were looking for alternative solutions to make the most of their partnership. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, Israeli capabilities in crisis prevention and management became much more important to NATO than before. Two options were floated to bring out the latent possibilities: Israeli membership in NATO or a more conservative approach of taking out NATO-Israel relations from the constraint of the multilateral platform and enhance its bilateral aspects. Israeli membership in NATO was envisioned in a transitory period during the first decade of the century, and, even though in hindsight it seems implausible, significant politicians voiced the idea. As regards NATO, José Maria Aznar mentioned it as part of creating a global NATO, together with Japan, Australia, and other like-minded countries. From the Israeli side, Uzi Arad, former national security advisor, promoted the idea among others. A global NATO could have been a useful trajectory in the development of the alliance in moving away from collective defence and taking a global role in cooperative security and crisis management following the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. While this initiative did not get traction, it was a useful maximalist approach to serve as a catalyst in embarking on a closer bilateral partnership with Israel, while also maintaining the multilateral framework in parallel.

The milestone of NATO-Israel relations was the Individual Cooperation Programme (ICP) in 2006, the first such agreement signed with a country outside of Europe. The agreement gave Israel a head start over other Middle Eastern states in many areas to strengthen its cooperation with NATO. The format also served NATO interests, as it enabled the utilisation of Israeli military knowhow and capabilities tailored to the needs of the mission and goal. Israel benefited from having a well-understood bilateral relation in which it maintained its freedom of decision (Arad 2006, 6). In practice, this means that NATO keeps the Mediterranean Dialogue alive, which promises equal treatment of all partners, while developing more intensive cooperation with some countries, including Israel through, ICPs. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept was written in a changing security environment which redefined the relations with Israel. The concept, written after the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, but before the 2014 Russian aggression on Ukraine, put a lot of emphasis on the region spanning from North Africa through the Middle East (including the Persian Gulf) to the borderlands with Russia. The 2011 NATO Partnership Policy offered to the members of the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation the possibility to access deeper and more operational partnership frameworks (NATO 2011, 2-3). During the 2010s, the Russian and Middle Eastern threats had dual effects on NATO's relations with Israel. On the one hand, the 2014 aggression by Russia reinvigorated NATO efforts to secure its eastern flank and collective defence once again became not only the main, but also the most present task. On the other hand, the process of the "Arab Spring" led to several civil wars. In addition, the regional



instability, fragmentation, and radicalisation proved that the southern strategic direction remains highly relevant even in parallel with a reinvigorated eastern threat. The partnership with Israel was strengthened in practical security cooperation and in political consultation as well. Mainly in naval cooperation, we had witnessed a rapid development, as the now well-equipped and highly capable Israeli navy became a valued partner in NATO's naval efforts (Lappin 2017). The Israeli representation on NATO HQ in Brussels in 2016 showed that the level of cooperation reached a higher level.

4. The Future of NATO-Israel Cooperation

In the above assessment, we have briefly described the evolution and logic of NATO's approach to the Middle East and in partnering with Israel. What are the factors which positively or negatively affect the partnership in 2023 and beyond?

From the Israeli point of view, *the biggest obstacle* for developing the cooperation is the potential for reduced Israeli freedom of decision and the erosion of the inclination of defending the country on its own (Freilich 2018, 305). Furthermore, the eventual participation in conflicts in which Israel does not want to fight, or not in complete agreement with NATO (entrapment) also discourage a formal alliance or a too close alignment. Two prime examples of these are the conflicts with Russia and China, and their Middle Eastern presence. Israel is perfectly aware that the Russian military presence in Syria poses a challenge for its assertive policy and conduct there, therefore, it is in constant dialogue with Russian forces in order to continue, albeit with certain constraints, its strikes against Iranian, Hezbollah, and Syrian targets, which could pose a threat on its Northern border (Kaduri 2023, 8). Israel can aspire to the ambition level of significantly contributing to regional stability in the Middle East, but it cannot and does not want to be involved in a distant conflict with Russia. The relations with China are even more complicated, as Israel and the US are in a debate on Israel's economic and technological cooperation with China, which it had to limit (Oded, Eilam, Orion, Shavit, Mil-Man, and Fadlon 2023, 15-19). However, it is highly doubtful that Israel wants to further alienate the second power on the globe that can provide significant support to Iran and other regional enemies. The Israeli army is primarily preparing to confront regional forces, a potential regional hegemon or alliance, currently Iran and its allies, clients, secondarily to all manifestation of terrorism (Israeli Defense Forces 2018, 16-19). It does not stand and cannot stand ready to be engulfed in a great power war outside the Middle East. In addition, it is not in NATO's interest to be dragged into Middle Eastern conflicts. Israeli military actions, due to the Israeli military strategy's preference for preventive and pre-emptive strikes, always carry an escalatory potential.

The second obstacle is Turkey's role in NATO and Ankara's regional aspirations connected to reshaping the Middle Eastern balance of power. Ankara is not interested



in an overt Israeli presence in NATO, as the Hellenic-Israeli axis can be a strong counterforce in the Eastern Mediterranean. However, the Turkish-Israeli relations change dynamically according to the interests of the two states, and therefore, Turkey is not interested in completely blocking pragmatic cooperation between NATO and Israel, as it can serve its interests as well. It is also worth noting that Israel cannot readily share sensitive information with NATO if it knows that they can get to hostile actors in Turkey, and indirectly to Hamas or other actors. In addition, it is also true that Israel cannot counterbalance all forces in the Middle East alone, therefore, having Turkey as a partner is useful for Israel as well, to a certain degree.

Finally, NATO itself must be mentioned as a limiting factor, as the exact role of the military alliance is also questioned among the alliance members themselves. Therefore, we cannot speak of a unified Middle East strategy of NATO, there are only general aims, with Member States having differing goals in the MENA (Biscop 2020). On NATO's part, the exact goal of the Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Cooperation is not clear, especially considering the re-emergence of the importance of the eastern flank. This in between nature of the southern strategic direction limits the efficiency of NATO's activity. Moving towards a global NATO, in which crisis prevention and management and cooperative security would have to come to the forefront among NATO's core tasks, has been taken off the agenda. This does not mean that these tasks became irrelevant after the Russian invasion in Ukraine, but rather the opposite is true. If NATO must concentrate most of its forces literally on its eastern flank, then it is even more important to have partner states that are able to carry the weight of securing the alliance's southern flank with support. This is a beneficial goal from NATO also on a cost-efficiency basis. The repeatedly promised restructuring of NATO's partnership system understandably did not happen in 2022, which only means that this task must be carried out in the future.

Regardless of all the factors limiting NATO-Israel cooperation, the rapid strengthening of relations proves that there must be more positive factors supporting the partnership. Following the hypothesis of the paper, by considering these factors through the lens of alliance theory, we should get to the current level and trajectory of NATO-Israel cooperation. The first is Israeli political will. Alongside maintaining the freedom of decision, the Israeli political and security elite is aware of the limits of their state to protect itself and the importance of external partners (Eizenkot-Siboni 2019, 10). In the end, Israel does not aim to balance the potential regional hegemon and its clients alone. Therefore, it is interested in sharing the burden. Israel does not have the option to bandwagon with a potential hegemon, so it chooses to partly balance, partly buck-pass the threat. Cooperation with NATO is a useful tool in this sense, in terms of practical cooperation and through political consultation as well. Israel receives support from the strongest military alliance in the world in order to balance regional threats, but it can also maintain its freedom of decision



when actively waging its campaign between the wars strategy and degrading Iranian and its client forces. Israel also buck-passes some of the burden, firstly to the United States and also to Turkey, which is the only NATO country with major land borders in the Middle East. It is not that Israel would not be interested in a firm security guarantee if it came under attack, but it is in no position to offer such guarantees to any other state due to its constraints and the potential for a harmful entrapment by an alliance. An ever-closer partnership with NATO, short of membership and binding security commitments, is the best choice Israel can make when it comes to a military cooperation, but this is still a very beneficial offer for Israel.

For NATO, Israel is a key partner, especially in naval missions, missile defence, and cyberwarfare. Alongside these concrete areas, Israel is a bulwark against regional hegemonic aspirants in its region that would be hostile to the transatlantic alliance. As already mentioned, Israel, while it is a regional great power in military terms, it cannot itself aspire to be the regional hegemon in the Middle East (Mearsheimer 2014, 61). However, a strong Israel could also not be cost-efficiently subjugated by an aspiring potential hegemon and continue with dominating the Middle East. In other words, Israel is a high capability, low resolve security partner, which means that it is useful for deterrence and regional force projection purposes but not for offering security assurances to other actors. It is also in NATO's interest that it does not demand any binding commitments from Israel, because thereby Israel remains a flexible actor in the Middle Eastern balancing process.

NATO does not have to take any responsibility for Israel's assertive military actions in the region, therefore it can serve as a constant unfettered deterrent against all other anti-status quo actors. This policy also indirectly supports other regional NATO partners, as an independent Israel effectively follows an ambiguous conventional military policy; a hostile power can never know what step would initiate an Israeli retaliation. Israel's dual nature as a great power, its strengths and weaknesses in this unique combination make it an outstanding partner for NATO. Israel aims at defending itself on its own as much as possible, effectively doing the work for NATO in providing security in its region.

Finally, the changed security environment provides the utmost relevance for Israel-NATO cooperation. Russia's military presence in the Middle East means that a collective defence challenge can emerge from the southern strategic direction as well (NATO Reflection Group 2020, 34). This has become a grave concern especially after the Russian invasion in Ukraine during which Russia and Iran developed their cooperation to an unprecedented level, by Iran allegedly supplying drones to Russia. Israeli activities in the scope of its "campaign between wars," which degrade Iranian and allied forces and military assets in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Iran itself, is a useful asset to NATO in weakening this emerging anti-status quo partnership. Beyond the campaign between wars, which is Israel's way of grey zone military activity, Israel



presents a threat of going to full-scale war against Iran, providing deterrence in the Middle East without direct NATO commitments.

5. A Blueprint for NATO-MENA Security Partnerships?

While highlighting the uniqueness of Israel as a military power that can indirectly serve NATO interests explains the state and trajectory of this particular partnership, the question remains whether this can be a useful blueprint for other MENA states.

A comprehensive framework (the Mediterranean Dialogue), coupled with an individual partnership agreement with each partner states, remains the best approach for NATO to guarantee security in its southern flank (Lesser 2020, 18). This method enables NATO members to cost efficiently station forces in the Mediterranean, and primarily work through southern partners that aim to serve their own security interests. A multilateral framework is useful for coordinating joint actions in the Mediterranean and the Gulf region, when the “greatest common denominator” can lead to mutually beneficial missions and projects. When it comes to higher ambitions for cooperation, the individual partnerships, short of mutual defence agreements, also work for virtually all MENA and Gulf states, apart from Syria, Libya, and Yemen, which are still in a civil war and are, therefore, outlying cases for now. For different reasons, all MENA states strongly oppose any suspected foreign attempt to constrain their freedom of decision, similarly to Israel. MENA states are, however, interested in receiving support for their own security providing activities, and, due to the persistent distrust among them, cannot pass on the opportunity to get NATO support, especially if their regional competitors already benefit from it.

Turning back to alliance theory and the three choices that a nation can choose to guarantee its own security, the attractiveness of NATO partnerships can be explained thoroughly. The main threat to non-potential hegemonic MENA states are the proximate hostile powers and entrapment by an outside alliance is a threat only in the extreme. Against the primary threat of potential hegemonic ambitions bandwagoning is an unattractive strategy, as it leads to loss of sovereignty, and there are no effective regional hegemon to bandwagon with, only anti-status quo potential hegemonic powers. Any bandwagoning attempt would turn the particular state into part of a sphere of influence and a warzone, as we can witness in the Syrian case. Buck-passing is only partly an option, because, with the US less-interested to commit conventional forces to fight wars in the Middle East, the only other power to buck-pass a threat to is another potential regional hegemon, again creating an entanglement in the regional conflicts between the most assertive military powers, without the added support provided by the balancing strategy. The best option, therefore, remains balancing and receiving as much external support as possible without being entrapped by constraining security commitments or creating inflexible



structures leading to more tensions in the region. Also, as alliance theory suggests, successful balancing can only happen with a partner which is not able to dominate the balancing state (Walt 1985, 5). This is why NATO partnership is attractive to Israel and can be to other MENA states as well, as NATO does not aim at dominating its partners, but looks for cost-effective security solutions in the south. Furthermore, any state that receives external support gets a power advantage and therefore the potential threat it represents to other regional states grows. All actors are therefore interested in receiving outside support in order to, at minimum, maintain the regional balance of power. NATO is not interested in providing capabilities which can aggravate existing tensions between states, such as the enmity between Morocco and Algeria, but in working on initiatives which support stability. Therefore, NATO's partnerships in the south, while beneficial for the alliance and the neighbours as well must be guided by a careful, holistic strategy in order to not leave gaps in countering threats, while also taking into consideration the sensitivities of the partner states, and their particular threat perceptions.

Conclusions

Without a doubt, Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has made NATO's eastern flank and collective defence the alliance's top priority. This does not mean, however, that the southern strategic direction will become absent in NATO planning, just that it will require more cost-effective solutions to achieve goals on that front.

Security partnerships are tools through which NATO can achieve its limited strategic aims, when it can build upon the self-interests of southern states. This paper demonstrated that partnerships suit well MENA states that require external support, but are reluctant to engage in binding security commitments and have complex threat perception, which needed to be taken into careful consideration.

The example of the NATO-Israel cooperation, which is the most advanced of the partnerships, can serve as an example of building towards a dual-track approach, having a multilateral framework and tailored bilateral partnerships at the same time. This approach, however, needs more investment from NATO once capabilities are freed up from focusing on Russia's invasion in Ukraine. First and foremost, the investment must come in the form of aligning existing frameworks in an overarching partnership strategy, including the Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation, and the Partnership for Peace and set their relationship with the ICPs. NATO must also reassess opportunities which were opened by the signing of the Abraham Accords and possible normalisation of relations by further Arab states with Israel.

The paper argues that the logic clearly supports more robust southern partnership for NATO. However, its inherent potential depends on a clear understanding on their limits and the intent of the partner states, upon which a new framework can be built in the coming years.



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IMPLICATIONS OF DEFENCE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ON NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

*Simona-Daniela BORDEA**

The new international context justifies an analysis of the priorities, interests and objectives of the Pontic states in relation to an immediate reaction to discourage the armed conflict initiated by Russia and unjustified in terms of international humanitarian law. NATO and the EU have recently intensified the conduct of large-scale maritime exercises to promote stability and peace and strengthen the Alliance's Eastern Flank, and have consistently encouraged cooperation between outgoing states on the Black Sea. Although Russia's energy dependence on some Pontic states could be a problem for the mutual agreement on strategic negotiations and partnerships, NATO and the EU must join forces to take concrete and deterrent action to maintain regional and international order alike. The present article aims to highlight the importance of the Black Sea for the Pontic states, having as the premise of the scientific research the fact that nowadays it represents an important cross-border resource both for the security of the states in the region and for the security of NATO and the EU.

Keywords: *Black Sea; NATO; EU; Russia; Pontic states; armed conflict; cooperation; negotiations; strategic partnerships.*

Theoretical framework

Samuel P. Huntington, a longtime Harvard University professor, an influential political scientist and mentor to a generation of scholars once said that “national interest derives from national identity. We have to know who we are before we can know what our interests are” (Huntington 1997, 28).

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This theoretical framework will begin by defining key terms and concepts, such as *national interests*, *national objective*, *politics and national defence and security strategies* and *defence resource management*. One by one will it be analyzed in relation to the implications of effective defence resource management.

Firstly, we believe it is necessary to clarify the concept of *defence resource management*. It refers to the allocation of financial, human, and material resources within a country's defence sector in order to achieve national objectives.

Romania's Defence White Paper sets out the components of integrated *defence resources management*, namely: human resources management, financial resources management, material resources management, including defence procurement management, research-development and innovation system management, defence infrastructure management, information resources management (Carta albă a apărării 2021, 41).

National objectives are based on each individual nation's own interests, usually stipulated in the Constitution, a fact that highlights a relationship of interdependence normatively transposed into strategic documents. Any democratic, sovereign and independent state will aim to thus strengthen its international profile among other states and capitalize on its geostrategic position.

However, in the Constitution of Romania, the "supreme" law of the country, "the national interest" is not clearly defined, even though it is mentioned five times: in the case of the President's participation in the Government meetings (art. 87, paragraph 1), the referendum called by the President (art. 90), the Economy and public finances (art. 135, paragraph 2, letter b) and letter c) and in the case of property (article 136 paragraph 3). Also, "the national objective" is not clearly defined in the Constitution.

However, from the 2020 National Defence Strategy (SNAP) we learn that "national interests and objectives are perennial and ... based on adherence to values similar to those shared by the other EU and NATO Member States, as well as on the fundamental rights and liberties of citizens, as defined in the Romanian Constitution" (National Defense strategy 2020-2024 2020, 14).

In other words, national interests refer to the goals and objectives that a country seeks to advance in its foreign policy, including its economic, political, and security interests.

Based on these, we can consider that the implications of effective defence resource management on national interests can include:

1. Protecting critical infrastructure: proper defence resource management can ensure that the military has the resources it needs to protect critical infrastructure, such as ports, airports, and energy facilities, thereby protecting the country's economic interests.

2. Maintaining regional stability: proper defence resource management can help to ensure that the military is prepared to respond to potential regional threats, promoting stability in the country's immediate vicinity.



3. Supporting humanitarian missions: effective defence resource management can enable the military to participate in humanitarian missions, improving the country's reputation and advancing its political interests.

4. Promoting international cooperation: a well-managed defence sector can prove the country's commitment to international cooperation, promoting its political interests and relationships with other countries.

5. Maintaining military power: by allocating resources effectively, the country can ensure that its military personnel is prepared to defend the country against external threats and maintain its military power.

Next, in the *Foreword* of the same National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024 we could find that this document is the one that "... provides answers to key questions about the main national objectives for ensuring Romania's security and of its citizens and underscores the necessary steps to achieve them" (National Defense strategy 2020-2024 2020, 4)

In this case, we can affirm that national objectives refer to the goals and aspirations that a country seeks to achieve in order to promote its well-being and prosperity.

As a result, the implications of effective defence resource management on national objectives can include:

- ensuring national security: effective defence resource management can ensure that the military has the resources they needs to defend the country against external threats, promoting its security and stability;

- supporting economic growth: by allocating resources effectively, the defence sector can reduce waste and inefficiencies, freeing up resources for other priorities, such as economic development;

- promoting social stability: effective defence resource management can help to ensure that the military is prepared to respond to internal threats, such as civil unrest or natural disasters, promoting social stability;

- improving public services: proper defence resource management can reduce the burden on the defence sector, freeing up resources that can be used to improve public services, such as education, health care, and infrastructure;

- enhancing international relations: a well-managed defence sector can demonstrate the country's commitment to stability and security, enhancing its relationships with other countries and promoting its international standing;

- protecting human rights: effective defence resource management can help to ensure that the military is equipped and trained to respect and protect human rights, promoting the country's social objectives;

- achieving military readiness: effective defence resource management ensures that the military has the resources they need to maintain operational readiness, allowing them to respond quickly to potential threats;



- supporting modernization efforts: proper resource management enables defence organizations to invest in new technologies, weapons systems, and other equipment that can improve military capabilities;
- enhancing national security: by allocating resources effectively, a country can strengthen its military and improve its ability to defend against external threats;
- promoting economic stability: effective defence resource management can help to ensure that the defence sector is not overburdened, freeing up resources for other priorities, such as economic development;
- improving accountability: proper defence resource management can improve transparency and accountability in the allocation of defence resources, reducing the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse.
- development of human capital: proper defence resource management can ensure that the military has the resources to recruit, train, and retain high-quality personnel, helping to build a strong and capable workforce. This can improve the effectiveness of the military and support their ability to achieve national objectives;
- improved strategic planning: effective defence resource management requires improved strategic planning, comprehensive planning and decision-making, which can help to ensure that resources are allocated in a way that supports the country’s long-term strategic goals;
- better resource allocation: by managing resources effectively, the defence sector can avoid waste and inefficiencies, allowing it to allocate resources more effectively and make the most of limited resources;
- maintaining international credibility: a well-managed defence sector can demonstrate a country’s commitment to its security and stability, enhancing its international credibility and relationships with other countries;
- building public trust: proper defence resource management can help build public trust in the defence sector by demonstrating that resources are being used effectively and efficiently.

A country’s politics and national defence and security strategies play a significant role in determining its defence resource management priorities and decisions. Effective defence resource management can have a direct impact on the country’s political and national strategies by:

- supporting political stability: by ensuring that the military is equipped and trained to respond to external threats, proper defence resource management can promote political stability;
- influencing foreign policy decisions: the allocation of resources within the defence sector can be influenced by a country’s foreign policy decisions, particularly with regards to its military presence and involvement in international conflicts;
- driving economic growth: by reducing waste and inefficiencies within the defence sector, effective defence resource management can free up resources for other priorities, such as economic development, which can drive national growth;

- shaping public opinion: effective defence resource management can demonstrate a country’s commitment to stability and security, influencing public opinion and support for government policies;
- strengthening national identity: the defence sector plays a critical role in promoting national unity and pride, strengthening the country’s national identity and sense of purpose.



Figure no. 1: A pyramid view of the connection between interests- objectives-politics and national defence and security strategies

1. Case Study - The Black Sea, an Important Cross-Border Resource

A. Background and regional context

In his book “Transboundary Resource Management”, the Chinese expert Rongxing Guo addresses the subject of natural and environmental resource management in the area of borders between states. Calling for a succinct classification of them, he delimits natural and artificial borders. The world’s oceans as a whole are among the types of natural boundaries, along with mountains, seas, rivers, lakes, bays, canals and straits (Rongxing 2012, 6-15).

In terms of military, it was the Russian Federation that paid more attention to the Black Sea, more precisely to the militarization of the Pontic area. As early as February 2007, in an attempt to reassert itself as a global power and be recognized as such, at the Munich Security Conference, the Russian presidential administration bluntly stated that it was no longer willing to tolerate what it described as being NATO’s intrusion into Russia’s areas of privileged interest. A few months later, the



Russian Air Force decided that the strategic bombers would resume their long-range flights, including the Black Sea area. According to the statements of Russian analyst Sergey Karaganov, this marked the beginning of a new era of confrontation, in which the Russian Federation is guided by a different set of values, based on the traditional “aspiration to justice beyond formal laws and rules”, as well as the desire to “defend its national interests by the use of force” (Karaganov, Novaia ideologicheskaia borba? 2016).

A 2016 study by the Romanian think-tank “New Strategy Center” deals with the importance of the security of the Extended Black Sea Region (REMN), analyzing the stages of its militarization. Analysts from non-governmental organizations (NGO) see the Georgian war of August 2008 as „...a test for what was to come. One of the conclusions Russian military planners reached after the Georgia operation was that they needed modern capabilities for combined naval missions. In the fall of 2008, the Russian Navy Command announced ambitious plans for the development of the Black Sea fleet, including operations in the Mediterranean Sea. It was also decided to accelerate the development of the Novorossiysk military port, considering that at that time Russia could not increase its naval presence in Sevastopol because of the limitations imposed by the corresponding agreements with Ukraine” (New Strategy Center 2023, 6).

The illegal annexation of Crimea, in March 2014, gave Russia a clear geostrategic advantage. At the end of 2015, the Russian Black Sea Fleet had four submarines, 41 surface ships, 34 aircraft and 40 helicopters, plus a marine infantry regiment. The naval force was supported by an air defence corps consisting of two fighter jet regiments, i.e. 50-60 SU-27 (Flanker) and MIG-29 (Fulcrum) machines and two surface-to-air missile regiments. The 5th Kilo-class submarine (Project 636.6 Varshavianka, according to the Russian classification) was completed in March 2015 to join the Black Sea Fleet, followed by the 6th, in 2016. The Krivak-class frigates V Admiral Grigorovich (Project 1135 Burevestnik), Admiral Essen, which conducted sea trials in November 2015, and Admiral Makarov, launched at the Kaliningrad shipyard in September 2015, were to be sent to Sevastopol in 2016. Another three frigates were scheduled to be delivered before 2020, if the Russian side could find substitutes for the turbine engines that were supplied by Ukraine until then. A total of 15 ships have been recently added to the Russian Black Sea fleet, including two Kilo-class submarines, two missile-carrying corvettes and a several patrol boats. According to the Center for the Analysis of Strategies and Technologies in Moscow, another 20 missile-carrying corvettes were to be delivered by 2020 (New Strategy Center 2023, 6-7).

Of the other Black Sea states, only Turkey has a navy and air force comparable to Russia's. Ukraine, having been deprived of 70% of its fleet with the occupation of Crimea, has only two corvettes and a patrol vessel equipped with missiles. Georgia



has only a few Coast Guard speedboats. NATO countries such as Bulgaria and Romania have outdated fleets with low strike capability and limited range (four frigates, two corvettes and a missile patrol vessel – Bulgaria; three frigates, four corvettes and three missile carriers – Romania). In 2015, the Turkish Navy was still superior to the Russian Navy in terms of combatants number (44 surface ships and 13 submarines compared to the Russian Black Sea Fleet's 22 surface ships and 3 operational submarines), but these differences have narrowed considerably by 2020.

In contrast, it can be argued that the Russian Black Sea fleet currently holds superiority in terms of strike capability and surface-to-ship and ship-to-ship range (124-200 km for Turkey vs. 600 km for Russia). All this points to the programmatic development of Russian offensive capabilities focused on Crimea and the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, which tends to alter the military balance in the region and beyond. At the same time, with their characteristic vehemence, Russian decision-makers and opinion-makers were outraged by the purely defensive response measures taken by NATO countries. Evidence of this is their disproportionately nervous reaction to the formal inauguration of the anti-missile system in Deveselu, Romania, on May 12, 2016 (New Strategy Center 2023, 8).

Contradicting reality, Russian propaganda presented the event as a threat to Russia's national security and went as far as to suggest the possibility of denouncing the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which would remove the last vestiges of the arms control regime and paves the way for the resumption of the arms race (New Strategy Center 2023, 8).

Thus, following its hegemonic ideal, the Russian presidential administration decided to concentrate large-scale military forces in Ukraine's eastern vicinity. This shook the entire transatlantic space, and the probability of the Russian invasion of Ukraine was becoming more and more obvious, despite the statements of Kremlin officials, who insisted that nothing but training and military exercises against an imaginary enemy were being carried out in that area.

