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EDITOR'S NOTE

The third issue of 2024, volume number 92, of the scientific journal *Strategic Impact* includes four articles, covering a range of topics, and two book reviews and the Guide for authors. The articles' topics vary from aspects related to climate change and its connection to the military domain, and perspectives on the strategic role of naval forces. Additionally, the topics delve into the phenomenon of terrorism, its link with social media and the Internet, and terrorist attacks targeting the banking industry in Europe.

The first section, ***Political-Military Topicality***, includes an article written by our colleague, Brigadier General Crăișor-Constantin Ioniță, PhD. The article highlights the main effects of climate change on the conduct of military operations, emphasizing significant countermeasures at both allied and national levels. The study represents a new decisive factor on the modern battlefield, which could either reinforce existing risks, or become a totally new one.

The second rubric, ***Geopolitics and Geostrategy: Trends and Perspectives***, features an article by commander (Navy) Alexandru-Lucian Cucinschi, PhD, which highlights the importance of naval forces in fostering a strong maritime awareness. It also illustrates the strategic role of each military service, with an emphasis on the strategic mission of the Romanian Naval Forces.

Under the umbrella of ***The Terrorist Threat*** rubric, we find two articles. The first, authored by Mr. Iancu-Marius Bufnea, discusses how terrorism leverages social media and, by extension, the Internet, with profound social and psychological implications, to recruit many individuals all over the world for hostile actions. Additionally, the paper explores the concept of “filter bubbles”, through which social media algorithms facilitate interactions among people with similar radical perspectives, thereby contributing to user polarization and radicalization.

The second article, written by Mr. Tamas Somogyi, a PhD Student, and Colonel (Ret) Rudolf Nagy, PhD, is a study aimed at examining terrorist attacks on European banks over the past 20 years, identifying trends and patterns, and providing several recommendations to enhance resilience.

In this edition, the ***Book Review*** rubric introduces two book reviews. The first, written by Brigadier General Crăișor-Constantin Ioniță, PhD, introduces the book *Politicizing Islam in central Asia. From the Russian Revolution to the Afghan and Syrian Jihads*, by Kathleen Collins. The second review, by Mr. Vladimir-Mihai Zodian, PhD, presents the book titled, *Romania's Holy War: Soldiers, Motivation and the Holocaust*, written by Grant T. Harward.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



CLIMATE CHANGES AND THE MILITARY. HOW RECENT ENVIRONMENTAL MAJOR ISSUES COULD AFFECT THE NATIONAL DEFENCE STRATEGY

*Crăișor-Constantin IONIȚĂ, PhD**

The last decades of this century have been characterised by overwhelming effects of climate changes all around the world and in all areas of human activity, including national defence. Environmental extreme phenomena and global warming have strongly influenced and continue to affect the conduct of military actions, as well as the efficiency of some defence capabilities, somewhat turning them into vulnerabilities that could be subject to additional security threats and risks.

Therefore, this paper will focus on the main effects that climate changes could have upon the conduct of military activities, highlighting the most significant countermeasures at the allied and national levels. The research method is based on existing data analysis and evaluation of the recent climate phenomena and global warming, briefly touching on major events within the modern operating environment. The paper has some limitations due to little importance given to this new security risk/threat by many decision makers, military leaders and strategic planners, as well as the unclear strategies and implementing plans to counter it. Nevertheless, it represents a new decisive factor on the modern battlefield, which could either reinforce existing risks, or become a totally new one.

Keywords: *climate changes; extreme phenomena; global warming; big magnitude events; climate lens; Anthropocene Era; climate security.*

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Introduction

As per many security organisations' periodical risk assessments – including the UN, NATO and the EU –, the last couple of years have been characterised by more frequent and intense phenomena of extreme heat, catastrophic floods and dangerous clouds of volcanic ashes across Central and Southern Europe and the Western Balkans, as well as devastating wildfires and unstoppable storms in the Mediterranean region and North America. In this regard, more and more Allies, including Romania, have begun to reconsider the increasing interaction between climate change versus traditional security risks, recognising the fact that the scale and pace of climate-related challenges affect the modern operating environment.

Therefore, military leaders, having a strong conventional attitude, should raise their understanding of the complex, non-linear and co-evolving effects of climate changes on national, regional or even international security, in order to become a solution and not a problem in mitigating those effects to not affect citizens' lives, strain national resilience and pose direct or indirect challenges to the conduct of military operations. This task implies a thorough staff assessment of these challenges in each operational domain – land, sea, air, space and cyber –, as well as a continuous expert evaluation of the escalating effects on national resilience and the global security environment.

The staff assessment should address both the speed and scale at which the climate crisis continues to unfold, and the overwhelming urgency of addressing the root causes of climate change. It is worth mentioning here that a physical operating environment is possible to be altered by climate change, both directly or along indirect pathways.

1. Climate Change's Impact for National Security and Defence

There are many environmental experts and military researchers who consider that climate change has the potential to inflame an existing conflict through economic and social instability and increased violence or even start one. This assessment might also incorporate the status of the environmental objectives established at national and European/Euro-Atlantic levels, adopted also by the military, from which the main two represent the reduction of carbon emissions from fossil fuel and the transition to the 'green' energy.

This is why, the military experts' evaluation should take into consideration the most readily observed extreme weather events that are already putting pressure on critical military and civilian infrastructure and require additional military deployments to support civilian authorities. That demonstrates the fact that the escalating effects of climate changes would impact the national resilience and security, both at the



national level and in its broader neighbourhood. Climate-induced instability, large-scale population movements, and disruption of global supply chain are likely to alter the strategic environment in the medium and long term. Extreme weather events and global warming could also produce changes in key oceanic currents, or the collapse of agriculture system, fuelling a rapid deterioration of the national resilience (Stoltenberg 2024, 7).

It becomes crucial to understand the regional differences regarding climate vulnerabilities, as well as the fact that climate change exacerbates the strategic competition on resource scarcity and the scramble for the global commons. This strategic competition would exacerbate the pre-existing vulnerabilities of many different groups, resulting in bringing human security and Women, Peace and Security considerations to the forefront of the climate security discussions. In this respect, military forces might be required to adapt to hotter temperatures and increasingly more challenging, extreme and unpredictable operating environments, as well as to prepare for an increasing demand to assist civilian authorities when disasters strike (Stoltenberg 2024, 8).

Climate change is considered by many military thinkers as either a new threat at the national and European/Euro-Atlantic security, or a force multiplier of already existing risks and threats. This is the reason why there are some international relations debates to include the ‘ecoclimate¹’ perspectives as a strategic insight in its main preoccupations, in order to finally create a so-called ‘Climate Security²’ domain. Unfortunately, this approach would probably establish new contradictions on the North – South Axis, because of the ethics and moral existing rules inside the international system. Poor and undeveloped states will not have the capacity to adapt to climate changes’ effects, without a major support from rich/developed states and new international climate agreements accepted and implemented by all those states with high greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, the EU and its Member States and Partners take into consideration an increased role of the UN to include climate changes in international relations, by establishing a collaborative network between private sector, civil society and research institutions in order to share information and knowledge, find new innovative solutions, exchange good practices and establish common aims and goals in the relationship between climate change and security. Some already existing links,

¹ According to the 3rd NATO Climate Change and Security Impact Assessment of 2024, no region of the World or operational domain will be untouched by climate change. This is why NATO will remain determined in its collective ambition to better understand, adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change on Allied security.

² As per the Webster dictionary, ecoclimate is a new approach of climate as an ecological factor and represents “the actual climatic condition of a habitat”, site <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ecoclimate>, accessed on 9 September 2024.



such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)³, the Nordic-Baltic Network on Climate, Peace and Security⁴, or the Middle East NATO Liaison Office in Amman, could be used at the beginning for attracting more and more state and non-state actors. Moreover, the UN should support all regional and international projects related to climate changes, like the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁵, the Paris Agreement⁶, or the OSCE project on climate change and security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus⁷ and encourage other organisations to start new projects with the same importance and topic.

2. Climate Change's Effects in the Military Domain

Why it is important for military leaders and strategic planners to study climate change and its effects on security or on creating insecurity for humans? First of all, it is the scientific theory of the so-called 'Anthropocene Epoch' (see Figure no. 1), in which the humanity (Homo sapiens), through its continuous expansion and vast activities, began to alter the surface of the Earth, its atmosphere, oceans and systems of nutrient cycling. Being considered after 1950s, this era is characterised by an

³ Climate security refers to “the direct and indirect impacts of the climate crisis on peace and security, where climate change acts as a threat multiplier, exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities and compounding existing grievances. The consequences of climate change affect all areas of human security (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political) and undermine conflict prevention, sustaining peace and sustainable development efforts with a disproportionate impact on communities with existing vulnerabilities, including migrants, women and girls, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples”, site <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/climate-and-security>, accessed on 9 September 2024.

⁴ IPCC is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change and providing comprehensive Assessments Reports about the state of scientific, technical and socio-economic knowledge on climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for reducing the rate at which climate change is taking place. It also produces Special Reports on topics agreed to by its member governments, as well as Methodology Reports that provide guidelines for the preparation of greenhouse gas inventories. Site <https://www.ipcc.ch/>, accessed on 9 September 2024.

⁵ The Nordic-Baltic Network on Climate was established in 2021, by 12 research institutes in order to establish a suitable knowledge base on climate, peace and security issues in the Nordic and Baltic regions. Site <https://www.nupi.no/en/news/new-nordic-baltic-network-on-climate-peace-and-security-established>, accessed on 9 September 2024.

⁶ UNFCCC is a multilateral treaty adopted in 1992 to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system.” Every year, countries who have UNFCCC meet in a UN Climate Change Conference (COP) to measure progress and negotiate multilateral responses to climate change. Today, there are 198 Parties to the Convention. Site <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/un-climate-conferences>, accessed on 9 September 2024.

⁷ The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. It entered into force on 4 November 2016. Site <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>, accessed on 9 September 2024.



increasing role of technology and fossil fuel-based energy, as well as concentrations of pollutants in the atmosphere – especially of carbon monoxide (CO₂) –, reaching a level where the ecosystem can no longer absorb them. In turn, those characteristics generated the relevant climate changes, which has a major negative effect on temperature cycles, the water cycle in nature and the interdependence between plants, animals, bacteria and the human species (Rafferty 2024).

From ancient times the human behaviour has directly and indirectly altered their habitual space, sometimes with disastrous consequences for the future of humanity and survivability of some other species, resulting in a pronounced global insecurity. This aspect led us to the next important aspect of studying climate change in the military. It is related to the idea that the Armed Forces are usually involved in causing negative climate effects on the operational environment both during training activities and conducting military operations. Therefore, we can consider military leaders as being part of Anthropogenic Geopolitics and some of them even obstruct Allied and European climate policies (Vogler 2024).

Eonothem/ Eon	Erathem/ Era	System/ Period	Series/ Epoch	Stage/ Age	millions of years ago
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Anthropocene ¹		1950 CE
			Holocene		0.0117
			Pleistocene	Upper	0.126
				Middle	0.781
				Calabrian	1.806
Gelasian	2.588				

¹In August 2016 the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), a special body created within the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), recommended that the Anthropocene Epoch be made a formal interval within the International Chronostratigraphic Chart. The AWG recommended that the year 1950 be used as the starting point of the Anthropocene Epoch.

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Figure no. 1: The Quaternary Period, reconfigured to accommodate the Anthropocene Epoch⁸

⁸ The project “Climate Change and Security in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus” aims to enhance understanding and awareness of climate change as a security challenge and the consequent need for regional and transboundary co-operation in adaptation; and to enhance national and local stakeholders’ capacity to anticipate, prevent and mitigate effectively and in a timely manner potential security risks resulting from climate change. Site <https://www.osce.org/projects/climate-change-and-security>, accessed on 9 September 2024.



