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EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE – KEY ELEMENTS OF DEEP INTEGRATION AT THE LEVEL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*Colonel Mădălin Adrian BANGALĂ**

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to highlight the key elements in European security and defence that enables a deeper integration within the European Union. The security and defence represent a fundamental domain in the European architecture, a benchmark, and a challenge regarding the loyal cooperation between Member States.
The methodology used is represented by a synthetic qualitative documentary analysis with an additional quantitative support. The research hypothesis is related to the correlation of key elements in the field of security and defence with the development of a deeper integration of Member States into the European project. As their own defence and security policies belong to the Member States, the research question will provide the answer to whether key elements in European security and defence generate better cooperation between Member States and deeper integration.
This article aims to provide a profound understanding of the obligations, challenges, and the impact on the Member States policy on common defence. Following the latest developments in implementing the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, new steps should be taken to achieve the common defence goal.
The presentation will also seek to highlight whether the coherence of Member States policies on achieving the common goal is linked to their deeper integration into the European project.

Keywords: Cooperation; common defence; strategies; legal framework; integration, challenges.

1. Introduction

The European security and defence require today a systematic and full recognition as a fundamental domain in the European Union (EU) development. It stands as a benchmark but also as a great challenge in Member States cooperation, a pivotal point in writing the future of the Union.

From the political standpoint the development of the security and defence at European level represents a main goal and an achievement in deepening the Member States integration. But from a security and defence point of view are the Member States capable of developing a coherent and unique approach to achieve this goal? Are they prepared and do they really cooperate in a loyal and foreseeable manner?

The Treaty of the European Union (TEU), better known as *The Maastricht Treaty* imposed a common goal for the Member States, respectively to achieve the *common defence*, without interfering into their national security and defence policies. For that, the research hypothesis is going to be analysed in relation with the key elements in the field of security and defence. Since their own defence and security policies belong to the Member States, the research question will provide an answer if the core developments of the European security and defence could generate better cooperation among the Member States and a deeper integration within the European architecture.

The present research focuses, firstly, on providing a profound understanding of the obligations, as well as of the challenges faced by the Member States in achieving the common objective – the European defence. The harmonization with Member States' security and defence strategies and policies adopted or in process of being enacted could provide the proper answer to a deeper collaboration and integration in the European defence.

Using a synthetic qualitative documentary analysis including a literature review with an additional quantitative support, the article aims to provide the impact of the security and defence policies of the Member States on the common defence objective.

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2. A deeper integration in security and defence

2.1. Strategic Compass – a step forward to a deeper integration

European Union defence readiness can be defined as a steady state of preparedness of the Union and its Member States to protect the security of its citizens, the integrity of its territory and critical assets or infrastructures, and its core democratic values and processes (European Commission 2024). The definition given by the European Commission in March 2024 in the new European Defence Industrial Strategy comprises the general understanding of the role of all the actors in implementing a real European common defence.

A pivotal shift in implementing a common defence remains the unprovoked, illegal, and unjustified on-going aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, started in February 2022. It should be noted that Russia`s annexation of Crimea in 2014 was signalising not only its assertiveness or the audacity in tackling the West (how it was interpreted), but also the fact that all former boundaries, established after the fall of the Iron Curtain were at risk.

Either way, EU shifted from a long, standing non-confrontational relation with Russia to a more practical and strategic oriented one. The Strategic Compass represents a capstone document that was negotiated and embraced by all Member States. They acknowledged the need for common defence and cooperation, to counterpose Russian aggression. In addition, their cooperation in developing The Strategic Compass was aiming to reshape the strategic vision of EU as a united block for the next decade.

The Strategic Compass for security and defence is a programmatic document, a strategy, a vision of the Member States in boosting together their security and defence on four major pillars – Act, Secure, Invest and Partner. EU is posing itself as a real Union in security and defence.

The EU acknowledged the need to enhance its strategic autonomy and ability to work with partners to safeguard its values and interests. A stronger and more capable EU in security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO (Council of the EU 2022).

Two years after the Strategic Compass, EU is more than ever aware of the necessity to establish a European Defence Union that maximizes the effectiveness of its missions and operations abroad, the joint development and procurement of defence capabilities, and the robustness of the European defence industry (EEAS 2024).

On the *Act* pillar EU is projecting a Rapid Deployment Capacity who will comprise 5,000 troops and is designed to be more flexible, with the ability to include specialist units and air and sea capabilities. This implies the capacity to deploy force in case of wider range of scenarios, such as the rescue of EU citizens from a civil war zone or the stabilization of a country in the immediate aftermath of hostilities (Gallagher 2022).

EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC) is planned to be fully operational by 2025. As of 2024, three operational scenarios have been finalised, including military support to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, allowing EU to advance on the planning and requirements. The first ever EU live military exercise with units, troops, and personnel from 19 Member States took place in October 2023 in Spain and is essential to enhance the readiness and interoperability of Member States`s troops. The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) is transforming by doubling numbers in staff and operating new infrastructure equipped with state-of-the-art capabilities and secure communications (EEAS 2024).

In order to boost EU`s intelligence-based situational awareness, on *Secure* pillar, steps were made in strengthening the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity and Satellite Centre from Torrejon which provides an unique and autonomous geo-spatial intelligence capability (Union and Policy 2023).

Also, The EU's cyber defence policy is to be better resourced to counter cyber-attacks from criminals and belligerent nations, and a "hybrid toolbox" is to be created to respond to hybrid threats (Gallagher 2022).

Furthermore, the establishment of the FIMI Information Sharing and Analysis Centre provides a common analytical framework and methodology among Member States, partners and other actors, to expose, attribute and propose restrictive measures against perpetrators (EEAS 2024).

The fight against terrorism, violent extremism, radicalization, cyber and hybrid threats, organized crime are topics on which EU is increasing its efforts to take effective measures.

Climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters are impacting security landscape over the next decades and are proven drivers for instability and conflict around the globe (Council of the EU 2022). Alongside with the ongoing harsh and tide race and competition for natural resources (energy, rare metals, etc.) all are detailing a security environment that need to be approached on a common manner by EU and the Member States.

In the *Invest* pillar, the defence spending in the EU has been on a rise. In 2022, total defence expenditure amounted to EUR 240 billion, of which EUR 58 billion was allocated to investments. In 2023, the defence expenditure, including investment, were estimated to reach EUR 290 billion and EUR 92 billion, respectively. While EU Member States collectively surpass the 20% investment target, total defence expenditure is still only 1.5% of the Gross Domestic Product overall, albeit with large differences between Member States (EEAS 2024).

Furthermore, EU promoted, in March 2023, the Ammunition Initiative, as a reaction to Ukraine and Member States' urgent needs for artillery ammunition and missiles. This was financed with EUR 2 billion from the European Peace Facility, and EUR 500 million from the EU-budget for industrial ramp-up, and was enacted in The Act in Support of Ammunition Production (EEAS 2024).

Also, to respond to the need for collaboration for short-time joint procurements of ammunitions, air and missile defence or platforms and replacement of legacy systems, EU adopted the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act, with a total budget of EUR 310 million.[1]

Moreover, in March 2024 in order to achieve readiness through a responsive and resilient European Defence Industry in a turbulent geopolitical environment EU adopted The European Defence Industrial Strategy (European Commission 2024).

As *partner*, EU developed robust bi and multilateral partnerships to enhance and boost interests and security and address global challenges. These partnerships cover different regions on the world`s map and involve cooperation with both individual countries and international organizations. The EU-NATO partnership is fundamental, NATO remaining the main element and pillar in Europe`s defence. Also, the transatlantic strategic partnership with the USA has been enhanced. The relations with the UN, the African Union and ASEAN have been strengthened. EU is engaging in Western Balkans more and is providing aid, support, or assistance to its Eastern partners like Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, or Armenia. The tailored bilateral partnerships with UK, Canada, Norway, Iceland, or Switzerland have been enforced. Discussions and cooperations on security and defence with Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana, and Nigeria from African region or with Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Israel, and Türkiye from the Mediterranean region have been engaged and deepened. Also, Latin America has become a point of interest for EU.

A special mention is the Indo-Pacific region in which EU has already shown boosting interest. Dedicated security and defence dialogues and consultations took place with Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, Japan, India and the Republic of Korea, enabling increased coordination and pursuit of shared interests (EEAS 2024).

On the other hand, EU defined its own relations with China and Russia. China is seen as a is a partner for cooperation, an economic competitor, and a systemic rival. China is increasingly both involved and engaged in regional tensions and has substantially developed its military means aiming impact on regional and global security (Council of the EU 2022). With China, EU continues to hold security and defence consultations (EEAS 2024).

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[1]   https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/eu-defence-industry/edirpa-procuring-together-defence-capabilities_en, accessed at 10.06.2024.

While China is a rival, Russia is an aggressor state that violated the international law and the principles of UN Charter, undermining European and global security and stability (Council of the EU 2022).

The mentioned point of view over China and Russia represents an important re-evaluation in EU policy and EU vision, by aggregating a new way of relating with the two states. It is an improvement by comparison with 2016 EU Global Strategy – where Russia, for example, was seen as a state who violates international law, but still a state interdependent with EU (EEAS 2017) – and it could stand as a solid foundation for further development in EU foreign and security policies.

Nevertheless, the Strategic Compass is a relevant step forward in fostering the security and defence on a limited scale, having its own shortcomings and limitations. For example, in enhancing crisis management capacity, the Strategic Compass should have defined a specifically defence role for the EU beyond the coordination of the national defence policies. (Sweeney and Winn 2022). However, this did not happen, so the Strategic Compass remains a document with limited obligation and force.

2.2. Security and defence strategies among the Member States

The new clear and present threats posed by the Russian aggression, or the surge of new potential or ongoing conflicts (in Middle East, Indo-Pacific region, Sahel, and Sub-Sahel Africa) have raised awareness of the Member States in tackling the complex security and defence domain.

In this general case we must ask the question if the steps taken together by the Member State will overwrite the national policies in terms of security and defence, or the national policies will prevail and generate shrinkage and neck bottling opinions on EU integrated approach on security and defence?

The answer is divided by two choices:

• A declarative approach that will always generate political discussions and contradictions.

• A factual one, based on the analysis of the measures and policies taken by the EU and the Member States on security and defence.

The factual base is regarded as a main proven track to understand the insight and development of European security and defence at Member States and EU level. Looking at the documents and strategies adopted or in process of being enacted nowadays, may provide relevant conclusions on EU`s security and defence.

Member States started to update, rewrite, or simply review their security and defence strategies, giving the EU security and defence a proper framework and a different approach comparing to former strategies and doctrines.

France adopted in 2022 a National Security Review an ambitious document in correlation with the Strategic Compass that stipulates France's role as a key player in world security, but also EU's role. EU is perceived to become a global player, a credible defender of free access to contested domains ((cyber, space, seabed and air-sea spaces)) in the face of its competitors' hybrid strategies (SGDSN – Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale 2022).

Germany adopted in 2023 its first National Security Strategy, a monumental shift in country's political and strategical vision regarding security and defence after World War II. The strategy recognises Germany's identity, its values and interest. Germany sees as a major responsibility for itself, ensuring that the EU will be able to geopolitically act and to uphold its security and sovereignty for the coming generations (Bundesregierung 2023). Germany remains committed to NATO and the EU and sees the development of EU security and defence as a key element in achieving its own goals and interests.

The Netherlands reshaped its view on security and defence by approving The Security Strategy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 2023 in which they established their strategic course in security and defence. The Netherlands remains committed on developing and strengthening both NATO and the EU through investment in necessary military capabilities and intensified (European) defence cooperation (Government of The Netherlands 2023).

Denmark, a country which adopted after the Maastricht Treaty a form of non-engagement in EU security and defence policies through an opt-out clause, reviewed completely its approach (Milne and Nordic 2022)(Tani 2022), and approved a new security and defence strategy. It stands in between the NATO commitment on collective defence and the EU security and defence necessary development with a complementary and mutual beneficial expected outcomes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark 2023).

The Baltic states and the Northern states were and are also in process of adjusting their security and defence policies.

Whether they already shifted their vision through a more focused approach on defence, provided primarily and fundamentally by NATO – Latvia (SAEIMA – Latvia Parliament 2023), Estonia (RIIGIKOGU – Estonian Parliament 2023) or Lithuania[2], or they are in process of adopting new security and defence strategies embracing the same vision (Sweden[3], Finland[4]), all the mentioned countries remain committed to the EU projects on security and defence, being aware of the importance of EU as a global actor on the international stage.

Moreover, Luxembourg, in its Defence Guidelines 2035, is focusing on the development of European defence autonomy and enhanced EU-NATO cooperation (The Government of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg 2023).

This approach resembles with the strategies adopted earlier by Poland (Republic of Poland 2020), Romania (Parliament of Romania 2020), or Slovakia (National Council of the Slovak Republic 2021) in which NATO remains the main pillar of defence. In these cases, EU security and defence development becomes a relevant political task for the countries, their commitment in EU security and defence projects being profound. Also, the EU-NATO enhanced cooperation remains a fundamental pillar and a key topic.

In Slovenia's case, a proportionate part of Slovenian defence capabilities is devoted to the joint efforts of NATO and the European Union in security and defence areas. This aims to ensure a proportionate share of the joint responsibility for collective defence, solidarity, and security within NATO and the European Union (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia 2019).

In the same manner, Belgium (Conseil National de Sécurité 2021) or Spain are committed to greater European strategic autonomy, which calls for promoting the necessity of a greater cohesion and resilience among the Member States in order to implement the Common Security and Defence Policy and to give EU a leading role in assuring world order and security (Gobierno de Espana 2021).

The conclusion is partially applicable even in Hungary's[5] case, even if the Hungarian National Security Strategy adopted in 2020 sets the political necessity of a profound and deeper dialogue and collaboration with Russia and China.

On the other hand, Italy, a founding nation of the EU, a middle power, a G7 member with a considerable military force, is on the track of adopting its new first national security strategy[6], a milestone moment in the history and politics of a state that was always characterized by a political turmoil and non-consensus in this matter[7]. This strategy will emphasize Italy's role in the world being focused on its vision over Mediterranean region or North-Africa, Sahel, and Sub-Sahel region but also its ongoing and full commitment to NATO and EU security and defence development.

Also, Greece as a consistent supporter of the development of CSDP is engaging in military operations, civil missions and hybrid initiatives working towards its commitment to implement the strategic autonomy and to establish EU as an international security and stability main actor[8]. To

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[2] https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAD/3ec6a2027a9a11ecb2fe9975f8a9e52e?jfwid=rivwzvpvg, accessed at 25.04.2024.
[3] https://www.government.se/articles/2024/04/swedish-defence-commission-submits-final-report-on-military-defence-strengthened-defence-capability-sweden-as-an-ally/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
[4] https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/-//1410869/finnish-government-to-draw-up-national-security-strategy, accessed at 29.04.2024.
[5] https://honvedelem.hu/hirek/government-resolution-1163-2020-21st-april.html, accessed at 29.04.2024.
[6] https://decode39.com/7322/italy-new-national-security-strategy/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
[7] https://www.affarinternazionali.it/missioni-militari-governo-meloni-continuita-potenziali-novita/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
[8] https://www.mfa.gr/en/foreign-policy/greece-in-the-eu/eu-common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp.html, accessed in 29.04.2024.

conceptualize and to codify the EU and NATO commitments and to tackle the most complex security problems and challenges, Greece is developing its own National Security Strategy[9].

Furthermore, Portugal is reviewing its Strategic Defence Concept and is going to provide a clear vision of its place in the world, being fully committed to develop its policies based on NATO Strategic Concept and EU Strategic Compass[10].

In the same manner Croatia is updating its own security strategy[11], the main pillars in defence being NATO, as a guarantor of peace, stability, and security, and EU. Within EU's CSDP, Croatia actively contributes to missions and operations[12].

A particular case in EU, Austria, a neutral country by its constitutional definition (Austrian National Council 1955), is updating its national security strategy. As the Austrian government mentioned, recent developments in the field of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) such as EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, which defines the EU's objectives and priorities and takes steps towards an EU Security Union are also not sufficiently reflected in the former security strategy adopted in 2013[13].

In terms of neutrality, Ireland is also discussing and debating on security policy. Since the war in Ukraine started, the Irish government has increased its security and defence engagement with the EU and NATO by joining the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), the European Hybrid Threats Centre of Excellence and a range of EU PESCO defence projects[14]. Furthermore, in 2023, a national Consultative Forum on International Security Policy established its purpose as being to build public understanding and generate discussion on the link between the State's foreign, security, and defence policies (Louise Richardson 2023). Ireland's role in multilateral fora and involvement in defence-related areas through such activities as the CSDP and PESCO in the EU and Partnership for Peace with NATO (Louise Richardson 2023) represents real steps taken in enhancing Ireland's security.

Malta, another member state, neutral by its own constitution, has maintained a moderate line in security and defence policies, not actively participating in either CSDP or other cooperation formats.

On the other hand, Cyprus, a Member State that has important security issues at hand due to the non-recognized Turkish Republic of Northen Cyprus, has taken actions on security and defence by putting into force his first National Security Council, with a mission to generate ideas, recommendations, and practical proposals regarding matters of national security (including a national security strategy), to decision-making bodies in Cyprus[15].

3. Discussion and conclusions on common and loyal cooperation among states on security and defence

Discussions

Common defence is a goal and a perspective. Whether all the EU States Members are *de facto* involved in the EU common defence project is still debatable. But, *de jure,* all Members States, directly or indirectly (by abstention), are fully committed to define and implement a policy whose main objective is to define and put in place a framework that will lead to a common defence (Member States 2012).

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9   https://www.eliamep.gr/en/publication/%CF%83%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%AC%CE%B6%CE%BF%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%82-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CF%83%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B5%CF%83%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%81/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
10 https://www.portugal.gov.pt/en/gc23/communication/news-item?i=new-strategic-concept-for-defence-will-clarify-the-vision-on-our-place-in-the-world, accessed at 29.04.2024.
11 https://total-croatia-news.com/news/politics/croatia-preparing-new-national-security-strategy/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
12 https://balkandefencemonitor.com/strategic-document-croatia-2023/, accessed at 29.04.2024.
13 https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/themen/sicherheitspolitik/sicherheitsstrategie.html, accessed at 29.04.2024.
14 https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategiceurope/90935, accessed at 30.04.2024.
15 https://cyprus-mail.com/2023/05/31/cabinet-approves-establishment-of-national-security-council/, accessed at 30.04.2024.

The main goal is a "progressive framing of a common Union defence policy. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides" (Article 42(2) TEU)(Member States 2012). But all these are achieved only through a major and collaborative cooperation between the Member States on one side and the Member States and EU institutions on the other.

Starting with the Treaty of Lisbon, CSDP became the main legal framework in EU security and defence. Written in the fundamental treaties of the EU (Treaty on European Union – TEU), CSDP represents the political and legal vision and acknowledgement of the EU security and defence domain. It enables the EU to take a leading role in peace-keeping operations, conflict preventions and strengthening the international security[16]. Also, it allows the Member States to take part in putting into practice the EU's role as a contributor to global security.

But it must be mentioned as a rule that the defence and security policies remain in the Member States national competence. As such, the general principles of CSDP delineated in Article 42 TEU (Member States 2012) ensure that specific national defence policies or memberships of defence frameworks outside of the EU are respected (Sabatino et al. 2023).

The clauses of the Treaty of the European Union (TUE) concerning the security and defence matters are binding on normative characteristics. *De facto* are seen and interpreted as rules of conduct, established to achieve the determined objective. The main cause of this is the sanctioning element who does not prevail in case of non-fulfilment of the expected legal effects. So, to explain the binding relationship of law in the field of defence and security the main characteristic is generated *ipso facto* by EU membership.

The manifestation of state sovereignty in security and defence determines the evolution of the Member States and the involvement in the EU project. Moreover, the principle of subsidiarity, assumed as a fundamental element of the European construction, has no efficiency in terms of defence and security.

As already presented, Member States are aware of the necessity of having policies and strategies regarding their own security and defence.

The unique approach of each Member State on security and defence is generated by its own form of organization and its own decision-making process. In that case, the legal approach for their strategies and doctrines is different from Member State to Member State, the documents adopted having legal statuses and different legal bindings.

Whether are adopted by the national parliaments, the governments, or the national security councils, these strategies reflect Member States' political will to develop their security and defence.

The strategies have or will have different point of view or different approaches. There are more centred strategies or more balanced, all confirming their commitments towards NATO (except neutral and non-members) and EU. On one hand, NATO is and will remain the main security and defence provider and, on the other hand, EU's project on development of its own security and defence represents a focus and a vital domain at political and strategic decision-making level.

This demonstrates that even though the Member States have different points of view on various aspects and policies they can speak on a united voice about their common goals.

Also, this provides us a better factual understanding regarding the Member States' approach on common defence. Whether is different from a Member State to another, the main goals and the primary guidelines remain the same.

On a particular aspect, regarding the fact that European strategic autonomy is a concept with a history fraught with tensions and ambiguities, Member States were not all directly committed to its enhancement and development. But after the Russian invasion to Ukraine, the vision has slowly shifted towards a more focused approach.

The Member States have started to acknowledge the fact that the European strategic autonomy in security and defence represents the ability of Europe to make its own decisions, and

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[16] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/common-security-and-defence-policy_en, accessed in 12.03.2024.

to have the necessary means, capacity and capabilities available to act upon these decisions, in such manner that it is able to properly function on its own when needed (Zandee et al. 2020).

Furthermore, European strategic autonomy is fully tied with some key points facts and policies, that, will boost European cooperation among Members States in the field of security and defence and are appropriated by the Member States:

- Military capabilities development, strengthen defence among EU Member States (increasing defence spending, investing in research, development, and procurement of advanced military technologies, development of common defence capabilities).
- Continuous development of Strategic Partnerships with States and organizations that shares common values and interests.
- Technological sovereignty that will ensure critical defence technologies, in domains like cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and space capabilities.
- Strong political will and loyal cooperation and coordination among states and states representatives, policymakers, military leaders, and defence industry stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Even if the Member States had different points of view on specific topics or matters, the definitive answer was always provided as a common action of the Member States, the unanimity concept being applied. The more policies driven and managed together, the deeper integration among the Member States and within the EU project is provided.

On a normative and practical analysis, the EU security and defence evolution still reveals a discrepancy between what the EU has aimed and managed to achieve in terms of defence and security. And considering that the security and defence domain is a national prerogative, Member States can turn and reshape the EU's security and defence using legal tools and loyal political cooperation.

On a broader and conceptual approach, Member States have at their disposal the necessary tools to overcome a strategic shrinkage or contraction and overcome or avoid security and defence pitfalls only by applying Article 24 (3) of the Treaty on European Union. That provision stipulates the fact that the Member States shall support the Union's external and security policy actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity and shall comply with the Union's action in this area (Member States 2012).

The lack of strict and binding legal obligations at regulatory level regarding the imperative nature of a European defence *per se* requires loyal and deep collaboration among all involved actors.

The TEU establishes a real code of conduct among the Members States to accomplish the main goal by stipulating the domains of action and the foreseen results. Still, a binding, mandatory provision in establishing the European defence is not directly mentioned within the TEU, so, all the legal requirements and all the developments in that area remain at Member States own decision and action.

Their own security and defence strategies present Member States' views on the topic. The approach on security and defence is not yet uniform, but there are similarities and commitments to a safer and more secure European Union. EU Member States are committed to the EU's project and their vision (sometimes different from one Member State to another) or their actions provided under CSDP are clearly recognized.

The CSDP framework, an important European defence catalyst, represents a framework for the Member States to enforce EU`s security and defence (even thaw CSDP, is a compromise between the Member States and the EU), since:

- CSDP is a framework for launching crisis management operations on behalf of the EU, projecting the EU capacity in this domain.
- It provides the synchronicity between the different instruments of European Union foreign policy.
- It represents an insurance policy that Europeans can act autonomously (Sven Biscop and Daniel Fiott 2013).

Furthermore, all the measures taken in implementing CSDP, all the frameworks and instruments of cooperation like PESCO, CDM, EPF, CARD, or the Strategic Compass' implementation were generated through a united voice under the EU's umbrella. In force planning, capability development, procurement and defence industrial policy, the EU and the Member States are now focusing on the state-of-the-art, near-peer conflict, promoting a fundamental shift in larger and more centred investment in land, sea, and air warfare capabilities, as well as advances in cyber warfare and defence in space. Developing common military capabilities, increasing defence spendings, investing in cutting-edge technologies in a fully collaborative manner are all measures already taken.

Member States are stepping up and coordinating in what is known today as strategic responsibility. The idea of strategic responsibility drives the security and defence domain in the present. For the first time EU is giving military assistance to a country under attack (Ukraine), EU is training troops involved in an inter-state European war and is mobilizing its defence industry to sustain one country's war effort. With the new Act to Support Ammunition Production EU quadrupled its production capacity for ammunition. EU today is looking to switch its defence industry to wartime mode[17].

All these elements represent a factual demonstration of the research hypothesis, that Member States are providing a deeper integrational approach in the European project.

In Brief, the European defence remains a fundamental component and goal for the European Union's policies, a first-rate concern for both EU and Member States. The achievement of a common European defence is fully linked to the coherence of Member States' policies in this field, but also to their common and loyal actions towards the related objective generating a deeper integration into the European project.

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THE COGNITIVE ELECTRONIC WARFARE IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Alida Monica Doriana BARBU; PhD∗

Abstract: *Collecting and acting on data has increased the military's dependency on the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS). Electronic Warfare (EW) controls the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS) in order to detect, analyze, and track potential threats. EW provides situational awareness for diplomatic insights, defensive measures and offensive options for each country. EW enables Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO). In the EM Operation Environment, the armed forces exploit, protect and attack. More advanced EW can identify, intercept and decode the adversaries' Data. It can also project directed energy to disrupt enemy operations, reducing the impact of conflicts or preventing some armed conflicts before they begin.*
Applying cognitive systems to EW helps the army personnel identify patterns and improve the systems, as well as anticipating the COA. Cognitive Electronic Warfare systems interpret a large amount of data from a range of vast sources to provide hypotheses for action plans. Combining human strategies with computer input ensures the success of Cognitive EW approach. Leaving data collection and probability calculations to computers let humans time to think, to be creative and to use their intuiton in order to find the best solutions.

Keywords: *Electromagnetic spectrum (EMS); Electronic Warfare (EW); Cognitive Electronic Warfare (CEW); AI; Machine Learning; DeepNets; Directed-Energy Weapon (DEW); 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict.*

Introduction

Electronic or Electromagnetic warfare (EW) involves the use of electromagnetic spectrum (EM spectrum) or directed energy to impede enemy operations by denying the access to the opponent or attacking him, while ensuring friendly access to the EM spectrum. Land, sea, air or space are the domains where crewed and uncrewed systems can apply Electromagnetic warfare on targets such as communication, radar or other civilian and military assets. (Joint Publication 3-13.1 2012)

In peacetime, Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO) coordinate access to joint users to the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS), while in time of armed conflict, tactical, operational and strategic advantages and EMS superiority is the goal through exploit, attack and protect military actions in the Electromagnetic Operational Environment. (Joint Publication 3-85, 2020, v-vi)

From attacks on radar systems, jamming of communications and navigation systems, to electronic masking, probing, reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, EW uses directed energy to block signals between technologies and cut off access to the electromagnetic spectrum. By interfering with computer infrastructure, EW can affect operations in the cyber domain, still, EW should not be confused with cyber warfare and capabilities. Cyber operations use hacking techniques to disrupt a target's computer systems, aiming to degrade the target's capabilities and to obtain Intelligence.

Electronic Warfare (EW) controls the Electromagnetic Spectrum (EM) in order to detect, analyze, and track potential threats. EW provides situational awareness for diplomatic insights, defensive measures and offensive options for each country. EW enables Joint Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (JEMSO). In the EM Operation Environment, the armed forces exploit, protect and attack. More advanced EW can identify, intercept and decode the adversaries' Data. It can also project directed energy to disrupt enemy operations. "These changes to the battlespace prevent some armed conflicts before they begin and/or reduce the impact and scope of conflicts underway." (www.baesystems.com).When one party controls the Electromagnetic Spectrum in the

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area, the use of positioning, accurate navigation, communications are denied to adversaries. The disruption and denial of enemies' use of the EM spectrum is essential to mission success.

Military and Intelligence Forces use in Electronic Warfare (EW) electromagnetic or directed energy and integrated cyber capabilities to pre-empt electronical ennemy threats and attacks. The electromagnetic (EM) spectrum consists of X-rays, Gamma Rays, Radio waves, Ultraviolet, Visible or Infrared light, Millimeter waves, Microwaves. (www.baesystems.com)

Cognitive Electronic Warfare (CEW) is the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Machine Learning – cognitive systems – to enhance development and operation of Electronic Warfare (EW) technologies. Cognitive systems can reason, learn, sense and interact with environments and people, for threat detection, suppression or technologies neutralization. (www.baesystems.com)

1. ELECTRONIC WARFARE

1.1. The Electromagnetic Environment

The Electromagnetic Spectrum or the Electromagnetic Environment (EME), represents a part of the Information Environment. The access to and use of the electromagnetic environment is decisive for military operations. The NATO Electromagnetic Warfare Policy and NATO Electromagnetic Spectrum (EMS) Strategy govern the Alliance's use, development, testing and training of EW capabilities and tactics. (Nord Atlantic Treaty Organization, Electromagnetic warfare, 2023).

Radio frequency, infrared, electro-optical countermeasures; electronic security; EM compatibility and deception; emission control; spectrum management; EW reprogramming are activities used in EW.

Electronic Warfare (EW) Systems are configuration of EW technologies that are built to execute military missions on ground, air, sea or space platforms. Examples of EW Systems now in use or development include: Anti-Radiation Missiles (ARM), Antennas Arrays, Anti-Jam Electronic Protection Systems, Advanced Threat Infrared Countermeasures (ATIRCM), Common Missile Warning Systems (CMWS), Directional Infrared Countermeasures (DIRCM), Directed Energy Weapons, Electronic Attack and Support Platforms, Infrared Missile Warning System, Geospatial Location and Exploitation Systems, Multi-Spectral Situational Awareness Sensors, Radar Warning Receiver, Storm EW™, etc. (www.baesystems.com)

1.2. The Electronic Warfare Concepts

The modern EW is facing such challenges that it needs other methods than traditional approaches to manage complex problems. The solution was found in incorporating AI techniques (Situation-assessment or SA, decision-making or DM and ML) into EW systems, in order to analyze the system and adapt, since AI, and not only ML, is regarded as the heart of future cognitive EW solutions. Joe Mitola was the one who first used the term in 1999, when cognitive radio was already in use, while cognitive radar term became known since 2006. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 1)

Situation assessment for electronic support (ES) is represented by classification, characterization, causal reasoning, anomaly detection and intent recognition in real-time in-mission learning to recognize new environments and act adequately when facing surprises. DM techniques for electronic attack (EA), electronic protect (EP) and electronic battle management (EBM) assume scheduling and optimization, and most importantly, incorporating ML for better DM and SA. From the AI point of view, radar or communications are treated equally, as well as EP and EA, whose objectives are the only one that make the difference: EA defines objectives with respect to the adversary and EP defines objectives with respect to oneself. The AI techniques apply also to position, navigation, and timing (PNT); cybersecurity; intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 1-2)

The core concepts of EW (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 5-6) are:
1) ES (who is using the electromagnetic spectrum, when, how and where);
2) EP takes countermeasures into consideration and strategies (Antenna directions, frequency agility, waveform design and signal processing) to maintain radar or communications

performance in order to protect the friendly nodes from unwanted effects of noise or jamming.

3) EA denies or degrades the adversary access to its own RF spectrum through directed offensive EM energy, also deceiving the enemy by false information.

EBM is involved in obtaining effective missions, by coordinating effects and changing mission priorities when necessary, also supporting the EW officer. EW BDA assesses the effectiveness of the EA and provides feedback that allows the operator or system to create more effective attacks. EW reprogramming (software, tactics and hardware) modifies the offensive and self-defense systems, as well as intelligence-collection systems, in order to adapt to changes in enemy threat systems and correct system failures.

2. COGNITIVE ELECTRONIC WARFARE

2.1. Features of Cognitive Electronic Warfare

The U.S. Department of Defense invests each year $7B in EW. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, xi). The application of AI to make EW systems cognitive ensure the system's adaptability and learning during missions. Cognitive EW will be decisive in future wars. EW systems must respond to previously unknown signals in a digital world of Internet of military things, while feedback must be estimated and known permanently during a mission. Through aggregated sensor understanding, EW systems must be able of adapting on real-time feedback. Through automation, learning can occur faster than humans can reason on data. This adaptation allow the military staff to have success in their missions. Military applications of cognitive technology demand security to protect their functionality, and AI and Machine learning are robust and effective in performing this function. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, xii)

Some subfields of AI are Machine Learning, Distributed AI, Robotics, Planning, Human Factors, Machine while Learning comprises Rules, Neural Networks, Support Vector Machines, Decision Trees, Instance-based Learning (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 42). DeepNets identify latent features in the data, whereas classical ML approaches rely on traditional feature engineering.

Symbolic AI like Decision Trees manipulate human-readable symbols; non-symbolic approaches, like DeepNets, operate on raw data. Recently, hybrid approaches combine the two. Symbolic knowledge reduces the search space, constructs features, improves search efficiency, explains the models. Hybrid approaches, known as knowledge-based ML or neural-symbolic AI, find solutions more quickly and enable the learner to work even with no training data and work well after real-world training. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 47)

Situation-assessment (SA), decision-making (DM) and ML represent AI techniques for EW. SA techniques for electronic support (ES) include causal reasoning, characterization, classification, intent recognition and anomaly detection. Optimization, scheduling, planning and managing the temporal trade-offs and distributed nature of the problem are DM techniques for electronic protect (EP), electronic attack (EA), and electronic battle management EBM. Using ML improves both SA and DM.

AI incorporates many subfields, covering the broader concepts of Situation Assessment (SA) and Decision Making (DM). AI techniques are planning, optimization, data fusion, while Learning Support Application Areas are Machine vision, NLP, robotics and logistics. ML can predict performance of jamming effectiveness, learning which EA technique is appropriate for which observed emitter behaviors. EW BDA offers performance feedback on these predictions. ML is a concept within AI and DeepNets are techniques within ML, which is more than Deep Learning. Even though DeepNets have the largest visibility, one must not neglect ML or other AI approaches. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 52)

Bengio, Hinton and LeCun won the Turing award for their work about DeepNet architectures in 2018. Common architectures (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 45-47) are: a) Convolutional neural networks (CNNs) − convolutional, pooling, and fully connected - neural networks to process data with a known grid-like topology; b) Recurrent neural networks (RNNs)

– neural networks for processing sequential data that have feedback connections (i.e., memory); c) Temporal CNNs deal with time-related, sequence-related and memory-related Deep Learning and could render RNNs obsolete; d) Autoencoders build a model with a bottleneck layer, which is the efficient encoding, and tries to generate a representation of the original input; they eliminate noise and are anomaly detectors; d) Siamese neural nets train on different input data, while they use the same weights on multiple networks; e) Kohonen networks or self-organizing maps (SOMs), visualize an reduce dimensionality; f) A system of two competing neural networks or Generative adversarial networks (GANs) are used to create synthetic data.

Cognitive EW system performs also Data Fusion, which integrates data for situational awareness from various sources (unmanned ground, aerial or underwater systems, radars, space assets, ships, antennas, fighter jets and sensor networks) in order to produce more accurate inferences than those achieved by a single sensor alone Multi-intelligence (multi-INT) data fusion correlates, compares and combines data from different sources of different types to achieve improved accuracy and more specific inferences. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 65)

2.2. *AI-based STAP, ARC, BLADE, ICS, WARDEN AND EWPMT – CADETS OF COGNITIVE EW*

The Pentagon is investing in the offensive capabilities of AI-based CEW (cognitive electronic warfare). These technologies help more effectively spoof or jam an adversary's radar. DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) is working on projects that apply AI to the EMS and target either wireless or radar communications. **AI-based STAP** (space-time adaptive processing) is meant to overcome adversarial jamming by using Machine Learning algorithms to sense, probe and characterize threats and then generate automatically countermeasures in real-time. (DefenceOne website)

The DARPA Cognitive EW effort began in 2010, providing Adaptive Radar Countermeasures **(ARC)** and Behavioral Learning for Adaptive Electronic Warfare **(BLADE)** for thwarting enemy's radar and its communications.

Jamming capability of the F-35's active electronically scanned array radar (AESA) and Navy's Next Generation Jammer (used on the EA-18G Growler EW aircraft) are examples of Cognitive EW. DARPA's Spectrum Collaboration Challenge in 2016 offered competitors the challenge to develop AI collaborative autonomous spectrum systems to optimize bandwidth in dense communications environments.

DARPA uses Machine Learning algorithms to assess communications emitters and radars in real time and then to produce countermeasures. Threat systems operating across wider bandwidths claim better RF adaptability and processing (Chirico).

CADET creates coalition battle plans, integrating HTN planning. CADET is a knowledge-based tool that delivers realistic and detailed battle plans, integrated for the U.S. Army and DARPA with several battle management systems. The goals for a tactical course of action (COA) are presented by the human personnel, CADET comes with a detailed schedule of the operation, resource consumption or routing, coordinates team efforts, even supports autonomous action, but always with man-in-the-loop. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 118).

The use of mixed reality (virtual and real worlds in real time) systems is a new vulnerability, which enemies could exploit through targeting cognition: distracting personnel by injecting virtual data; cluttering displays by planting real-world objects; motion sickness induced by Information flooding; confusing the user with real-world objects false alarms.

The applied cognitive engineering principles during system development do not ensure the safety of systems. Adversary interfering by cognitive effects in virtual settings could consist in reducing trust in equipment. inducing cybersickness, manipulating emotion, causing confusion or anxiety.

The DARPA Intrinsic Cognitive Security program **(ICS)** explores formal methods (mathematical approaches), using MR system designs to mitigate potential cognitive attacks. Cognitive engineering provides Formal methods meant to protect the MR user, based on models applicable to MR system. Modeling user behavior in the immersive systems will also help the

understanding of people's behaviour in the MR domain. Also, users will perform different MR-related tasks with commercial technologies. Phase 1 of the 36-month ICS effort focuses on developing guarantees to desirable properties of mixed reality systems and supporting cognitive models to enable proofs of the guarantees. Phase 2 will proof the usefulness of the guarantees in MR systems. The developed prototypes will demonstrate how using commercially available software and hardware will lessen vulnerabilities. (Wilding, DARPA)

The Waveform Agile Radio-frequency Directed Energy **(WARDEN)** program wants to develop theory, hardware and computational models to extend for backdoor attacks the range of high-power microwave (HPM) systems. HPM systems are a category of directed energy weapons (DEWs) that use electromagnetic (EM) radiation to disable, disrupt or damage electronic circuits and components.

Raytheon's **EWPMT** software assists since 2014 the U.S. army commander's ability to coordinate, plan and synchronize spectrum management, EW and Cyber operations. EW targeting, EW mission planning and simulation capabilities of EWPMT support COA development. The display of the electromagnetic operational environment, the electromagnetic order of battle and communications assets, as well as analytics are provided by EWPMT who takes in data from sensors in real time and identifies and geolocates new threats. Sensors being turned off on a specific frequency when they're detected by the sensing system is an automated action that helps the human component of the AI-human team. (Haigh and Andrusenko 2021, 131).

3. THE MODERN ELECTRONIC WARFARE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

3.1. *EW in the Russian - Ukrainian conflict since 2022 till present times*

The US Space Forces believe that the electronic war in Ukraine could exceed in scope a possible conflict between China and the US, a conflict in which China would try to interfere, including kinetically, with the satellites of the US military used for navigation and timing and disrupt the ability to effectively use C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) through electronic warfare. Ukraine and Russia have jammed each other's systems, with Russia interfering with signals to disrupt global positioning system satellites that help Ukraine use US-supplied air and guided artillery munitions, and Ukraine countering enemy missiles and drones with electronic means. (Gordon 2024)

In December 2010, the Russian Army system known as Borisoglebsk 2, was the first land-based multifunctional electronic warfare of Russian Army with jamming stations for electronic reconnaissance, satellite-based navigation signals and mobile satellite communications suppression. (deagel.com)

Russian aircraft had important losses in Ukraine in March 2022 (Bronck 2022), but by late April 2022, the extensive Russian jamming infrastructure deployed in Donbas electronically suppressed radio signals and GPS of Ukrainian UAVs.

In October 2023 Russian jammers and video feedback were impairing small battlefield Ukrainian UAV activity (The Economist 2023), yet three Russian Palantin EW system were destroyed by Ukraine who also suppressed the satellite radio navigation.

USA and other allies helped Ukraine with their spoofing and jamming methods against Russian electronic systems and gave Ukraine armored vehicles, long-range missiles and secure communication devices. Detection and a better access to critical sources of situational awareness are the high priority of the American army, but also how to deal with the situations when digital harassment makes impossible the use of GPS. (Demarest 2024)

Some U.S. precision-guided weapons, such as Excalibur, Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) and GLSDB, the Boeing-Saab product, showed vulnerability in front of Russian jamming. Even though they assured good results at the beginning of the ostilities, once the Russian army adapted and learnt how to act against them, they became useless. (Gall 2024)

Ukrainian drones were able to repel Russian forces, damaging tanks and armored vehicles. Stupor is the advanced electromagnetic weapon used by Russian forces against Ukrainian

unmanned aerial vehicles and can disrupt Glonass and GPS satellite navigation signals (Frahan 2022). The drone is neutralized by Stupor's blocking the operator's signal to the drone and lands at a desired location. (Dangwal 2022).

Each war represents an opportunity to produce sophisticated weaponry and learn about the opponent's previously secret technology. The performance of the weapons used is monitored by all parties to guide future conflicts. The US Department of Defense is aware of possible armed conflicts with China in the Indo-Pacific or with Russia in Europe, so is investing in sophisticated electronic warfare equipment as well as jam-resistant navigation equipment. BAE Systems was awarded $318 million for M-code GPS cards. The $402 million second-generation battlefield transportable and dismountable positioning, navigation and timing system was produced by TRX Systems. (Demarest 2024)

3.2. *Directed-energy weapons (DEW)*

In the United States, DARPA, the Pentagon, the Air Force Research Laboratory and the Naval Research Laboratory aim to counter hypersonic cruise missiles, ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles with **directed-energy weapons (DEW)**, which damage the target (missiles, personnel, optical devices and vehicles).

Non-lethal weapons like microwave, electromagnetic, acoustic, particle beams, laser weapons can paralyse the adversary until conventional forces enter the scene. They disable communications, disrupt sensor systems, penetrate electrical systems, affecting military and civilian infrastructures as well. The United States, but also Russia, China, Germany, France, United Kingdom, Israel, Pakistan and India are developing this technology. (Herbert 1991, 90). Turkey (DailySabah 2019) and Iran (Tehran Times 2019) pretend to have military-grade directed-energy weapons in active service,

High power microwaves from the Electromagnetic weapons spectrum were used to destroy Iraqi electronic systems by the U.S. military during Persian Gulf War. (https://premium. globalsecurity.org) Turkey claims to have used for the first time in battle between military forces a directed-energy weapon (ALKA) in Libya, August 2019. (Ahval News 2019).

The operational advantages of Directed energy weapons over conventional weaponry are their almost perfect flat trajectory due to the lack of affect from the wind, gravity and Coriolis force; the extended to line-of-sight and precise aim; its discretion, since radiation is invisible and doesnṭt generate sound (Defence iQ' 2012); the travel at light-speed and long range of lasers, which can also reduce logistical problems (ammunition supply); cheaper than conventional weapons; the difficulty of attribution to a certain actor the high-powered microwave weapons use to degrade electronics such as drones (Grand-Clément 2022).

The Vigilant Eagle, a ground based system which employs High Power Microwaves (HPM), was produced by **Raytheon** in 2005. The Vigilant Eagle is successful in defeating MANPADS missiles. (Vollin 2006)

The BAE Systems high-powered microwave weapon **Bofors HPM Blackout**, purportedly non-lethal, has a microwave sourse, a pulsed power unit and a horn antenna. It evaluates the threats from electromagnetic effects. (Karlsson, 2009, 499-501)

EL/M-2080 Green Pine Long Range Anti-Ballistic Missile Radar tracks and detects Tactical Ballistic Missiles (TBMs) (https://www.iai.co.il/p/elm-20802080s-green-pine).

The Northrop Grumman's **AESA Radars,** positioned on fighter aircraft, are using the Sabr, APG-81, Vader and Starlite Systems and providing surveillance and intel to armed forces. (www.northropgrumman.com)

Thor is a system that uses high-power microwaves to protect against drones as a counter electronic effect, with less engagement time than nets, guns and laser systems and an extended effect. (https://afresearchlab.com/technology/thor)

Radio Frequency Directed Energy Weapon (RFDEW) uses beams radio waves to disrupt the adversaries' electronics and take down drone swarms. The UK Military uses RFDEW as a cheaper alternative to air defence missile-based systems. (https://des.mod.uk/, 16th of May 2024)

A laser weapon is a weapon with directed-energy based on lasers. **Dragon Fire,** created in the **United Kingdom**. It can engage any target at a classified range within line-of-sight, being used against drones. (https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/)

Genasys (formerly LRAD Corporation) developed an acoustic hailing device to send warning tones and messages over longer distances. LRAD is a non-lethal directed-acoustic-energy weapon non-projectile crowd control. (https://genasys.com/)

During Operation Orchard or Operation Outside the Box in 2007, Israeli jets attacked with electronic warfare systems a Syrian nuclear site near the Euphrates River and succeeded to deactivate the Syrian air defenses. (Katz 2010).

721 physical and cyberattacks were launched over the **U.S. electrical infrastructure** in the past decade. **NNEMP weapons** can be easily made, and are available for purchaising online, without any license required. (Owen 2023)

The Havana medical symptoms **(Havana syndrome)** were reported in Havana, Cuba, etc. by US personnel who assumed microwave energy was causing those symptoms (Myre 2021). Seven US intelligence agencies concluded no foreign rival was involved (Myre 2023). The *60 Minutes* investigative report from March 2024 made the Russian GRU Unit 29155 responsable to these attacks (Pelley 2024) (FitzGerald, 2024). The prohibited blinding laser weapons used by Russia in Donbas war zone (2018) inflicted severe eye injury to an Ukrainian Border Guards serviceman. (Ponomarenko 2018)

In 1997, The TECOM Technology Symposium concluded that determining the target effects of non-lethal weapons on personnel is very challenging because the potential lethal injury of human testing. (Herbert Dennis, https://apps.dtic.mil/) Directed-energy weapons may cause neurophysiological disorders and target the central nervous system. Vertigo, nausea, disorientation, pain, epileptic seizures because of repetitive visual signals or difficulty breathing (potentially lethal) could indicate the use of of non-lethal electromagnetic weapons.