The end of 2021 attracts a new reaction of the European Parliament, through the Resolution of December 16, 2021 on the situation on the Ukrainian border and in the Ukrainian territories occupied by Russia (2021/3010(RSP), in which, in a concise manner, it condemns the large concentration of armed forces of Russia along the Ukrainian border and no justification for this from Russia is accepted; the Russian Federation is demanded to immediately and completely withdraw its armed forces, to stop threatening the territorial integrity of Ukraine, which has a destabilizing effect over the entire region and beyond its borders, to end all measures that further aggravate the conflict and defuse tensions, in line with its international obligations; stresses that a peaceful political solution to the conflict must be found; stresses that the focus of Russian armed forces are also a threat to the peace, stability and



general security of Europe and invites Russia to respects international obligations (Parlamentul European 2023).¹

On February 21, 2022, after several weeks of extreme tensions, the Russian presidential administration decided to recognize the non-government-controlled areas of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (administrative regions) as independent entities and to send Russian troops to those areas. This decision came as a result of a favorable vote by the Russian State Duma (the lower house of the Russian parliament) on February 15. On February 24, 2022, Russia has began its invasion of Ukraine (Consiliul European 2023).

Bogdan Aurescu, international humanitarian law (IHL) specialist, stated in an interview at the beginning of May, 2022, that during one of his visits to two cities near Kiev, Irpin and Borodianka, he has discovered that the disaster, both humanitarian, as well as physical, material destruction of civilian objectives is inadmissible. Moreover, civilian objectives must not be subject to military actions, according to the IHL. He has expressed his belief in the commission of serious violations of international law, of IHL, including war crimes, and probably, as international investigations will prove, other types of international crimes – genocide or crimes against humanity (MAE 2023).

Next, Aurescu stated that he supported the referral to the International Criminal Court on March 2, together with 39 other states, and granted 100,000 euros from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the approval of the Government, for the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to facilitate the effort of investigating this crime in Ukraine. Moreover, during the visit to Kyiv, he also mentioned the possibility of sending experts, if necessary, to support the investigation in Ukraine on this subject. Also, Romania, together with 44 other states, was among those that notified the Moscow Mechanism of the OSCE (it is a mechanism that also deals with the investigation of IHL violations and human rights violations in Ukraine in connection with the ongoing conflict). In addition, Romanian and Ukrainian officials discussed the possibility of supporting the process that Ukraine opened at the International Court of Justice against the Russian Federation for violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (MAE 2023).

Additionally, in a Memorandum on the consequences of the war in Ukraine on human rights (the Memorandum), published on July 8, 2022, Dunja Mijatovic, the Commissioner for Human Rights within the Council of Europe, insists on the “imperative to do justice”, given the fact that “the attack of the Russian Federation caused serious and massive violations of human rights and IHL, with disastrous effects on the exercise of practically all human rights by the population of Ukraine”.

¹ To be seen the entire document at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0515_RO.html, accessed at 12.01.2023.



In addition to this, both states “have the obligation to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of massive violations of human rights and serious crimes against IHL” (Commissioner for human rights 2023).

In the contents of the Memorandum, a relevant aspect for the present research has been identified. Due to the overwhelming nature of the atrocities committed by the Russian Federation against Ukraine for any justice system, the involvement of multiple actors and mechanisms in the process of gathering evidence and documenting international crimes is called for. However, effective coordination between national and international actors is essential to ensure the proper management of evidence and to avoid re-traumatizing victims and witnesses. Coordination of assistance to Ukrainian judicial authorities in the investigation and prosecution of international crimes is also necessary to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure the best use of resources (Commissioner for human rights 2023, 22-23). In this regard, the Commissioner welcomes the joint EU, UK and US announcement of the creation of an Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine to ensure effective coordination of their support (GOV.UK 2023). The establishment by the investigative authorities of Ukraine and five European Member States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia) of a Joint Investigation Team, under the auspices of the EU Eurojust, to which the International Criminal Court has since joined (European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation 2023), aims to establish a structured and rapid exchange of information (GOV.UK 2023) and is another positive development towards the judicious use of resources.

Both EU and NATO leaders have repeatedly called on Russia to immediately cease military action, unconditionally withdraw all military forces and equipment from Ukraine, and fully respect Ukraine’s territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. They have highlighted the fact that Ukraine has the right to choose its own destiny and congratulated the Ukrainian people for their courage in defending their country. In response to the military aggression, the EU massively expanded sanctions against Russia, adding a significant number of individuals and entities to the sanctions list and taking unprecedented measures.

The new Strategic Concept adopted at the NATO Summit in Madrid, on June 29-30, 2022, explicitly states that the Russian Federation violated the norms and principles that contributed to maintaining a stable and predictable European security (NATO 2022 Strategic Concept 2023, 3-4)

B. The Black Sea, a National Objective of Strategic Importance

The concept of regional security complex, addressed by professor emeritus Barry Buzan, representative of the Copenhagen School, is the faithful image of the strategic importance of the Black Sea region today.

The major concern for this area by some international organizations and Pontic states is due to the security fluctuations that have occurred over the last two decades.



The Black Sea is considered a national objective of strategic importance by several countries that have a coastline along the Black Sea, including Romania. The Black Sea is an important economic, political, and military region, and the bordering countries have significant economic and security interests in the region.

The Black Sea is a major hub for energy and trade, and is also an important area for military operations. Countries bordering the Black Sea have an interest in maintaining stability and security in the region, and in protecting their economic and political interests. This requires significant resources, including military resources, and a strong defence posture.

The national objective of strategic importance of the Black Sea is a complex and dynamic issue, and requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach to security and defence. This includes the development of effective military capabilities, the establishment of regional security partnerships, and the implementation of effective crisis management and conflict resolution mechanisms.

In summary, the Black Sea is considered a national objective of strategic importance due to its strategic location, economic and political significance, and the need to maintain stability and security in the region. The protection of this objective requires the coordination of multiple resources, including military, economic, and diplomatic resources, to address the complex and dynamic security challenges in the region.

Romania, being a coastal country along the Black Sea, has significant strategic interests in the region. The following study examines Romania's defence strategy, its military capabilities, and the measures taken to protect its national interests in the Black Sea.

The study will start by reviewing Romania's defence strategy and its objectives in the Black Sea region. This will involve examining the role of the Romanian military in the region, its partnerships with other countries in the region, and its contribution to regional stability and security.

Next, the study will examine Romania's military capabilities, including its naval and air defence capabilities, its capabilities for maritime surveillance and control, and its ability to respond to crisis and conflict in the region. This will involve analyzing the resources and equipment available to the Romanian military, as well as its organizational structure and training programs.

Romania's defence strategy in the Black Sea region is focused on protecting its national interests, maintaining regional stability and security, and contributing to NATO and European security efforts. Romania recognizes the Black Sea as a strategic region with economic, political, and military significance, and has taken several measures to protect its national interests in the region.

The main objectives of Romania's defence strategy in the Black Sea region are:

- maintaining stability and security: Romania is committed to promoting stability and security in the Black Sea region, and participates in multinational peacekeeping and security operations, as well as in regional security initiatives;



- protecting its national interests: Romania is committed to protecting its economic, political, and military interests in the Black Sea region, and has developed its naval and air defence capabilities to support this objective;
- supporting NATO and European security efforts: Romania is a NATO member and is committed to contributing to the alliance’s security efforts in the Black Sea region, as well as to the broader European security architecture;
- strengthening regional partnerships: Romania recognizes the importance of regional partnerships in promoting stability and security in the Black Sea region, and has established strong relationships with its neighbours, as well as with NATO and the European Union.

In summary, Romania’s defence strategy in the Black Sea region is focused on maintaining stability and security, protecting its national interests, supporting NATO and European security efforts, and strengthening regional partnerships. These objectives are essential for ensuring Romania’s security and prosperity in the region, and for promoting stability and security in the wider Black Sea region.

C. Overview of Romania’s defence posture in the Black Sea region

The Russian Federation’s aggressive behaviour, the actions to militarize the Black Sea region, as well as their hybrid actions carried out with the purpose of maintaining a tense climate of insecurity in the proximity of our country, prompt Romania to firmly continue the extensive process initiated in 2015 of building robust deterrence and defence capabilities. This process is concurrent with the increase of our Armed Forces’ interoperability with the Allies, as well as with the strengthening of the institutional capacity to counter hybrid actions (National Defence Strategy 2020-2024, 6).

Raising the awareness among allies on the role of the Black Sea and on the importance of securing this area is another objective that channels articulated efforts made by Romania. It has the interest to support and contribute to developing policies and solutions aimed at putting out existing outbreaks of tension and conflict, as well as to support regional development towards an area of security, stability and progress. At the same time, it must create the necessary premises for the efficient use, for its own interest as well as for the interest of its allies/partners, of its potential as energy and transport corridor in the Black Sea region, as well as of its energy resources in the Black Sea, so that our county may become a relevant actor in the energy sector (National Defence Strategy 2020-2024, 9-10).

In terms of **foreign policy**, Romania must aim at strengthening its position as a relevant international actor, connected to the Euro-Atlantic principles and values – in accordance to the goals set forth at the political level, as well as in line with its economic development capacity. Our country is not only a beneficiary, but also an important contributor in providing regional, European and Euro-Atlantic security.



Given these coordinates and in accordance with national security interests, **national security objectives** aim at:

- strengthening security in the Black Sea region and in the Balkans, as well as the security and stability of the other neighbouring regions (National Defence Strategy 2020-2024, 17),
- strengthening NATO defence and deterrence posture in the Black Sea area, including by boosting partnerships with other interested states, as well as improved situation awareness and early warning capacity (National Defence Strategy 2020-2024, 18).

The Black Sea region is **an area of paramount strategic interest** for Romania. Ensuring the security of this region requires a comprehensive approach covering, in addition to the military dimension, relevant aspects related to economy, transportation, energy, environment, society resilience (National Defence Strategy 2020-2024, 22).

The Romanian military plays a significant role in the Black Sea region, as it is responsible for protecting Romania's national interests, promoting regional stability and security, and supporting NATO and European security efforts.

The Romanian military has several key responsibilities in the Black Sea region, including:

1. Maritime and air defence: the Romanian military is responsible for defending the country's maritime and air territory in the Black Sea region, and has developed a comprehensive maritime and air defence posture to support this objective.

2. Maritime surveillance and control: the Romanian military plays a key role in monitoring and controlling maritime activity in the Black Sea region, and contributes to the security of the region by ensuring the free flow of commerce and preventing illegal activities.

3. Crisis management and conflict resolution: the Romanian military is responsible for responding to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region, and has the capabilities to support peacekeeping and security operations, as well as to support humanitarian and disaster relief efforts.

4. Regional security partnerships: the Romanian military plays an active role in regional security partnerships, including partnerships with NATO and the European Union, as well as with its neighbours in the Black Sea region.

In summary, the Romanian military plays a critical role in the Black Sea region, as it is responsible for protecting Romania's national interests, promoting regional stability and security, and supporting NATO and European security efforts. The Romanian military has developed a comprehensive defence posture and has the capabilities to respond to crisis and conflict in the region, as well as to support regional security partnerships.



The main military risks and threats to national security are determined by the further consolidation of the military potential in the vicinity of Romania (militarization of Crimea and the Black Sea basin by the Russian Federation), running military exercises (especially ones with short-term notification or without notification) and the development of offensive and defensive capabilities on NATO's eastern flank (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 9).

Additionally, a series of challenges are emerged that can be ranked, from the perspective of the probability of generating security crises, as follows:

- the limited prospects for settling the frozen conflicts in the wider Black Sea region (including Transnistria) (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 9).

NATO remains the most successful alliance in history, with 30 member states with a population of nearly one billion people, producing nearly half of global GDP and providing a safe space from the American Pacific coast to the Black Sea (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 11).

For the period 2021-2024, national military objectives are: increasing the presence of allied and partner forces in the Black Sea region, facilitating their mobility, emplacement and deployment (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 14).

The Naval Forces carry out military actions, independently or within multinational task forces, to ensure the integrity of the sea and river lanes of communication, participates in national and international law enforcement operations in territorial waters, contiguous zone and exclusive economic zone, conducts sea maritime security operations and search-and-rescue interventions at sea and on rivers. Furthermore, it ensures permanent reconnaissance of the littoral and of the Black Sea, provides support to the other Services and takes part in international operations and missions, according to approved plans.

In order to fulfill these missions, the composition of the naval forces will include: the Naval Forces Headquarters; Maritime fleet; River flotilla; a research, surveillance and reconnaissance brigade; a logistical support base and military institutions/units for continuing education and training (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 22).

Romania strengthens its national defence and preserves its national interests in the Black Sea Region and the Danube River, with its own structures and capabilities, until the activation of "Article 5"/NATO or "Article 42/7"/TEU functioning mechanisms, as well as through developing cooperation with strategic partners, close allies and through regional military cooperation initiatives. The Romanian Armed Forces will be able to deter and counteract a possible armed aggression on the national territory and to participate in deterring and repelling an aggression within the alliance. The Romanian Armed Forces will participate in ensuring internal security in peacetime, in supporting central and local public administration structures in civil emergencies, and will contribute to promoting regional and Euro-Atlantic stability by participating in crisis response operations, under the command of NATO, EU, UN and OSCE and in coalitions (Military Strategy of Romania 2021, 30).



D. Romanian military's partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region

The Romanian military has established several partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region to promote stability and security, protect its national interests, and support NATO and European security efforts.

1. NATO Partnerships: Romania is a NATO member and has established strong partnerships with other NATO member states in the Black Sea region, including Turkey and Bulgaria. The Romanian military works closely with its NATO partners on regional security initiatives, including joint training and exercises.

2. European Union Partnerships: Romania is a member of the European Union and has established partnerships with other EU member states in the Black Sea region, including Bulgaria, Greece, and Cyprus. The Romanian military works closely with its EU partners on regional security initiatives, including crisis management and conflict resolution.

3. Bilateral Partnerships: Romania has established strong bilateral partnerships with its neighbours in the Black Sea region, including Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. These partnerships are focused on promoting regional stability and security, and on strengthening regional cooperation on security and defence issues.

To sum up, the Romanian military has established a range of partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region to promote stability and security, protect its national interests, and support NATO and European security efforts. These partnerships are essential for ensuring regional stability and security, and for contributing to the broader European and NATO security architecture.

E. The Romanian military's contribution to regional stability and security

The Romanian military makes significant contributions to regional stability and security in the Black Sea region. Some of these contributions include:

1. Maritime and air defence: The Romanian military contributes to regional stability and security by defending the country's maritime and air territory in the Black Sea region and monitoring and controlling maritime activity to ensure the free flow of commerce and prevent illegal activities.

2. Peacekeeping and security operations: The Romanian military is capable of responding to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region, and can support peacekeeping and security operations to promote stability and security in the region.

3. Regional security partnerships: The Romanian military plays an active role in regional security partnerships, including partnerships with NATO and the European Union, as well as with its neighbours in the Black Sea region. These partnerships help to promote regional stability and security, and to strengthen regional cooperation on security and defence issues.

4. Joint military exercises: The Romanian military participates in joint military exercises with other countries in the Black Sea region to improve regional stability



and security. These exercises help to build interoperability and coordination between military forces in the region.

The Romanian military makes significant contributions to regional stability and security in the Black Sea region by defending its territorial interests, supporting peacekeeping and security operations, participating in regional security partnerships, and participating in joint military exercises. These efforts help to ensure regional stability and security and to promote cooperation and coordination between countries in the region.

F. Romania's military capabilities

Romania's military capabilities include both naval and air defence capabilities, which are essential for ensuring its security and regional stability in the Black Sea region.

Romania's military capabilities can be analyzed by examining its various branches of service, including its army, air force, and navy. In terms of land forces, Romania has a well-trained and equipped army that is capable of conducting a range of missions, including peacekeeping and security operations. The army has modern equipment, including infantry fighting vehicles, armored personnel carriers, and artillery systems.

The Romanian air force owns a mix of modern and older aircraft, including fighter jets, transport aircraft, and helicopter gunships. While the air force has faced some challenges in modernizing its fleet, it is capable of conducting a range of missions, including air defence, close air support and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).

The Romanian navy is responsible for maintaining security in Romania's territorial waters and for protecting its coastline. The navy owns a range of vessels, including patrol boats, corvettes, and minesweepers. The navy is capable of conducting a range of missions, including maritime security operations, anti-submarine warfare, and search and rescue.

In other words, Romania has a capable military with a range of capabilities. While there are some areas for improvement, particularly in terms of modernizing its equipment, Romania's military is capable of conducting a range of missions and contributing to regional and international security efforts.

One example of Romania's military capabilities is its participation in NATO and EU peacekeeping and security operations. Romania has contributed troops and equipment to a number of international missions, including NATO's mission in Afghanistan and the EU's mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These deployments demonstrate Romania's ability to operate effectively in challenging and complex environments, as well as its commitment to contributing to regional and international security.



Another example of Romania's military capabilities is its ability to conduct maritime surveillance and control operations in the Black Sea region. The Romanian navy owns a range of vessels, including patrol boats and corvettes, which are equipped with radar and communications systems that enable it to monitor and control shipping in its territorial waters. This helps to ensure the security of Romania's coastline and to prevent illegal activities, such as smuggling and human trafficking, in the region.

A third example of Romania's military capabilities is its ability to conduct air defence operations. The Romanian air force owns a range of modern and older aircraft, including fighter jets, which are equipped with air-to-air missiles and radar systems. These capabilities enable the air force to defend Romania's airspace and to respond to any threats to its security. Whether it is conducting peacekeeping and security operations, maritime surveillance and control, or air defence, Romania is able to make a significant contribution to regional and international security.

The Romanian Navy and Air Force have the equipment and personnel to support a range of operations, including maritime and air defence, peacekeeping and security operations, and support for NATO and European security efforts. By maintaining a strong military capability, Romania is able to ensure its security and support regional stability in the Black Sea region.

Romania has developed significant capabilities for maritime surveillance and control as part of its efforts to ensure security and stability in the Black Sea region.

1. Maritime patrol assets: Romania operates a range of vessels, including frigates, corvettes, and patrol boats, which are equipped with advanced sensors and systems for monitoring and controlling maritime activity in the Black Sea. These assets provide the Romanian Navy with the ability to detect, track, and respond to a wide range of maritime threats, including illegal activity and smuggling.

2. Airborne surveillance: The Romanian Air Force operates a range of aircraft equipped with sensors for airborne surveillance and reconnaissance, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). These assets provide the Romanian military with the ability to monitor and control maritime activity from the air, and to detect and track a range of threats, including illegal activity and smuggling.

3. Information and communication technology: Romania has also invested in advanced information and communication technology systems to support its maritime surveillance and control capabilities. This includes systems for collecting and analyzing data, such as satellite imagery and signals intelligence, as well as systems for exchanging information and coordinating operations between different agencies and military assets.

In summary, Romania has developed a range of capabilities for maritime surveillance and control as part of its efforts to ensure security and stability in the Black Sea region. The Romanian Navy and Air Force operate a range of vessels and



aircraft equipped with advanced sensors and systems, and Romania has invested in information and communication technology to support its maritime surveillance and control efforts. These capabilities allow Romania to effectively monitor and control maritime activity in the Black Sea, and to respond to a range of threats to its security and stability.

Romania's efforts to enhance its maritime surveillance and control capabilities are part of a broader strategy to secure its interests in the Black Sea region. The Black Sea region is of strategic importance to Romania, as it provides access to major shipping lanes, energy resources, and markets. By maintaining strong maritime surveillance and control capabilities, Romania is able to ensure the safety and security of its territorial waters, and to support regional stability and security.

In addition to its own efforts, Romania is also actively engaged in regional and international cooperation to enhance its maritime surveillance and control capabilities. This includes participating in NATO and EU initiatives, as well as collaborating with other countries in the region on maritime security and counter-terrorism operations. For example, Romania has worked closely with NATO and EU partners to improve its maritime surveillance and control capabilities in the Black Sea, including through joint training exercises and the sharing of best practices.

Romania is actively working to enhance its maritime surveillance and control capabilities in the Black Sea region. These efforts are driven by the need to secure its interests in the region and to support regional stability and security. By investing in its naval and air assets, as well as in information and communication technology, Romania is well positioned to effectively monitor and control maritime activity in the Black Sea, and to respond to a range of threats to its security and stability.

G. Romania's military and diplomatic means

Romania has the ability to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region through a combination of **military and diplomatic means**.

The Romanian military has a range of capabilities that supports it in case of crisis or conflict, including land, air, and naval assets. The Romanian military also has the personnel and training to support a range of operations, including peacekeeping and security operations, as well as support for NATO and European security efforts.

In addition to its military capabilities, Romania also has significant diplomatic and humanitarian assets that it can use to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region. This includes experienced diplomats, humanitarian workers, and development specialists who can support efforts to address the root causes of conflict and to promote stability and security.

Romania has also demonstrated its ability to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region through its participation in a range of international and regional organizations, including NATO and the EU. Through these organizations, Romania



has been able to work with other countries to address common security and stability challenges, and to coordinate its response to crisis and conflict.

For example, Romania has contributed troops and equipment to NATO and EU peacekeeping and security operations in the region. It has also been involved in international efforts to promote stability and security in the region, including through participation in NATO and EU initiatives to address common security challenges.

In addition to its military contributions, Romania has also used its diplomatic and humanitarian assets to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region. This has included sending diplomatic delegations to engage with other countries in the region, as well as providing humanitarian aid to support civilians affected by conflict.

One notable example of Romania's response to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region is its support for the Ukrainian government following the 2014 crisis in Crimea. Romania provided political and diplomatic support to Ukraine, and worked with other countries in the region to help to address the root causes of the conflict. Romania also contributed troops to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Eastern Europe, which was established in response to the crisis.

Romania has the ability to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region through a combination of military and diplomatic means. The Romanian military has a range of capabilities that it can use to respond to crisis and conflict, and Romania has demonstrated its ability to participate in international and regional efforts to address security and stability challenges in the region. By leveraging its military, diplomatic, and humanitarian assets, Romania is well positioned to respond to crisis and conflict in the Black Sea region.

H. To protect its national interests in the Black Sea, Romania has taken several measures, including:

1. Increasing its military presence: Romania has increased its military presence in the Black Sea region by deploying more naval vessels and air defence assets, as well as strengthening its coastal defence. This has helped to enhance Romania's ability to respond to potential threats and to maintain security in the region.

2. Developing partnerships with other countries: Romania has developed partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region, including NATO allies and neighboring countries. These partnerships help to ensure that Romania can work together with other countries to address common security challenges and to promote stability and security in the region.

3. Improving maritime surveillance and control capabilities: Romania has taken steps to improve its capabilities for maritime surveillance and control, including upgrading its naval vessels and enhancing its ability to monitor shipping in its territorial waters. This helps to ensure the security of Romania's coastline and to prevent illegal activities, such as smuggling and human trafficking, in the region.



4. Strengthening its air defence capabilities: Romania has taken steps to strengthen its air defence capabilities, including modernizing its air force and upgrading its air defence systems. This helps to ensure that Romania can defend its airspace and respond to potential threats to its security.

To summarise, these measures demonstrate Romania's commitment to protecting its national interests in the Black Sea region and to promoting stability and security in the region. By increasing its military presence, developing partnerships with other countries, improving its maritime surveillance and control capabilities, and strengthening its air defence capabilities, Romania is well-positioned to address the security challenges it faces in the Black Sea region.

I. To participate in regional security partnerships, Romania has taken several measures, including:

1. Joining regional organizations: Romania is a member of several regional organizations, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Southeast European Defense Ministerial (SEDM), which promote cooperation and coordination among countries in the Black Sea region. By participating in these organizations, Romania has been able to contribute to regional security initiatives and to collaborate with other countries on security-related matters.

2. Building relationships with other countries: Romania has taken steps to build relationships with other countries in the Black Sea region, including NATO allies and neighboring countries. These relationships help to ensure that Romania can work together with other countries to address common security challenges and to promote stability and security in the region.

3. Participating in joint military exercises: Romania has participated in joint military exercises with other countries in the Black Sea region, including NATO allies and neighboring countries. These exercises help to improve interoperability among military forces and to enhance the ability of countries to respond to potential threats in the region.

4. Supporting peacekeeping operations: Romania has provided personnel and resources to support peacekeeping operations in the Black Sea region, including NATO-led operations and United Nations-led operations. This demonstrates Romania's commitment to promoting stability and security in the region and to supporting international peacekeeping efforts.

In other words, these measures demonstrate Romania's active participation in regional security partnerships in the Black Sea region. By joining regional organizations, building relationships with other countries, participating in joint military exercises, and supporting peacekeeping operations, Romania has demonstrated its commitment to promoting stability and security in the region and working together with other countries to address security challenges.



c) Romania has taken several measures to engage with NATO and to strengthen its ties with the Alliance, including:

1. NATO membership: Romania joined NATO in 2004 and has since been an active member of the Alliance. This has allowed Romania to participate in NATO's decision-making processes, to contribute to NATO's missions and operations, and to benefit from NATO's collective defence capabilities.

2. Hosting NATO assets and activities: Romania has agreed to host NATO assets and activities, including NATO command and control facilities, NATO-led military exercises, and NATO-led training missions. This has helped to increase NATO's visibility and presence in the Black Sea region and to demonstrate Romania's commitment to NATO.

3. Contributing to NATO operations and missions: Romania has contributed to NATO operations and missions, including NATO's peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and NATO's Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean. This has demonstrated Romania's commitment to NATO's collective defence efforts and to NATO's mission of promoting stability and security in Europe.

4. Participating in NATO's defence planning and decision-making processes: Romania actively participates in NATO's defence planning and decision-making processes, including NATO's Defense Planning Committee and NATO's Military Committee. This allows Romania to provide its perspectives and to influence NATO's decision-making on security-related matters.

These measures demonstrate Romania's active engagement with NATO and its commitment to strengthening its ties with the Alliance. By hosting NATO assets and activities, contributing to NATO operations and missions, and participating in NATO's defence planning and decision-making processes, Romania has demonstrated its commitment to NATO's collective defence efforts and to NATO's mission of promoting stability and security in Europe.

J. Romania has taken several measures to participate in multinational peacekeeping and security operations, including:

1. Contributing troops: Romania has contributed troops to various multinational peacekeeping and security operations, including the NATO-led peacekeeping mission in Kosovo and the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. This has shown Romania's commitment to promoting peace and stability and to supporting international efforts to maintain security.