It is worth mentioning another important aspect linked to some ambiguous measures underpinned by military leaders to mitigate climate changes and their impact in the modern operating environment. Their effects led to environmental protection and are less efficient in countering the climate change's effects on actions of Armed Forces. Thus, a new Anthropocene security dilemma has been created, in which the conduct of military operations, even in self-defence and of short duration, aggravates long-term existential threats (Vogler 2024, 3). This is the case of the last military experiments with Weapons of Mass Destruction, lasers or ecological weapons, as well as the militarisation of the Arctic and the weaponisation of outer space, with disastrous effects for the environment and the future existence of humanity. The same disastrous effect is the conduct of combat actions in the framework of the Russian-Ukrainian war near the Ukrainian nuclear power plants and the use of these critical energy infrastructures as military objectives, despite the prohibitions provided by international laws and conventions. Only recently policy decision-makers, businessmen and climatological experts understood the fact that human prosperity is strictly linked to protecting life on our planet, avoiding human extinction. As André Hoffmann, one of the Davos Group leaders mentioned at the World Economic Forum meeting of January 2024, “We are seeing the limit to the system more and more. If our growth is not contained within planetary limits, we are just going to outgrow the system, and that’s not going to be beneficial in the long term” (Feingold 2024).

Finally, the involvement of regional security organisations and their Member States in analysing the impact of climate change in the military field is a relatively recent action that is gaining more momentum each year. There are already senior military officials and climate advisors who consider climate change as having serious implications for national security. They nominate among the global effects of climate change the warmer climate, changing precipitation patterns and, more frequently, intense and unpredictable extreme weather. “Climate change is dramatically increasing the demand for military operations and, at the same time, impacting our readiness and our ability to meet those demands while imposing unsustainable costs on the department. Our climate investments are not only aligned with mission objectives, increasing resiliency and enhancing combat capability, but those investments are absolutely necessary for future mission success...” (Vergun 2022).

The increasing importance of climate change in our lives is highlighted by the “Global Risk Report 2023 (18th edition)” of the World Economic Forum (WEF) of 11 January 2023, in which there are analysed the most dangerous risks the humanity will encounter in the next decade (see Figure no 2).



Figure no. 2: Top 10 risks and their likely impact in 2 and 10 years⁹

As we are at the edge of an era of low economic growth and low cooperation, tougher compromises could risk to erode the climate action, human development and future resilience. Thus, in its report, WEF ranked ‘extreme weather’ first in the top ten risks in terms of probability of occurrence and ‘climate action failure’ ranked first in terms of impact – ahead of ‘weapons of mass destruction’, ‘cyber attacks’ and ‘infectious diseases’. As a result, extreme weather and the failure of measures to counter climate effects are determining characteristics in the risk matrix, being catalogued before the economic, societal and technological categories (World Economic Forum 2023, 11).

Therefore, the need to analyse, forecast and counter the effects of climate change on the military domain of security has gained a major importance, being considered on the same level as military conflicts, the proliferation of WMD and terrorism. Furthermore, there are international relations theorists who wish to introduce the concept of ‘climate security’ into climate-related policies. Other experts in ecoclimatic phenomena are trying to establish a causal relationship between climate change and regional military conflicts, considering that some consequences of the

⁹ Source: <https://www.britannica.com/science/Anthropocene-Epoch>



former accelerate the risks of instability and the emergence of the latter, such as competition for resources or climatological migration, caused by rising seas, floods massive or prolonged drought. Thus, this is also situated in the area of ‘climate security’. There are military and civilian experts who include, among other climate-induced threats to humanity, pandemics and epidemics of vector-borne diseases such as contaminated insects and water (Kamradt-Scott, et al. 2015).

At the 57th Session of the UN Council for Human Rights of 9 September 2024, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Volker Türk, subjected to the attention of participants the future of humanity, mentioning that the world is now at a ‘crossroad’ and is going, if not careful, to a ‘dystopic future’: “we can continue either on the current pathway – a new dangerous normality’ – which directs us, as sleepwalking towards a dystopic future, or we can wake up and turn the course of things for our goods, for humanity and the Planet” (Gaidau 2024). The current normality, which should be collectively rejected, is characterised by the military escalation, repression and disinformation, injustice, climate change that affects especially those who are less responsible, and human rights abuses in the name of national sovereignty.



Figure no. 3: Most prominent impacts of climate change on security¹⁰

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2023/digest/>



There are certainly some consequences of the impact of climate change on the National Defence Strategy (see Figure no 3). One of them is represented by the increase in importance, size and number of the Armed Forces' operations and missions in support of local authorities and the affected population. In the case of extreme phenomena, military forces are required to conduct more search and rescue, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, both nationally and internationally. This is because the scale of these extreme phenomena exceeded, in many cases, the possibilities of intervention of the civil protection and law enforcement forces, and involves the establishment, in some states, more often affected by floods, fire, drought and heatwaves, of military capabilities for rapid intervention in disasters. At the same time, the exchange of good practices and greater interoperability between the forces destined to ensure the military response to natural disasters has been intensified, especially for neighbour countries or those who have special partnerships.

An additional consequence can be considered the challenge facing planners who must understand that the main operational dilemma of the current operating environment is not represented by the establishment of direct link between climate and conflict, but in the ability of climate change to disrupt/destroy the systems that provide stability and human security. Solving this dilemma is the way to achieve national resilience in its entirety both by duplicating natural systems and by preserving those that ensure governance and the continuation of the activity of local institutions and systems.

Some Conclusions for Romania and its Armed Forces

In Romania, the first ideas regarding climate change and how it affects the Romanian Armed Forces were developed as early as the 2010's in the form of 'climate security'. Of course, this was not a common term in the eyes of military theorists and Romanian researchers. In its 2010 definition, climate security was considered the minimization of climate instability, and this does not put humanity in conflict with nature, because human beings are part of nature, of the global ecosystem (Dutu 2010). As a result, it is possible that precisely the lack of adequate conceptual tools is the most important obstacle in the case of identifying solutions for global problems such as climate change.

In order to respond to the recent international and regional approach on climate change, Romania developed, in 2016, the "National Strategy regarding climate change and economic growth based on reduced emissions" adopted by the Government Decision no. 739/2016 and, in 2021, the "Integrated National Plan in the field of Energy and Climate Change 2021-2030 (PNIESC)", documents whose main objective is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 44% by 2030, compared to the year 2005.



Based on the “NATO 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and the “NATO Climate Change and Security Action Plan”, the Romanian Defence Minister established, in 2022, a Working Group dedicated to addressing climate change in the field of defence and energy transition, and released the “Strategy regarding the preparation of the Romanian Armed Forces to address climate change and the energy transition” in 2023, which targets a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 (Directia Informare si Relatii Publice a MApN 2023).

However, nothing would happen regarding the materialisation of the objectives set by strategies and the implementation of plans both at the Alliance, the EU and national levels, without effective inter-institutional, European and Euro-Atlantic collaborations and a real comprehensive approach, in which civil society, the environment business and the research and development community will have an increased role. The realisation of the commitments assumed by the states on climate change issues should continue in an accelerated way, and the Allied Armed Forces should cultivate a responsible attitude and an ‘eco-climate culture’ regarding the reduction of the effects of climate change within the military actions they would perform in the future operating environment, including reducing carbon emissions and increasing defence energy efficiency.

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PERSPECTIVE ON THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF THE NAVAL FORCES

*Alexandru-Lucian CUCINSCHI**

Although over time each service has developed specific doctrines aimed at achieving decisive victory against the adversary, using only their own capabilities, this approach now seems no longer viable in the context of new technologies and the dependency of military forces on elements that are not entirely under their control, such as the cyber domain. Nonetheless, the military have demonstrated that they possess some advantages in terms of the strategic impact they have, not only within a conflict but also as a state policy. This is also the case for Naval Forces, which have proven over time to be an important means of advancing the interests of nations that have developed a strong maritime consciousness. In the article, one can find illustrated the strategic role of each service, subsequently being detailed the strategic missions of Naval Forces and how the Romanian Naval Forces can address this challenge.

Keywords: *military services; maritime environment; Naval Forces; strategic missions; maritime consciousness.*

Introduction

In the current security environment, each military service plays a distinct and strategic role in ensuring national and international security. Driven by historical events that left a significant imprint on collective memory, nations tend to develop a maritime or continental identity, reflecting the experiences that led to success.

The article explores how naval, land, air, and special operations forces have contributed uniquely to the global security strategy, and how strategic awareness and leadership influence the orientation towards each service.

In a continuously changing geopolitical landscape, military forces must adapt and evolve, integrating new technologies to enhance their capabilities.

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This transformative process is evident in the efforts of major powers, such as the development of the US fleet, which marked a crucial moment in forming a national maritime consciousness.

Although independent actions of different services have led to historical victories, the current context calls for an integrated and coordinated approach between land, naval, and air forces.

As we analyse in detail the missions and strategic roles of Naval Forces and subsequently, the Romanian Naval Forces, we will highlight how they align with contemporary challenges and the necessary re-evaluation in national and international defence strategies.

The research hypothesis to be validated in the article is that Naval forces play an essential role in integrating national and international defence strategies, constantly adapting to respond to modern technological challenges and the unpredictable global security environment.

The research objectives that we set out to analyse refer to how the Romanian Naval Forces adapt to new technologies and influence the security environment in the Black Sea region, thus contributing to regional and international stability, and to comparison between the strategies for utilizing naval forces among nations with maritime traditions and those with continental traditions, examining their historical and strategic impact on contemporary defence policies.

Regarding the limitations of the research, it can be mentioned that not always the missions of Naval Forces belonging to nations that have developed a strong maritime consciousness, operating in large seas and oceans, can adapt to Naval Forces operating in small, semi-enclosed seas, as they have their specific characteristics.

The methodology of the article consists of conducting a comparative analysis – comparing the ways different nations develop and utilize their services by presenting the differences in strategies between nations with maritime traditions and those with continental traditions, as well as a case study on the Romanian Naval Forces and the US Naval Forces, to illustrate the different historical and strategic impacts of the two approaches.

In the end of the paper, we have formulated recommendations for future defence policies and strategies, based on the findings of the analysis, and we have also suggested areas of future research that could complement and reinforce the understanding of the strategic role of the military in general, and of the Naval Forces in particular.

1. Considerations Regarding the Strategic Role of Military Services

Some historical events remain in the collective consciousness of a people. Thus, they are inclined to manage current issues through the lens of the traditional way of handling situations.



Consequently, the services that have brought glory to a nation gain favour in the eyes of the public, distinguishing maritime nations from continental ones. That is also the case of the US Naval Forces, which, with the construction of the Great White Fleet, ingrained a strong maritime consciousness in US citizens.

We believe this is also the reason why, although other services have experienced a decline in recruits, the Naval Forces have managed to maintain a constant level over time (Figure no. 1).