CONCLUSIONS

Brian Holden Reid wrote in his book "The Science of War: Back to the First Principles" (Holden-Reid 2014), that surprise is still a decisive element of military operations. The new technologies made it challenging to obtain surprise on the transparent battlefield, yet, they could be the key of innovative battlefield doctrines and the surprise itself by inflicting indecision, technological overconfidence, cognitive dissonance, confirmation bias, a failure to process, misconceptions about enemy capabilities.

Classical ML has been present in EW systems for years, enriching results, due to the developments of Deep Learning, such as Natural Language and Image Processing. Three factors have an important contribution: labeled data, bigger computers and insights on how to connect the networks.

As more wireless devices – both defense and commercial – are added, the competition for the finite spectrum becomes more fierceful: the erosion of the access to the electromagnetic spectrum by disrupting the military's ability to receive and send infrared, radio and radar signals. along with the prevalence of advanced digital signal processing in adversary systems and software-defined architectures.

The Q-values of all possible actions of each MDP state are estimated by DeepNet from Deep Q-Networks (DQNs), reducing the number of samples required and the computational burden of conventional Q-learning. RF tasks like coexistence, signal classification, jamming and anti-jamming have been given to DQNs.

In interaction with the real environment, it is critical to learn from only one sample. Real environment imposes constant oversight for planning and enables ML to improve empirical models and performance. Execution monitoring ties the DM to the SA, the actions to the observations, and the EP/EA/EBM to the ES, the heart of every EW system. The quality of the ES influences EP and EA performance. ES analyzes the environment and helps DM.

The challenges of interrelationship between humans and machines are: behavior, performance and physiological factors of Human state sensing and assessment; information-sharing and communication between human and machine; establishing DM balance and workload by function allocation; mutual training and adaptive learning between human and machine; human and machine data fusion and integration in order to generate a shared world model.

As the EW community explores cognitive EW technology development and cognitive systems concepts, it becomes clear that cognitive technology is the future of EW, but also of all areas of defence electronics and operations within the EM Spectrum (EMS).

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THE LIMITATIONS FACED BY GEORGIA IN TERMS OF GEOPOLITICAL OPTIONS

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Abstract: *The recent intensified challenges to Georgia's democratic development, which since the fall of the Soviet Union has been recognized as a democratic beacon among post-Soviet states in Caucasus area for its' continued path towards Euro-Atlantic integration, have in fact revealed to an unprecedented degree, the extreme lack of real geopolitical choices. The story seems as simple as never before, with either an option to enter and embrace the Russian domination zone, or to seize the absolutely unique opportunities for unprecedented rapprochement with the EU and realistic prospects for accession to the European Institutions, as well as for enhancing the multidimensional relationship perspectives already established with the United States, opportunities which, along with other factors, have emerged decisively due to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian War. Our academic inquiry also examines the erosion of the concept of neutrality, as well as the Realpolitik discourse.*

Keywords: *Georgia; EU; USA; Russia; limits of the geopolitical choices; erosion of neutrality; pro-Russian isolationism; Realpolitik.*

Introduction

The recent intensification of the challenges to the democratic development faced by Georgia on the path towards democratic development since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been agreed to be in fact unchangeable and lacking any solid alternatives, i.e. – the Euro-Atlantic integration of the post-Soviet country from the South Caucasus, – the variety of issues, controversies, and not rarely a considerable number of crucial inconsistencies.

In recent times, there has been a growing tendency in Georgia to curtail the rights to free expression, free assembly, and the freedom of non-governmental organizations to operate independently. This is occurring in conjunction with a broader trend of questioning the legitimacy of governmental decision-making, which has the potential to reinforce negative stereotypes and prejudices. With regard to the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society, such as the LGBTQI+ community, the likelihood of further discrimination, hate speech, hate crime, bullying and other forms of violence is increased. These circumstances are further compounded by a systemic deficit of neutral judges and persistent obstacles in the justice system. There is also a prevalence of nepotism, corruption and increasing political polarization, with oligarchs retaining considerable influence. Furthermore, the centralizing influence of the latter on politics, the dissemination of anti-Western propaganda, and the multitude of challenges the country faces, with the greatest responsibility lying with the government, are all factors that must be considered. These challenges are outlined in the European Commission's Twelve Priorities (The European External Action Service 2022),[1] and Nine Steps (Civil.ge 2023)[2] reports. In response to Georgia's earlier application for EU candidate status and the subsequent commencement of accession negotiations with the European Community, the priorities and steps outlined by The European External Action Service (2022) and Civil.ge (2023) have been widely perceived as indicative of a democratic backsliding characteristic for contemporary Georgia. However, these steps have also revealed the extreme lack of real geopolitical choices for the country, which has hitherto been unexperienced.

The story truly seems in a way as simple, if not primitive, as never before for Georgia, with either an option to join and re-establish itself under the Russian domination zone, whether welcoming absolutely unique chances for getting unprecedentedly closer to EU and acting in

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compliance with the realistic opportunities for even earlier than ever was expected, – eventually successful accession to the European community, as well as for accelerating a wide range of relationship perspectives between Georgia and the United States, following carefully, much pragmatically envisioned, and already designed strategy communicated from the western hemisphere recently (Civil.ge 2024)[3], – embracing the chances that de facto occurred along with other factors, decisively due to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian warfare.

Therefore, considering the above-mentioned, the paper aims at trying to look at the dynamics of the latest developments taking place in Georgia and how, at least officially, internal decision-making by the current government of the country considerably exposes the geopolitical limits, and in a way simplicity of the choices between the "evil" and the "good", as well as the factual erosion of the concept of neutrality. Certainly, such judgment fits well enough withing the Realpolitik discourse which precludes the possibility of sustainable liberal scenarios.

"Black" or "White"?

Even though the current Georgian Government under the leadership of the Georgian Dream Party has not yet officially acknowledged its reservations about the Western orientation of Georgia's foreign policy, it recognizes the unique success the country has achieved on its pro-European path during the GD administration, namely signing the Association Agreement and introducing through it a preferential trade regime - the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) on June 27, 2014 (It has been in force since July 1, 2016), as well as gaining visa liberalization with EU since March 28, 2017, and a development that has been eagerly awaited, the Candidate Status of the European Union in December 2023. In recent times, the card of neutrality, interpreted by many as in fact pro-Russian isolationism, has become a very significant part of the agenda of the Georgian ruling party.

Among the most critically acclaimed initiatives are the abolition of quotas for women MPs (Civil.ge 2024)[4], the overriding of the Georgian President's veto on the controversial amendments to the country's tax code, the so-called "offshore law," which facilitates the transfer of offshore assets into Georgia (Civil.ge 2024)[5], In April and May 2024, the Georgian parliament empowered particularly through the means of the constitutional amendments of 2017, transitioning the country towards a parliamentary republic (UNDP, n.d.)[6], made a series of significant decisions. These decisions were made in a relatively short period of time and were supported by other branches of government as well, namely the executive power through the prime minister and the cabinet of ministers, and the judiciary of Georgia, which has been the target of widespread criticism. In addition to the aforementioned contentious legislative measures, the so-called "Russian Law" has already proven to play a pivotal role as a means for considerable lustration of those in power.

Firstly, it is necessary to identify the major foreign policy priorities among decision-makers as these have the potential to have a direct impact on the external political course of the country, This is a belief that is widely held within the broader Georgian society, particularly among the younger generation, such as students from various universities and even secondary school students, who currently make up the majority of the population protesting against the governmental decision-making. The so-called Gen Z keeps protesting against the adoption of the "Russian Law" since the reintroduction of the bill and subsequent to its' adoption, protests spanning over a period

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of months in 2024, as was the case in March 2023, when the legislative initiative was first introduced, although removed shortly after due to the public outcry.

The "Russian Law" has also served as a significant test for exposing in the circles of Georgian politicians, perhaps the major determinant and core for relevant decision-making – whether voting or protesting against the measure, i.e. – the inner value systems and mindsets, specifically of the supporters of truly of one of the most controversial bills ever, meaning prominently - still quite resilient Soviet mentality of those in the ruling GD party and its allies in the Georgian Parliament, who have officially voted for the adoption of the law in all stages, including the final voting, and throughout all the procedures necessary for the law-making, thus "committing history" so to speak.

The divisive draft law on "foreign agents" was first initiated by the ruling Georgian Dream party in March 2023. At that time, the bill was passed by the Georgian Parliament in the first reading, however was later withdrawn due to mass protests by citizens. In the beginning of April 2024, it became known that the ruling party initiated the consideration of the draft law "On the Transparency of Foreign Influence" for the second time that has been unchanged from the 2023 version, apart from the descriptor ("organization carrying out the interests of a foreign power"), from which the contentious term "agent" has been dropped. Despite the permanent massive protests erupted throughout the country, in the capital city – Tbilisi and regions, gathering tens of thousands since the reintroduction of the controversial bill, with dozens detained in clashes with the police, including media personalities, and in spite of in fact unified critical assessments and calls for withdrawal issued overwhelmingly by the absolute majority of international partners, including the EU and US officials (Gavin 2024)[7], the Venice Commission - highly authoritative advisory body of the Council of Europe preparing the urgent opinion on the law (Venice Commission 2024)[8], etc., sometimes with reference to even enacting sanctions and other corresponding measures in case of no rejection of the law, - amidst the ongoing protest demonstrations, - the parliament of Georgia has still passed the contentious law with three hearings, eventually overcoming the presidential veto on May 28, 2024.

Claimed by many in Georgia and outside of it as leading to jeopardizing the country's path to EU membership and overall Euro-Atlantic integration, the law discussed above obliges media organizations and NGOs to register as in fact foreign agents if they receive more than 20% of their funds from abroad, imposing heavy fines on those who fail to comply. (JAMnews 2024)[9] Besides the fact that Russian officials have expressed their full support for the law (Civil.ge 2024)[10], it is important to consider that the Georgian version differs significantly from similar documents adopted by Western countries, including the EU (FIDH 2021)[11]. The law has been labeled a "Russian Law", considering the fact that it is modelled based on the analogous Russian law (Machalek, n.d.)[12], encompassing similar goals, and "armed" with the sufficient mechanisms for implementation of the authoritarian practices. According to the Georgian authorities, the new measures, which are categorized as falling under the auspices of a "transparency law," will limit perceived attempts by foreign states to influence domestic politics in the country. (JAMnews

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2024)[13] Conversely, as previously noted, the critics have warned that the legislation could significantly restrict freedom of speech, hinder Georgia's application to become a full EU member, and substantially halt the country's progress on its pro-Western path.

Over time, the concept of neutrality, which was initially perceived as a highly complex and challenging proposition, gradually became a prominent tool utilized by pro-Russian groups operating in Georgia. Any initial sympathy towards the concept was largely determined by its association with the issue of sovereignty, which has been a significant factor in the region's geopolitical landscape.

The prevailing macro- and micro-geopolitical factors, which could be largely understood through the lens of the lack of viable geopolitical choices, also played a role in the evolution of neutrality as a tool for influencing public opinion. On the one hand, the current political tensions have emerged due to the critical path of GD, which has led to questioning Georgia's progressive drive towards the West. This has unfolded via the ruling party's controversial and overtly problematic policy decisions in terms of democracy, human rights, an open society, a competitive economy, and Adherence to EU and other Western standards and values made it much easier to grasp the geopolitical limits for Georgia. In essence, there is a choice between the "black" – towards Russia – and the "white" – towards the EU and the West in general.

The Erosion of Neutrality

Concerning the evident lack of real geopolitical choices, it has to be noted that along with what has already been emphasized before, – on the other hands, the ongoing situation escalated to certain heightened level of political crisis in Georgia, at the same time, has also tested the notion of neutrality as at least theoretically viable alternative option, perceived earlier hypothetically by some as if ideally suiting the independent development and positioning of the country, the configuration that has not been visible in more real terms that much though, particularly for the – wider audience in the Georgian society, for quite a long. The unfolded crisis, under the given circumstances, eventually contributed – to the broader discreditation of the very idea of neutrality – for the overwhelming majority of pro-Western citizenry in the country.

Recently, a significant number of countries of a similar size, such as Sweden and Finland, which had traditionally enjoyed the benefits of military neutrality as a guarantee of security for many decades, or even centuries, have eventually applied for NATO membership in May 2022. Finland was the first to be approved for membership, which was granted in April 2023. The country in question has a 1,340 km (832 mile) land border with Russia (Open Access Government 2023)[14]. Subsequently, there was also Sweden, which had become a member of the Western military alliance in March 2024. However, this was initially opposed by Turkey and Hungary (Gozzi 2024)[15]. This course of action has resulted in compromising the countries' distinguishable, and in many ways precious, neutral position immediately in the aftermath of erupting Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 (Ellyatt 2022)[16]. The example is a noteworthy mention due to the topicality of the issue and as a salient demonstration of the limits in terms of geopolitical choices, in particular, when it comes to a specific location, especially in the case of small states, found in the immediate neighborhood or proximity of Russia actively attempting to revive its imperial and Soviet, i.e. longer historical spheres of influence.

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The Realpolitik Discourse

Furthermore, it is important to note that our analysis and evidence-based claims regarding the limits of geopolitical choices and the erosion of neutrality – in the case of Georgia, a country facing a variety of internal and external challenges, have also suggested analyzing the infamous Realpolitik discourse. This discourse addresses the impact of local, regional, or global processes on international relations and aids analysts in understanding opportunities which arise under the conditions of the Russian-Ukrainian War with the purpose of identifying the underlying geopolitical, geo-economic, and geostrategic trends. This rather practical framework is based on a corresponding theory, i.e. the realist approach to international relations, which is currently dominant in terms of sustainability and long-lasting effects. In contrast, liberal scenarios and liberal institutionalism are less functional on the international stage.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the paper, we have attempted to analyze the stream of the latest events, mostly of domestic nature, however not only limited to that, which are occurring in Georgia, and observe the publicly acknowledged and sufficiently critically perceived internal policy decisions made by the current government of the country, – under the leadership of the Georgian Dream party, – significantly reveal the considerable scarcity, as well as certain simplicity of the geopolitical choices between in fact the depicted "evil" on one hands, - understood through the lenses of Georgia's rapprochement with Russia and joining its anti-Western, isolationist, and anachronistic course.

First of all, in unavoidable confrontation with the security interests of the country, and creating essential threat to even the very basics, like – the independence and sovereignty of the state, on the one hand, and the "good" option, so to speak, – the choice might mean maintaining progress on the demanding but impressively successful integration path of Georgia within the Euro-Atlantic institutions and the Western world overall, on the other.

The factual erosion of the concept of neutrality as one of the alternative models, even in its preliminary stages, – considerably vague and limited theory for the development of the country, has also been concluded as a very important outcome of studying the ongoing multidimensional developments. As a matter of fact, the arguments provided in the paper, remarkably match still dominant – the Realpolitik discourse in global politics, weakening the chances for modern applicability of any viable liberal scenarios and liberal institutionalist approaches.

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CHINA, THE ILLIBERAL COUNTER-ORDER, AND THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE STRATEGIC RESPONSE

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Abstract: *This study examines how the People's Republic of China's advance of its economic and other objectives both supports, and benefits from the challenges by illiberal states to the rules-based international order. It argues that one of the most important dynamics of the current international system is how, in the context of interdependence and interaction accelerated by new technologies, the feedback loop between those activities of the PRC, and its international partners, are simultaneously enriching and empowering the PRC, and expanding the space in which such illiberal actors can operate, while also weakening the institutions and rule of law which have created the basis for interdependence, security, and prosperity since the end of the Second World War. This work recognizes the variety of goals of illiberal actors with which the PRC engages for its own benefit, distinguishing the dynamic from the structure of competing "blocks" that characterized the Cold War. This work further looks at the interaction between political and economic systems under stress new technologies, and the role of the state in this transformational period, It argues that the new dynamic is reopening fundamental questions about the relationship between the state, individual, and society, and associated questions about economic and political organization itself is in question. In addressing these challenges, this work concludes that transactional "competition" between Western democracies and their opponents for the loyalties of the rest is not enough. It argues that that Western democracies must both hedge against the coming destabilization of the international system, while leading by example and advancing more compelling arguments in the new context for why societal interests are best served by the protection of individual rights and individual choice as the foundation of government legitimacy, as well as for individual ownership and initiative, rather than government as the principal generator of economic value and technological progress in society.*

Keywords: *Russia; China; Iran; International Order; international relations; illiberal regimes; great power competition.*

Introduction

The dynamics of the international order in the third decade of the 21st Century are changing profoundly. The magnitude and complexity of the change are illustrated by Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, in both its initial failure, and in the ability of the Putin administration in Russia to sustain its costly campaign. The new international dynamics are further illustrated by Iran's ability to sustain a proxy campaign against Israel and moderate Arab nations in the Middle East, as well as by the failure of actions by Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Israel to escalate into a broader conflict. In Latin America, the new dynamics are highlighted by the ability of the authoritarian populist regime in Venezuela to threaten military action against its neighbor Guyana over the Essequibo territory, without a firm response by the United States, Venezuela's neighbor Brazil, or other states in the region. Finally, the new dynamics are illustrated by the increasingly aggressive posture by the People's Republic of China (PRC) against Taiwan, as well as by its assertion of maritime territorial claims in the South and East China sea and its increasingly confrontational military posture toward the U.S. and allied militaries in the region.

International relations scholars have long noted the linage between the structure of the international system and its dynamics, debating whether an order dominated by one major actor ("unipolar") or multiple actors ("multipolar"), or the "transition" between orders are associated with greater opportunities for conflict, among other characteristics (See Organsky and Fimo, 1958; Posen, 2009; Mearsheimer, 2019). Other scholars in the international relations literature focus on the role of institutions and multilateral frameworks in facilitating order, the avoidance of conflict, and the enforcement of norms creating the basis for the growth of international interdependence, and associated systems of trade, finance, communication and data connectivity (See Keohane and Goldstein, 1993; March and Olson, 1998; Barrett and Finnome, 1999; Barkin, 2006). Still others focus on the role of legitimating of ideas, such as "democracy", "human rights," and "market-based" versus

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"state-led" economies to explain international dynamics within broader structures of power arising out of state and other actors in the international systems, as mediated through institutions and other frameworks (See Doyle, 1986; Kegley, 1994; Richardson, 2001; Barrett, 1997).

Reflecting the synergy between each of these important perspectives, the dynamics and evolution of the contemporary international system are best defined by a complex interaction between the power of its actors (which is itself interdependent and evolving), and the effect of those interactions on formal and informal institutions and multilateral frameworks. Those dynamics are further mediated through and shaped by ideas and values, and the perceptions and discourses surrounding them, in an increasingly interconnected world in which information technologies themselves are transforming the transmission and perception of those ideas and values.

A complete characterization of the interacting dynamics transforming the international system is beyond the scope of this work. The present work seeks to briefly characterize some of the most important elements of those dynamics, and to identify associated risks, opportunities and policy recommendations.

This work argues that the most important driver of transformation in the international system is the ongoing rise and "crisis" of the PRC, and its synergistic interaction with an array of illiberal regimes, each pursuing distinct goals not necessarily coordinated with the PRC or each other. It argues that China's pursuit of its own, mostly economically based strategic objectives, and its work with illiberal indirectly supports the survival of those regimes and the challenges they mount to the Western-led "rules-based international order". The survival of those illiberal regimes, and their challenges to China's geopolitical competitors and the international order itself, in turn, indirectly advances the strategic objectives of the PRC, although also carrying a range of risks for the PRC. The deterioration of the international order and the potential for instability produced by it are magnified by the interdependence of the contemporary global system, and the associated development and synergies between new technologies including big data, artificial intelligence and the internet of things, including the use of those technologies to both control populations and destabilize adversaries (Ellis, 2022a; Ellis, 2023).

This work concludes with recommendations for Western governments in addressing these challenges focused in two areas: (1) the strengthening partner institutions and leading by example in a new values based discourse regarding the value of the individual over the state in political and economic organization, and (2) hedging strategies to prepare to survive the potential destabilization of the international system and the violence which may accompany it.

1. The Strategic Value of the Rules-Based International Order and Consequences of its Deterioration

The "rules-based" international order is arguably a concept ambiguous in meaning and uneven in the degree and manner in which "rules" prevail and are applied in different parts of the world. Its institutions, relevant laws, and application has also arguably evolved considerably since the formation of some of the key political and economic institutions associated with it at the end of World War II, and particularly since the end of the Cold War. The "Rules-based international order" is thus admittedly a concept whose origins, purposes, universality, and abstract "justice" can be questioned and deconstructed. Such issues non-withstanding, there is clearly a system of international institutions, agreements, norms, and supporting infrastructure which, however imperfect, has played a key role in the advance of the contemporary dynamics of global interdependence, and which has had some impact on global conflicts and other geopolitical dynamics (Moeini, 2023).

The post-World War II establishment of modern global financial institutions through the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, and the 1945 establishment of the United Nations, is conventionally advanced as the reference point for the origins of the contemporary "rules-based international order," although the scope of its application expanded greatly with the end of the Cold War. Its growth involved not only political agreements, but also an array of mutually reinforcing political, technological, and bureaucratic developments. The advent of containerized shipping transformed the economics and possibilities of global commerce, making possible

today's global supply chains (Ryssdal and Palacios, 2021). The rapid adoption of the concept globally, however, have been possible without communications and computer technologies and international legal agreements together allowing the settling of international accounts within reasonable timeframes, and with reasonable risk. Such developments, in turn, would not have been possible without a critical mass of states willing to sacrifice some elements of national sovereignty to secure the economic and other benefits which came with such a system. That mass expanded significantly at the end of the 20th Century with the end of the Cold War and the transformation of the PRC as the low-cost production center of the globe. The development of international investment and finance which also occurred in this period reflected a similar combination of technology solutions and infrastructure, vehicles (particularly reliance on the U.S. dollar as the backbone of the international financial system), legal agreements that contributed to the enforceability of contracts in multiple national jurisdictions, and international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and others, that facilitated the functionality, and to a degree, regulation, of the system.

Imperfectly, but importantly, international cooperation in the framework of the "rules-based international order" during this period also expanded in the realm of criminal law. Such cooperation has become increasingly necessary in combatting the expansion of transnational organized crime (including money laundering) which has been enabled by, and expanded with, the growth in global flows of people, goods, money, data and ideas in the international system. International cooperation on criminal matters has also been an important secondary enabler of international business, for current and past members of governments involved in transnational criminal activities, and to a lesser extent, those who violate their commitments under international law in domains such as human rights.

The apparent success of the "rules-base-international order," in the eight decades since the end of World War II, and the hubris of the West, accelerated by its victory in the Cold War led a veneer of inevitability to that order. The participation of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) as a key component of that system added to both its perceived value and international consensus regarding its continuation. Such factors also, however, helped to conceal the degree to which the continued functionality of that order depended on a range of impermanent conditions that enabled it. These included the relative dominance of the U.S. in financial, commercial and geostrategic terms. That dominance contributed to the system in inherent ways, such as the availability of the dollar as a stable, quasi-universal instrument for international transactions, and as a store of value. U.S. power and the perception of its willingness to use it also arguably contributed to perceptions of the viability of international institutions and the enforceability of contracts. As a corollary, the functionality of the rules based order in the post-Cold War period also benefitted from the participation of most states to at least some degree, limiting the ability of criminal and other actors to hide from enforcement in such safe harbors Critically, following the end of the Cold War, the rules-based order also benefitted from the absence of credible alternatives for obtaining resources or other conducting other transactions of value without participating in the system, making it effectively "the only game in town".

In several ways, the rules-based international order always contained the seeds of its own transformation. From its inception, there have always been political leaders and other actors who see their power, freedom, and interests constrained or prejudiced by the system. With the expanding scope of the order, it became both increasingly visible a political symbol. It became increasingly plausible for political leaders, academics, journalists, and others, to blame the shortcomings in their own societies on the rules-based order, including inequality, lack of opportunity, corruption and insecurity in their societies. Disillusionment of populations with the status quo periodically led to empowerment of such leaders, who once in office pursued policies that, to varying degrees, challenged or restricted their state's participation in, or challenging, the rules-based order. Prior to the current decade, however, such anti-sytemic experiments were short-lived, with the policies of the perpetrator cutting the country off from an important part of international trade, investment and finance, leading to economic deterioration, popular discontent, and the expulsion of the anti-system elites either through an election

or military coup. Such "lessons" served to both those in the country and in its neighbors, the importance of adhering to the precepts of, and participating in the rules-based order. The emergence of the PRC as an alternative, large-scale source of resources without demanding adherence to the rules of that system, arguably changed the dynamic which had for decades ensured that significant challenges to the system were temporary and isolated.

2. The Rise of China and its Strategic Objectives

The rise of the PRC as a powerful actor with enormous influence in global commerce, financial, institutional, and other domains that ultimately presented a challenge to the Rules-based international order, was ironically enabled by the order itself. As noted in the prior section, that order facilitated the growth of the physical, informational, and institutional mechanisms of global commerce, to which the PRC could connect as a global manufacturing hub, little-by-little attracting the capital and technology that allowed it to transform into an economic and military power with both the will and mass to change that system.

By contrast to the behavior of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, as the economic and military power of the PRC have expanded, it has generally not sought to impose a particular model of political or economic organization on other states in the international system, although it has periodically used military, economic and other forms of coercion to intimidate governments and other actors from criticizing it, or behaving in ways adverse to PRC interests. Its imposition of sanctions on Australia after that government called for investigation of the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic in Wuhan, China, and its cancellation of a $5 billion swap line in response to declarations by Argentina's libertarian President that he would not do business with "communists" are two prominent examples.

In general, PRC objectives in engaging states and international institutions are best characterized as "China-centric." In economic affairs, the PRC has worked through its State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and other entities, in coordination with its government in strategic sectors, to obtain secure access to the commodities, foodstuffs, markets and technologies it requires for national development and power. In the process, it has worked in a relatively concerted fashion to obtain as much of the value added and control of these sectors as possible (Ellis, 2022b).

As the size and technical sophistication of the PRC economy has grown, its impact as a purchaser of commodities, foodstuffs and other goods from the rest of the world, as a potential partner, employer and generator of revenues has given it increasing leverage with political and commercial elites, even if they have often approached the PRC with distrust, calculating their ability to "manage the risks" in order to obtain the hoped for benefits from the PRC.

Such "expectation of benefits" and the fear of losing them, has impacted the global discourse about the PRC, including the willingness of political, business and other elites to speak critically of it, or confront it over its behavior, including Chinese government's repression of democracy and the rights of minority groups such as the Uighur Muslims in the PRC itself, its violation of treaty commitments on Hong Kong, its technology theft from foreign partners, its militarization of artificial islands and the assertion of territorial claims in the South and East China sea in violation of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (Tiezzi, 2022), or its military exercises and other aggressive behavior towards Taiwan.

With China's growing power, it has also engaged with and asserted increasing influence in international institutions, from the United Nations to regional bodies such as the Inter-American development Bank. As illustrated by its use of its position within the World Health Organization (WHO) during the Covid-19 pandemic to suppress discussion of its role in the origins and propagation of the virus (Godement, 2020), the PRC has repeatedly employed its presence in multilateral institutions in the UN system and elsewhere to both prevent them from acting to its disadvantage, and where possible, to shape their actions to benefit PRC interests and companies. One example is PRC work with the Interamerican Development Bank to establish "co-financing" funds, which the institution to award projects to Chinese companies, allowing them to receive additional funds from PRC-based policy banks (IDB, 2013).

In addition, the PRC has used its influence to create new mechanisms for international engagement, including regional forums such as the 14+1 forum in Europe, FOCAC in Africa, and the China-CELAC forum in Latin America, as well as the "BRICS" forum, expanded in August 2023 to include in a range of new illiberal states such as Iran and Saudia Arabia.

While the economic power and technical capacity of the PRC continues to expand, its trajectory is also being shaped by mutually reinforcing dynamics of deepening authoritarianism, economic decay, and aggressive self-confidence in its international orientation. These could converge in a moment of confrontation with the U.S. and other key stakeholders in the Western rules-based international order to help escalate such a confrontation into a military conflict.

China's deepening authoritarianism is shaped by Xi Jinping's significant consolidation of political power, reflected in his securing of an unprecedented third term in office, and the absence of members from rival political factions in Xi's Politburo (Le Miere, 2022). Such power potentially removes feedback mechanisms and constraints that could moderate PRC behavior in a crisis, particularly on issues such as Taiwan, which are closely associated with the legacy of Xi Jinping's leadership over the country.

The PRC's economic decay is driven by the depth of its still unresolved crisis in the real-estate sector. As shown by the Chinese government's ability to weather the Covid-19 pandemic, despite enormous suffering wrought on the Chinese people by a sustained lockdown policy, Communist Party control over the country at all levels, including both information and the means of coercion, is sufficiently great to present an economic crisis from threatening Party Control over the country. Nonetheless, the state will likely have to muddle through a sustained period of unusually low growth. An external environment increasingly hostile to the PRC and characterized by Western efforts at "decoupling" from it will decrease opportunities for further expanding exports to drive economic growth. On the other hand, past PRC overinvestment in infrastructure limits the possible returns on infrastructure investment to stimulate the Chinese economy. Finally, the effect of the real estate crisis in wiping out the personal savings of many Chinese, is reinforced by the traumas suffered by many during the Covid-19 lockdown, as well as persistent problems in the healthcare and education sectors, inducing Chinese to save for the future, rather than increase current consumption in ways that could stimulate the domestic Chinese economy.

In the international realm, a confluence of factors induce China to behave in an increasingly aggressive, self-confident fashion. These include China's accumulation of military, economic and other power over past decades, leading it within the framework of Chinese culture, to feel less obligation to behave with deference than when it was weak. Such disposition toward greater boldness is reinforced by the personal style of Chinese President Xi, whose charisma and self-confidence is greater than his more technocratically disposed predecessor Hu Juntao.

Such increased disposition to boldness by the PRC as it engages both rivals such as the United States, and middle-level states, elevating the risk that such interactions could escalate through miscalculation.

3. The Synergy Between China and Illiberal Regimes

The PRC has engaged with a wide range of international partners in pursuing its economic and other strategic objectives, and in seeing to mold an international political, security, and institutional space that facilitates the continued expansion of Chinese power. It has arguably been particularly accommodating in its relationships with regimes seeking to defy the rules based international order. These include its "no-limits friendship" with the Putin regime in Russia throughout its ongoing military campaign in Ukraine (Jett, Gao, and Argawahl, 2024), its commercial support to both the Islamic Republic of Iran despite international sanctions (Xu, 2023), and its engagement with dictatorships in Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba in Latin America.

Despite such support, the PRC has generally not sought military or other formal alliances with its illiberal (or other) partners. Nor has it sought to group those partners into coalitions unified around particular political, economic or other themes. Indeed, the PRC has shown a remarkable capability to engage with multiple illiberal regimes with conflicting ideological orientations, and

sometimes direct rivalries. Significant PRC engagement with rivals Saudia Arabia and Iran, its simultaneous engagement with the theocratic regie in Iran and the kleptocratic regime in Venezuela, are some examples.

Although the PRC has generally engaged with each partner on its own terms, has not sought to formally create an illiberal anti-US alliance, noneless in its rhetoric and diplomacy, the PRC is poising itself as a leader of the challenge to the rules-based international order in an increasingly direct fashion. In its "Global Civilizational Initiative," for example, the PRC questions the knowability, and thus the enforceability of Western concepts of democracy and human rights, thus creating cover for friendly illiberal regimes that challenge them, in ways beneficial to those regimes (Ellis, 2023b). Such advocacy compliments the PRC "Global Development Initiative" and the increasingly prominent role of the PRC in the "G77+China" in which the PRC positions itself as a champion of the rights of the developing, generally non-Western aligned states.

For the PRC, such engagement with illiberal states has brought both significant commercial and other strategic advantages, while supporting the survival of illiberal regimes and their challenges to the US and the rules-based international order.

Commercial Benefits to the PRC. In the commercial realm, the relative isolation of illiberal regimes from the key Western capital markets and commerce, generally including sanctions by Western governments, has helped the PRC to negotiate deals for their resources, access to their markets, and projects with them on terms highly advantageous to the PRC-based companies involved. Often, the ability of these governments to make deals with the Chinese relatively centralized authority of these regimes for making deals with the PRC, including a lack of effective "checks and balances," lack of transparency, and a corresponding openness to bribes and other personalistic benefits, as well as bureaucracies chosen more for loyalty than for technical competency, all contribute to the favorability of the terms secured by the PRC and their companies in deals with such regimes. On the PRC side, the attention to bureaucratic and contractual detail by the PRC, and coordination between the Chinese State and its companies further advantage the PRC over their illiberal partners in such dealings.

Prominent examples of such lopsided deals include Russia's sales of petroleum and agricultural goods to the PRC, after the former's invasion of the Ukraine led Western countries to impose extensive sanctions on it (Rosen, 2022). Similarly, the PRC buys as much as 1 million barrels per day of Iranian oil at a steep discount, complimented by a massive deal worth up to $400 billion in which Chinse banks loan money to Iran to facilitate works projects there by PRC-based companies (Slav, 2021). In Venezuela, the PRC was similarly able establish multiple lines of credit allowing its companies to perform infrastructure work and send Venezuela products, repaid by deliveries of discounted Venezuelan oil pumped out of the country through partnerships with Chinese countries (Hayley, 2023). The PRC obtained at least $64 billion in work projects from Venezuela in this fashion, almost all of which was repaid by oil deliveries.

In all of these cases, although PRC-based firms have experienced significant security and operational challenges in the illiberal countries in which they have operated, they have proved remarkably capable in structuring their relationships to ensure that they are paid, even when their work is not fully completed, has serious defects or environmental and social consequences, or fails to produce the promised value added for the country.

Contribution to the Survival of Illiberal Regimes. In each of the aforementioned cases, and others, PRC support has played a key role in enabling the survival of illiberal regimes and their ability to pursue interests that challenge the rules-based international order.

In the case of Russia, PRC purchases of Russia's petroleum and agricultural goods, its providing to Russia an alternative to the US-controlled SWIFT system for conducting international financial transactions to evade Western sanctions, and the supply of of components for military hardware (Atwood, 2024), have all been critical to enabling Russia to sustain its expensive war effort against Ukraine for over two years, despite international sanctions.

With respect to Iran, the previously mentioned PRC purchases of Iranian oil have arguably helped Iran's Islamic regime to navigate domestic discontent in the face of international sanctions. It

has also arguably given Iran the resources to continue to support surrogate groups around the region supporting its objectives, including the terrorist group Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Hezbollah in Lebanon and elsewhere, and the Houthis in Yemen. In some cases, even arms such as Chinas C-802 anti-ship missile, appear to have been adapted by the Iranians and provided to surrogates such as the Houthis, who have used them in attacks against Western shipping (Brar, 2023).

In the case of Venezuela, PRC purchases of Venezuelan oil and other commodities, and its China's associated working of infrastructure projects and provisioning of goods for the Venezuelan state, including deals supported by at least $64 billion in Chinese credit, arguably played an important role in the survival of the populist Hugo Chavez and subsequent Nicholas Maduro regimes as they consolidated power and moved against the Venezuelan opposition (Monaldi, 2019).

In the case of Nicaragua, diplomatic recognition of the PRC by the Daniel Ortega Regime created the option for economic engagement with the PRC, including promised exports, loans, and PRC-worked infrastructure products, to compensate for increasing international sanctions against the Ortegas by the U.S. and Europe, in response to the Ortega regime's repression of democracy, elections, and public opposition (*Confidencial*, 2023).

In each of the cases, although PRC funds did not fully compensate for corruption, mismanagement, and economic isolation, they arguably provided a sufficient volume of transactions, with associated opportunities for associated graft and corruption, to incentivize elites affiliated with the government, to continue to support it and remain connected to such sources of income.

Strategic Benefits to the PRC. Beyond economic benefits to the PRC and its companies, the survival of illiberal regimes and associated challenges to the rules-based order enabled by that survival, strategically benefits China, albeit generated associated risk both within the country, and geopolitically, that China must manage.

In the case of Russia, its invasion of and sustained military campaign in the Ukraine has obligated the U.S. and Europe to dedicate significant resources and attention to supporting the later, while hedging against Russian aggression elsewhere. In the process, Russia, once a peer rival of the PRC, has become ever more dependent on it and subject to its influence (Isachenkov, 2023), as well as cooperating with it in other areas such as the Arctic against their shared rival, the U.S (Grady, 2022). In operational terms, Russia's campaign in the Ukraine has also allowed the PRC to learn from the military campaign and the Western approach to imposing sanctions against Russia, in ways that help the PRC to prepare for similar Western responses to its own possible future aggression against Taiwan, or other conflicts with the West in the Indopacific.

Iran's actions in the Middle East through surrogates including Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis, have similarly obligated the U.S. to expend considerable resources and attention supporting Israel, seeking to prevent escalation of the conflict. In the process, it has undercut Israeli reapproachment with moderate Arab states through the broadening of the Abraham accords, which would have strengthened Washington's influence at the expense of the PRC.

In Latin America, the survival of anti-U.S dictatorships such as those in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua undermines U.S. efforts to strengthen a values-based consensus and rule of law in the Western Hemisphere. The attention that Washington has been obliged to pay to high level engagements trying to induce the Maduro dictatorship to allow free and fair elections in Venezuela, the contribution of Venezuelan refugees to migration crises not only at the U.S. southern border, but throughout the Americas, and the Maduro regime's threats to forcibly take control of the Essequibo territory from Guyana, have all consumed scarce U.S. resources and distracted Washington from advancing its policy objectives elsewhere.

Beyond strategic benefits to the PRC from the actions of individual illiberal regimes, their economic engagement with the PRC has also facilitated the broader PRC global strategic objective of advancing the use of the Chinese currency, the RNB, at the expense of the dollar. Most illiberal states, from Venezuela to Saudia Arabia, have agreed to transactions which, in varying ways, use the RNB rather than the U.S. dollar. Often, the structuring of transactions in ways that avoid using the U.S. dollar or Western currency clearing mechanisms such as SWIFT, are designed to reduce the vulnerability of illiberal states to U.S. and other Western sanctions (Handwerker, 2022).

For the PRC, turn to the RNB both increases its financial leverage over the illiberal partners as a control mechanism, while supporting the broader PRC objective of RNB internationalization. For the U.S., the long-term strategic effect of decreased interest in the international financial system in conducting transactions in and holding dollars would be catastrophic, to China's advantage. In addition to reducing the ability of the U.S. to use financial sanctions as a tool of influence, it would ability of the U.S. to borrow large amounts of capital on international markets at reasonably low interest rates, weakening future U.S. growth vis-à-vis China, and forcing the U.S. to make difficult decisions to limit spending in areas such as defense and infrastructure, critical for its strategic competition with the PRC (Bezek, 2024).

A more indirect strategic benefit to the PRC of the survival and proliferation of illiberal regimes, as noted in the prior section, is to complicate the ability of Western governments to combat organized crime and enforce contracts and other legal norms in the international system. To the extent that such impediments to the rule of law facilitate corruption and insecurity in U.S. democratic partners, they create expanded flows of drugs and migrants to the United States, or other crises requiring resources and attention for the U.S. to address, particularly when such crises occur in close proximity to the United States. By weakening the performance of such democratic partners, they also further opportunities for anti-U.S. populist governments to come to power, who are then drawn to the PRC for resources and security cooperation, as an alternative to the U.S.

In the military domain, the survival of illiberal regimes expands possibilities for PRC strategic presence globally, including in close proximity to the U.S. in strategically sensitive sectors, even without formal alliance or basing agreements. Because illiberal regimes are generally more open to purchasing Chinese military equipment and engaging in other forms of military cooperation from populist Venezuela's purchase of K-8 fighter aircraft and radars to Cuba's hosting of Chinese military trainers and signals intelligence operators (Ellis 2024). It also includes potential PRC operation and control of dual-use space facilities, such as that agreed to by the prior populist Peronist government of Christina Fernandez in Argentina (Caro, 2024). It further includes PRC access to ports and other dual-use infrastructure that could be used against the US with the formal or tacit approval of illiberal host governments.

Beyond direct military collaboration of illiberal regimes with the PRC, in time of a major war between the PRC and the West, illiberal regimes sustained by PRC economic engagement also create expanded risks for the projection of power by other U.S. rivals against the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere and other strategic locations. The survival of anti-US regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, in combination with the survival of the Putin regime in Russia and a radical Islamic theocratic government in Iran, for example, expands the risk of Russian and Iranian projection of military and other threats against the U.S from proximate illiberal states such as Venezuela and Cuba, in support of their mutual partner, the PRC.

Risks to the PRC. Despite such strategic benefits to the PRC from the survival of illiberal states, the actions by illiberal states only partially within China's domain of influence also creates continual risks which the PRC must manage, both in each country in which its companies and citizens operate, and at the broader geostrategic level.

At the country level, the illiberal states in which the PRC seeks to operate have been beset by institutional deficiencies, often reinforced by their own policies. These, in turn, create recurring difficulties for Chinese companies seeking to successfully execute projects, as well as threats to the safety for Chinese personnel operating there.

At the broader geostrategic strategic level, Chinese work with illiberal regimes creates reputational risks when PRC-based companies are tainted by corruption, poor project and environmental performance and corporate social responsibility, or the failure of their projects to produce value-added by their societies. The virtual absence of value created by $64 billion of loan-based projects in Venezuela, and the disastrous performance by Chinese companies in building the Coca Coda Sinclair hydroelectric facility for the prior anti-U.S. authoritarian government of Ecuador (Casey and Kraus, 2018), are but two examples.

Beyond economic projects, Chinese engagement with illiberal states may undercut China's efforts to portray itself as non-threatening, or negatively impact its global engagement objectives in other ways as well. PRC political, economic, and military support to Russia in the Ukraine, for example, has arguably increased the number of political and other actors in the European Union and elsewhere that see the PRC as a threat, thus indirectly accelerating increasing efforts by those actors to protect their markets and technologies from China's advance as well.

Beyond reputational risks to the PRC, its empowerment of illiberal actors creates the risk of expanded military conflicts which can impact the PRC through damage to the global economy, even if the PRC itself manages to escape association with the aggression of its partners. The escalatory potential of Russia's actions in the Ukraine, Iran's actions through surrogate groups against Israel and the West in the Middle East, North Korea's nuclear program and aggression against its neighbors in the Pacific, and even Venezuela's threats o military action over Essequibo, are all examples.

4. Deliterious Effects on the International Order

As established in the preceding sections, the interaction between the PRC and illiberal states pursuing their disparate objectives, progressively undermines the rules-based international order which has served as the basis for the modern interdependent global economy, and the management (however imperfect) of the challenges of transnational organized crime and associated insecurity.

The survival of illiberal regimes which only selectively honor contracts or cooperate with international law enforcement organs when it serves their interests, including giving safe harbor to criminals and terrorist groups, complicates the fight against such groups and associated money laundering. In the process, it contributes to the strength of such groups and expanded illicit flows. In the process, it facilitates expanded corruption and insecurity, undercutting the faith of already skeptical citizens of democratic regimes in the ability of their political and economic systems to deliver results. It thus creates a reinforcing cycle of discontent which opens the doors to illiberal governments, whose policies often lead them into greater political and economic distance from the West, and greater collaboration with and dependence on the PRC, as well as leading their countries into even worse economic performance, corruption, and the erosion of the democratic institutions that permit future peaceful change.

The proliferation and strengthening of illiberal regimes with the facilitation of China also harms other states in other ways.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine put the existential survival of its democratic neighbor at risk, as well as imposing severe strains on its European neighbors by obliging them to significantly expand defense spending to help Ukraine defend itself, as well as providing humanitarian assistance and fiscal support to sustain the functionality of the Ukranian government and economy in the conflict. Russia's invasion also imposed strains on European and other economies through millions of Ukrainian refugees, as well as through the impact on European farmers from the opening of European markets to low-cost Ukrainian agricultural production (European Commission, 2023).

In the case of Iran, the conflict unleashed by the October 2023 terrorist attack against Israel undermined the comity and pragmatic interactions between Israel and moderate Arab states previously nurtured by and reflected in the Abraham accords, led to a humanitarian crisis with tens of thousands of civilian casualties from Israel's subsequent campaign against Hamas in the Gaza Strip, and fostered a polarizing debate with internal political repercussions from Latin America to U.S. college campuses.

In Latin America, illiberal regimes in Cuba and Venezuela have historically contributed to subversive efforts to destabilize neighboring democracies through working with radical movements in neighboring democracies, including the dissemination of propaganda and disinformation through social media and other channels, with the help of Russia (U.S. State Department, 2023), as well as a possible role in the weaponization of legitimate protests in other

countries of the region such as Ecuador and Chile (Jaramillo, 2019). The augmented survival of those regimes and ability to engage other countries in the region thus enhances their ability to undermine democracy in the region.

Beyond direct contributions to the destabilization of democracies in Latin America, in Venezuela and Nicaragua, as with Russia's Ukraine invasion and the war provoked by Iran's surrogate Hamas, consolidation of power by illiberal governments have unleashed refugee crises that have strained the socioeconomic fabric of neighboring democracies. More than seven million refugees have left Venezuela, significantly impacting the countries they have fled to, from Colombia and its Andean neighbors to the Caribbean, to Central America and the United States. Beyond the economic strains, the massive refugee flows have brought political repercussions for host countries. It has even had criminal impacts, including the migration of of cells of the Venezuelan prison gang "Tren de Aragua," which has moved with and exploited desperate Venezuelans along their journeys (*Insight Crime*, 2024).

Beyond the direct effects discussed in this section, the proliferation and strengthening of illiberal regimes, facilitated by engagement with the PRC, also undermines the faith of democratic governments in the reliability of international institutions and legal and contractual frameworks to protect their citizens abroad, the commerce and investments of their companies, and their national security against external threats. Such erosion of faith has a self-reinforcing effect on the deterioration of the international system, obliging states to take unilateral measures such as expanded defense spending, and decreased cessation of sovereignty to international institutions and treaties, in order to more effectively guarantee their own interests.

5. *The Compounding Role of New Technologies*

To the extent that the range of direct and indirect effects of PRC engagement with illiberal regimes are problematic, the destabilizing effects of this dynamic on the international system are expanded by the advance of and synergistic, reinforcing effects from new information technologies. Democracies and free market economies in Latin America and elsewhere in the world have long been under stress from the effects of increased "connectivity" including the displacement fostered by new commercial and social interactions accompanying the expanded global movement of people, money, data, and ideas in the contemporary world system. As noted previously, the globalized commerce and expanded communication enabled by the rules-based international order, in addition to its many beneficial effects, also expanded inequality and displacement within countries and societies not adequately prepared to effectively leverage the opportunities that globalization provided. At the same time, increasingly ubiquitous connections through modern cellphones, the internet, and social media expanded and accelerated the transmission of information, and with it, the ability to develop perceptions and communities at a global level, to coordinate across them, and to fight between them.

In addition to expanding the rate and volume of communication, however, the new technologies, including social media have also permitted their transmission and targeting of recipients in an increasingly decentralized fashion. In addition to fostering a fragmentation of communities of interest, the combination of increased volume, number of sources, and targeting of smaller groups, has made it increasingly difficult for recipients to process it with the appropriate skepticism, as well as greatly complicating the ability of governments and other entities to monitor those communications and manage their effects, let alone control them.