2. Providing equipment and support: Romania has provided equipment and support to multinational peacekeeping and security operations, including providing logistical support, medical support, and engineering support. This has helped to improve the effectiveness of these operations and to increase Romania's influence in the international community.



3. Training and equipping peacekeepers: Romania has invested in training and equipping its peacekeepers, ensuring that they are well-prepared to perform their duties and to respond to the challenges of peacekeeping and security operations. This has helped to enhance Romania's reputation as a responsible and capable contributor to international peace and security.

4. Participating in regional peacekeeping initiatives: Romania has participated in regional peacekeeping initiatives, including the Partnership for Peace program, which aims to promote peace and stability in Europe. This has allowed Romania to build closer relationships with other countries in the region and to participate in peacekeeping initiatives that are relevant to its national interests.

All in all, these measures demonstrate Romania's commitment to participating in multinational peacekeeping and security operations and to promoting peace and stability throughout Europe and around the world. By contributing troops, providing equipment and support, training and equipping peacekeepers, and participating in regional peacekeeping initiatives, Romania has demonstrated its willingness to support international efforts to maintain security and to promote peace and stability.

K. Valuable insights into the strategic importance of the Black Sea for Romania

Strategically located in its direct eastern proximity, the EU undertakes to strengthen dialogue and cooperation in various fields, which, moreover, are among the national objectives of the neighbouring states of the Black Sea:

“a) promoting and supporting democracy, respect for human rights and good governance;

b) encouraging regional dialogue with civil society, improving cross-border management and customs cooperation at the regional level with the aim of increasing security, combating cross-border organized crime (trafficking in human beings, weapons or drugs), as well as illegal migration;

c) promoting confidence-building measures in the regions affected by the so-called “frozen conflicts” (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh), including cooperation programs designed specifically to bring together otherwise divided parties;

d) the existence of a clear, transparent and non-discriminatory framework, in accordance with the EU acquis, for energy production, transport and transit;

e) actively supporting regional cooperation in the field of transport in order to improve the efficiency, safety and security of transport operations;

f) promoting and supporting sustainability, maritime trade, environmental protection, regional development, etc.” (Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative, Brussels 2007)



Later, on May 21, 2019, during the exercise of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council (January 1-June 30, 2019), one of the national external objectives was achieved. The adoption of two notable framework documents, under the auspices of the Black Sea Synergy initiative (the Joint Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea and the Black Sea Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda), reaffirm regional cooperation between Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, the Republic Moldova and Ukraine, cooperation supported by experts from the main European maritime institutes and organizations and the European Commission (Ministerial Declaration On A Common Maritime Agenda For The Black Sea Bucharest - 21 May 2019 2023).

All these being stated, the Black Sea holds a strategic importance for Romania for several reasons:

1. Geopolitical significance: The Black Sea region is strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, making it a crucial hub for regional and international trade and security. Romania, as a coastal state in the Black Sea region, is particularly interested in maintaining stability and security in the area to protect its national interests.

2. Energy resources: The Black Sea is rich in oil and natural gas reserves, making it a critical energy hub for Europe and the world. Romania has a vested interest in ensuring the stability and security of these resources to ensure its own energy security.

3. Maritime security: The Black Sea is an important shipping lane, connecting Europe to Asia and Africa. Ensuring the security and stability of this route is critical for Romania's economic prosperity and for the region as a whole.

4. Military presence: The Black Sea region is increasingly becoming a focal point of competition between NATO and Russia, with both sides seeking to increase their military presence in the area. Romania, as a NATO member state, has a significant interest in ensuring the alliance's ability to defend its interests and respond to potential threats in the region.

5. Border security: The Black Sea region is a major route for illegal migration, human trafficking, and organized crime. Romania, as a coastal state, is concerned about the security of its borders and the stability of the region to prevent these activities from threatening its national security.

These insights highlight the strategic importance of the Black Sea for Romania, which is deeply concerned about maintaining stability and security in the region to protect its national interests. By participating in regional security partnerships and engaging with NATO, Romania is working to enhance its ability to defend its interests and to contribute to regional stability and security.

Romania's defence strategy in the Black Sea region is centered around several key objectives, including:



- enhancing regional stability and security: Romania is committed to working with its regional partners and NATO to promote stability and security in the Black Sea region. This includes participating in multinational peacekeeping and security operations, as well as engaging in regional dialogue and cooperation initiatives.

- maintaining a strong military presence: Romania has a vested interest in maintaining a strong military presence in the Black Sea region, both to deter potential adversaries and to demonstrate its commitment to regional security. This involves modernizing and strengthening its naval and air defence capabilities, as well as enhancing its ability to respond to crisis and conflict in the region.

- protecting national interests: Romania is focused on protecting its national interests in the Black Sea region, including ensuring the stability and security of its borders, maintaining control over its exclusive economic zone, and ensuring the security and stability of critical energy resources.

- strengthening partnerships: Romania is committed to strengthening its partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region, both bilaterally and through regional organizations such as NATO and the European Union. This enhances its ability to cooperate on regional security initiatives and to respond to potential threats in the area.

L. The measures taken by Romania to protect its national interests in the Black Sea region

To achieve the above objectives, Romania has taken a number of measures to enhance its military capabilities and to participate in regional security partnerships, including:

- enhancing its maritime surveillance and control capabilities: Romania has invested in modern technologies and equipment to enhance its ability to monitor and control its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone. This includes investing in advanced surveillance systems, such as radar and remote sensing technologies, to improve its ability to detect and respond to potential security threats;

- strengthening its military presence: Romania has modernized its armed forces and has stationed military units in the Black Sea region to enhance its ability to respond to potential security threats. This includes deploying naval and air defence capabilities, as well as land-based forces, to help to ensure the stability and security of its territorial waters and airspace;

- participating in multinational peacekeeping and security operations: Romania is an active participant in NATO and EU-led peacekeeping and security operations in the Black Sea region. This includes contributing military personnel and equipment to multinational operations, as well as providing intelligence and logistical support to help to ensure their success;

- engaging in regional dialogue and cooperation: Romania is committed to engaging in regional dialogue and cooperation initiatives to promote stability and



security in the Black Sea region. This includes participating in regional forums and working with other countries in the region to address common security concerns and to build trust and confidence;

– developing partnerships: Romania is committed to developing strong partnerships with other countries in the Black Sea region, both bilaterally and through regional organizations such as NATO and the European Union. This enhances its ability to cooperate on regional security initiatives and to respond to potential threats in the area.

These measures demonstrate Romania's commitment to protecting its national interests in the Black Sea region and its determination to contribute to regional stability and security. By investing in its military capabilities, participating in regional security initiatives, and engaging with its regional partners, Romania is helping to ensure the stability and security of the Black Sea region.

M. There are several ways to ensure **stability and security in the Black Sea region** that can be taken into consideration by policy-makers and military planners:

1. Enhancing maritime security: strengthening maritime security through effective surveillance and control systems, such as radar and remote sensing technologies, can help to detect and respond to potential security threats in the region.

2. Building regional partnerships: encouraging cooperation and dialogue among the countries in the Black Sea region can help to build trust and address common security challenges. This can be done through regional organizations such as NATO and the EU, as well as through bilateral initiatives.

3. Modernizing military capabilities: modernizing military capabilities, such as upgrading equipment and training personnel, can help to ensure the ability of countries to respond to potential security threats in the region.

4. Promoting economic development: encouraging economic development and stability in the region can help to reduce the risk of conflict and promote stability. This can include initiatives such as increasing trade and investment, promoting tourism, and supporting the development of local businesses.

5. Supporting peacekeeping and security operations: participating in and supporting multinational peacekeeping and security operations can help to maintain stability in the region and to address regional security challenges. This includes providing military personnel and equipment, as well as intelligence and logistical support.

Encouraging transparency and cooperation: encouraging transparency and cooperation between countries in the Black Sea region, as well as between regional organizations such as NATO and the EU, can help to reduce tensions and build trust. This can include initiatives such as exchanging information, engaging in



dialogue, and working together on regional security initiatives. The Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy of 2016 takes into its text the concern of the states in the Eastern neighborhood of the Union regarding a reconfiguration of Europe's security architecture. Russia's hybrid actions in Ukraine and the violation of international humanitarian law, combined with the prolongation of the "frozen conflicts" in the extended Black Sea region, led the EU to focus its attention on this area (European Council 2023, 33).

A solution to preserve Pontic security is the Three Seas Initiative. This is a flexible and informal political platform, at presidential level, that brings together the 12 EU Member States located between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black seas (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia). The initiative aims to increase convergence and cohesion, in parallel with reducing the economic development gap between different areas and EU member states, by increasing interconnectivity in the region, in the fields of energy, transport and digital. The basic principles of the Three Seas Initiative are: promoting economic development, increasing cohesion at European level and strengthening transatlantic ties (MAE 2023). By taking a comprehensive and cooperative approach to security, countries in the Black Sea region can work together to ensure stability and security in the region.

Also, the following findings can contribute to the development of effective defence and security strategies in the Black sea region:

1. Geopolitical and regional dynamics: understanding the political and military relationships between the countries in the Black Sea region, as well as their alliances and rivalries, is crucial in developing effective defence strategies.

2. Strategic importance of the region: the Black Sea region is strategically important due to its access to key energy resources, transportation routes, and military bases. Understanding these factors can help to shape defence strategies to protect these assets.

3. Hybrid threats: the Black Sea region is vulnerable to various types of hybrid threats, including cyber attacks, propaganda, and covert operations. Defence strategies must take these threats into account and have the capability to counter them.

4. Military capabilities: understanding the military capabilities of the countries in the region is important in developing effective defence strategies. This includes analyzing the size and strength of each country's armed forces, as well as their weaponry and technological advancements.

5. Maritime security: the Black Sea is an important shipping route, and ensuring its security is crucial for the region's economies. Defence strategies must consider the threats to maritime security, such as piracy, terrorism, and smuggling, and have measures in place to counter them.

6. Border security: effective border security is essential for protecting the countries in the region from illegal activities, such as human trafficking and drug smuggling. Defence strategies must include measures to improve border security and enhance cross-border cooperation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Among all the countries with access to the Black Sea, Romania stood out by far with its active military of its strategic importance, advocating for its inclusion in the objectives on the NATO and EU agendas. To support this, Romania's political-military representatives often brought into discussions as arguments the developments in the Pontic states and the role of the Black Sea as a link between Europe, Asia and the Middle East.



Figure no. 2 – The extended Black Sea region²

² The extended Black Sea region includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and Russia in the north, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan in the east, and Turkey in the south. Although Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral states, their history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors, *Communication From The Commission To The Council And The European Parliament Black Sea Synergy - A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, Brussels, 11.04.2007, pp. 2-13, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52007DC0160&from=EN>, accessed at 12.01.2023.



Shortly after Romania's and Bulgaria's accession to the EU, an increased focus on the Pontic region could be observed through the launch of a new regional cooperation initiative called the Black Sea Synergy³ and the subsequent advancement of the projects initiated through it, including the Black Sea NGO Forum, proposed and started by Romania in close collaboration with the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Development.

Being the main initiative of the Union specifically dedicated to the Pontic region, it is based on the supported and coordinated efforts of Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany and other member states, as well as the considerable contribution brought by the support of the European Commission. The core directives focus on promoting and supporting the security of the Black Sea, as well as awareness of its major role in maintaining a stable climate in the region and in Europe.

Undoubtedly, the presence of the EU in the Pontic region, first of all, opens up new horizons and facilitates different opportunities. The Black Sea Synergy Initiative and related processes are important instruments precisely because of their stated purpose. The platform created by them outlines the guidelines for proposing pragmatic cooperation projects between coastal countries and the EU.

Secondly, the direct proximity of the Union to the Black Sea also means a series of commitments and responsibilities that require concerted and sustained efforts to achieve lasting and effective regional cooperation. The persistence of Romania's advocacy for its objectives regarding the strategic importance of the Black Sea region in the tense international context generated since 2014 by Russia, by annexing the Crimean Peninsula, has been included in the defining documents of the EU and NATO.

Once seen as a terrain of controversy and rivalry at the intersection of the peripheries of great empires by professor Charles King, the vast expanse of the Black Sea has lately acquired its own and somewhat uncomfortable centrality.

Regional dynamics call for a careful reconsideration of existing theoretical premises and analytical assessments in order to relate them to new realities, to understand what is happening, to identify viable solutions to current vulnerabilities, risks and threats, and to capitalize on the opportunities that may arise during this process of profound transformations.

The instability generated by the Russian Federation in its desire to change the strategic balance in the region by resorting to brute military force, its actions aimed at blocking the European path of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, the use of energy as a tool of geopolitical pressure, the constant interventions in the Balkans and The Middle East, the attack on the liberal value system, the encouragement of ultra-nationalist and populist discourse – all these are calls to anticipate what might come next and deter possible future challenges to regional stability and security.

³ *Ibidem.*



History has shown that whenever Russia decides to depart from established norms of international behavior and accepted business practices, Europeans are capable of finding alternative solutions if they act with unity and determination. In our viewpoint, the same applies to ensuring and maintaining stability and security in the extended Black Sea region.

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IDENTIFYING POST-DISASTER PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES TO REDUCE POTENTIAL DAMAGES

*László TEKNŐS, PhD**

Disasters can endanger and harm people's lives, health and properties, the basic living conditions of the population, the natural and built environment, and natural values. Therefore, one should always calculate with some kind of an accompanying psychic effect. It is important to deal with the analysis and presentation of psychic phenomena shortly or long after the disasters. In the present article, we are attempting to present a comprehensive summary of the issue. After systemizing the causes of disasters and the features of incident sites, we identify and map the expected psychic consequences, searching for protection options and solutions. The article discusses the psychological effects of terrorism as well.

Keywords: *disaster area; extreme weather; crisis intervention; psychological phenomena; post-traumatic stress disorder.*

Introduction

According to IFCR¹, a disaster is a “sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses” (IFCR n.d.), disrupting the normal conditions of existence (WHO 2002). A disaster is a sudden and severe unfortunate event, as well as a natural or man-made event that has a negative impact on life, property, livelihoods, or industry, often causing permanent changes in human societies, ecosystems, and

¹ The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network.

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the environment (Kai 1978) (Gibbs, et al. 2022). A disaster is a rarely occurring, unexpected disturbance that upsets the social order (KREPS and BOSWORTH 1993) i.e. disasters are social phenomena (Sjoberg 1972) with significant psychological effects (Bland, et al. 1996). According to the definition in item 5 of Section 3 of Hungary’s *Act CXXVIII of 2011 on Disaster Management and on the Amendment of Certain Related Acts*, a disaster is “...a condition or situation that endangers or harms people’s lives, health, property, the basic supply of the population, the natural environment, natural values in a way or to an extent that the prevention of or the response to damages or the liquidation of the consequences exceed the protection possibilities of organizations assigned to do so in a required cooperation order...” (Act on Disaster Management and on the Amendment of Certain Related Acts 2023).

Table no. 1: Physical and psychological effects of disasters (Created by Author)

The effects of disasters – briefly	
Physical effects – direct and indirect	Psychological effects – direct and indirect
• Tragedy, death, injury (permanent)	Over motivated environment – due to physical effect – psychological distress
• Economic effects – damages (certain or uncertain; production)	Shocks, negative views of life
• Infrastructure damage (disruption in the availability of services ensuring the continuity of living standards, outages – dependence)	Instinctive escape, devoid of any rationalisation – a reaction inferior to the development of one’s personality
• Losing home – where to go? Should one go back?	Mass panic
• Humanitarian crises (increasing involvement)	In the case of the ones who experience disasters: a lifelong fear, maybe even of nature itself
• Mass migration	Psychological trap: – action is accelerated or blocked and becomes inaccurate – intellectual progress, decision disorganisation develops coupled with a sense of helplessness
• Public health implications	
• Environmental problems (pollution, habitat destruction)	
• Community drawbacks – government instability, social inequality, unemployment, funding?	The mental stability of several individuals does not return to balance since their psychological resources are impaired due to various stress reactions



It can be clearly established from the above mentioned, international and Hungarian concepts of disaster that, under this notion one understands a situation or condition in which the involvement of the population and the higher levels of administration is inevitable, a situation when human lives or property are at risk. Regarding vulnerability, it can be stated that – based on what has been stated – psychic consequences may also occur apart from physical damage, psychic burdens may also occur when an individual loses their movables, personal belongings and the availability of services to ensure the continuity of their living standards.

In the 21st century, it can be observed that social development is associated with the existence of supporting infrastructures, supply systems and their continuous operation. These have the disadvantage that their role of maintaining a living standard becomes too important. If they stop or become disrupted, it increases vulnerability. Opportunities given by technological progress distort too much the ancient nature of man, the struggle for basic survival. It can also be said that society has over-reassured their own survival, which causes undesirable social changes. Such a negative effect is a general deterioration of health observed in a large part of the population. Because of social changes (low-powered lifestyle, rushing and stressed living conditions, media rumors, extreme work, urbanized form of life), an individual's "psychological immune system" is constantly exhausted due to inadequate physical condition, malaise, which can easily develop into depression. Health deterioration brings along mental instability. People with technological support systems and infrastructures – among other things – have fallen into the trap of progress. In the increasingly "rushing" world, human beings have many stress sources of anthropogenic origin, thereby reducing their own mental resilience. Burdens of physical and psychic origin are present in our time, to varying degrees.

The devastating manifestations of the reasons causing incidents and disasters include, but are not limited to creating, a so-called over-motivated environment where individual physical effects (such as odors, the wailing of the injured, the presence of deceased persons, sound effects, and the view of the living space perishing) strongly consume the human psyche (Hornyacsek 2010).

1. Early Psychic Phenomena on Incident Sites

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives but the most adaptable."

Charles Darwin

According to item 7 of Section 3 of *Act CXXVIII of 2011 on Disaster Management and on the amendment of certain related acts*, the area affected by the damaging effect of a disaster "is the area where governmental measures are to be taken in order to respond to the consequences of natural or human-triggered disasters



(rehabilitation)” (Act on Disaster Management and on the Amendment of Certain Related Acts 2023). An incident site is where the devastating effects of an incident are manifested the most (Hornýacsek 2012)². Based on their types, incident sites may be categorized as nuclear, chemical, fire, explosion, accident, abnormal technological process, technical failure, spill of hazardous materials or any other incident, and incident sites may be created by floods or inland waters, earthquakes, other natural disasters, extreme weather, biological infections, and the combination of these.

Those who have been affected to some extent by an incident or a disaster that might have originated in a hazard source, were subject to considerable physical and mental pressure. These undesirable burdens may have early psychic consequences, in the psychological sense (immediately following the post-crisis phase), or late ones (following an incident at a later time). All natural and human-triggered incidents and disasters have an accompanying psychic phenomenon.

On an incident site, one should calculate with injuries and significant physical load; from the threats of psychic origin, with increased fear, fright and panic. In general, it can be said that the individuals, *before* an incident occurs (e.g., the reception of evacuation), *during* that (resettlement, evacuations, sheltering, technical rescue, interventions, disruption of basic supplies) or *after* that (due to destruction of residential buildings, change of the environmental conditions, loss of next of kin, etc.), find themselves in a life situation which psychically burdens them.

The processing of physical-psychological effects on an individual is performed by the nervous system with the help of sensory organs and receptors, and then they “define” the different reactions and behaviors. An unexpected incident, the danger of a disaster, a disaster itself may trigger a behavior different from normal. For example, a good manager, a decisive and robust person, in an extraordinary situation simply becomes rigid, confused and unable to think properly. Their body perceives the threat, and their thalamus (epithalamus, thalamus, hypothalamus) will indicate the danger. The sympathetic nervous system receives³ the stimuli and informs the adrenal gland, which produces catecholamines⁴ and injects them in the blood circulation, thus reaches a higher level of preparedness (Lőrincz, et al. 2008). This has visible and perceivable effects. For example, pupils widen, the mouth dries out, the heart beats faster, the oxygen supply rises, the blood sugar level rises, more blood gets into the brain, the muscles and the vital organs, the performance becomes temporarily higher, the clotting time of the blood is shorter. These are normal reactions in an abnormal situation. These are emergency reactions of the body that serve to

² English translation of the original article-source title: The Psychic Impact of the Mass Disasters on the Members of the Rescue Team, the Fundamental Early and Post Psychic Symptoms and the Possible Options to Avoid the Negative Impacts of these Events.

³ Responsible for stress response in stress situations and emergencies, is activated as an entirety of the system.

⁴ Hormones.



handle the physical and psychological effects, ensuring survival. However, if the load is prolonged or the effects are too intense, the arousal level will be high (body's general excitement and vigilance state), and uncontrolled behavior or incapacitated state can easily occur (Bolgár and Szekeres 2009). If an individual cannot cope with the physical-psychic burdens, health deterioration may occur (heart and circulatory diseases, diseases of the stomach). If the affected person is exposed to increased, long-lasting negative effects, even years after the critical incident, stressful behavior may be witnessed.

Table no. 2: Characteristics of a person in crisis
(Bolgár and Szekeres 2009)

Physiological reactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tension: pain, tremors, poor coordination, fright (motoric stiffness during longer periods of load)• Preparedness: "rushes" to all sudden sounds or movements, cold sweat, dry mouth, paleness, difficult to focus the eyes, lack of sense of air, hyperventilation (overdose of oxygen), tense stomach, nausea, frequent urination• Fatigue: the body invests enormous energy in protection, but after a while, the organism runs out of protection reserves, protection cannot be maintained. Resistance decreases. For example, feeling of tiredness and numbness, every movement requires effort
Cognitive reactions	Confusion, disorientation –ignorance, poor concentration, memory disorders, extraordinary deconcentration, flashback may occur (as either visual or acoustic stimulus)
Emotional reactions	Mourning (the most critical emotional state), guilt, depression, anger, distraction, fear, anxiety (reaction after extraordinary events – fear without object), feeling of ineffectiveness, self-distress, stress (increased protection and coping reaction)
Behavioral reactions	Total inactivity, withdrawal from social space, emotional outbursts (crying, laughter), unjustified intolerance (impatience), aggression, striking loquaciousness or taciturnity, hyperactive behavior (forced uncontrolled motion, all reactions are accelerated)

From Table no. 2, one can see that the reaction of an individual to psychic challenges is diverse, complex and multileveled. The behavior of a person in crisis is influenced by a psychic burden which – as one can see from the table – cannot be processed and dealt with alone in the long run at a normal level. From the several possible behavioral characteristics, it can be concluded in general that psychological assistance has *raison d'etre*, as it is an inevitable and necessary option for protection.



From the early psychic phenomena, **stress**, increased **fear** and **panic** are to be treated with priority on an incident site.

Stress

Stress is a more advanced kind of protection, a coping reaction of an individual against the stimuli of an incident. This is an intensified adaptation process for the person receiving the stimuli, that is, stressors (Hornyacsek 2010). There are various physical processes in the body (rising heart rate, increased blood pressure, adrenaline and norepinephrine separation). Stress generates psycho-physiological processes that promote the formation of a more resistant behavior (preparing for coping with the difficulty). If stress persists in an intensified manner, a state of exhaustion can easily occur, as the greatest efforts of the organism digest enormous energy, which is not sustainable over a long period of time. According to János Selye⁵, the essence of stress is adaptation. The more intensive the stress situation is, the greater extent of adaptation is needed. Caused by stress, various reactions occur, such as depression, aggression, restlessness, intensive mood changes, etc.

Stress may be classified into two types according to how an incident has occurred, what kind of a trauma has been endured during a disaster, what are the immediate symptoms or the symptoms endured after a trauma, and what symptoms emerge only after a certain time:

- acute stress disorders: these occur suddenly, during or immediately after stress, last minimum of two days up to four weeks, and cause major functional impairments;
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – PTSD: the psychic injury occurs a certain period of time after the experienced trauma.

Fear

Fear is a strong emotional state that causes an unprepared individual to easily lose his/her sense of judgment and, consequently, make decisions inappropriate for the situation, so these may end up in tragedy. If it is possible for the individual to control the state of mind maintaining conscious thinking, the sense of danger can be reduced. For example, if meteorological, hydrological events are predictable, the population can be prepared, – and thus an advantage of time can be gained with regard to protection measures. Adequate emergency communication and alert can result in an even more effective protection by means of the time advantage, thus the conditions for the population to survive may be improved.

The sources of the development of fear:

- The direction and object of fear is known before the possible occurrence of the adverse effect, it is possible to avoid the danger, either by external assistance or on one's own.

⁵ He was a successful internal medicine practitioner and chemist, one of whose most popular works was published in 1964, entitled “Életünk és a stressz” (Our Life and Stress).



– The direction and object of fear is known, however, the possibility of avoidance is uncertain or excluded.

– The object of fear is known, but its direction or the possibility to avoid it is uncertain. This threatening situation causes a stress effect, during which the problem-solving methods that previously proved successful appear to be ineffective, so internal tension may become more and more powerful. Thus, a sense of hopelessness can arise which can lead to an uncontrollable state of panic and a complete physical-psychic collapse.

– Neither the direction, nor the object of fear or the time of occurrence of the event are known. Generally, this, can cause persistent situational aberration, which, from the examples taken from practice, may occur due to the lack of relevant information, e.g., due to a facility near one's residence believed to be dangerous. In such cases, we suggest primarily to raise awareness and dissolve the unreasonable fear by providing information as clear as possible through dialogue.

Panic

According to Iván Kémenczy, panic is actually an abnormal nervous system reaction that explodes suddenly, occurring quickly and with great energy. Because of the lack of conscious functioning, intellectual and moral control is lost (Kémenczy 1980). In panic, human self-control and in general the level of consciousness decrease, and rational thinking may be pushed in the background. Individual consciousness, and attention may become constricted, extreme emotional passionate reactions may occur (e.g., shouting, anger, aggressive manifestations, crying, wailing, irrational or meaningless actions, etc.). So, this is a *regressive state*⁶, in which a person often does not have control over himself/herself and can react to extreme situations as he would never do in a normal life situation.

The state of panic is a result of a sudden fear or fright, which seriously disrupts the order of mental processes, in the event of unexpected, frightening environmental impacts and events. Disasters cause panic very often, but a state of panic can itself cause a tragic end result or lead to a further incident or disaster. An important means to overcome panic created by fear is proper preparation and information.

The course of a panic reaction can be divided into the following phases for an individual:

- reflex phase,
- “stampede” type escape,
- unjustified urge to move,
- subcortical phase (moral zealotness, self-sacrifice),
- “subcritical” and aggressive phase, a shift in responsibility,
- return of sober judgment, perceptiveness.

⁶Regression means slipping back to an earlier development level.