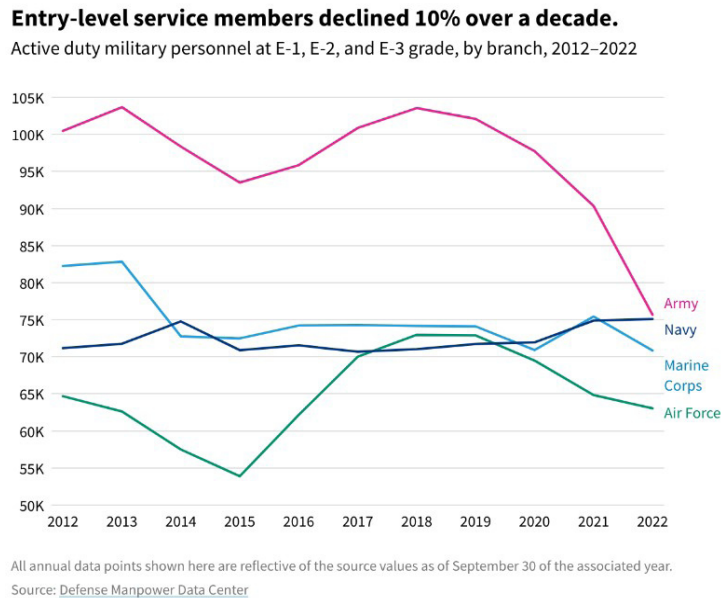


Figure no. 1: Active duty military personnel at E-1, E-2, and E-3 grade, by branch, 2012-2022 (USAFacts Team, 2023)

The construction of the Great White Fleet by the United States was based on the country’s dependence on maritime trade, following the rapid pace of industrialization after the Civil War, which generated significant resources, as well as the lack of a military and commercial fleet to support this trade (McMahon, 2018).

Leadership is also a very important aspect regarding a nation’s orientation towards a particular type of consciousness (maritime or continental). As General Petraeus states with regard to the four important steps of strategic leadership, one must initially be able to clearly understand the main idea, meaning appropriately addressing the strategic situation (Petraeus & Roberts, 2023, p. 4), which in some cases involves focusing the actions of the armed forces on a specific service.

This aspect can be represented by the implementation of a concept that is actually an idea that synthesizes very well reality. For example, a concept that emphasized



Naval Forces is the Air-Sea Battle, implemented between 2013-2015 (LaGrone, 2015), but it was based on a recent threat (A2AD¹), developed on the model of the air-land battle of the '80s.

It should be also mentioned that the Air-Sea Battle did not reach the implementation stage (capability development) because the actions of the Land Forces were not included in this concept and the effect of the Naval and Air Forces on land was considered insufficient.

Therefore, we believe it can be stated that each service has a specialized strategic role, which contributes to the success of military operations and national security. Coordination among these forces is crucial to ensuring effective defence and responding to global security challenges in an integrated manner. Each branch brings a unique set of capabilities and advantages, and their interaction determines long-term strategic success.

Land Forces represent the backbone of many armies, being the ones that ensure direct control over the terrain. They are crucial for ensuring security and maintaining order in conflict regions. For example, in conventional conflicts, infantry and tanks can conduct decisive operations to capture or defend territories. In peacekeeping operations, Land Forces are responsible for patrolling areas and maintaining stability. A clear example of their importance is the deployment of NATO forces in Eastern Europe to deter potential Russian aggression.

Although it is known that, in the past, Land Forces have achieved victories without the support of other services, it is our belief that today, without gaining a degree of control over the air and maritime space, a decisive victory for the Land Forces is difficult to imagine. A historical example in which the Land Forces prevailed without consistent naval support is the war waged by Alexander the Great against the Persians. Thus, understanding the advantages of gaining access to the sea and how these can be denied. "This Macedonian conquest, which made the Aegean Sea an "enclosed sea" – depriving Greeks and Phoenicians of their previous bases – allowed Alexander the Great, or Macedon, the luxury of attempting to conquer the extended Middle East by land" (Kaplan, 2020, p. 157).

Air forces offer a strategic advantage through their ability to project power over vast regions, rapidly and efficiently. They are essential for air superiority, reconnaissance, strategic transport, and support on ground operations. Fighter aircraft, such as F-35, provide advanced offensive and defensive capabilities, ensuring air supremacy. Additionally, reconnaissance and surveillance missions, carried out by drones or surveillance aircraft, are vital for intelligence gathering and the strategic coordination of operations.

However, there have been historical periods when Air Forces aimed to win the war solely through their own capabilities. This was the case of the British Air Force at the beginning of World War II (Werrell, 1986), but without experiencing success.

¹ Anti Access Area Denial.



Special Operations Forces (SOF), which were included relatively recently among the services, play a strategic role within the military due to their ability to conduct complex missions that require a high level of training and precision. These units are extremely flexible and can operate in a variety of environments and situations, often in collaboration with other services.

SOF are often involved in targeted strike missions, such as capturing or eliminating high-value targets, such as terrorist leaders or enemy critical infrastructure. A notable example is the mission to eliminate Osama bin Laden.

Next, we will analyse the strategic missions of naval forces and the extent to which they align with current challenges in the international security environment. We will also provide some considerations regarding the capabilities of the Romanian Naval Forces to execute strategic-level missions.

2. Strategic Level Missions for the Naval Forces

Naval Forces play a critical role in securing maritime lines of communication, ensuring freedom of navigation, and projecting power in distant regions. In conflict situations, they can block enemy access to resources and provide logistical support to land and air forces. Aircraft carriers, as centres of mobile power, allow for rapid and flexible deployment of air forces close to conflict zones, extending operational range and capabilities. In cases of humanitarian crises, military ships can offer rapid assistance and logistical support.

As mentioned, Naval Forces are essential for several missions, each having a significant impact on global security and international stability. Further, we propose a description of these missions and a perspective on their future:

Protecting Maritime Lines of Communication:

Current Mission: Naval forces ensure the security of maritime trade routes, which are vital to the global economy. They patrol and monitor key areas such as the Strait of Hormuz or the Suez Canal, preventing piracy and ensuring the free flow of commerce.

Future: There is expected to be an increase in the use of naval drones and autonomous technologies with the purpose of a more efficient surveillance of maritime routes. With advances in artificial intelligence, Naval Forces will be able to better predict and prevent threats.

Ensuring Freedom of Navigation:

Current Mission: This involves patrolling international waters and ensuring compliance with international maritime treaties, preventing unilateral actions by states that could block free access to navigation routes.



Future: Disputes related to maritime territories (such as the South China Sea) will require more sophisticated diplomatic approaches and the presence of a deterrent Naval Force, supported by international alliances and maritime cooperation.

Force Projection and Logistical Support:

Current Mission: Naval Forces project military power in distant regions, supporting land and air operations by ensuring secure supply lines.

Future: With technological modernization and the development of new naval platforms (e.g., advanced destroyers and attack submarines), force projection will become more efficient. Future aircraft carriers will include unmanned combat aircraft, such as those being constructed at the Damen Shipyard in Galați, which has begun building a drone carrier (DefenseRomania Team, 2024).

Humanitarian Assistance:

Current Mission: Military ships are used to rapidly respond to natural disasters or humanitarian crises, providing assistance and logistical support in hard-to-reach areas.

Future: Closer international cooperation and a greater emphasis on humanitarian aid will lead to expanded roles in peacekeeping operations and crisis response. The assistance capabilities of ships could include mobile hospitals and supply aircraft with advanced resource distribution capacities.

Looking ahead, the technological development and diversification of Naval Forces, along with international collaboration, will be essential for adapting to new global and regional challenges. These strategic missions of Naval Forces will continue to evolve in order to better respond to multidimensional threats and complex crisis scenarios.

3. Strategic Missions of the Romanian Naval Forces

The Romanian Naval Forces have a history and context different from those of the United States Naval Forces, as presented at the beginning of the article. Through its 245 km coastline on the Black Sea, Romania gained access to the coast in 1878, much later compared to other maritime nations. This means that maritime tradition and consciousness are not as developed as in countries with a long history of sea and ocean exploration.

Although the Romanian Naval Forces played a crucial role in certain operations, such as the evacuation of Romanian and German troops from Crimea in April-May 1944 (Iancu, 2018), or the air-naval action on June 26, 1941, against a Soviet naval force targeting Constanța, in which the Romanian Navy sank the Russian destroyer Moskva and damaged a second destroyer, alongside the losses suffered by the Soviets



among their bomber aircraft (15 out of 24 Soviet planes were shot down, some by ships) (Mara, 2000, p. 55), these moments are not as widely known or recognized by the Romanian public.

Thus, we believe it should be mentioned that, due to its geopolitical position and security challenges, Romania has often placed greater emphasis on land and air forces. In contrast, the US, having oceans on both its east and west coasts, has developed a strong culture and perception regarding maritime importance, reflected in the substantial resources allocated to Naval Forces.

Therefore, it is our belief that developing a stronger maritime consciousness in Romania can be achieved through education and public awareness regarding the strategic role of the navy, the importance of the maritime economy, and promoting naval history.

Increased investments in naval infrastructure and participation in international exercises can also contribute to raising the profile and perception of Naval Forces among citizens. Moreover, the fact that, starting with February 2022, the Black Sea has become a theatre of conflict and maritime challenges are becoming increasingly complex, should lead to the development of Naval Forces as the main actor in this new strategic situation. Currently, the Romanian Naval Forces contribute to the security of the Black Sea, which is an important trade route for countries in the region. Romanian ships participate in patrol missions and international exercises, such as those organized by NATO, to ensure a safe and stable maritime environment.

Additionally, the Romanian Naval Forces are prepared to intervene in the event of natural disasters or crises in the Black Sea basin, providing necessary assistance and logistical support.

Therefore, we believe that, although the Romanian Naval Forces do not have the same level of visibility and recognition as those of other states with a long maritime tradition, they play an important role in national and regional security. Increasing promotion and education regarding the importance of the maritime environment could contribute to changing public perception.

4. Comparative Analysis

To conduct a comparative analysis of the information previously presented, we can consider several criteria: firstly, the historical context and background in analysing how historical events and traditional military practices have shaped current strategies and compare these influences between different countries' military services.

Technological Integration: examine the role of new technologies in military strategies, particularly how naval forces have adapted to these technologies.

Strategic Mission and Role: compare the strategic missions and roles of the naval forces discussed in the article. Evaluate how these missions align with contemporary global security challenges.



Maritime vs. Continental Identity: evaluate how maritime or continental identities influence military policies and the strategic role of naval forces. Compare this influence on military focus in nations with maritime traditions against those with continental traditions.

Public Perception and Support: analyze how public perception and national consciousness affect support and development of naval forces, and compare these factors between nations highlighted in the article.

Based on these criteria, we can draw the following comparative insights from the article:

Historical Influence and Traditions: nations with a strong maritime tradition like the US have developed more robust naval capabilities and consciousness compared to countries like Romania, where historical maritime engagement is more recent.

Technological Adaptation: the article discusses the ongoing modernization efforts, such as the construction in Romania of a drone carrier, which, even though it is not destined for the Romanian Naval Forces, can be considered a know-how gained for the employees of the Damen Shipyard.

Strategic Roles: the Romanian Naval Forces focus on regional security in the Black Sea, contributing to international missions and ensuring local stability, whereas the US Naval Forces have a global force projection capability.

Maritime Identity Influence: the US's maritime consciousness has significantly influenced its defence priorities, while Romania is encouraged to strengthen its maritime awareness to better integrate regional defence strategies.

Public Support and Investment: increased investments and public awareness in Romania are necessary to elevate the perception and effectiveness of its naval forces, aligning with the strategic importance of maritime security highlighted in the article.

Conclusions

The hypothesis that naval forces play an essential role in integrating national and international defence strategies has been confirmed through the analysis of how these forces adapt and expand their capabilities to respond to global technological and security challenges. The article details how naval forces contribute to maritime security, protect communication lines, and ensure freedom of navigation, demonstrating their importance in global defence strategies.

The first objective, which examines the adaptation of the Romanian Naval Forces to new technologies and their influence on security in the Black Sea, is achieved through a detailed analysis of the current role of these forces in the region.