As a compliment to the expanded rate, volume, decentralization and targeting of information, new technologies such as artificial intelligence are exponentially expanding even further the capacity to generate information in ways that blur the line between human generated content, "objective" images and data, and computer-generated content. The result has arguably been to facilitate the potential "weaponization" of communication, as well as expanded uncertainty and polarization within societies, further eroding faith in institutions and governments.

As a counterweight to such uncertainty, societal polarization and fragmentation, the new technologies are also giving governments and other groups unprecedented tools for monitoring and targeting those individual users and groups, constraining their information flows, and impacting them in financial and other ways. The PRC has had multiple comparative advantage in

developing such technologies, including substantial investment in applied research, an infrastructure for the appropriation of the technology of others, a regulatory environment with less emphasis than in the West on the protection of individual privacy, a large population across which to develop such technologies, and a Party-led state with both the interest in and budget for technologies that facilitate such monitoring and control.

In many parts of the world, the development and application of technology by the PRC is linked to perceptions of its economic success, efficiency, security, and social order, attributes often lacking in the other parts of the world. Although the PRC government is generally restrained in promoting itself as a "model," the perceptions in the rest of the world about the role of the PRC government and technology in success, efficiency, security, and social order, impacts debates in the observing societies regarding the appropriate role of government and technology, and the sacrifice of individual privacy and other protections to obtain those hoped-for benefits.

Beyond the impact of perceptions of the PRC example, the reality of the tradeoffs between technology and the protection of the individual is being impacted globally by the expanding market share of Chinese technology companies such as Huawei and Hikvision, and Chinese products in sectors such as security systems, telecommunications, cloud computing, the internet of things, and "smart cities," among other products. The increasing dominance of Chinese companies and products in these sectors, and their associated opportunities to lock in their advantages and the trade-offs inherent in their products through the setting of standards (De La Bruyère, 2022; Ellis, 2022c), is creating a reality on the ground across the world, increasingly in favor of results and efficiencies, over protection of the individual.

In the context of an international order under multidimensional stresses, the evolving synergy between the new technologies give the PRC and collaborating illiberal governments unprecedented new capabilities to control information, and their own populations, while potentially destabilize those of their "democratic" adversaries. The PRC has already exported control systems to illiberal allies, including providing the "fatherland ID card," system to the Maduro regime in Venezuela, telecommunication management technologies in Cuba, as well as national monitoring systems built for the prior anti-US authoritarian regime of Rafael Correa in Ecuador ("ECU-911"), and to the populist regime of Evo Morales in Bolivia ("BOL-110") (Ellis, 2022c).

The ultimate balance within the evolution of technologies between facilitating control versus polarization and chaos is arguably still indeterminate. Within the context of the synergistic interaction between the PRC and illiberal states discussed in this work, however, the near to mid-term impacts of such technology developments is likely to expand the power of the PRC and the illiberal states to which it provides its technologies, to maintain control of their own societies and thus extend their own longevity, power, and by implication, behaviors that undermine the rules-based order and otherwise serve PRC strategic interests. On the other hand, the impact of the new technologies in straining democratic states, will be complimented by their ability to be "weaponized" in the hands of the PRC and its illiberal partners for targeted use against its democratic adversaries, further accelerating the deterioration of democracies and the rules-based order.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This work has argued that the nature of the challenge posed by the PRC to the international system cannot be fully understood in terms of a "bi-polar" world order, such as that which imperfectly characterized the era of the Cold War. Nor is the role played by mid-sized illiberal regimes such as Russia and Iran sufficiently independent from the PRC to characterize the order as "multipolar" in classic terms. Rather, the key dynamic currently shaping and transforming the international system is the synergistic interplay between an increasingly powerful PRC pursuing its own economic and other strategic interests, and a range of illiberal states whose survival and ability to challenge the international system is enabled by their engagement with the PRC. Those interactions strategically benefit the PRC, while at the same time, creating risks at both the country and geostrategic level that the PRC must manage. Over the long-term, this work argues, the dynamic between the PRC and illiberal states erodes

the functionality of the international system in ways that could prove destabilizing, undermining the security and prosperity of all.

Finally, this work has argued that the erosion and destabilization of the rules-based international order is accelerated by the convergence of new communications technologies, big data, artificial intelligence and the internet of things. Collectively, these technologies advance polarization and instability within democracies, while giving the PRC and its illiberal partners enhanced tools to control their populations, extending their own longevity and power, while also using the new technologies as weapons to destabilizing their democratic rivals, accelerating the demise of the system.

In this dangerous new international environment, it is not enough for Western democracies to merely "strategically compete" with the PRC and other illiberal rivals. The West must start by compensating for the sociopolitical debates currently dividing and paralyzing it from effective action. It must get improve and resolve the impediments to its own tools for engaging with and strengthening the institutions of its democratic partners, thus better helping them to succeed against the myriad of challenges that they face.

While the West must "get its own act together," apply additional resources, and fix broken institutions and engagement tools, in the face of the enormous, systemic, self-reinforcing challenge described by this work, doing so alone will not be enough. The necessary key element for the West is the re-thinking, re-formulation, and re-assertion of its discourse on values.

If the West defines leadership on values as merely sanctioning or calling-out regimes for their corruption and non-democratic behavior, in a geopolitical context in which China provides other options, the West will fail.

What the West requires, is the formulation more effective values-based arguments, more effectively and sensitively delivered, to inspire the world to make their own positive choices, not about why they should "align" with the United States, but about why their own societal interests are best served by principles such as the protection of individual rights, individual choice as the foundation of government legitimacy, and individual ownership and initiative as the principal generator of economic value and technological progress. The West must convince others not that it will "offer" them more than China, but why it is in their own long-term interest to pursue a democratic path privileging individual rights, market-led economies, and the rule of law, and to cooperate and sacrifice to sustain an international institutional framework that sustains such values.

At the end of the day, the U.S. and the West must also be prepared for the possibility that such engagement may be too little, too late. The prudent, while working to preserve the current order, should prepare plans that permit their nation, or firm, to navigate its collapse, and the chaotic, violent, dark period which will likely follow.

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INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIC INTERESTS AT THE BLACK SEA – ENERGY SECURITY ANALYSIS

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Abstract: The birth, development and propagation of regional and world conflict, as well as its escalation towards military war, global economic interests that converge towards the monopolization of strategic hydrocarbon energy resources, it transforms the Black Sea into a geostrategic space of geopolitical and geo-economic importance, but also with huge potential for confrontation and war. Positioning Romania in an inflection point of interests, in an area of strategic importance, being the buffer between NATO and the Russian Federation (the most important regional actor), it gives us the status of a state provider of regional security and welfare. The Black Sea region is important in that it is rich in hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas), it is an energy transit center and becomes a hot spot for the extended world security because it delimits the border between NATO and the Russian Federation, but also the influences from China.

Keywords: Black Sea; strategic interest; energy security; analysis.

Introduction

The actions of the Russian Federation against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine represent flagrant violations of international law and accepted standards of civilized behavior of states and represent a direct threat to security and stability european, with serious repercussions on world order and well-being. The consequences of war are felt in all parts of the globe disrupting supply chains, raising the cost of energy, and, by generating economic inflation and jeopardising energy security, especially in import-dependent countries in Africa and Asia, the post-pandemic economic resilience is jeopardised. (Fita, 2024) Thus, the Black Sea region becomes in these times of crisis, a bigger stake than ever, not just in terms of security, but especially from a geopolitical perspective, with implications on several levels: security, free movement, freedom of trade, energy, security of supply chains, infrastructure, interconnectivity and interdependence. Since the Black Sea is of paramount importance in protecting NATO's eastern and southern flank, it represents the space of confrontation between the Russian Federation and NATO and the defence of strategic interests. For this reason, the Russian Federation can disrupt navigation, create problems for Romania within the exclusive economic zones where strategic energy resources are located, or block access to Odessa. (Fita, 2021)

In this unfortunate context, the Black Sea region meets all the conditions to become a conflict area with the risk of military escalation and global expansion, especially against the backdrop of the global energy crisis and the resurgence of the global hegemony struggle, which includes, among other things, the struggle for (re)sharing areas of control and influence. (Bahnareanu, 2008)

I. Geopolitical, situation and interest analysis to Black Sea

1.1. Geopolitical analysis

Location: *South-East Europe;*
Riparian countries: *Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia. Ukraine (see Figure no. 1.1.);*
Surface: *over 420 000 km² ;*
Volume of water: *547 000 km³ ;*
Depth: *2212 m.;*

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Length:	*1149 km.;*
Width:	*630 km.;*
Bays:	*Odessa;*
Straits:	*a) Kerch (Azov Sea – Black Sea);*
	b) Bosphorus – Darnanelles (Black Sea – Marmara Sea – Aegean Sea – Mediterranean Sea);
Peninsulas:	*Crimea;*
Islands:	*Snake;*
Ports:	*Constanta (Romania); Odessa, Kherson, Mariupol (Ukraine); Rostov on Don, Sevastopol, Ialta, Sochi, Feodosia, Kerch, Novorossiisk (Russia); Batumi, Sukhumi (Georgia); Rize, Trabzon, Ordu, Samsun, Zonguldak, Istanbul (Turkey); Burgas, Varna (Bulgaria).*
Strategic resources:	*The Black Sea is very rich in hydrocarbons (oil and natural gas) and it is the only large natural pool in the world of hydrogen sulfide liquefied at high pressure (400 meters).*

1.2. Geopolitical analysis

Actors (players):	a) **Russia** *(state actor/player) – the biggest actor/player in the Black Sea;*
	b) **NATO** *(non-state actor/player) – the most current and important actor at the Black Sea, consisting of the following countries:*
	• *Romania (state actor/player);*
	• *Turkey (state actor/player)*
	• *Bulgaria (state actor/player)*
	c) **Ukraine** *(state actor/player) – country at war with Russia and joining NATO and the European Union;*
	d) **Georgia** *(state actor/player).*
Situation:	- *In the regional security scheme are involved not only the Black Sea riparian states, but also certain directly involved states:*
	• **Republic of Moldova** *and* **Transhistria** *(directly involved in the regional security scheme through Ukraine and Romania);*
	• **Greece** *and* **Cyprus** *(directly involved in the security issue thanks to Turkey);*
	• **Israel, Iran, Hamas** *and* **Egypt** *(directly involved in the war in the Middle East, through Turkey, which is on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood, that is, Iran, Hamas, Egypt and newer Palestine, which is in the process of becoming a state within Israel);*
	• **China**, *which is buying many Black Sea port targets to implement and develop the Silk Road.*
	- *The hydrocarbon basin is mostly under the control of the Russia, which involves a great imbalance of power;*
	- *The evolution of the security environment of the Middle East can be a model of how the Black Sea Region would tend to evolve, if starting from a fairly balanced distribution of control and influence areas (in the Middle East) during the Cold War, it has come to take control by the US – Israel binomial over the entire region, except Iran and Syria, and this trend extends to the Black Sea;*
	- *Some of the Black Sea riparian states are part of the Balkan geopolitical equation (Turkey, Bulgaria, partly Romania) and this involves directly but*

also tangentially a number of other states that are located in the Extended Black Sea Region, without being riparian proper (Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Hungary, etc.);

- *Recalculating the position towards the European Union and withdrawing the borders of the regions of control and influence realized from the perspective of the Brexit event, including the possible design of similar events;*
- *Without any exception, all the Black Sea riparian states face serious internal problems being states where there are (sometimes they also manifest) inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflicts of traditional nature, old in certain cases for hundreds of years;*
- *Between all the states riparian the Black Sea there are old and serious territorial disputes, which further complicates the regional security scheme;*
- *The Black Sea area is a transit area between the East and Europe, which makes the main illegal cross-border actions to be concentrated in this region;*
- *Through the Black Sea area pass the main energy supply routes (gas pipelines and oil pipelines) with fossil resources and electricity marine cables of Western Europe. (Horell, 2016)*

1.3. Interest analysis

Interests:
- *China's increasingly insistent attempt to meddle in the economic problems of the Black Sea region, as China has already seized important hydrocarbon exploitations in the Mediterranean basin, the Cyprus/Turkey Region and develop the Silk Road;*
- *The presence of immense natural resources (hydrocarbons), largely untapped, which arouse the attention and amplify the expansionist struggles in the field (re)drawing of areas of control and influence;*
- *The growing American military presence on Romanian territory only indicates the preparation of this state as a base for launching air and ground military operations and therefore, attracting Romania into a military confrontation with evolution and outcome that is difficult to specify, but which is very unlikely to be in favor of the US-Israel binomial.*
- *The security environment of the Black Sea is becoming very unstable and capable at any time to generate conflicts of greater proportions, including escalations of already existing conflicts and global expansions of regional conflicts:*
  - *the Hegemonic confrontation between the US and the Russia;*
  - *the emergence of Turkish and Chinese regional power (the latter, very discreet);*
  - *preparing armed confrontations with consequences and developments that are difficult to predict;*
  - *the existence of multiple sources of conflict involving other states in Europe;*
  - *the corrupt political regimes, which induce general discontent, the stupid gait of states, poverty, unemployment, ineffective administration, etc. (Baumann, 2008)*

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Figure no. 1.1. Black Sea and riparian countries

(*Source:* https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea)

II. SWOT analysis to riparian countries to Black Sea

SWOT analysis (Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats), is the most important technical and managerial analysis on understanding and knowing the strategic position of an organization, industry or national economy and has the following objectives[1]: the detailed knowledge of threats, risks and vulnerabilities and the possibilities to counter them related to energy organizations, industry and the national economy; development opportunities of national energy organizations, industry and economy; the safety and security level of the national industry and economy; the real state of the national economy and economic security; the recommendation of strategies that ensure the best alignment between the internal and external environment and choosing the right strategy for adapting strengths to opportunities, minimizing risks and eliminating weaknesses. (SGG, 2024)

2.1. Russia

Strenght	Weaknesses
- global superpower capable of influencing certain regional and global events and exercising power; - military, maritime, land, air and space superpower; - possess nuclear weapons and mass destruction; - access to the warm seas: Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Japan Sea, Baltic Sea;	- NATO borders in the proximity areas of the Russia: Romania, Bulgaria, Poland; - expansion of NATO and the European Union, through the desire to join Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, at the proximity with the Russia;

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[1] ISO 30000 – Risk Management

Strenght	Weaknesses
- access to the Frozen Ocean; - all types of relief and environment; - economic superpower, by holding strategic energy resources (oil and natural gas); - world leader in hydrocarbon exports (oil and natural gas); - it has the largest network of pipelines (oil and gas) in the world over very long distances, supplying almost all of the European Union, China, India and other Asian states; - large reserves of gold, coal, wood, ores; - very strong nuclear force; - very strong Orthodox religion anchored in the state; - total/partial political, military and energy dependence of the former states of the USSR; - he is a permanent and active member of the following global security structures: United Nations – UN; Association of Southeast Asian Country Nations – ASEAN; Shanghai Cooperation Organization; G20; Council of Europe; Asia Economic Cooperation – Pacific – APEC; Pentry Organization Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE; World Trade Organization – WTO; Commonwealth of Independent States – CIS; Collective Security Treaty Organization – CSTO; Eurasian Economic Union.	- counter-candidates to the world superpower: USA and China; - possible conflicts with NATO through war with Ukraine; - the economy is not very strong compared to the US and China economy; - economic blockades followed by EU sanctions due to the war in Ukraine – financial losses; - mistrust of the people in the president; - distrust of European and world security states and organisations by using the armed forces to occupy Crimea, parts of Ukraine, Georgia and Azerbaijan; - non-compliance with international peace and arms treaties; - interference with the internal affairs of other States with the role of interests and supremacy; - economic loss by decoupling certain European energy buses from the Russia; - few inhabitants compared to the country's area, most of them living in the western part of the country, about 77% of the population.
Opportunities	**Threats**
- control the world and become the largest global superpower – total hegemony; - become the greatest military, maritime, land, air and space power; - possess the most nuclear weapons and mass destruction; - expansion of territories and appropriation of natural and energy resources in the basement; - become the greatest economic and energy power; - serious opponent of NATO; - defeat the military, economic and political war with the US and China.	- NATO expansion in the proximity areas of the Russian Federation through the entry of Ukraine into NATO; - loss of control over Ukraine and Moldova; - the continued development of China and the US; - financial losses through EU economic sanctions; - exit from certain international peace organizations and treaties; - possible war with NATO; - reduced credibility through use of energy (hydrocarbons, electricity) as an energy weapon or pressure instrument for profitability or blackmail purposes; - economic loss by decoupling certain European energy buses from the Russian Federation; - low demographic factor compared to the country's area.

2.2. Turkey

Strenght	Weaknesses
- the settlement of the crossroads of Europe and Asia makes it a country of great regional and world geostrategic importance; - it is a member state of the UN, NATO, OSCE, OECD, OIC and Council of Europe;	- dependence on imports of strategic resources, in particular hydrocarbons (oil, natural gas) from Russia and Azerbaijan.

Strenght	Weaknesses
- in 2005 the European Union opened accession negotiations with Ankara; - great economic power; - a strong Islamic state and has cooperative relations with the Middle East and the Turkish states of Central Asia, through membership in organizations such as the Islamic Conference and Economic Cooperation Organization; - total control of the Black Sea: the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits separate the Black Sea from the Mediterranean Sea (Marmara Sea and Aegean Sea), having an important role in the transit of goods, military resources and techniques between the two seas; - construction of the Istanbul canal to bypass the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits and to circumvent the Montreux Convention, 1936; - integrated State in the Muslim Brotherhood; - decision-making role at the Black Sea; - high demographic factor; - the growing presence throughout Europe.	
Opportunities	**Threats**
- control the Islamic world and become a great superpower; - become a great economic, military and maritime power; - energy hub to Black Sea.	- economic loss by decoupling certain energy buses from the Russian Federation, or Azerbaijan; - a possible war with Israel, being on the side of Hamas in the war between the two; - the character of fundamental Islamism can generate conflicts or wars; - the use of the two straits (Bosphorus and Dardanelles) as a political weapon or pressure instrument for the purpose of profitability or blackmail; - country of transit of migrants to Europe.

2.3. Bulgaria

Strenght	Weaknesses
- state belonging to the European Union and NATO, which gives security, stability, credibility and economic, diplomatic and military relations with all countries of the world; - NATO military bases on the territory of the country; - exit to the Black Sea (warm sea) through the two ports of Varna and Burgas; - exit to the Danube through the two ports of Vidin and Ruse; - bridges over the Danube, Vidin – Calafat and Ruse – Giurgiu; - possible hydrocarbon resources (oil and natural gas) in the Black Sea: perimeter 1-26 Han Tervel, Han Asparuh block, Vinekh deposit and Krum deposit; - rich coal deposits (lignite and anthracite), which gives energy security;	- almost total dependence on Russian gas; - almost dependence on coal for to produce electricity; - high level of corruption; - non-partnership in the Schengen area.

Strenght	Weaknesses
- connection to ENTSO-E – the main electricity system in the EU; - connection to ENTSO-G – the main gas system in the EU.	

Opportunities	Threats
- massive investments in exploration and extraction of possible hydrocarbon resources (oil and natural gas) in the Black Sea: perimeter 1-26 Han Tervel, Han Asparuh block, Vinekh deposit and Krum deposit; - eliminating dependence on Russian gas; - membership of the Schengen area confers the free passage of goods and people; - energy hub to Black Sea.	- the use of gas by Russia as an energy weapon or a political pressure instrument in achieving the objectives; - possible attacks by Russia on NATO military bases; - transit of the territory of refugees; - EU policy against coal, which gives energy insecurity and dependence from import.

2.4. Georgia

Strenght	Weaknesses
- member of: United Nations, Council of Europe, World Trade Organization, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development.	- it has few energy resources; - dependence on natural gas brought from Russia that can cause many conflict situations; - dependence on natural gas brought from Azerbaijan through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (oil pipeline), as it connects Baku with Ceyhan.

Opportunities	Threats
- become a member of NATO; - become a member EU; - energy hub because is transit country for gas from Caspian Sea – Azerbaidjan to Turkey and South Europe.	- the desire to join NATO and the EU, as well as energy dependence on Russia and Azebaidjan, can generate military conflicts on the part of Russia.

2.5. Ukraine

Strenght	Weaknesses
- military support from NATO and the EU; - strong solidarity with EU countries; - strong financial support from the US and EU; - energy and food support with some EU countries; - humanitarian and political support with EU countries, especially Romania; - country very rich in natural resources and especially energy; - country with very strong energy infrastructure; - good relations with the US, NATO and the EU, on the background of war; - transit of gas and oil energy pipelines through the national territory to Europe; - possibility of interconnection to ENTSO-E and ENTSO-G (the main European electricity and gas systems) especially through Romania – this involves major investments in energy infrastructure.	- state of war with the military and economic giant Russia; - loss of life and military technique; - significant infrastructure losses; - population decimation (refugees); - dependent on Russian gas; - dependent on Russian nuclear energy and nuclear fuel; - dependent on romanian electricity; - involvement of Belarus on the side of Russia; - the involvement of Iranian drones in aggression; - bombardment of the port infrastructure on the Black Sea and Danube; - bombardment of the energy critical infrastructures; - non-transition of grain and resource vessels; - many black-outs; - food insecurity; - energy insecuriy; - economic insecurity; - national insecuriy.

Opportunities	Threats
- accession to the European Union; - accession to NATO; - escape from Russian domination and become a European country.	- lose the war with Russia and return to Russian domination; - naval and maritime insecurity in the Black Sea; - inability to join the EU and NATO; - possible loss of territory in favor of Russia: Lugansk, Donetsk, Zaporozhie, Herson and Crimea; - loss of territories rich in strategic energy resources; - loss of life and military technique; - escalating war in the long run.

2.6. Romania

Strenght	Weaknesses
- state belonging to the European Union and NATO, which gives us security, stability, credibility and economic, diplomatic and military relations with all countries of the world; - NATO military bases on the territory of the country, which gives military security; - declaration of the Black Sea as an area of strategic interest by NATO (Summit Madrid 2022); - exit to the Black Sea (warm sea) through the port of Constanta; - the Danube's navigability (commercial or strategic transport on the Danube with the EU and Serbia states); - the Danube in the Black Sea (Danube Delta) through the three arms: Chilia, Sulina and St. Gheorghe; - ports on the Danube: Sulina, Tulcea, Galati, Braila, Cernavoda, Calarasi, Oltenita, Giurgiu, Bechet, Calafat, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Orsova, Moldova Veche; - bridges over the Danube: Calafat-Vidin and Giurgiu-Ruse; - hydrocarbon resources (oil and natural gas) in the Black Sea; - coal deposits (hard coal, lignite and anthracite), which gives energy security; - connection to ENTSO-E – main EU electricity system; - connection to ENTSO-G – main EU gas system; - supply with electricity for Ukraine and Moldova.	- partial dependence on Russian gas; - unpredictability of the executive and legislative system; - high level of corruption; - legislative non-harmonisation; - the departure of civil or military academics, specialists and experts, abroad due to low salaries, can generate national crises (military crises, energy crises, food, etc.); - non-partnership in the Schengen area.
Opportunities	Threats
- massive investments in exploring and extracting possible hydrocarbon resources (oil and natural gas) in the Black Sea; - exit of the country from the NATO periphery and its transformation into a regional hub of energy and regional security; - exit of the country from dependence on Russian gas and Russia's impossibility to use its energy	- the use of gas by Russia as an energy weapon or a political pressure instrument in achieving the objectives; - possible attacks by Russia on NATO military bases; - transit through the territory of refugees from the Middle East or North Africa;

as an energy weapon or a tool of political pressure to pursue its interests; - membership of the Schengen Area – confers the free passage of goods and population.	- possible refugees from the Global Islamist Network or the Muslim Brotherhood can harm Romania's national security.

III. Equation of power, sources of conflict, risk scenarios and balance of forces (militarization)

3.1. Equation of power

3.1.1. States actors/players directly involved

Next actors/players is directly involved to Black Sea: Ukraine, Rusia, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania. (SGG, 2024)

3.1.2. States actors/players indirectly involved

Next actors/players is indirectly involved to Black Sea: USA, China and Austria. (SGG, 2024)

3.1.3. No-state actors/players indirectly involved

Next no-states actors/players is indirectly involved to Black Sea: NATO, UE and Muslim Brotherhood. (SGG, 2024)

3.1.4. Diminant states/Dominated states

The next states are dominant in the Black Sea: Russia and Turkey. (SGG, 2024)

The next states are dominated in the Black Sea: Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Georgia. (SGG, 2024)

3.2. Sources od conflict

Possible sources of conflict to Black Sea region: (SGG, 2024)
- Hegemonic rivalries between the US and the Russia;
- American or NATO military presence in the territories of Romania, Bulgaria or Turkey in proximity to the Russia;
- Moving the war between Israel and Hamas, Israel and Iran or Israel and the Muslim Brotherhood on the international arena with an emphasis on Muslim states at odds with Christian states;
- Possible involvement of the Russia in the war between Israel and Hamas or Israel and Iran;
- The influences and interests of the Russia on the Black Sea;
- Unlawful cross-border actions;
- Disputes on transit between Europe and the East through the Black Sea;
- Territorial disputes;
- Disputes of a traditional inter-ethnic and inter-confessional nature;
- Disputes on hydrocarbon resources;
- The use or transport of energy resources as an energy weapon or instrument of political or energy pressure;
- Disputes regarding the transit of Russian natural gas through the Black Sea to Turkey:
  - Russia-Turkey: Beregovaya-Samsun;
  - Russia-Turkey: Russkaya-Luleburgaz.

3.3. Risk scenarios

Risk scenarios with low probability: (SGG, 2024)
- Risk scenario 1 – Military war Ukraine – Russia → Nuclear war NATO – Russia:
  - Probability: 1 – Very low;
  - Gravity: 5 – Very high;
  - Risk assessment: 5 – Very low.

- Risk scenario 2 – Military war Israel – Hamas or Israel – Iran → Entry Turkey to war (Hamas or Iran) → U. S. Entry into war (Israel) → U. S. war/NATO – Middle East (muslim state):
  - Probability: 1 – Very low;
  - Gravity: 5 – Very high;
  - Risk assessment: 5 – Very low.
  Risk scenarios with high probability: (SGG, 2024)
- Risk scenario 3 – Territorial dispute hydrocarbons Black Sea NATO (Romania/Bulgaria) – Russia → Energy conflict → Economic conflict (interests) NATO – Russia:
  - Probability: 5 – Very high;
  - Gravity: 4 – High;
  - Risk assessment: 20 – Very high.

- Risk scenario 4 – Using (re)energy resources as a weapon /pressure tool by the Russia → Energy conflict → Economic conflict Russia – NATO (Romania/Bulgaria):
  - Probability: 5 – High;
  - Gravity: 4 – High;
  - Risk assessment: 20 – High.
- Risk scenario 5 – Use of electricity as an energy weapon/pressure instrument of the Russia → Decoupling Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova from the Russian Energy System IPS (Integrated Power System – system with transport voltages 330 kV and 750 kV atypical EU) → Possible black-out → Energy conflict with possible military escalation → coupling Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova to the Romanian Energy System (ENTSO-E – European system):
  - Probability: 5 – Very high;
  - Gravity: 5 – Very high;
  - Risk assessment: 25 – Very high.

3.4. Balance of forces (militarization)

- Romania:18 ships; 7150 soldiers.
- Ukraine: 14 ships; 6500 soldiers.
- Russia: 43 ships; 7 submarine; 25 000 soldiers.
- Georgia: 19 patrol ships; 700 coast guard.
- Turkey: 72 ships; 12 submarine; 45 000 soldiers.
- Bulgaria: 17 ships; 4500 soldiers. (SGG, 2024)

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of ensuring national and European energy security, the Romanian state must focus on the following essential pillars:

National pillars:
- Security of energy supply – The European Union must become less dependent on imported energy by making more efficient use of energy produced in Europe and by diversifying energy and supply sources;
- Nuclear energy – actions of the European Union must help to ensure the safety and security of nuclear reactors, the sound management of radioactive waste and the use of nuclear materials only for legitimate purposes;
- Single energy market – The European Union must have fewer technical and regulatory barriers, so that energy can circulate across national borders and energy suppliers can compete across the whole territory of the Eeropene Union;

- Oil, gas and coal – European Union rules must maintain a balance between fossil fuel markets and protect the environment, including when new technologies such as shale gas extraction are used;
- Energy efficiency – The European Union must achieve certain energy efficiency targets so that it becomes a low-carbon society;
- Energy technologies and innovations – The European Union must support the deployment of low-carbon technologies such as photovoltaic and wind energy sources, carbon capture and storage and energy storage technologies;
- Renewable energy – The European Union must coordinate the actions taken to achieve national targets in accordance with the Directive on renewable energy;
- Critical energy infrastructure – the strategy of trans-European networks – TEN-E, it must focus on expanding and modernising European critical infrastructure and on creating networks covering several countries and even other continents.

National pillars:
- Romania, regional energy security provider;
- Continuation of electricity generation from non-renewable energy sources (coal, natural gas, uranium) – with very high share in ensuring, stability and increasing national energy security;
- Promoting electricity generation from renewable energy sources (E-SRE) and energy efficiency – promoting the production of electricity from renewable energy sources (global potential, photovoltaic parks, wind farms, biomass, biomass, energy efficiency, etc.) must represent an imperative at the level of Romania and the European Union justified by the protection of the environment, the increase of energy independence from imports, by diversifying the sources of energy supply, and for economic and social cohesion reasons;
- Making investments in critical energy infrastructure – building new national or cross-border energy critical infrastructure and/or refurbishing existing ones;
- Electricity storage – through major investments in energy storage technologies to cover domestic consumption in peak hours and control of the energy market, it must become the top priority of decision makers on ensuring, stability and increasing energy security;
- Vulnerable consumer protection and reduction of energy poverty;
- Stability of energy markets;
- Increasing the quality of the education system through the continuous training of the human resources specialized in the energy field.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN EXTENDED NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2030. PROMOTING INTERESTS IN A DYNAMIC WORLD, UNPREDICTABLE IN FULL EXPANSION AND CHANGE

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Abstract: *In the last three decades, Romania has evolved greatly through the individual and joint action of its citizens and has achieved national objectives essential for internal stability and development and strengthening its external position: integration in NATO and the European Union. The extended national security policy is built on fundamental values and benchmarks, being the expression of the common national consensus and effort. In addition to these goals, Romanians have affirmed, on numerous occasions, their attachment to defending the rule of law and democracy, the independence of the judiciary, the fight against corruption, their attachment to involvement in the public space, an indication of the development of a participatory political culture. As a state that continues to reform and aims at stability and modernization, the progress of the citizens of Romania must be the foundation of the actions of the institutions of the rule of law.*

Keywords: *Development; national extended security strategy.*

Introduction

Romania must be a state that functions for every citizen, without discrimination, with institutions to work for the development of the country, to promote and guarantee real democracy, the rights and freedoms of citizens, and, to ensure the development of the society and the affirmation of the country, which places the citizen at the center of the action of the public institutions, being realized the triad of state-society-citizen, as a constant of public interest and demarches. From the point of view of Romania's security, in a dynamic, turbulent and unpredictable geopolitical context, like today's one, we need to have an adapted and effective response to the elements of instability and insecurity (risks, threats and vulnerabilities) we are facing, based on: continuity, adaptability, flexibility, resilience and predictability. A functioning Romania means a safe country, which offers its citizens all the necessary conditions to live a better life, in complete safety and which protects their identity, values, heritage and resources, and, as well as the parameters of the rule of law. The strategy supports the national effort to modernize the state. Good governance remains the instrument through which democracy passes from the concept and theory plan into the real life plan and an essential condition of security and prosperity, the factors involved in the process of good governance are both the state and the civil society. Romania is a politically, economically and securitarily stable state, which invests resources to consolidate and project this profile in the region and in Europe. It is important that Romania can adapt, anticipate and adequately respond to the security challenges that a world in permanent and accelerated transformation is generating. As such, prospective knowledge and evaluation of domestic and international processes, as well as major trends in the evolution of international security, become essential. Efforts are needed to accelerate the transformation of our country into a resilient state. (CSDSS, 2022)

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II. Romania – EU and NATO stability and security provider. Continual, adaptable, flexible, resilient and predictable state

1.1. Romania – EU and NATO stability and security provider

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Romania must generate and promote the concept of extended national security;

2. Romania must continue its process of modernization, adaptation and alignment to technological advances in all areas, to the dynamics and turbulence of the international environment and to the processes of remodeling the international system;

3. Romania undertakes to continue the measures to increase the capacity to manage new and possible crises: medical, public order, from the perspective of the educational system, ensuring public services and, in particular, increasing economic resilience;

4. Romania must become a strong state, a state that ensures an optimal framework for the development of participatory democracy, in which the rights and freedoms of citizens are ensured and which encourage the participation of people and civil society in solving all the problems of society, including those concerning national optimization and security;

5. Romania must continue its foreign and security policy under the sign of strategic continuity;

6. Romania must continue its membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and strengthen the privileged strategic partnership with the US, regarding the provision of extended national security, with a high degree of strategic credibility and consistent and consistent national security values, with favorable sustainability assumptions;

7. Romania must build its security strategy on the premise that its main guarantees are membership in NATO and privileged relationship with the US, he said, partner who shares his perception on the level of threats in the Eastern border area of the Alliance;

8. Romania must continue its externally assumed role of strengthening the transatlantic partnership and the coherence of NATO-EU action;

9. Romania aims to strengthen military cooperation with the US, not only as a direction of action aimed generically in allied format, but especially as an operational objective to be implemented on the national territory, where the efforts are directed to the location on the Romanian territory of solutions to strengthen the advanced presence of NATO and, implicitly, to discourage the possible aggressive actions of some state actors, and these efforts will be combined with those undertaken at national level to increase the military mobility capacity, an objective assumed at European level by NATO and which is also among the EU's concerns;

10. Romania must become an important regional player at the Black Sea, to capitalize its energy resources through policies with national interests, to become a regional energy hub and a state provider of energy and regional security;

11. Romania must make efforts to support the European path of the Republic of Moldova, by participating in bilateral strategic interconnection projects and supporting the efforts of the neighboring state to strengthen its democratic institutions and increase its resilience, to contribute to the political, economic and security stabilization of the neighbourhood NATO/ /EU, with direct benefits for all citizens of the Republic of Moldova and for the entire community of Romanian language, identity, history and culture;

12. The Romanian state counts on increasing external credibility in order to achieve all these objectives, by projecting the image of a partner fully involved in the commitments it undertakes. Thus, Romania has confirmed and consolidated its image and status of regional stability pole in relation to previous years, increasing its concrete capabilities and national resilience in the new security environment, fast-changing and highly complex, in concert with our partners with similar orientations;

13. Romania must protect and promote its national security values, increase its resilience and security culture;

14. Romania must take advantage of its geostrategic position and the elements related to its profile and role at regional, European and international level.

1.2. Romania – Continual, adaptable, flexible, resilient and predictable state

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Romania must modernize good governance which remains the instrument through which democracy passes from the concept and theory plan to the real life plan and an essential condition of security and prosperity, he said, the factors involved in the process of good governance are both the state and the civil society;

2. Romania must remain a politically, economically and securitarily stable state, which invests resources to strengthen and design this profile in the region and in Europe;

3. Romania must continue its process of modernization and adaptation to technological advances in all plans and become a resilient state (inherent capacity of entities - individuals, communities, regions, etc, state – to resist and adapt articulated to violent events, causing stress, shock, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on the one hand, and the ability of these entities to quickly return to a functional state of normality, on the other hand);

4. Efforts to strengthen resilience need to be calibrated to address new types of threats - subtle and subversive – including on the back of technological developments, therefore, a central role is given to collaboration on multiple levels: public-private, citizen-community and civilian-military, which aims to strengthen societal resilience and critical infrastructures, responsibility at the intersection of social and individual spheres, with the institutional-public and private;

5. Respect for the firm commitment to law and justice, the values of democracy and the principles of the rule of law, as well as the modernisation of the state and its institutions are the foundations that ensure the security and prosperity to which citizens are entitled.

II. National security interests and objectives

2.1. Fundamental values and principles in defining national security interests and objectives

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. National values, interests and objectives must play a central role in defining the national strategy of extended national security, giving it legitimacy;

2. National interests must be perennial and defined in the Romanian Constitution;

3. The characteristics and attributes of the Romanian state: national, sovereign and independent, unitary and indivisible;

4. Supreme constitutional values: national identity, the rule of law, democracy, dignity, rights and freedoms of citizens, political justice and pluralism, civic cohesion, manifested within the rule of law, democratic and social economy and a strong and competitive market economy as a basis for efficient generation and use of national resources necessary to ensure the functioning of the state, security and well-being of citizens;

5. Our country's commitments towards our allies and partners are marked by continuity, which implies a high degree of availability for cooperation and coherence within the EU, respectively, NATO and strategic partnerships, especially with the US;

6. The attitude and decisions taken by Romania must be predictable, denoting a responsible behavior towards its allies and partners, as well as towards its own citizens, trustworthy, reliable, a state located in a region of significant geopolitical interest;

7. In order to ensure the exact observance of national values and principles, the Romanian state will facilitate the implementation of security and defence policies, and will promote the following attributes: efficiency, trust, pragmatism, professionalism, and, prevention and anticipation, pro-activity and judicious management of national wealth.

2.2. National security interests

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. The national security interest must be aimed at: defending and promoting the fundamental national values, ensuring prosperity, guaranteeing respect for democratic rights and freedoms, the protection and security of its members, which guarantees the existence, identity, and security of its members, stability and continuity of the Romanian state;

2. The national internal and external security objectives must be represented by objective (land size, resources, population, geographical location) and subjective (values, intentions, intentions, expectations) of the practical action taken by the state through the institutions that represent it, namely through the national strategies and policies for the achievement and assertion of its fundamental national interests, and maximizing the chances of their materialization, it calls for a high level of ambition to be maintained in promoting them - in a coherent manner, without discontinuities and redundancies in interinstitutional relations - by all actors involved at political level, socio-economic and cultural, by using all available channels at political-diplomatic and security level.

III. Elements of instability and insecurity regarding the national security of Romania

3.1. The international security environment

3.1.1. Climate change

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Creating and implementing a coherent national strategy on the fight against climate change, which generates resilience and security culture;

2. Anticipating, preparing and responding to the negative effects of climate change by increasing resilience;

3. Ensuring and increasing climate security by eliminating or stopping global threats and warming;

4. Introducing global warming in the documents on defence planning with geopolitical valences;

5. Reducing the factors that lead to the degradation and disappearance of heritage elements that define national identity and multiculturalism in Romania;

6. Developing a strategy on the security culture that connects climate change with national security;

7. Romania's accession to the international organizations' action directions on raising awareness, adapting to climate change in terms of resilience, civil training, defence planning, providing capabilities and responding to disasters.

3.1.2. Demographic events and phenomena

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Clear policies to mitigate and/or eliminate the following existing and potential vulnerabilities: cancelling demographic decline, better border management and visa-related EU policies, and, integration of migrants in line with strengthening the culture of security and civic awareness;

2. Economic policies aimed at the well-being of the population and those aimed at reducing the negative effects of climate change, which will be able to reduce the likelihood of threats, by increasing life satisfaction and, implicitly, by, a the level of social stability.

3.1.3. Economic situation at national, regional and global level

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. The development of Romania through the implementation of essential programs and projects that support resilience, the level of preparedness for crisis situations, which requires a flexible economic development strategy, to take into account the resilience to possible crisis situations, including means of prevention, mitigation of effects and, possibly, their transformation into opportunities for the Romanian economy;

2. Stability and growth of the national economy with economic security effect;

3. Increasing the capacity of military forces and capabilities in case of crisis or conflict, according to NATO requirements.

3.1.4. Geopolitical competition between the great powers

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Identifying opportunities that may decrease Romania's vulnerability in the face of risks and threats arising in the short and medium term;

2. Clear policies on increasing defence investments and strengthening the military capacity of the Romanian state;

3. Policies on increasing Romania's resilience and reducing the level of vulnerability to hybrid acts of aggression, aimed at lowering the level of cohesion at the Euro-Atlantic level;

4. Clear policies regarding Romania's stay as part of the Euro-Atlantic community, in the context of increasing competitiveness, conflict and instability;

5. Clear policies on possible political-military and economic partnerships with Russia, China and Turkey, in the context of reducing the classical and hydride threats to Romania's security.

3.1.5. Competition between the major economic powers

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Increasing the capacity of state authorities to develop and implement policies and programs to strengthen resilience to external shocks generated by competition and competition between economic powers;

2. Developing critical branches of national industry and agriculture, as well as the ability to increase the production of certain industrial and agricultural sectors in case of import problems;

3. Implementation of public policies, based on Community principles and regulations, to ensure sustainable economic growth.

3.1.6. Dynamics of military spending

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Romania must become a supplier of security and stability in the Extended Black Sea Region, as a member state of NATO;

2. Developing and implementing appropriate strategies at national and allied level to counter actions of (re)activation of crises and conflicts, increase funding and accelerate the modernization of capabilities of the Romanian Army, and, intensifying NATO and European Union efforts to secure the Black Sea borders.

3.1.7. Competition in space

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Romania must develop and implement a national development strategy for basic space capabilities and counterspace.

3.2. Areas of strategic interest

3.2.1. Euroatlantic region

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Strong anchoring of Romania's security in the Euro-Atlantic context – NATO;

2. Membership in NATO, the EU and the strategic partnership with the US must form the foundations of foreign policy and the trajectory on which the Romanian state has consciously and irreversibly committed itself.

3.2.2. Extended Black Sea region

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Romania must become a regional energy hub and a pole of regional energy stability and security at the Black Sea;

2. Energy security policies and strategies focused on realising the opportunities for oil and gas resources at the Black Sea;

3. The integrated approach in the field of strategic energy resources, truly connected to the geopolitical and geoeconomic, regional and international realities, which maximize geostrategic advantages and energy potential at national level;

4. Developing a very long-term energy strategy where major vulnerabilities, risks and threats in the energy field must be clearly identified, concretely establish both achievable strategic objectives, as well as directions of action and ways to achieve them, which ensure a high level of energy security in the medium, long and very long term;

5. Implementation of countermeasures on combating hybrid threats through an integrated proactive, interinstitutional, civil-military approach, but also within the similar European and Euro-Atlantic mechanism, under the leadership of a „operative" group established at the level of the Supreme Council of Defense of the Country;

6. Developing a coherent strategy to counter hybrid aggression and an implementation plan including concrete responsibilities and a set of pre-established realistic measures for all institutions involved;

7. Development of Reserve Forces to ensure both the efficiency of active forces by replacing losses and resilience in the military field;

8. Adopting a modern and effective mobilization system to ensure the support provided by the Romanian Army to increase resilience at national level and would be a major deterrent to any possible aggressor.

3.2.3. Western Balkans region

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)
1. Romania must have clear policies and actions on national action, stability and security in case of political and military instability scenarios coming from the Western Balkans region.

3.2.4. Middle East and North Africa region

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)
1. Romania must have clear policies, actions and directions on the flow of migrants that represent clear threats of national security (Islamic extremism and radicalization, terrorism and organized crime).

3.2.5. Asia – Pacific region

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)
1. Romania must have clear policies and actions on national action, stability and security in case of political and military instability scenarios coming from the Asia – Pacific region, because of the rivalry between the US and China, the interests of Russia and India;
2. Romania must have economic, political and military partnerships with China.

IV. Directions of action and modalities on ensuring Romania's extended national security
4.1. Dimensions

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)
1. The diplomatic dimension of the extended national security action must be based on pro-active diplomacy, able to promote national interests, to identify developments in the international environment and their possible impact on Romania, generate solutions so that this impact is not negative and define concepts in accordance with national and internationally accepted interests;
2. The defence dimension of the extended national security action must be based on the national political agreement on increasing defence financing to 2.5% of Gross Domestic Product, which creates the premises for the modernization of the Romanian Army and the consolidation of its status as an increasingly respected international partner;

3. The public order dimension of the action to ensure extensive national security must be based on increasing the safety of citizens by protecting lives, and, their physical integrity and ownership, identification and countering the activities of organised crime networks, including cross-border and the dismantling of criminal groups, preventing and combating large-scale illegal economic activities (tax evasion, money laundering, smuggling of excise goods, counterfeiting), carried out by cross-border criminal groups and border security, in particular that which is the external border of the European Union, with a view to combating illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, and, smuggling of excise or counterfeit products and other risks having an impact on national security;

4. The dimension of information, counterintelligence and security of the action to ensure extensive national security must be based on the prevention and countering of risks and threats arising from the activity of hostile information entities directed against security interests of the Romanian state, ensuring the counterintelligence protection of classified information, preventing and counteracting risks and promoting opportunities in terms of ensuring economic and financial stability, energy security, and, the economic interests of Romania in the wider Black Sea region and in the Balkan region, the operation of critical infrastructures, the development of transport infrastructure, the implementation of the information society and the digital economy, as well as the signaling of vulnerabilities, respectively of the opportunities in the industrial field and in the financial-banking, agricultural and forestry sectors, preventing and countering the cyber threats – developed by hostile entities, state and non-state - on communication infrastructures and information technology with critical valences for national security, preventing and countering hybrid threats, materialized in hostile conjugate actions, developed by state or non-state actors, in political-administrative, economic, military, social, informational, cyber or organized crime;

5. The economic and energy dimension of the comprehensive national security action must be based on the comprehensive development and promotion of policies that ensure the reduction of development gaps between the regions of the country, promoting free initiative and strengthening of domestic capital, protecting public and private property, ensuring energy security through operational adaptation and optimization of the structure of consumption of primary energy resources, development of energy production capacities, etc, increasing energy efficiency, developing projects aimed at ensuring the diversification of access to resources and making Romania an important player on the energy market, by capitalizing on the resources available in the Black Sea, increasing the interconnection capacity and competitiveness, including through the implementation of the Energy Union objectives, reduce dependence on fossil fuels by using future innovations in generating fossil fuel dependence by using future innovations in power generation, including green, clean, clean energy, this will help to solve energy problems, including green, clean energy, which will help to solve the problems generated by climate change, energy being of vital importance on climate change, energy being of vital importance to social continuity; to social continuity, to, developing and modernizing national infrastructure networks and developing a strategy for retention and attracting talent (brain-gain) and specialists in various areas of national interest, to prevent economic stagnation, in the context of an economy increasingly focused on cutting-edge technology. In this respect, a first step could be represented by simplifying the procedures for accepting the files of foreign researchers who want to work in Romania;

6. The dimension of crisis management and civil protection of the extended national security action must be based on the full implementation of the National Integrated Crisis Management System, as well as, system that must ensure an optimal level of operational planning and training and functionality of all decision and execution structures with responsibilities in the field, including, to manage the entire spectrum of internal or external crises and at the same time have the capacity to respond adequately to different crisis situations;

7. The environmental security dimension of the action of ensuring the extended national security must be based on preventing and countering the significant degradation of the climatic conditions in our country, against the backdrop of increasing flood frequency and prolonged droughts, implementation of EU environmental protection policies, both at central and local level, promoting the concept of a circular economy and supporting sustainable development,

the proper and responsible exploitation of natural resources and the increase of protected areas and their protection more effectively;

8. Societal dimension (educational, health, health, social and demographic) of the action to ensure the extended national security must be based on the promotion of the Romanian cultural values and the creation of conditions of affirmation and development in the European and international context; preservation of ethnic values, folklore, customs and traditions of the Romanian people and national minorities, ensuring cultural freedom through public access to archives, libraries, museums, cultural heritage goods, cultural heritage goods, as well as freedom of creation, encouraging, promoting and supporting scientific research, experimental development and innovation, developing the capacity to prevent and respond to the public health system and public administration structures in case of pandemics, epizootic diseases, etc., especially those with high degree of infectiveness and danger, which cause emergencies; development of diagnostic capacity, including the ability to detect epidemics rapidly, analysis and forecast their evolution; the necessary medical equipment will be included in the program of strategic reserves; the state will support the development of the medical industry in Romania, the creation and modeling of a health system that will take into account the location of the patient/to the citizen at the heart of this system, the correlation of public health policies so that they determine a sustainable development of society, the implementation of projects for the reform of education and training systems, and, optimizing the financing modalities of the education system and streamlining the investments in human capital, through a better use of synergies between the different financing sources: the national budget, the, non-reimbursable European funds or external (non-refundable funds, as well as funding allocated through the Erasmus programme, reducing inequality in access to education and health, aiming at capturing potential of development of rural regions or regions in a precarious economic situation, better correlation of labour market policies with those in education and health, and, in order to support the sustainable development of Romania, to reduce the degree of deterioration of the demographic situation and to reduce development disparities between the different regions of Romania.