The panic symptoms of an individual are quite diverse, however, there are several typical and obvious indications (Hornyacsek 2010):

- sweating,
- increased heartbeat,
- ringing in ears,
- choking,
- irritability,
- blurry speech or voice,
- fainting,
- other symptoms.

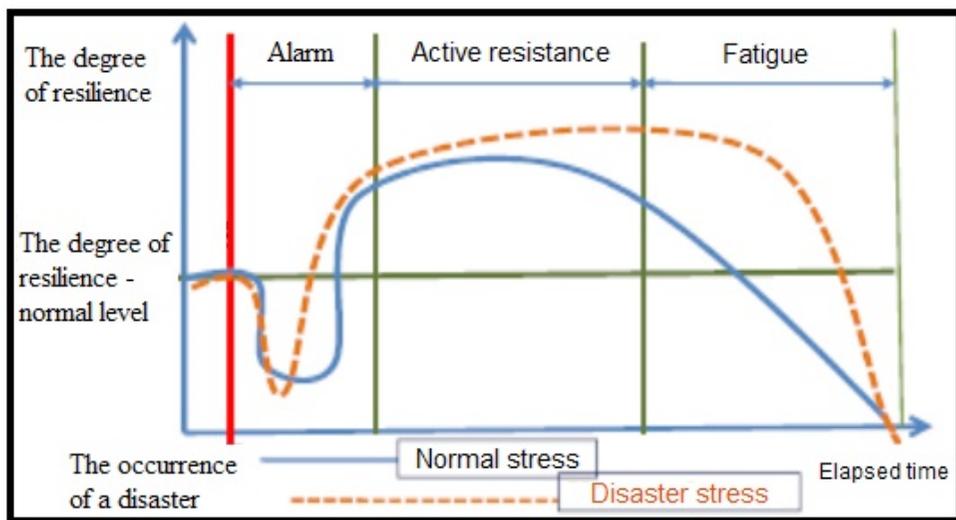


Figure no. 1: The phases of general adaptation syndrome when a disaster occurs, according to Selye's research (Created by Júlia Hornyacsek, 2010, based on János Selye)

During a disaster, it is not always the incident itself that is decisive, but how it is evaluated by the physically-psychologically affected person. Individuals, primarily, evaluate the situation during which they consider it innocuous or harmful (Hornyacsek 2010, 10-12). During the evaluation phase of a stress generated by a disaster, stakeholders evaluate the event as clearly negative, whether they are affected directly or not. As a first step in the process of the General Adaptation Syndrome, a threatening stimulus and alarm reaction occurs, which last for a short time. Different processes start in the body (increase in heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar level, separation of adrenaline and noradrenaline, parasympathetic inhibition). It is followed by a second evaluation when it is decided if the person's resources are enough to cope



with it and he/she has options available for the solution. In disasters, even the second evaluation may be distorted, which can lead to panic. Often, they do not feel strong to escape and thus survive, and so their chances to realize their ability to participate in rescue or self-rescue get worse. Normally, in a disaster, an adequate response to stress is witnessed through relevant coping mechanism, i.e., participation in active self-rescue or rescuing others. Severe meteorological incidents or disasters caused by such incidents may cause fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, possibly subsequent consequences, psychosomatic changes, PTSD, depression, etc. (Hornycsek 2010):

The main types of panic are the following:

- situational (escape),
- mood,
- efforts to acquire and recover.

The stages of panic are:

- Pre-critical phase: becoming aware of an incident; a short period, sometimes like a flash; shock, feeling lost,
- critical phase,
- chaotic attempts of individual action,
- the emergence of successful behavioral patterns,
- the emergence of leadership roles,
- post-critical phase: rational solutions, cooperation, and helpfulness will gradually dominate,
- return to the previous normal state.

Panic can be interpreted not only for individuals but also for the masses (Bolgár-Szekeres 2009). The mass psychological effect of panic differs from that of an individual, by intensity and the capacity to cope with it. A large number of people can be regarded as a peculiar formation, and special psychological rules apply. The character of a human mass is different from that of the individual person. In panic, emotions extend from individual to individual, like a chain reaction. As the threat of injury increases, the crowd becomes less and less controllable and organized. In a group situation, no matter how different the individuals are, a kind of “collective power” may develop. In a community, the sense of responsibility of an individual decreases and the tension and the strength of an individual may multiply. In people who witness the treatment and resuscitation of the injured as eyewitnesses, intense tension may also block the ability to act as an individual.

Disasters cause fear, increased tension, anxiety, and stress in humans. The feeling of uncertainty, the fear of deterioration and the fear of death often pose a great burden. The late consequences, such as depression or PTSD, might cause the victims to escape to suicide. In disaster management, therefore, the recognition of normal psychic phenomena should be given more emphasis and attention to. In addition, the prevention of the late harmful consequences should come to the fore (Hornycsek, 2010).



Late psychic phenomena occurring after incidents and disasters

Due to the effects of extraordinary meteorological incidents, various stages and groups of people can be differentiated. In stage I, the direct effects generate the largest group of people, based on psychic reactions of those who are confused: their attention becomes constricted, they act automatically, almost without thinking. In the next group (stage II) are those who are relaxed, some may even become suitable for rescuing others. In stage II, the organization of psychic functions of people can be observed. The smallest group (stage III) is composed of those who are in the most critical state with respect to rescue; they shout, run around, fall asleep and panic. In stage III (post-traumatic phase), it becomes clear if the psychological phenomena are normalized in individuals or the different pathological reactions become permanent; PTSD may develop with other complications such as depression, psychosomatic illness, addiction, etc.

Coping with psychic phenomena following a disaster depends on many factors and is mostly successful (Hornycsek, 2010: 14). Sometimes, as a late consequence, we encounter psychosomatic disorders, alcoholism or other addictions, depression and PTSD. Cases that render the disadvantaged people completely disabled are not uncommon and this situation can end with the destruction of the environment and possibly themselves.

A person struggling with depression due to a disaster changes and turns inward, feels worthless, ineffective and inexperienced. They do not want and cannot change this situation. Whether depression develops or not, depends, to a great extent, on how the individual's psychological immune system is fit at the time of the incident. That is, what level and state of personality traits are capable of enduring the stress effects, to successfully cope with the threats in a way that the integrity of the personality, its operational efficiency and its potential for development are not violated.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Incident sites, created by the complex effects of extraordinary meteorological incidents, may have another late accompanying psychic phenomenon as well, i.e. PTSD, which is a persistent, severe anxiety disorder accompanied by psychotic symptoms. Symptoms may be divided into four groups, namely: the first group includes symptoms that are related to the re-emergence of a traumatic event or some of its details, such as recurring nightmares or repeated re-thinking of events in a self-torturing way (Az átélt traumák utáni pszichés zavarok, tünetek [Psychological Disorders and Symptoms after Experiencing Trauma] n.d.); the second group involves the typical behavior of maniacal avoidance, which means that a person avoids places, situations and activities that remind them of the traumatic event; the third group is a phenomenon when an individual shows a reduced response to the outside world. This is called "emotional amnesia". A person gets alienated from others, loses their interest in jobs or engagements, etc. The fourth group includes, for example,



increased levels of arousal, anxiety and guilt. An individual, during recollection, experiences disturbing liveliness, vigilance, they cannot sleep. Sometimes they feel excessive guilt because they survived that tragic event, or because of what they have done for their survival (Bolgár and Szekeres 2009).

According to post-traumatic stress disorder, a patient is:

- acute if the symptoms are present less than 3 months.
- chronic if the symptoms are present more than 3 months.
- delayed start means that the symptoms start at least 6 months after the trauma.

The treatment of post-traumatic disorders requires a professional intervention in the chronic phase because, although a person suffering from PTSD learns to live with these symptoms and difficulties, it is difficult to get rid of them.

If post-traumatic illnesses, symptoms endure for years, they can cause permanent personality changes. In such cases, it can be seen that a person becomes distrustful towards his/her environment and the people around them. Hopelessness and intolerance may persist, the person may become uninterested. The greatest danger is that all these feelings increase the possibility of suicide.

2. Psychological Threats of Terrorism

Terrorism, as one of the most crucial security challenges nowadays (Alexander and Klein 2005) (Farkas 2016), is a social phenomenon based on (unlawful) violence (Fletcher 2006) (Bartkó 2011). Its causes may include political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious, or other factors (Korinek 2015). The psychological final purpose of various terror organisations and groups is to achieve a change of attitude and behaviour of the individual, community, and state. Violence acts more as a means, rather than a purpose (Murányi 2021). Regardless of the root causes, such acts significantly impact the legal system, such as human rights (rights of freedom), the functioning of a legitimately established government, the national security of states (Maras 2016). Strong – especially democratic – states reduce the development of terrorism, however, unstable state measures and weak governance itself increase the development (Krieger and Meierrieks 2001). Such significant elements of everyday life are these that the psychological consequences are relevant. According to this, in the following text, the author applies two policies in relation to terrorism. On the one hand, the psychological causes of the emergence of terrorism are examined, while on the other hand, the psychological threats of terrorism are discussed in further detail.

Psychological reasons for the development of terrorism

The “development” of a terrorist’s personality can be traced back to biological or psychological causes (Korinek 2015) (Hamden 2019). Considering the biological tracing, the behaviour of the perpetrators is influenced by hormonal and neuro-



chemical processes and unbalanced states which may be determined by the excess of norepinephrine, acetylcholine and endorphins. As for psychological reasons, the tendency to aggression is definitely worth mentioning (Póczik 2007). Although no one is indeed born a terrorist, a person may become one (Nagy 2020). In terms of “psychological development”, several conditions can cause personality distortions for which the individual may be susceptible to terrorist organisations. Such are severe psychological influences in childhood, adolescents with personality disorders, community socialisation (Nagy 2020, 73), identification with the victim community, victimisation, etc. (Horgan 2008). Their motivations and psychological profiles are diverse, characterised by a distorted, absolutist worldview, and the dehumanisation of the enemy (Murányi, “A terror árnyékában” [In the Shadow of Terror] 2021). In the case of the latter, humans, as living beings, are erased from the terrorist person as the goal is to break down each barrier to manslaughter. A strong religious ideology may greatly facilitate this. With the created concept of the enemy, a lack of control and common sense can be maintained in the long run. Not to offend any religion, however, in the case of Islam, killing the enemy means a reward in heaven (Weitzmann 2005). Terrorists are characterised by complacency, self-assertation needs, a strong sense of social exclusion, the motive of anger, and extreme frustration (Nagy 2020, 74). Although not only terrorist groups are exposed to xenophobia since of the fear arising from the activities of their cause, people who have not experienced it directly begin to hate different ethnic groups in general. This creates a kind of spiral of violence that never ends (Smith, Mackie and Claypool 2016, 872).

Analysis of the psychological threats of terrorism

Panic after terrorist acts can lead to the inhibition of higher cognitive functions (Murányi 2021, 173). Response mechanisms may work (e.g., suppression, denial, dislocation), however, if this occurs permanently or more frequently on an ad-hoc basis, it puts a lot of pressure on the level of the individual or the community (Farkas and Borbély 2018). This definitely leads to a deterioration in life situations. Psychological effects include strengthening feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, disrupting faith in the state, proving the incompetence of authorities, destroying a sense of security, keeping individuals in constant fear and anxiety, enhancing experiences of failure, etc. (Alexander and Klein 2005, 55).

An important part of the implementation of terrorist attacks (viewed from the perpetrator’s side) is the communication of the committed act. In order to create fear and panic, terrorists need publicity (Nagy 2020, 79). The Islamic State (ISIS) has revolutionised the use of modern media as a weapon in terrorism. As an example, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria, taking advantage of the Internet and the evolving online communication opportunities, began to intensify online messaging in 2005, and later joined a larger organisation, Al-Qaeda, and



this only intensified further (Besenyő and Sinkó 2021). As social media has spread, terrorism has expanded its communication channels, and according to specific studies (Asongu, Orim and Nting 2019), there is a link between social media, Facebook penetration, and terrorism. In 2019, the global social media penetration rate reached 3.2 billion persons (42%) (Zeiger and Gyte 2020), which in January 2022 grew to 4.62 billion (58,4%) (Kemp 2022) therefore, the accessible user base is quite significant. It is a tremendous thing that the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sami (ISIS), for instance, are known for producing execution videos that are broadcasted on YouTube and Twitter (Zeiger and Gyte 2020, 358). The point here is not the use of weapons but the psychological message: anyone can be killed at any time (fear of the innocent) (Murányi 2021, 178). In 2012, 13% of Boko Haram's messages had appeared on YouTube and Twitter, and in 2015, all of their messages were shared on these platforms (Besenyő and Sinkó 2021, 72). Referring further to the African continent; social media is also used regularly by AQIM, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram (primarily for networking, information and funding reasons) (Besenyő and Sinkó 2021, 74). As a solution, perhaps the restriction or complete cessation of such contents may provide a detailed solution. According to Murányi, fewer bombs, more love and more psychology are needed (Murányi 2021).

Possibilities of reducing the effects of psychic phenomena following disasters

In addition to damage remediation and elimination, emergency and crisis communication, crisis intervention (the use of panic-avoidance mechanisms, separation of instable individuals, psycho-social support), restoration and follow-up activities are paramount tasks. It is important that in parallel with rescue activities, psychic assistance takes place on the incident or other affected sites. Types of assistance may be as follows, considering the physiology of incidents (Teknős and Endrődi 2014):

- acute phase: tranquility, medical help, nursing, providing information, opportunity for religious acts, etc. ceremonies, basic nutrition, toilet facilities, identifying losses, satisfying the need to “talk off” the incident and happenings, relaxation techniques to help restore calmness. During the acute phase, the best solutions are crisis intervention counseling, crisis support and crisis therapy (Bolgár and Szekeres 2009),

- transitional phase: help return to everyday life, assistance procedures, coping strategies, helping to accept losses, to find and identify the missing, etc.,

- closing phase: recognition of unsuccessful coping by an individual (the formation of phobias, depression, PTSD), referral to psychotherapy (Hornyacsek and Hülvely 2009) (Hornyacsek 2010, 23).

During a crisis intervention, an individual's problem-solving ability must be improved to an appropriate level, since the goal is to restore the previous equilibrium. This is a method of treatment that greatly helps uncover an individual faulty behavior (based on known symptoms) and strives, together with the injured, to resolve the



situation as soon as possible. Charitable, ecclesiastical and social organizations can greatly support crisis intervention; on the other hand, the victims' families and social networks may help. Professional practitioners, voluntary psychologists, psychic aid workers, pastors, and social workers all work and perform a vital background work to restore the victims' psychic balance, besides eliminating the negative psychic consequences originating in extraordinary disasters.

3. Crisis Intervention, Aftercare as a Treatment Option for Early and Late Negative Psychic Phenomena

In the next section of article, we have chosen to discuss about the prevention and treatment of psychic phenomena already described as potential and possible protection.

Among the psychological methods of prevention, perhaps the most important is preparation, which is getting ready for the mental challenges during disasters. It is important to define the tasks to be carried out and to establish an action plan that will effectively eliminate the consequences (Hornyacsek 2010).

Professional and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in protection: their primary task is protecting human lives, rescuing and looking after the injured. Since this is a complex system of tasks (protection, rescue, physical movement, damage assessment, psycho-social support, etc.), its command and control is inevitable to be performed by professionals. Different NGOs, associations, churches are included in helping people affected by disasters, as they can provide social assistance, psycho-social counseling, and mental health support. Rescue teams of churches have proved that during and after minor or major incidents, they can provide assistance to physically and mentally injured, survivors, and the ones shattered in many ways. Churches maintain protected spiritual communities, so they can support even hundreds of people in need through their well-developed family and social networks (housing, food, etc.).

After incidents due to weather, psychologists, doctors, social workers, mental health workers deployed there start their extremely important background work among the population. Crisis intervention (as a complex order of actions) occurs usually within the first 72 hours after an incident, or if it has already occurred, from its notification. It is important to point out that, in the current article, we do not interpret crisis intervention as an assistance against suicide, but, as preventing the development of mental illnesses.

The steps and features of crisis intervention

The first step is contacting the relevant individuals. Then, during the interview, mapping the antecedents and, on this basis, establishing trust and a positive



relationship follow. One needs to get involved quickly emotionally, and to achieve a reduction in panic, anxiety and tension. Thinking as one needs to be expanded and the stabilization of the emotional state and in raising hope must be done in order to avoid dependence in the future. In such cases, psychological first aid must have already begun, thus, restoring the individual's increased emotional state to the original level. Many people are not able to process events at the right level in the first 72 hours of crisis intervention, so, it is recommended to provide aftercare for them. In such cases, the psychic helper brings hope with their behavior and motivates the injured by supporting them in participating in subsequent therapies.

Crisis Intervention possibilities and tasks are the following:

- create the basics of permanent presence (contact, confidence building, future psychic care, therapies) on the incident site.
- voluntary psychologists and psychic helpers reduce the crisis that involves, as much as possible, emptying negative feelings from the human brain to make the patient regain, as quick as possible, stable self-sufficiency so that they can act individually, without external help,
- secondary effects of extraordinary weather can be floods (torrential rain) that may generate new problems. The property of residents can be flooded. Many times, tenants cannot go back to their residences, anxiety and post-traumatic stress can arise after being in insecurity. One of the solutions may be crisis intervention reception stations, parallel to which temporary accommodation should also be set up. Private and municipal apartments are good examples of this, etc.,
- ensuring the supply of basic necessities (housing, food, medicines, clothing),
- social assistance.

Crisis intervention is a fundamentally quick, effective intervention, involving acts to help the environment. The emotional wounds are perhaps less visible than physical injuries, but they often generate emotional and psychological effects for a much longer time than those because of the losses of material nature. Neglected emotional reactions may occur later in the survivors as a serious psychic syndrome. Early and proper psychosocial support can prevent psychological pain and suffering from developing into a more severe disease and help people who are more affected to cope with the crisis and return to everyday life (Sáfár and Hornyacsek 2011), (Zsákai 2021).

Psycho-social support (psychological assistance) is one of the most important ways to prevent psychic consequences. The psychological effects are caused by incidents and experiences that affect emotions, behaviors, thoughts, memories, the capacity of an individual; while social influences concern common experiences with shocking incidents that affect human relationships (Sáfár and Hornyacsek 2011). Psycho-social assistance needs to be shaped to the needs and the specific circumstances of the situation, adapting to the physical and psychological needs of the population.

The task of the professional and trained voluntary personnel is to help the population process the psychic shocks caused by the circumstances. The aim is to avoid the escalation of harmful psychic symptoms, to grant assistance in processing life situations that are expected to cause stress.

Psychic assistance has several forms (Hornyacsek 2010, 24):

- preclinical support is not psychotherapy, but in the event of an emergency situation, early intervention is necessary before the appearance of pathological changes. Its aim is to reduce tension, provide disaster relief and restore the previous equilibrium. Its features are action orientation, situation orientation,
- acute care is the form of psychic support that is used in times of crisis and an emergency; its aim is to support the adequate psychic response to incidents and to establish a psychic balance,
- aftercare is a form of support that follows a crisis situation. Its aim is to monitor the lives of people affected in this period, and to support them in their everyday lives, and if they develop psychiatric phenomena, direct them to therapy, and prevent the decline in their post-traumatic period.

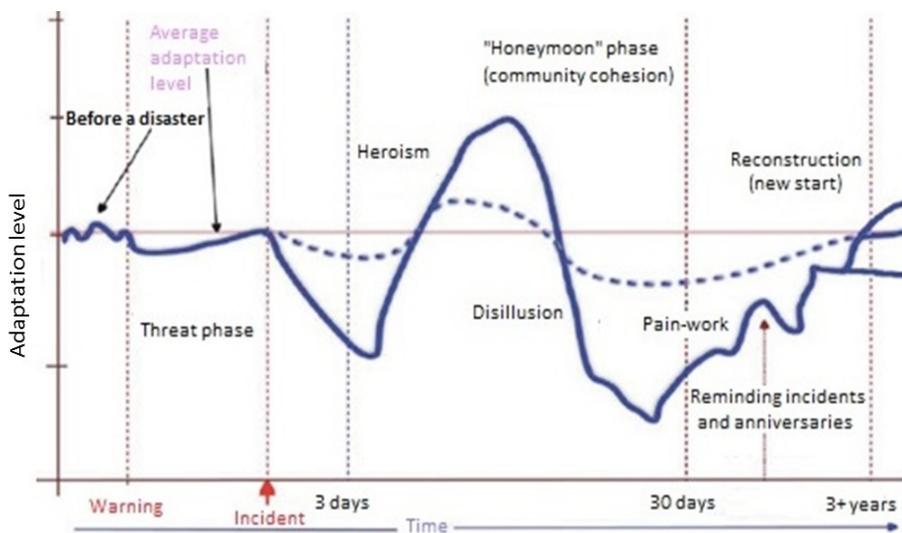


Figure no. 2: Flow chart of processing disaster crises
(Edited by: László Teknős, source: V. Komlósi, 2017)

Aftercare

- Mapping history (interview), finding a temporary solution.
- Supporting, tracking, monitoring, emotional twists, accepting personality.
- Preserving and representing some emotional reality, besides perceiving and responding to emotions and pains.



- Extending the constriction, involving other aspects, feelings, people.
- Reducing tension.
- Maintaining hope, ego strengthening.
- Assisting in turning to a specialist, hospitalization.
- Treatment of a crisis of a family or a narrower environment.
- Avoidance of dependence.
- Mobilization of all those who can help in dissolving constriction and providing assistance.

Crisis aftercare takes place in the first six months after the immediate danger, which can be performed with great efficiency by charitable organizations (such as Maltese Charity Service, Hungarian Red Cross, etc.).

As one can see, in the first month of crisis management, the professionals speak of a “honeymoon” and “community cohesion”: when everyone helps everyone, they are open and trusted by everyone. This is a very specific state. In this case, the former social structure will be dissolved and transformed. Conventional boundaries are blurred: in territorial, ethnic, and hierarchical terms. Local people and people outside the community, professionals and civilians, minorities living previously segregated and the majority used to segregation, work together altruistically in order that the community renew and re-organize “coexistence”. What happens instead? After the danger has passed, the personal pains of the injured are deepened and, at the same time, they are magnified, their personal interests are intensified and they want to “legalize” and acknowledge their eligibility in the broadest possible sense. Through their tragedy, their personality receives glorification, a “machine” has been set up to solve their problems, and they – with full reasoning from their point of view – expect the “world run around them”. A sympathetic and helpful environment would accept this “expectation” for a while and “serve” it. After a while, they not only feel that they are burdened, they constantly listen to the complaints of the injured, but seeking for external help efforts to settle their situation, and envy many people: they feel that the injured might not have lost but “won” due to a disaster. The victims compare the support they got as well: who has received how much support and assistance (Čépe, Adányi and V. Komlósi n.d.).

Possibilities to avoid panic:

- one of the most important tools to avoid panic is adequate information (crisis communication). The most important goal is to avoid and prevent rumors, to prevent the spread of false information,
 - strengthening of hope,
 - if there is no direct danger to life, sirens, bells, alarm systems should not be operated,
 - spontaneous or intentional formation of masses should be avoided, nodes causing crisis or panic should be highlighted and isolated,



- the law and order and the attention must be maintained; such groups must be under control and be manageable (purposeful tasks and exercises),
- general atmosphere improvement measures (ensuring the basic supply of population – to avoid starving, thirst, insomnia, and provide toilets, cots, medical care, to provide contact with relatives, etc.).

In order to prevent panic, it is expedient to take the following actions:

- the most important thing is to adequately inform people,
- to convince the crowd that the leaders are competent enough,
- increased maintenance of law and order and the discipline of a group,
- relief by the potentials of psychic support and care,
- attention should be paid to avoiding hunger, thirst, fatigue, insomnia,
- to separate people who are prone to panic or have already panicked.

At the occurrence of the state of panic, the following actions can bring effective results:

- the possibility of providing immediate contact with the rescue personnel,
- the voice of a person giving instructions should not suggest fear, but firmness, and should communicate the instructions aloud,
- whenever possible, rescue must be started in a controlled way,
- taking these into account, it is advisable to keep in mind also the measures to prevent panic.

Steps for treating severe traumatic stress:

- hazard analysis: what are the hazards; how and when they impact the environment,
- evaluation of injury: the effects on a person,
- investigating an individual’s reactions: is (s)he vigilant or under the influence of a drug?
- determining the care method: should a trained firefighter or specialist do it?
- reconnaissance: are others affected by the incident, do they have symptoms of stress?
- contacting: introduction, support, diverting attention,
- “Jolting back”: conversation with the person, discussing and analyzing what has happened,
- support: reassuring the person, ensuring compassion,
- normalizing reactions,
- looking forward: a summary of what has happened, discussing future events.

During the entire process of crisis management, a great emphasis must be placed on communication.

An individual in crisis incurs numerous psychic burdens, under which they can easily be “shattered”. Amidst fear and uncertainty, appropriate information can stop the development or emergence of several other problems, or at least delay them.



Disasters cause a state of panic very often, but it may also be the reverse; state of panic can also create a disaster situation. Appropriate information is an important tool to overcome panic caused by fear, within crisis communication. During emergency communication, one of the most important goals is to avoid panic.

Crisis communication requires a high degree of organization, discipline, preparedness and quick adaptation to the situation. One should rely on the appearance of the media, who, if do not find or receive answers to their questions, would search for or create their own answers in extreme cases. These rumors can easily cause panic in a short time. In the last 20 years, the number of incidents of meteorological origin has shown an increasing tendency. Therefore, one should make plans for preparing communication based on the experience of the past for different meteorological anomalies. It is important for the information to be kept professional and do not create the impression that something is unspoken. It should be formulated in a way that even non-specialists clearly understand what to do. For example, in the event of an accident of a tanker transporting hazardous material, the population should not be burdened by the chemical formula of the HAZMAT⁷. If possible, describe the hazardous material; this would not be regarded as misdirection. Thus, a layman feels that they are trusted and have been informed on the HAZMAT they are exposed to. By doing so, they increasingly trust professionals and become more cooperative. If possible, let people who live there know how harmful impacts they may be exposed to. The first task when informing the population is always raising awareness. It refers to what people know or think of the emergency or not. It should be formulated in a way that even non-specialists understand very clearly what to do. It shows what people know or think of an emergency or do not. Based on the information received from the population, the information strategy is developed, with the help of which the population is made aware of the important updates that are necessary in order to avoid the increase of their threat perception or fear. It will become possible to establish and maintain a feeling of trust between the population and the authorities involved in the rescue operation.