The second objective, concerning the comparison of strategies between nations with maritime traditions and those with continental traditions, is achieved through a



comparative approach to how naval forces are utilized by Romania and the US. The study highlights historical and strategic differences, as well as the impact of these differences on current defence policies, emphasizing how historical experiences and maritime consciousness influence current strategic decisions.

Therefore, nations are influenced by historical events and significant victories of different branches of the military, which contribute to the formation of national defence identity and priorities. Maritime nations, such as the USA, have developed a strong maritime consciousness due to their reliance on sea trade and the development of their naval fleet.

Leadership influences the strategic direction of a nation. Leaders are responsible for understanding strategic situations and adapting force capabilities to meet contemporary challenges. It is our belief that the fact that a certain service is less developed can be considered a strategic decision and should be assumed both in the case of success and, especially, in the case of failure of that strategy.

Moreover, the fact that each service brings a unique set of capabilities should lead to an integrated approach, combining Land, Air, and Naval Forces, which is crucial for success in modern military operations.

In addition, Naval Forces play a vital role in global security by protecting maritime lines of communication, ensuring freedom of navigation, and projecting power. Investments in advanced technologies such as drones and artificial intelligence will enhance the effectiveness of naval missions.

It should also be noted that due to different geopolitical challenges and the relatively underdeveloped maritime consciousness, the Romanian Naval Forces do not have the same visibility as other maritime nations, yet they play a critical role at the regional level. Strengthening maritime consciousness in Romania and increasing investments in Naval Forces are necessary to meet current challenges.

Furthermore, we believe it is important to remember that a single service cannot win a modern conflict without the support of other services. Technological advances require closer integration among all branches to effectively address contemporary security challenges.

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THE TERRORIST PHENOMENON, SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET. SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

*Iancu-Marius BUFNEA**

The paper examines how terrorism uses social media and the internet, exploring the social and psychological implications of these modern media. Starting with an assessment of migration from print to online media, the paper highlights the particular impact of social networks, such as Facebook and X (e.g. Twitter), in the dissemination of terrorist information and propaganda. The study highlights cases such as that of ISIS, which used the online space to recruit thousands of individuals from around the world. The paper also explores the concept of “filter bubbles” through which social media algorithms facilitate the meeting and interaction between people with similar radical views, thus contributing to the polarization and radicalization of users. The paper argues that while the internet facilitates academic collaboration and rapid communication, it is also a source of threat, facilitating access to information that supports terrorist acts.

Keywords: *counter-terrorism; national security; social media; intelligence analysis; security policies; radicalization; propaganda.*

Introductory Considerations

This paper is titled *The Terrorist Phenomenon, Social Media and the Internet. Social and psychological implications*, aiming to critically assess the way in which online social networks and, in a broader sense, cyberspace together with the media, interact and are used in terrorist activities.

From the beginning, it is important to mention that, although the number and circulation of print media publications has decreased significantly in recent decades,

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at the same time as their popularity, people’s access to news and information has not experienced a direct-proportional trend. On the contrary, people’s access to the media has increased significantly with the popularization of the services offered through the Internet. According to a 2021 study, a total of 4.66 billion people were active users of the internet, of which 4.22 billion also actively used social networks on the internet (Statista.com, 2021). Social networks, such as *Facebook*, *X* (the former *Twitter*) and *Instagram*, allow users not only to connect with other users, but they constantly distribute news and press articles, according to their preferences. We can thus compare these data with others, provided by a study on the sales of printed publications in the United States of America, which revealed that they fell from an absolute record, around 60 million copies per week in the 70s and 80s, to an all-time low of only 24,299,333, in 2020. Thus, the initial hypothesis is confirmed, the migration of the population from written to online press articles being obvious (Barthell & Kristen, 2021).

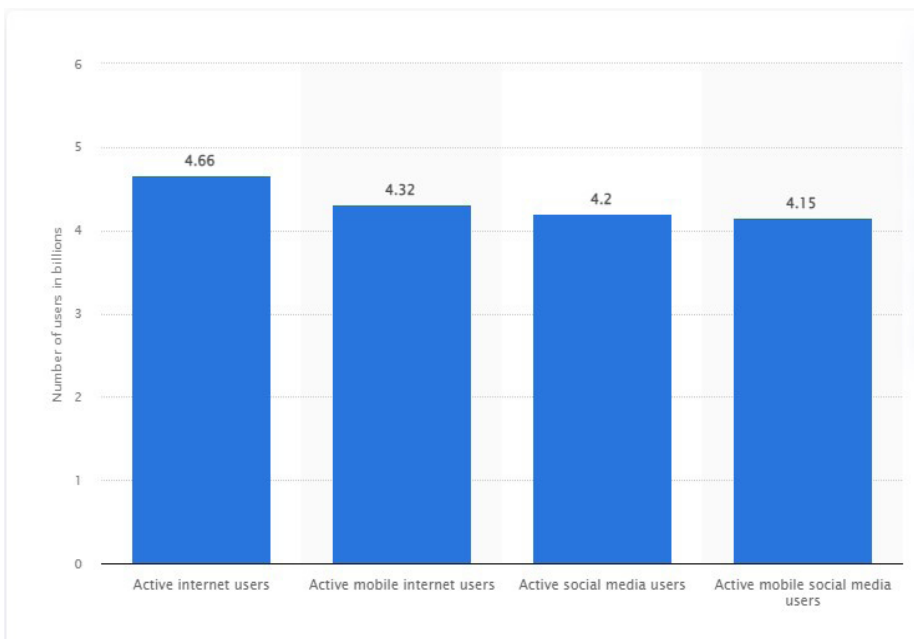


Figure no. 1: Digital population statistics, as of January 2021¹

This is probably due to a number of factors, the most relevant of which are the ease and speed with which they can be obtained and read, combined with the relatively low cost of this type of publication, or even free of charge, as anyone who already owns a device with internet can access an extremely large number of publications, as we have already stated, some of them are even free of charge and

¹ Source: <https://www.statista.com/>



have a good reputation, for example *The Guardian*, *BBC News* and *Reuters*, among others. Also, articles from these publications have been incorporated, as we have shown, into social networks, on which readers can react to by providing feedback or even comments and have debates on the topics of these articles. Thus, on the one hand, in a broader and theoretical sense, anyone who posts an article, a personal idea or other kind of information on one of these social networks, has theoretically the chance to have an audience of about 4 billion people. Obviously, such an ability to reach such a large number of people in a relatively short time has been unimaginable for many centuries, new discoveries in the field of information and communication technology making such a relatively recent achievement possible. Such a capacity can serve certain positive causes, making it possible to communicate over long distances by videoconferencing, for example, or to exchange ideas, scientific articles or results of studies, thus facilitating academic and scientific collaboration. On the other hand, those new technologies may be the victim of their own success, in particular if they serve to facilitate communication or to obtain information and instructions for the perpetration of certain anti-social, illegal or violent acts, in particular acts of terrorism, or for the publication of material enhancing the capacity for ideological propaganda, or acts committed by certain groups or individuals using such means. In the following, we will address exactly this fact, analyzing the ways of its use and its limits within the terrorist phenomenon.

1. Clarification of the Definition of Terrorism

In order to be able to undertake a rigorous process of academic research and analysis, I believe that an explanation is necessary, a definition of the terms with which we are going to operate.

In this regard, although terrorism still does not have an unanimously accepted definition by researchers and practitioners in the field of preventing and combating terrorism, for various reasons, we can nevertheless offer several elements considered particularly important, even essential, when we talk about the terrorist phenomenon. Thus, violence or the threat of violence, exercised by groups or individuals, who deliberately target civilians, non-combatants, in order to influence the actions of a target audience or a government, also wishing to have an impact on a wider audience than the target group, are common characteristics of terrorism, extracted from the works of several authors, experts in the field.

It is also common knowledge that terrorism, although it often involves physical violence, is essentially likely to have a greater psychological impact. Thus, killings and lethal terrorist attacks do not, in and by themselves, constitute an end, but rather a means to achieve an objective, namely to bring a particular issue to light, to make it known to the widest possible public and, indirectly, to call into question the legitimacy of a particular target government, underlining its inability to defend its citizens.



Nowadays, with an extensive number of people having access to the internet, social networks and mass media publications, in physical or online format, never in the history of the World has it been easier than information coming from a single source, reach such a large number of people. Thus, the characteristic of terrorism according to which violent actions serve as a means to achieve the ultimate objective of influencing the actions of a certain segment of the population or of a government, is facilitated precisely by this unprecedented access to the internet and to official or alternative means of information (Nacos, 2019) (Mingst & Arreguin-Toft, 2017).

2. The Process of Recruitment and Radicalization through the Online Environment

The virtual space serves not only for the rapid and extensive dissemination of information about the perpetration of certain violent acts of a terrorist nature, but also to facilitate the recruitment process of future members of terrorist organizations. According to statistics, the terrorist group ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) which, since 2013, has committed numerous acts of terrorism and violence with the aim of seizing as much territory as possible in the targeted regions, trying to eventually create an Islamic Caliphate based on Sharia, has actively recruited in the online space, managing to reach a number of 40,000 foreign recruits from over 110 countries, which is due to the accelerated spread of internet access in the Middle East and Africa, but also in Europe, numerous recruits coming from countries such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany (Ward, 2018).

A study by Stanford University also found that Tweeter profiles and accounts associated with ISIS propaganda generally manage to post more content before being reported and terminated, compared to other types of suspended or terminated accounts. Moreover, given the fact that on social networks, in general, the interaction between users is facilitated or, sometimes, even conditioned by the pre-condition that they have the status of *acquaintance/ friends* (Alfifi & al., n.d.), we can assume that either there is a certain link between them even before the use of these social networks, which has a correspondent in the real world, or this link is created within these networks, in the virtual cyberspace, the corresponding link in the virtual world being created later. There is also the possibility that certain people, within certain social networks, belong to certain *Groups*, within which a sense of belonging is created, with a greater or lesser degree of awareness, and those *Filter bubble*, which we will detail a little later. Thus, the recruitment process is facilitated, recruits and recruiters already having a certain connection, real or perceived, making viable the theory that an explanation for terrorism lies in the social component. More specifically, it states that, in most cases, the recruiter is a known person or, at least,



familiar to the recruited, the actions and speech of the leader of the group having a greater impact on the decision to join, compared to the ideological and doctrinal particularities of the terrorist group. *In 88 % of cases where the nature of the link with the recruiter is known, he or she is not a stranger. In 44 percent of cases, he or she is a personal friend. In 22 %, he or she is a relative* (della Porta, 1995). Thus, through the existence of these *friendships* in the virtual environment, the meaning of the notions of *friendship* or *acquaintance* can expand dramatically, compared to the classical meaning, which limited them to the physical interaction between individuals, nowadays it is possible for a person to claim to be a *friend* with another, thousands of kilometers away and whom he has never physically met.

What is even more worrying that these social networks belong to a certain segment of cyberspace, namely the *surface web*, which accounts for only about 5 % of the total, which is the only one accessible by the general public. The remaining 95 % fall under *deep web* and *dark web* sections of the internet that are not widely accessible, are sometimes illegal to access, and require expert knowledge to access, representing more than 550 times more information than that available on the *surface web* (Montra.io). In these deep layers of the internet, organized criminal groups or terrorists, hackers and other entities that want to carry out activities generally outside the law or away from the eyes of the general public operate. Moreover, in the *dark web* space, the absolute anonymity of all those who access it is ensured, they can resort to illegal means of action against everyone, the services and sites also enjoying anonymity and transactions and exchanges that cannot be traced or monitored. In view of the above, i.e. this (Kaspersky.com) *Exclusive* of the majority segment of the internet, it is still impossible to quantify or analyze the precise role it plays in terrorist activities, but it certainly exists and poses a real threat.