4.2. Functionality of the national extended security system

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. According to the Romanian Constitution, the unitary organization and coordination of activities regarding the country's defense and extended national security are carried out by the Supreme Council of National Defense;

2. In order to analyze, evaluate and interpret the dynamics and changes in the international environment and provide integrated expertise to the President of Romania, a Strategic Reflection Group is set up, coordinated by the head of the National Security Department of the Presidential Administration.

4.3. Linking the lines of action with the extended national security objectives

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. Linking the lines of action with national security objectives must remain a permanent, inter-institutional effort, supported also by a more in-depth dialogue between institutions and citizens, in the spirit of strengthening the security culture and resilience, and there will be an integrated effort, coordinated at strategic level, based on a single implementation plan, which will involve horizontal cooperation, with permanent monitoring, within interinstitutional working groups gathered in formats suitable to the concrete themes they address, and the success of this effort will depend on the proper functioning of the national security system, the statement said, this means that between the correlation of the objectives with the directions of action, on the one hand, and the functionality of the national security system, on the other hand, there must be a bi-univocal relationship, of mutual dependence;

2. Romania must apply the commitments related to the allocation of sufficient funds for the field of defence and national security, as well as, so that citizens are better protected from

security risks and threats by allocating resources through an integrated, planned and multiannual process, able to meet the inter-institutional requirements both at national level, at NATO and EU level, ensuring the digitization of the institutions in the field of defense of the country and national security, public services and inter-institutional mechanisms through recent technological developments, the protection and efficient use of national material resources; encouraging domestic and foreign investors in developing various national or regional interest objectives and attracting European funds or other funds to finance important projects and particularly infrastructure projects critical/vital, including in the field of military mobility.

4.4. Role, adaptation, adoption and implementation

Directions and actions regarding ensuring national security: (CSDSS, 2022), (SGG, 2024)

1. The role of the Strategy is to provide guidance for the further implementation of strategic guidelines and to support the efforts of national institutions to adapt to domestic and international developments in order to address the concerns of the citizen and preserve the climate of security in the euro-Atlantic area;

2. For the period 2025-2030 it is necessary to adapt the legislative framework in the field of extended security, in order to provide the responsible national institutions with the necessary tools for prompt connection and the flexibility to manage the challenges to national security;

3. After the adoption of the Extended National Security Strategy – *Promoting interests in a dynamic world, unpredictable in full expansion and change,* for the period 2025-2030, the executive and public institutions with responsibilities in national security are *obliged* to develop sectoral strategies and measures in the field of responsibility, aimed at countering and combating risks, threats and vulnerabilities and achieving the objectives of the Strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

The *extended national security* of Romania must be the result of the coherent and coordinated action of the state in several strategic action plans, which, corresponding to the specialization of the responsible public institutions, are the result of, define the dimensions of achieving the state of security and its perception by citizens, first of all, but also by public institutions, by international public opinion and by our country's allies and partners. The sum of all the activities carried out and the actions undertaken within the area of these dimensions define the national security as the general state of the Romanian society.

National security interests and objectives are the starting point in developing the directions of action for ensuring national security. The directions of action regarding national security are focused on strengthening all the capacities available to Romania to prevent, and, discourage and defend against any aggressive actions targeting the state or its citizens.

The *directions of action* specific to the dimensions of materialization in the social practice of the national security of our country have as fundamental objective the implementation of the national interests of Romania, in the margins of the strategic objectives arising from them and using in an aggregated manner the totality of the power instruments of the state, in proportions appropriate to the dynamics of the security environment, the dangers and challenges arising therefrom. Circumscribed to the principles promoted by the Strategy, the directions of action are correlative to the areas in which they manifest themselves and to which they adapt - domains identified as dimensions, according to the concept of extended national security, defense, diplomatic, information, counterintelligence and security, public order, crisis management, economic and energy, societal.

The *dimensions* of achieving the extended national security must be understood in their synergistic action, meant to give consistency to the action of public institutions with attributions and responsibilities in the defining sectorial areas of national security. The sum of these dimensions ensures and determines the practical-applicative character of national security, defining and describing how public institutions will scale and calibrate their actions and activities and prioritize for a period of five years.

Consistent implementation, with the expected results and the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy, involves a joint effort on the part of the political class, national authorities with responsibilities in the field and civil society, as well, as well as the efficient use of human, material and financial resources available to our country.

The *aim* of the Strategy is, on the one hand, to provide guidance for the further implementation of the strategic guidelines adopted in 2015 and, on the other hand, to, support the efforts of national institutions to adapt to domestic and international developments in order to address the concerns of citizens and the preservation of the security climate in the Euro-Atlantic area.

From the perspective of the operationalization of this strategy, a condition complementary to all the other values and principles that were the basis for the elaboration of this programmatic document, materialized through a scientific paper, is to ensure a coherent and applied legislative framework, aimed at contributing to the consolidation of the security culture and the modernization of institutions with responsibilities in the field of national security.

Although in Romania the legislative framework exists and the institutions are functional, the regulations in the field of national security have been the subject of several proposals for amendment and completion, without concrete finality. For the period 2025-2030, it is necessary to adapt the legislative framework in the field of security, in order to provide the responsible national institutions with the necessary tools for prompt connection and the flexibility to manage the challenges to national security. Any sound security architecture also requires the provision of trained and equipped human resources as an essential part of interoperable capabilities to act coherently and convergently. Anticipating security trends and incorporating technological advances, they will increase their ability to effectively counter national security risks and threats, regardless of their nature. The evaluation of the degree of implementation of the Strategy is carried out annually or whenever the situation requires it and is based on the information collected during a monitoring process, which, with the aim of developing a comprehensive analysis – Evaluation report on how to implement the strategy, as well as issuing recommendations on how to carry out further actions.

After the adoption of the Strategy, the executive and public institutions with responsibilities in national security are called to develop sectoral strategies and measures in the field of responsibility, aimed at countering and combating risks, and, threats and vulnerabilities and the achievement of the objectives of the Strategy.

The authors of this paper tried to elaborate an extended national security strategy, through 80 pragmatic directions and actions that come to the aid of state institutions with national security attributions and that can be implemented anytime.

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THE U.S.-CHINA TRADE WAR DURING THE JOE BIDEN PRESIDENCY: STANDSTILL OR CONTINUATION?

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Abstract: The author's objective is to briefly outline and discuss the Joe Biden administration's trade moves towards China and attempt to answer the question to what extent the Biden administration is continuing the Trump administration's policy on this issue. The text briefly and succinctly outlines the similarities and differences between the approaches and policies of these two U.S. presidents, who fiercely compete in a presidential election year.

Keywords: China; U.S.; trade war; Joe Biden; Donal Trump; U.S. trade policy; U.S. economic policy; U.S.-China relations.

Introduction

Long-standing issues in American politics – both security and economic – China have been the subject of lively debates and polemics. US political leaders and strategists continue to consider on what policies to pursue to prevent the decline of US comprehensive power and to prevent China from replacing the US as the global hegemon. Unquestionably, the U.S.-China economic relations, in particular bilateral trade, have become the subject of vehement debates, polemics and disputes in the United States of America since 2017, both in expert circles and in Congress. Moreover, since Donald Trump became president, the issue of US bilateral trade with China has become a pivotal point of contention between the two great powers. Subsequent presidents and their administrations must take some positions on this issue. This is often what American society expects.

The purpose of the paper is to very shortly present and describe the Joe Biden administration's trade actions vis-à-vis the People's Republic of China and try to answer the question to what degree the Biden administration is proceeding the Trump administration's policy on this matter. The paper concisely and shortly outlines the similarities and differences between the stances and policies of these two U.S. presidents, who viciously compete in a presidential election year. It does not discuss and describe in depth all the moves of the two presidential administrations and all the diverse complexities and dimensions of US trade policy as well as US-China trade war. It is such an immense subject that a meticulous description of it would require an extensive book, not a short article. Nevertheless, the focus has been put exclusively on the author's most important findings and reflections regarding this complex subject-matter. The main research method used by the author is a content analysis of different texts and public statements of presidents Donald Trump, Joe Biden, representatives of their administrations, experts and commentators. The research relied exclusively on publicly available sources.

U.S. trade wars with China during Donald Trump and Joe Biden presidencies

In 2024 Biden administration decided to raise tariffs against import of, among others, electric vehicles, solar panels, photovoltaic cells, advanced batteries, chips, dockside cranes, and some metals. In addition, President Biden announced that the duties already introduced by Trump on steel and aluminium products imported from China would be increased. The heightened duties will have the highest impact on imports of lithium ion non-electric cars batteries[1]. However, there is a grace period, so any impact will be felt not sooner than in 2026. The announcement of raising tariffs in the midst of May 2024 is quite an important change relative to the previous approach of Biden administration. During presidential campaign of 2020 Biden often criticized Trump for trade

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[1] Matthew Bey, "Essential Geopolitics: The U.S. Tariff Strategy Against China," interview by Emma Comey (?), *Stratfor,* May 22, 2024, audio, 4:40-4:54, https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/essential-geopolitics-us-tariff-strategy-against-china.

wars with other countries (especially allied ones, less critical was Biden towards China). Biden verbally preferred so-called multilateral approach. When Biden became president his administration basically froze the trade war, by refraining from further tariff increases but not reducing the existing, which were hightened by Trump. Biden administration seemed to prefer more targeted, narrow approach as to the China's trade challenge, than more broad, indiscriminate approach adopted by Trump.

Biden administration increased import duties for lithium ion electric vehicles batteries by 25%. The US heightened tariffs on electric vehicles shipped from China from 25% to 100%, so it was a significant rise. Also traiffs on Chinese semiconductors were increase to 50%. The U.S. is attempting to focus its tariffs against China primirily on strategically relevant goods – green energy vehicles, green technology (permanent magnets, solar cells), medical equipment, semiconductors[2]. During the current campaign president Trump proposes quite high flat across-the-board tariff on all imported Chinese goods equaling 60%[3]. Moreover, Trump wants to introduce new tariffs on electric vehicles produced by different Chinese companies in Mexico, primarily to avoid already increased U.S. customs for imports from China. Biden administrateied adopted „more surgical approach"[4]. Biden administration wants to prevent China's EVs from „ever getting a foothold in the United States"[5]. It must be stressed that, in reality, the prevailing majority of these goods are not exported to the U.S. presently in considerable quantities[6]. For instance, the People's Republic of China accounts for roughly 1% of U.S. solar cell imports – a modest percentage[7]. Therefore, we may put some hypothetical explanations why Biden administration made such a decision:

a) this move is a preventive measure, because the U.S. can see how fast Chinese companies in some prospective industries is gaining the share in the world market and how cheap and competitive are their products. Furthermore, economic advisors of Biden's administration may see the overcapacity of many China's industries[8], hence they might fear the excessive inflow of Chinese goods in the U.S. market in the future.

b) this move is primarily a result of fierce domestic competition in presidential election year. According to this alternative explanation, Biden administration wants to convince U.S. citizens that the incumbent president will fight fiercely for their jobs and wages counteracting Chinese imports, whereas in fact these tariffs are less anti-China that it might seem from a cursory glance. This explanation should not be rejected out of hand. The 2024 is an election year. In the opinion poll from March 2024 for CBS News television, Americans rated Donald Trump's economic policy in the previous term far better than Joe Biden's in the current term. Respectively, at present 65% of respondents rated Trump's economic policy from 2017-21 as good, while only 38% of respondents gave the same rating to the economic policies of the current White House host over his presidential term[9]. In other words, for the time being Trump is regarded by Americans as more competent in economic policy than Biden. If Biden political camp wants him to be reelected, his administration has to move to positions which are closer to Trump's economic policy agenda. An additional argument to support this thesis is that in total, the new duties on imports from the Middle Kingdom announced by President Biden in May 2024 will cover goods worth approximately $18 billion. For comparison, during his presidency Trump imposed tariffs on a much wider range of Chinese goods, on goods whose total import to the U.S. from China amounted annually to roughly $370-380 billion. To put it differently, Trump anti-China customs hit China's

[2] *Ibidem*, 1:25-1:35.

[3] Andrew Druehren, Andrew Restuccia, "Biden to Quadruple Tariffs on Chinese EVs," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 10, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/economy/trade/biden-to-quadruple-tariffs-on-chinese-evs-203127bf?mod=economy_feat4_trade_pos4.

[4] Matthew Bey*, op. cit.*, 2:10-2:20.

[5] *Ibidem*, 2:35-2:40.

[6] *Ibidem*, 4:30-4:42.

[7] *Ibidem*, 6:15-6:22.

[8] Nathaniel Taplin, "Why China's Overcapacity Problem Is About to Get Even Worse, in Seven Charts," *The Wall Street Journal,* June 4, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/why-chinas-overcapacity-problem-is-about-to-get-even-worse-in-seven-charts-d0e25e38?mod=world_lead_pos1.

[9] Damian Wnukowski, Mateusz Piotrowski, "Stany wyborcze: Gospodarka w amerykańskiej kampanii," interview by Natalia Radulska, *The Polish Institute of International Affairs,* June 3, 2024, audio, 10:20-11:05, https://www.pism.pl/pism_w_mediach/podcasty/stany-wyborcze-gospodarka-w-amerykanskiej-kampanii.

economy incomparably more acutely than Biden's May 2024 customs. Therefore, one may wonder whether Biden's anti-China trade move from May 2024 sold to the American public as a sharp and decisive blow to the Chinese economy is not just a simulated tough stance just to raise Biden chances for reelection?

c) this move is a result of both of the above-mentioned motivations.

China claims that the introduced tariffs are not consistent with international law and are harmful for free trade. During the Trump trade war with China Beijing in retaliation, increased tariffs on certain goods imported from the U.S., with the tariffs being raised in such a way as to hit states (so-called red states) and professional groups (ex. farmers) that have traditionally supported the Republican Party for years particularly hard. That was a message we can summarize as: „Don't attack our trade, because if you do your supporters will be economically hurt and your chances for reelection, in contrast to your expectations, will diminish instead of increasing!".

Trump initiated a trade war against China in 2017. Chinese companies quickly adapted by relocating a lot of their production to Vietnam[10], Mexico[11], and – to a smaller degree – India[12]. Especially lines of final assembly were constructed in these states – only to evade U.S. tariffs. In reality, the local contribution to goods produced their is in most cases low or very low. As a matter of fact, these goods are still Chinese-made goods with Vietnamese or Mexican label attached. In principal, Chinese entrepreneurs simply disguise and conceal the true place of origin of the products they sell in huge and lucrative U.S. market. They do it notoriously and deftly.

Critics of the trade policies of Trump administration oftentimes raised this argument that – in fact – derisking and decoupling from China did not materialize, at least, not materialize substantially. Instead, dependencies on parts and components coming from China were skilfully and painstakingly masked. Therefore, this policies turned out to be quite ineffectual, though popular among many voters. What is worse, efforts to lessen the dependence on China inadvertently resulted in emerging new risks in global supply-chains that became even more complex, intricate and hidden. To express it differently, the promised advantages of derisking from China prove actually illusory when someone takes a closer look at the issue[13]. On top of that, U.S. importers tend to underreport how much, in fact, they are purchasing from China. According to certain studies the U.S. statistics may understate imports from China even by 20-25%[14].

The Biden administration wants to curb China's technology development resorting to other than heightened tariffs means (ex. embargos, new and more severe export control restrictions that hit particularly hard the Chinese semiconductor industry, increasing number of scrupuluous supply-chain reviews, etc.)[15] Biden wants to inhibit the China's progress in strategically important and prospective technologies chiefly via the non-tariff barriers, for example, by requiring U.S. electric cars makers not to use chips purchased from China. Both Trump and Biden also attacked Chinese Tik-Tok application in an attempt to force the Chinese owner of Tiktok to sell his stake in the firm to some US entity. Biden administration faced quite a lot of internal disagreements about the trade policies and protectionism. Nevertheless, even these prominent members of the administration that once used to be widely regarded as staunch supporters of free trade – like Janet Yelen – during the Biden's term in office began to at least slightly change their stances toward more protectionist approach. To what degree this is the result of a sincere shift in views or reconsideration on a basis of experience and to what extent it is the outcome of mounting grassroots pressure from an increasing number of American voters, often referred to by the

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[10] Matthew Bey, *op. cit.*, 8:50-9:23.

[11] "Mexico Is China's Backdoor to the US Market," *Geopolitical Futures,* April 26, 2024, https://geopoliticalfutures.com/mexico-is-chinas-backdoor-to-the-us-market/.

[12] Paul Page, "Import Groups Decry Higher U.S. Tariffs on China-Made Goods," *The Wall Street Journal,* May 14, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/articles/import-groups-decry-higher-u-s-tariffs-on-china-made-goods-4d509623?mod=economy_feat4_trade_pos1.

[13] Nathaniel Taplin, "'Derisking' China-Reliant Supply Chains Is Creating New Risks," *The Wall Street Journal* January 6, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/economy/trade/derisking-china-reliant-supply-chains-is-creating-new-risks-b5f26440?mod=hp_lead_pos6.

[14] "How Trump and Biden have failed to cut ties with China," *The Economist,* February 27, 2024, https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2024/02/27/how-trump-and-biden-have-failed-to-cut-ties-with-china.

[15] Matthew Bey, *op. cit.*, 7:55-8:30.

somewhat pejorative name of 'populists' is debatable. Nonetheless, scholars perceive a real evolution of American society in this respect – voices calling for reversing of globalization and more robust closure of U.S. market to foreign producers and laborers are becoming increasingly frequent[16]. Biden or any other Democratic Party politician, or U.S. foreign policy decision makers must take them into account if they want to be elected or reelected. It is necessary if the liberals intend to preserve support amongst a big chunk of their electorate.

Biden administration in its China trade policy appears focused mainly on semiconductors. Even from within Democratic Party circles, there were voices from congressmen demanding that the White House take tougher measures to diminish the dangerous overreliance on imports of chips from prime U.S. geopolitical adversary[17]. In 2022 the Congress enacted the Chips and Science Act – the law that earmarked almost $53 billion for boosting output of semiconductors in the U.S. Ultimately, the law promises even $280 billion for suport of development artificial intelligence, quantum computing, integrated circuit manufacturing and other high-tech businesses. The Chips and Science Act's purpose was to make the U.S. less dependent on import of semiconductors primarily from the Middle Kingdom, but also from Taiwan and South Korea – both of these economies can potentially be conquered or paralysed by China in case of maritime blockade or invasion. Additionally, the fast progress in AI technology made chips adopted to AI requirements essential for attaining dominance in future battlefields and in future global economy. The U.S. share in global semiconductor output is about 12% – far lower percentage than three decades ago. Simultaneously with effort to shore up chip manufacturing in the U.S., the Biden administration went to great legths to inhibit progress in designing and manufacturing of most advanced chips in China. The U.S. measurably restricted China's access to U.S.-made semiconductor design software, the high-end U.S-made semiconductor manufacturing equipment and the very desired unique knowledge how to design and produce such equipment and chips[18]. New cutting-edge and costly chip factories are planned to be constructed this decade in Arizona, Oregon, Idaho, Texas, Ohio and New York[19].

In August 2023 president Biden issued an executive order, that either limits or – in certain cases – completely forbids investment in Chinese enterprises that contribute to designing and manufacturing of chips, quantum computing technologies, and artificial intelligence[20]. In retaliation, the Chinese authorities resolved not to remain indifferent to this act, hostile from their standpoint, and imposed restrictions on the export of gallium and germanium – two elements crucial in manufacturing of chips[21]. Thereby, Beijing demonstrated that the U.S. government must expect retaliatory steps in the event of overly bold anti-China trade steps. Indeed, the Chinese government quite frequently resorts to various trade restrictions in retaliation or punishment for unfriendly economic or political acts of foreign nations. Among the states and economies that in the last decade at some point felt China's retaliatory or punishing trade restrictions were: Japan, South Korea, the Phillipines, Taiwan, Mongolia, the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and Lithuania[22].

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[16] David H. Bearce, Seungbin Park, "Putting the Trans-Pacific Partnership Back on the Table," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2024): 16-17, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2285164.

[17] Asa Fitch, "Lawmakers Push to Defuse China's Dominance of Older-Generation Chips," The *Wall Street Journal,* January 8, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/lawmakers-push-to-defuse-chinas-dominance-of-older-generation-chips-cbd5adaa?mod=hp_lead_pos4.

[18] Brad Glosserman, "De-Risking Is Not Enough: Tech Denial Toward China Is Needed," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2024): 108, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2286134.

[19] Asa Fitch, "The U.S. Gave Chip Makers Billions. Now Comes the Hard Part.," *The Wall Street Journal,* June 2, 2024, https://www.wsj.com/tech/chips-act-funding-semiconductor-investments-us-22cc1ea8?mod=hp_lead_pos7&mod=hp_lead_pos7.

[20] Ian Bowers, Øystein Tunsjø, "The Implications of Contemporary US-China "Hypercompetition"," *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (Winter 2024): 91, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2286136.

[21] Edoardo Campanella, *"Economic Self-Reliance in a Leaderless World,"* The Washington Quarterly 46, no. 3 (Fall 2023): 110, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2023.2259256.

[22] These are state enumerated by Kristen Hopewell and a few others she did not enumerate in her text: Kristen Hopewell, "The Untold Victims of China's Trade Policies," *The Washington Quarterly,* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2022): 160, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2022.2059144.

Importantly, the Biden administration managed to convince governments of the Netherlands, Japan and Taiwan to accede to U.S. – initiated export control, which forbade the export of the deep ultraviolet (DUV) lithography machines necessary for production of the most advanced semiconductors (smaller than 10 nm). Having the Japanese and Dutch governments join this initiative was particularly important, as the Dutch ASML and the Japanese Nikon are the two leading manufacturers of these state-of-the-art devices. Without Tokyo and Amsterdam's unison Washington's aim of impeding Chinese progress in high-end chip manufacturing would definitely not be viable. In this respect Biden's multilateral approach indeed succeeded, though we will be able to assess this completely only in farther future.

CONCLUSION

In many ways, Joe Biden has continued Donald Trump's economic and trade policies vis-a-vis the People's Republic of China. The tariffs that Trump's administration introduced in 2017-2019 have not been lifted by the administration of his successor in the White House. These customs affected goods imported to the U.S. with a total value of approximately $370-380 billion[23]. This can be explained both by the fact that one of the few things the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have in common is their distrust and fear of communist China. Politicians from both parties see the Middle Kingdom as an unquestionable rival in the economic, military and political fields, the only country able to challenge US supremacy in the world and with the potential to undermine U.S. hegemony. From another perspective, this can also be explained by the popularity of targeted economic policy moves against China, especially trade policy moves among the American public.

Until May 2024, however, Biden did not increase duties on other Chinese products, instead focusing on stifling, inhibiting, slowing the growth of China's semiconductor industry. Officially, the May 2024 tariffs were implemented following the completion of the previous White House occupant's trade policy review, which Biden initiated at the dawn of his presidency.

However, one can see some differences in the political rhetoric of Donald Trump and Joe Biden regarding economic steps towards China. Trump has consistently complained about the colossal trade deficits recorded annually by the U.S. economy in bilateral trade with China and imposed duties across the board. Biden instead wants to present himself as tough, hard anti-China leader too, but the leader who economically attacks China in a wise and prudent manner – in a more targeted, so-called „surgical" approach, in contrast to mindless and misguided Trump's trade actions. What the two political rivals have in common is that in political rhetoric both Biden and Trump emphasise that Chinese exports to the U.S. are unfair and heavily subsidised[24]. Thus, the U.S. must act to to restore disturbed and distorted competition. Biden often stresses that he does not desire to provoke another trade war with China in contrast to impulsive and unwise Trump.

Analysing the public statements and trade policy moves of both politicians towards China, we can cautiously deduce that Trump appears to be most troubled with high U.S. trade deficit, while Biden is most worried about U.S. reliance on some critically important goods, and high competitiveness of the Chinese industry in some branches widely regarded as prospective and promising.

According to Polish analyst Damian Wnukowski two other differences between Biden's and Trump's policies vis-a-vis China can be noticed as well. Biden wants to engage in diplomatic talks with Chinese authorities, always maintaining channels of communication and the possibility of some sort of agreement – or at least – temporary rapprochement. Secondly, Biden's administration tries to coordinate its anti-China trade actions with U.S. allies[25]. Trump, for his part, does not seem to be concerned about these things. Trump does not care for that things so much. He is ready to pursue more unilateral policy and he is not anxious about Beijing's potential retaliation.

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[23] Damian Wnukowski, *op. cit.*, 34:30-35:40.
[24] *Ibidem*, 37:00-39:00.
[25] *Ibidem*, 41:30-43:00.

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MANIPULATING PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOR THROUGH COGNITIVE WARFARE TECHNIQUES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract: *Dominated by technology and information in our digital era, cognitive warfare has become a ubiquitous occurrence impacting views and human behavior by leveraging cognitive weaknesses. Rapid spread of propaganda and false information made possible by the Internet and social media seriously influences democracies, economics, and social stability by means of their effects on Emphasizing the need of preserving cognitive integrity, this book investigates how psychology and technology interact to control minds and behaviors. Propaganda, contrived stories, behavioral psychology, and the application of personal data for tailored influence efforts are among the strategies applied. Media education, digital literacy, and the development of psychological resilience are therefore absolutely crucial in order to offset these consequences.*

Keywords: *technology and information; the Internet; Propaganda; social stability; influences democracies.*

Introduction

The technologically driven society of today regularly witnesses the manipulation of ideas and human behavior by means of cognitive warfare techniques. The Internet and social networks have completely changed the way knowledge is shared and absorbed, so generating amazing chances to change public opinion. In this sense, cognitive warfare now covers all spheres of social, political, and economic life, transcending military battles. Given its major impact on democracies, economies, and social stability, it is abundantly evident that research of this phenomenon is important. Studying this subject will enable one to have a complete look at the ways in which psychology and technology interact to influence ideas and behavior. It underlines the need of preserving cognitive well-being in a society going more and more technologically advanced.

1. Conceptual delimitations.

Cognitive warfare is a developing form of conflict that seeks to manipulate and dominate the thoughts, beliefs, and decision-making processes of individuals and groups by exploiting their cognitive vulnerabilities. This method combines modern technologies and knowledge from neuroscience, psychology, and behavioral sciences to subtly and convincingly influence human consciousness, so transcending the traditional boundaries of informational and psychological warfare. NATO's Strategic Communications Center of Excellence defines cognitive warfare as "strategies and tactics designed to influence and manipulate the perceptions, beliefs, and decision-making processes of individuals or groups by exploiting cognitive vulnerabilities. Unlike traditional warfare, which focuses on physical confrontations, cognitive warfare targets the mind, aiming to alter the way people think, perceive reality, and make decisions." (StratCOM COE 2020) Using small and consistent strategies, the main goal of cognitive warfare is to change attitudes and behaviors; this might not always be clear to the affected parties.

Information war "aims at controlling and manipulating information to influence the decisions and actions of the adversary." says Martin Libicki (Libicki 1995) With an aim of erasing the dependability and availability of information, information warfare consists in a spectrum of operations including deception, propaganda, censorship, and cyber-attacks. The main objective of information warfare is to twist and distort the truth so as to shape public narratives and forward the agenda of people in charge of distributing the resources. Cognitive warfare and information warfare differ primarily in their inherent goals and features, even if they have certain similarities. Although cognitive warfare depends on the effect of information on an individual's mental processes, such changes in perception and cognition, information warfare stresses on the content of knowledge and its distribution.

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Psychological warfare is the application of psychological methods meant to discredit, threaten, or disrupt an enemy. These strategies use pressure to alter attitudes and behavior and cover the dissemination of messages meant to cause panic, uncertainty, and bewilderment, so inspiring a feeling of powerlessness. Particularly psychological warfare seeks to regulate the emotions and psyche of people or groups so lowering their capacity for resistance and their will to take part in conflict. Renowned authority in the field of foreign policy and national security issues and a major player in the evolution of modern psychological warfare theory, Paul Linebarger defined it "the deliberate use of propaganda and other psychological maneuvers to shape the viewpoints, emotions, attitudes, and conduct of adversary factions."(Linebarger 2015).

Unlike psychological warfare and information warfare, **cognitive warfare** stresses less on the direct transmission of messages and more on indirectly influencing the way people absorb knowledge and grow in their beliefs. Basically, it is about guiding the information flow and the mental framework people build to produce opinions. Moreover, cognitive warfare emphasizes cognitive comprehension and information assimilation over a long period of time, so transcending the control of instantaneous emotional reactions. With the intention of progressively and regularly altering perceptions and behaviors, this calls for a great knowledge of cognitive mechanisms as well as a sophisticated and complex approach.

2. Tools and Techniques Used in Cognitive Warfare

Technology and security specialist P.W. Singer says "modern digital tools provide unprecedented opportunities to influence and manipulate human thinking on an unparalleled scale and depth." (Singer and Brooking 2018) Cognitive warfare customizes and maximizes influence efforts by using advanced technologies and a wide range of tools and tactics. These technologies enable the identification and use of some cognitive flaws in people and groups, so customizing messages to fit the emotional and cognitive inclination of the target audience. Another important element is the use of social networks and other digital platforms to distribute and improve communications in a way that seems natural and reliable. This phenomenon increases its influence on people's views and behavior since it creates a false sense of genuineness and consensus.

Among the earliest and most researched strategies for changing public opinion and behavior is **propaganda**. It means the intentional sharing of knowledge, ideas, or rumors meant to either support or compromise a cause, group, or person. In cognitive warfare, propaganda is used to create and reinforce attitudes and beliefs consistent with the goals of the disseminator. Jacques Ellul defines propaganda "a technique of influence that seeks to change opinions and behaviors by acting directly on the mental representations of individuals," (Ellul 1965) Modern propaganda makes advantage of digital platforms and social networks to target particular groups of people, using sophisticated techniques of tailoring and distribution of information. To grab viewers' attention and set off strong emotional responses, this can include interesting emotional messages, startling images, and simple storylines.

Another essential tool in cognitive warfare is **manipulated narratives**. Joseph Nye says "narratives are powerful because they give our world meaning and structure, so impacting how we view and respond to information." (Nye 2009). These exercises involve the development and spread of stories and ideas that distort the truth and so shape people's perception of events and actions. Stories under manipulation help to shape opinions and create a particular understanding of complex events. Within the framework of cognitive warfare, these stories usually fit the target's current perspective and cultural standards, so simplifying their acceptance.

Cognitive warfare also depends on **behavioral psychology** since it uses strategies of behavior modification grounded in knowledge of how people react to specific stimuli. Without explicit compulsion, techniques including conditioning, nudging, and framing are used to shape decisions and behaviors. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein first presented the idea of "nudge," in their book "Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness," outlining how small changes in the way options are presented might have a big impact on behavior. (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Often without the targets conscious of the impact being applied upon them, these strategies are used in cognitive warfare to control actions towards specific objectives.

The utilization of personal data is one of the very effective weapons in the armory of cognitive warfare. Data acquired from digital channels, social media, and other online sources helps one to fully understand personal preferences, behavior, and cognitive susceptibilities. This information helps create and distribute designed and potent communications. In "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," Shoshana Zuboff writes on how governments and businesses enabled by the vast gathering and analysis of personal data have unparalleled influence over individuals' behavior (Zuboff 2019). Cognitive warfare looks for cognitive flaws using these methods and customizes influence campaigns to increase their effectiveness and persuasiveness.

Advanced technologies including artificial intelligence and machine learning are absolutely required in cognitive warfare since they automate and improve influence operations. Using artificial intelligence and machine learning to analyze vast amounts of data and find trends and patterns helps one to apply these ideas in influence projects. In "LikeWar: The Weaponization of Social Media," P.W. Singer and Emerson T. Brooking call attention to how algorithms dramatically alter the visibility and interpretation of content on social media platforms, so rendering them venues of influence (Singer and Brooking 2018). Depending on the responses and actions of the intended audience, these technologies magnify the impact of messages and change them in real-time, so allowing the execution of cognitive warfare with hitherto unheard-of accuracy and efficacy.

3. Social networks and digital platforms

Both of them have evolved into essential tools in cognitive warfare since they enable the quick and efficient dissemination of manipulative knowledge all around the globe. These platforms provide not only simple access to a big audience but also sophisticated tools for customizing and improving communications, so optimizing their impact on people's opinions and actions. Manipulative messages, false information, and propaganda are distributed widely on well-known social media sites including Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms let players of cognitive warfare quickly create and disseminate viral material with the power to change public perspective."Social networks have become primary channels for manipulating public opinion through the spread of disinformation and false narratives." claims a report by the Oxford Internet Institute (Bradshaw and Howard 2019). These platforms' algorithms are designed especially to maximize user involvement; thus they give content that causes strong reactions top priority—positive or negative. This creates an environment that is ideal for the spread of emotive and divisive messages, which are more likely to be shared generally and go viral

Moreover, a very important factor of using social media in cognitive warfare is the capacity to **customize messages** to fit particular preferences and susceptibilities of individual users. By compiling and analyzing personal data to create thorough profiles of their targets, cognitive warfare actors can produce quite accurate message personalizing. In "The Age of Surveillance Capitalism," Shoshana Zuboff emphasizes "the massive collection of personal data enables not only the anticipation of behavior but also its subtle and unnoticed influence."(Zuboff 2019). This enables the performers to create not only persuasive but also flexible influence campaigns able to change in real time depending on consumer reactions and behaviors.

Furthermore, social networks help to quickly spread manipulative messages, which can be further enhanced by means of bot networks, fake accounts, and coordinated amplification techniques. These approaches can give the impression of general consensus or strong public endorsement for particular ideas or stories. Regarding research by the Atlantic Council "the use of bot networks and fake accounts to amplify manipulative messages can alter perceptions of public opinion and influence behaviors and political decisions." (Alina Polyakova 2019). This is part of a more all-encompassing strategy meant to change impressions and discredit democratic nations by purposefully creating uncertainty and confusion.

Within this field of knowledge, there is debate about the psychology of social networks—which are purposefully designed to exploit consumers' emotional and cognitive weaknesses. Features like "like," "share," and "comment" are meant to set off dopamine release and encourage addictive behavior, so increasing users' vulnerability to outside influences. In "Persuasive Technology," B.J. Fogg clarifies how positive feedback and intermittent rewards help digital technologies to be deliberately shaped to change user behaviors. (Fogg 2003). In the context of

cognitive warfare, these mechanisms are exploited to disseminate and reinforce manipulative messages, creating a feedback loop that can radicalize opinions and behaviors.

4. Impact of Cognitive Warfare on Society and Democracy

Cognitive war affects social cohesiveness, political polarization, and confidence in democratic institutions profoundly. Cognitive warfare players can destabilize whole societies by taking advantage of cognitive weaknesses and changing perceptions, so compromising the foundations of democracy and generating divisions among people. The great use of social networks and digital platforms in the setting already mentioned intensifies this phenomena.

Social cohesiveness is the link and feeling of belonging that ties together the people living in a society. Direct attacks on this cohesiveness by cognitive warfare include disinformation, propaganda, and false narratives encouraging divisions and hostility between many social groups. Cass Sunstein states "disinformation and propaganda can erode social cohesion by creating suspicion and hostility among social groups."(Sunstein 2014). One prominent example is the proliferation of pandemic-related conspiracy theories and false news, which have caused social fragmentation and raised tensions between many groups. These strategies of cognitive warfare have been destabilizing, so impairing societies' capacity for collective action and cooperation in the face of shared problems.

One other major result of cognitive warfare is **political polarization**. Cognitive warfare players can widen political divisions and radicalize public views by spreading false information and polarizing propaganda. This results in a more divisive political environment and difficulties arriving at consensus-based solutions. According to Nolan McCarty, political polarization "increases when people are constantly exposed to messages that reinforce their own beliefs and demonize the opposition."(McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal 2016). Cognitive warfare exploits social media algorithms that support content creation with the most interaction, so magnifying polarizing messages and further separating society.

The foundation of democracy is **trust in state institutions** Cognitive warfare often aims to undermine trust by disseminating false information and conspiracy theories challenging the legitimacy and efficiency of public institutions. Francis Fukuyama asserts that "trust in institutions is essential for social cohesion and the functioning of democracy." (Fukuyama 1996).

Direct effects on citizens' trust in democratic institutions are disinformation campaigns attacking the integrity of elections, the accuracy of the media, and the impartiality of the court system. These strategies might cause a general mistrust and cynicism, so undermining the basis of democracy and helping authoritarianism to grow.

Notable examples of cognitive war are the Brexit referendum and the 2016 U.S. presidential contest. In these instances, psychographic profiles created from the personal information of millions of Facebook users were used to target specific political ads during the specified referendum and election. Having a clear and obvious impact on society and the values of democracy, Carole Cadwalladr says "Cambridge Analytica used personal data to build detailed models of voter psychology and deliver personalized messages intended to manipulate electoral behavior" (Cadwalladr and Graham-Harrison 2018). Particularly ascribed to Russia, foreign intervention included disinformation and social media propaganda campaigns meant to polarize the American population and erode confidence in the voting system. The 2019 report of the former FBI director exposed that these initiatives used social media and created false narratives to influence voter opinions and spread divisive stories. (Mueller 2019). Regarding Brexit, false ideas about the effect of immigration and European Union membership were pushed forward using disinformation and propaganda campaigns. Social media and digital channels helped to magnify these messages, so fostering uncertainty and division among British people.

5. Defense and Resilience Measures Against Cognitive Warfare

Media education, digital literacy, and psychological resilience development all part of a multifarious and multilateral strategy needed to shield people and civilizations from the consequences of cognitive war. Using sensible policies and strategies will help to produce a society more informed, strong enough to resist cognitive manipulation.

To help people to recognize and evaluate the material they come across, **media education** is absolutely vital. This entails honing abilities to spot false information, grasp context, and evaluate information sources. Media education specialist Renee Hobbs underlines that "media education is not just about using technology, but about understanding how media influences society and developing critical thinking skills." (Hobbs 2011). Programs for media education can be included into adult continuing education courses as well as into school courses. These ought to comprise case studies, hands-on drills, and debates on how the media shapes society. Furthermore crucial for ensuring the relevance and timeliness of instructional resources as well as for offering different points of view is cooperation with journalists and communication experts.

Digital literacy is a crucial component of defense against cognitive warfare. It requires not only knowledge of digital technologies but also of how algorithms, social media platforms, and data collecting systems operate. Researching digital literacy, Helen Haste notes that "in the digital age, literacy must also include the ability to navigate and understand the complexity of digital environments." (Haste 2009). All age groups should be able to access digital literacy initiatives, which should comprise courses on online security, personal data protection, and acknowledgement of algorithmic manipulation. Governments, non-governmental groups, and technology companies can all help these projects guarantee sufficient resources and wide coverage.

Psychological resilience is a person's capacity for stress management and adaption to adversity. Developing psychological resilience can enable people in the framework of cognitive warfare resist manipulation and preserve critical thinking ability. According to George A. Bonanno "resilience is not a fixed trait, but a set of behaviors and skills that can be developed and strengthened" (Bonanno 2004). Stress management strategies, emotional intelligence development, and a growth mindset encouragement should all be part of programs aiming at psychological resilience. Building supportive communities where people may share and talk about experiences helps to improve social cohesiveness and lower isolation by means of which individuals might be more involved.

Policies and regulations. Developing laws and rules to protect societies against the effects of cognitive warfare falls mostly on governments and international agencies. These could cover rules about data protection, algorithm transparency, and digital platform accountability for the content they carry. One such a clear example is the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which lays strict rules on the acquisition and use of personal data. The European Commission says "GDPR gives citizens more control over their data and imposes clear obligations on companies that manage personal data"**.** (European Commission 2018). Furthermore encouraged should be digital channels for creating and using defenses against manipulation and false information. Working with independent journalism organizations, enhancing fact-checking systems, and creating tools to let consumers report and fight misleading or manipulative content could all help to accomplish this.

Public awareness campaigns are crucial to inform people on the dangers of cognitive warfare and to advance a critical thinking culture. To properly reach a big and varied audience, these campaigns can use a wide spectrum of communication channels including traditional media, social networks, and community events. Organizations such as First Draft News and the Digital Forensic Research Lab are working to provide resources and training in recognizing and combating misinformation. Educating the public about misinformation techniques and how to recognize and combat them is crucial to maintaining an informed and resilient society.

International collaboration. Cognitive warfare is a global problem that requires international collaboration to address effectively. Working together, states and international organizations can create shared strategies, exchange data, and coordinate reactions to disinformation and manipulation campaigns. Initiatives like NATO's Working Group on Cognitive Warfare draw attention to how crucial worldwide cooperation is in creating sensible defense plans. (Allied Command Transformation 2023)

CONCLUSION

Different from informational and psychological warfare, **cognitive warfare** is a sophisticated development of non-kinetic conflict emphasizing subtle and deep manipulation of cognitive and emotional processes. Cognitive warfare becomes a potent weapon for influencing

behavior and perceptions by means of advanced technologies and cognitive science insights, so posing new challenges and opportunities in military security and strategy. Its instruments are propaganda, contrived narratives, behavioural psychology, and the use of personal data to over time shape opinions and actions. Social media and digital channels magnify these effects by letting manipulative messages travel quickly and personally. Deeply affecting society and democracy, the effects compromise social cohesiveness, polarize politics, and erode confidence in democratic institutions. Deep knowledge of the mechanisms of cognitive warfare and the creation of resilience and defense strategies including media education, digital literacy, and international cooperation are absolutely vital if we are to safeguard democracies

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TAIWAN (ROC) MUST ROCK! WHY TAIWAN'S CASE MATTERS?

Malwina Ewa KOŁODZIEJCZAK; PhD∗

Abstract: *The author discusses the subjectivity of Taiwan in the article. It must be remember that Taiwan is unrecognized as a state according to international public law. First then, author describes the theories of state elements. She also briefly characterizes the division of power in Taiwan. Then, she points to the organization of the cybersecurity system and methods of combating disinformation as an example of the efficient functioning of Taiwan as a state.*

Keywords: *Taiwan; unrecognized state; international public law; cybersecurity.*

Although Taiwan's international legal situation is complicated, Taiwan has experience in fighting disinformation and cognitive warfare, as well as potential that could be used by other states.

The main problem of the paper is contained in the question: What impact (if any) does Taiwan, as an unrecognized state, have on international law and security?

Therefore, the hypothesis comes down to the assumption that in international public law there are provisions whose interpretation allows for recognition, but there are no direct and explicit regulations. However, due to customary practice, the multitude of interpretations can bring different solutions. Thus, the lack of such clarity of law in this regard is unfavorable for both unrecognized states and the international environment.

The author will try to briefly present the most important legal regulations, problems with the recognition of Taiwan and the most important aspects contributing to Taiwan's security, as well as current security threats.

1. Taiwan according to International Public Law

According to Jellinek definition of the state must simultaneously consist of three elements: power, territory, population. Therefore, one of the most important criteria should be the stability and effectiveness of power over the territory and population and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. Increasingly, the ability to provide security and defense of the territory is added. Therefore, it is not international law that creates states, but states create international law. Nowadays, the state can be formed by secession, the dissolution of another state, the separation of territory from another state, or by merger/reunification of territories or, in fact, not currently practiced by the creation of a state in the territory of res nullius. A geopolitical unit, at the moment of acquiring legal capacity and capacity for legal action, becomes an entity according to public international law and can be recognized.

Lech Antonowicz said that: recognition of the states is one of the most complex and controversial institutions of international law. International practice in this area is uneven and scientific opinions are completely divergent. He believes that the recognition of newly created states is compulsory, provided that the criteria resulting from the definition of the state are met. That is why the topic of recognition of the R.O.C is extremely important both from the perspective of international public law and security.

The history of Taiwan is complicated and has a bearing on the current status of the island and the very use of the name Republic of China. The island - historically called Formosa, was under the protectorate of China, and even earlier of Japan. Following the adoption of the Cairo Declaration in 1943, which was incorporated into the Potsdam Proclamation of 1945, Taiwan was returned to Chinese administration[1]. At the end of 1949, the Chinese Communist Party under Mao

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[1] L. Antonowicz, *Status prawnomiędzynarodowy Republiki Chińskiej na Tajwanie,* [in:] *Tajwan w stosunkach międzynarodowych,* ed. by E. Haliżak, Warsaw 1997, p. 38.

Zedong came to power in mainland China and proclaimed the People's Republic of China in Beijing. As a result of these events, the former authorities – the Kuomintang (KMT) and Chang Kai-shek[2] – moved to the island and in 1949 announced that the Republic of China in Taiwan was the one and only "China", and the KMT was the only legal government, to which the People's Republic of China did not can claim no rights. This situation was possible thanks to the support provided to the authorities in Taipei by the United States, which was accompanied by the "Sino-U.S. Agreement on Mutual Defense and Assistance" and the "Sino-U.S. Treaty on Mutual Assistance." What is important, at that time, Taiwan - as the Republic of China - was a member of the UN and also sat on the Security Council (!). Only in 1971 was Taiwan replaced by representatives of the government of the People's Republic of China.

However, in 1979 it was replaced by the "Taiwan Relations Act". It was only in the early 1990s that official talks began between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. The President of the People's Republic of China, Chiang Tse-min, referring to Teng Hsiao-ping's concept of peaceful unification and "one country with two systems"[3] from the 1970s, presented a cooperation proposal. This proposal received a response from Li Tenga-huej, who did not definitively reject the concept of unification. The effects of the lack of a clear refusal to this type of proposal are felt in relations between mainland China and Taiwan to this day.