Forms of providing information:

- press release: contains important data for the target audience, which reaches them through the press. The publisher does not overwrite the information formulated by the original author.

- News conference: is a verbal news announcement. It is usually kept close to the incident site. It is customary to send an invitation that contains the background material; also, appropriate press requisites are to be provided as well as power for the equipment.

- Interview: is initiated most often to be done with a spokesperson. They agree, in advance, on the goal and content of the topic. Types: electronically, by telephone, communication can be live or recorded.

⁷ HAZMAT: hazardous material, dangerous substance.



- Report: made on the spot, based on experience gained on the site, by addressing the responsible persons.
- Live coverage: goes on in the vicinity and continuity of the event, thus the authenticity of information is increased.
- Brochure on hazard sources: it is worth issuing it with detailed information; it must be continuously updated.

During the protection against disasters and emergencies, it is important to provide continuous awareness and updated information to the population with preventive purposes. The information should be aligned to the existing situation, as all emergencies are different, therefore, different responses are required from the people concerned. The training and education of communicators is significant, since the correct or incorrect choice of strategies influences if a particular organization has a positive or negative image. Hungary's accession to the EU and the increased attention towards disasters make it inevitable to correctly select crisis communication.

Conclusions

Mankind has always been exposed to different kinds of dangers. One group of threats is related to meteorology, whose number and intensity have continuously been rising for the last two decades. Individuals at the sites of damages caused by weather anomalies always endure some kind of physical and psychological impact. It can often be observed that at certain damages, previously well-functioning problem-solving systems collapse, victims lose their mental balance and become insecure and unstable. Generally, damages produce early (immediately following the crisis) and late (occurring with a time delay) mental symptoms. Natural weather anomalies are considered heavy mental burden, often it is impossible to tackle challenges happening at the same time and place. The affected people who are left untreated are very likely to suffer from permanent mental damage, which in the long run have a negative effect on their health. The state of those injured people who cannot recover from the crisis they went through may gradually deteriorate, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder may appear which can even lead to suicide. There are several possibilities when these people can get help and total breakdown can be prevented.

The treatment of people under strong emotional burden starts with emotional first aid, crisis intervention (Pavlina and Komar 2007). It is essential that an expert should arrive at the spot as soon as possible and he starts to monitor the individual's reactions and behaviour. The work of psychologists, community workers and those who are actively and effectively involved in mental first aid will become increasingly valuable in the following years, since they support the state's most valuable assets, its own citizens, in different crises. The state is the most important responsible character in the protection against disasters, so it has an interest in the physical



and psychological protection of its own citizens. Effective protection mechanism requires active social contribution, which means that knowing the increasing weather anomalies, possessing self-rescue skills, etc. are supposed to fall under the duties of a citizen. The population should improve their opportunities for physical and mental protection, which experts dealing with crisis intervention in Hungary can help through connection points that should be looked for, an issue of pressing urgency in the future (Ferencz and Teknős 2020).

Disasters have physiological impacts, which can be linked to psychological phenomena. It would be of utmost importance to analyse the psychological consequences of disasters as well and to conduct researches which would help to predict them. For this purpose, unitary, national trainings are necessary, which are not yet available. Charity organisations, churches could offer a lot of possibilities, but they must be coordinated at state level. Financial resources needed for admission and operation have to be allocated. These entities are valuable as psychological defensive systems because of their expertise and social networks. In the background, professionals, volunteer psychologists, pastors, social workers all strive to reduce negative psychological impacts of extreme weather events and to restore psychological balance (Teknős and Debreceni 2022).

According to David and Susan (2005), terrorist incidents can cause a higher level of psychopathology than natural disasters (e.g., tsunamis and earthquakes) since predominantly terrorist incidents systematically affect the civilian population. As an example, a year after the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the number of PTSD patients in the population increased significantly, while substance and alcohol abuse increased to extraordinary proportions. This could have been measured in relation to the destruction of the World Trade Center or relatives of the victims of the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing in Scotland. Terrorist incidents are characterised by achieving the greatest possible impacts with a low budget. From a psychopathological standpoint, terrorist attacks have deeply significant effects in the long run. Perhaps it is even a risky statement that it is greater than, for instance, in the case of disasters of natural origin.

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CONVERGENCE AND PRAGMATISM IN STRUCTURING THE EU DEFENCE PLANNING PROCESS. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COORDINATED ANNUAL REVIEW ON DEFENCE (CARD)

*Dragoş ILINCA, PhD**

European defence cooperation has recently made significant progress in a wide range of instruments aimed in particular at streamlining the way in which defence capabilities are generated under the auspices of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). In this context, there is also an interest in optimising the defence planning process by strengthening the integrated nature and ensuring interconnectivity between the different CSDP-related initiatives, such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the European Defence Fund or the Capability Development Plan. Thus, the launch of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) is an endeavour to help harmonise these initiatives by identifying concrete opportunities for cooperation between Member States and making recommendations to guide cooperation between Member States. The potential of CARD has been preliminary tested within two operating cycles, with promising results and practical effects in generating optimal formulas for the use of Member States' resources. From this perspective, the study aims to deepen the way CARD contributes to the creation of an integrated framework for the functioning of European defence cooperation. The article also proposes a comprehensive perspective by analysing how CARD contributes to guiding the interaction between Member States on the capability dimension and, last but not least, to strengthening EU-NATO complementarity. The main premise of this approach is precisely to value the potential of CARD to ensure the sustainability of cooperation under the aegis of CSDP. At the same time, the overriding interest of Member States in ensuring the transposition of the recommendations and cooperation priorities identified by CARD at the level of national defence planning processes is considered.

Keywords: CSDP; PESCO; EDF; CARD; MPCC; EUGS; EDA.

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Introduction

As with other initiatives developed by the EU in recent years, the EU's role of the Global Security Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) has been the main driver of momentum in European defence cooperation. This includes the interaction formulas developed under the aegis of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF) or the EU Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). All of this stems from the priorities set by the EUGS. Underpinning the ambitious agenda, the development of the defence dimension has been one of the priorities, addressed both in terms of capitalising on progress made and in promoting distinct lines of action aimed at deepening the integration process. Against this background, the issue of defence capabilities and, subsequently, of the capability shortfalls encumbering the EU's defence dimension at an early stage (December 1999) was addressed as a matter of priority and from a pronounced multidisciplinary perspective. This approach was reflected both in the capability generation process and in the context of cooperation between Member States. The starting point of setting the level of ambition was to move towards an integrated approach in generating capabilities with a view to seizing the opportunities for cooperation between Member States. Under EUGS provisions, the focus was on strengthening coherence in "defence capability development and planning" at EU level. The advanced implementation formula for this objective was mainly aimed at creating a mechanism for the regular assessment of national policy issues. The need for such an instrument was all the more pronounced in the context of the highly active dynamics of European defence cooperation, which led to the emergence of the extensive set of initiatives mentioned. The need to ensure interaction between the levels managed by them has led to the decision to launch a defence analysis process that will be part of the Coordinated Annual Defence Review Process (CARD).

1. General Context

The objective of launching a defence review process was deepened in immediate aftermath of the EUGS, with the adoption at the level of the European Council of the proposals of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the implementation of the EUGS objectives (Implementation Plan, 2016). Through it, the project of structuring a mechanism aimed at "Coordinated Defence Analysis" has begun to take concrete shape. Building on the emphasis placed on strengthening coherence, a number of aspects related to the interaction between Member States in capability generation were considered:

- Exchange of information on national plans and possibilities for structuring joint efforts.



- Identify possible shortcomings in the management of capability gaps and assess possible ownership of coordination responsibilities.
- Strengthening budgetary predictability for collaborative projects and seize opportunities for cooperation.

In their implementation, it is anticipated that the degree of synchronization and mutual adaptation of national planning systems and procedures associated with capability development will increase. From this perspective, the development of CARD envisaged a dual purpose of interacting between Member States and bringing national planning processes closer to the priorities agreed at EU level.

On these issues, the developments in European cooperation registered up to that point had resulted in the development of a set of benchmarks and priorities with a European profile to which the Member States have subscribed to direct financial resources. The targets were adopted in November 2007 at the Steering Committee meeting (Defence Data, 2007, p. 1) in the format of defence ministers including: 20% endowment expenditure of total defence expenditure; 35% of European collaborative programmes out of the total endowment expenditure; 2% R&T expenditure of total defence spending; 20% of European collaborative programmes out of total R&T expenditure. Assessments of their achievement, recorded through the Global Strategy almost a decade after their adoption, indicated an unsatisfactory level. Hence the emphasis placed on the need to adopt measures to optimise (EU Global Strategy, 2016, pp. 45-46) how these are translated into national procedures.

From the perspective of the capability development process, two mechanisms have been created during the evolution of EU cooperation. The first of these, known as the Capability Development Mechanism (CDM), was initiated in 2003 on the operational dimension in connection with the Global Objective¹ adopted by the EU in December 1999. In 2004, the second objective was adopted focusing on the development of rapid reaction capacities in the form of the EU BattleGroups. The objective of the CDM was to manage the requirements which formed the basis for the establishment of these entities and, by extension², the tasks which they had to carry out. Thus, the CDM can be regarded as an operational planning formula, the practical results of which were found by drawing up of inventory documents (Requirements Catalogue, Force Catalogue, Progress Catalogue) of the contributions with forces and capacities made available to the EU by the Member States for those objectives.

The creation of the European Defence Agency in 2004 brought about a number of changes in capability planning by strengthening the strategic nature. In 2008, a new instrument was launched, known as the Capability Development Plan (CDP), to

¹ Known as Headline Goal 2003 adopted by the Helsinki European Council (December 1999) aimed at creating, by 2003, of a Rapid Reaction Force (50-60.000 strength).

² Joint disarmament actions, humanitarian and evacuation missions, advisory and assistance missions, conflict prevention and peacekeeping, crisis management combat forces missions, including peace-building missions and stabilisation operations.



address capability issue in an integrated manner and framed in a long-term perspective of security developments that could affect the evolution of European defence. Thus, the purpose of the CDP was to provide benchmarks/priorities for all levels of activity developed under the aegis of the Common Security and Defence Policy.

2. Methodological Benchmarks and Concrete Objectives

Under these auspices, the EU Council adopted in May 2017 the decision to implement the guidelines of the Comprehensive Security Strategy with a view to launching a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD). Building on these elements, the key rationale for using the CARD was to identify the areas of cooperation that Member States can initiate through targeted collaborative projects in support of PCD and those identified through the CDM. CARD implementation involves a multi-tiered analytical effort structured on several levels where the coordination role is provided by EDA and EUMS. The related analysis process is designed in a multidisciplinary matrix that includes the assessment of national plans and priorities in capability development, which is carried out through the EDA, in dialogue with the Member States. From a multidisciplinary perspective, this component can be assimilated to the defence analysis process developed at NATO level in the context of the Defence Planning Process (NDPP).

The (bilateral) dialogue with Member States is doubled by a comprehensive analysis of strategic trends impacting on European defence cooperation, also carried out in connection with the operational aspects resulting from the implementation of the various EU commitments. The two analytical components are harmonized within a specific product of the CARD process – CARD Aggregated Analysis, which thus provides the basis for making concrete proposals and/or recommendations to Member States. They are merged into another product called the CARD Report, and is basically a tool to provide a comprehensive picture of global developments in defence cooperation. To meet this challenge, it is structured in three components: defence planning; defence spending and defence cooperation. The exhaustiveness of the final product is reinforced by a set of concrete recommendations on areas of common interest to Member States and which have significant potential for tangible progress.

The timeframe envisaged for carrying out such a cycle of these activities covers two years, each report being approved by Defence Ministers meeting in the EDA Steering Committee format. Although a relatively new instrument, two CARD cycles have been carried out so far (2019-2020 and 2021-2022), which allows for the development of a fairly comprehensive perspective of the European defence cooperation landscape. The provisional balance sheet of these two cycles can be viewed from at least two perspectives. Firstly, the conceptual drivers promoted through this instrument aimed at focusing on overcoming European fragmentation



in the field of defence, in particular by harmonising national approaches and stimulating a cooperative approach in concrete areas. Underpinning the EU objectives through the Global Security Strategy, were recommendations on strengthening the operational potential of the CSDP, based on increasing the availability of forces and commitments advanced by Member States. In addition to the aspects of operational planning procedures at national level, the CARD process identified a number of elements that require particular attention.

They concern the field of so-called ‘enablers’, with a focus on: strategic air transport; projection of the maritime force, air defence systems. It should be noted that those elements represented a constant presence³ in the set of shortcomings identified in the EU defence planning process. Addressing them in the CARD context is one of the strands of action with significant potential to address shortcomings through cooperation between Member States. From this perspective, it can be argued that the launch of this instrument represents a new stage in structuring the defence planning process at EU level. Thus, CARD can be regarded as a successor of the CDM by taking over the operational aspects related to capabilities, but without excluding cohabitation with this mechanism, in the absence of a decision by the Member States to terminate de jure the operation of the Capability Development Mechanism and translate the functionalities to CARD.

The issue of fragmentation was also addressed from the perspective of developing a common vision regarding a potential common profile of national planning systems focused, in principle, on the following coordinates: the importance of European defence initiatives; the relevance of multinational cooperation projects; the importance of eliminating addictions; procedural-functional synergy (synchronization) between administrative establishment (CARD Report, 2020). In quantitative terms, the CARD cycles have revealed the importance of this instrument by identifying more than 100 opportunities for cooperation between Member States both on the capability dimension and on the R&D segment. On these coordinates, a set of six areas of interest has been structured: the modernization and acquisition of the Main Battle Tank; modernization of the universal soldier system, centred on the idea of strengthening the protection of force and operational efficiency; developing a Maritime Patrol Class (EPC2S) capability; combating autonomous air systems (Counter-UAS); the development of a European approach to space defence; strengthening military mobility. Moreover, it was envisaged to address these lines of action also through the use of innovative technologies such as: artificial intelligence, cyber, sensor technologies, emerging materials, optimal energy propulsion systems, autonomous systems and robotics (CARD Report, 2020).

³ In this context, the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) initiative was launched, which addressed the shortcomings identified in all the offers put forward by the Member States for the fulfilment of the HLG 2003. For details on this stage and the role of ECAP in Yannis A. Stivachtis. *The State of European Integration*, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University USA, Routledge, London-New York, pp. 31-32.



3. CARD in a Multidisciplinary Equation

Clearly, CARD is not a standalone tool. It was not designed within these parameters and could not possibly function in such a scenario. It should be noted that the emergence of CARD corresponds to a moment of maximum effervescence regarding the development of European defence cooperation, which included the emergence of the main initiatives – PESCO, EDF, CDP, MPCC – representing the core of CSDP. The way of promoting a higher level of ambition also aimed at integrating these initiatives into a functional matrix that would ensure a complete cycle of the capability generation process and, subsequently, their industrial finality. The rationale of the conceptual-practical sequencing has been a constant aspiration in the process of developing the security and defence component of the EU. CARD's role of the in relation to those initiatives was primarily to ensure greater visibility of national priorities and objectives as well as existing formulas for cooperation between them. At the same time, CARD should also be regarded as a link between the CDP and the mentioned initiatives. In the light of the time-lags in the launch of the latter, CARD comes to ensure the connection between the guidelines provided by the CDP, as a regular exercise initiated almost a decade earlier, and the initiatives generated on the foundation and guidelines of the Global Security Strategy.

At the same time, CARD can also be viewed in terms of the concrete support it can provide, through its ability to provide an integrated picture at European level, to Member States in identifying solutions to meet their priorities and objectives. It is thus possible to speak of CARD's potential as a tool to promote the change of mentality in the pragmatic approach to the process of developing capabilities. Thus, the objectives undertaken by the Member States in the framework of the European defence cooperation can further benefit from CARD's contribution by identifying more precisely the areas with the potential for major and rapid exploitation of joint investments. The latter are largely in line with PESCO, an initiative activated at EU level in November 2017, based on the provisions of the Treaty of the European Union (Articles 42(6) and 46). From this perspective, it can be seen as a forum for interaction between Member States on concrete cooperation projects with applicability both in the field of capabilities and in terms of opportunities to strengthen and optimise the EU's operational component in the field of crisis management. Along these lines, the functioning of PESCO envisages the fulfilment by the participating Member States of a set of commitments covering a wide range of European cooperation, including financial/budgetary aspects, operations, capabilities, research & technologies. They also include the quantitative-qualitative objectives undertaken by the Member States in the context of the EDA (defence spending targets).

Basically, CARD has been directly connected to the process of formulating the commitments, thus providing the possibility of integrating the approaches of the two



initiatives. At the same time, the functional association of CARD with the PESCO objectives has an intrinsic value from the perspective of revalidating the importance of this instrument within a specific framework such as that of structured cooperation formulas. From this perspective, CARD is designed as one of the key benchmarks, alongside the CDP, for guiding the work and priorities that PESCO focuses on. Equally, the PESCO-CARD connection is an additional way to reaffirm Member States' commitment and readiness to participate in this mechanism. There is thus a real interdependence between the two initiatives, which Member States' participation must consider even in the light of the voluntary nature of the initiative.

In particular, the reporting of the commitments undertaken under PESCO to the priorities of CARD can be found in terms of the financial and budgetary aspects on the coordinates of their increase and, subsequently, of the share of expenditures for covering the deficits and developing the collaborative approach (COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2017/2315 , 2017). At the same time, in the implementation of PESCO, ensuring the juxtaposition between the projects and CARD recommendations is one of the main criteria for evaluating proposals put forward by Member States. Thus, the CARD recommendations are regarded as distinctly valuable guiding elements for practical cooperation under the aegis of PESCO. Also, the harmonization of the two initiatives is also approached from a functional perspective, by increasing synergy at the level of the stages of the two initiatives. This approach is viewed as a way of strengthening the practical interaction (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS of 15 June 2020), being able to contribute to increasing the relevance of CARD-PESCO interaction and, subsequently, the level of ambition for projects developed by Member States. The results of this approach have begun to become visible both in terms of increasing the role of the CARD recommendations as guidance elements for PESCO's work, and in terms of the use at national level of the recommendations and progress identified through CARD, including in the light of Member States' interest in including collaborative proposals in national planning processes (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS of 14 November 2022). These trends are thus acquiring additional development potential, which will allow the extensive exploitation of the CARD recommendations through PESCO.

At the same time, the PESCO-CARD interaction will also be valued at the level of the European Defence Fund, an initiative launched in 2021, whose main objective is to provide funding from the EU budget for projects developed by Member States in the field of defence capabilities, namely research and technologies. Within this framework, projects developed under the aegis of PESCO benefit from special funding rates, designed to stimulate this formula of cooperation for which the CARD recommendations are priority guiding elements (Regulation (EU)2021/967). The structured approach and the focus on the use of defence initiatives to fulfil the CARD recommendations was the subject of the Strategic Compass, adopted by the Council



of the EU in March 2022. The strategic context created through this document attaches particular importance to CARD by reaffirming Member States' support for the six areas of interest mentioned (A Strategic Compass for EU, 2022).

4. Relevance of CARD in the Context of EU-NATO Cooperation

CARD should also be seen in terms of EU's interaction with external actors, namely in relation to NATO. In practice, the analytical process offered by this instrument is one of the substance elements of EU-NATO cooperation in the field of capabilities. The parameters of this partnership formula are to be found in the initial stages of the process of defining the cooperation relations between the two organisations, which have included the 'Berlin+' Agreements and the EU's assumption of the main operational responsibilities in the Western Balkans. This period also corresponds to the establishment of principles of cooperation between the EU and NATO aimed at: partnership in the field of crisis management; equality; consultation and dialogue; respect for the Member States' interests; respect for the principles of the UN Charter; coherence, transparency and synergy in capability development (EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP, 2002).

The focus on complementarity also reflects developments in the process of implementing the objectives set by the EU Member States on the development of this organisation's profile in the field of security and defence. Much more specifically, the adoption at the Helsinki European Council (December 1999) of the HLG 2003 brought to attention the need to coordinate national commitments with forces and capabilities, given that the existence of the common membership of most states in the two organisations. Along these lines, priority was given to the following aspects: the need to ensure the compatibility of EU commitments with the objectives of forces accepted by the member states of the two organisations in the context of the NATO planning process; mutually reinforcing the EU's capability objectives and those deriving from capability initiatives developed in a NATO context; avoiding procedural duplications and strengthening the exchange of information between the two organisations (Maartje Rutten, 2001, p. 160).

All these principles will govern the interaction between NATO and the EU in the context of the launch of European capability initiatives. The adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon and the EUGS's opening up of a more ambitious perspective in terms of European defence cooperation have generated significant progress in cooperation between the two organisations. Thus, the EU-NATO Declarations adopted in 2016 and 2018 on deepening cooperation placed particular emphasis on interaction in the field of capabilities, on the coordinates of complementarity, coherence and interoperability (Joint Declaration, 2016). Based on these guidelines, at the level of practical interaction, the issue of capabilities has been addressed from



the perspective of coherence of NDDP results (including on contribution made by partner countries) and CARD.

The interaction between the two organisations included the systemic approach of the capability development process within the two organizations, especially with regard to the implementation of the CARD recommendations and the conclusions of the NDPP evaluation process (NATO Defence Capability Survey). On this level, a regular dialogue mechanism has been structured to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication of multinational cooperation programmes (e.g. airborne supply, maritime patrol and situational perception, combating improvised devices, aerial piloting systems, medical support, ammunition and helicopters). (Fourth Progress Report , 2017). Similarly, the cooperation procedure at expert level between the two organisations has been developed, including through the participation of NATO staff in bilateral meetings between the EDA and the Member States, carried out in the context of CARD implementation. All these elements add coherence to defence planning, both functionally and conceptually, at the level of the two organisations. Clearly, the expected outcome is to strengthen the interchangeability between NDDP and CARD results, reflected in the symmetry of the types of capabilities developed and the interoperability between them.

Conclusions

The emergence of CARD is undoubtedly placed in the specific context of the recent period in which European defence cooperation has made significant progress. Thus, CARD complements the set of previously developed initiatives by ensuring the role of integrating their results and, subsequently, providing a comprehensive picture of the cooperation opportunities that Member States can access in support of their own objectives. At the same time, it should be stressed that CARD's role in structuring European defence cooperation is still in its infancy, and the relatively short time since its launch is not such as to provide a comprehensive perspective on the effects that this new instrument may generate.

The rationale for creating this facility that CARD provides is validated both from the perspective of streamlining the processes developed under the aegis of the Common Security and Defence Policy and from that of the Member States' interests in order to adequately reflect in the European context their own priorities in capability development. From this perspective, CARD is a tool that has the potential to strengthen the comprehensiveness of cooperation in capability projects, in particular by capitalizing on individual dialogue with Member States. Equally, the role of facilitator is valued by ensuring connectivity between national priorities and can lead to their efficiency through multinational solutions. It is therefore possible that the CARD profile may evolve towards a European defence analysis process. Clearly,



this perspective cannot materialize in the absence of Member States' support and the way in which their perceptions and opinions are accurately translated into the level of the recommendations made following the CARD cycles. The stocktaking of the activities carried out so far under the aegis of CARD shows both the interest of the Member States in seizing the opportunities offered by this initiative and the concrete results provided by the practical recommendations for deepening cooperation.

In addition to the aspects related to the role of CARD in the internal dynamics of CSDP processes and initiatives, the importance of this instrument is also validated from the perspective of the EU's external interaction on the defence dimension. This aspect is validated all the more pronounced in the context of EU-NATO interaction, with CARD's role being profiled as one of the most important for ensuring coherence of the planning processes of the two organisations. However, this objective must be seen not only from a functional perspective, in terms of planning cycles, procedures, etc., but also from a broader perspective of how the recommendations and objectives derived from the functioning of the NDPP and CARD are sufficiently well harmonised to ensure sustainability of implementation at national level.

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HUMOROUS SATIRICAL MEME – ONLINE INFLUENCE TOOL

*Cristian Ionel HAIĐĂU**

In the era of communication, internet and social networks, memes have acquired a huge power to disseminate and influence people. This phenomenon is mainly due to the ease with which a message resonates with people and with one's friends and acquaintances, the lack of regulation of digital communication channels, and the way social media algorithms are programmed. They tend to favour the financial profit of social media platforms and less to combat bots, fake accounts and the propagation of misleading messages.

In this paper, I will analyse and explain why humorous satirical memes have come to be used in influence actions and campaigns and why they have increased effectiveness, especially among trained people, compared to other techniques. The argumentation is built on two dimensions: that of genetic baggage and programming, together with the chemistry of the human body, where hormones play a very important role and that of the social, tribal dimension, where man is a being who wants and needs belonging to a group to feel safe, accepted and valued.

Keywords: *meme; memetic warfare; influence; disinformation; manipulation.*

1. Influencing

The influencing of the receiver must be done in such a way that they reach by themselves, through logical deduction, the conclusion desired by the manipulator (reflexive control theory) (Stamatin 2017) and for this, the communication channels, the timing, the selection, the form and the packaging of the information that is delivered are vital to them in order to guide their logic and thinking (Dobrescu și Bârgăoanu 2003). Keep in mind that less than 7% of people are immune to disinformation and manipulation (Volkoff 2009, 125).

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Four decades of studies and research have shown that people are not very efficient at identifying lies in a text, with an average success rate of only 54% (Oprea 2021, 219), 28% of people do not understand the satire of the messages they come into contact with and consider them to be true (Munafò 2021, 31), and if we also add the “sleeper effect”, in which the message is more important than the sender, which means the human inability to remember over time whether a news was from a credible source or not (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu 2003, 149), we see how vulnerable an individual is to manipulation.

Now, in the digital age, where traffic lights were added, for instance, in South Korea, in the asphalt as well, at pedestrian crossings, because people started to keep their eyes on their phones all the time (The Korea Times 2022), we live the dependence on technology, connectivity and we hit the paradox of informational abundance. Every one to two years, the information available online doubles (Taylor 2022). Being assaulted daily with information on all communication channels, each individual can find and select information that confirms their beliefs, without necessarily being entirely false, as McIntyre also said, “depending on what we want it to be true, some facts matter more than others” (Bârgăoanu 2018, 85). For profitability reasons, online social networks apply the technological agenda setting, through which they deliver only the information that feeds our beliefs, and thus amplify the polarizations of opinion and the segregation in informational bubbles and resonance chambers.

In 2023, 5.5 billion people have access to the Internet out of 8 billion total population (Worldometers 2023) and nearly 3 billion have online social media accounts with a penetration rate in Western Europe of 80% (Dixon 2022). Seeing this data and its evolution, we notice that the fertile ground for manipulations and digital disinformation is pencilled in.