However, even if, as we have seen, *Deep Web* and *dark web* facilitates, or even makes possible, interactions and transactions that would not be possible in the space open to the public, it is not necessary for those who want to commit certain terrorist attacks to access these restricted segments to find out information or to obtain guidance on, for example, the best methods to set fire to a room or the optimal way to build an Improvised Explosive Device. For example, organizations like ISIS not only have certain publications and even dedicated magazines published online, such as *Rumiyah* or *Naba*, but they even have a department specialized in social media and propaganda, in a very similar way to Hitler's Nazi regime, the equivalent of the propaganda minister at the time, *Joseph Goebbels*, Being *Abu Muhammad al-Adnani al-Shami* (Nacos, 2019).

Although it may seem that, in particular, religious terrorist groups publish such documents, news and propaganda online, other types of organizations also provide users with multiple means of information. For example, there is the website of the Animal Liberation Front, a group that aims to identify and counter violence against



animals, it is sometimes associated with what is also known as *eco-terrorism*, that is, violent actions to achieve the desired objectives or to bring to light injustices, real or perceived, in the field of ecology or animal protection. Inside this site, among others, a section entitled *ALF First*, where those interested can quickly and easily find out detailed information on how to destroy towers of telephone networks, how to build simple incendiary devices and how not to get caught by the police.



Figure no. 2: The functional layers of the Internet.
95% not accessible to the general public²

The Anarchists Manual or *Home Workshop Explosives* are examples of other books, available on sites such as *Amazon.com*, often attracting fewer positive comments from shoppers, such as this: *Almost all (except for some) of the things found here are accurate in the sense that they simply show you how to build something specific, but also in the sense that the way you are told what and how to do it will most likely lead to failure... If you really want to know how you can build explosive devices at home, you can try Home Workshop Explosives by Uncle Fester, that's what you need. This book presents techniques taken from military manuals over 30 years old (Amazon.com)!*

Thus, a person who already has certain sympathies towards a terrorist group, towards the ideology that underlies it or towards the acts he commits, simply, has an extremely wide range of information *just a click away*, to learn all about how to make a homemade bomb, for example, or how to commit an arson without being caught by the police. The next step, for some of them, is trying to find, on social networks, other people who share their point of view.

² Source: Montra.io



This is relatively easy to do, the algorithms of operation of these social platforms making it easy to meet people who have the same opinions as you and view only those news materials that confirm and enhance your opinions, even if they are radical. Moreover, if several users with a similar point of view interact regularly, the probability increases that they will confirm each other's opinions, thus creating those *filter bubbles*, which no longer allow information contrary to the personal points of view already created to reach the users, who eventually have the impression that the contrary information simply no longer exists, or, if they exist, they are not popular or are believed only by a minority of individuals. Thus, it can create what we today call *exaggerated polarization* of the population, or it can even lead to radicalization.

3. Press Reports and the Perception of the Terrorist Threat

Certainly, the first and most shocking propaganda video of ISIS was represented by the video of about five minutes in which the assassin who would later be named *Jihadi John*, cut off the head of the American journalist James Foley. Committed with unprecedented violence and streamed on *YouTube*, it shocked the world, unfortunately representing the first of a long series of such videos showing how infidels and those who oppose the Islamic State will die. Still, this initial video served as a huge catalyst for the newly established terrorist group, with press reports and mentions of its name doubling in the months that followed.

Table no. 1: Press reports with and about ISIS before and after the publication of the video of the beheading of J. Foley³

	<i>Month Prior to Beheading (July 18–August 18, 2014)</i>	<i>Month Following Beheading (August 19–September 19, 2014)</i>
<i>New York Times</i>	124	375
<i>Newsweek</i>	3	15
CNN.com	45	296

In view of these facts, we can identify a preliminary conclusion, namely that the materials, in particular video or photo, have the potential to bring certain groups out of anonymity and to bring them to the attention of the public and, with them, the objectives and issues they promote, thus serving the dual role of both informing the following public, as well as to lead to the fulfillment of the operational objectives of the terrorists, namely that the information about the atrocities committed reaches the widest possible audience, influencing as many people as possible.

³ Source: Marissa Young (2015)



This seems to lend credence to the theory that more authoritarian and repressive regimes are better at deterring terrorist acts because they are able to impose measures that sacrifice certain citizens' rights in order to achieve security, and the fact that the flow of information can be relatively easily controlled within them, there is a possibility that news about committing a terrorist act will never spread in mass, the primary objective of the attackers being thus defeated.

In Figure no. 3 we will be able to observe the trend that indicates something somewhat intuitive, namely that peoples' perception of the importance and centrality of the terrorist problem is influenced and relatively directly-proportional to the number of news articles with and about terrorist acts.

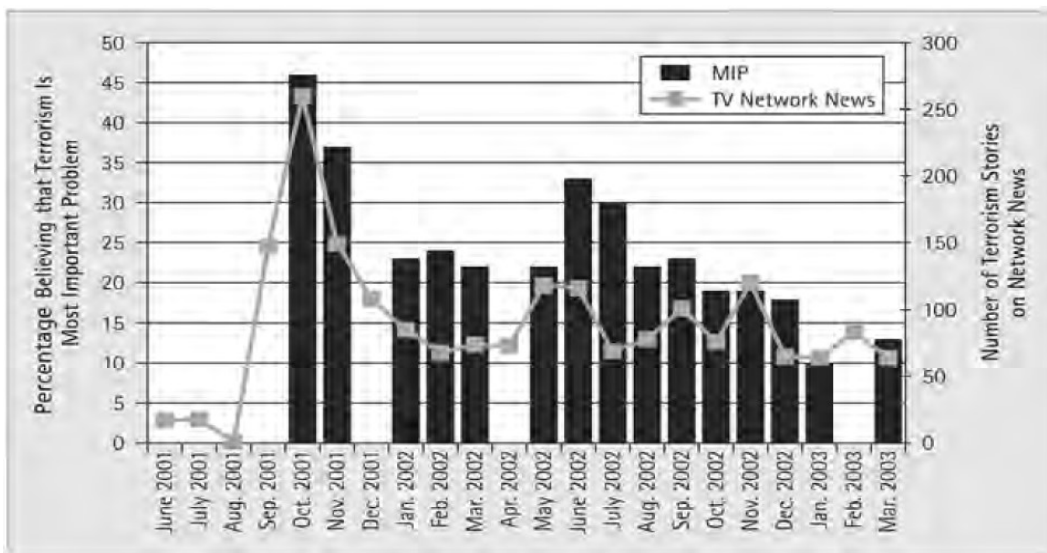


Figure no. 3: Perception of the terrorist threat in relation to the amount of news about terrorist acts⁴

Thus, we can say that the actions of terrorists can get disproportionately high attention, if their online strategies are corroborated with a particularly high attention of national news agencies. These terrorist acts manifest on two levels, one micro, national, in which the press, the public and the national government are influenced, the second being the macro, international, in which the international press, the public and governments are influenced, the relationship between the two levels being a complex and interconnected one, as shown by the graph below.

⁴ Source: (Norris, et al., 2003)

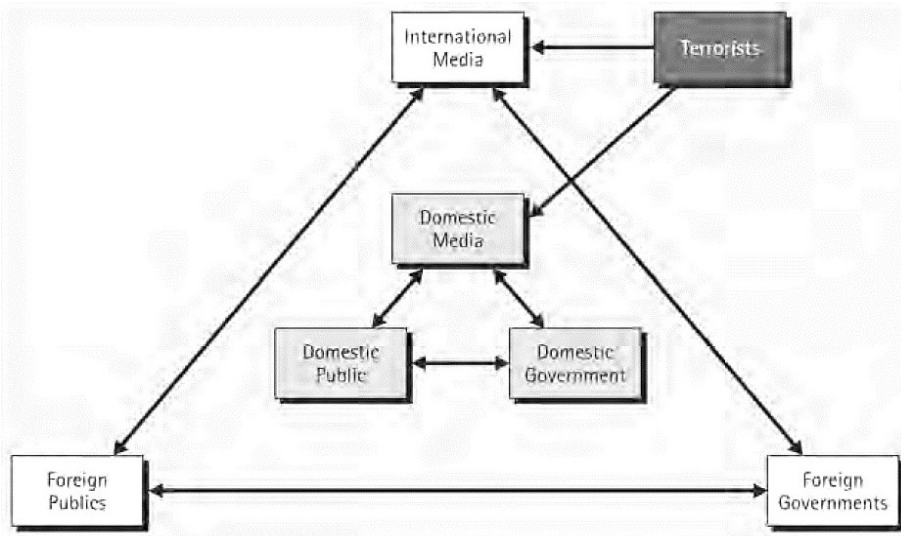


Figure no. 4: Terrorism and the Triangle of Political Communication⁵

The Psychological Dimension of Radicalization through Social Media

From a psychological perspective, radicalization through social media is a process that exploits fundamental human vulnerabilities such as the need for belonging, validation, and significance. Social networks allow users to quickly find communities that reflect their pre-existing opinions and beliefs, thereby enhancing a sense of belonging. In many cases, individuals going through this process first experience an identity crisis, followed by a search for a greater cause or a group that provides them with a clear purpose and direction (Horgan, 2008).

Relative deprivation theory suggests that the feeling of social or economic marginalization plays a key role in radicalization. Those who feel deprived of the social or economic opportunities others have may become more vulnerable to extremist ideologies. Social media exacerbates this perception, as users are often exposed to images and narratives that confirm their resentments and frustrations, thereby reinforcing a sense of “us versus them” (Moghaddam, 2005). The social validation mechanism is extremely important in this context. Social platforms create an environment where psychological rewards (such as “likes” and positive comments) reinforce individuals’ ideas and behaviors. In the process of radicalization, extremist sympathizers receive validation and approval from other group members, which strengthens their beliefs and encourages them to more firmly adhere to the extremist ideology (Della Porta, 1995).

The echo chamber, a phenomenon widely discussed in social psychology, is an effect amplified by social media algorithms. These echo chambers restrict users’

⁵ Source: (Nacos, 2019)



experiences to content that confirms their existing beliefs, reducing their exposure to opposing opinions and contributing to extreme polarization. In this way, users come to believe that their opinions are widely shared, while contradictions become rare and less visible (Sunstein, 2001). Another essential aspect is the emotional impact of visual propaganda, such as violent videos or news that trigger strong emotional reactions. Studies have shown that materials evoking intense emotions, such as fear or anger, can accelerate the radicalization process, as these emotions reduce the capacity for critical thinking and facilitate the adoption of a radical attitude (Frijda, 1986).

These psychological dimensions explain why social media has become a powerful tool in the radicalization process. Easy access to radicalized communities, along with mechanisms of emotional reward and social validation, makes vulnerable users more easily influenced and more likely to adopt extremist ideologies with less internal resistance.

Conclusion

As we have shown, violent terrorist actions aim not only to actually commit them, but to influence a wider audience, much more numerous than the target audience of terrorist attacks. This was, and still is, best served by the media reports of traditional news companies. However, with the technological progress of recent decades, the internet and the large interconnected global network it possesses are beginning to serve these objectives of terrorist groups more and more. In addition to this, the internet proves to be an almost endless source of resources and information that can be used to commit violent and/or illegal acts. Thus, in addition to the obvious benefits it brings to users, it also represents a possible source of threat to them. Given the new capabilities, particularly Artificial Intelligence ones, which are constantly developing, it is important to follow how public policies aimed at the field of national security will keep up with the fulminant technological advance and the imminent threats and risks it entails, including from the point of view of terrorism.