The Constitution of Taiwan states that the Republic of China is based on "three political principles", i.e. a democratic people's republic, ruled by the people and for the people[4]. These are principles based on Sun Yat-sen's concepts. He also developed the concept of the "five powers", adding examination and control powers to the traditional tripartite division of state powers.

Contrary to the Montesquieu principle of separation of powers, popular in Western countries, a different division is in force in Taiwan. Power is divided between the juanas (transl. chambers/councils). According to the Constitution, there are: Executive Juan, Legislative Juan, Judicial Juan, Control Juan and Examining Juan. The equivalent of the government is the Executive Juan and the parliament is the Legislative Juan. The superior state body, which has the power to appoint people to many positions and mediate in disputes between the authorities, is the President.

It can be indicated that there are currently three prevailing concepts of the further political direction in which Taiwan should be heading: closer cooperation with mainland China (in the extreme case, unification), increasing independence until independence, and maintaining its current status.

Over the past few years, decision-makers and politicians in Taiwan have been trying to implement reforms and ensure economic and social development. It should be remembered that the country stabilized and began to implement the principles of a democratic state only in the early 1990s. Basically, enormous progress has been made, which is visible, for example, in the indicators of economic and innovative progress[5]. One of the biggest problems in the 1990s was the high rate of corruption among politicians, officials and judges. Currently, the corruption perception index surveyed by Transparency International placed Taiwan in 31st place among 180 assessed countries based on data for 2018[6].

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[2] Former power elites, party and government institutions of the National Party – Kuomintang (KMT) and the command of the destroyed army, along with their families, evacuated to the island (approximately 1.6 million people in total), taking away national treasures, museum collections, some archives, and the achievements of the Academy of Sciences (Academia Sinica) and other "national institutions and symbols", and in Taipei, next to the authorities of Taiwan Province, the central authorities of the Republic of China began to function, headed by the parliament elected in 1947 and the president. The Constitution of 1946 and the ideology of Sun Yat-sen's "three principles of the people" were also in force, on whose concepts the state system and the KMT ideology were based. These principles are translated, in principle, which in principle are translated as: "nationalism" (minzuzhui) – more as "state patriotism", democracy (minquanzhuyi) and "people's well-being" (minshengzhuyi). Vide: K. Gawlikowski, *Tajwan: spory o status wyspy i procesy transformacji,* [in:] *Azja Wschodnia na przełomie XX I XXI wieku: przemiany polityczne i społeczne,* ed. by K. Gawlikowski, M. Ławacz, Warsaw 2004, pp. 165-236.

[3] This concept was later implemented in relations between China, Hong Kong and Macao.

[4] *Constitution of the Republic of China 1947,* art. 1.

[5] Vide: *Profil terytorialny Tajwanu,* https://poland.tw/resource/0bee84ac-aaca-44f6-b6fe-20b3ed9f1114:JCR [10.06.2024].

[6] https://www.transparency.org/country/TWM [09.06.2024].

2. Cybersecurity as an example of the most important element of the national security

Cybersecurity in Taiwan has been playing a key role in the country's defense for several years and is perceived on an equal footing with national security. This should not be surprising, given Taiwan's problematic international legal status. For this reason, Taiwan is trying to strengthen its position in cyberspace and develop cybernetic capabilities – improving not only legal regulations, system organization, but also technological properties.

The reason why cybersecurity considerations are so important for Taiwan is the numerous attempted hacker attacks carried out from outside, including: through other international entities. These issues should be combined with the elements of disinformation or even the so-called "information war". Moreover, it is often pointed out that cyber attacks, but also fake news, infected applications, etc. are a common element of this practice. Therefore, cybersecurity is of particular importance in Taiwan and is also considered in the context of military security.

For this reason, cybersecurity in various dimensions – both legal and organizational – is becoming increasingly important in the government's policy, strategy and activities. The new Cybersecurity Management Act[7], together with six implementing acts[8], creates complete regulations in this area.

The purpose of the act was to implement the national information security policy and build a secure IT environment to protect national security and the well-being of society. The Act also defines the IT system, information security, information security incident and critical infrastructure.

In addition to passing the Cybersecurity Management Law and establishing a special cybersecurity cell – DCS – in the Executive Yuan, the government created or remodeled agencies, developed training programs and developed cooperation with the private sector to strengthen the cybersecurity system. The current cybersecurity system in Taiwan has been transformed into an "iron triad" consisting of[9]:

• National Information and Communications Security Office (NICSO) operating under the National Security Council (NSC);

• Department of Cyber Security (DCS) with a separate National Information and Communication Security Taskforce (NICST) operating under the Executive Yuan;

• National Communications and Cyber Security Center (NCCSC) under the National Communications Commission (NCC).

NICSO reports directly to the President, while DCS reports to the Prime Minister. The above-mentioned institutions and bodies, together with separate units of the Ministry of Interior (MOI), Ministry of National Defense (MOND), Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and Ministry of Economy (MOEA), create Taiwan's cybersecurity system.

In turn, the National Information and Communication Security Taskforce (NICST) was created in January 2001 by Executive Juan. Its tasks are managed by DCS. NICST is responsible for developing national cybersecurity policy, establishing reporting and response mechanisms, promoting interagency coordination, and overseeing cybersecurity matters.

It should be mentioned that there are three main institutional entities in Taiwan's cyber defense infrastructure: the National Security Bureau, the Ministry of National Defense and the

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[7] *Cybersecurity Management Law 2018,* vide: https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=A0030297 [16.06.2024].

[8] *Regulations on the Notification and Response of Cyber Security Incident, Regulations on Classification of Cyber Security Responsibility Levels, Regulations on Audit of Implementation of Cyber Security Maintenance Plan of Specific Non-Government Agency, Regulations of Special Non-official Agencies' Cyber Security Management by National Communications Commission, Enforcement Rules of Cyber Security Management Act, Cyber Security Information Sharing Regulations,* vide: https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/Law/LawSearchResult.aspx?ty=ONEBAR& kw=cyber [16.06.2024].

[9] Bo-Jiun Jing, *Cybersecurity as a Sine Qua Non of Digital Economy: Turning Taiwan into a Reliable Digital Nation?,* [w:] *Taiwan Security Brief: Disinformation, Cybersecurity, & Energy Challenges,* ed. by Y. Tatsumi, P. Kennedy, J. Li, Stimson, 2019, p. 29.

Criminal Investigation Bureau. Civilian and military institutions have developed common operational and protective mechanisms, and use various exercises and training to materialize the concept of critical infrastructure protection in the context of cyber threats in order to improve and strengthen information security protective capabilities[10]. For this purpose, the Information Communication Electronic Force Command (ICEF) was created three years ago, de facto the fourth branch of the armed forces[11].

The above outline of the cybersecurity system indicates that Taiwan is constantly strengthening its cyber capabilities, not only in the field of cyber defense, but also in the broadly understood development of the digital economy, to which cyber security is key.

3. Disinformation as an example of the most important threat

Disinformation, not only from the Chinese-Taiwanese perspective, is related to propaganda activities and information warfare elements with the use of mass media. Current information warfare mechanisms allow effective operations aimed at directing the adversary's decision-making patterns. Information entered to the state, but hidden, as well as data patterns of a specific country (including false information) should affect the society and evoke reactions consistent with the manipulator's intentions[12].

The new National Cyber Security Program of Taiwan 2021-2024 lists 6 potentially most probable types of threats related to attacks in the cyberspace: "the intensification of personal data and digital certification leakage attacks", "the proliferation of ransomware attack risks", "the increase of threats of vulnerabilities of IoT and mobile devices", "APT targeted attacks to steal confidential data", "the hacking of cyber security (information) suppliers destroying supply chain security" and "the multiplication of critical information infrastructure security risks"[13]. These threats might occur parallel to the elements of Chinese propaganda, including the dissemination of false information related to actual facts, or vice versa, which is currently a widespread phenomenon.

Moreover, the People's Republic of China has been using modern propaganda measures for several years now. According to Chinese doctrine, cognitive warfare is unlimited in time and space, it is targeted, and affects the mentality and will of adversaries. It expands on the PRC's "Three Warfares" and united front tactics, stressing that propaganda must transgress "into the island (Taiwan), every household, everyone's head, and ultimately individual's mind". These activities are combined with hacker attacks and disinformation, and are aimed at attempting to influence public opinion, manipulating the evaluation of public authorities' operations, and sometimes creating panic, fear, and suspicions among the society, so as to ultimately destroy their trust in the Taiwanese government. Currently, social media are mostly used to spread disinformation that is produced fast and on a mass scale, but is meticulously prepared. To counteract the cognitive warfare tactics of the PRC, the Armed Forces of ROC established mechanisms for fast response in the society and fostered education in this sphere. In the meantime, strategic communication activities were also carried out to provide explanations on time and earn the understanding and support of the international community[14].

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[10] Li-Chung Yuan, *The Role of Military in Cyberspace: Case of Republic of China (Taiwan),* [w:] *Securing Cyberspace. International And Asian Perspectives*, ed. Ch. Samuel, M. Sharma, Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2016, s. 290-291.

[11] S. Yeh, E. Hou*, Information, communication and electronic warfare command formed* „Focus Taiwan" (27.06.2017), vide: https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/201706290027 [15.06.2024].

[12] R. Bielawski, B. Grenda, *Wybrane zagadnienia cyberbezpieczeństwa narodowego*, Wrocław 2019.

[13] National Information and Communication Security Taskforce, Executive Yuan, *National Cyber Security Program of Taiwan (2021 to 2024) Republic of China (Taiwan)*, 2021.

[14] *Quadrennial Defense Review Republic of China, 2021.*

4. Conclusion

Taiwan knows well, "as the old saying goes, it is a bad idea to bring a knife to a gun fight; so too it is a bad idea to use a conventionally armed, equipped, trained, and organized military force as the principle means to fight what is primarily an informational war - a war that requires a more nuanced sophisticated, flexible, and distributed approach"[15].

Although Taiwan has made significant progress in cybersecurity, it still faces challenges in this area due to increased attempts and attacks. As indicated in reports and analyses, the main challenge is integration and cooperation between countries and continuous improvement of the cybersecurity system and infrastructure. Cooperation with other countries is therefore necessary, and areas of cooperation could include the protection of critical infrastructure, including telecommunications networks, financial systems and electricity supplies, and the adaptation of regulations to international regulations on cyber issues. Therefore, cooperation with the United States and European states seems invaluable Taiwan has potential in this field and, due to its geopolitical location and Taiwan's experience with attacks from Chinese organizations, other states could also derive tangible benefits from mutual relations in the field of cybersecurity.

Disinformation activities deployed in Taiwan, including fake news, are aimed at interference in democracy. However, it should be stressed that disinformation campaigns in Taiwan are producing increasingly weak results. This is owing to system-based and legal and organisational measures. The approach of the authorities, conveying accurate and clear information and implementing a transparent health policy, is vital here. Another greatly important element is education in the sphere of combating fake news and improving resilience to disinformation campaigns, with activities addressed both to children and the older population.

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[15] D.A. Borer, *Why is information strategy difficult?,* [w:] *Information Strategy and Warfare. A guide to theory and practice,* red. J. Arquilla, D.A. Borer, p. 236.

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THE FIFTH WAR GENERATION AND ITS GEOSTRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS ON THE BLACK SEA SECURITY DIMENSION: NEW TRENDS, NEW TENDENCIES

*Professor Vakhtang MAISAIA; PhD**

Abstract: *paper considers and reflects new dimensions of New Cold War geostrategic balance implications at pan-regional (European) and regional (Black Sea) levels. Currently adopted new challenges in the military doctrine of the Russian Federation envisages engagement into two military conflicts simultaneously and constructed its strategic operational framework founded on incorporation of three combat elements: military, non-military and information warfare measures and proper concepts. Hence, it means that Russia can begin war-game scenarios at the same time against two neighboring nations as it occurs at time being against Ukraine and Georgia. A transformation of war strategy and geostrategic culture (it is a new jargon affiliated with cardinal shifting of strategic operational planning in wargame scenarios at global and regional levels). Hence, the process of geostrategic culture transformation occurring currently whilst introducing Fifth War Generation concept replacing the previous one due to the high technical achievements and technological introduction into the neo-modernist war dynamics itself. Generally to say, a fifth generation warfare is an attempt to accomplish strategic objectives through the use of propaganda and information attack vectors. It's carried out by unknown actors for unknown reasons. Even if the core enemy is identified, the victim nation will not be able to understand the purpose or end goal. The goal of the paper is to realize how the geostrategic cultural transformation takes place at regional level and reflection on what type of influence high-level technologies effect on war process itself.*

Kewwords: *New Cold War; Black Sea; fifth war generation concept; geostrategic culture; Georgia; Ukraine.*

Introduction

In the era of globalization and the technological revolution 4.0, the armed forces and the arms industry are the first sphere to experience rapid development. This development in modern warfare – RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) changed the way world powers perceive the functioning of their military. The development of technology requires further army professionalization which leads to high costs of its maintaining and training. Therefore, we can no longer understand the term frontline as a static line, drawn on a map. There is no frontline in that sense, modern warfare is based on effective mobility and having the ability to eliminate selected targets (Targeting). In order to have these abilities, it is absolutely crucial to procure solutions of a modern war, namely situational awareness systems, systems of Network Centric Systems (NCW) and systems of electronic warfare (EW). Modern conflicts are characterized also, by reconnaissance/assault network centric systems working in over the horizon range, which allows correcting tactical and operational aspects of the battlefield in real time. All data gathered from a battlefield observation are delivered to the Command and Control (C2) system in order to reduce decision-making time. It indicates that the battlefield shapes politics and momentum affects morale[1].

In the era of globalization and the technological revolution 4.0, the armed forces and the arms industry are the first sphere to experience rapid development. This development in modern warfare - RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) changed the way world powers perceive the functioning of their military. The development of technology requires further army professionalization which leads to high costs of its maintaining and training. Therefore, we can no longer understand the term frontline as a static line, drawn on a map. There is no frontline in that sense, modern warfare is based on effective mobility and having the ability to eliminate selected targets (Targeting). In order to have these abilities, it is absolutely crucial to procure solutions of a modern war, namely situational awareness systems, systems of Network Centric Systems (NCW)

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[1] "Is Putin Winning? Leaders", published in "The Econoimst", London, December 2nd-8th 2023, p. 11.

and systems of electronic warfare (EW). Modern conflicts are characterized also, by reconnaissance/ assault network centric systems working in over the horizon range, which allows correcting tactical and operational aspects of the battlefield in real time. All data gathered from a battlefield observation are delivered to the Command and Control (C2) system in order to reduce decision-making time[2].

Having considered new realities with stance of new type of strategic war culture reflected in aegis of the regional security cases, it should be linked with the Black Sea Regional Security paternity. The Black Sea Region becomes one of the seriously turbulent zone of war activities and direct zone of confrontation between the Russian Federation and the USA. Unfortunately, the confrontation reaches level of Strategic Security Dilemma that undermines geostrategic equilibrium and exposing with flexing the muscles with strategic non-nuclear armaments elements. It is symptomatic that the "New Cold War" *scenario ramification possible stimulate similar war-game scenario with the most drastic consequences and the vivid example of the massacre is to be Russia's military aggression in Ukraine on 22 February, 2022.* Namely, the "New Cold War" geostrategic balance implications at pan-regional (European) and regional (Black Sea) levels. Currently adopted military doctrine of the Russian Federation envisages engagement into two military conflicts simultaneously and constructed its strategic operational framework founded on incorporation of three combat elements: military, non-military and information warfare measures and proper concepts. In addition to that there is connection between traditional and "non-traditional" military threats that include as international terrorism, drug smuggling, aggressive separatism, violent non-state actors, etc. Therefore, degradation of the essence of collective security provisions at the regional level, on example of the Black Sea Region as well as the Basin due to the "New Cold War" confrontation increases tendency multiplying those non-traditional military threats and challenges undermining basis of the regional security and national security of the regional actors and creating "anarchic disorder" modality in the 21st Century[3].

This is triggered with correlation between war generation provision and geopolitical space cases and the winning point is being determined by the several key factors, including high maneuvering tactics, control of relatively small amounts of space and time, accomplish a great deal while committing relatively limited forces, rapid movement, systematic disruption of the enemy's capacity, etc. The transformation of war-game scenario into new forms of violence that were unknown in time of Cold War period, determines changes in war nature[4]. Namely, in Cold War period of time main military conflicts have had mainly configuration of the Low Intensity Conflicts (LIF). In case of both casualties and political results achieved in the warfare is very irrelevant and in time procedure is impossible to realize[5]. In Post-Bipolar period, the LIFs easily have transformed into new dimensions of the warfare form that contradicts with classical warfare doctrine with "linear war" principle. The one is to statement that the populations who are oppressed and who subjected with ideological, ethnical, religious threats are forged to assert their resistance by means of organized violence[6]. With introduction of prefix "New", neo-modern type of warfare is coined with a jargon introduced by Dr. Mary Kaldor. Under the term is being considered a fight not among nation-states itself but among non-state actors with states and the war could have a global dimensions. Dr. Kaldor argues that contemporary warfare doctrine reviews different kind of political identities as a different

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[2] Temur Chachanidze "From Blitzkrieg to Total War" published in military journal "Arsenal"#2, Tbilisi, June 2024, pp. 10-12.

[3] Gorda Gibradze "The Factor of Military Conflicts and Nuclear Security in the 21st Century", Caucasus International University Strategic Studies Institute for Research CBRN Threats, Tbilisi, 2023, pp. 12-14.

[4] Mary Kaldor. "The Structure of Conflict" in Pullan, W. and Bhadeshia, H. Structure in Science and Art., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 155.

[5] Pamina Maria Firchow "New War Theory: Does the Case of Colombia Apply?" published in "Peace, Conflict and Development: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Vol.7, July 2005, available from: http://www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/6.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

actors of international security with their involvement into globalized economy where weapons and communications are available to them without any border lines[7].

Namely, "New War" theory as well as Hybrid War strategy are in combination provided good basis for introduction new type of war culture in a way of promotion of so-called "The Fifth War Generation" concept. Notable the notion is vividly clarified how the military conflicts have been developed in time of postmodern period of time leveraged with special peculiarities in wagging such type of the military conflicts. The below chart illustrates the tendencies provision and explained above-mentioned shifting in combat operations characteristics been special in the 21st century:

Chart#1: *Postmodern War – Military Conflicts Classification and Peculiarities in 21st Century*

	Description	*Cases*	*Scope*
Low-Intensity Conflict/limited military conflict	*Military empirical conflicts with the following identifications: combatant forces-7-30.000, 150 tanks, 300 armor car, 10-15 jets and helicopters*	*Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992-1993; Georgian-Ossetian war in 1990-1992; Moldova-Transdnestria war in 1992*	*Usually those wars fought between states and separate government as well as clan/tribal scope*
Limited War/Regional war conflict	*Military actions when belligerent sides do not fully exploit its capabilities and limited in scope operations*	*Armenia-Azerbaijan war over Karabakh in 1990-1994; First Post-Balkan war in 1990-1992;*	*"Army Corp-Brigade" scope*
Local War	*Military operations with limited military-strategic purposes and with political achieved goal between nations or inside nations*	*First Chechen war campaign in 1994-1996; NATO-Yugoslavia war in 1999*	*Military battles wedge in limited scope areas*

The cases are given sufficient understanding why the Clausetwitzian "trinity" configuration in classical conventional modern war envisaged in "The Government – The Military" line drifted into new type of "line" in postmodern war doctrines coined with "The Fifth War Generation" concept as is: "the Government – the People" with limited intrusion of the Military forces albeit still having dovetail mission in the military conflicts in the 21st century (the cases of Russian military aggression into Ukraine with domination of the para-military groupings, like "Wagner" military company mercenaries, Russian National Guard combat formations and Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadirov's "private Army" units, are indicating of the tendency).

The Fifth War Generation Doctrine as Set of Geostrategic Culture and Military Conflict "Technocratization"

It rapes time to debate about how new technologies are cardinally changing a nature of war at any levels. The so-called "multi-domain" military and battle concepts are being implicated and enriched with new components of the weapon system linked to the effect of "Artificial Intelligence" phenomenon. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) has driven in growth too fast and its concept became very popular at national and global levels. The AI has resulted in a wide range of applications, both civil and military. The main interesting side of the AI is certainly its military application as it contains

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[7] Mary Kaldor "New& Old Wars", Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 23-26.

to pursue better, faster and stronger military technologies and new types of weaponry[8]. As it is known the AI has very great influence on all geostrategic domains (sea, land, cyberspace and space). It also effect on all levels of warfare (political, strategic, operational and tactical). At presently, having considered the AI, it should be sought about what are the military components of the AI. The AI includes on that stance the following:

1. Robotized Weapons;
2. Space Control;
3. Cyber Defense;
4. Homeland Security;
5. Logistics;
6. Independently behaved machines[9].

From perspective of the reviewing the AI influence on military thinking is relevant to underscore that the military strategy and the AI have common identification. As the military strategy (strategic, operational and tactical) as well as geostrategic provisions (air, land, sea) planning, have three levels of operability, the same rest with the AI that has also three levels of domains or levels. General to say, according to classification of AI, there are three main categories:

1. Artificial special intelligence *(ANI)*;
2. Artificial nominal intelligence *(AGI)*;
3. Artificial superior intelligence *(ASI)*.

ANI is a special computer algorithm aims at focusing and creating options for solving a single problem. The AGI can operate in multi-domain format and handle all types of problems as it gears more capacities rather than humans and increase its self-awareness[10]. Namely, the factor of the AI promotes reshaping military strategic thinking from simply military culture into geostrategic culture scope. The geostrategic culture reflects unification of all domain operations (land, sea, space and information) with technological novation that make possibility of performing combat operations more sound, rapid, mobile and simple in its actions. Hence, it also contributes in transformation of the war generation stages, like it depicted in below chart:
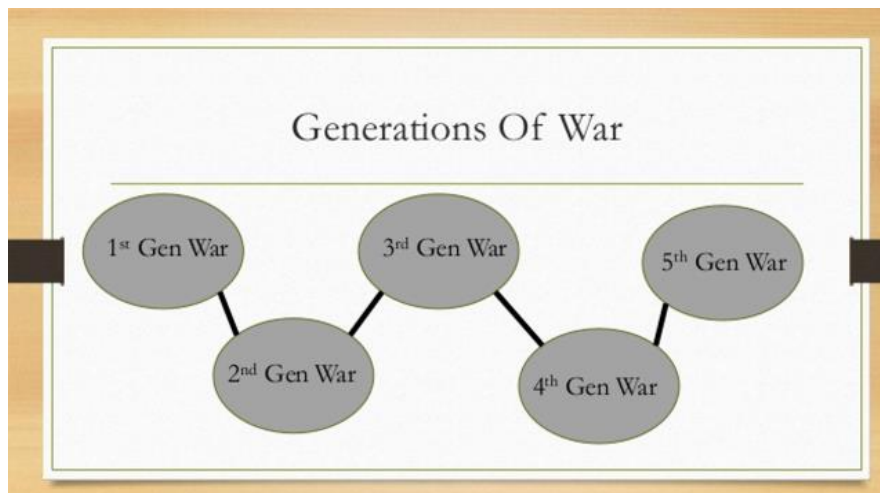
Herewith interesting to review how modern war is being waged and what factors are domain in the process. The main characteristics of general modern warfare are as follow:

- Physical geography defines tactical identities of Armed Forces;
- Escalatory dynamics of modern war games;
- Intercombination and interdependence of all types of warfare;
- Conduct of a war in different physical environment.

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[8] Gloria Shkurti Ozdemir "Artificial Intelligence Application in the Military: the Cases of U.S. and China", SETA/Analysis #51, Turkuvaz Haberleşme ve Yayıncılık A.Ş., Istanbul, June 2019, pp. 8-9.
[9] Marcus Roth, "Artificial Intelligence in the Military – An Overview of Capabilities," Emerj, February 22, 2019, https://emerj.com/ai-sectoroverviews/artificial-intelligence-in-the-military-an-overview-of-capabilities/
[10] *Idem*.

All these factors are also stipulating formation of elements of the Fifth Generation War (FGW) concept that is becoming real and true in real life of contemporary international security system. Before clarifying the content of the FGW is important to introduce its definition for clarifying how it could be perceived. According to some assumptions, one of new definition and identification is possible to determine:

Fifth Generation Warfare (FGW) is an attempt to accomplish strategic objectives through the use of propaganda and information attack vectors. It's carried out by unknown actors for unknown reasons. Even if the core enemy is identified, the victim nation will not be able to understand the purpose or end goal[11].

The main goals of the FGW has its own goals and missions that are to be sought to be the following:

1. High Mobility/Precise Surveillance/Complete Superiority/Submission;
2. Full domination in any space dimension (land-air-sea-space-information) and ultimately destruction of enemy's political will;
3. Psychological and Informational Superiority.

Having considered the above-mentioned modality of the FGW from the standpoints of proceeding as military conflicts which involves the following military elements:

- A2/AD Concept;
- High Technology (Drones, Precision Munition Weapons) – inherited from the fourth warfare generation;
- Artificial Intelligence;
- Cyber warfare and Cyber-terrorism;
- Coalition Technology Attrition Concept;
- 5G Technology.

Therefore is logical to identify the aims of the Fifth Generation War that more likely similar of the hybrid war concept with information/psychological component in mind. The aims are the following:

- To spread disappointment against the homeland;
- To destroy a country's economy;
- To blackmail namely the government of the country;
- To get partitioned the country;
- To make their peoples the rebels of their own government and security forces.

Hence, it times to qualify the weapons of the Fifth Generation War as follow:

1. Social Media;
2. Print Media;
3. Non-State Actors;
4. Rebels;
5. States.

The weapons include the resources and capabilities of the dominant actors involved in waging.

The FGW and more exploited new component of the power as "smart power". It seems so that the FGW is modernization of the hybrid warfare strategy with involvement of the "New Internal War" components. According to some inspirations, a definition of "New Internal War" that means following: "*emulated like civil war and internal conflicts but referred with disorderliness, extreme violence and apparent senselessness toward civilian population and with no concrete political goals*".

The "New Internal War" possesses two implications: political and military ones and the both ones are referred as follow:

Political Implications of the "New Internal War" are prescribed as:

- No political objectives;
- Ethnic cleansing;

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[11] The definition is composed for consideration by the author of the paper

- ➢ Tragic historic memory;
- ➢ Criminality versus politics;
- ➢ No battle for "hearts and minds of men";
- ➢ Bellum Omnium Contra Omnes;
- ➢ No support from regional and global powers;
- ➢ High causalities among civilian population;
- ➢ New Internal Wars cases: Abkhazia in 1992-1993; Somalia in 1991-1993 and new Balkans war since 1992.

Regarding the **Military Implications** are the following:
- ✓ Fighter and warlord combat operations;
- ✓ Poor military training;
- ✓ High percentage involvement of children and teenagers;
- ✓ "Warlord" fighting imagination;
- ✓ No rules, no laws;
- ✓ Abstract military planning.

All these matters flatter perspective of proceeding mentality in military strategic thinking from local, regional and global levels into simple regional and global ones with consideration the geostrategic culture provision with space domain fora.

Asymmetric Military Threats at the Black Sea Region – Military Strategically and Operational Levels

Demonstrate the nature of asymmetric warfare the example of the Black Sea region reflects well what kind of forces Actors have. In a broad sense, we can see it as a match of interests and there is also self-interest in the game. The existence of asymmetric threats in the Black Sea region give rise to this region is a strategically important corridor for trade, transport and energy routes between Asia and Europe and has a very specific role for Europe, USA, Russia, Turkey and other countries. The Black Sea has coastlines in six countries, including the EU member states Bulgaria and Romania and NATO member countries Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. Until the 20th century there was the Black Sea mare nostrum for Empires (Byzantine, Ottomans, and Russia). The Soviet had its own interests. During the Cold War Black Sea was divided with blocks and after all, Turkey wanted to build a south-east European geostrategic area. The Black Sea can become the main transport and energy transit corridor and also the route for the transfer of Central Asian resources to Europe. This dimension comes in correlation with 21st Century challenge[12]. Current challenge is energy and energy routes, e.g. Europe need the Black Sea to diversify its transit routes: to the Caspian Sea to Central Asia, to Iran and maybe at some point to Iraq. Ukraine is working closely with Azerbaijan and Georgia to develop such routes. The Black Sea region is geopolitical place for three large dimensions: US, EU, Russia. The term "asymmetry", "asymmetrical threat" or "asymmetric warfare" is used very often, nowadays the term "asymmetric warfare" is understood as employing terrorist methods. In Modern Warfare Klaus-Peter Lehmann defines asymmetry as a lack of symmetry, i.e. the existence of an imbalance. This imbalance can be expressed in a number of ways[13]. He identifies five basic asymmetries:

1. the classic imbalance of forces;
2. the different determination or motivation;
3. the different legitimation or statehood (i.e. non-state Opponents are usually not on a legitimate, rule of law Base);
4. a discrepancy in the methodology provisions;
5. a difference quality of the resources.

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[12] Vakhtang Maisaia and Magdana Beselia "Asymmetrical Warfare Strategy and Its Implications to the Black Sea Regional Security in 21st Century: Non-State Aggressive Actors and Terrorism" in "Ante Portas – Security Studies"#2(15), Poland, 2020, pp. 74-75, 13.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

It is clear that asymmetric conflict occurs when there are significant difference among involved parties forces, combat operations, methods and means and including motivation and morality of the parties[14]. The both jargons "asymmetric warfare" and "asymmetric threats" have in common many identities with political, strategic, military and economic structures and elements having no references to conventional analogical ones. Asymmetric combat operations are expecting when one the belligerent party behaves unexpectedly and differently rather that it's counter partner and use new form of tactical combat actions as well as weaponry systems and behaved in different manner[15]. The notion of military operations also become innovative that can no longer be made up within a foreseeable period of time.

The main provision of superiority in the warfare considers new sphere of combat operations, new spaces of domain and technological superiority over the enemy[16]. These threats are deriving from the conceptual and practical activities performed by the Armed Forces units of the Russian Federation.

This is good case to define what it means jargon "Asymmetric Threat". Hence, there is one of the definitions, upon to which, "Asymmetric Threat – irregular threat of using power as source of the threat to define purpose of attack as well as means and capabilities causing serious harm to a state»[17]. There are difference between Asymmetric and Symmetric (conventional) war-games and main superiority of the Asymmetry remains in capability of the weak power holder to evade the superior one with assistance of more flexible and trickier strategies and tactics and exploit its weakness in its victory end. In this regard, term "asymmetry" means on covert operations mission achievement when enemy is unaware who attacks its forces. A purpose of the action is to protract war over space and time and wear down enemy's superiority[18]. Partisan war was considered the prevailing Asymmetric Strategy to offer resistance to a technologically and organizationally superior opponent, very often the central goal of the partisan struggle was to become a state actor and thus to achieve new balance of power perspective. There are a difference between partisan and terrorism struggles and the one is perceived from their nature of origin. The partisan struggle is more oriented toward defensive warfare whilst the terrorism strategy is linked with offensive struggle and by doing so, impose will on a foe's will[19].

Today there is no longer any doubt that the line between war and peace is becoming increasingly mixed and it is being purposely obscured for strategic reasons – states internal political disorder and turmoil with severe civilian causalities and presumable starting with clashes between majority and minority political, ethnic or racial groups with involvement of para-military groupings could be interpreted as hybrid warfare aiming at reaching special political goals. Whilst waging hybrid war is possible to use dual approaches as like indicating flexible compound of open and covert, regular and irregular, symmetrical and asymmetrical, military and non-military elements of the warfare with aiming at configuring borderline between war and peace actions namely under international law. The conviction is linked directly with the Fifth Generation Warfare classification also included the elements of the hybrid war strategy elements. In hybrid wars are on three different Fronts in combat actions:

1. on conventional battlefields;
2. with the public and the population of the attacked country;
3. among the home population and the international public.

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[14] Klaus-Peter Lohmann: Zur Entwicklung der modernen Kriegführung. Grundlegende Asymmetrien und eine mögliche Strategie. In: Josef Schröfl, Thomas Pankratz, (Hg.): Asymmetrische Kriegsführung - ein neues Phänomen der Internationalen Politik? Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2004, S. 57-62.

[15] Friedrich Korkisch: Die amerikanische Sicht: Asymmetric Warfare. In: Josef Schröfl, Thomas Pankratz, (Hg.): Asymmetrische Kriegsführung – ein neues Phänomen der Internationalen Politik? Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2004, S. 145.

[16] Bernhard Richter, "Richter, Irreguläre Kriegsführung am Beispiel des Libanonkrieges im Sommer 2006", ARMIS ET LITTERIS 18. Wien, 2006, p. 171.

[17] В.Н. Конышев, А.А. Сергунин „Современная военная стратегия», учебное пособие, издательство «Аспект Пресс»", Москва, 2014, стр.15.

[18] *Idem*.

[19] Herfried Münkler, Der Wandel des Krieges – Von der Symmetrie zur Asymmetrie. Verlag Velbrück Wissenschaft, Weilerswist 2006, S. 148.

Hybrid wars are therefore carried out by both nation and non-nation actors. These multimodal activities are sought to be two level in action (at operational and at tactical) and geared towards achieving synergy results in aegis of the psychological warfare doctrine[20]. This means that hybrid warfare can be achieved through the use of both conventional and non-conventional modalities of combat operations that are not characterized simple in military way but also with economic one and stipulated by the intense exploitation elements of an information warfare.

Becomes Hybrid warfare the "unknown zone" of globalization and new technologies? – That is the question, but the fact is, that Globalization and new technologies (Cyberspace) act as a catalyst for hybrid methods of warfare. In post-modern period of time, a decisive characteristic for security policy is asymmetrical threats or warfare they arise in many forms. Some of these forms of asymmetrical threats or warfare can be conventional we speak of robbery, ambush, surprise, deception, subversion, the appearance of irregular forces, hacker attacks from cyberspace against the ICT infrastructure, etc.[21] The prospective get demonstrate, if terrorism will become the central threat in the 21st century, but at the instant after September 9/11 2001, terrorism has moved to the center of threat perception as almost the most important asymmetrical threat or form of asymmetrical warfare, and it can be assumed that this perception will continue.

According to some academic sources, there are many different definitions of the doctrine, but one of them: *Asymmetric Warfare* – is war conducting by different belligerents with relatively different military capabilities and with different combat strategies that are significantly different[22]. It contradicts with full-pledge or conventional war with similar military power holder actors and with even combat strategy lines that difference only consists in tactical elements of military planning and execution[23]. A popularity of new war theory in strategic studies, labeled as "hybrid war" is being determined by the importance of globalization effect on global security and contemporary international relations system. Here is to be considered hybrid war phenomenon. Having considered several assumptions, it is possible to identify definition of the hybrid war – hybrid war is primarily based on the ability to target distant objects and processes through non-traditional military means, particularly those critical to state and military functions[24][24]. It is important to admit that hybrid war is waging mainly between state and non-state opponents (including terrorists, like "Taliban", DAESH, etc.) that is fully corresponded to realms of fourth war generation[25]. Herewith is being interested to present the author's view on identification of hybrid war. Hybrid War Concept – method of waging combat operations by coercive power elements with non-military means and with insurgency tactical components pursuing goal of destroying and demoralizing excessive enemy forces and subverting their will for further resistance. Hence, hybrid war is indispensable component of the Fourth Generation War concept aiming at destructed enemies political will and culture for continuous further resistance. However, the hybrid war is also being considered as a protracted component for the Fifth Generation War concept in its provision to destroy a foe's will for further resistance. The tendency of threats and challenges getting evolved into asymmetric warfare doctrine are being developed at regional levels and these ones are disseminating in aegis of the Black Sea Regional Security System.

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[20] Hoffmann, Frank G.: Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars, (Potomac Institute for Policy Studies), Arlington 2007.

[21] Friedrich Korkisch: Die amerikanische Sicht: Asymmetric Warfare. In: Josef Schröfl, Thomas Pankratz, (Hg.): Asymmetrische Kriegsführung – ein neues Phänomen der Internationalen Politik?, Nomos-Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2004, S. 147.

[22] Peter Bator "International Conflict Management - Crisis, War and Peace" in "Introduction to Security Studies", Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA), Bratislava, Slovakia, 2014, p. 42.

[23] Arrenguin-Toft I. "How to Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict" in "International Security", Vol.26, 2001, c. 1, s. 93-128.

[24] Yuriy Danyk, Tamara Maliarchuk and Chad Briggs "Hybrid War: High-tech, Information and Cyber Conflicts" in "Connections" The Quarterly Journal, Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, Vol.16, no.2, Germany, Spring 2017, p. 6.

[25] William S. Land "Understanding Fourth Generation War" in magazine "Military Review", September-October, 2004.

CONCLUSION

The so-called "technocratization" processes taken place in the 21st century with introduction of so-called "open" and "closed" technologies in aegis of the Military Revolution development further promoted new tendencies in military strategic culture transformation into geostrategic culture with endorsement of Artificial Intelligence components that is not considered as a special type of weaponry system tied up with technological innovations with multiple attitude approaches[26]. New tendency in military operational thinking with strategic planning mapping implicate connotation adjustment with shifting process from "the Fifth War Generation" into "the Fifth War Generation" Concept with shift advantage back to nation-states with promotion of space weapon capabilities. A probable time-table of the transformation could be traced from 2000 to 2050 period. The reapplication of nation-state as key actors of the then international security system and holders of privileges conducting military operations with new dynamics and new methods with old mature perception in geostrategic planning and operational provisions getting reversed importance of the regional security relevance to these new geostrategic realities. Notable, what is occurring at present time in aegis of the Black Sea region with development of new type warfare style in a way of the hybrid war strategies with involved actors, on case of the modern war in Ukraine, indicates how the transformation of war generation takes place at the regional level.

Namely, the Black Sea regional security and geostrategy are relevant to be researched and analyzed from concrete academic theoretical framework that of Realpolitik school of international relations and security studies theories. Therefore, simple reviewed the regional security aspect from that academic standpoint sparks implications toward creation zones of humanitarian crisis, ethnic cleansing with encroachment of political and economic disaster scenarios to be followed. The Black Sea region faces two the most geopolitical "misgrievances" in form of nationalism and great power competition since 19th century. The instability and stalemate in aegis of the Black Sea-Caspian Basin-Central Asia multi-domain area undermine any peaceful and stable process promotion namely in that of the geopolitical axis that also links to geoeconomic development of the area. Modern hazardous threats - terrorism and low intensity conflicts transformed into realities of "the Fifth War Generation" pattern could easily subvert security background in the region. Those types of the threats are considering as "external" origin albeit the "internal" turmoil events, as for instance, political extremism and political polarization inside of the states, are inclined to create "rim of instability" of the region in context of the contemporary international security realities. However, the Black Sea Regional Security is very fragile and tend to create instable environment that is possible to convert into peaceful coexistence perspectives in nearest future. Hence, it is very important that security provisions and their peculiarities could be viewed and scrutinized with academic research modalities, for instance, on example of the "Securitiization" theory with its military and economic cases. In conjunction with regional threats perception, the Black Sea region faces various types of conventional and non-conventional ones making turbulent the geopolitical climate in the place. It seems so that both "hard" and "soft" security provisions are becoming volatile, insecure and unstable for the regional security actors. From namely that standpoint, the region is inspired of massive attention by the global, international and local actors, both military and non-military in its origin (like NATO and EU). In this scenario, the role of the littoral states of the Black Sea Basin are very important and decisive and one of example of the case is to be Georgia's geopolitical code and its national security environment. It makes more plausible geopolitical processes around the region and causes great concern of the international community.

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[26] Michael C. Horowitz, "Artificial Intelligence, International Competition, and the Balance of Power," Texas National Security Review 1, no. 3, Texas, May 2018, p. 39.

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CALLING FOR MORE SECURITY IN THE EU: THE EFFECTS OF THE "GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR" TOWARDS SECURITY INTEGRATION

*Ligia NICULAE**

Abstract: This paper examines the transformative trajectory of Directive 91/477/EEC, tracing its transition from a predominantly market-oriented Directive to one underscored by security imperatives based on the global war on terror. The evolution of this Directive assumes significance against the backdrop of internal dynamics within the EU proving that in times of uncertainty, the Commission becomes the leading voice of change. This is the case of 2015, when the Commission assumed a proactive role in advocating for enhanced security measures as the main security threat of the EU was terrorism.
Based on this, this article underscores the pivotal role played by Directive 91/477/EEC revisions in establishing cooperative endeavors among Member States in addressing emergent security challenges. By foregrounding the Commission's assertive stance amidst prevailing uncertainties within the EU, the 2017 revision emerges as a critical juncture catalyzing substantive policy reform at the EU level marking the path towards security integration of the EU. Despite divergent perceptions among Member States regarding the nature and gravity of security threats, this article contends that the Commission's leadership in navigating the complexities of European security dynamics has been instrumental in shaping the discourse and trajectory of EU policy on security.

Keywords: Security Integration; EU Commission; Intergovernmentalism; Supranationalism; EU Directive.

Introduction

Immediately after the terrible terrorist attacks of 9/11, President George W. Bush stated that "America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism" ("Statement by the President in Address to the Nation" 2001) launching and coining the *global war on terror* (Leffler 2011, 34; Biegon and Watts 2023) as a strategy to fight all those who challenge democracy and security. To this, the European Union (EU) replied positively; on September 12, 2001, the EU Commission met to discuss the events from the United States of America (Vella 2002, 142), and ten days after these tragic events, the Extraordinary European Council met to analyze the international situation and to make the action plan of the Union (Vella 2002, 142). The rather fast-forward measures taken by the European Union, or "the supra-national initiatives by the EC" (Vella 2002, 142) marked the beginning of the strategy against terrorism, and at the same time created the needed context of the start of the security integration in the EU.

The first steps taken by the EU following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 marked the beginning of a policy change that can be understood from two perspectives: firstly, the immediate reactions towards war on terrorism at the general level of the EU and secondly as a leitmotiv for policy change applicable to all Member States proving that terrorism is a defining point for security cooperation and integration. The second becomes important for this paper as one of the main challenges of the EU was to bring to the same table the Member States and to accept and apply the needed steps towards accessing the EU's position on security. In the context of the EU security cooperation, thus based on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)[1], doubled by the Lisbon Treaty as a game changer, the need for a common path towards security of the EU was mandatory. Undoubtedly, the foreign policy of the EU should have been backed by a common view of the Member States. Yet, it raises the question of the paradox of *high-politics* (Menon 2013).

The different perspectives on security became evident after 9/11 as it points out that the EU's view differed from that of the Member States as each had different security threats. Given this, there was no common understanding of security threats; only national security prevailed, so in the case of 9/11 and the war on terror it can be observed as a "two-tier system [..] where the EC

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[1] As part of the second pillar of the Treaty of Maastricht.

took measure supra-nationally and the Member States made their contribution each separately" (Vella 2002, 141).

The reaction to 9/11 becomes also important as terrorism was seen, understood, and acknowledged differently, as the Western Member States had a longer history of terrorist attacks compared with the Eastern and Central Member States where such attacks were close to zero. Amidst this context, the security integration must be analyzed, and one of the best examples, and yet less discussed is the case of Directive 91/477/EEC, initially a predominantly market-oriented Directive that underwent major changes, especially after the terrorist attacks of 2015, transforming this Directive into a key element of security integration.

Understanding that this Directive assumes significance against the backdrop of internal dynamics within the EU, this current paper underlines that in times of uncertainty, the Commission becomes the leading voice of change, thus becoming the supra-institution that takes the lead as responsible for marking the path for all the Member States that must follow. In other words, the revisions of this Directive played a pivotal role in establishing cooperative endeavors among the Member States in addressing emergent security challenges. Furthermore, knowing that the adoption of this Directive in 1991 is linked to the common market, doubled by the Schengen Agreement, thus underlining the need to have a well-established framework in terms of common policy becomes a top argument when navigating the complexities of European security dynamics.

Taking into consideration the above, this current article looks retrospectively at the evolution of Directive 91/477/EEC and subsequent revisions until the 2021 codification by underlining that this Directive has played an important role in the security integration of the Member States. More to this, this Directive evolved not merely in a chronological progression of legislative revisions, but in a sort of a consequence of the dynamic interplay between societal concerns, and political imperatives doubled by the goal of safeguarding the security of the EU and of its citizens. In other words, each revision of the Directive(s) seems to represent a nuanced response to the evolving landscape of threats and vulnerabilities.

To underline the above, this current article is structured into three main parts. The first part of this article brings into discussion terrorism in the European Union. It underlines the idea that terrorism was present especially in the Western Member States with a peak in the 70s as ethno-nationalist and far-right attacks were an *internal* security threat to the states, while the events that led to the change of Directive 91/477/EEC were due to the growth of Islamic terrorism. Data presentation on terrorist attacks is also pointed out as becoming significant for understanding the internal situation of the countries that were subject to attacks. Furthermore, this analysis has also to be placed into the context of 2015-2017 when we have a European Union enlarged, thus with different internal dynamics and history related to terrorism. As terrorist attacks were in Western Europe, so pretty much in the founding countries, this clearly shows that Directive 91/477/EEC becomes a key element for security integration and for the debate on *high-politics*.

The second part of this article looks at the Security Cooperation in the European Union. In this second part is underlined that security cooperation was not a result of the war on terror, and neither of the terrorist attacks. The idea of security cooperation has been present even since the 80's and based on the evolution of the EU became a stringent subject. Furthermore, under this context, the Directive must be placed to see the complexity of the EU Gun Ban policy.

The last part of this article pinpoints the evolution of the 1991 Directive to drive the discussion to the evolutionary trajectory from a market-based to a security-driven perspective. By pointing this evolution, the hypothesis of this paper can be underlined that despite the divergent perceptions of the Member States on the nature and gravity of threats, the Commission's leadership has been instrumental in shaping the discourse and trajectory of the EU's policy on security.

III. Terrorism in the European Union

Mader et al. ask a pertinent question regarding European integration, namely, "[w]hen member states of the European Union face serious international threats, does this serve as a catalyst or obstacle for European integration in the security and defence domain?" (Mader et al. 2023, 433) knowing that all the theories of European integration point the idea of cause-effect as triggers of change. In other words, tragic events such as the terrorist attacks of 2015 became a catalyst of change "that have overridden barriers of cooperation" (Mader et al. 2023, 436).

Terrorism is still one of the biggest security threats in the European Union, yet Islamic terrorism was something new in the European Union (Vries 2005, 3). According to the European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT) 2023 (EUROPOL 2023), "28 completed, failed and foiled were reported by Member States in 2022" (EUROPOL 2023, 9) showing that despite all the measures taken by the EU towards fighting terrorism it remains one of the biggest security threats.[2] Europe, especially Western Europe has always been prone to terrorist attacks, and the below data clearly shows that terrorism is and was part of the main threat to the national security of those Western States.