Subliminal messages have the property to go unnoticed by the human conscious, but to generate effects on the subconscious (popularized by Freud), modifying perception and inserting doubt, because where doubt occurs, more doubt is generated and this is the most important step in influencing a receiver. “Manipulation must leave the impression of freedom of action” wrote Sonia Stan in her book *Manipulation through the press* (Stan 2004, 12).

Information processing is of two kinds. The first is central processing, conscious, analytical and systematic, but slow and limited to only three to five simultaneous things and only 1000 bits per second, with an average attention time of only six seconds (Oprea 2021). This type of analysis consumes many resources of the individual, it is tedious and consequently avoided, and rarely used. The human brain prefers the second form of information analysis, which consumes less resources, namely peripheral or heuristic processing. This is faster because it is based on previous experiences that generate patterns, logical shortcuts, preconceptions, with



the help of which it frames the surrounding information. This type of analysis is also sensitive to emotions. Because of the shallowness of processing and emotions, heuristic analysis is highly vulnerable to manipulation. The human brain is not a truth-seeking device, but an apparatus that produces a viable reality (Oprea 2021, 18).

In the age of the Internet, of the new media of communication and socialization, when the amount of information is huge, and the narratives are increasingly dramatic, influencing the receivers has become simpler because “the human brain is vulnerable to situations in which it has to understand quickly” (Bârgăoanu 2018, 20).

The actor performing influence chooses and calibrates its techniques starting from the objectives, knowing a person’s desires, needs and psychic mechanisms (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu 2003, 56).

We have divided the influencing processes into three broad strategies.

The *first strategy* is to exploit the physical limits of the human body’s perception. The limits of the visual and perceptual system can be tested by the 25th frame technique. The cinematographic video standard is 24 frames per second, a process that transforms the sequence of those static frames into a fluid continuous image in the human brain (Kurniawan and Hara 2023). Experiments have shown that it is possible to change or add a frame in the film to one that contains a specific message, and the viewer is not aware of this, but the subconscious perceives it, and it is influenced (Karremans et al., 2006). In the case of the limits of the auditory system, frequencies outside the conscious perceptible spectrum between 20 Hz and 20.000 Hz are exploited by transmitting messages outside this range, but still close so that the conscious does not perceive it, but the body and the subconscious sense it, and are influenced by it (Volkoff, 2009) (Stern, 2015). Studies have shown that the olfactory system also has limits to perception and interpretation, and some substances, even apparently odourless, can be used to influence the hormonal system, the brain activity, or the mood and behaviour of a receptor. The most famous case is that of pheromones (Sela and Sobel 2010).

The *second strategy* refers to the use of perceptible stimuli, but whose manipulative purpose is difficult to be aware of or is overlooked by the receiver. We would like to mention the arrangement of the environment, the space, the time of day or year, the choice of colours, the emanation of smells (Spence 2015), or the preparation of situations, in such a way that the human decision seems free and natural, but in reality it is influenced and channelled.

The *third strategy* encompasses all the strategies, techniques, and tools of influencing through communication, from the theory of the magic bullet (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu 2003, 131) to deepfake and AI. “The sword is always defeated by the word!”, the PSYOPS motto in KFOR NATO Mission, supports this strategy (Stan 2004).

We consider that the meme, as part of the vast communication environment, is a very powerful and effective influencing tool in the online environment of this



period, especially in the case of receivers with a higher degree of training. In this paper, we are going to demonstrate this. Memes are of many kinds, but this theory is based on those that camouflage the message conveyed with the help of the cloak of humour. Thus, the message has the purpose to ridicule an important subject or distract attention from it, or – in the case of people – to ridicule and to cast doubt on their credibility, value, correctness, as well as on their image, prestige and authority, so as rather to attempt to compromise than challenge that person. In the long term, humorous memes can also create an attitudinal background that responds in a desired way to a particular action, at a given time, by mocking and ridiculing certain targets (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu 2003, 61).

Further, we will explain why funny memes pass filters and personal censorship, partly due to human genetic programming and the objectivity of chemical processes in the body, and partly due to social norms and canons.

2. Humour and Laughter: Exploring the Chemical Processes in Influence Strategies

The term “humour” originates from ancient Greek through the French branch, and in the conception of the “father of medicine”, Hippocrates of Kos, it signifies the fluid in the body (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile), fluid balance favouring peoples’ well-being (Chelcea, 2019). The related term, “comedy”, derives from Comus, the ancient God of fertility, who signifies perpetual rejuvenation (Eagleton 2019, 186).

In the 18th century, the philosopher David Hartley said: “laughter and mirth frustrate our search for truth, because they prevent our minds from perceiving the true nature of things”. Thanks to humorous satire, messages, memes, manage to pass the censorship and filters of people’s beliefs because jokes suspend social conventions and restrictions, distort meanings, mix hierarchies, confuse distinctions and confuse identities (Eagleton 2019). Thus, the receivers either do not actually realize that they are influenced by the message, or they are aware of its ability to influence, but they appreciate the humorous value and not only pay attention to it, but also distribute it, considering that due to the fact that they have become aware of this, the influence will not be achieved, and they just enjoy the humour conveyed. This perception is false because if the message comes back in various forms, many times the effect of illusory truth is being formed.

In marketing, it is known that a customer is convinced to purchase a product after being invited to do so on average between five and seven times and Joseph Goebbels said that “a lie repeated a thousand times remains a lie, but a lie repeated a million times becomes the truth” (Volkoff 2009, 64).

Everything that makes us laugh or amuses ourselves is perceived and identified both consciously and unconsciously as something beneficial for our physical and



mental health, being imprinted in our genetic baggage, so that the reaction to triggering stimuli is one of reception and acceptance. Sigmund Freud argued that jokes are a release of psychic energy that we normally invest in maintaining certain essential social inhibitions (Eagleton 2019, 22). When we enjoy something, the so-called “hormones of happiness” are secreted in our body, the neurotransmitters serotonin, endorphin and dopamine that dictate our “good” mental and physical state. The release of these hormones through the effect they have in the body both at the level of the brain and at the level of other organs, reduces stress, improves the immune system by stimulating the production of white blood cells, reduces blood pressure through the calming effect it generates, improves blood circulation and cardiovascular functions, relieves certain physical pains and plays a very important role in improving mental mood by combating depression and anxiety.

These hormones have a fundamentally positive role, but due to their “mechanical” functioning, they can be manipulated in such a way that they in turn influence individuals’ mood, perception and behaviour. The main exploited security loophole of the hormonal system is the addiction that these hormones generate, having a structure very close to opioids. This effect makes us very receptive and permissive every time we encounter a stimulus in this direction in order to receive another dose of “good mood”. Concretely, when we see a funny meme on social networks, we read it, watch it, analyse it and have fun with it even if the message transmitted may also be in contradiction with our principles and beliefs, taking precedence over the chemical processes in our body that satisfy our addiction to well-being through the secretion of “happy hormones”. Ten minutes of laughter is equivalent to an hour of Zen meditation (Ravich 2017, 108). Of course, there are also situations in which the man is so indoctrinated on a certain subject that he refuses and rejects from the start even the best joke on that subject, but these cases are still few, being exceptions to the majority.

As manipulators exploit the chemical processes in the body, it is crucial to understand what these hormones are, and how they function. Serotonin is considered the most important bioregulatory substance with a role in people’s emotional states, having a critical role in their good mood and preventing anxiety and depression. It can alter the activity of neurons by changing their permeability to sodium, potassium and chloride ions. These ions influence the electrical voltage of nerve cells. When the permeability to sodium ions decreases due to serotonin and the permeability to chloride ions increases, neural activity is reduced and thus a state of well-being is established (Houellebecq 2022). Serotonin is produced 80-90% in the gastrointestinal tract and the difference in the pineal gland, in the brain. It was discovered in 1948, by a team of US doctors from a clinic in Cleveland (Dăscălescu 2022).

Endorphin was accidentally discovered in 1960 at the University of California, San Francisco by neurochemist Choh Hao Li, while analysing fat metabolism, but



he did not realize the importance of the discovery, at the moment. 15 years later, Hugh and Kosterlitz described the effect of endorphins, and Hao Li returned to the experiments and discovered the amazing effects of the substance. Endorphins are neurotransmitters that have properties similar to opioids and play an important role in regulating pain and well-being. Injected into the brain it is 48 times stronger than morphine, and injected intravenously 3 times stronger. Like morphine, endorphins are highly addictive (Ulteriu 2007).

Dopamine, known as the “hormone of pleasure”, is a neurotransmitter closely related to endorphin. It is part of the brain’s reward system and plays an important role in creating addictions of any kind. It also deals with the regulation, strength and nature of emotions. Laughter and humour can activate the same areas of the brain associated with reward and pleasure, which can trigger the release of dopamine. Anticipating a funny situation can also increase dopamine levels, improving mood and creating a sense of well-being. Dopamine was first synthesized in 1910 by George Barger and James Ewens of the Wellcome Laboratories in London, and its function, as a neurotransmitter, was discovered in 1958 by Arvid Carlsson and Nils-Åke Hillarp, in the Swedish Pharmacology Laboratory of the National Cardiology Council (Nestler et al. 2009).

On today’s online social networks, every “like” we receive from virtual friends gives us a shot of dopamine that keeps us coming back online to social networks dozens of times a day. The exploited psychological process that triggers the release of dopamine is that of recognition, appreciation and social belonging.

3. The Role of Humour and Laughter in Social Dynamics

Man, a result of animal evolution, has a few primal instincts inherited for thousands of years: fight or flight (in dangerous situations), feeding, mating, competition, and belongingness (group membership) (Beer 2017). He evolved as a hunter, but discovered over time that he has a better chance of survival in a group and, as a result, began to develop his tribal capacities for coexistence and conformity with others (Oprea 2021, 17).

Humour is a way to facilitate communication, exchange of information and ideas and socialization between people. At the same time, it is a social coagulant because people are social beings and they need to understand and use this tool to be able to get closer and integrate into the community, to achieve social cohesion. Making jokes and laughing with other group members increases the sense of connection and helps strengthen the relationship. From an evolutionary perspective, humour also contributed to the survival and perpetuation of the individual who possessed this ability, due to the increase in the capacity to deal with difficult situations by reducing stress, improving mental health, developing communication skills, forming



social bonds, avoiding and de-escalating conflicts. People who had the ability to make and understand jokes were more likely to be accepted and appreciated in the group, which gave them survival and reproductive advantages. Happiness, a sense of security, inner peace and the satisfaction of appreciation, validation of the group are dependent on social inclusion, which is based on the human capacities of communication, interaction and pleasing ourselves. These aspects are decisive for the psychological development of human beings, and the stability of their mental and physical health (Psychologies 2016).

Historically, Aristotle assigned humour the first place in the category of the three social virtues, next to friendship and sincerity (Eagleton 2019, 114), and the first laughter in Western literature occurs in Book 1 of the Iliad, when the gods ridicule the lameness of Hephaestus, the God of fire.

From the point of view of social persuasion, it is proven by many studies that humour plays an important role because it transmits a positive emotion that contributes to increasing the effectiveness of persuasion (Oprea 2021, 114). Humour can function as a means of undermining tension and making difficult, delicate, taboo or tense topics less threatening and easier to discuss. People perceived as having a developed sense of humour are considered by those around them to have better social interaction skills (Bell et al. 1986), as being more intelligent and more attractive to the opposite sex, and this makes it easier for them to find a partner (Greengross and Miller 2011). A sense of humour also plays an important role in creating popularity, and popularity attracts more popularity (Bârgăoanu 2018, 119), characteristic that generally helps the individual in social interactions. Humour also contributes to obtaining material benefits. In this regard, O'Quin and Aronoff did an experiment in which they demonstrated that when a financial request is addressed with humour, individuals tend to accept it in a greater proportion (O'Quin & Aronoff 1981). People prefer the company of those who reward and resemble them, and are more easily influenced by those they like or admire.

Today's popular online social networks are built on exploiting people's need for recognition and belonging, because they fear isolation even more than error (Bârgăoanu 2018, 18) and the sense of humour plays an important role in this equation.

Laughter, a response to humour, is contagious and can have tremendous power over people, reaching the point where it can no longer be controlled. In the past, there have been laughing epidemics in China, Siberia and Africa that have engulfed entire towns (Eagleton 2019, 17).

According to the theory proposed by Rod Martin and Thomas Ford, there are four main types of humour, each with a specific role in social interaction.

The first type, *affiliative humour*, focuses on consolidating social bonds by expressing positive emotions and creating pleasant experiences. This type of humour can be observed in jokes that emphasize common experiences or positive traits of those around us.



The next type, *self-protective/self-enhancing humour*, is used to cope with stressful or unpleasant situations by finding humorous aspects in a difficult situation. For example, in contexts involving evaluations or tests, people may use this type of humour to reduce stress and tension.

The third type, *aggressive humour*, involves hostile or harmful behaviour towards a certain group or individual, through jokes or humour. This type of humour may be considered unpleasant or offensive by those targeted and can lead to social tensions or conflicts.

Finally, *self-deprecating/self-defeating* humour involves self-irony and self-deprecation and is used to reduce social tension or avoid conflicts. This type of humour can be found in jokes that emphasize one's own mistakes or limitations, in order to make others feel more comfortable around them (Martin and Ford, 2018).

In Jewish culture and religion, laughter is respected and they even have a saint with this name, Isaac ("the one who laughs") (Ravich 2017, 88), but other nations also pride themselves on the quality of humour. Probably, the most recognized are the British, where banter and mockery have had a real attraction among club members in political discussions, since the 18th century, and among the population, jokes still revolve around the conflict between class cultures (Eagleton 2019, 35). Romanian people have also come to develop their sense of humour – this was probably stimulated by the years of communism, in which freedom of expression was limited and censorship was everywhere. Thus, people turned to humour both as an outlet for frustrations, by making fun of trouble and as a method of protest against the rulers, inventing thousands of banter and sayings, which they told in small groups of trusted members. Thus, the joke became an instrument of popular culture of resistance against the communist regime that loosened the grip of restrictions and had the tacit purpose of realizing the connection between people with the same values and principles.

Anthropologist Mary Douglas stated, in 1968, that "all jokes are subversive" (Douglas 1968).

4. Memes

The word "meme" was coined by Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins and first published in his book *The Selfish Gene* in 1976. It has since been picked up and used by psychologists and cognitive science researchers. The first definition of the meme stated that it "is the basic unit of cultural transmission or imitation". Later, after the term was taken up in other fields, it also received other definitions adapted to the respective sciences. For instance, there is Plotkin's psychological definition: "The meme is the unit of cultural inheritance analogous to the gene. It is the internal representation of knowledge". Here is another cognitive definition, belonging to



Dennett: “A meme is an idea, a type of complex idea that constitutes itself into a distinct memorable unit. It spreads through vehicles that are physical manifestations of the meme”. The fourth definition found, that of Richard Brodie, sounds like this: “A meme is a unit of information in a mind, the existence of which influences events in such a way that several copies of it are created in other minds” (Oprea 2021, 169). Finally, we also suggest a definition: a meme is a representation of a message in the form of an image, video, audio or a combination of them, mostly humorous and having the ability to go viral online due to the societal clichés it addresses, the linguistic, attitudinal or behavioural fashion, with which many people resonate.

The science that deals with the study of memes is called memetics and is based on evolutionary psychology. It looks at how memes function, interact, evolve, propagate and multiply (Brodie 2015, 7). This new science combines biology, psychology and cognitive science and coagulated in the 80’s with Aaron Lynch, Howard Bloom, Susan Blackmore and Richard Brodie as the main researchers.

Humorous satirical memes are a funny critique of real or invented flaws and weaknesses of people and society. Their characteristics are irony, ridicule, exaggeration, the construction of unusual relationships of absurd appearance and sarcasm, a term originating from ancient Greek, referring to the tearing of flesh (Eagleton, 2019). The term “satire” was coined by Quintilian and comes from the Latin word “satura”, which originally meant disorder or clutter. Satire is of three kinds: Horatian, in which humour is at ease and uses moderate comments and statements; Juvenalian, in which humour takes a back seat and criticism becomes more bitter and dark; and Menippean, in which serious moral judgments are used to address some controversial topics (Gotlieb 2019). Most of the memes identified to date, fall into the first two styles of satire, Horatian and Juvenalian.

By the year 2003, with the emergence and then the development of large-scale online social platforms, we can say that memes rooted in satire also took off, and now they have become part of the Internet culture, and are present daily in the streams of social networks in the form of images, videos, text messages or combinations thereof.

Memes are a very important tool in disinformation and manipulation campaigns because they have the ability, through humour, to go viral more easily, including among the educated, sceptical, defensive and insightful ones, and to influence them more or less subliminally to adopt certain attitudes or behaviours. They are widely used in election campaigns for ridiculing press subjects, creating information diversions, denigrating and mocking political opponents or creating a favourable image of a certain political figure. One of the first election campaign that made intensive use of the internet and memes was that in 2004, between George W. Bush and John Kerry.

Major Michael Prosser of the United States Marine Corps, knowing the teachings of the great Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, who claimed that the whole art



of war is based on deception, drew attention as early as 2006 that memes can be effective tools for disinformation and manipulation of people and called the creation of a specialized structure to study this new weapon to be integrated in the new types of conflicts, and later the Armed Forces introduced this discipline in the curriculum (Prosser 2006).

Since 2016, the influence capacity of memes was officially acknowledged by including the term *memetic warfare* in NATO reports (Giese 2016). The strategy of using memes is considered a part of guerrilla information warfare, with the aim of controlling narratives and psychological space to disrupt, denigrate, undermine and manipulate the perceptions of the enemy, in order to change their attitudes. The use of memes is an asymmetrical action, because the impact can be much greater than the resources invested (Memetic Warfare - Part 1 - Vol 1 - Nr.5 - 2017.pdf).

Among the major global players, Russia has been and remains a master of disinformation and manipulation, with a whole history behind this strategy. Lenin began to perfect information warfare as a cheap, but effective solution in the fight against the richer, and more technologically advanced West – a strategy also adopted by later Soviet leaders.

5. Spreading Memes

In 1580, Pope Gregory XIII established the committee of cardinals De Propaganda Fide, for the propagation of the faith (Guilday 1921). Later, Napoleon propagated his influence through printing (Wayne 1998), and Hitler used radio and television for propaganda (Volkoff, 2000). In recent times, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden have used the Internet and online social networks with real success in the fourth industrial revolution – the digital one, to influence the electorate. We gave this example of the three American presidents as their electoral campaigns are notorious in the media. However, they are not the only ones who successfully used these technique – the practice of influencing the electorate is spread all over the planet, regardless of the political regime, the economical level, and the cultural peculiarities of the country. The spread of disinformation and propaganda has stood the test of time and of geographical barriers, and has always successfully adapted to new technological breakthroughs, because leaders have always believed that it is not necessarily the reality of life that matters, but rather what people perceive and believe.

Social networks are designed and optimized to keep users captive for as long as possible, and thus are able to deliver a large series of advertisements, as these are their main source of income (Hâncean 2018). In order to do this, algorithms select and deliver to users content relevant to their preferences, based on a profile created from hundreds of points of interest (Voicu 2018, 359). For example, from the analysis of likes, the algorithms can predict with 60% accuracy if the parents of the



analysed user on Facebook were divorced before the respective one turned 21 years old (Bârgăoanu, 2018, p. 175). This selective delivery of content through precision targeting is good for the platform's income, but dangerous for the individual and even for the society, because it creates so-called "personal bubbles" that exclude information and opinions contrary to the individual's beliefs and opinions, isolating and then bombarding them with content that reinforces their beliefs, resulting in a misperception of reality, that leads to its polarization and radicalization through mutual validation.

At a higher level, personal bubbles turn into group bubbles, where hundreds, thousands, or even millions of like-minded individuals group together and form the so-called resonance chambers. A good example of a giant echo chamber is Donald Trump's new social network called "Truth". In these rooms, the shared content is more easily received, accepted and assimilated because the filter of individuals is much more permissive to messages coming from people categorized as having similar ideals, goals and preferences. The credibility of the persuasive source plays a central role in the persuasive processes (Chelcea 2006, 143). These bubbles and resonance chambers also favour the phenomenon of projection of the individual through which they start to believe that everyone around them is alike, and the phenomenon of identification, through which they believe that they are like others and these false impressions strengthen their belief in their own ideas (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu 2003, 256). This consolidation of ideas favoured by the group prepares the individual for contact with the world of outside information and ideas. When the individual encounters ideas and information contrary to their beliefs, that is outside the bubble, they self-confirm and reinforce the validity of their reasoning and beliefs, which at some point leads to exaggerated and potentially dangerous self-confidence (Oprea 2021, 130).

People are drawn to this isolation in personal bubbles or echo chambers such as closed Facebook groups for a number of reasons. The first reason is the psychological phenomenon of cognitive dissonance. This refers to the fact that man is psychologically uncomfortable when he encounters information or an idea contrary to what he already knows and believes, and the instinctive reaction is generally to de-stress by denying or avoiding information that contradicts it. Thus, information bubbles are perfect for avoiding cognitive dissonance (Britt 2019).

Another reason why individuals prefer belonging to bubbles and echo chambers is given by a concept from the area of social psychology, namely confirmation bias. This refers to the fact that people select from the total information with which they come into contact only those that confirm and support their existing beliefs, and ignore the rest. Confirmation bias is at the heart of online social media shares and their groups and bubbles. Social network algorithms favour the creation and proliferation of these groups and selective content because they do not want to lose



the time spent on the platform by users, a phenomenon that would happen if they were exposed to a lot of dissonant content. Thus, extending the observations a little further in the Internet world, social networks work based on the imposition of the content provided, while search engines have turned, in many cases, from information tools into confirmation tools. Online social networks are also the ideal ground for the formation, deployment and manipulation of phenomena such as social proof, whereby people tend to believe something not because of arguments, but because they have the feeling that many others believe the same thing, the established herd effect (bandwagon) from politics because it gives an advantage to the perceived first place as people tend to join the winning team (Chelcea 2006, 247). There is also the classic spiral of silence, theorized by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1974, which refers to people's fear of being ostracized and isolated because of their opinions, and to avoid this, those who feel they are in the losing camp cease to be voices and express their opinions. The theory of the spiral of silence is based on alignment with the majority opinion and social conformity (Dobrescu and Bârgăoanu, 2003, 254). Summarizing the lines above, we would quote Walter Lippman: "where everyone thinks alike, no one thinks much".

Given that online social media has emerged as the primary theatre of operations for the dissemination of disinformation and manipulation campaigns, it is imperative to introduce the forces engaged in this conflict. These forces are primarily responsible for generating and disseminating propaganda, disinformation, and manipulation materials, as well as fabricating artificial traffic and engagement to create the impression of widespread support and acclaim. This tactic, commonly known as astroturfing, is facilitated by the use of bots and cyber troops. Bots are software programs designed to mimic the online behaviour of individuals, and are tasked with carrying out specific mission objectives set by campaign strategists. They can be utilized for a variety of purposes, including initiating and amplifying debates with the aim of polarizing audiences, supporting informational diversions, and facilitating the astroturfing phenomenon. Their main advantage is that they are difficult to attribute to a country or private structure, being, in theory, anonymized (Gîrdan 2020). In 2019, 37% of the internet traffic was done by bots, and in 2020 Facebook estimated that 5% of the accounts were fake (Oprea 2021, 156). Cyber troops are teams made up of people employed or volunteers in military, political or private structures, whose role is to influence public opinion on online social networks. The way these structures are organized is often like in journalistic newsrooms, where the editors work on the assignments, edit the content and then disseminate it, and later the activity is audited and rewarded according to performance.

Out of the manipulative content distributed by dissemination structures on online social networks, an important part is made up of memes. In the psychological warfare, state actors such as Russia, China, Iran or non-state actors, such as the



terrorist organizations ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Al-Shabab or even political organizations and politicians in the West, use directly or through specialized companies armed with trolls and bots to disseminate narratives and memes and build them notoriety, support and relevance. This is achieved because it exploits certain cognitive fallacies such as validation through social interaction, where individuals will believe and do what they believe others believe and do (Oprea 2021, 15). Here are two examples: the presidential election campaign for the 2016 election in the United States (Mueller, 2019) and the Brexit campaign for the 2017 Referendum, with the involvement of Cambridge Analytica and AggregateIQ (AIQ) companies (Zimmer 2018).

Memes, as a product used in influence campaigns, due to their apparently harmless character and the humorous message they carry, are disseminated very quickly and easily without being subjected to rigorous analysis. A very important role in this process is played by the means of propagation – in our study – social platforms. They promote the spread of memes by the ease with which this can be done. From just 1-3 mouse clicks or screen taps, the meme goes out to be displayed to hundreds, and even thousands of people. A study done in the US in 2021 showed that more than half of people share content on social networks without carefully analysing it (Pennycook et al. 2021). This happens, according to an MIT study, because fake and manipulative content is made more creative and exciting, specifically to stir up emotions and thus end up being shared 70% more likely than authentic and true content (Empoli 2019, 72) and political content spreads three times faster than that from other sources (Bârgăoanu 2018, 146). Interpersonal spreads are more effective than those generated by a top-down system because people tend to be more gullible when they see something shared by a friend, and in 59% of cases when they share it, they do so without analyse carefully (Oprea, 2021, p. 132). One suggested solution to combat scrutinized distributions was to multiply the steps until the process is complete. In this sense, it was suggested to introduce a small self-assessment of the veracity of the content by ticking on a scale the estimated degree of correctness of the content before the execution of the distribution (Pennycook et al., 2021).

Memes, like the advertising industry, exploit human genetic psychological weaknesses. For a meme to go viral, it doesn't matter how true it is, Alfred North Whitehead said: "There are no absolute truths, there are only half-truths" (Brodie 2015, 19). The most effective memes from the point of view of propagation are those that amuse, anger, scare or conquer us, as Bogdan Oprea claims, "in the face of emotions, the truth has no chance" (Oprea 2021, 21). What matters is the ability of the message conveyed by it to arouse feelings, emotions and, very importantly, to feed a need, curiosity or conviction of the receiver. There is a saying in advertising: "Sell the sizzle, not the steak!" (Dalglish 2005).



Mememes have a technological advantage, due to their mixed structure of text over images or video clips, use of slang, and the fact that the message can be changed. Because of the ambiguity, subjectivity, and interpretive nature of the messages conveyed, which often differ from one country or culture to another and have local specificities in most cases, they are very difficult to identify and combat, at present, by social media algorithms, and, as a result, they spread very quickly (Fisher and Snyder, 2021). Thus, they are considered a powerful tool of influence, because they are resilient, adaptable and infectious (Brodie 2015, 22–35).