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TERRORIST ATTACKS AGAINST THE EUROPEAN BANKING INDUSTRY SINCE 2001

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There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of counter-terrorism and security, especially after the events of 9/11. Studies of terrorism and critical infrastructure protection agree on the essential nature of financial services and mention many cases when banks were attacked. However, the threat of terrorism to the banking industry received scant attention. This is the first study set out to investigate the terrorist attacks against banks in Europe since 2001. Research data were collected from the Global Terrorism Database.

The aim of this quantitative research is to i) examine the terrorist attacks against European banks over the last two decades, ii) identify trends and patterns, and iii) provide some recommendations to increase the level of resilience.

Our findings and recommendations can bring important contributions to the field of counter-terrorism and security. The study may hold relevance for researchers, operators of essential services, law enforcement agencies and policy-makers.

Keywords: *Europe; banking industry; bank; terrorism; terrorist attack; Global Terrorism Database; critical infrastructure protection.*

Introduction

The significance of essential services can be understood by its definition provided by the EU Directive 2022/2557, Article 2: “a service which is crucial for the maintenance of vital societal functions, economic activities, public health and safety, or the environment”. Generally, transport (Shatnawi and Rajnai 2023), services of

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the energy sector (Yusta et al. 2011), the healthcare system (Shaffer and Besenyő 2023), food production (Wu and Takács-György 2023), the water sector (Berek 2024) and the banking industry (Pursiainen and Kytömaa 2023) are considered essential. The critical infrastructure that provides these essential services, undoubtedly plays a vital role in our society. Therefore, protecting critical infrastructure is a fundamental (Fjäder 2014). Although the idea of protecting important places and objects is absolutely not a new one (e.g., the European explorers established fortified towns to secure their commercial interests on the shores of Africa (Besenyő 2017)), in the last decades this topic is receiving more and more attention.

The smooth operation of critical infrastructure is jeopardised by natural hazards and man-made hazards (Faramondi et al. 2020). For instance, the effects of global warming are a major concern within the former category (Somogyi and Nagy 2022), while terrorism is central to the latter group (Asmer et al. 2019; Besenyő and Sinkó 2024). Protecting the infrastructure from the intentional man-made attacks is a major area of interest within the field of security (Szabó and Balogh 2021). Cyber security (Haya and Rajnai 2023), physical security (Novák 2021), and counter-terrorism (Cross 2023) are extensively studied nowadays. The field of security and military science has been developed to a highly investigated multidisciplinary field (Vuk 2023; Szűcs and Szakali 2023). Divišová et al. (2023) has suggested that the public expectation is that states and armed forces be capable to deal with hybrid interference, including terrorism.

By playing an important role and providing essential service, the banking industry obviously has to be protected against terrorist attacks. The aim of this paper is to examine the terrorist attacks against banks and provide some recommendations to increase the level of resilience.

Methodology

The study set out to investigate the terrorist attacks against European banks. It was decided that the best source of data for this research is the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). GTD is an event-level database in English, containing more than 200,000 records of terrorist attacks that have been taking place around the world since 1970¹. Another advantage of GTD is its reliability: it has been used in several researches, e.g., Jasani et al. (2023) and Guohui et al. (2014).

Terrorist attacks were only included in the analysis provided:

- The year they took place is not before 2002,
- The region is “Eastern Europe” or “Western Europe”,
- The Target/Victim Subtype is “Bank/Commerce”.

¹ The database is available online at URL: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>



To identify events related to banks, the field “Incident summary” was used. There have been found 153 cases of terrorist attacks against the European banking industry. These cases have been examined in our research.

1. The Threat of Terrorism to Critical Infrastructure

Mirza and Rana (2024) found that the number of studies on terrorism had been increased after the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Thus, nowadays there is a growing interest in the field of terrorism and counter-terrorism. What is terrorism and why is it important for the field of critical infrastructure protection? Terrorism is considered to be severe violence committed by radicalised people for the purpose of achieving extreme political goals (Prezelj et al. 2018). Papamichael et al. (2024) noted that research on critical infrastructure protection has multiplied after high-profile terrorist attacks.

But does terrorism really impose a threat to critical infrastructure? By analysing the situation in the Middle-East, Khan (2024) pointed out that terrorism jeopardises the operation of infrastructure and negatively affects the economy by the devastation of infrastructure and interrupting the services and commercial operations. Glickman (2008) identified terrorism as an enormous challenge to critical infrastructure protection. It has been assumed that critical infrastructure will be terrorists’ target in the future as well (Jenelius et al. 2010). Due to the so-called cascading effect, disruption of a sector may have an effect on other essential services as well (Sellevåg 2021). Financial services illustrate this cascading effect: operators of essential services naturally rely on the services of the banking industry. Therefore, for terrorists, causing outage of essential services can be an aim, but it is highly likely that critical infrastructure will be targeted.

Several analysis of terrorist attacks have found that attacks can either be simple, cheap, low-cost attacks or complex and costly ones. A case study of the energy sector was able to demonstrate that attackers can cause serious damage with simple tools and explosives (Eze et al. 2017). Besenyő (2021) has mentioned cases when terrorists attacked hospitals with knives, baseball bats and stones. On the other hand, terrorism has also been identified as a threat that has to be covered by information security (Theoharidou et al. 2008). Technology has been found as a tool used by terrorists to provide information, solicit financial support, connect with others, recruit and gather information (Quigley et al. 2015). It has been demonstrated that terrorist groups are actively using the internet and social media for their malicious activities (Besenyő and Sinkó 2021). Moreover, some of the terrorist groups even have their own secret service (Sinkó and Besenyő 2024) which clearly shows their potential and capabilities. Marx et al. (2024) have suggested that the two major terror threats to hospitals are the attacks with conventional weapons and cyber-attacks. According to Chen et al. (2011), the technological development and terrorism clearly show



the fragility of our society. It should be mentioned that some terrorist groups are supported by states (Kocjančič 2023). Terrorism can be an integrated part of the so-called proxy war (Boda 2023), therefore, some of the terrorist groups can have financial support and technology to carry out a high-level attack against critical infrastructure. These results highlight the importance of protecting critical infrastructure.

Analysing the terrorism in Cabo Delgado, Besenyő and Hegedűs (2024) demonstrated that banks were attacked as the infrastructure of financial services were also targeted by terrorists. The motivations of terrorist attacks on the banking industry may vary, but certainly there is the goal of disseminating fear, causing mass confusion and causing financial loss. Beside the financial loss due to the obvious physical damage, it has been proved that terrorism decrease the GDP per capita (Paul and Bagchi 2023). Conflicts and terrorism negatively affect businesses and investments. Attacking banks and business can lead to these desired results, especially if the above-mentioned cascading effect is taken into consideration. The outage of the banking services may cause liquidity problems in other critical sectors and can lead to political instability. Moreover, Posso (2023) has demonstrated that in regions hit by terrorism and armed conflict, people tend to choose informal financial services, which are considered less vulnerable to conflict and terrorism. A connection has been established between the uncontrolled, informal financial services, e.g., hawala, and the finance of terrorism and money laundering (Somogyi and Nagy 2023a). Moreover, legislative controls over the services of the banking industry are an integral part of counter-terrorism (Jirásek 2023). Another possible motivation for terrorists to cause (financial) instability by targeting critical infrastructure is connected to migration. A link has been established between migration generated by instability and terrorist groups who are engaged in human trafficking (Nagy et al. 2023). Overall, these findings underline that essential services, including financial services, need to be secured against terrorist attacks.

Previous studies have demonstrated the increasing threat of terrorism to critical infrastructure and have suggested a continuing trend. Beside the conventional weapons, the usage of modern technology for terrorist activities also has been shown. Hence the importance of advancing the knowledge on terrorism and contributing to the field of critical infrastructure protection, including the banking industry. Having discussed the threat of terrorism to critical infrastructure, the following part will examine the terrorist attacks on the banking industry.

2. Terrorist Attacks against the European Banking Industry - Research Results

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) has been queried as described in the Methodology. In the result, 153 terrorist attacks were identified and all of them were categorised into four groups. The two major categories are the *bombing/explosion*



and the *facility/infrastructure attack*. There are two small categories as well, the *armed assault* and the *hostage taking*. These category names are used in the attack type field in the GTD. Quotations in the following pages are taken from the Summary field that contains the summary of the incident.

The biggest group of terrorist attacks against banks is the facility/infrastructure attack. In 79 cases out of 153, a facility or infrastructure has been attacked. For instance, in Thessaloniki, Greece, on May 27, 2008, “an incendiary device was thrown at the Millennium bank subsidiary in Thessaloniki, Greece by unknown anarchists”. Another example is the attack on October 16, 2017, when “an assailant set fire to a Banque de France branch in Place de la Bastille, Paris, France”. Another reported case happened in Oiartzun, Spain, on May 24, 2003, when one of the BBVA bank’s ATM machines “was burnt after radicals threw two Molotov cocktail at the machine”. Beside these individual cases, there were attacks that are linked to each other by the authorities. An example in this regard is the series of events which happened on February 17, 2006, when “suspected anarchists used homemade incendiary devices in five arson attacks targeting banks, which occurred within 30 minutes of one another, in the greater Athens area of Greece”. Another reported case refer to the three attacks on April 3, 2006, when three Turkish bank branches damaged in an overnight gasoline-bomb attack in Northern London, UK. A similar event took place on December 13, 2020, when “assailants threw a Molotov cocktail at a Hellenic Bank branch in Agia Fyla, Limassol, Cyprus” as part of two related attacks. Perhaps the biggest coordinated terrorist attacks against banks happened on November 30, 2014, when assailants set fire to seven ATMs in Athens, Greece, on the same day. Out of 79 facility/infrastructure attacks, 58 terrorist attacks are parts of related events, and only 21 cases are considered individual cases. Whether individual cases or not, in all cases facility damages were reported but no serious injury or death occurred. This is due to the fact, that in most of the cases, the attacks were outside of the opening hours, mostly at night or early in the morning.

The second category of the terrorist attacks against the banking industry is the bombing/explosion. It includes 67 cases out of the total of 153 attacks targeting banks. Explosives are used in these cases, e.g., on January 16, 2008, when a bank damaged in a bomb attack in Bastia, Corsica, France. Another example happened on April 25, 2016, when “assailants fired a rocket launcher at a Pivdennyi Bank building in Odesa, Ukraine”. Home-made devices are also used, for instance on May 13, 2002, when “two camping gas cylinders and several lead balls exploded at a La Caixa Bank cash dispenser in Barcelona, Spain”. In most of the cases the attackers could not be identified, however, in some cases, it was important for the terrorists to identify themselves. The following case clearly illustrates this. On April 10, 2018, “an explosive device detonated at a UniCredit bank in Bologna, Italy. Anarchists claimed responsibility for the incident in a note left at the scene criticising Turkish



President Recep Tayyip Erdogan”. These cases were individual ones, however, there are many coordinated series of attacks. Out of the total of 67 attacks in this category, 23 cases were part of a series of attacks. The following case is a good illustration of the coordinated attacks. On October 17, 2002, a week before Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy was scheduled to arrive, 14 explosions occurred throughout the night at various towns in Corsica, including four banks in Ghisonaccia, Corsica, France. A similar case occurred on January 21, 2008, when “unknown perpetrators detonated home-made bombs next to 6 banks, 22 vehicles and 3 luxury car showrooms in Athens and Salonica, Greece”. Another example is the case reported on January 24, 2013, when an explosive device detonated near a Credit Suisse bank branch in Zurich, Switzerland, as one of the two attacks in protest of the World Economic Forum. Interestingly, in the majority of the attacks, in the category of bombing/explosion, no serious injury or death was reported. This is due to the fact that these attacks were either carried out during non-working hours or terrorist paid attention to the people nearby. An example for the former type of attack is the case on the April 11, 2009, when “explosive device exploded outside an office building that houses an Alpha Bank branch and the offices of the Cetelem Insurance company” on Saturday night at 04:15. The following case in Newry, Northern Ireland clearly shows how terrorists took care of the people in order to avoid injuries. On August 22, 2011, two Irish nationalists carried a bomb concealed in a bag into a Santander Bank branch and shouted that the device would detonate in 45 minutes and then escaped on foot. The British army defused the bomb in time. It is clear that the attackers wanted to avoid injuries in Athens, Greece, as well, when on February 16, 2010, a time-bomb exploded outside a JP Morgan bank at 19:50. “Shortly before the bombing, a local newspaper received a warning call and in turn immediately informed the police”, so the area could be cordoned off in time.