According to the data, between 1970 to 2020 no less than 17495[3] terrorist attacks took place in European Union Member States[4], with a peak both in the 70s and in mid-2010.
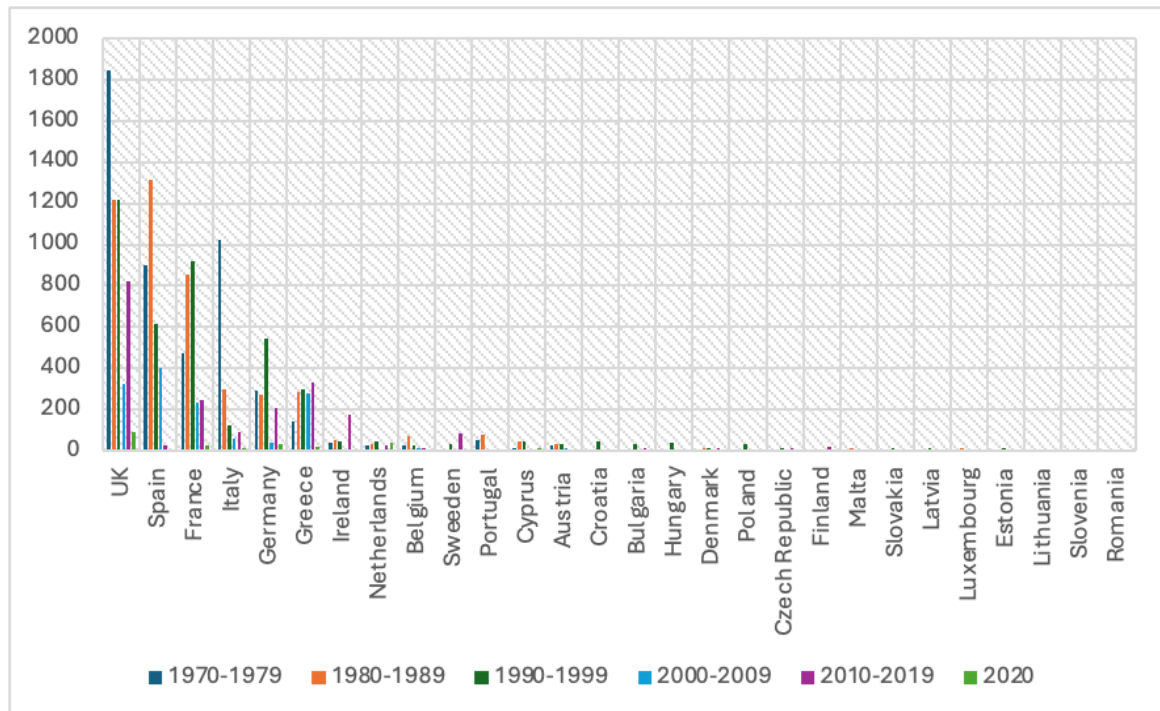
Chart no. 1: *Terrorist attacks between 1970 to 2020 (source: Global Terrorism Database)*

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[2] In this case we have to mention that in 2022 the terrorist attacks were mostly left-wing and anarchist attacks, while six jihadist terrorist were reported in the Member States (EUROPOL 2003, 9). In 2021 were 18 attacks, while in 2020 were 56. (EUROPOL 2003, 6, 9).

[3] The data was collected by analyzing the information present on the Global Terrorism Database.

[4] The analyzed data from the Global Terrorism Database was for the Member States of the European Union. Given that the United Kingdom was part of the EU until Brexit, thus playing an important role into shaping the Directive 91/477/EEC, this paper will include all the information on terrorist attacks including the United Kingdom. At the same time, in order to better understand the situation on terrorist attacks in the Member States, the data collected and analysed go prior to the accession to the EU. In other words, to understand the reaction of the Member States to the war on terrorism, the analysis must be done way back, and not just by looking at a shorter time frame.
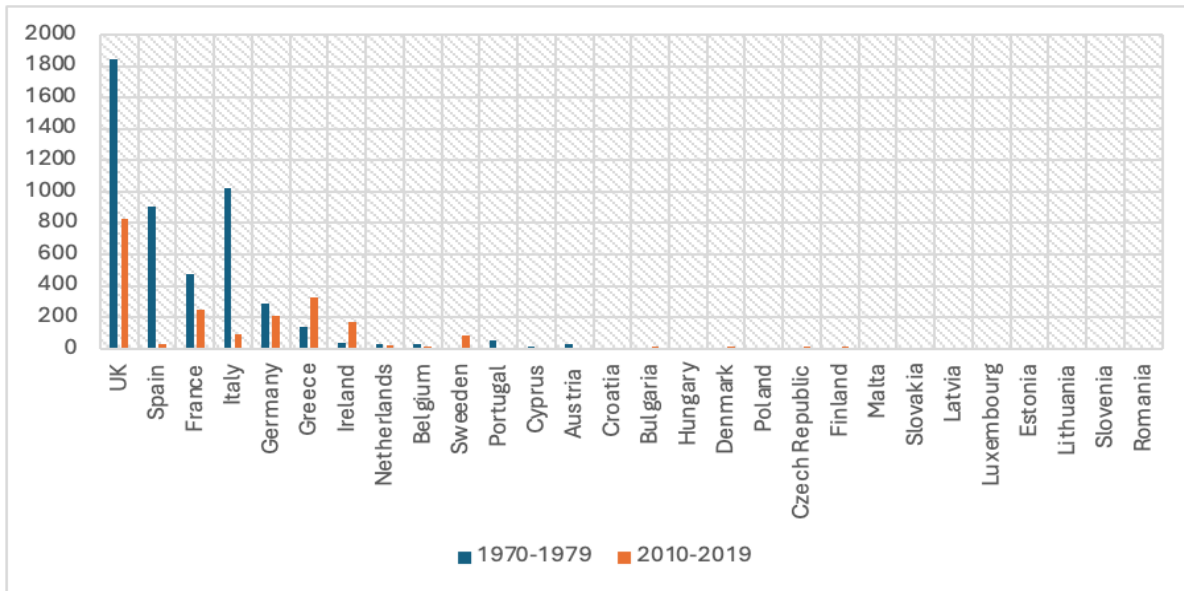
Chart no. 2: Comparison between terrorist attacks 1970s and 2010s
(Source: Global Terrorism Database)

These two charts bring to light the fact that terrorism poses a significant threat both to national security and the security of the EU. Thus, since the 70's there have been numerous attacks, most of them being ethno-nationalist and separatist attacks affecting the national security of mostly Western Countries. More, there was no settled agreement on the internal market of the Economic Community which becomes essential for this analysis. Yet, the terrorist attacks of Madrid (2004), London (2005), and Paris (2015) were different and shook not only the Member States of the EU but the whole world. These attacks were completely different from the previous, the EU was different from the European Community, so it called for action especially at the level of Member States proving that the *high-politics* must be addressed as "terrorism is a global phenomenon that requires a global response" (Vries 2005, 5). At the same time why, the Directive was revised under the context of Paris attacks and not earlier. This answer can be traced to the Commission where the main objective of President Juncker was security.
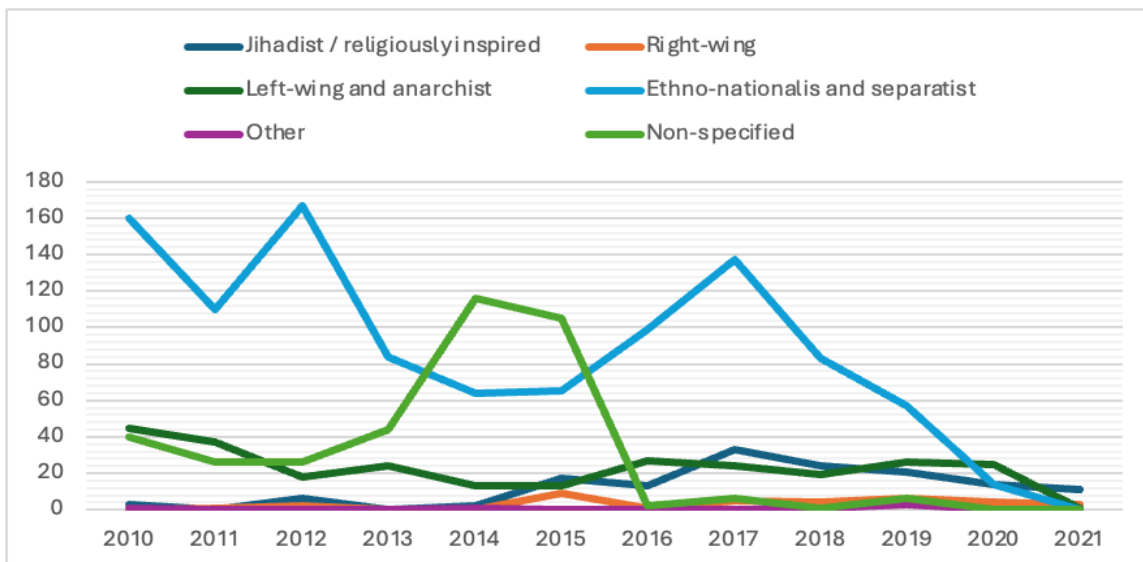
Chart no. 3: Types of terrorist attacks between 2010 to 2021 (source: TE-SAT for 2010 to 2021)

At a parallel level, the media coverage of 9/11 doubled with the evolution of the war on terrorism and became one of the focal points of all media outlets. Consequently, this led to a rise of fear, especially in the Member States, which is why terrorism became one of the main concerns

also at the individual level. When analysing the Eurobarometer surveys between 2015 to 2018, it can be observed that the main concern was related to immigration followed by terrorism. In spring 2017 terrorism was the main security concern. This can be also a result of the numerous discussions at the EU level on the idea of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures. That was also a focal point of the media outlets and the social media. 2017 is also the year when the second revision of the 1991 Directive was adopted.

Table no. 1: Concern of EU citizens

(*Source:* Standard Eurobarometer)

Standard Eurobarometer	Terrorism	Immigration
90 – Autumn 2018	20% (-9% since spring) – second concern	40% (+2% since spring) – first concern
89 – Spring 2018	29% (-9%) – second concern	38% (-1%) – first concern
88 – Autumn 2017	39% (-6%) – second concern	39% (+1%) – first concern
87 – Spring 2017	44% (+12%) – first concern	38% (-7%) – second concern
86 – Autumn 2016	32% (-7%) – second concern	45$ (-3%) – first concern
85 – Spring 2016	39% (+14%) – second concern	48% (-10%) – first concern
84 – Autumn 2015	25% (+8%)	38%
83 – Spring 2015	17% (+6%) – 4th concern	38% (+14%) – first concern

Another aspect that can be pointed out from the Standard Eurobarometer is the fact that at the EU level, before 2015 little was underlined in terms of terrorism and counter-terrorism. For example, the Standard Eurobarometer of 2001 to 2003 did not underline terrorism as a direct threat to the security of the EU. In the Standard Eurobarometer of 2003 fighting terrorism is placed in third place in terms of top priorities (Standard Eurobarometer 59 Spring 2003, 5), while a couple of months later it was in the 7th place (Standard Eurobarometer 60 Autumn 2003, 9).

In 2002, "82% (of the respondents) fear acts of international terrorism" (Standard Eurobarometer 58 Autumn 2002, i) as "[t]he proportion of EU citizens that feels the United States plays a positive role ranges from 16% when it comes to the protection of the environment to 54% when it comes to fighting terrorism" (Standard Eurobarometer 58 Autumn 2002, 14), as 8 in 10 EU citizens were still afraid of terrorism (Standard Eurobarometer 57 Spring 2002, 5). The 9/11 terrorist attacks created a level of fear that can be observed in these surveys. Thus, in the aftermath of 9/11 the fear of terrorism was 86% (Standard Eurobarometer 56 Autumn 2001, i), rising from previous surveys.

One of the main objectives of the EU is to provide citizens security within its borders, while the fear of terrorism doubled by the terrorist events shows that the fight against terrorism becomes an unprecedented situation to be dealt with. It becomes evident that the EU needed to address and deal with it.

IV. Security Cooperation at EU level

Even from the beginning of the 1990s the subject of security cooperation was underlined in the now European Union. Security integration among the Member States of the European Union has been a pivotal aspect that has evolved significantly since the inception of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, which laid the groundwork for preventing conflict through economic interdependence.

The fall of the communist bloc called for further steps as the end of the Cold War brought to the table questions on the future stability in Europe. Under this context, the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 marked the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), thereby institutionalizing the EU's security and defense cooperation. The subsequent treaties of Amsterdam (1997), Nice (2001), and Lisbon (2009) further strengthened the CFSP and introduced the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

At the same time, despite these important steps, several challenges hinder deeper security integration within the EU. Firstly, the Member States posed the question of sovereignty as reluctance to cede national sovereignty over security and defense matters becomes evident. Again *high-politics v. low-politics* govern.

Secondly, the Member States have a different assessment of threats with different roots – while in the West, with longer democratic traditions, most of the threats were linked to terrorism, and immigration; the Southern European countries are more affected by political instability in Africa and Middle East, while Eastern countries are more inclined to asses threats as coming from Russia.

So, to discuss the security integration and cooperation a common denominator had to be found. As security integration within the EU is a complex and evolving process, Differentiated Integration[5] (DI) must be pointed out as it offers a viable pathway to navigate the diverse interests and capacities of Member States, enabling progress where uniform integration may be unattainable. But, in the case of the Firearms Directive, the Member States already complied to knowing that the first revision was in 2008.

In terms of cooperation and security integration, after the terrorist attacks of 2001, the EU immediately adopted counter-terrorist measures. Still, these measures proved to be rather inefficient as the EU had to face major challenges which led to so-called crises. The refugee crisis, and the overflown of refugees seeking asylum created a new context within the Member States, which is why immigration was seen as one of the main security threats as per the surveys mentioned above. Besides this, since 2014 terrorism has been linked to immigration.

V. Understanding the transformative trajectory of Directive 91/477/EEC

Directive 91/477/EEC was introduced in 1991 due to the establishment of the single market. From the initial scope as a purely market-oriented Directive, it was slowly transformed into a security-based one linked to terrorism, illicit trafficking, and a key factor for security cooperation. The evolution of this Directive until its Codification of 2021, but especially during its second revision, became an interesting case study that is not enough scholarly discussed, as the subject of gun acquisition and possession by civilians is neither a simple nor an easy-to-follow subject. In other words, from a Directive implementing the minimum conditions for ownership, acquisition, and transfer of firearms used by civilians within the borders of the Member States it developed towards gun control linked to terrorism and trafficking.

The complexity of this Directive which is linked to the Area of Freedom Security and Justice can be observed in the discrepancies that arise from the legislative process, thus proving that in times of uncertainty the Commission becomes the leading voice. Moreover, it represents a pivotal point for security integration and part of the long war on terror.

5.1. Understanding Directive 91/477/EEC

As a response to the economic challenges faced by the Western Europe, the need of an internal market was instrumental. Still, to have an internal market meant regulating several areas which normally were in the obligation of the states as part of their internal regulation. This was the case of the firearms legislation where each country had its internal legislation. As *euroslerosis* was evident in the 80s, thus it called especially for economic evolution, regulating firearms ownership and acquisition was included by Lord Arthur Cockfield in his 300 measure points needed to complete the internal market (COM (85) 310, Vol. 1985/0130). The White Paper called for a proposal to regulate firearms ownership and acquisition. In parallel, the Schengen Agreement

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[5] The roots of Differentiated Integration can be traced back to the early stages of European integration. The founding members of the European Economic Community (EEC) recognized the necessity of flexibility to accommodate different national circumstances and ambitions.

paid detailed attention to firearms, especially in Chapter 7.[6] As the established deadlines for the internal market were close, the first proposal for a Directive dealing with firearms was done in a hurry as the "proposal addressed several different areas of firearms control and movement" (Eigel 1995), thus being a rather vague proposal which did not brough any clearness in this aspect. As the Member States of that time had different legislative provisions regarding firearms, furthermore that proposal making possible loopholes in the national legislation, the challenge was enormous, which is why the second proposal of Directive pretty much combined the main aspects of the Member States legislation. So, this new proposal included the (a) classification of firearms into three categories (prohibited; subject to authorization, and subject to declaration – A to C category), (b) a travel document for the transfer of the firearm was agreed with the name of European Firearms Certificate, (c) authorization for entry in Member States, and (d) the person who wants to buy and own a firearm must be older than 18 and must be without mental issued and not likely to be a danger to society (COM(89) 446 final).

This second proposal was analyzed by the European Parliament in 1990 and their general direction was to try to make the provisions of the Directive much harder, but the final accepted version contained only part of their suggestions. The Parliament intended to have legislation that would have resulted in a decrease of firearms possession in the Member States. At the same time, as this Directive was directly linked to the internal market, and thus the Member States at that time already had legislation that regulated the civilian firearms market; the time pressure of 1992, led to the 1991 Directive. So, the European Communities adopted this Directive on June 18, 1991, a few months prior to the internal market. This was the initial Directive aimed at bringing a balance between firearms possession and acquisition and the internal market conditions.

5.2. The first revision of the Directive

The first revision of Council Directive 91/477/EEC was done in 2008. 17 years had passes since it was first adopted and implemented in the Member States. This revision was pretty much dictated by the United Nations as, in January 2002, on behalf of the EU the Commission signed the Protocol Against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition. According to the provisions of this Protocol, the scope of it is to prevent the manufacturing and trafficking of firearms and its components (Article 4, point 1 of the PROTOCOL) for the civilian use, calls for legislative measures in the State Party (Article 5 point 2, Article 6 point 2 of the PROTOCOL), including confiscation of firearms and components which were illicitly manufactured or trafficked. Furthermore, the Protocol gives clear provisions in terms of requirements for export, import and transit licensing and authorization systems (Article 10), cooperation between States (Article 12) on all levels including share of data, and in terms of brokers and brokering (Article 15).

Under this context, the first revision must be placed. Furthermore, according to the European Commission report of 2000, the Member States had tougher provisions in their national legislation compared with the Directive (European Commission 2010, 10). Based on this report the first proposal on the revision of the 1991 Directive was submitted in 2006. Following debates, the directive was revised in 2008 (Directive No. 2008/51/EC). This revision was not directly linked directly to Spain's tragic attacks of 2004 where nearly 200 were killed and more than 1500 were injured (Morris et al 2024), and neither to London bombing.

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[6] In this case we have to underline the fact that this chapter is pretty much the reordered European Convention on the Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Firearms by Individuals of 28 June 1978. (See more in: Council of Europe, "European Convention on the Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Firearms by Individuals", Strasbourg, 28.VI.1978, European Treaty Series - No. 101, https://rm.coe.int/1680077d97). Chapter 7 of the Schengen Agreement clearly explains, among other, (1) the types of firearms and ammunition that are prohibited, subject to authorization and subject to declaration, (2) mentions the authorization to acquire and to poses firearms, (3) marking of firearms with serial number, (4) that dealers and manufactures are obliged to keep a registry of firearms subject to authorization, or declaration, and (5) establishes the need for a national authority for sending and receiving information of the gun acquisition. (Articles 77-90 of CONVENTION IMPLEMENTING THE SCHENGEN AGREEMENT of 14 June 1985 between the Governments of the States of the Benelux Economic Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic on the gradual abolition of checks at their common borders, Official Journal of the European Communities, 22.9.2000, 19 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42000 A0922(02)).

5.3. The second revision of the Directive – Commission changing the scope

In 2012, the European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Anna Cecilia Malmoström underlined that:

> "There is, simply, no evidence that firearms are causing less damage or insecurity in the EU today than, say, five or ten years ago. The trend appears, in fact, to go in the opposite direction!
>
> Legally owned weapons in the EU continue to feed the illegal market, powerful and highly dangerous weapons continue to be smuggled - apparently without great difficulty - over our external borders, notably from countries in the EU's neighbourhood, where weak management of stockpiles, looting, and corruption fuel the illicit market. There is evidence that criminal groups creatively exploit new technologies, for example making and distributing weapons from spare parts bought legally on the Internet, by converting lawful air guns into more dangerous weapons, and by re-activating neutralized weapons bought both outside and inside the EU.
>
> As a result, illicit firearms are much too easily available." (Anna Cecilia Malmoström 2012)

This speech became relevant as it marked the beginning of the second revision, thus started the debates on further restrictions on civilian firearms. This second revision can also be linked to the European Agenda on Security. As "[r]ecent terrorist attacks have focused attention on how organised criminals are able to access and trade firearms in Europe, even military-grade firearms, in large numbers" (COM (2015) 185 final, 17) the European Agenda on Security called for a revision of the Directive No. 2008/51/EC given that "differences in national legislation are an obstacle to controls and police cooperation. As a priority, a common approach is needed on the neutralisation and de-activation of firearms to prevent reactivation and use by criminals. The Commission will review the existing legislation on firearms in 2016" (COM (2015) 185 final, 17). So, one of the main security issues to be dealt with was terrorism and firearms, fact underlined also by President Juncker:

> "The recent terrorist attacks on Europe's people and values were coordinated across borders, showing that we must work together to resist these threats. Today's proposal, prepared jointly by Commissioners Elżbieta Bieńkowska and Dimitris Avramopoulos, will help us tackle the threat of weapons falling into the hands of terrorists. We are proposing stricter controls on sale and registration of firearms, and stronger rules to irrevocably deactivate weapons. We will also come forward with an Action Plan in the near future to tackle illicit arms trafficking. Organised criminals accessing and trading military grade firearms in Europe cannot and will not be tolerated." (European Commission 2015)

As part of the European Agenda on Security and knowing that President Juncker's main priority was security and security cooperation, the Firearms Directive became a key element of counter-terrorism, thus underlining that the Commission changed the role of the Directive from a market-based to a security-driven Directive. This is the first step towards the 2017 revision of the Directive. This period from November 2015 to May 2017 is the most significant one as, despite initially scheduling in 2016 the start of the revision process, the terrorist attacks pushed the Commission to take immediate action.

The Commission's proposal was hard to digest as it would have changed completely civilian firearms ownership without clearly limiting the access of terrorists to such weapons. Under this context, the European Parliament and its Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) addressed the Commission's Proposal. Surprisingly, IMCO became critical on the proposal as "the absence of an impact assessment makes our work even harder" (Ford 2016). In 2015 when the subject of revision of the Directive was discussed during the meeting of IMCO in the EP in Brussels, on the Control of the acquisition and possession of weapons it was underlined that "[w]e do not aim at banning all semi-automatics for use by civilians. With regard to semi-automatic firearms we only propose to prohibit two types of arms which have been identified as potentially dangerous. First of all, automatic firearms which have been converted into some automatic and which of course could be reconverted in automatic firearms" ("Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Weapons (Firearms Directive): Extracts From the Presentation by the Commission – Multimedia Centre," n.d.) making it clear after the second revision was adopted in 2017 that:

> "[W]e've just voted on the changes to the Firearms Directive and during a long negotiation we have managed to come up with an amended proposal that defends the interests of legal owners [..] but also closes some loopholes especially on poorly deactivated firearms. So in particular we've had a common firearms law since the 1990s. The Commission proposed many changes the original Commission proposal that would have been enormously difficult for hunters, for shooters, for collectors, even for museums and would have been very very difficult legally, so we have completely rewritten this to come up with what should be a much more workable

proposal but at the same point we've also closed the loophole regarding so-called solute firearms and these were very poorly deactivated and sold without permission" ("Control of the Acquisition and Possession of Weapons: Extracts From the Vote and Statement by Vicky FORD (ECR, UK) – Multimedia Centre," n.d.).

This extract from the Statement of Vicky Ford brings into discussion the fact that the initial proposal of the Commission was far too severe, and the final version was a negotiated one. This proves the central idea of the Commission wanted a tougher Directive, making the intent far too ambitious.

Despite reaching a consensus on the final version of the Directive which later became known as the EU Gun Ban, it was not well received by some Member States. For the first time this Directive was contested by Member States which resulted in the Czech Republic[7] taking legal action. The Czech Republic[8] filed a lawsuit with the European Court of Justice against Directive (EU) 2017/853 which called for annulment under Article 263 TFEU (Judgment of the Court 2017). Pretty much the Czech Republic underlined that the 2017 Directive goes beyond its initial scope of market-based Directive – "the Czech Republic submits that, if Directive 91/477 pursued the aim of harmonising the disparate national rules on the acquisition and possession of firearms in order to eliminate obstacles to the internal market, that is not the case with the contested directive" as "it pursues consist exclusively in ensuring a higher level of public security in relation to the terrorist threat and other forms of crime". (Judgment of the Court 2017, 11). This sustains the hypothesis of this paper as the 2017 Directive was no longer observing the minimum requirement for ownership, acquisition and transfer; it changed to a security Directive. Likewise, the 2017 Directive linked a security threat of which the Member States had different perspectives, so knowing that the Member States already agreed to such a Directive and included it in the national legislation, automatically all the Member Stated, by implementing this 2017 Directive accepted the EU perspective on security threats, thus no longer being a subject of *high-politics* and sovereignty issue.

The European Court of Justice dismissed the action of the Czech Republic, this Directive being officially in 2019 free of any legal claims. This was not the last time this Directive was changed, as in 2021 the Codification was adopted.

CONCLUSIONS

This current articles examines a particular subject as part of the security integration of the Member States. As it was argued in these pages, the Firearms Directive has undergone significant transformations, evolving from a market-based approach to a security-driven one. This shift was particularly notable during the tenure of President Jürgen Jucker, who emphasized the need for a more comprehensive and security-focused framework to address the complexities of firearms regulation within the EU as a need to regulate a market that was included as part of the counter-terrorist measure.

At the same time, the evolution of this Directive proves that the Commission becomes the key in terms of importance in times of uncertainty. The 2017 revision emerges as a critical juncture catalyzing substantive policy reform at the EU level marking the path towards security integration of the EU. This was an important step in what later evolved in the security policy of the EU.

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[7] It has to be underlined that the Czech Republic has a different relationship with firearms. One of the first changes to the legislation after the fall of communism and the separation of Czechoslovakia was to grant the right to bear arms. This is a right which was included in the Constitution of the Czech Republic, as firearms have a historical meaning to them. Even today this country is considered the *Texas of Europe* where concealed carry was permitted.
[8] The Czech Republic was supported by Hungary and Republic of Poland.

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UNRECOGNIZED STATES AS A CHALLENGE TO INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract: *The article deals with the issues of unrecognized states that function in the international environment. These are states that have declared independence but have not been recognized by other states. The article refers to terminological issues related to unrecognized states and the features that characterize them. The main aim of the article is to present states that are not recognized as a challenge to international security. This has been done on several examples. Moreover, scenarios for the development of the future of unrecognized states are analyzed.*

Keywords: *state; quasi-states; challenge; threat; security.*

Introduction

Around the world there are countries and states that have declared independence but are not recognized by other countries. These political entities are referred by various names: "de facto states", "unrecognized states", "para-states", "pseudo-states" and "quasi-states". Since their existence is not backed by international recognition, they must be sustained by something else. The content of the article, which is based on the analysis of the literature on the subject and statistical reports, proves that the tendency of these countries is weak economy and weak state structures. It seems that the main reasons why these states have not collapsed is that their governments have managed to build internal support from the local population. Also through propaganda and identity building directs to disproportionately large part of their meagre resources to the military and defense, and also enjoy the support of a strong patron. Research goal is defining the subjectivity of unrecognized states, their typology and considering wheather they are a threat to international security.

None of these circumstances, however, will ensure the existence of quasi-states unless they achieve international recognition or unite with their welfare state. However, this is unlikely in most cases - they will eventually be reabsorbed into the home state or agree to an autonomous status in the home state in a federal arrangement. The latter result is the preferred option of the international community. However, it can be accepted as an assumption, that unrecognized states pose a threat to local and international security and, on the other hand, they are a challenge for the international community, especially in the context of violations of human rights and the principles of statehood.

Unrecognized states in the literature

The concept of state is defined according to four main criteria. They are: territory, population and supreme power. The state has the power to decide and exercise of law in a given territory and is capable of establishing and maintaining relations with other countries. The legal definition of this term is taken from the Convention on the Rights and Duties of States signed in Montevideo on December 26, 1993. A state as a subject of international law should have the following elements: a permanent population, sovereign power, a defined territory separated from others by a border, and the ability to enter into international relations (Ker-Lindsay & Berg, 2018). The above factors are necessary to talk about a state, as they are included in most definitions from the literature on the subject. In the Dictionary of the Polish Language, this concept is explained as "a politically organized community inhabiting a specific territory, having its own government and its own laws" (Sobol, 1996).

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Unrecognized states is a term used for several political entities of the world that, despite having no (or minimal) international recognition, are de facto independent states. According to P. Kolsto, a political entity should meet three criteria in order to be classified as an unrecognized country. First, its authorities must control (most of) the territory they claim. Secondly, they had to strive, but unsuccessfully, for international recognition as a state. Third, there must be existence of minimum two years (Kolsto, 2006). In turn, M. Rywkin writes about quasi-states, defining them as units that have separated from existing states and function like real mini-states, starting from administering their territory and ensuring public order within it, to maintaining schools, health care, and their own military forces or international relations. However, they are not officially recognized as states by the United Nations or by more than one state (Rywkin, 2006).

The practice of state recognition emerged in the late 18th century with the recognition of the independence of the United States by some other states. Later, this principle expanded to culminate in the recognition of the independence of former colonies. According to the principle prevailing in international law, the recognition of a state in the international arena is not a prerequisite for its creation. In practice, however, the situation is different: states that are not internationally recognized are not considered independent. However, this does not change the fact that such states function, have their own territories, populations and governments exercising sovereign control over them. There are many separatist areas that have declared independence in the world, but only a few of them can be classified as de facto independent states. They will not be regions that have proclaimed independence, but are still under the actual authority of the country to which they belonged. Separatist areas, where fighting is still going on and the situation may be constantly changing, are also not states – an example is Chechnya, which is currently largely subordinated to Russia.

Currently, eight states can be considered as de facto independent, whose independence, announced at least a dozen or so years ago, has already taken hold or has been recognized by at least one internationally recognized state, and their governments exercise power without hindrance in a territory with a relatively defined borders and permanent population, that is: Kosovo, Abkhazia, Somaliland, Taiwan, Northern Cyprus, Transnistria, South Ossetia, Palestine (Kubiak, 2005).

There are some territories that have a somewhat similar character to unrecognized countries of undetermined status. These are territories that demand recognition of independence and whose aspirations are taken seriously in the international arena. However, the complexities of the world of international politics mean that so far these countries are actually under the power of neighboring countries, and their final status, i.e. granting independence or remaining in some form of connection with the state currently administering this territory, is to be resolved in an unspecified future.

The typology of unrecognized states distinguishes three basic types of entities (Sobczyński, 2006):
- countries partially recognized on the international arena (Abkhazia, Northern Cyprus, Kosovo, South Ossetia, Republic of China);
- countries unrecognized in the international arena, de facto controlling their territory (Nagorno-Karbakh, Transnistria, Somaliland, Islamic State);
- territories with undetermined status (Palestine, Western Sahara).

The quasi-state phenomenon includes three elements: territory, population and power. The population in unrecognized countries generally supports their quasi-state, and the motivation can be positive or negative. Firstly, it is treated as its own state, giving the possibility of self-determination, development of its own nation, its culture etc. Secondly, it is perceived as a guarantee of better socio-economic conditions and the rule of law compared to the mother country, as a guarantee of protection against anarchy or against a central government that a group of people believe discriminates against or threatens their identity or even their physical existence. In addition, there is no requirement for a minimum population of a state, therefore such a condition should not be imposed on a quasi-state (Antonowicz, 1988). Similarly, there is no requirement as to the minimum size of a country, and thus also unrecognized countries. Similarly, its area may

change, and the boundaries do not have to be precisely defined. Power is also an inseparable element of the group of described geopolitical units.

Another feature of unrecognized states is material sovereignty, which means that they actually exercise exclusive, full and independent power on their territory, and are actually independent in international relations – if they establish any – from other states and entities. The attribute of material sovereignty should therefore be accepted as a prerequisite for including a given geopolitical unit in the group of unrecognized states. However, it is not required to rule over its entire territory - it does not need to control all of the territory it claims.

It can therefore be concluded that an unrecognized state is a geopolitical entity which, first of all, is materially sovereign, thus actually exercising exclusive, full and independent power on its territory, and is actually independent of other states and entities in international relations. Secondly, it is not sovereign in a formal dimension, and therefore, in the light of international law, it is subject to a state, constituting its integral part, which it does not recognize. Thirdly, it performs, at least to a narrow extent, the basic functions of the state (Kosienkowski, 2008). Unrecognized states are geopolitical units that do not have the attribute of formal sovereignty, which means that in the light of international law they are subject to a state, constituting its integral part. Such states are therefore not formally recognized as sovereign by the international community.

Unrecognized states as a challenge and threat

Assuming that all currently existing unrecognized states and secessions from uncontrolled territories to states with limited recognition are *de facto* not subject to the norms of international and national law (central or unrecognized local), they all potentially pose a threat to international, regional and local security at varying degrees.

First of all, it is necessary to determine the sources of threats resulting from actual secessions, the existence of unrecognized states. A. Rabasa proposes 4 indicators of uncontrollability:

1. The level of *interdependence of government and society*, which is determined by the availability and effectiveness of major state institutions such as the social security system, public health, law enforcement, judiciary, etc. (these institutions are ineffective when they come under the control of tribal, criminal, or military groups partisan);
2. The level of *government monopoly on the use of force*, which is estimated on the basis of the effectiveness of state coercion in specific territories;
3. Level of *government border control* as most unrecognized countries are located in border regions;
4. Level of *external interference* by other states (Rabasa, 2007).

Thus, the lower these indicators are among the central authorities, the greater the chance of unrecognized territories appearing and the less possible the control and mitigation of threats. Despite the fact that A. Rabasa singled out these factors concerning central authorities, it is also acceptable to use them inversely in relation to the self-control capacity of local authorities as a factual situation. Therefore, the higher these indicators among local authorities, the more stable and less dangerous the parastatal formation. This dependence seems to be more correct and significant than the original one, which does not take into account the durability of the de facto state in the case of low indicators of statehood. For example, in relations between Somalia and Somaliland, both countries control their territory poorly and ineffectively, and thus pose a threat at the local, regional and international level, while in relations between Moldova and Transnistria, the latter's indicators are low, therefore Transnistria is de facto a relatively minor threat to international and regional security.

The main threats coming from unrecognized countries are terrorism, economic crimes and criminal activities in general, e.g. piracy, violations of human rights and the principles of international law. De jure international non-recognition is a potential haven for terrorists. Terrorist activity can come both from local fighters for independence, ethnic rights, etc., and from outside groups that gain sympathy and shelter from the local population. For example, ethnic nationalism has historically provided the ground for terrorist activities (e.g. Kosovo-Serbian "Arkan Tigers",

Greek-Cypriot "EOKA", Kosovo-Albanian "Kosovo Liberation Army", Turkish-Cypriot "Kosovo Liberation Army", "Turkish Resistance", etc.).

The sources of internal terrorism do not exclude links with external terrorist organizations providing solidarity, finance, weapons, etc. (Basque ETA and Al-Qaeda, Chechen terrorist groups). There are also numerous examples of links between unrecognized countries and terrorists. Another example, but not officially proven, is the use of commercial banks in Northern Cyprus to finance Chechen terrorist groups, as these banks are not controlled at the international level. Even a small possibility of being linked to terrorist activity is not unreasonable due to the fact that it is not subject to international law.

Moreover, when central or local self-appointed authorities are ineffective in managing the state or unable to help the population in certain critical situations, terrorist groups can take advantage of the situation, abuse their power and provide assistance in return for future sympathy, favor or even direct involvement (for example, the Islamist group "Lashkar-e-Taiba" carried out humanitarian work in Kashmir after the 2005 earthquake).

The RAND Corporation experts distinguished 4 indicators favoring the presence of terrorists in unrecognized countries (Rabasa, 2007):
1. Availability of infrastructure needed for terrorist activities with unsupervised access (transportation, uncontrolled financial flows, etc.);
2. Availability of sources of income;
3. The possibility to escape with simultaneous observation, which is easy when the territory is outside the national or at least international legal framework;
4. Favorable attitude resulting from the cultural and social conditions of the local population (such as traditions of hospitality and not expelling a guest to the enemy).

In terms of criminal activity, internationally unrecognized state can also serve as a haven for criminals, and kidnappers, drug traffickers and human traffickers themselves can be organizers and leaders of secessionist territories (as is the case in Bolivia, Venezuela, Colombia, etc.). In addition, criminal activity can be a source of income for self-appointed authorities.

Also, local people may consider economic crime as a source of income when the economic system does not provide employment. Kosovo is an ideal example in this context. This area is located in the center of the so-called the "golden crescent" connecting Afghanistan and Pakistan with the European drug market, and the village of Veliki Trnovac is one of the largest drug trafficking centers in Europe. It is well known that drug trafficking is closely linked to criminal and terrorist organizations (Kemp & Amerhauser & Scaturro, 2021). Tax evasion, money laundering and the use of banking services that go beyond the operation of international law are also side effects of the existence of unrecognized countries where the inhabitants of the grey zone can operate.

There are several reasons why quasi-states do not develop their economies well. One aspect is war damage. Secession is usually effected through a civil war fought mainly or entirely in the territory of a quasi-state. The length and ferocity of these conflicts varied, but results in the destruction of entire villages and even towns. Another reason is what Pegg calls "the economic cost of non-recognition." Foreign companies are afraid to invest in a quasi-state because legal agreements there may not be binding at the international level. Investors may also be concerned about offending the home country so as not to lose opportunities to trade with its usually larger market (Pegg, 1998).

The status of a non-recognised state hinders normal, legal trade with the outside world, thus encouraging illegal business. Virtually all quasi-states have a large grey economy, often with close ties to the top state leaders. Local officials and authorities profit from this business through bribes, but the quasi-state as such does not profit from it. The "income" collected in this way goes to private pockets, not to the state treasury. While this phenomenon is obviously present in other countries, including some in the Western world, certain circumstances tend to exacerbate the problem in unrecognized countries. One of them is the civil war, which in most cases precedes the formation of a quasi-state. During the war, not only buildings are destroyed, but also administrative and state structures, and illegal activities are easily uncontrollable. While wars, conflicts and emergencies are devastating events to most countries, they create a breeding ground for criminal

activity and illicit economic activity, which proves particularly effective in the absence of order. Those who benefit from such measures see little reason to support the restoration of state of law effective public scrutiny.

If the experience of war were the only problem, it can be assumed that criminal activity would gradually disappear in times of peace, but certain characteristics of the quasi-state favor the criminalization of the economy, regardless of the war factor. As these countries are not recognised, international conventions cannot be applied and effective monitoring by international organizations is not possible. The resulting lack of transparency in these countries is extremely attractive to criminal organizations and other dubious companies. As de Waal argues regarding the quasi-state he studied, "Nagorno-Karabakh remained internationally as outlawed as Chechnya. None of its laws or institutions were valid outside its borders, and no foreign diplomats appeared there, except peace negotiators. It was practically an invitation to become a rogue state" (Wall, 2003).

Another threat is piracy, which occurs in unrecognized countries as a result of economic collapse and unemployment, and as a result of inaction and inefficiency of border guards. Pirates usually rely on the support of self-proclaimed authorities (e.g. Puntland leaders provide support to Somali pirates). No one is able to ensure respect for human rights in para-states, and the activities of humanitarian organizations are carried out in a constantly risky environment. Moreover, counter-terrorism and punitive efforts to re-establish state control or consolidate local government may lead to mass civilian deaths and humanitarian disasters (Antonova, 2021).

Non-recognised countries are also at risk of ethnic and religious discrimination against minorities (for example, Kosovo authorities ignoring the rights and violations of workers from minorities) which can further lead to acts of provocation and violence, as well as disappearances, trafficking human beings, human organs and even genocide due to the low level of personal protection. Violation of the rights of minorities also occurs in the case of a unilateral declaration of independence without taking their interests into account, as was the case in Kosovo in 2008 (Żmuda, 2010).

The emergence of unrecognized states is a serious challenge for international law. It is well known that internal contradictions exist in international law, such as conflicts between the principles of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination. Cases of unilateral declarations of independence add to instability because it is a balance between these two principles that sets precedents and triggers incentives for other separatist regions. Contemporary international law is becoming more and more fragile as the world changes rapidly and the existing rules no longer satisfy the environment, revealing more and more gaps in the system, such as the lack of special institutions and criteria for recognizing statehood.

Survival of the quasi-state – the persistence of threat to security

Most of the unrecognized states lack international recognition and strong state structures, but they exist nonetheless. Several factors can be identified that contribute to the survival of quasi-states: *symbolic nation-building; the militarization of society; weakness of the home state; support from an external patron; and a lack of commitment from the international community.*

A distinction can be made between state-building and nation-building. Statehood concerns the institutional, economic and military foundations, the "hard" aspects of state-building. Nation-building, on the other hand, concerns the "soft" aspects of state consolidation, such as shaping a common national identity among residents through symbols, history, and cultivating traditions and national customs. Nationality and national identity are not inherent in a state's population, but are developed and maintained through nation-building.

Most countries in today's world treat themselves as nation states. Rightly or wrongly, state leaders invariably claim to represent their "people." In a similar way, the leaders of the quasi-states speak on behalf of the Ossetian people, the people of Somalia, the people of Transnistria, and so on. Like other states, they strive hard to cultivate a sense of common identity among the inhabitants of the territory they control. Through nation-building, quasi-state leaders seek support from within, from the local population, to create or maintain their internal sovereignty. Usually, successful

nation integration is largely dependent on successful state building. Through nation-building, the state authorities want to achieve the attachment of the population to this particular state through identification with it. A country that cannot provide the basic services at the level expected will have a much harder time winning the loyalty of its people than a country that can. However, even in the absence of effective state-building, most quasi-states have had fairly good success in their nation-building efforts. The population of most quasi-states share a high degree of shared national identity (Ramasubramanyam, 2021).

However, "soft power" in the form of internal support of the population is not enough to ensure the continued existence of quasi-states. Quasi-states were created by military means and must be maintained in a similar manner. As political entities that are not protected by the international system of mutual recognition, they are thrown back into the "Hobbesian jungle" (Hobbes, 2005) and have to rely on brute force more than other states to survive. However, their armed forces do not have to be very large. King (King, 2001) estimated the armed forces of the quasi-states of the former Soviet Union in Nagorno-Karabakh to be between 15,000 and 20,000; 2000 in South Ossetia; and 5,000 in Abkhazia. Compared to the size of the armies of other countries, this is not a large number, but compared to the size of the entire population of the belonging quasi-states, it is significant. For quasi-states, the need for a strong military capability means that they must devote a disproportionately large share of state resources to national defense. This leaves less resources for civilian purposes and contributes to poor development of social services, educational facilities and infrastructure.

Military strength and weakness are, of course, relative measures. It suffice that the quasi-state is strong enough to keep away the parent state from which it has seceded. Indeed, the home state of most quasi-states is a weak state, politically, institutionally, and militarily. Georgia, Azerbaijan and Moldova were not only economically and politically weak in the first years after regaining independence, but also torn apart by severe internal conflicts. Moldovans were deeply divided over reunification with Romania, and Azerbaijan went through several coups and regime changes before Geidar Aliev managed to bring himself, and later his son, to power. Georgia fared the worst as the country plunged into a civil war in 1992 with Georgians confronting Georgians, a war that ran partly in parallel with military campaigns against the separatists. In the early to mid-1990s, Georgia clearly fell into the "failed states" category (Nodia, 2002).

The largest mother country, Russia, was clearly in a much better position to defend its territory, although the economic transformation has also hit the country hard. Russia took over the Soviet central administration and almost all of the former Soviet Armed Forces and their equipment. Nevetherless, even Russia has not been able to achieve complete control over all parts of its separatist region, Chechnya. As long as the mother country is plunged into political chaos and economic collapse, not only can it not start a new war to regain lost territory, but it will also not attract the population from the detached region. Even those quasi-state citizens who are deeply dissatisfied with their self-proclaimed leaders have no reason to wish to reunite with a disappointing home state.

However, not all home countries are as weak as those described above. Some quasi-states have to defend themselves against states with a well-functioning state apparatus, a solid economy and good defense capabilities (e.g. Republic of China – Taiwan vs. PRC). Most quasi-states, even those that struggle with weak home states, are therefore dependent on the support of an external patron. It can be said that such a patron plays the same role as the international community towards failed states. In such cases, the role of the international community as the guarantor of the survival of weak states has been "privatized" in a way.

With a powerful patron, the quasi-state has a stronger position in the international arena, which is able to deters a potential military aggression. Taiwan is a strong country not only economically but also militarily, despite its small geographical area. Like most other quasi-states, Taiwan was founded when the mother state, the People's Republic of China, was weak, torn apart by a prolonged civil war. Today, however, China is a powerhouse and could annex Taiwan if not for Taiwan's external patron, the United States. The Republic of Dniester, Ossetia and Abkhazia enjoy Russia's support, while Northern Cyprus has another powerful patron, Turkey. In post-Soviet matters, this patronage is

unofficial: Russia has not recognized any of its quasi-states, but without the participation of the Russian 14th Army in the 1992 Moldovan civil war, the Transnistrian unrecognized state would most likely have disappeared from map. The Russian military also played a key role in the wars in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In the case of Northern Cyprus, patronage was quite open and explicit: Turkey was the only country in the world to officially recognize its Cypriot republic, and also provides it with most of its defense military capabilities.

International organizations such as the UN, OSCE and NATO have played a key role several times in conflicts between quasi-states and their home states. The refusal of quasi-states to enter the international state system has thwarted their aspirations to achieve "true" statehood (e.g. Somaliland and NATO's Operation Ocean Shield). At the same time, such organizations in several cases acted as a collective external patron of the quasi-state. Eventually, they engaged in negotiations and peacekeeping missions in quasi-state conflicts (e.g. the UN intervention and peacekeeping mission in Cyprus - UNFICYP). While the international community is clearly in favor of peaceful, negotiated solutions to these conflicts, it seems reasonable to say that its involvement in most cases has had quite the opposite effect and inadvertently contributed to the prolonged existence of quasi-states (e.g. the United Nations Mission for the Sahara Referendum Western - MINURSO).

Two instances where international organizations have acted as external patrons of a quasi-state are Kosovo and the Kurdish-controlled territories in northern Iraq between 1991 Gulf War and 2003 Iraq War. The degree of active involvement in these cases varies. In northern Iraq, it was about denying the mother country the opportunity to regain control of the area, leaving administration in the hands of the local population. In Kosovo, the UN and NATO, through UNMIK and KFOR, have virtually taken over military defense as well as direct oversight of the civil administration. Kosovo today is, practically speaking, an "international protectorate" (Buzard & Graham & Horne, 2017).

Moreover, international organizations are involved in quasi-state conflicts, offering their services as mediators and arbitrators at the negotiating table. Typical cases are the OSCE sponsored negotiations, the so-called "Minsk process" to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and UN-led negotiations regarding Cyprus. Sometimes such negotiating efforts were accompanied by the deployment of peacekeepers. The problem with international involvement in quasi-state conflicts is indecision and inconsistency. The lack of determination in these efforts clearly reflects the low priority these conflicts have for Western states. This allowed regional actors, more interested in the conflict, to intervene in this process and pursue their own agendas. This was the case, for example, when Russia – a member of the Minsk group – launched its own parallel initiative in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in 1994, took over the negotiations and imposed a permanent ceasefire – but not peace – on its own terms (Baev, 1998).