Conclusions

Upon analysing online content, it becomes obvious that disinformation and manipulation techniques, whether old or new, have been adapted to suit the particularities of the digital environment, as well as the evolution or involution of human social and psychological capacities and characteristics. The COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine have served as catalysts for the deployment of various strategies, tactics, and techniques of online influence. These include the spiral of silence, the herd effect, social proof, authority, astroturfing, validation through social interaction, cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, projection and identification, Freud's pleasure principle, Skinner's operant conditioning, and Thorndike's law of effect. These techniques target genetic vulnerabilities, such as the manipulation of neurotransmitters: serotonin, endorphin, and dopamine, commonly referred to as hormones of happiness, or mental vulnerabilities, such as the predominant exploitation of heuristic thinking or social and tribal habits that have been deeply ingrained in humans for thousands of years.

Online social networks have become the primary arena for psychological confrontations over the control of public opinion between state or/and private entities. Within contemporary hybrid conflicts, memetic weapons have emerged as a significant component of psychological guerrilla strategies. These weapons have the ability to generate disorder within a system and gradually instil attitudinal dispositions among the population to react in a particular way to an event, such as a war. Discrediting politicians, decision-makers, and key institutions, as well as denigrating democratic values and patriotism, can create an attitudinal fund for undermining democracy. Moreover, memetic weapons can be successfully employed for short-term objectives, such as influencing election outcomes by targeting specific politicians who are disapproved of and supporting alternatives.

When memes start to go viral, they acquire truth valences due to the availability bias, and their success in viralization is favoured because people tend not to carefully analyse their content and sources, particularly if they come from a friend, acquaintance, or person with whom they share the same values and beliefs. We



consider humorous satirical memes in the age of the Internet and social networks to be very effective in influencing receivers with a higher degree of training. This is because if, under normal conditions, they do a fairly good filtering and framing of the received information, the humorous camouflage of messages is perceived as a communicative social act with the aim of entertaining and not to convey something serious, whereas jokes suspend social restrictions and conventions and thus succeed in penetrating the receiver's censorship. Even if memes are perceived as an attempt to influence, it is important that they reach the target and are not rejected from the start and categorically categorized as manipulative. In time, on the principle of the Chinese drop, influence will be achieved.

The memetic weapon will still work in democracies where Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on freedom of opinion and expression is respected. Technological limitations in detecting manipulative content online are beginning to disappear due to efforts by authorities and companies towards continuous improvements in AI-based algorithms and we have reached the point where technology meets ethics and the question arises as to how far we should allow technology to censor. By observing attentively what is happening in countries with dictatorial regimes, such as China and Russia, we could draw beneficial conclusions for democracy.

Discussions and debates will dwell around establishing a fair balance between freedom of expression and protection against disinformation and manipulation. In my opinion, the restrictions on expression must be minimal and limited to categorically disturbing topics and expressions, and the emphasis must be placed on warning messages about the source of information and sources of income, detailing the context, adding an explanatory message about the original source of the image or footage. This is because taking things out of context and using real images from one place or event as if from another place or event is frequent. If a piece of information or image is already identified as fake, it should be marked accordingly and linked to the page explaining the problem, giving and publicly displaying a rating of credibility of the established source, based on the history of the content disseminated, rating to influence and frequency of display in individuals' content streams.

We consider that state and private organizations should be supported both legislatively and financially to combat disinformation. Such initiatives and measures aimed to tackle disinformation were taken at the European Union level. Thus, in 2015, there was established a Department assigned to combat disinformation coming from Russia, called the East StratCom Task Force, then, in 2017, the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) on Fake News and Online Disinformation was created, and in March 2019, the European Commission decided establishing the rapid alert system for online disinformation.

There are private initiatives aimed at educating journalists and citizens who are aware of the issue of online manipulation, such as the "Identifying and Tackling



Manipulated Media” project, which has received significant recognition from the world’s largest press agency, Reuters, and is financially supported by Facebook.

Currently, the European Union finances the implementation of the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) project, intended to be a hub for fact-checkers, scientists and other involved structures, which will become a support for the development of public policies in the field to combat online disinformation.

Another example in this direction is the International Fact-checking Network (IFCN), an international network that brings together 71 verification platforms from around the world, launched in 2015 in the United States. It is our belief that the circulation of memes, news and content of a misleading nature, but accompanied by warnings and explanations, favours improving people’s resilience to manipulation, through exemplary practical mass education.

In conclusion, the use of memetic weapons in online manipulation poses a significant threat to democratic values. The adaptation of traditional manipulation techniques to the digital environment, coupled with the vulnerabilities of human psychology, makes it easier for state and private entities to influence individuals and societies. However, technological advancements in AI-based algorithms, along with legislative and private initiatives aimed at combating disinformation, can offer a path towards a balanced approach between freedom of expression and protection against manipulation. We consider it crucial to continue supporting such initiatives and to educate the public on how to identify and tackle online manipulation, in order to strengthen our resilience to memetic weapons and preserve democracy.

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TRANSNISTRIA FROM THE FORMATION OF THE MOLDAVIAN AUTONOMOUS SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC TO ITS INTEGRATION INTO THE MOLDAVIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC (1924-1940)

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The creation of autonomous regions on the territory of the union republics of the newly created Soviet state was a practice often used by the communist regime to resubordinate the provinces lost at the end of the First World War. In order to theoretically preserve the chance to integrate the former province of Bessarabia into the new empire during 1924, the new Kremlin leader Joseph Stalin decided to form a republic and a new people, the Moldavian SSR and the Moldavian people distinct from the Romanian one. This decision proved to be catastrophic for the Romanians living in Bessarabia over the next 100 years, who in this way could be forced to link their fate to Russia.

Keywords: *Transnistria; autonomous republic; Soviet; communism; Moldovenism.*

Introduction

The victory of the Bolsheviks in the civil war and the establishment of the USSR marked the beginning of a new era of territorial expansion. Despite heroic resistance from the peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia, the new political leadership in Moscow was determined to restore the pre-war borders in the shortest

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possible time. The security guarantees offered by France and England to the newly created states of Central and Eastern Europe made it much more difficult to regain this area. Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had been reconstituted in this part of Europe and the former governorate of Bessarabia had been integrated into the borders of Greater Romania Sanborn Joshua 2014, 218.).

1. The international context that favored the formation of the Moldavian RSSA

The loss of the province between the Prut and the Dniester, for a long time considered to be a Russian outpost in the south-eastern part of Europe, has put a stop for the time being to Russia's plan to extend its influence to the Balkans (Cojocaru Gheorghe 2009, 93). Aware of the risk of losing this territory and unable to organise a direct military intervention, the Bolsheviks tried since the end of 1917 by various means to prevent the separation of Bessarabia from the Russian Empire. Even though during the entire period of Russian rule there was no concern for preserving the national identity of the "Moldavian people" living on both sides of the Dniester, a first congress of Moldavians was held in Tiraspol on 17-18 December 1917. Representatives of the Moldavians in Transnistria were pressing for: "We wish to unite with our brothers in Moldova! We want to unite with Bessarabia!" (Stepaniuc Victor 2005, 256). After the unification of Bessarabia with Romania, for a short time on the left bank of the Dniester, a territorial administrative structure without international recognition came into being called the Basarabian Soviet Socialist Republic. This self-proclaimed republic came into being in May 1919 and had an ephemeral existence, disappearing in the turmoil of the Russian civil war as a result of military intervention by officers loyal to the Russian monarchy (White Army) (Stepaniuc 2017, 311). However, in 1921, once the civil war was over, the supposed "popular movement" in Tiraspol resumed its activity, aiming to create a counterweight to the Romanian national movement that had brought about the unification of the province with the Romanian kingdom. This movement was a product of the interventionism of the new Bolshevik leadership, which sought to create dissension in territories it could no longer control militarily, so that it could later organise movements to destabilise the states on the borders of the future Soviet empire.

The unification of Bessarabia with Romania was a momentary defeat for the Soviet authorities, who at that time were economically and politically weakened. This "shortcoming" was carefully analysed and rapid solutions were sought to recapture this area without coming into direct military conflict with the European powers that guaranteed the Romanian borders. From 7 March 1924 the new authorities in Moscow developed a strategy for regaining influence in Romanian Bessarabia. The Kremlin leadership ordered the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the



Ukrainian Communist Party (CC of the Communist Party of Ukraine) to delimit the territory of Ukraine as the new Autonomous Republic of Moldavia (Cojocaru 2021, 99). The same strategy was also used to take over important territories from Poland and Finland. On the territory close to the borders it was decided to create the autonomous republics of Karelia and Belarus.

Soviet Russia never recognized the union of Bessarabia with Romania and tried to take advantage of the misunderstandings that had formed in the camp of the Western powers. They speculated that Japan, one of the great victorious powers in the First World War, had refused to ratify the provisions of the Treaty of Paris signed on 28 October 1920 by France, Great Britain and Italy. This document legally regulated the de facto situation that had arisen as a result of the decision recognising the province's membership of Romania. Aware of the need to normalise relations with the newly created Soviet state, the Romanian government initiated several rounds of negotiations aimed at gaining recognition for the new political reality. The two sides met in Warsaw from 22 September to 25 October 1921 (Cojocaru 2021, 100) and in Geneva from 10 April to 19 May 1922 (Moraru 2016, 91), but the result was the same, the Soviet side rejected any argument by which the new border between the two states could be recognised. The last round of negotiations preceding the formation of the Moldavian ASSR was held in Vienna on 27 March 2 April 1924 (Șișicanu Daniela and Stănescu Manuel 1924, 19). The chairman of the Soviet delegation N. Krestinskii made several demands which the Romanian side considered unacceptable. As a result, Romanian-Soviet relations remained frozen throughout the interwar period, during which time the Soviet side continued to carry out a number of subversive activities on the territory of Bessarabia.

2. The Establishment of the Moldavian ASSR

Through these new republics, the Soviets wanted to create an attractive model of social space for the “peoples” incorporated into the nation states on the western border of the USSR, on the basis of which they could organise themselves politically and demand the right to self-determination. The members of the initiative group led by the former secretary of the Romanian Revolutionary Military Committee, Ion Dic (Ion Dicescu) (Șișicanu 1924, 158), believed that the Moldavian ASSR would succeed in: “shaking the unity of Greater Romania” and “serve as an additional impetus for the tendency of the newly joined provinces to national self-determination. And the (state) organization of the national minorities (Bulgarians and Gagauz), who will live within the boundaries of the future Moldavian Republic, will serve as an example for the national minorities populating the Romanian Kingdom” (Cojocaru 2021, 91-96). The idea of organising this republic on Ukrainian territory had its critics, one of the most vocal being the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs,



Cicerin, who warned that the identification of such a large number of citizens of Moldavian origin would only support the ideas of continuity of the Romanian people in this area and encourage “Romanian chauvinism”: “The formation of the MASSR at this time is premature, because it will generate expansionist tendencies of Romanian chauvinism. The discovery of such a large number of Moldovans, i.e. Romanians, in Ukrainian territory will strengthen the position of Romanians in the dispute over the Bessarabian question” (Cojocaru 2009, 16). In this way the Soviet Commissar indirectly acknowledges the Romanian origin of the Transnistrian Moldovans and draws attention to the fears the Soviets had at that time about the future of Bessarabia.

However, the plan set in Moscow went ahead and step by step the elements that the regime thought it would need in its future endeavours were realised. An essential element of the political change they were seeking to bring about was the future “hatchet men”, the activists who would be sent to the territory of neighbouring states. The ideological training of the future party cadres who would operate in the Central European states was carried out at the Moscow-based Communist University of National Minorities of the West. Among the obligatory ideas introduced in the lessons for training future party cadres were those arguing for the need to establish autonomous regions. On 6 December 1924 in a document addressed to Gr. Starii (Țicu, 2021, IV) it was stated that : “by the formation of the Moldavian Republic we must understand the organization of an outpost for the offensive against Romania. The Moldavian Republic must be given back a more or less Romanian character, so that we can use it to oppose two regimes of one and the same people, the peasantry of Bessarabia and Romania will have the opportunity to see and judge how their brothers live across the Dniester” (Cojocaru 2009, 195).

Although the document of the initiative group (consisting of Gr. Cotovschi, I. Dic Dicescu, P. Tkacenko, A. Nicolau) (Burlacu and Cojocaru 2019, 99) which proposed the establishment of the new territorial administrative unit was handed over to General Mihail Frunze on 4 February and was carefully examined by the Central Comitee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union March 1924, the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic came into being only on 29 July 1924. The new territorial administrative unit acquired the status of an autonomous republic within the Ukrainian Soviet state (Rotari Ludmila 2004, 267). There were voices, especially from Kiev representatives, calling for its establishment only with the status of an autonomous region. The new autonomous republic with its capital in the city of Balta (the cities of Ananiev and Birzula have also been proposed for capital status) (Popa, Ioan and Popa, Luiza 2012, 86), initially included 12 districts with an area of 8100 km² (Burlacu and Cojocaru 2019, 102). On 29 September 1926 by a decision of the CEC of Ukraine the number of districts was increased to 14 (Camenca and Veliko-Kosnitsky districts which had previously been part of Podolia Governorate



and Ananiev, Barzula, Kruteni, Dubasari, Grigoriopol, Ribnitsa, Slobzia, Stavrov and Tiraspol districts which had been part of Odessa Governorate, adding about 2000 square kilometres. Throughout the 1920s, several changes to the republic's borders continued to be made, and in Timiș the districts of Valea-Hoțului and Balta (the villages of Pașițel, Ghidirim, Baital) were added, increasing its territory to about 8300 km². The purpose for which the new republic was formed was evident from the very first days of its existence. On October 26, 1924 the Ukrainian SSR People's Commissar of Justice, Mykola Skrypnyk that the western border of the Moldavian ASSR was only a temporary one: "We consider not the Dniester but the Prut as the border (...) On our map Bessarabia is marked with a red line, for Bessarabia must become an inseparable part of the Moldavian SSR" (Rotari 2004, 269).

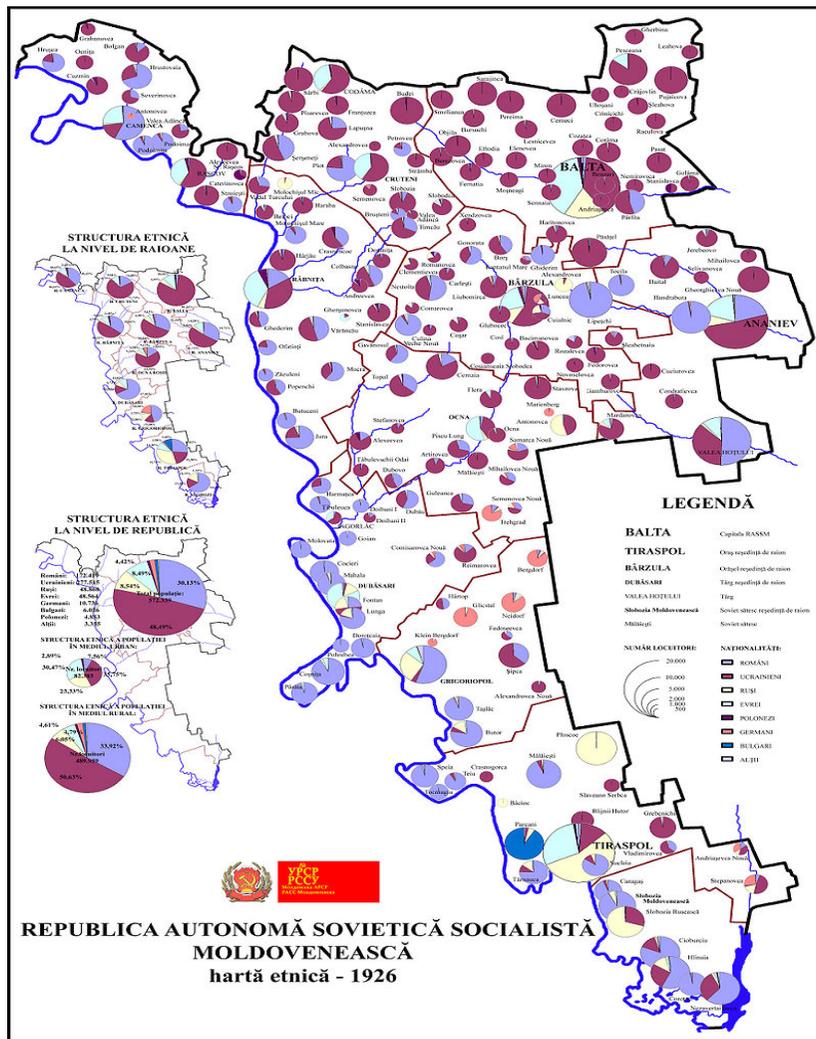


Figure no. 1: Ethnic map of Moldavian SSR



In terms of the ethnic structure of the new republic, the Romanian (Moldavian) element represented only 31.6%, which proves the fragility of this Stalinist construct. The only districts with a majority Romanian population were Ribnitsa (52%), Dubasari (58%), Tiraspol (an overwhelming majority not specified) and Ananiv (53%), located in the immediate vicinity of the Dniester (Nistor Ion 1939, 19). The majority ethnic group was Ukrainians 45.5%, especially in the eastern districts, which for this reason from 1929 were reintegrated into the Ukrainian SSR. Alongside Romanians and Ukrainians, Russians (9.7%), Jews (7.8%) and ethnic Germans (2.2%) also lived in the new republic (Pântea Călin 2008, 170). An important point to note is that despite official declarations to create an autonomous republic for Moldavians living on Soviet territory, almost half of the total number remained outside the borders established in 1924. According to the 1926 census, out of approximately 283,000 Moldavians living on Soviet territory, of which approximately 257,800 on Ukrainian territory, only 172,300 were integrated into the administrative boundaries of the new republic (Burlacu and Cojocaru 2019, 103).

Until its integration into the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic created after the occupation of Romanian Bessarabia in 1940, the territory of the newly formed republic underwent several changes. Taking into account the error in the ethnic structure of the new republic, the Soviet authorities decided to reduce its territory and reintegrate the eastern districts inhabited mainly by Ukrainians into the Ukrainian SSR. Following these changes the final territory that was unified with Bessarabia in 1940 had an area of only 4,118 km², where, despite the will of Soviet officials, the “Moldavian” population continued to be a minority (Covalski Stanislav and Leanca Viorica June 2014, 243).

3. The Thesis of “Moldovenism” as a Component of Stalinist Repression to Transform the Social Space in Communist Moldavia

It is worth noting that the Romanian population, who lived predominantly in the rural areas of the province, was forced to form agricultural production associations (households), which immediately reduced agricultural productivity and generated vulnerability from the point of view of food resources. Repressive action against the Romanian population living in Transnistria was unleashed during 1929 with the forced collectivisation. Many of those who refused association were deported to Soviet territory. It is estimated that more than 3200 Romanian families were expropriated and forced to leave their villages and deported to regions such as Archangelsk, Tomsk (Popa and Popa 2012, 101) or Kazakhstan (where it is estimated that more than 2000 Transnistrian Romanian families arrived). There are indications that some of the Transnistrian Romanians were also deported to the islands of Solovet (Igor Cașu 2009, vol. 3-4) in the White Sea. The Romanian



community living on the territory of the Autonomous Republic was also affected by the Great Famine which was deliberately generated by the Soviet authorities in Ukraine in the period 1932-1933 (King Charles 1999, 51). It is estimated that about 18,000 people died in the Moldavian Autonomous Republic due to lack of food (Dragnev D., Iarkutchi I., Chirtoagă I. and Negru E. 2001, 167). A large part of the Transnistrian Romanians crossed the Dniester to take refuge in Romania. In the first part of 1932 alone, an estimated 4,500 people crossed the Romanian-Soviet border, drawing international public attention to the shortcomings of the Soviet regime. This prompted the Bolshevik authorities to institute a harsh blockade ordering the border guards to shoot at those forcing their way along the Dniester. Several locations are recorded where dozens of people were killed in cold blood (40 Romanians were killed near the village of Olanesti and about 100 others were machine-gunned near the town of Tighina) (Popa and Popa 2012, 102).

The main element to remember in the interwar evolution of Soviet Moldavia is the formation and promotion of the thesis of “*Moldovenism*”, which was supposed to justify the annexation of the territory between Prut and Dniester. The idea of the Moldavian language as distinct from Romanian was the result of a misinterpretation of the decision of the Chisinau County Council, which in December 1917 had decreed Moldavian language as the official language of the newly formed Moldavian Democratic Republic. Article 78 of the Draft Constitution of the Moldavian National Republic, which sought to neutralise the Russian language, stated: “The Moldavian language, the official language of the state, is a compulsory subject of instruction in all schools of the republic” (Stepaniuc Victor 2017, 304). This decision did not represent an official proclamation of a new national identity but was a compromise formula necessary at that time to identify the Romanian nation in Bessarabia as distinct from the allogenic population.

The idea of distinct identity was widely publicized by the Soviet authorities who were preparing the ground for the future annexation of Romanian Bessarabia. This desire was materialized in the immediate aftermath of the 1940 territorial abduction, when the thesis of Moldavianism became the main instrument of denationalization of the Romanian population of the province. In the 1925 constitution, along with the “Moldavian language”, the Russian and Ukrainian languages also received the status of official languages of the autonomous republic (Gribicea A., Gribicea M. and Șișicanu I. 2001, 9.). The theory that Moldovans have a distinct identity from the Romanian ethnic group was widely promoted by the Soviet regime, creating generations of people who cannot identify themselves as part of the Romanian people, despite clear evidence proving their similarities.

The use of the Cyrillic alphabet and the Slavonic language in the medieval religious writings of the two extra-Carpathian principalities became elements through which the ideologists who laid the foundations of this theory questioned



the very Latinity of the Romanian people. According to these supposed scholars, the Moldavians are a people of Slavic origin (Slav-Romanians [Prisac Lidia 2021, 169]) whose language was influenced by the Romanian culture and took on a number of its characteristics. The supposed Slavic origin of the Moldavians can be disproved from the outset by the translation of the Slavic word *bolohu* or *volohi* (Gherghel Ilie 1920, 4-8), which refers to the Wallachians (the name given to the Romans in the Middle Ages) who lived on the territory of the future principality of Moldavia. Since 1926 a committee of intellectuals was formed with the task of reconstructing the Moldavian language based on the Moldavian grammar spoken in Transnistria. The campaign entitled “Apple in the People” was aimed at identifying the words of the Moldavian language still in use in Romanian villages. They concluded that: “The Moldavian language, in which the Moldavian people speak, is the language of the people, the Romanian language” (Popa and Popa 2012, 115). As a result, on February 2, 1932, the Bureau of the Moldavian Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine approved the creation of the Moldavian language written with the Latin alphabet (Rotari 2004, 268). After 1937, however, due to the intensification of political repression, it was decided to return to the Cyrillic script. This idea, which had no scientific support whatsoever, remained in place for almost a hundred years when, at the behest of the famous Moldavian President Vladimir Voronin, historian Vasile Stati wrote the Romanian-Moldavian dictionary (Zahariuc Petronel 2009, 439). This volume contains a collection of archaisms that also exist in Romanian, the use of which has ceased over time as a result of the modernisation of the Romanian language through the adoption of neologisms.

4. Formation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic

An unfortunate chapter in the history of the territory between Prut and Dniester was written on August 2, 1940 (Dolghi Adrian 2020,168), immediately after the annexation of the province to the Soviet Union, when the borders of the new Soviet republic were redrawn. The integration of Bessarabia into the USSR involved several rounds of discussions at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The period when this province was part of the Greater Romania overlapped with the time when the former Tsarist empire was reorganised according to new principles, which generated administrative territorial units other than the traditional ones. The administrative and territorial reform of Bessarabia was somewhat delayed because of the war. In May 1948, the new authorities installed in Chisinau decided to abolish the counties and organise the new republic into districts (60 such territorial administrative units were created) (Cornea Sergiu 2010, 61). The Soviet Empire aimed more than its predecessor to assimilate the peoples within its borders and to form a mixture of peoples that would eventually lead to the formation of a new



type of man, the Soviet man. This could have been accelerated by redrawing the old ethnic borders and massive colonisation with an allogeneic population. This criterion was the basis for negotiations in the CC of the CPSU meeting on 2 July 1940 to discuss the drawing of the new borders of the future Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. The discussions, under Stalin's direct leadership, were attended by V. Molotov, M. Kalinin, G. Kaganovich, A. Jdanov, A. Mikoian, A. Andreev, leading members of the Communist Party who proposed that: "*The CC of the Communist Party of Ukraine to form county committees of the Communist Party of Ukraine in Bessarabia and the northern part of Bukovina and county executive committees in the following counties: Chisinau, Hotin, Balti, Soroca, Orhei, Bender, Akerman, Ismail, Cahul and Chernivtsi*" (Moraru Anton 1995, 321) thus extending the authority of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of People's Commissars of the MASSR over the whole province. Discussions continued on 9 July 1940 with a new round establishing the need to reunite the Moldavian people on both sides of the Dniester.

Despite their intended aim to dismember Bessarabia, regardless of the ethnic composition of its various districts., the Soviets officially promoted a false principle formulated by the Soviet dictator Iosif Visarionovich Stalin himself that the Soviet Union is organized in ethnically homogeneous union republics. Stalin argued that "*The nation is a stable, historically developed community based on a common language, territory, economic life and psychological state manifested in a community of culture*" (Țicu Octavian 2021) and in this way it was justified that Bessarabia was attached to 6 of the 14 districts of the Moldavian ASSR. The intention of the Moldavian ASSR to join Bessarabia had been made public in an article published on 10 July 1940 in the newspaper Pravda (Pasat Valeriu 2011, 21). In the original proposed format Soviet Moldavia was to retain its entire territory and receive the 6 Transnistrian districts, thus increasing its area from 45.1 thousand km² (the area of Bessarabia) to about 53.6 thousand km². This could not have been possible, the approaches between the leaders in Chisinau and Kiev were particularly tough. The Ukrainians wanted to fully limit the new republic's access to the Danube and the Black Sea, while the leaders in Chisinau wanted borders based on the principle of majority nationhood. To achieve this goal, the Moldavian Communist leaders Pyotr Borodin, secretary of the Moldavian Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine; Tikhon Constantinov, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Moldavian SSR, and Feodor Brovco, chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR, submitted a letter to Stalin requesting that a much smaller portion of the southern part of the province be ceded to Ukraine than the Ukrainians had requested. The Moldavian Communists were seeking approval to include only three Transnistrian districts (Kodima, Balta and Peschansk) in the borders of the new republic, while in the south the boundary between Ukraine and Moldavia was to be made at the border of the Chilia Pond. This would have allowed



Bessarabia to keep the Reni, Bolgrad and Ismail plates, including the town of Ismail (Țîcu 2021). The exclusion of a significant part of the Transnistrian rayon was logical given the ethnic composition of this region. Despite the name Moldavian Republic, the Romanian (Moldavian) population in this area only represented 28.54%, while Russians and Ukrainians together formed a bloc of over 60% (Ukrainians 50.71% and Russians 10.23%) (Galuscenco Oleg 2001, 43).