These were the two major categories of the terrorist attacks (the bombing/explosion and the facility/infrastructure attack), and there are two small categories: the armed assault and the hostage taking. The result from the GTD contains two hostage taking cases and five armed assault cases as well. The two hostage takings were individual cases with no casualties, both of them are reported from Ukraine. The five reported armed assault attacks also ended without casualties. On April 28, 2014, assailants opened fire on a bank branch in Donetsk city, Ukraine, but did not cause any harm to anyone. The remaining four armed assault cases occurred on the January 1st, 2002, when “approximately 40 hooded assailants hurled Molotov cocktails and other incendiary devices at four Spanish banks in Guernica, Spain”, and also “assaulted local police patrols responding to the scene”.

Having explore the terrorist attacks by their categories, it is now necessary to examine the number of attacks by year in order to identify trends. Table no.1 shows the number of terrorist attacks against the European banking industry by year. Interestingly, there are significant differences between the number of cases over time.



Table no. 1: Number of terrorist attacks against the European banking industry, by year²

Year	Facility/ Infrastructure attack	Bombing/ Explosion	Total number of attacks
2002	3	9	16
2003	7	0	7
2004	0	2	2
2005	0	2	2
2006	9	6	15
2007	1	4	5
2008	17	7	24
2009	14	5	19
2010	1	2	3
2011	0	2	2
2012	0	3	3
2013	2	4	6
2014	10	5	17
2015	3	9	12
2016	3	2	5
2017	4	2	6
2018	0	1	1
2019	0	2	2
2020	5	0	6
2021	0	0	0

In summary, the GTD contains 153 terrorist attacks against banks or ATMs, of which in the most cases are either bombing/explosion or facility/infrastructure attack. Although in some cases the physical damage is significant, no death or serious injury has been reported. The next section discusses our findings based on these 153 cases.

3. Discussion

The current study found that terrorists have attacked the European banking industry 153 times since 2001. This is the most important finding, it further supports that banks are threatened by terrorism. The reported cases clearly show that the main goal is not killing or causing injuries but causing damage to the infrastructure. This seems to be consistent with the literature reviewed in the beginning of this

² Source: edited by the authors based on the GTD



paper, suggesting that terrorism jeopardises the critical infrastructure. The cases also confirm that terrorist activities have political goals. The above-mentioned attacks in Corsica in 2002 and in Bologna in 2018 were clearly politically motivated terrorist attacks. Therefore, in general, it seems that banks and ATMs are attractive targets for terrorists. Taking into consideration that terrorism may increase in Europe, it is probable that terrorist attacks against the European banking industry will continue in the future.

Thus, a question arises, namely “It is possible to identify patterns or tendencies that have emerged over the past two decades?” The number of terrorist attacks by year (Table no. 1) shows differences between the years. There were years with only a few cases, but periodically there is a sharp rise. With a small sample of two decades, caution must be applied, however, it is likely that terrorist attacks against banks rise in every six years or so. It is important to bear in mind that the war in Ukraine affects the security in Europe (e.g., Štrucl 2022; Somogyi and Nagy 2023b), therefore a shift in this period is possible. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be prepared for further terrorist attacks against the banking industry.

These findings may be somewhat limited by the data of GTD. The database is believed to be accurate, however, it is possible that cases are missing from the database that were not identified as terrorist attacks, but were committed by terrorists (e.g., bankrobbery in order to make money for their malicious activities).

After providing insights into the terrorist attacks, some recommendations can be given. As the most important result is that terrorism poses a serious threat to the banking industry, the first recommendation is that more research is needed to support the efforts of counter-terrorism and critical infrastructure protection. Although the reported cases show that killing or causing injuries was not an intention in the past, it may change in the future. Galehan (2019) has pointed out that the terrorist group Boko Haram took advantage of women, using them in suicide bombings. Therefore, it can also be recommended to make the necessary preparation against bombing attacks during working hours. The consequences of killing and causing injuries by bombing an open bank branch would be serious. In addition to this, data clearly shows that some European countries suffer much from terrorist attacks, e.g., Greece, Spain and the UK. Exploring ways of effective international cooperation on sharing information, training and research can also be recommended. Such cooperation may be incentivised on EU level, e.g., by the European Central Bank.

Conclusion

Based on the literature, there are reasons to suggest that terrorist groups target the banking industry worldwide. This study set out to investigate the terrorist attacks against banks in Europe by analysing the cases recorded in Global Terrorism Database.



The results of our research could underpin that European banks are jeopardised. This study has found that the vast majority of terrorist attacks over the last two decades were targeted the infrastructure outside of the working hours, thus no death or serious injury reported. Examining the number of attacks by years, a pattern has also been identified: there is a sharp rise in terrorist attacks periodically. Therefore, it is highly probable that similar incidents will continue to occur in the upcoming years.

Taken together, these findings suggest that more research and actions are needed. To support this, three recommendations were provided in this study: i) further studies which take into account the threat of terrorism to the banking industry; ii) make the necessary preparation for being protected against bombing attacks during working hours; iii) explore ways of effective international cooperation on sharing information, training and research.

This study highlighted our understanding of terrorism and its impact, and also the importance of protecting critical infrastructure which incorporates the banking industry. Our findings and recommendations are relevant to researchers, operators of essential services, law enforcement agencies and policy-makers.

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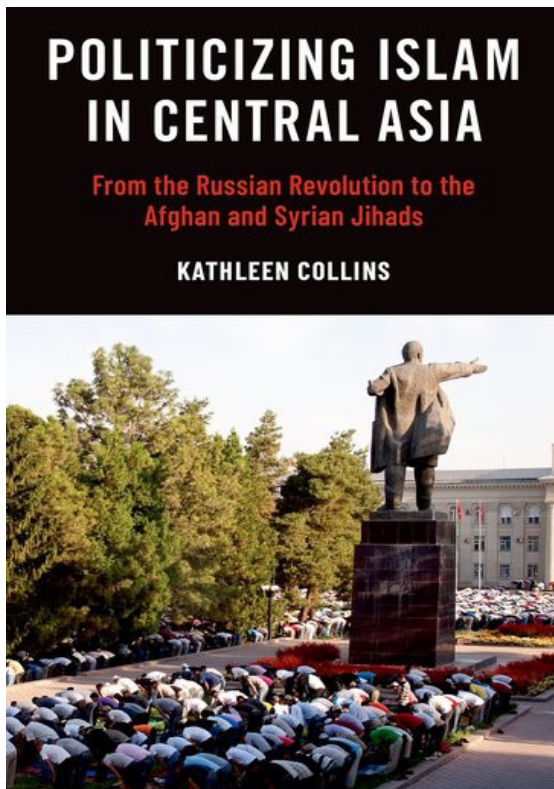


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POLITICIZING ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA, FROM THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION TO THE AFGHAN AND SYRIAN JIHADS

by Kathleen Collins



We continue our security culture tradition by sharing with our readers a few ideas from a new editorial release that, as it is our strong belief, will hold your interest. The book, signed by Mrs. Kathleen Collins, a well-known associated professor and expert in the Islamic culture, is titled *Politicizing Islam in Central Asia: From the Russian Revolution to the Afghan and Syrian Jihads*, and next we present its review.

Professor Collins visited “Carol I” National defence University in June this year and had the opportunity to introduce to academic professors and students as well, her new research topic, which was published by Oxford University Press, and which represents the author’s second book on existing challenges in Central Asia.

Her first book, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, published by Cambridge University Press in 2008, won the Central Eurasian Studies Society Award for the Best Book in the Social Sciences on Central Asia. This makes Mrs. Collins an excellent expert on Central Asia matters.¹

As the author mentions, this highly interdisciplinary study consists of 15 chapters divided into six parts that offer a “ground-breaking study of Islam’s evolution in

¹ As per the official page of Amazon.com – About the author, site <https://www.amazon.com/stores/author/B0BY5LXKGV/about>



Central Asia”, as well as a significant “new interpretation of Islamism’s causes using original primary source evidence, which includes hundreds of Soviet-era archival documents, oral histories, and a trove of interviews and focus groups with Muslim leaders, Islamist activists, and ordinary Central Asians²”

In order to achieve her intended research objectives, Professor Collins spent a long time researching and writing on this project, almost during the same years that marked the growth and spread of Islamism across the region in former Soviet so-called ‘Stan’ states (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan or Kyrgyzstan), offering important insights for policy makers and human rights activists about a sweeping history of Islamism in Central Asia from the Russian Revolution to the present.

Few observers anticipated a surge of Islamism in Central Asia, after seventy years of forced communist atheism. Muslims do not inevitably support Islamism, a modern political ideology of Islam. Yet, Islamism became the dominant form of political opposition in post-Soviet Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In her new book, Kathleen Collins explores the causes, dynamics, and variation of Islamist movements – first within the former USSR, and then in the post-Soviet states in Central Asia. Drawing upon extensive ethnographic and historical research on Islamist mobilisation, she explains the strategies and relative success of each Central Asian Islamist movement, arguing that in each case, state repression of Islam, by Soviet and post-Soviet regimes, together with the diffusion of religious ideologies, motivated Islamist mobilisation. Sweeping in scope, this book traces the dynamics of Central Asian Islamist movements from the Soviet era through the Tajik civil war, the Afghan jihad against the US, and the foreign fighter movement joining the Syrian jihad³.

During her research methods used to finalise this reader-friendly manuscript in a balanced manner of historical accuracy and cultural respect for local particularities, Mrs. Collins considers that she encountered many complications – ranging from multiple times changes in the spelling and alphabets’ writing and reading (from Cyrillic to Latin) to serious movements of geographical borders of Central Asian countries, as well as political and religious changes in many of them. Even so, her main goal was to respect the Central Asian languages and cultures, maximise consistency, and ease the nonspecialist’s burden.

Therefore, the narrative of her book is oriented in providing adequate answers to two interrelated sets of questions. The first set is strictly linked to the understanding of Islamist emergence or non-emergence over time and space, including language and the defining character of political opposing movements, the different spread of Islamism in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and the three waves of Islamist movements from 1980s to 2010s. The second set is centred on whether and how Islamists attract popular support, including their media campaign, strategies

² The quotation source is Mr. Mike Croissant, a retired US government counterterrorism official.

³ Kathleen Collins: *Politicizing Islam in Central Asia: From the Russian Revolution to the Afghan and Syrian Jihads*, Oxford University Press, New York, the USA, 2023, on the cover.



employed to win social bases, ordinary people attractiveness to all/any Islamist movements and why are some of them sympathetic to Islamist ideas.