Instead of resolving conflicts, negotiations freeze them and perpetuate the status quo. In this way they contribute to the prolonged existence of quasi-states. The same can be said for most peacekeeping missions. The party most willing to resume hostilities in these conflicts is the home state, which wants to regain lost territory. An unrecognized state is content to have territory under its control. For these reasons, international peacekeepers deployed between warring parties act as additional border guard units for the quasi-state behind which it can pursue its nation-building and other activities (Kolsto, 2006).

CONCLUSION

The fact that unrecognized states are not formally sovereign has negative consequences for their functioning and existence. Threats to their functioning for the international security system may be external or internal. Firstly, unrecognized states are protected by international law only to a limited extent compared to states, so they are not subject, for example, to the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs or the prohibition of using or threatening to use force against them, and their continued existence is not guaranteed. In addition, they meet with a rather negative reaction from the international community – for example, by imposing economic sanctions -

because, in its opinion, they destabilize international order and security, as they violate the principles of territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of existing states. Secondly, the lack of international recognition is the cause of economic problems for unrecognized states, threatening them with collapse and, as a result, their definitive disappearance from the world map. The unspecified legal status of these units prevents or limits their benefits granted by participation, in international organizations, regional and bilateral initiatives or receiving international aid.

The problem of these specific geopolitical units is noteworthy, if only due to the fact that they often constitute a source of threats to international security, as they are in a state of conflict with their home state, and the norms of international law apply in their area to a limited extent. At the same time, most of the identified unrecognized states – more precisely Transnistria, Northern Cyprus, Kosovo, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh – function in the European space.

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THREE GEOPOLITICAL SCENARIOS WITH GLOBAL IMPACT

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Abstract: *Although it seems chaotic, the international environment is shaped by predictable forces, nurtured by interest and lust for power and domination. However, sometimes, as Nassim Nicholas Taleb pointed out, "black swans" can happen, meaning events that come as a total surprise and have a major effect. This article refers to three predictable geopolitical developments with significant impact on the global power competition, namely: the re-election of Donald J. Trump as US President; Chinese global financial initiative, including a new Asian bloc currency and a new gold/currency benchmark; and the extension of the asymmetric war between Israel and HAMAS. Three foreseeable geopolitical dynamics, which can however be influenced by chance ("black swans"). The study is linear, starting with the hypotheses, continuing with data collection, data analysis and synthesis and ending with conclusions. The research methods belong to geopolitics and combine data analysis and synthesis with inductive-deductive and ambispective methods. The data used are exclusively from open sources and include official documents, literature and journalistic sources.*

Keywords: *Donald J. Trump; China; BRICS; de-dollarization; Israel – HAMAS war; "Arab autumn".*

This article provides an analytical perspective on three potential geopolitical developments that could unfold in the near future. Each of the three scenarios has a medium probability and can have a significant impact, generating reconfigurations of the regional and global geopolitical game. The study design is linear, starting with the formulation of working hypotheses, continuing with data collection, data analysis and synthesis and ending with the formulation of conclusions. The research methods used belong to geopolitics and combine data analysis and synthesis with inductive-deductive and ambispective methods. The data used are exclusively from open sources and include official documents, literature and journalistic sources.

1. Donald Trump's victory in the November 2024 presidential election

Barring any unforeseen events, Donald J. Trump, former USA President, will most likely be the Republican Party's nominee in the November 2024 US presidential election. According to American polling companies, he is credited with a chance of winning against his Democratic challenger, the incumbent President, Joe R. Biden [„FiveThirtyEight", 23.05.2024]. President Trump's re-election to the highest office in the US executive is viewed with concern by some analysts, who anticipate sudden and drastic changes to US policies on trade, energy, immigration, climate change and foreign partnerships.

❖ **Trade**

According to campaign claims, once in office, Mr. Trump will impose a 10% general import tariff, which will increase stock market tensions and trade costs, including for European goods. His administration will also block negotiations on a new *US-Mexico-Canada Agreement* (USMCA), the geo-economic format that replaced the *North America Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA). A new Trump administration will exit or renegotiate the US presence in the *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity*, the multilateral framework for regional economic cooperation launched by the Biden administration. New trade and investment restrictions are expected in the relationship with China, to discourage outsourcing of manufacturing and to stimulate industrial relocation, especially to Middle Belt states. In other words, the incoming Trump administration will return to protectionist, sovereigntist, *America First* trade policies, which could create some disruptions in the global trading system. Unilateralist, neo-mercantilist policies that encourage exports, discourage imports, control the capital flow, and centralize currency to increase the foreign exchange reserves held by the government.

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❖ **Energy and climate change**

Today, energy policies are inextricably linked to climate change discourse. The decisions of the former Trump administration to transform the US into a global energy superpower are already well known. In this regard, it is expected that the energy policies of the (potential) next administration will continue in the same neo-mercantilist and unilateralist register, with an emphasis on the exploitation and commercialization of fossil fuels, including the so-called "shale revolution" that has turned the US into a net energy exporter. In this sense, we can expect the lowering oil prices policies, in parallel with a decrease in government support for "green" industries (whose projects exceed $ 1 trillion) [Volcovici V., 17.05.2024]. Policies explained by at least two arguments:

- fossil fuels ensure a secure and predictable energy production;
- "green" industries rely on strategic minerals such as lithium, cobalt, gallium, germanium, indium, graphite, essential minerals in the production of batteries and solar panels.

China is the world's third largest producer of lithium [Pistili M., 2024], the mineral used in lithium-ion batteries, and produces more than 75% of the world's refined cobalt. The Chinese market is the world's largest consumer of cobalt, with more than 80% of its consumption used in the rechargeable battery industry [Distribution of refined cobalt]. China also produces 96% of the primary gallium used globally, including in battery manufacturing [Distribution of gallium production], and over 90% of the global production of germanium, a mineral used in solar panels, which China has been stockpiling since 2017 [U.S. Geological Survey, Jan. 2018]. China produces over 60% of the global indium used in batteries, solar panels and control rods for nuclear reactors (Indium-115) [Leading countries] and over 77% of non-metallic graphite, the essential mineral in lithium-ion and zinc-carbon batteries [Distribution of graphite production]. Last but not least, China monopolizes the global production of rare earths [Distribution of rare earths] and their finished products: permanent magnets (neodymium-iron-bromine, samarium-cobalt) and nuclear batteries (promethium). Magnets based on terbium, gadolinium, neodymium, dysprosium are fundamental components in the production of wind turbine generators. In other words, by developing "green" industries, the US is becoming dependent on Chinese strategic minerals, and the West is replacing dependence on Russian hydrocarbons with dependence on Chinese strategic minerals. Problematic issues in the context of the bipolar Sino-American hegemonic competition, a competition that will largely shape American geopolitical behavior under a new Trump administration.

On the other hand, in the EU, decarbonisation policies are an imperative of the European Commission. To this end, generous incentives have been launched for companies to invest in clean energy and "green" technologies. These technologies are based on components and sub-assemblies manufactured outside Europe, in particular in China (world leader in "green" technology production), the USA, Taiwan and South Korea. As hegemonic competition between the US and China intensifies, especially in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and tensions around Taiwan, the Americans are likely to ask the Europeans to limit imports of sub-assemblies from China or to introduce tariffs and anti-dumping.

China could retaliate, as it has already done [Baskaran G., 08.01.2024], by blocking exports of strategic minerals, especially REM and graphite, gallium and germanium (essential in semiconductor production) [He L., 22.09.2023], increasing the costs of decarbonisation. In these conditions, which overlap the sanctions on hydrocarbon and mineral imports from Russia, we are likely to see a European return to carbon-based technologies and limited support for financing the energy transition of emerging markets.

❖ **Illegal cross-border migration**

On illegal cross-border migration, the Trump administration's policies aimed at limiting and penalizing the phenomenon, including by building a wall to increase the capacity of controlling the border.

Also, the Trump administration embraced the *Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy* (RAISE) Act in August 2017. The RAISE Act seeks to reduce levels of legal

immigration to the United States by halving the number of green cards issued. These policies are expected to continue and even tighten. In this regard, in an interview with "Time" newspaper, Donald Trump said his future administration will deport between 15 million and 20 million people that are undocumented in the USA [Wolf Z.B., 01.05.2024].

❖ **US political and strategic partnerships**

But the most significant transformations are expected in the field of US political and strategic partnerships. In this regard, there are several "hot files", starting with financial and military support for Ukraine; the Russian-American relationship and the Sino-American relationship; and continuing with the War between Israel and Hamas; the American influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America; the US relationship with India, Turkey, Pakistan and the Arab states; the situation in the Korean Peninsula and the alliances in the Indo-Pacific zone; and especially with the bilateral relationship with European partners and the future of NATO. At first glance, there is a general increase in volatility in US foreign policy. On closer examination, the risk of this volatility is somehow reduced.

Why do we say this? For the simple fact that the 2024 world and the geopolitical game are not the same as the 2016 ones. The room for maneuver on the US-China-Russia trilateral has been limited and we are witnessing a bipolar reconfiguration of the international system, with a uni-multipolar bloc led by China, and a Western bloc led by the US. It is, therefore, quite unlikely that a future Trump administration will dramatically shift the center of gravity of the geopolitical game. "*Make America Great Again*" (Mr. Trump's campaign slogan) reaffirms America's global hegemonic role. A hegemony that cannot be achieved through a 19th century isolationism, when America was nothing but a former British colony in search of identity. So, it is hard to believe that there will be tectonic shifts in America's alliances and partnerships with the World. Moreover, the Trump administration may be more intransigent with Russian-Chinese interference in its sphere of influence in Europe, South America, South Asia or Africa. But that doesn't mean there won't be different approaches regarding "hot" issues such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza or the trade relations with China, Japan and European partners.

After claiming a year ago that he would immediately resolve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by forcing peace, Mr. Trump recently declared that "*Ukraine's survival is important to the US*" [„Reuters", 18.04.2024]. Then, during the June 2024 debate with President Joe R. Biden, former President Donald J. Trump reaffirmed that he will end the Russia-Ukraine war in one day. A significant alternation in attitude, mirroring the new international *status quo* and the need for *a way-out from the Russia-Ukraine war of the future administration*. As a result, the potential Trump administration might continue, for a while, to support Ukraine's war effort, widening, in exchange, the negotiating leeway for a ceasefire or a negotiated peace.

He also said that Europe, which should be the most interested in Ukraine's survival, should equally share with the US the economic burden of the war: "*as everyone agrees, Ukrainian Survival and Strength should be much more important to Europe than to us, but it is also important to us! GET MOVING EUROPE!*" [Ibid.]. A statement that heralds a re-tensioning of the relations with the Europeans. Especially in the context of French policies regarding Europe's strategic decoupling from the US and the assumption of a "strategic compass" favoring European military industries over the American ones. This tension is amplified by the already well-known European financial contributions to the NATO budget dispute. Contributions that might rise up to 3% of the GDP. This new quota has been unofficially reported as having been proposed by the Polish President, Andzrej Duda, during a recent meeting with Mr. Trump [Ibid.]. How real it is, we shall see. The re-tensioning of the relationship with the Europeans, might impact NATO cohesion, though logically such an event cannot come up. In a negative scenario, NATO might suffer a "reshaping", somehow similar to the Europe of multiple speeds. We might be confronted with a multiple speed NATO, with a "hard core" of total partners and a "soft core" of "rebels" like Turkyie, France or Hungary.

In any case, as during the 2016-2020 term, a future Trump administration will support US military institutions, will increase the defense budget, will support research projects in unconventional areas and, perhaps, will halt denuclearization policies by reducing the nuclear military arsenal.

In the Gaza War, the incoming Trump administration is unlikely to unconditionally support the Netanyahu government. Moreover, a temporizing of the American political, economic and military support for the Jerusalem government might happen. Being logistically and economically connected to the War in Ukraine, the Gaza War is scattering America's resources. On the other hand, an American offensive against the Muslim Brotherhood might start, due to its close ties with Iran, Russian Federation and China, and its efforts to push the Islamic zone towards the multipolar bloc. This offensive involves strengthening ties with Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the UAE, Oman, Egypt and India (the Asian bridgehead that can counterweight China's global hegemonic ambitions), as well as reconfiguring partnerships with Turkey and Qatar. This is why it is hard to believe that a future Trump administration will unconditionally support Netanyahu government in its decisions regarding the Palestinian population (and the territories) in Israel.

Therefore, the potential return of the Republican Trump administration will change the global game but not in the drastic way predicted by some analysts. We will see a return of neo-mercantilism and unilateralism in US trade policies, a relaxation of "green" energy policies, a tightening of the cross-border migration policies, and an American hegemonic repositioning in the context of the bipolarity.

2. China's launch of the global financial initiative, including a new Asian bloc currency and a new gold/currency benchmark

On March 28, 2015, the Chinese government published the document entitled *Vision and actions on jointly building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road*, known to the general public as the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). In essence, the BRI represented the first affirmation of China's hegemonic aims over the landmass of the Eastern Hemisphere and the Global South. Conceived as a geo-economic mega-project, BRI directs Chinese economic and political presence across four continents - Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, and four oceans - the Pacific, Indian, Atlantic and Arctic. A gigantic masterplan based on state corporatism, derived from the well-known "*one country, two systems*" strategy of Deng XiaoPing (1904-1997), which made China the main beneficiary of globalization.

In 2023, Beijing published two other initiatives aimed at strengthening the *c*alongside the BRI. Both were announced on April 21, 2022, by Chinese leader XI Jinping (b.1953), at the *Boao Forum for Asia* (Asia's Davos, the Asian equivalent of the World Economic Forum). The first one, the *Global Security Initiative* (GSI), is a new collective security format for the BIS states. An institutional format designed to secure the BRI's strategic corridors and, with them, China's position as hegemon. The second one, the *Global Civilizational Initiative* (GCI), is a gigantic investment plan in the *'third world'*'s infrastructure, a kind of BRI in the Global South [Global Civilization Initiative, 19 March 2023]. The Chinese Civilizational Initiative will be implemented "*respecting the diversity of civilizations, advocating the common values of humanity, valuing the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation*" [Ibid.]. These hard-power hegemonic masterplans for the Global South are complemented by a series of other initiatives aiming at strengthening the Chinese dome, namely: *BRI International Green Development Coalition*; *Silk Road e-commerce cooperation*; *the annual Global Digital Trade Expo*; *the Belt and Road Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan and Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Initiative*; *the Chinese government scholarship "Silk Road Program"*; and *the Liangzhu Forum*, that comprises *the Silk Road International League of Theaters*, *the Network of Silk Road Arts Festivals*, *the International Alliance of Museums of the Silk Road*, *the Silk Road International Alliance of Art Museums and Galleries*, *the Silk Road International Library Alliance* and *the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities*. A smart-power strategy that aims at creating a future Beijing-led socialist global governance, a Chinese alternative to the Western "*rules-based international order*" [R. Evan Ellis, 01.06.2023]. Hegemonic desires complemented by China's efforts to coagulate a 'multipolar bloc' around the two institutional mechanisms it leads: the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

These strategic plans are added to the policy of de-dollarization of transactions within the uni-multipolar bloc, replacing the US dollar as the main currency of deposit, transaction and reference in bilateral trade transactions. This policy, explicitly included in the financial mechanism of the BRI, aims at replacing the Bretton Woods system - America's instrument of financial power, in the uni-multipolar bloc. Consequently, it is only a matter of time before China's next hegemonic initiative, aimed at a new financial system, a new currency or monetary unit, a new gold or silver-based standard system. A return to the financial *status quo* of the Cold War era, when the states of the *Council for Mutual Economic Assistance* traded in transferable rubles, the scriptural monetary unit based on the Soviet ruble, a kind of cryptocurrency *avant la lettre*.

What will be the geopolitical impact of such an event? Given China's dependence on Western markets, it's hard to believe that a total decoupling of the uni-multipolar bloc's financial system from the Bretton Woods system will follow. But, there will be implications for the US Treasury Department's ability to continue to monitor the SWIFT financial transfer network and to impose effective sanctions on foreign entities and individuals, as recently happened with Russian Federation assets after the invasion of Ukraine. In other words, it will affirm the sovereignty of the uni-multipolar bloc in relation to the US and will enshrine the bipolarity of the international system. A measure designed to protect the vital interests of the main players in the uni-multipolar bloc:

- *the Chinese corporate state*, interested in protecting its economic advantages against the risk of de-globalization through a return to protectionism;
- *and the Russian expansionist state*, interested in protecting its economic and financial system against painful financial sanctions.

3. The Israel-Hamas war becomes a regional war[1]

The extension of the Israel-Hamas armed confrontation into a regional war may have a considerable impact, due to the "geostrategic status of Palestine/Israel as the center of gravity of the Eastern Hemisphere continental mass, where the reverberations of the crises spread concentrically, gradually engulfing neighboring spaces. In the present case, the crisis is mainly spreading across Europe, Transcaucasia, North and East Africa, West and South Asia". [Popescu, p.247]

Through Israel's overblown response, the current intifada has turned into a "civilizational aggregator that could trigger a conflict of global proportions. A potential conflict that, once escalated, will go far beyond Israel's borders. By engaging the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood global Islamist network alongside HAMAS and by anchoring the confrontation within the global geopolitical competition of strategic corridors, geopolitical blocs and related spheres of influence. A potential civilizational conflict built on an ideological mix between the 'Palestinian cause' and radical Islamism. A conflict that unites the secular and Islamist strata of Islamic societies and communities into an anti-Zionist and anti-Western bloc!" [Ibid., 248]

For months now, "*Free, free Palestine*" has been the slogan heard loud and clear in major Western capitals. Weekly marches and actions in support of the Palestinian cause orchestrated by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood have put pressure on Western governments. In the US, discontent over Israel's handling of the military crisis in Gaza has undermined the electoral base of the Democratic Party, known for its pro-Palestinian leanings, and has intensified criticism from anti-Zionist Jewish communities [Ibid., p.248]. Anti-Israel discourse has monopolized the public space, making forgotten the spark that reignited the conflict, namely the HAMAS attack on October 7, 2023. Moreover, the same discourse also omitted the stark reality that "the wars that led to the total abandonment of the 1947 UN plan to partition Palestine into two Semitic states were started and lost by the Arabs. And, as in any war in history, once conquered, the territories remain in the possession of the victorious one, if he has the power to defend them. And, for decades, Israel had that power.

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[1] This fragment is a summary of the analysis published in: Alba Iulia Catrinel Popescu, *Geopolitical and security analysis of the Middle East*, Military Publishing House, Bucharest, 2024, pp. 247-257. The book has not been translated into English.

Over this force-field, that engages the energies of two civilizational spaces – Islamic and Jewish, overlaps the geopolitical game of the two global competitive blocs, structured since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022. A game of strategic corridors and energy stakes, aimed at decoupling Europe from Russian gas and building alternative, secure transport routes. Which at the time of the HAMAS attack had recorded four successes for the Western bloc:

- The Israel-Lebanon maritime border agreement, which was very important for securing the planned Israel-Turkey undersea gas pipeline that would have turn Turkey into a Levantine gas pipeline hub;

- The agreement on a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Turkish President Erdogan, that should have taken place by the end of 2023. On that occasion, the bilateral agreement on the pipeline project to transport Israeli gas to European pipelines was supposed to be signed [Azriel, 29.08.2023];

- The new India-Middle East-Europe economic corridor thar was announced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the New Delhi G20 forum, in 2023. The corridor was supposed to take Saudi Arabia out of the uni-multipolar bloc and to bring it back into the Western bloc, and was supposed to be in direct competition with the masterplan for a North-South connectivity corridor among India - Iran - Azerbaijan - Russian Federation – Europe (INSTC);

- The negotiations for a peace agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, announced by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly on September 22, 2023 [„FRANCE 24", 22.09.2023], negotiations which automatically sacrificed the 'Palestinian cause'. [Popescu, pp.249-251]

Geopolitical challenges amplified by the geopolitical and security imperatives of the Russian Federation:

- to reduce the mass-media pressure and Western support capacity for Ukraine;

- to thwart Europe's chances of benefiting from the Levantine gas;

- to increase dissent among members of the Western bloc;

- to control the Islamist secessionist potential of the Muslim minorities compactly located in the south-western and southern border regions of the federation. [Ibid., p.251]

To achieve these objectives, Moscow has sacrificed her relations with Israel by inviting HAMAS leaders to talks. [Czerny, 31.10.2023]

Russian effort to draw the Islamic world is a joint decision with China, the hegemon of the Asian/multipolar bloc, that has imagological capitalized on the American request to intervene in support of easing tensions in the Levant [„France 24", 14.10.2023]. That request was the US recognition of China's regional hegemony and the signal of the returning to the East-West bipolarity. The returning to the Cold War paradigm of two power blocs, this time separated by an "iron arc" running through the middle of the Ponto-Baltic Isthmus and the Sahel corridor of recent Russian-orchestrated coups.

The Asian bloc also includes Iran, the Middle Eastern Shiite theocracy known for its aggressive rhetoric against Israel and its nuclear military program. Iran supports the Houthi militias and Hezbollah, the latter linked to HAMAS since the Popular Arab Islamic Congress times (sponsored by the Sudanese branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood) [Patterson, 2011, 157]. This takfirist connection between Hezbollah and HAMAS entails the danger of drawing Shia militants into the conflict against Israel on an independent track from Iran. In the event of a Western attack on Iran, it is possible that the Persian state and its allies will mechanically blockade (by sinking ships) the Straits of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb and seriously disrupt oil supplies to Asian (India, Japan, South Korea) and European consumers. Such an action would lead to an unprecedented rise in oil prices, which would hit the already weak economies of Europe and bring great financial benefits to the Russian Federation, strengthening its war potential vis-à-vis Ukraine. [Popescu, p.252]

On the other hand, Europeans and Americans - already facing overlapping crises (leadership, geopolitical, economic, social) generated by the SARS-COV II pandemic, the war in Ukraine and especially by the Marxist subversion of the Western capitalist scaffolding - will have

to manage the risks of a new wave of migration. A wave of migration that risks to burden the welfare budgets of Western countries and to swell the ranks of Islamists in the neighborhoods of the major metropolises, which have been turned into *no-go-zones* for "non-believers". Islamists controlled by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, who have been called to jihad by their "brothers" from HAMAS. [„Reuters", 11.10.2023]

To all these risks, another one is added – the fall of the secular Egyptian regime of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi under the impact of HAMAS-controlled refugee waves and the Islamist pressure from Sudan and Libya. Such a scenario would turn the Levantine Mediterranean into an area of radical Islamism and would open a new corridor of illegal migration to a Europe already oversaturated with Islamist migrants. An Islamist Egypt could lead to a possible heating of hotbeds of instability in Africa (Libya; East Africa - Al Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab; North and West Africa - Al Qa'ida in the Maghreb, Boko Haram), the Levant (Syria; Lebanon) and the Balkans (Kosovo), which could end up in new waves of illegal cross-border migration in Europe and elsewhere. The consequences could be disastrous and should be coupled with a potential rise in oil prices in the geo-economic context of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

A geo-economic context that brings Qatar to the fore. On the one hand, Qatar is an important sponsor of the HAMAS regime in Gaza [Mounier, 14.10.2023], and on the other it is the main supplier of gas to Europe in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. European dependence on Qatari hydrocarbons reduces the ability to respond and complicates the positioning of European chancelleries towards the two warring sides. [Popescu, pp. 252-255]

On NATO's eastern flank, Turkey, increasingly Islamist, de-Kemal-ised and more involved in the Hanabillah Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood through its leader, Recep Tayyp Erdogan, is increasingly signaling towards the Eastern bloc, becoming the catalyst for regional anti-Israeli [Gumrukcu & collab., 11.11.2023; Berman, 25.10.2023] and anti-Western energies. [Popescu, pp. 252-255]

And, last but not least, monarchies and political regimes that have signed peace or economic agreements with Israel. All these regimes could face existential risks of Islamist insurgency, coups, power-shifts and abdication if the inter-civilizational conflict spreads. The most vulnerable are the Saudi monarchy through Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince, intensely criticized by Saudi Wahhabis for the liberalism of his reforms [Karataş], and the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy, accused of breaking tradition and betraying the Palestinians [Markin, 17.05.2024]. Two of the most influential America's allies in the region. [Popescu, p.255]

Over the Ocean, the situation is equally complicated. The current Democratic administration must position itself among the geopolitical imperative of helping Israel, finding a solution for Ukraine, and preserving the electoral base of Islamist, anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian voters. An extremely difficult task, which heralds a fierce presidential contest this autumn, amplified by the Israeli problem, stuck between territorial partition and continued war. [Ibid., p.255]

This patchwork of geopolitical challenges overlaps the "aversion of the Islamic world to America's (the West's) interference in its internal affairs and, in particular, to its unconditional support for Israel, since the founding of the Jewish state until today. Aversion that could reach unprecedented proportions. All the more so because behind the anti-Western propaganda machine is the network of influencers and media offices financed by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood and anti-Zionists [Lax, 26.03.2024; Abrams, 07.11.2013]. This state of affairs, coupled with the rifts straining the Islamic world, will force the US's regional allies to distance themselves from the hegemon so as not to capitalize on the grievances of their co-religionists. Discontents which, amidst the general excitement, could trigger massive protests, anarchy, violence and their possible abdication/overthrow of power. In other words, it could trigger an "*Arab autumn*" directed, this time, against America's allies in the region! We can therefore say that the current crisis in the Levant is the "*litmus paper*" of the stability of the global status quo". [Popescu, p.256]

CONCLUSIONS

Any of the three scenarios has a medium probability. Any of the three scenarios expresses the *de facto* existence of bipolarity in the international system. A bipolarity that also includes civilizational aspects, in the spirit of the neo-Atlanticism anticipated by Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008) in his seminal work on the clash of civilizations. A bipolarity that unites non-Western civilizations into a uni-multipolar bloc led by China.

Of all the scenarios, the most powerful and far-reaching geopolitica impact, if it materializes, may be the expansion of the Israel-Hamas conflict, since through its mismanagement, Israel has become a civilizational aggregator of the Islamic world. The possible re-election of Mr. Donald Trump as US President is next, mainly because of the neomercantilism and economic unilateralism of his policies. And finally, China's hypothetical global financial initiative, which due to Beijing's economic interconnections with the Western zone, is unlikely to produce consistent structural changes in the global financial system.

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A LESSON IN MILITARY DOCTRINAL AND OPERATIONAL FAILURES: THE BATTLE OF HOSTOMEL AND THE RUSSIAN MILITARY'S FAILURE TO CAPTURE KYIV.

Oliver B. STEWARD; PhD*

Abstract: This paper will examine the underlying doctrinal and operational factors that led to the failure of the Russian military to capture Kyiv, and its subsequent military implications that led to its (re)assessment of military strategy. Firstly, this paper will examine the historical lead-up to the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, detailing the relative political and strategic factors that impacted upon President Putin's decision to launch the 'Special Military Operation'. Secondly, this paper will go into detail into the relative military and tactical landscape of Russia's attempt to capture Kyiv, in particular, its failure to seize Hostomel airport, thereby leading to strategic failure. Thirdly, this paper will contend that the failure to capture Hostomel was based in part on operational factors but also upon the inability of Russian military planners to fully predict the Ukrainian resolve, as well as the limitations found in its doctrinal approach to warfare.

Keywords: Battle of Hostomel; Russo-Ukrainian War; Putin; Leadership; Doctrines; operational warfare.

1. Core arguments of paper: The Kremlin's doctrinal limtations

Firstly, one must take a historical overview of the lead up to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine to understand the underlying factors that led up to the fateful decision of President Putin to launch military action. Following the 'Orange Revolution' in Ukraine, the then pro-Russian leader was ousted and left the country. These political changes in the aftermath of the revolution led to the annexation of Crimea by Putin, and the start of the 'frozen conflict' in the Donbas region, with a 'hybrid war' waged by Russia. This is an important point to make, as this demonstrates again how wider geopolitical factors impacted upon the timing in the context of a window of opportunity for Russian military intervention. However, it was not until the advent of President Zelensky's administration in 2021, who was considered to be of pro-Western, EU orientation, that the change in Ukrainian leadership was a contributing factor that led to President Putin's fateful decision to launch the 'Special Military Operation' against Ukraine in February 2022.

In terms of military doctrine, one must first consider the concept of military strategy. A useful summary of what is deemed a successful military strategy is as follows: "Objectives are set for both the short term and long term. Those for the short term are about getting to the next stage: they must be realistic to be credible" (Freedman 2024, 56). However, it is the contention of this paper that Russia's war aims were based upon misperception of Ukrainian military resolve, as well as a mismatch between Russian initial objectives, and its actual warfighting capabilities on the ground – compounded by military setbacks and logistical challenges.

The underlying political objectives of Putin's decision-making are aptly described in this following quote: "Putin concluded that the situation was untenable. Unwilling to withdraw support from the enclaves and with no prospect that the position could be stabilized so long as the government in Kyiv was unwilling to make concessions and was looking for more support from NATO and the EU, Putin decided that the only way out was to change the government" (Freedman 2024, 64). President Putin held the perspective "that Ukraine was an artificial construct with an illegitimate government suppressing Russian language speakers" (Freedman 2024, 64). Therefore, these factors led to President Putin's decision to launch military invasion on Thursday, 24th February 2022 under the auspices of "demilitarisation and denazification", with the aim of eliminating the Zelensky administration and replacing it with a Pro-Russian leader.

My first key point in this article, and the main the crux of my argument, is as follows: on a political level the failure to capture Kyiv, as a result of the Battle of Hostomel, meant that Russian military objectives were subject to change – due in part to its enormous material casualties fighting

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a war of manoeuvre, which led to the Russian leadership deciding to wage a war of attrition. That being said, there is a further point to be had that Russia's failure to achieve strategic success is also found in its doctrinal culture exhibited in the Russian military's own organisational 'strategic culture' – that Russia is able to win a strategic victory through the use of overwhelming firepower against the enemy. The Russian military leadership took lessons from the First Gulf War, the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, and its military intervention in Syria, as historical case studies. Thereby demonstrating the efficacy of the use of overwhelming firepower to bring about a desired strategic outcome.

Thus, the argument of this paper is that it is this doctrinal belief that underpinned Russia's initial wartime goal was based upon achieving decisive victory through use of superior firepower in the shortest time possible. However, warnings about the Ukrainian opposition was dismissed by the political and military leadership at the Kremlin. This also laid bare the fundamental mismatch between doctrinal aspirations and actual Russian military capabilities. However, this also has to do with Putin's leadership style and the micromanaging of military operations. As Plokhy argues in his book *The Russo-Ukrainian War,* the 'Special Military Operation' was based upon "Putin's belief in the nonexistence of the Ukrainian nation and the desire of Ukrainians to live under Russian rule", with the military operation itself "modeled on the Russian takeover of Crimea" (Plokhy 2023, 154). All of which, underpinned the emerging Russian military doctrine in the belief of a quick victory against Kyiv. However, as we shall see, the evolving military situation on the ground deemed this initial war objective unattainable.

By taking this quote into account, this paper argues this strategic failure to capture the airport, as well as further losses, were based upon the unrealistic expectations. Additionally, the lack of coordination between differing elements of the Russian invasion force meant that the chances of the Russian military being able to successfully launch an attack of Kyiv was, therefore, diminished. Furthermore, a wider qualification has to be made in that a "strategy involves a story about how a conflict can be decided in favorable terms" (Freedman 2024, 56). Furthermore, there was no 'Plan B' or contingency plan for the Russians to be able to revert to once the initial offensive failed in its objectives. The Russians launched a multi-pronged attack in the belief that the Kyiv regime would buckle early on. When this did not happen, its only recourse of action was to (re)calibrate its objectives towards narrower wartime goals.

The Kremlin's beliefs in a quick victory were based upon the employment of use of overwhelming firepower in a decisive fashion. However, an important point to make here is that there was a gap between the aspirations of the Russian leadership, influenced by its overall doctrine, and that of its actual available capabilities. This is seen through the use of air assets, cruise missiles, and decisive armoured thrusts, but this, in operational terms, could not be realised on the battlefield – due to material constraints and available firepower, not to mention the logistical and communication challenges besetting the initial Russian 'thrust'. However, another factor needs to be taken into consideration: that of the underestimation of the Ukrainian military resolve to resist the Russian invasion. This meant that its doctrinal beliefs in a quick victory were ill advised and based on the misperception of the Ukrainian resolve to resist the Russian military. Consequently, the Russians' inability to bring about combined warfare operations meant that it was unable to coordinate its activities in the kinetic battlespace environment. This inability to realise its operational doctrine led to the failure to achieve its initial objectives: that of the capture of Hostomel and the fall of the Kyiv regime.

2. The battle of hostomel&failure to capture antonov airport

"Russia's military strategy in Ukraine was informed by inaccurate intelligence assessments, leading to the development of unrealistic battleplans in the opening phase of the war" (de Dreuzy and Gilli 2022, 25).

The quote above demonstrates the misinformed nature of Russian military strategy, combined with intelligence failures and limitations in operational planning. The combination of its tactical shortcomings seen in its initial thrust into Ukraine, as well as its doctrinal failures, meant that the Russian military was unable to achieve its initial war aims. On the battlefield, Russian forces were

unable to capture Ukraine's strategic, military and political centre – that of Kyiv, which was one of the core objectives of Russia's Special Military Operation of "denazification", in essence, regime change. On March 25th, the Russian Ministry of Defense ordered Russian forces to withdraw from the outskirts of Kyiv and elsewhere, with more limited military objectives of focusing upon the Donbas and the Siege of Mariupol, the latter witnessing some of the fiercest fighting.

In terms of military operations, the aim was to capture the airport "with the help of a relatively small detachment of airborne troops and special forces" (Plokhy 2023, 160). From a tactical, operational level, linked to the capture of Hostomel airport was the objective of a future strategic airlift of Russian paratrooper reinforcements. The successful capture would "allow a much larger [Russian] paratroop force to land in the vicinity of Kyiv, capture the city's bridges across the Dneiper River" (Plokhy 2023, 160). The aim of this objective was to "limit the ability of the Ukrainian armed forces to maneuver and move units through Kyiv's transportation hub" (Plokhy 2023, 160).

The initial assault was based on Russian gunships with transport helicopters loaded with Russian elite paratroopers to storm the airport and seize control. In addition, pro-Russian Chechen forces, under the command of Kadyrov, failed in their efforts to assassinate President Zelensky during the Battle of Hostomel. (Plokhy 2023, 160). This, in turn, further enhanced Ukrainian resolve to meet the Russian invaders and launch a resolute defence.

One aspect of this was seen in the vulnerability of Russian gunships and transport helicopters to Ukrainian shoulder launched weaponry, during its initial assault. The use of air-assault tactics against Hostomel also proved challenging due to the vulnerability posed by Ukrainian soldiers firing shoulder launched MANPAD weaponry at helicopters. "Russia's *operational plan* called for a rapid air assault into Hostomel Airport, while mechanized forces would concurrently advance on Kyiv from Belarus, on the western side of the Dnipro River, and from Russia, on the river's eastern side" (Collins, Kofman, and Spencer 2023). The first two waves consisted of 2 helicopters that landed at Hostomel carrying Russian air-assault troops. However, during the "first wave, two helicopters were shot down by MANPADS" (Zabrodskyi, Watling, Danylyuk, and Reynolds 2022, 26). Although the Russian paratroopers flown in fought tirelessly in the initial capture of Antonov airport, they were unable to successfully repel Ukrainian counterattacks. This operational military failure meant that the Russian military was unable to secure a strategic 'air bridge' that would allow for reinforcements to be flown in by Il-76 transport aircraft. In addition, Russia was unable to achieve full air superiority, which also meant its helicopters and aircraft were vulnerable to Ukrainian anti-aircraft weaponry. Therefore, Russian elite paratroopers' reinforcements coming in from Mi-8/17 helicopters came under heavy fire.
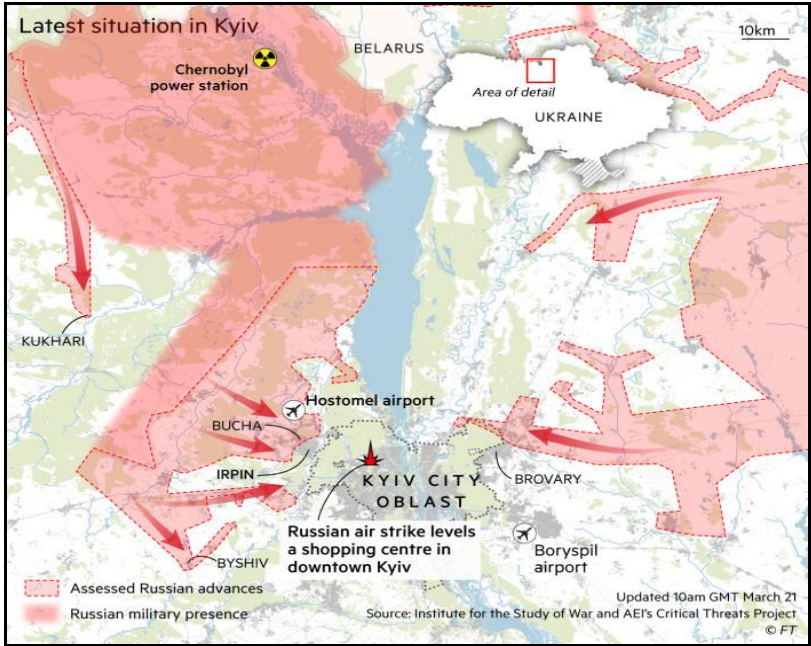

Figure 1.1: The Battle of Hostomel and the Extent of the Russian Advance March 21st 2022

Source: Image extracted from: (Rathbone, Foy and Jones 2022)

The image above shows the extent of the Russian military advance and its proximity to the Ukrainian capital. Due to the proximity of Hostomel airport, this was considered by Russian military command as vital to the effort to capture the Ukrainian capital. From a tactical, operational level, a future strategic airlift of Russian paratrooper reinforcements was linked to the capture of Hostomel airport.

An important aspect of the initial Russian invasion was based on the element of surprise, and contingent with the taking of Hostomel. As the Russian military lost the element of surprise, this hampered its overall military advance to Kyiv. Consequently, this led to the Kremlin's inability to fulfil its initial wartime objectives. Furthermore, the advancing Russian advance was beset by logistical challenges. This has been stated in the following quote by Collins, Kofman and Spencer who argued, "The failure at Hostomel was compounded by the slowness of the Russian advance from Belarus, which forced the Russian troops to attempt to seize the capital without the element of surprise, days behind schedule." (Collins, Kofman, and Spencer 2023). This allowed time for Ukrainians to hit the Russian tanks, armoured personnel carrier and other vehicles with shoulder weaponry, causing havoc among the Russian troops – with the effect of stopping its advance on Kyiv.

In terms of the Ukrainian ability to defend against the Russian onslaught, the Ukrainian military was successful in firing missiles and other projectiles against incoming Russian T-72 Main Battle tanks. These following operational challenges meant that Russia was unable to launch a mechanised armour storming of Kyiv by an overwhelming number of Russian military forces, due to the resistance being met by the Ukrainians launching shoulder-held weaponry and other missiles at incoming Russian armored units and mechanized infantry – resulting in high Russian casualties on the ground. However, tactical constraints and logistical challenges, as well as the failure to capture Hostomel, put this very much as unachievable militarily.

As the Russians were unable to achieve a strategic airlift at Hostomel airport, the Russians could not fly reinforcements, as well as their advanced team of paratroopers on Il-76 heavy lift aircraft, in order to capture Kyiv and install a pro-Russian leadership. In terms of military bureaucracy, there was an initial confusion in the Russian military operational leadership. Many Russian generals had to leave the safety of their bunkers to take operational control of their battle groups on frontlines. This in turn left the Russian generals vulnerable to Ukrainian sniper fire. Furthermore, in terms of micromanaging the ongoing military operational theatre, President Putin himself tried to interfere with tactical decisions – further reinforcing this confusion.

3. Moscow's failure to achieve its initial war aims: military&operations difficulties

The failure of Russia to achieve its initial war aims was based also on its inability to launch combined military operations - based on the coordination of air assets and armored units, followed by reinforcements including mechanized infantry and other support units. This is based in part, as earlier mentioned, on the misperception of a lack of Ukrainian resistance, which meant that "Russian forces advanced too quickly and haphazardly in their initial advance towards their targets" (de Dreuzy and Gilli 2022, 26). Also, further compounding Russia's military efforts was the lack of utilising its overall air capabilities and, as a result, did not fully eliminate Ukrainian air defenses. In effect, the Russians were not able to gain total 'air superiority' through lack of munitions, communications and logistics, as well as the inability to wage 'combined military operations'. This denotes the complete mismatch of its initial military objectives of a quick victory achieved through a 'blitzkrieg' style assault and its actual military capabilities, or in this case, the lack of coordination and utilisation of assets.

Furthermore, in terms of available firepower, the Russians "lacked the combat power to successfully seize the city", and as they moved to surround the Kyiv, the Russian army "came into range of more and more Ukrainian artillery units and exposed more of their depth to raiding" (Watling and Reynolds 2022, 4). Consequently, due to Russian tactical and strategic mistakes, the Ukrainian resistance was able to use rockets and other missiles to take out both trucks and armoured Russian tanks. The Russians suffered from high casualties at the battalion level due to Ukrainian anti-tank weaponry and the use of drone strikes striking the initial Russian armoured thrust

Another point to add is that the Ukrainian centre of its political leadership withstood the Russian onslaught in Kyiv, which led them to gain the political momentum for increased military aid from the West. By Kyiv showing defiance with Ukranian troops fighting back against the Russian military advances towards the capital, further compounded Moscow's inability to achieve its initial military objectives. As Watling and Reynolds state: "The Russians continued to advance, but at an increasingly heavy price, so that by the time they had secured Hostomel and were in place to launch an attack on Kyiv, it was clear that they lacked the combat power to successfully seize the city" (Watling and Reynolds 2022, 4).

NATO estimates place the Russian casualties "between 7,000 and 15,000 dead (many of these hard-to-replace officers) with thousands more wounded" (de Dreuzy and Gilli 2022, 27). In addition, as the military situation worsened, many Russian commanders moved closer to the front, leading to high casualties in its command. All of these factors are emblematic of intelligence failures, and limitations in Russian military doctrine. None of this was foreseen by Russian strategic and military planners. The combination of these factors, coupled with the complete lack of coordination and communication, along with the lack of combined arms operations by the Russians, led to the failure of this 'blitzkrieg' operation. Russian military underestimated the will of the Ukrainians to defy the invasion.

It was at the Battle of Hostomel and the Russian Army's failure to capture Kyiv that ultimately led to the (re)assessment of Moscow's strategic aims and military goals, as we shall see in the next section.
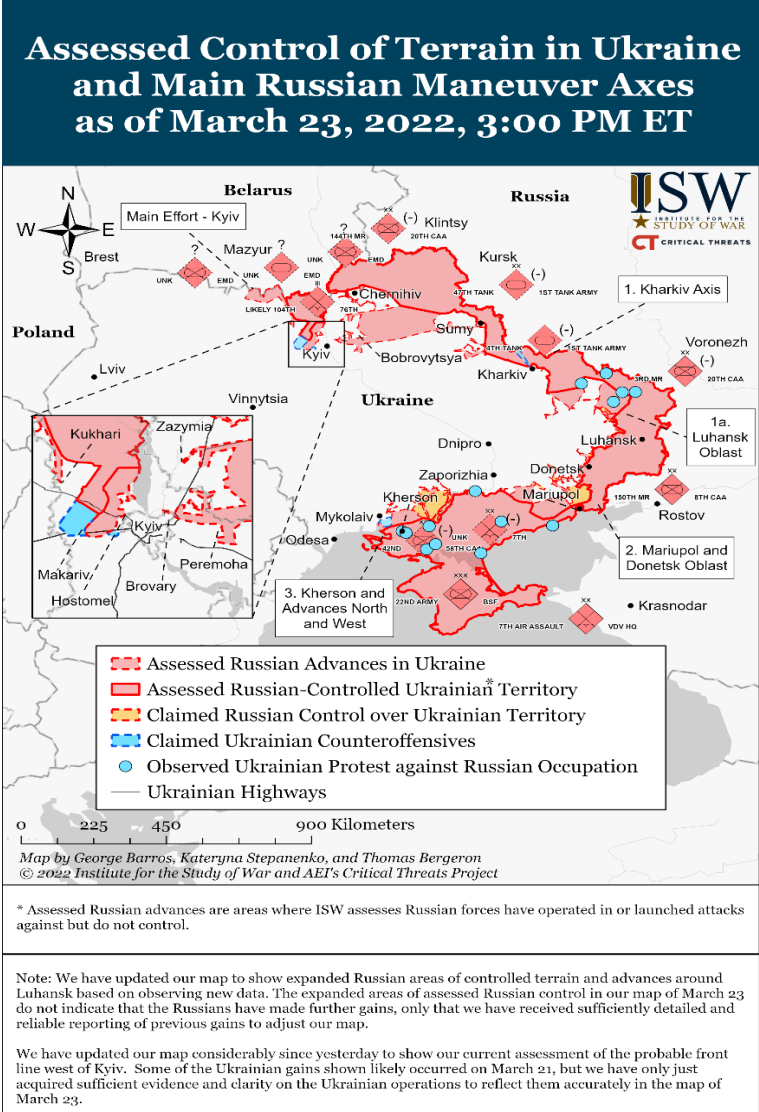

Figure 1.2. Battlefield Situation following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 23rd March 2024

(Source: Image extracted from: (Kagan, Barros and Stepanenko 2022)

Instead, Russian military tactics changed. On an operational level, the Russian Army attempted to "encircle the capital, but in doing so came into range of more and more Ukrainian artillery units and exposed more of their depth to raiding" (Watling and Reynolds 2022, 4). The leadership at Kyiv concluded that "its centre of gravity was the capital and had prioritised its defence for artillery systems, air defences, anti-tank weapons and reserves" (Watlings and Reynolds 2022, 4). By the 23rd March, the military situation on the ground in Ukraine is depicted in Figure 1.2, as Russia shifted from offensive to defensive actions, while still on the outskirts of Kyiv. However, the Ukrainians have by this point started to go on the offensive and push the Russians back.

The Russian Army eventually left the airport on 2nd April 2022 after its failed offensive on Kyiv. Therefore, in terms of the situation on the ground, a combination of factors led to the failure of the Russian military to achieve its strategic objectives including the following: its inability to capitalise on its initial gains, logistical and tactical shortcomings, as well as limitations in its fighting doctrine. All of which combined led to a reassessment of its war aims

Lastly, the situation on the ground further changed, and the decision was made to withdraw from parts of Ukraine, and instead, focus on its main offensive in the Donbas. After the initial thrust "Russian forces withdrew many of their forces from around Kyiv after about four weeks of fighting and reduced their military operations to the south and east of the country" (de Dreuzy and Gilli 2022, 26). This led to Ukrainian forces regrouping and able to counter-attack, but Russia pulled back to its Southern Front and the Donbas, as seen in the Battle of Mariupol. This denotes a change in war aims, following the failure to capture Kyiv, which led to a reassessment of Grand Strategy, towards much narrower military objectives.