On July 22, 1940, Mikhailo Greciuha, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, countered the proposal of the Moldavian side by arguing that “a. it is not necessary to prove the advisability of annexing to the Ukrainian SSR the county of Hotin, where Ukrainians live”; b. Akkerman county “must also be fully annexed to the Ukrainian SSR”; c. Ismail county must be included in its entirety in Ukraine, because “Russians and Ukrainians cannot be separated here”; d. 10 of the 16 districts of the former Moldavian SSR (Țîcu 2021) must be included in the MSRSS”. The Ukrainian leader’s proposal won the day thanks to the strong support of Nikita Khrushchev, a leading member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Stalin’s future replacement. Perhaps the most shameful part of this was the desire to legitimise the territorial abduction by a ‘democratic’ decision of the peoples of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. The hypocrisy of the Soviets was evident when they selected the 32 delegates who were to attend the meetings and ratify the boundaries of the new republic. Of the entire delegation only 7 were Moldavians, the rest belonged to various national minorities, 19 of whom were Russians and Ukrainians, 4 Jews and one Hungarian (Dolghi Adrian 2020, 167).

After the Second World War in 1946, the issue of rectifying the borders of the Moldavian SSR briefly came back into focus. The letter written by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR, F. Brovco, was most probably an attempt to revive the idea of the formation of Greater Moldavia, which had been discussed for the first time during the war on 24 August 1944, when Soviet troops entered Romanian territory. Several possible options were put forward during discussions on the delimitation of the new administrative boundaries of the Moldavian Republic. It is interesting to note the contents of the letter submitted to Soviet dictator Stalin by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the MSSR F. Brovco, the Chairman of the CCP of the MSSRT. Constantinov and the Secretary of the CC of the CP of Moldavia N. Salagor. The three leaders of the Moldavian Communists called for the enlargement of the borders of the Moldavian SSR and the formation of a Greater Moldavia, which should have included the whole of Romanian Moldavia, including southern Bukovina and two counties in northern Transylvania, Năsăud and Maramureș (Țîcu 2021). After the war, the idea of annexing Romanian Moldavia was abandoned, but the idea of annexing part of Transylvania



remained under discussion. There is also a reported incident in Maramureş county where a group of ethnic Ukrainians travelled to Sighetul Marmaţiei and tried to intimidate the Romanian authorities to demand the unification of the province with Subcarpathian Ukraine (Orzac Dorina 2006, 119).

Following the same pattern of interethnic intermingling and the creation of latent conflicts, the Supreme Soviet accepted the Ukrainian SSR's request to include the south and north of Bessarabia, falsely justifying this territorial abduction in order to create ethnically homogenous republics (at that time southern Bessarabia was inhabited by a multitude of national minorities, Ukrainians being only one of these groups [Alongside Romanians in 1940 in southern Bessarabia lived Germans, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Russians, Jews, a small Greek minority and Ukrainians whose number at that time did not exceed the Romanian population of the province.]). In exchange for the two pieces of the territory of historical Bessarabia the newly established Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic received a strip of land of about 4163 square km located on the eastern side of the Dniester River (The Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova had been created as early as 12 October 1924 as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in order to act as a bridgehead for communist propaganda in Romanian Bessarabia, which the Russians wanted to "reintegrate" into the new empire.), a region that would never be truly integrated into this province and would be the source of future problems.

Conclusions

The formation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924 represented a step forward in the plan the Soviets had devised to regain influence in Romanian Bessarabia. Even though until that moment there had been no preoccupation with the identity of the peoples contained within the borders of the former Russian empire, the communists who had taken power developed "a veritable industry" of forming fictitious national identities especially for the population of the territories that at the end the war had been integrated into other states. At that moment, the foundations of the Moldavian people distinct from the Romanian people were laid, a thesis that unfortunately was also taken up by the pro-Russian politicians who remained to govern the newly formed states after the disappearance of the USSR. Ignoring these ideas can have dire consequences for regional peace and stability, being able to produce secessionist movements (the case of the self-proclaimed Moldavian Dniester Republic) or even more seriously the promotion of historically aberrant ideas such as the recreation of a Moldavian state that would include all the territories of the medieval principality of Moldavia.



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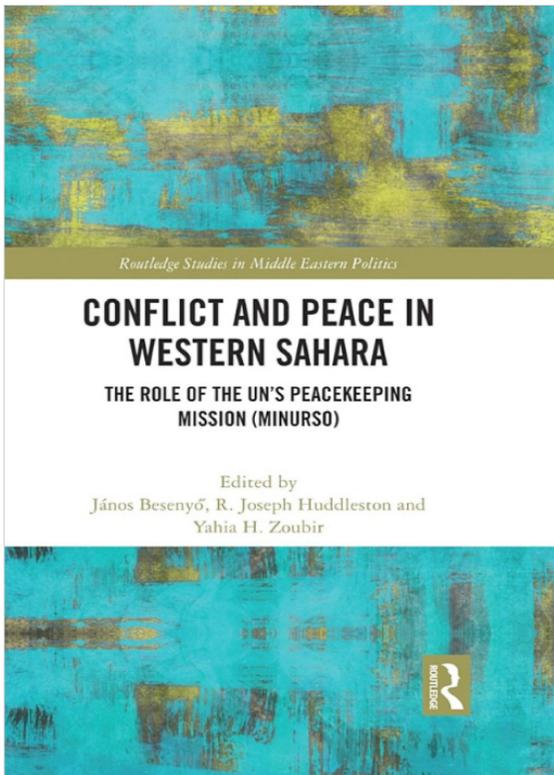


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CONFLICT AND PEACE IN WESTERN SAHARA

by *János Besenyő, Joseph Huddleston, and Yahia Zoubir*



Although the energy and raw materials crisis has made the work of authors and publishers of this book significantly more difficult, Routledge is expected to offer its readers a number of interesting and useful books this year as well. The international professional audience interested in security policy could rejoice in one of the first pieces of this year's selection at the beginning of January, which deals with the Western Sahara conflict and the peacekeeping operation known as MINURSO.¹ The joy of the Eastern Central European reader is all the more justified since one of the three editors is Hungarian, and he participated in several missions as a former peacekeeper, thus being able to provide readers with first-hand

information. János Besenyő, formerly the commander of the Scientific Research Centre of the General Staff of the Hungarian Defence Forces in the rank of colonel, is currently a professor at the Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences at the Bánki Donát Faculty of Óbuda University (Hungary), director of the Africa Research Institute and guest researcher at the Stellenbosch University (South Africa). Joseph Huddleston is an assistant professor of the Faculty of International Relations at Seton Hall University (USA). Yahia Zoubir, professor of international studies and director of research at KEDGE Business School in France, has been dealing with the Western Sahara issue for decades.

¹ The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.



The area of Western Sahara on the northwest coast of Africa bordering Morocco, Mauritania, and Algeria was under Spanish control until 1976. In 1979, Morocco occupied most of the territory, but the annexation was not recognised by the UN and its member states until 2017. Finally, in 2020, the US recognised Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara. The POLISARIO Front, established in 1976, waged the war of independence first against the Spanish, and then the Moroccan colonialists. The government of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), proclaimed by the insurgents, still operates in Algeria. As a result of the liberation struggle, the eastern part of the territory became independent, which is separated from the occupied western part by the technical barrier (BERM) built by Morocco with the help of Israel. Refugees from Western Sahara now live in refugee camps in Algeria. The armed conflict has been on and off since 1991. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was established in 1991 with the task of ensuring the preparation of the referendum on annexation or independence and the implementation of the settlement plan for the transition period. The referendum, however, has not taken place to this day. MINURSO's current activities are mostly limited to monitoring the ceasefire.

The 18 studies included in the volume's four main chapters provide the first comprehensive analysis of the UN peacekeeping operation in Western Sahara, presenting its activities, international composition, and goals, weighing the forecasts for the future of the region. It examines key historical, legal, military, and political aspects of the MINURSO mission from a broader perspective. The authors of the studies are experts in relevant fields, administrative specialists, lawyers, soldiers, and staff of humanitarian aid organisations, who share their theoretical considerations and their experiences on the ground. In the book we find several authors from the ECE region (Mirela Atanasiu, Éva Fábrián, Barnabás Horváth, Marcell György Pintér and Dávid Vogel), which fortunately points to the increasingly intense presence of the EU eastern countries in joint operations and in international scientific life. The authors of the volume reveal the complex interrelationship of the region and the mission, while also interpreting MINURSO action in a global context, which mainly refer to a viewpoint analysis of the United States, China, Russia, France, and African states on the role they play in the region.

The study series is opened by Marco Balboni, professor of EU and international law at the University of Bologna. In his paper (Introduction: Peacekeeping Operations in Situations of Conflict: The Case of MINURSO), he analyses the possibilities and tools of peacekeeping in international conflict situations, with particular regard to the MINURSO mission. In his summary, he states that the basic measures that constituted MINURSO mandate, established 30 years ago, have not yet been implemented. The mission was successful in only a few socio-political issues, such as women status and the protection of cultural heritage, but mostly in



monitoring ceasefire and easing the fighting. To this day, it is not known when the planned referendum will take place, as Morocco and POLISARIO are unable to agree on the criteria for identifying those who would participate in the referendum. Progress, therefore, can only be expected when the international community clearly determines who the occupier is and what specific punitive measures can be taken against the violation of the right to self-determination.

Meriem Naïli, who is a lawyer and also PhD holder at the University of Exeter, states at the beginning of her in-depth legal explanations that, after the Cold War, UN's peacekeeping operations took on new dimensions under the Capstone doctrine. Military actions aimed at ending the violence between the warring parties were replaced by multidimensional, ambitious political goals and operations that included significant civilian elements (self-determination referendum, democratisation, institutional reforms, community development, capacity building). MINURSO is one of these new types of operations. However, the legal foundation of the mission was hampered by political obstacles, and its political foundation by legal obstacles. In order to carry out the mission, it was necessary to look for dogmatic and legal loopholes related to human rights, and to clarify the relationship between international human rights provisions and humanitarian law (The Legal Aspects of the Functioning of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara).

Carlos Ruiz Miguel, Yolanda Blanco Souto, and Jacob Mundy's legal-focused studies analyse the work of MINURSO and scrutinise the difficulties, achievements, and failure of the Western Sahara peace process. Miguel, professor of constitutional law at the University of Santiago de Compostela, elaborates the legal historical aspects of the creation and work of MINURSO, relying on a wealth of legal documents, beginning in 1974, when the UN General Assembly established a special committee dealing with the implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial peoples. After the International Court of Justice stated in an advisory opinion dated October 1975 that neither Morocco nor Mauritania could extend their sovereignty to Western Sahara, the ruler of Morocco launched the "Green March" in order to "reunify" the country. The conflict was not resolved by the then UN Secretary General Kurt von Waldheim's plan, nor the 1983 plan by the Organisation of African Unity. The multinational and multilingual MINURSO mission also only succeeded in maintaining the ceasefire. Miguel deals in detail with ideas regarding refugees' return and the work of NGOs. Finally, he states that the changes in the situation of the area since 2000 make it necessary to reconsider the MINURSO mission: its task should be guaranteeing human rights in the entire region, especially in the refugee camps, to suppress the black economy and to hold a free, fair and democratic referendum on the territory's independence (An Overview of MINURSO: Legal History, Framework, Missions, Structure: A Balance).



According to Yolanda Blanco Souto, a doctoral student at the University of Santiago de Compostela, MINURSO had to face strong political headwinds from the beginning, with both sides trying to put obstacles in the way of its work. The militarily and diplomatically strong Morocco tried to put pressure on the United States and to extract concessions from the UN. These manoeuvres also sparked tensions in the MINURSO staff. Those who sympathised with the Moroccans, for example, witnessed the destruction of the Sahrawis' archaeological heritage. The investigation of MINURSO's disciplinary situation revealed corrupt behaviour, black trading with food, and other illegal business dealings. In 2016, Morocco expelled MINURSO civilian staff from the occupied territory, withdrew its financial contribution to peacekeepers, and then declared that MINURSO could not investigate human rights issues (Relevant Events in the MINURSO History).

Colgate University professor Jacob Mundy states at the beginning of his paper that the long-standing ceasefire in Western Sahara collapsed in November 2020. He looks for the reasons for this mainly in international developments. As a result of the 2008 world crisis and the Arab Spring of 2011, an increasingly risky international environment acted against a peaceful solution to the Western Sahara issue. Amid constantly rising tensions in North Africa, the Middle East, and the Sahara/Sahel region, Moroccan and Sahrawi forces engaged in intense clashes. The escalation of fighting calls into question the ability of the UN Security Council to mediate in territorial disputes in which the council's permanent members are biased (The End of the Western Sahara Peace Process and the Collapse of the UN Ceasefire).

In the second major chapter of the volume, the three studies written by Toby Shelley, María López Belloso, Elia Quesada, and Nick Brooks focus on human rights aspects and heritage protection. Shelley, paraphrasing the title of an American book, evaluates MINURSO's potential as a trap situation in terms of human rights. Although its key task would be to protect the human rights of the Sahrawis living under Moroccan oppression against the violations of the invaders, its activities in this respect are mostly characterised by passivity (Human Rights: MINURSO between a Rock and a Hard Place).

Belloso's study examines the role of women in the activities of MINURSO. The gender issue has gradually come into focus in UN peacekeeping operations since the mid-1990s. Although gender ratios and (opportunity) equality were not explicitly included in the MINURSO mission's programme, in accordance with other UN resolutions, the mission's documents dealt with the gender problem. Documents from the period 2006-2020 testify that the mission's female contributors performed important tasks, but some countries sent little or no female soldiers to the mission. Some progress was made during the mission towards the balance of gender ratios, but the measures related to gender equality were not sufficiently institutionalised. To overcome these shortcomings, the mandate of the mission needs to be reformulated,



institutionalising certain policies such as gender quotas and gender equality training (Participation of Women in the MINURSO: Scope, Evolution, and Factors for the Contribution to the Mission).

The author duo Quesada and Brooks state that the preservation of the rich archaeological heritage of the Western Sahara, which has been seriously threatened by the 40-year-old military conflict, is not at the forefront of public attention. They say indignantly that some MINURSO soldiers have committed acts of vandalism against archaeological sites in areas controlled by the POLISARIO. In doing so, they seriously hurt the local people's sense of national identity, caused unnecessary costs and, despite the restoration work carried out, seriously undermined the peace mission's authority (MINURSO and the Saharawi Archaeological Heritage).

The opening study of the third chapter of the volume entitled "How to build a sandbox in the desert" is written by two Polish Africanists, Cyprian Kozera and Błażej Popławski, who evaluate the performance of the tasks of the military components of the MINURSO operation based on official reports and interviews with participants. According to their findings, the MINURSO military contingent performs three important conflict prevention functions: they monitor the observance of the ceasefire, they try to ensure the implementation of UN measures aimed at reviving the peace process, and they contribute to maintaining the relative stability of the Western Sahara region, despite the fact that the opposing parties often lack political will, and terrorist and organised criminal groups threaten the personnel of the mission as well. The Moroccans are successfully trying to isolate the peacekeepers from the local population. On the Moroccan-controlled side of BERM, MINURSO vehicles are forced to carry Moroccan diplomatic license plates, which undermines confidence in the mission's impartiality. MINURSO does not have the authority to document human rights abuses either (Building Sandcastles in the Desert? MINURSO Military Component: Tasks, Duties, and Their Fulfilment). Mirela Atanasiu (Carol I National Defence University in Bucharest) examines the logistical and financial base of MINURSO and finds that the volume and scope of MINURSO's support has increased over the years, and the efficiency of the use of resources and logistics systems has improved, but there were financial gaps in ensuring human rights and in terms of resources that can be used to meet the needs of those in need of humanitarian assistance (Integrated Logistics Support and Financial Issues of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)).

Analysing the work of the MINURSO police contingent, János Besenyő and Marcell György Pintér (Óbuda University) believe that the disciplinary situation of the police unit was impeccable. The task of the police staff assigned to MINURSO would have been to conduct the census. Preparations for this have been made, but since the census will not take place within the foreseeable future, the police contingent is slowly becoming redundant (The MINURSO Police Contingent). Besenyő also



devoted an independent study based on a diverse research methodology to the experiences of the last more than 20 years of the Hungarian participants in the mission in the military and law enforcement field. The recorded interviews show that both the police and the soldiers took the training and equipment of the contingent seriously. Despite this, neither the police nor the Hungarian Defence Forces processed the lessons of the Western Sahara operation thoroughly enough and integrated them into training. Yet this would be all the more important, since Hungary's role is becoming more and more significant on the African continent. Disappointment is also reflected in the fact that several of those returning from operations in Africa are demobilised and continue to operate as civilians. At first, it was difficult for the Defence Forces to adequately supply personnel. However, the security environment has deteriorated over time to such an extent that – although peacekeepers are in principle unarmed observers – it would be worthwhile to equip those serving there with at least self-defence weapons (Military and Police Experiences from Western Sahara: The Case of Hungary).

The fourth chapter of the volume deals with the geostrategic considerations and the activities of the contingents of the most important countries participating in the peace mission. According to the author pair Huddleston and Zarate (Seton Hall University, USA), the United States' position regarding Western Sahara is based on concern for its regional stability. For this reason, the USA, pretending to support the UN process for a long time, avoided an open resolution, which allows Morocco to exploit the area's resources and disregard human rights while maintaining its favourable position. In doing so, it turns a blind eye to activities deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice and undermines the UN's principles of international conflict resolution (The United States and MINURSO: 31 years).

The thesis of Csaba Horváth, researcher of the Silk Road Research Group at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is one of the most interesting studies in the volume. With a witty title, the author refers to China's real purpose and role, which shows the image of a responsible global power, in MINURSO and several other African peacekeeping operations (MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNAMID, etc.). For China, strengthening its economic presence in Africa has become a priority. In the spirit of the new Silk Road concept, it primarily wants to connect the countries of East Africa with the Indian Ocean trade network, but also shows significant economic activity in the countries of the Atlantic coast of Africa. MINURSO is an important milestone in China's UN missions to the extent that in 2007, for the first time, a Chinese commander-in-chief was appointed to head an entire UN peacekeeping mission. The ultimate reason for China's committed participation is not political, however, but a single raw material, phosphate, 70% of which is found in Morocco and Western Sahara, and which is essential in global food production and guarantees Morocco's economic power. China strives for a balancing role between Algeria and Morocco,



but rather favours Morocco in the regional conflict, which can help China build economic positions in the western Mediterranean basin (China and the MINURSO: Eyes on Peak Phosphorus?).

In his viewpoint on Russian participation, Sergej Nyikonov, a professor at St. Petersburg State University, criticises the preparation of the referendum and questions the role of the UN in its implementation. He believes that the task of MINURSO would be to secure the borders valid at the time of Spain's withdrawal (1976). Although the principle of self-determination of peoples is represented by the POLISARIO in the given situation, President Donald Trump recognised Morocco's rights over the territory. Since the government of the Sahrawi Democratic Republic did not turn to Russia for political support, Russia would not have a role to play in settling the conflict (Russia and MINURSO: This Is Not Our Conflict).

On the other hand, the French foreign and security policy in the African territories also in the spirit of great power ambitions, following the path paved by de Gaulle, takes a very active role in the MINURSO mission from the beginning in addition to other peace missions, Éva Fábíán states at the beginning of her study, because the conflict not only poisons the relations between Morocco and Algeria and the work of the Arab Maghreb Union founded in 1989, but it also has a negative effect on French-Algerian relations. According to the French proposal, the territory of Western Sahara should be given its autonomy within Morocco, as they fear that the independence of Western Sahara would destabilise Morocco and threaten significant French investments (France and MINURSO).

Although it is difficult to quantify the contribution of African states to UN peacekeeping operations, they keep a keen eye on regional conflicts and actively participate in their resolution, writes Dávid Vogel, senior research fellow at the Doctoral School on Safety and Security Sciences at the University of Óbuda, who himself previously participated in African peacekeeping operations with the African states, analysing their respective positions concerning and their participation in MINURSO. Countries with adequate resources try to simultaneously ensure African dominance and their own security interests in the architecture of African peace and security, but unlike other participants, they think little about obtaining economic benefits (The Approach of the African States towards MINURSO).

The chapter as well as the volume are closed by a joint study by Souadou Lagdaf (University of Catania) and Yahia Zoubir (KEDGE Business School). They believe that since November 2020, the Moroccan occupiers have grossly violated the ceasefire by using violence against the peaceful Sahrawi demonstrators and by continuing to build the technical barrier, and MINURSO, which is limited in its functions and movements and has been condemned to decades of inactivity, has become useless, only maintaining the status quo, and thus, in fact, serving Morocco's interests (MINURSO: A Mission for Maintaining the Status Quo?).



In the volume, although it might have been more practical listing the authors in alphabetical order by last name, and to arrange the chapters with a main title and possibly according to other priorities, from the perspective of an experienced editor, not only can we not find anything significant to object to, but its critical spirit that collides points of view is also all the more welcome. The book is a landmark, not only because it is the first to deal with the peace operation that has been in operation for more than 30 years, but it is an extremely important read for those working in the fields of international relations, international law, and security studies as well as future peacekeepers and for theoretical and practical experts interested in the problems of the MENA Region and the Western Sahara conflict.

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WORKSHOP ON *LESSONS IDENTIFIED IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT*

March 23rd, 2023

The last year, a year of change and challenges, marked by the geostrategic and geopolitical situation on the eastern border of the European Union and the Alliance, has caused serious consequences in all fields, ranging from military to humanitarian, economic and political, followed by a variety of concerns which will continue to affect the countries of the international community.

February 24th, 2022, represented a beginning of an extremely difficult period that has significantly influenced the development of the European and global security environment, the day Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine with global consequences unparalleled since World War II.



Event photo: *WORKSHOP ON LESSONS IDENTIFIED IN RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT*

The situation remains tense and requires a rational and strategic approach by all parties involved, with a need to reshape and strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture in the long term, especially on the Eastern Flank and the Black Sea. Resilience is not only about being able to withstand and respond to challenges, but also about being able to achieve transitions in a sustainable, equitable and democratic approach.



The workshop, organised online nationally by Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies (CDSSS) on March 23rd, 2023, was based on the events of the year-long Russian massive assault on Ukraine, and specialists in the field set out to identify the most important aspects of the conflict so far.

The broad theme covered the main national and international threats and the major consequences of armed conflict on national, regional and global stability and security; the direct effects of conflict on the population, such as: multiple casualties and material damage to critical infrastructure, triggering a massive refugee influx, limiting access to food resources and essential services for the remaining population in Ukraine; violations of international humanitarian law; national policies and measures to mitigate the effects of the conflict, increase resilience and increase adaptive capacity in the context of new security challenges; perspectives of the European and Euro-Atlantic political community on the armed conflict; strategic communication and media warfare.

The event topic created the scientific framework for 18 presentations, on which debates were held, as follows:

- *Possible scenarios of war in Ukraine;*
- *Nuclear deterrence and risk in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war;*
- *Conventional and Hybrid in the First Year of the Russian-Ukrainian War;*
- *Russian-Ukrainian conflict – lessons identified;*
- *The work of the Special Telecommunications Service in the context of the conflict in Ukraine;*
- *Information operations in the Russia-Ukraine war;*
- *Analysing the concept of strategic communication – Russia’s media war in the context of the attack on Ukraine;*
- *Quantitative analysis of the selection criteria used in the production of prime-time news bulletins in Romania;*
- *The effects of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine on food security;*
- *Support measures in response to crisis situations: Experiences and lessons identified at RBD (Romanian Border Police) level in the context of Ukraine conflict;*
- *Civil protection missions in managing the influx of refugees from Ukraine;*
- *Developments in reported air-specific threats in the context of the conflict in Ukraine;*
- *Effects of electronic warfare actions on GPS, GSM;*
- *Neutralization of mines in the area of responsibility of Romanian Naval Forces;*
- *Lessons identified from Romanian EOD Combat Divers operators’ interventions to neutralize/destroy sea mines discovered in the RNF (Romanian Naval Forces) area of responsibility in the Black Sea from the beginning of the crisis in Ukraine to date;*



- Key coordinates of the humanitarian-migration situation in Ukraine;
- Civilians in Ukraine – collateral victims or targets in a brutal, unprovoked war?;
- The importance of standardisation and resilience in NATO member countries in the context of Russian-Ukrainian war.

The event embraced the mastery in the security sphere from representatives of structures of the Ministry of National Defence (Multinational Divisional Command Southeast, National Military Command Centre (NUCLEU), Air Component Command, Fleet Command, Armament General Directorate, Diving Centre), Special Telecommunications Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs (General Inspectorate of Border Police, General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Police Academy), organisations and associations (Romanian Reserve Officers Association, European Institute of Romania, Experts for Security and Global Affairs) and, last but not least, researchers from the CDSSS.



Event photo: WORKSHOP ON LESSONS IDENTIFIED IN RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT



SCIENTIFIC EVENT

The scientific event underlined the inter-institutional collaboration, achieving a nexus, a junction, both of theory and practice, as well as of the areas in which the armed conflict in Ukraine engenders effects. The workshop concluded with a brief assessment of the entire activity ensuring its success through the comprehensive analytical approaches with an overlap of results, from both academia and specialists in the field.

More information about the scientific activities organised by the CDSSS can be found at: <http://cssas.unap.ro/en/events.htm>

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- ✓ **Quality of the scientific content** – neutral, objective style, argumentation of statements and mentioning of all references used;
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- ✓ 6-8 relevant **keywords** (italic characters)
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(Grazer and Fishman 2015, 12)

(Smith 2016, 315–16)

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(Keng, Lin, and Orazem 2017, 9–10)

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(Manjoo 2017)

(Mead 2017, 43)

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