The first part of the book starts with an excellent and comprehensive description of the history of political Islam in Central Asia, followed by outstanding definitions of the core concepts of political Islam versus Islamism, and Muslim politics versus civil Islam. Without a clear understanding of the differences of some ideological terminology such as Islam, Muslim and Islamism, someone who is not a specialist could consider every Islamism a radicalistic, an extremist or, even worse, a terrorist. This part of the book develops the author's arguments and analytical framework.

The second part examines Central Asia during the Soviet communist rules, highlighting the idea of the foundation of Islamist opposition in the twenty century, as a result of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's antireligious policies. At the end, the main focus of this part is on the existing conditions of state repression and politicization of Islamic identity, alongside growing association space to disseminate Islamist ideas, which fostered the emergence of Islamist entrepreneurs. The next three parts (III to V) represent real case studies of the three waves of Islamist mobilisation in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan over nearly 50 years of Soviet and post-Soviet history, starting with the Gorbachiev's "perestroika" and finishing with the Muslim religious freedom, justice, and national Islamic revival through nonviolent means in 2000s.

The last part examines the surprising rise of foreign fighter movements in Syria and Iraq with the diffusion of Salafi jihadist ideology by radical entrepreneurs through online associated space. The main conclusion of this part is the fact that the idea of ISIS and Al-Qaida movements did not resonate with most Central Asians. Even so, by using efficient social media, enhance their sacred authority, and develop networks to mobilise thousands of fighters, Talibans obtained victory in Afghanistan.

The research project uses 23 well-designed images, seven detailed tables and seven descriptive maps of all Central Asia countries and neighbours meant to strongly argue the author's statements and ideas. These figures highlight the fact that Islamism is varied and complex, and the process of Islamist mobilisation is embedded in Central Area's historical and political context. In this respect, the most Central Asians want to believe and practice their faith under a just state and not through militant jihadists or a caliphate.

In conclusion, the author considers that studying Central Asia might provide novel insights into why Islamists sometimes emerge and mobilise and why the majority of Muslims reject radical and violent forms of Islamism. As Professor Collins mentions, a better understanding of Islamism's roots causes and dynamics over time is crucial for politicians, scholars, and the non-professionals who, many times, associate the instability and conflict with some Islamic movements in Central Asia and surrounding countries, especially targeting the West⁴.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 21-22.



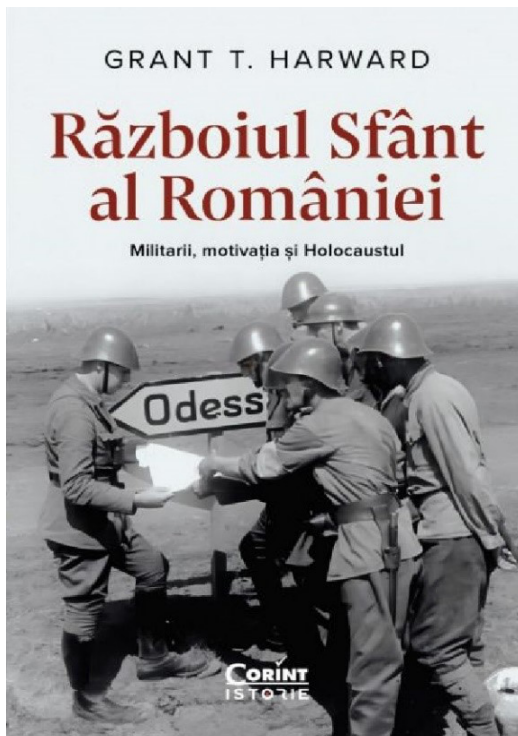
After lecturing this very interesting book, we consider the theoretical and empiric accent of this research project as being in line with the one of the Strategic Impact Journal. Therefore, we invite you to discover a well-argued and logical constructed research book, which presents a little addressed topic in the Romanian Armed Forces – the history of Islam and Islamic movements in Central Asia. Katleen Collinns’ remarkable feat of scholarship should be required reading for all students, academic professors, serious analysts and observers of Central Asia and Islam.

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ROMANIA'S HOLY WAR: A THOUGHTFUL STUDY

by Grant T. Harward



World War II is a difficult subject in the Romania's past, which needs to be approached with clarity and intellectual honesty. The state and society engaged in one of the biggest massacres of their history, the Holocaust against the Jewish and Romapopulations. Romania started the war as a defeated and humiliated country and ended it in a similar condition after horrific losses, under foreign occupation. Grant T. Harward's study, *Romania's Holy War; Soldiers, Motivation and the Holocaust*, is an important contribution to the effort of understanding and grasping with the event of that period, and I will review the Romanian translation¹.

The author is an American military historian who did research in this country. Grant T. Harward combines two directions

of investigation, often kept apart. One is the study of Holocaust; the other is the history and analysis of military operations during World War II. *Romania's Holy War* main thesis is that these approaches should be treated together, that they are linked because the genocides were influenced by the state of the morale of the armed forces, which interacted with the fighting. Morale refers here to the psychology and the ideology of military units, and of Antonescu's dictatorial regime, who governed during that period. There are two components to its study, according to *Romania's Holy War*: the constitution and the intensity². Romania's Army morale during

¹ Photo source: www.libris.ro.

² See: Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



World War II combined religion, nationalism, antisemitism, and anticommunism, which are detailed in the book (pages 46-51). Ideology interacted with small group cohesion in fights and massacres, argues Grant T. Harward. These four factors were not restricted to the military realm. They contributed decisively to Romania's foreign policy orientation towards Nazi Germany, alongside the external conjuncture and the events. The fall of France in the summer of 1940 was the most important of the latter, according to Grant T. Harward. In *Romania's Holy War*, the author insists that between 1940 and 1944 the ideology was the most significant source of foreign policy, in comparison with other causes such as the European and regional distribution of power.

The strength of morale was significant and it was the result of ideology, propaganda, discipline, and the state of military operations. *Romania's Holy War* main thesis is that when optimism, belief in the success of the war and small group cohesion prevailed, the killings and deportations of Jewish and Roma people were at their maximum intensity. This offers a key to explain the Iasi Pogrom, the murders which accompanied the recovery of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, the massacre of Odessa, the deportations, and executions in Transdnistria, and others. They were more frequent during the period between 1941 up to the summer of 1943, when Romanian's forces and regime morale was high, and declined after, according to Grant T. Harward.

In *Romania's Holy War*, one example is the Odesa massacre. Once Romania entered World War II, alongside Nazi Germany, in 1941, during a campaign when things did not end up as well as the decision-makers expected, Antonescu's regime overplayed its hand and wanted a prestige victory. Grant T. Harward points out that, plagued by lack of equipment and leadership mistakes, the Romanian forces managed to take the city with huge losses, once the German pressure compelled the Soviet units to withdraw. The building chosen to host the military headquarters blew up and the Romanian forces killed tens thousands of Jewish residents, and deported tens of thousands more.

Military effectiveness is another part of Grant T. Harward study, a topic often ignored in Romanian historiography. The author considers that its political component was good, taken account of the context, but he states that the Romanian operational control of its troops was infrequent, which is a consequence of the relationship with Germany and of diplomacy (pages 51-54). Even when national control was restored, according to *Romania's Holy War*, the operations were sometimes faulty and subjected to political interference. There were also several long-term weaknesses such as a tendency to conceive the strategic goals in an overly optimistic manner, to overestimate one's strength, excessive centralism in planning and execution and lack of equipment.



The author also undertook a detailed analysis of Romania's army structure of that time. For example, the officer corps was privileged, trained according to elitist values, with the cavalry and mountaineers being highly regarded, but its performance was mixed. Grant T. Harward states in *Romania's Holy War. Soldiers, Motivation and the Holocaust* that a professional NCO corps did not exist and thus, a significant cleavage divided the officers from the recruits, which reflected social and cultural features. The access of minorities was restricted, especially for the higher echelons.

A strong point of this book is the diversity of sources employed. Grant T. Harward relies on convention bibliographies of Holocaust studies and military history, to which he adds several war diaries, his personal documentation from the archives, or a few propaganda products especially a comic series, *Peripețiile soldatului Neață* (The Adventures of Private Morning). This makes *Romania's Holy War* an interesting text, with a variety of topics. The reader needs to be aware of this diversity and that sometimes, there is a need to go back to previous sections of the book.

Military history is often practiced in an apologetic manner, and it may become less useful from both intellectual and practical points of views. It does not satisfy one's curiosity and wish to understand the past, nor does it identify lessons, issues which should be avoided. Newer trends have started to change that, a development which *Romania's Holy War* encourages, with its innovative approaches. The Romanian edition was translated by historian Alina Pavelescu and prefaced by another historian, Mioara Anton.

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GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

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

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- ✓ **Compliance with the thematic area of the journal – security and strategic studies** and the following topics: political-military topical aspects, trends and perspectives in security, defence, geopolitics and geostrategies, international relations, intelligence, information society, peace and war, conflict management, military strategy, cyber-security;
- ✓ **Originality** of the paper – own argumentation; novelty character – not priorly published;
- ✓ **Quality of the scientific content** – neutral, objective style, argumentation of statements and mentioning of all references used;
- ✓ **A relevant bibliography**, comprising recent and prestigious specialized works, including books, presented according to herein model;
- ✓ **English language** shall meet academic standards (British or American usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these).
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- ✓ **Article length** may vary between **6 and 12 pages** (25.000 - 50.000 characters), including bibliography, tables and figures, if any.
- ✓ **Page settings**: margins – 2 cm, A 4 format.
- ✓ The article shall be written in **Times New Roman font, size 12, one-line spacing.**
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ARTICLE STRUCTURE

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



confusion), main institutional affiliation and position held, military rank, academic title, scientific title (PhD title or PhD Candidate – domain and university), city and country of residence, e-mail address.

- ✓ A relevant **abstract**, not to exceed 150 words (italic characters)
- ✓ 6-8 relevant **keywords** (italic characters)
- ✓ **Introduction / preliminary considerations**
- ✓ **2 - 4 chapters** (numbered, starting with 1) (subchapters if applicable)
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- ✓ **Tables / graphics / figures**, if they are useful for the argumentation, with reference made in the text. They shall be also sent in .jpeg /.png/.tiff format as well.

In the case of tables, please mention above “**Table no. X:** Title”, while in the case of figures there shall be mentioned below (e.g. maps, etc.), “**Figure no. X:** Title” and the source, if applicable, shall be mentioned in a footnote.

REFERENCES

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

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

The article will comprise in-text citation and bibliography (in alphabetical order), according to The Chicago Manual of Style¹, as in examples below:

BOOK

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

Grazer, Brian, and Charles Fishman. 2015. *A Curious Mind: The Secret to a Bigger Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Smith, Zadie. 2016. *Swing Time*. New York: Penguin Press.

In-text citation

(Grazer and Fishman 2015, 12)

(Smith 2016, 315–16)

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



CHAPTER OF AN EDITED BOOK

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

Reference list entry

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

In-text citation

(Thoreau 2016, 177–78)

ARTICLE

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

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

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

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

In-text citation

(Keng, Lin, and Orazem 2017, 9–10)

(LaSalle 2017, 95)

WEBSITE CONTENT

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

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

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

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

Citare în text

(Bouman 2016)

(Google 2017)

(Yale University, n.d.)



NEWS OR MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Articles from newspapers or news sites, magazines, blogs, and like are cited similarly. In the reference list, it can be helpful to repeat the year with sources that are cited also by month and day. If you consulted the article online, include a URL or the name of the databases.

Reference list entries (in alphabetical order)

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

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

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

In-text citation

(Manjoo 2017)

(Mead 2017, 43)

(Pai 2017)

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