Thus, this paper concludes, from a Grand Strategy perceptive, after the initial failure to achieve its ambitious military objectives, the underlying strategic objectives changed to that of 'annexation', and the subsequent continuation of the war in the form of 'a war of attrition'. This is what I have written about in my other article instead, titled '*Russia's embrace of attritional warfare*', in this same journal edition. Next, this brings us to the nature of Russian strategy. Lawrence Freedman goes onto conclude that Russia's efforts can be termed as a "bad strategy" (Freedman 2024, 67). This "includes the underestimation of an opponent. It may involve overreliance on some hunch about how others will act, or not thinking through the possible consequences of a course of action, or failure to work out how a good idea can best be implemented" (Freedman 2024, 67). Therefore, it is the argument of this paper that the combination of Russia's doctrinal limitations is found in the following factors: its underestimation of Ukrainian resistance, as well as its belief in a quick victory, combined with the resultant military failures and a lack of a 'Plan B'. This marked a new chapter in Russian operational thinking with its focus instead upon waging a war of attrition in Ukraine.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the Russian military failed in its initial objectives and, therefore, was unable to capture Kyiv, which was the centre of Ukrainian political and military leadership and power. Russia's operational failures had two implications: political and strategic. The capture of Antonov Airport by Russian Paratroopers was deemed necessary to bring about a quick victory for Putin's 'Special Military Operation', as it would then be able to reinforce its presence, and drive onto Kyiv. However, on a political level, Russia was unable to realise its initial war aims of 'regime change' in Kyiv, because it failed to capture the capital after the Battle of Antonov Airport (part of the wider Battle of Hostomel). On a strategic level, the failure to remove Zelensky was also part of the reason for the change in Grand Strategy. Consequently, Russia's failure to decisively bring about a military victory and the inability to achieve its initial war aims contributed to a change in its overall Grand Strategy. The Russian Invasion of Ukraine in 2022 was based on the belief in a quick victory with the capture of Ukraine's political centre, Kyiv – to achieve its overall military and political objectives. This was due in part to the underestimation of the Ukrainian resolve to resist, coupled with the wider doctrinal culture and operational limitations of the Russian military

– meant that, in effect, Russia failed to achieve its initial objectives. Furthermore, the Ukrainian ability to target tanks with missiles, and defend from an entrenched position, meant that Russia was unable to hold onto the airport and subsequently lost the Battle of Hostomel, and with it, the loss of a quick victory. Consequently, this led to the Kremlin reassessing its war aims and shifting its overall approach, by pursuing a protracted war of attritional against Ukraine.

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RUSSIA'S EMBRACE OF ATTRITIONAL WARFARE: "WINNING BY NOT LOSING"

Oliver B. STEWARD; PhD[∗]

Abstract: *This paper argues that once President Putin was no longer able to achieve his initial objectives of regime change in Kyiv in 2022 by using blitzkrieg operations, Russia's grand strategy underwent a reassessment towards narrower strategic objectives. This paper will provide an account of the changing nature of Russia's strategic aims and goals, as well as exploring the 'Russian' way of warfare. The shift in war aims is evident in the partial mobilisation of fresh troops, the annexation of Ukrainian territory and waging of a war of attrition. Russia has increased its military budget, the manufacturing of weaponry, as well as the import of military technology from Iran and North Korea. However, NATO allies, including Romania, have provided military aid to Kyiv to continue fighting. Taking all these factors into account, this paper argues this conflict has become a 'long war' of attrition.*

Keywords: *Putin; strategy; positional warfare; war of attrition; Ukraine; Kyiv; Drones.*

1. Introduction: the definition of attritional warfare&its application

Firstly, it is prudent to define what military strategy is. The standard definition involves "ways" as well as ends and means (Lykke 1989, 2-8). However, one must include a caveat to this argument. Firstly, this paper puts forward the notion that Russia is winning "by not losing the war of attrition". Therefore, firepower in this operational context truly matters. Additionally, until there is a substantial change on the battlefield, Russia continues to maintain the upper hand. In operational terms, the Russian military in Ukraine has pursued a 'defence-in-depth' strategy that included fortifications and anti-tank mines. Russia's strategic assessment can be described as follows: "If winning the war is defined by one state's attainment of their political-military objectives at the cost of the adversary is political objectives, then Russia appears to possess the upper hand through two years of conflict" (Watling and Reynolds 2023, 8).

A useful account of the nature and scope of attritional warfare is put forward by Alex Vershinin, writing in *RUSI,* who defines this type of approach to war as being "fought with a 'force centric' approach, unlike wars of manoeuvre which are 'terrain focused'" (Vershinin 2024, 1). Furthermore, the author goes onto explain that attritional warfare is "rooted in massive industrial capacity to enable the replacement of losses, geographical depth to absorb a series of defeats and technological conditions that prevent the rapid ground movement" (Vershinin 2024). In terms of a war of attrition, "military operations are shaped by a state's ability to replace losses and generate new formations, not tactical and operational manoeuvres. The side that accepts the attritional nature of warfare and focuses on destroying the enemy rather than gaining terrain is most likely to win" (Vershinin 2024).

However, within the context of Russian Grand Strategy, this embrace of attritional warfare can be seen as fulfilling a wider objective. This hereby denotes the overall Russian Grand Strategy and its relationship to its military course of action, specifically, its pursuit of attritional warfare in Ukraine. As Freedman points out, "Putin has re-doubled his efforts. With the possible exception of March 2022, following the failure to take Kyiv, the means have become more violent and destructive and the disregard for Ukraine's identity and interests more emphatic" (Freedman 2024, 67).

A second aspect of this approach to warfare has an economic dimension to it based upon the need to maintain its superiority in war production, and to outproduce the enemy by replacing the losses incurred on the battlefield. An important qualification to this argument is seen in the following: "Victory in attritional warfare is assured by careful planning, industrial base development and development of mobilisation infrastructure in times of peace, and even more careful management of resources in wartime" (Vershinin 2024). An interesting quote demonstrating how this

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is part of a broader strategy is seen as follows: "It does appear, however, that the Kremlin is attempting to elongate the conflict in time and cost" (Fox 2024, 3). The objective behind the 'surge' in troops and resources is that "Moscow outlasts both Kyiv's financial and military support and Ukraine's military means to continue attempting offensive military activities", and in doing so will "accelerate Ukraine's exhaustion and subsequently force Kyiv to broker a peace deal" (Fox 2024, 3). As such, this paper intends to go further into detail about the military means employed and how Putin has, in effect, elongated the conflict for the long-game, by shifting the Russian war economy as well waging an 'attritional' destructive war upon the Ukrainian regime. This approach is meant to exhaust Ukrainian manpower, resources, and political resolve.

The core of this paper's argument is that Russia's means at achieving its military objectives has fundamentally shifted, following its failure to capture Kyiv. From a tactical and operational perspective, this shift in seen with an emphasis away from its original approach of a war of manoeuvre, and towards a more protracted approach to the conflict. This approach is based upon the notion of 'defence in-depth', while also making incremental territorial gains to weaken the Ukrainian military.

One important caveat to consider when discussing 'attritional warfare' is "as the conflict drags on, the war is won by economies, not armies", with the objective of this type of warfare "aimed at exhausting enemy resources on near-term territorial objectives" (Vershinin 2024). While the West's 'strategic culture' is based upon winning a war of manoeuvre with mobility and superior technology, reflected in its common practices and attitudes, Russia's conception is different. The aim of embracing this attritional approach to warfare is to wear down over time Ukraine's ability to effectively wage warfare against Russia's 'Special Military Operation'.

In reality, the initial failure of the Russian military to capture Kyiv led to a reassessment of its military strategy. The battle of Hostomel and the failure to capture Kyiv meant that Russian strategic aims and goals had to subject of (re)assessment towards more narrower objectives. Following a successful counteroffensive by the Ukrainian military – by September 2022, "there was a major reappraisal in Moscow. This led to the adoption of a new strategy" (Freedman 2024, 65). Although there was an opportunity to de-escalate, Putin decided instead to double-down on his strategy, and this emerging strategy was based upon a 'war of attrition'.

In terms of the battle landscape, the character and nature of this conflict quickly changes to one of 'attrition' with bloody ground combat seen in the Battle of Mariupol at Azovstal steel plant. An important quote on the nature of attritional warfare is found in the following: "Instead of a decisive battle achieved through rapid manoeuvre, attritional war focuses on destroying enemy forces and their ability to regenerate combat power, while preserving their own" (Vershinin 2024). These bloody battles of mass artillery exchanges and infantry assaults on a hardened Ukrainian defender. Consequently, the scenes at the Battle of Mariupol, as well as more recently the Battles of Bakhmut, and Avdiivka show demonstrate this mode of warfare, and in terms of the military means as well as the objectives sought by Russia. Next this paper, will look at how Russia has implemented a 'surge' in both commitments as well as firepower – in order to wage this protracted war of attrition against Ukraine.

2. A "surge" in Russia commitments: the "partial mobilisation" of fresh troops, increases in military spending&war production

A necessary component in this shift towards 'attritional warfare' is the emphasis upon surging its overall material and troop commitments, and with it the means in which to wage this type of warfare. After the initial failure to capture Kyiv, the Russian strategy was subject to changes. Also, correlating with this change in strategy, was also a shift of focus on the means to achieve a much narrower military objective. President Putin signed a decree that allowed for the mobilisation of 300,000 troops, in an effort to replace the battlefield losses of the initial operation.

President Putin, "Having resisted for some time, authorized the mass mobilization to address the chronic troop shortages. Some 300,000 were called up initially, of which around 120,000 were moved to the front as a matter of urgency. The effect of this decision was that Russian forces could shore up

their defenses. Manpower shortages would not force the war to end quickly" (Freedman 2024, 65). In effect, the political and military leadership doubled-down on the means in which to achieve this goal. Thereby, one can conclude that the surge of Russian military commitments, and a redefinition of political and military objectives. General Sergi Surovikin was appointed as the new military commander of the 'Joint Group of Forces in the Special Military Operation Zone'. "This was designed to signal a firmer operational grip" (Freedman 2024, 65). Therefore, "[h]is approach was largely to improve the land defenses, waiting for fresh units before returning to the offensive in the spring, while concentrating the offensive on attacks on infrastructure" (Freedman 2024, 65). In terms of my working terminology, I define this mobilisation in terms of a 'surge' in commitments. From a political perspective, this mobilisation demonstrates that President Putin is willing to expend enormous number of military resources in order to secure a more favourable military situation in the longer term.

The "surge" in commitments is also reflected in Russia's ever-increasing military budget. This also demonstrates that the Russian leadership is hoping to pursue the 'long game' and is demonstrative of its shift in approach by embracing attritional warfare. However, "by staking everything on rising military expenditure, the Kremlin is forcing the economy into the snare of perpetual war." In addition, in terms of defense expenditures, the "record defence spending shows that the Kremlin has no intention of ending its war" (Luzin & Propopenko, 2023). Consequently, an increase in spending is necessary to wage this type of warfare, because the Russian military uses "massive quantities of armored vehicles, drones, electronic products, and other combat equipment." In addition, its production is geared towards a mixture of different weaponry. Because high-end weaponry is very complex to manufacture and consumes vast resources, a high-low mixture of forces and weapons is imperative in order to win" (Vershinin 2024). Therefore, the emphasis this mixture of technological weaponry, and maximization of production has become the focus of the Kremlin's war production strategy in order to wage a long protracted war in Ukraine.

It is also important to note, as the war has progressed so to has Kremlin's military spending. Statistically, Russian military expenditure has also seen a massive increase by "24 per cent to an estimated \$109 billion, in 2023" (Sipri 2024). This military spending is to account for new productions of war munitions, tanks, cruise missiles and other warfighting capabilities, as well continuing cost of equipment and manpower to sustain the war effort.

The next section will discuss the concepts and application of attritional warfare, going into more specific detail about the military operations and tactics related to Russia's overall approach to the war in Ukraine.

3. The military tactics of attritional warfare: human "meatgrinder tactic"&casualties

This section will go into more specific detail concerning the tactics employed by the Russian military within its embrace of 'attritional warfare', with particular reference to 'human meatgrinder tactics', but first this paper will visit the Battle of Mariupol, as a first sign of these more destructive means employed against the Ukrainians. It was during the Battle of Mariupol that we see a new chapter in how Russia shifted its operational tactics and waged its way of warfare against the Ukrainian defenders, employing more attritional style tactics to the siege. There were scenes of Ukrainian resistance, with the Azov battalion mounting an ever-desperate defence against the Russian onslaught at the Azovstal Steelworks in Mariupol. This marked a new chapter in Russia's way of warfare in Ukraine and its shift in operational tactics.

A qualification in terms of the relationship between Russian military tactics and attritional wars is offered by Vershinin (2024), is as follows: "In attritional wars, military operations are shaped by a state's ability to replace losses and generate new formations, not tactical and operational manoeuvres". Furthermore, Russia's inability to achieve its initial objectives meant that it reorganised its forces and focused on the port of Mariupol to achieve a decisive military victory against the besieged Ukrainian forces. However, this time, it was through differing operational tactics, through use of sustained artillery, drone and air strikes, including cruise missiles, against the Ukrainian defenders.

Artillery is a key element of Russian military tactics in this attritional battlespace, and it is used to saturate Ukrainian positions, as well as serve as counter-battery. As seen in the Battle of Mariupol, and ever since, is the proclivity to use 'artillery' and superior firepower upon the enemy but, also, the use of mass assaults by Russian infantry, often on fixed – Ukrainian defenses, which produce increasing losses. Another advantage is that Russia has superior numbers of artillery systems. This translates to a superiority on the battlefield as follows: "Russia has a fivefold advantage. Ukrainian batteries fire around 2,000 shells a day. Russian batteries fire 10,000" (Axe 2024). in the and can out-produce its adversaries in terms of the number of shells produced. Thus, making this weapons system incredibly useful for Russian military planners in engaging Ukrainian targets.

The military tactics of Russian infantry troops is based upon the following practice: "lead with fires and move forward incrementally as fire allows. The incremental advances, however, have also come at extreme cost in men and material" (Fox 2024, 4). However, an important fact remains, that Russia's resilience is seen in its ability to absorb these material losses and replace with fresh troops and weaponry.

Another facet to Russia's preferred approach to military operations and tactics is found in the concept of what is termed 'meatgrinder tactics'. Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds (2023) for instance, refer to Russian fighting at the battles of Mariupol and Bakhmut as relying on "meatgrinder tactics" in which human-wave attacks are used to advance Russian military interests (Watling and Reynolds, 2023, also see Fox, 2024).

However, one must first define the concept of 'disposable infantry' that are used in 'meatgrinder tactics', put forward by Watling and Reynolds (2023):

"Russia's disposable infantry should be considered fundamentally different and are drawn from three principle sources: conscripts from the Luhansk and Donetsk's Republics (heavily attrited from early rounds of fighting); prisoners drafted by the Wagner Group, and under-trained Russian civilians" (Watling, and Reynolds, 2023: 3).

One of the means in which Russia augmented its overall fighting capabilities with its standard regular forces as well as elite paratroopers, is through the recruitment of volunteers of members to the paramilitary group Wagner, then under the leadership of Yevgeny Prigozhin. Also, worth noting that the Wagner paramilitary mercenary group began recruiting prisoners in order to gain more numbers of combat available men (Ivshina, Dale & Brewer, 2024). This was useful as a means to increase the numbers of combat infantry available in order to supplement the losses that have already been incurred by Russian Army in its initial wave of operations in Ukraine.

That being said, in terms of military tactics, these former prisoners have been used by the Russian military commanders in increasingly desperate 'human meatgrinder' attacks against entrenched Ukrainian positions. During an assault "disposable infantry are the first to be deployed" and will "skirmish with Ukrainian defensive positions on contact, often until killed" (Watling and Reynolds 2023, 4). After gaining a fix, the Russians then target the position using artillery, drones and other means to attack the positions – and afterwards, allow for more well-equipped soldiers to follow up the attack. In this context of "meatgrinder attacks", these "disposable" soldiers are first used to probe Ukrainian positions, and after the initial wave the Russians are then able to gain a fixture on the position of the defenders.

Further, it must be noted that Wagner sustained some of the highest levels of casualties during last years' Battle for Bakhmut, so much so that it led to protestations given by its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who later mounted a failed coup d'etat against Putin and later was killed in a plane accident. Following the failed mutiny, the remaining Wagner members were placed under the direct control of Moscow itself, further illuminating the increasing centralised control of Moscow under his paramilitary force.

Furthermore, Russia has used other proxy-forces, in its efforts to wage a sustained military effort against Ukraine, with the use of militias from the Donetsk as well as the Luhansk People's Armies, as well as Kadyrov's Chechen forces are used as "true cannon fodder, used to the maximum extent possible in Donbas to minimize Russian casualties" in the "meatgrinder" during the Battle of Donbas in the Summer of 2022 (Wasielewski 2022).

Secondly, another means of which Russia went about increasing the number of troops in Ukraine, was through the use of Chechen fighters, who come under the direction of Kadyrov, the Head of the Chechen Republic, while at the same time, being outside the Russian military command. However, this approach, in the use of so called 'meatgrinder tactics' does come at a cost. Russia has sustained heavy losses due in part to its tactics and approach to warfare, it is estimated that "Russia has lost 404,950 troops, 6503 tanks, 338 aircraft and 25 ships, among many other combat losses; the losses that they have afflicted on Ukrainian forces remain largely unknown" (Fox 2024, 3). Therefore, the military logic behind this is to augment Russia's military without incurring official losses.

This was particularly seen in the Battle of Bakhmut, where 'human meatgrinder' tactics were employed (Watling and Reynolds, 2023). To conclude, the use of prisoners and Wagner mercenaries, as well as Kadyrov's Chechen fighters, is a testament of how Russia intended to bring about a 'force multiplier' without having to incur more costs to the military. The Wagner Paramilitary groups some of whom consisted of poorly trained troops were used in such 'human meatgrinder' attacks suffered from high rate of losses on the battlefield.

Currently, Russia's military operations are based on incremental territorial gains, while at the same time using relentless firepower and overwhelming Ukrainian positions. The incremental progress has been seen in the recent battles such as Avdiivka that lasted from 24th February 2022 until the 17th Feb 2024 – resulting in a Russian victory. This battle was waged for nearly two years – demonstrating the 'attritional aspects' to this campaign. Military officials have started that Russia has been firing approximately, "10,000 shells per day, compared to just 2,000 a day from the Ukrainian side" (Lillis, Bertrand, Liebermann, and Britzky 2024) Currently, at the timing of this writing, the Russians have gained momentum, there has only been small geographical gains made by the Russian Army against the Ukrainian defenders. We have also witnessed a surge in production of both artillery munitions and other weaponry in order to wage this attritional conflict. It has been reported by RUSI, that the Russians expect to "increase 152mm production from around 1 million rounds in 2023 to 1.2 million rounds over the course of 2024, and to only produce 800,000 122mm rounds over the same period" (Watling and Reynolds, 2024). Therefore, it is evident that Russia has mobilised its vast industrial base to increase production of artillery munitions. All of which, is a testament to this type of warfare.

4. Weaponry from Iran, North Korea and China: aiding in its attritional warfare approach

This section will argue that an important and necessary element in Russia's approach to attritional warfare is its use of imported weaponry from Russian-friendly nations, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, North Korea and China.

One important facet to Russia's adoption of a 'war of attrition', is the use by Russia of imported weaponry from Iran as well as North Korea. This serves Russia's wider strategic interests. "Put it another way, Russia's ability to diversify its means has allowed it to generate a stalemate – which works in Moscow's favor" (Fox 2024, 6). In addition, this diversification of the means of production through imports from Iran and North Korea has meant that Moscow can in effect "keep the conflict going, with the goal of outlasting the international community's military support and exhausting Ukraine's ability to continue fighting" (Fox 2024, 6). Consequently, this strategic logic underpins Russia's overall approach to waging this war of 'attrition' in Ukraine, and also, signalling to the West its military intent in the long-term.

This has given it an added advantage in both diversification in the means of production of munitions and in acquiring technology, as seen in the Kamikaze drone technology from Tehran. These Kamikaze Drones (Shahed-123) as well as artillery and ballistic missile munitions from Pyongyang have all been used on the frontline in Ukraine to increase the firepower of the Russian military, especially as the rate of artillery shells being used is considerably high at the amount of approximately 10,000 per day (Axe, 2024). Consequently, this in turn has allowed Russia's approach to 'attritional warfare' to generate its overall objective of 'winning by not losing'. An important point to consider is as follows: Iranian-made Kamikaze Drones are cheap to buy and

manufacturer – useful for 'psychological warfare' and the targeting of Ukrainian infrastructure, without incurring official losses. Consequently, one can infer that Russia is taking the strategic lessons learned in Aleppo, during its intervention in Syria but also in the context of the Second Chechen War, with the emphasis given to the indiscriminate use of overwhelming firepower against an enemy.

This paper also contents that weaponry from the Islamic Republic of Iran, specifically drones, which have been purchased by Russia, has become an important part of attritional warfare. The Iranian-made Shahed-123 has gained a level of notoriety for its lethality as well as the indiscriminate targeting of population areas. This drone has been used to target population centres across Ukraine itself. One of the reasons for its prolific use is because it can be mass produced, is relatively cheap and unsophisticated, and ideal for 'attritional warfare'. This weapon system has the added role of being used to wage 'psychological warfare' on the Ukrainian population as a whole. In addition, as the conflict has entered its third year, both the Ukrainians and the Russians are using a variety of different drone systems in either a tactical space, by targeting individual troops, tanks and other armoured vehicles, or for its targeting of buildings in towns and cities. Drones have become so prolific that it has become mainstay in the waging of warfare by both sides.

Consequently, we have already seen that Russia has used massive amounts of ballistic, artillery and cruise missiles in its war against Ukraine. The use of ballistic missile and drone strikes has with it an added element of 'psychological warfare', in an attempt at waging indiscriminate strikes on energy and infrastructure, the goal of which is as follows: "By creating dire conditions for Ukraine through the winter, by means of deliberate and sustained attacks on critical infrastructure using missiles and "kamikaze drones", the aim was to pose a serious threat to Ukraine's ability to sustain itself" (Freedman 2024, 66). Therefore, one can conclude that part of its approach to attritional warfare has been the use of missiles to devastate Ukraine's infrastructure.

Artillery is a weapon system that Russia has a considerable advantage of, in terms of numbers and overall production capabilities. That being said, as Russia's military effort has shifted towards the degradation of Kyiv's ability to continue waging war it needs constant resupply, and that has led to Moscow seeking munitions from outside sources. In addition, there has been an "injection of 2 million 122mm rounds from North Korea will help Russia in 2024" (Watling and Reynolds 2024). This has the purpose of alleviating any munition shortages, as well as augmenting Russia's firepower capabilities, coupled with the increased production of war materials and other munitions. According to the *Royal United Services Institute* (RUSI), the aim of importing North Korean shells is to "alleviate shortages of munitions for what has proven to be an ordinance-hungry conflict" (Byrne, Byrne, and Somerville, 2023). This will no doubt augment Russian firepower and alleviate any munitions and logistical challenges faced by a protracted war, at least, for the short term if not longer. Russia has also signed defence and munitions contracts with other providers such as "Belarus, Iran, North Korea and Syria" (Watling and Reynolds, 2024). All of which will further aid in its continued replacement of munitions for its protracted war in Ukraine.

While the import of weaponry does enable the Russian war machine to continue its war of attrition against Ukraine, this also highlights wider limitations. Firstly, one can conclude that "the appearance of Chinese, North Korean and Iranian weapons and munitions on the Ukrainian battlefield indicate that Russia is facing its own challenges keeping up with the conflict's attritional character" (Fox 2024, 4). This has a number of implications for Russia's warfighting, including acting as a 'force multiplier', augmenting Russia's firepower capabilities and replacing artillery munitions that have been used.

From a war economy standpoint, "We do know that external support allows the Russian military to overcome some of its defense industry production and distribution shortfalls" (Fox 2024, 4). It has been reported by the Centre for European Policy Analysis, that Russia will "receive hundreds of surface-to-surface ballistic missiles from Iran for its war on Ukraine" (Borsari 2024). Furthermore, in terms of Russia continuing this approach to warfare, "In turn, Chinese, North Korean and Iranian Support allows the Kremlin to continue elongating the conflict in time, space and resources with the goal of exhausting Ukraine's military and Kyiv's capacity to sustain its

resistance to Russia" (Fox 2024, 4). All of which, attests to the logic of attritional warfare, and the overall doctrine used to support Russia's military efforts. Moreover, Russia has increased its reliance on drones and the ability to strike targets with the use of cruise and ballistic missiles has meant it has increased demand for imports of drones, artillery munitions and also, ballistic weaponry to sustain its efforts on the battlefield.

CONCLUSION

Russia has resorted towards a protracted war of attrition with Ukraine, with the objectives of outlasting, as well as outproducing and weakening the Ukrainian military resolve to resist. As the Russo-Ukrainian War enters into its third year, Russia has so far made incremental gains, with the most recent seen in the Battle of Aviidvka, which lasted nearly two years.

Not only that, but Russia has increased its artillery and missile production, as well as sought partial mobilisation in order to deploy fresh-troops to the battlefield, augmented by troops from the People's Republics, Wagner, and Chechen fighter. The attritional nature of conflict has meant there has been a high number of casualties, but, Russia has still be able to absorb these losses and maintain military momentum. There has also been growing reliance upon external actors, such as Iran and North Korea, to provide munitions and other weaponry in order to sustain Russia's war effort from the short-to-medium term, which has an effect of augmenting its overall firepower capabilities on the Ukrainian battlefield.

On a wider policy-making perspective, Russia's policy options have become more limited, and Russia has no recourse of action. More resources will be committed, and the result of which may become increasingly marginalised, which leads us to consider this as part of a broader path dependency, with a much narrower recourse of alternative policy choices available to the Kremlin. This is evident in the fact that President Putin has staked his political reputation and that of Russia's military to continue the fighting in Ukraine. Furthermore, in terms of Moscow's strategy and policy-making in relation to the ongoing war, if the West and NATO member states continues the supply of technology, ammunition and funding. The Russians will have no choice but to increase their own military footprint, which will place considerably more demands on their economy.

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MILITARY LEADER'S OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING EVER-CHANGING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract: *As operational environments continue to evolve, military leaders face a broad spectrum of challenges, from rapidly changing technologies, geopolitical shifts, to increased threat diversity and the need to keep troop morale high in often difficult conditions. The aim of this study is to identify the main operational challenges and analyze their complexity, characteristics and impact on military leaders. This study also highlights the need for military leaders to develop a wide range of skills, including mental agility, critical thinking, adaptability, communication and resilience, and to remain open to continuous learning. These skills, combined with the use of technology, are necessary to respond effectively to new challenges and threats and contribute to the development of military leader resilience. The scientific research methods used to conduct this study are diverse, each with the ability to provide insight and solutions for military leaders.*

Keywords: *operational environment; challenges; military leaders; skills; resilience; technology.*

1. Introduction

In a world marked by accelerating transformations, geopolitical instability and unprecedented technological progress, military leaders face an increasingly complex and unpredictable operational environment. This dynamic requires the simultaneous management of challenges ranging from advanced integration of new technologies, geopolitical changes to rapid adaptation to diverse threats. In the face of continuing technological challenges, leaders are forced to rapidly adopt and integrate innovations such as artificial intelligence, robotics, cyber technologies and autonomous systems, all of which are redefining the traditional parameters of warfare and military operations. In addition to technological innovations, military leaders must respond to diverse threats such as cyber warfare, global terrorism, and asymmetric conflicts, which require dynamic and proactive strategies. These complex challenges require not only anticipation of potential risks, but also operational agility to adapt quickly to changes on the ground. In addition, constant changes in the geopolitical landscape add an extra layer of complexity. This study sets out to analyze the operational environment and identify the operational challenges faced by military leaders, and as a response, to identify the skills required to deal with such an ever-changing environment. In parallel, consideration will be given to the analysis of the 20th and 21st century operational environment to further highlight contemporary operational challenges.

2. Research methodology

The research methodology is an essential element of this study, as it provides the framework for collecting and analyzing information in a systematic way. With the aim of analyzing the operational environment and identifying operational challenges, this study primarily aims to answer the following main research question (RQ): What are the operational challenges faced by the military leader and how can they be effectively managed? This question is the central pillar of the research, providing coherence, clarity, and direction throughout all stages of the research. In order to fulfill the two proposed research objectives (RObj) four secundary research questions have been formulated, two for each RObj. Table no. 1 correlates Robjs, RQs, and research methods (RMs) that will be used during this paper.

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Table no. 1: Research Design&Methodology

Main RQ: What are the operational challenges faced by the military leader and how can they be effectively managed?		
RObj	**RQs**	**RMs**
RObj$_1$_Identification and analysis of the main operational challenges faced by a military leader in a changing operational environment	RQ$_{11}$: What are the main factors contributing to changes in the operational environment?	- literature review; - systemic analysis of information; - logical scheme.
	RQ$_{12}$: What are the differences between the 20th and 21st century operating environment?	- literature review; - comparative analysis.
RObj$_2$_Identification of essential competencies and skills that military leaders need to develop to effectively managing operational challenges	RQ$_{21}$: What are the competences and skills required of a military leader in today's operational environment?	- critical literature review; - descriptive method.
	RQ$_{22}$: How can these competences and skills be effectively developed to facilitate the leadership process?	- study and critical analysis of literature.

3. Analysis of the operational challenges of the ever-changing environment

To highlight the changing nature and fast pace of the operational environment, it has been analyzed the operational environment in the 20th and 21st century in Table no. 2. The analysis focused on the nature of conflict, how combat is conducted, military training, technology and the domain in which operations are conducted. This type of analysis provides a clear picture of the rapidly changing operational environment and contributes to a better understanding of current and future needs and challenges.

Table no 2: The comparative analysis of the operational environments – 20th vs. 21th century

Characteristics	**20th Century**	**21th Century**
Nature of conflict	- traditional conflicts between states;	- the emergence of cyber warfare, non-state and terrorist groups, the intensification of hybrid threats.
Military training	- training for conventional combat and national defence missions;	- the need for expertise in combating terrorism and cyber attacks; - international missions and exercises.
Tactics and strategy	- large masses of troops; - use of Blitzkrieg tactics, trench warfare; - World War I brought military advances in defense in depth as well as troop infiltration techniques (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 4); - World War II revolutionized the use of mobile armored units (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023 p. 4); - development of the concept of manoeuvre warfare (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 4);	- involvement of special operations forces (SOF), rapid reaction units, JOINT operations; - involvement of economic, political, social and environmental factors (Antunez 2021); - future wars will focus on urbanised environments (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 10); - focus on population support (Bados, 2010, cited in Antunez, 2021);
Technology and equipment	- conventional weapons: planes, tanks, ships; - introduction of the concept of revolution in military affairs (RMA) (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 5);	- integration of technological innovations: artificial intelligence, unmanned autonomous systems, sensors (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 5); - emerging and disruptive technologies (Weissmann and Nilsson 2023, p. 8).
Operational area	- land, air, maritime.	-land, air, maritime, space, cyber.

Also, to have an overview of this study, we have designed Figure no. 1 which includes the factors contributing to the changes in the operational environment and therefore to the operational challenges, as well as the competencies and attributes needed by the military leader. Later, in the development of this study, these will be defined and analyzed in more details. This design represents the mirror of this study, capturing all important aspects in a single scheme. What needs to be emphasized is that all these operational challenges have brought new characteristics to the operational environment, which are volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA). In addition to these characteristics, operational challenges have led to complex approaches that integrate different operational domains such as land, air, maritime, space and cyber, facilitating the concept of multi-domain operations.
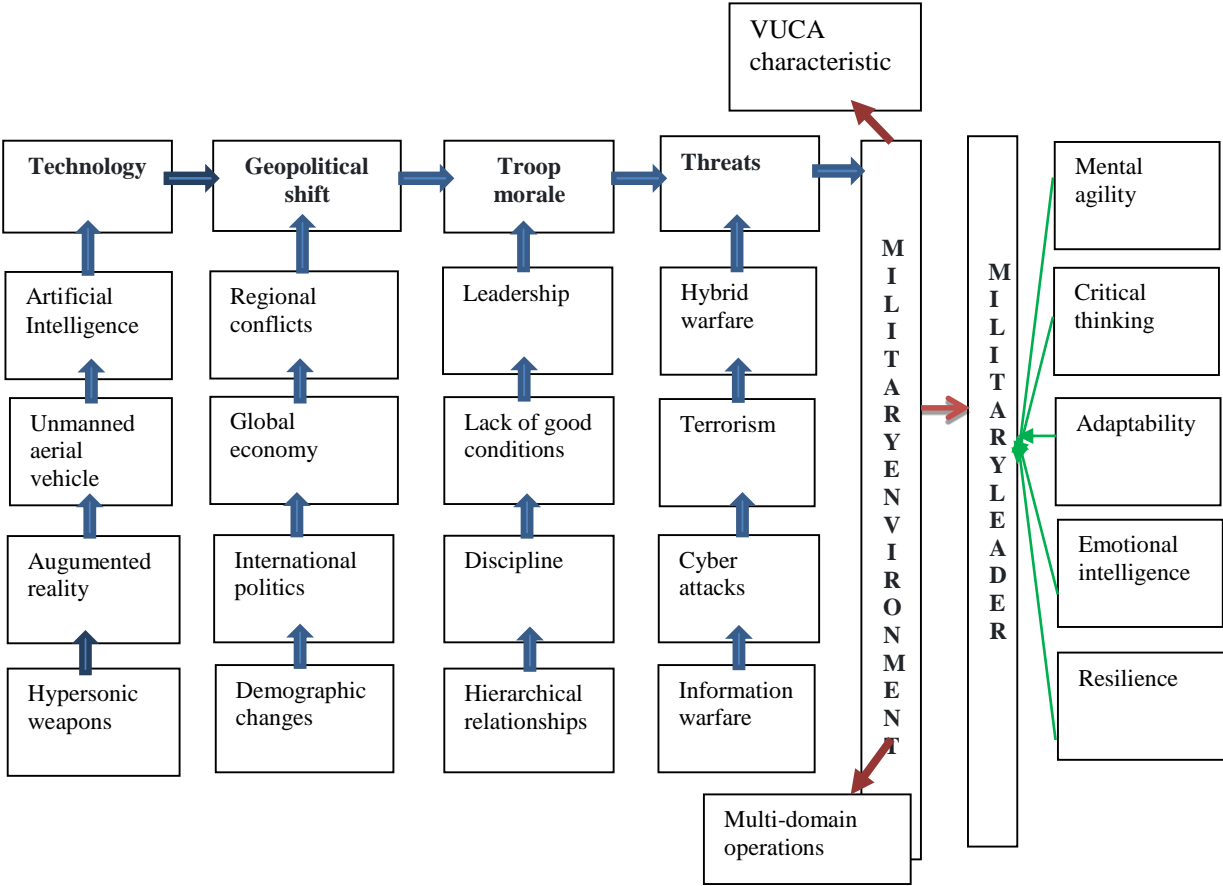

Figure no. 1: The operational challenges

(Source: Figure developed based on information from the systemic analysis of information and own research)

The figure that has just been presented is a summary of the study, integrating the determinants of changes in the operational environment, the related challenges and the necessary skills for the military leader in order to be able to form a clear picture of what the operational environment means. Next, the study proposes a detailed analysis of these elements, highlighting the importance of each in the operational context.

3.1. Technological advances

In the modern military operational environment, technology is both an opportunity and a challenge. The implementation of technology can significantly transform the way military forces plan and conduct operations, but it also brings many challenges that need to be managed effectively. As benefits, technology enables the rapid collection, analysis and distribution of critical information, contributing to well-informed strategic decisions. Autonomous vehicles and drones can also conduct reconnaissance or attack missions without putting soldiers' lives at risk. Last but not least, modern communication systems ensure connectivity between structures and efficient

coordination of operations, regardless of distance. New technologies require continuous adaptation, and their deployment must be fast and efficient to ensure battlefield superiority. In terms of challenges, technology presents cyber vulnerabilities as the increased reliance on computer networks increases the risk of cyber attacks, threatening the security and integrity of military systems.

The European Defence Agency (2023) agrees that "the development of novel disruptive weapons (such as hypersonic and directed energy weapons) will bring new opportunities and challenges to the battlefield. Others, like space technologies, artificial intelligence, nanomaterials, additive manufacturing, and quantum technologies will allow to change the way several military tasks are carried out, including command and control, communications, intelligence and surveillance, engagement, logistics or protection of forces." (p. 12).

Also, the introduction of emerging technologies on the battlefield represents an unprecedented revolution in the military. From artificial intelligence and autonomous drones to augmented reality and cyber warfare, these technological innovations not only bring efficiency and precision to military operations, but also strategically and tactically redefine the conflicts of the future. AI products that will support decision making will result, in addition to reduced time, reduced workload and improved command and control systems (Billing et al. 2020, p. 949).

The implementation of new technologies requires continuous staff training and rapid adaptation to technological change, and over-reliance on technology can lead to the loss of traditional essential skills and a possible inability to operate effectively in the absence of technological equipment. Technology, while advanced and indispensable, can never exceed the importance of knowledge of the political, socio-cultural or historical side of a conflict. Every conflict is deeply rooted in history, culture and politics, and the integration of accumulated knowledge, in order to formulate effective strategies and evaluate their implementation, is essential. The knowledge deficit stems from over-reliance on technology and the belief that technology alone can solve conflicts. In reality, success on conflict management clearly depends on integrating technology with an understanding of political, socio-cultural and historical factors developed over time (Robinson et al. 2014, p. 2).

On the battlefield, technology is an important asset, but it cannot guarantee victory because there are several issues that need to be considered. Quick decisions, troop morale and cohesion, the ability to adapt to changing conditions and exploit enemy vulnerabilities, and logistical support are essential. History teaches us that success on the battlefield depends on a combination of technology and human, political and cultural factors. This idea is supported and demonstrated by the many conflicts of the 20th and 21st centuries. Examples include the German army, the Swiss army in the Vietnam War and coalition troops in Afghanistan, who, despite having considerable technological advantages, failed to achieve their objectives. During the Second World War, Blitzkrieg tactics initially worked for the German army, but as the war progressed, this strategy was thwarted. Also, the US army lost out by not understanding the cultural and political context, and last but not least, coalition troops lost out because of the difficult terrain and the taliban's motivation to fight on their own territory (Andric 2018, p. 29).

Consequently, technological advances in the operational environment have a profound impact on the way military operations are conducted. As was seen in the case of the Ukrainian war, drones, artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and advanced communications have completely transformed traditional warfare. These technologies have the potential to increase efficiency, reduce risk and enable more accurate and faster operations. To reap these technological advantages, the military must place a high priority on investing in research and development to ensure military forces remain at the forefront of technological innovation. Also, in terms of training and education, consideration should be given to introducing training modules for military personnel that include the use of new technologies, as well as updating university curricula to include concepts specific to emerging technologies. Investment in cyber security is also vital, especially when it comes to protecting critical infrastructure. Technology continues to redefine the operational environment and constant adaptation is essential to capitalize on the opportunities offered by technological advances.

3.2. Geopolitical shifts

Geopolitical shifts are producing significant transformations on the battlefield, remodeling alliances and shaping new military strategies. These changes require military to adapt quickly and effectively to new political and economic realities. In a changing world characterized by regional conflicts, population migration, competition for resources and global influences, militaries have to cope with a complex and often unpredictable operational environment. Adaptability and international cooperation thus become essential to maintain security and operational effectiveness in this dynamic context.

The conflict between Russian Federation and Ukraine clearly illustrates the complexity of geopolitical challenges. Beyond the devastating human impact, it has disrupted international and economic relations, generating global instability and insecurity. In the context of such a conflict, states and institutions are forced to take swift and decisive action to counter the negative effects and maintain regional stability. Barwiński (2005) argues that "geopolitical transformations in Europe caused not only far-reaching changes in the political, territorial, economic and social aspects of the continent but also heavily influenced defence doctrines and military potential in all countries concerned" (p. 1).

Furthermore, the emergence of new actors on the global stage, regional conflicts and competition for various resources constantly transform the geopolitical landscape, thus affecting the operations process, with a significant imprint on planning and execution. In this regard, geopolitical changes require armed forces to be more flexible and adaptable. Military strategies need to evolve rapidly in response to new realities, with an emphasis on asymmetric conflict preparedness and international collaboration. Flexibility and anticipation are essential to respond effectively to today's challenges, and updating defence strategies to meet new threats and preparing for asymmetric conflicts is essential. Also, to face geopolitical changes it is necessary for military forces to take part in international missions and conduct joint exercises and training to ensure interoperability between allied forces.

3.3. Troop morale

In the operational environment, maintaining high troop morale is essential to mission success and unit cohesion. Morale refers not only to the mood of soldiers, but also to the level of motivation, confidence and determination with which they carry out their missions. In a world characterized by complexity and multiple risks at every step, maintaining high morale is vital to ensure the rapid and effective responsiveness of troops, to promote a spirit of camaraderie and resilience, and to sustain operational efforts over the long term. High morale is built through leadership, adequate psychological support, recognition of performance, and ensuring optimal readiness and equipping, all of which help turn operational challenges into opportunities.

High morale is a combination of mental and spiritual strength, including courage, self-discipline and resilience. In peacetime, high morale is achieved through sustained and robust training, but also through the encouragement of team spirit, which creates an environment where soldiers feel supported and motivated, but in wartime, morale is reflected in the determination of soldiers to do their duty in every possible circumstance, even at the cost of their lives. This level of devotion not only increases combat effectiveness, but also inspires comrades and can influence the outcome of conflicts. Cheerfulness and selflessness, being considered hallmarks of high morale, are factors that nurture psychological resilience and strengthen bonds between soldiers, creating a stronger unit (Baynes, 1998, cited in Burwell, 2000, p. 4).

In the following, through study and analysis of literature sources, we have identified factors that affect troop morale. The authors find that the following factors affect troop morale in the US Army: lack of clarity and purpose of mission, lack of success on previous missions, lack of mutual respect, poor leadership (Reed et al. 2011, p. 210). In the New Zealand Army, Williams (2002), finds that the following factors affect troop morale: training, leadership, discipline, welfare, communications and information, social and political influences (p. 3). On the other hand, in the UK Army, the following

factors have been identified as influencing troop morale: feelings of unfairness and not being fair, good accommodation, lack of quality food, routine duties and the relationship between junior officers and their subordinates (Jones, 2012, p. 16). To highlight the interdisciplinarity nature of the problem addressed, the morale challenges are carefully analyzed in other domains such as business, management, etc. For instance, in different companies, the following challenges were identified as influencing employee morale: lack of a well-defined company purpose, lack of employee inspiration, not taking into account employee vision (Sinek, 2009, p. 220), "repetitive tasks, long hours sitting still and occasionally rude customers" (Sinek, 2014, p. 150).

On these grounds, to ensure high morale, it is crucial to pay attention to the physical, psychological and emotional needs of the military. Training military leaders to communicate openly and empathetically, building trusting relationships with subordinates and providing opportunities for training and professional development, along with taking an interest in the physical health of military personnel through special programs and recreational activities, are some of the methods that can maintain high morale.

3.4. Threats

Hybrid threats are a major challenge in the 21st century military operational environment. They represent a complex and emerging challenge for the modern military operational environment. These threats combine conventional and unconventional techniques, such as cyber attacks, disinformation, information warfare, the use of paramilitary forces and economic means, to create a combined effect that is difficult to counter. Their multidimensional nature requires adaptability and innovation on the part of military structures, which must develop new strategies and capabilities to respond effectively to these challenges. International cooperation, continuous training and the integration of advanced technologies are essential to counter hybrid threats and ensure security in an increasingly complex and volatile operational environment.

Hoffman (2011) suggests that "hybrid wars can be conducted by separate units or kinds of forces – or even by the same unit – but are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated simultaneously within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects in the physical and psychological dimensions of conflict"(p. 17).

Other authors consider that "a hybrid threat is characterized as possessing decentralized command and control, distributed military and non-military activities, combines traditional, irregular, terrorist and disruptive criminal methods, exploits complex operational environmental conditions, and operates with intention to sacrifice time and space in order to achieve decision by attrition" (Glenn, 2009, cited in Fleming, 2011, p. 36).

In the context of the current conflict between Russia and Ukraine, hybrid threats have become a dominant and essential element in understanding battlefield dynamics. They not only amplify the intensity of the conflict, but further complicate international response and defence strategies. The aggressive actions demonstrated by Russia in the war with Ukraine have resulted in a series of events that affect both the European and transatlantic security systems. In an era when the borders of nations are perceived not only geographically, but also economically and politically, the Kremlin's hybrid actions are destabilizing the region from the Baltic to the Black Sea. This destabilization clearly poses a major threat to peace and security in the region. Russia's hybrid warfare involves a combination of military, political, economic and cyber tactics to influence and dominate. Its effects are all the more serious because it attacks the most vulnerable points of the targeted nation. Through this strategy, Russia aims to erode trust in governments and institutions, influence public opinion, and cause instability (Bratko et al. 2021, pp. 148-149).

In addition to hybrid threats, the fight against terrorism is another complex challenge, being a form of unconventional warfare. Terrorism, by its nature, turns fear into a central strategy, targeting Western symbols and vulnerable societies. In a calculated and cruel way, terrorism exploits social weaknesses and tensions to create panic and terror and manages to implement a unique combination of violence, creativity and rationality, redefining the classical concept of war. This modern form of warfare requires innovative and flexible countering strategies, involving

both armed forces and civilian community efforts (Szenes 2018, p. 92). In this conflict, the protection of civilian populations becomes paramount and collective engagement, and security systems play a crucial role. International collaboration between states, institutions and non-governmental organisations is also essential to prevent the spread of terrorism and to support global stability and security.

In the digital age, information has become a powerful weapon, capable of influencing decisions and destabilising entire nations without the use of firearms. This form of warfare involves the strategic use of information to achieve desired military advantage, whether through disinformation, propaganda, cyber attacks or psychological operations. Its multiple dimensions include cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, manipulation of social media to influence public opinion, and dissemination of fake news to cause panic or mistrust. Such tactics can create confusion and disorganisation among enemy forces, undermining their ability to make effective and rapid decisions. Nichiporuk (2002) argues that the goals of information warfare are "to deny, corrupt, degrade, or destroy the enemy's sources of information on the battlefield" (p. 189).

If information warfare focuses on manipulating and controlling the flow of information, cyber attacks focus on the integrity and availability of information systems and data. Another threat to the operational environment is cyber attacks. Ho Wei Sang (2016) believes that "cyber attacks on critical infrastructures such as the energy, transportation and communications sectors could seriously undermine military mission success since the infrastructures are critical in supporting the conduct of military operations" (p. 28).

By identifying and analysing both the factors contributing to changes in the operational environment and the differences between the 20th and 21st century operational environment, we consider that the first objective has been achieved.

Consequently, the allocation of resources for research and development in critical areas such as artificial intelligence and cyber defence, as well as the implementation of training programs that include real simulations of possible threat scenarios are necessary in the context of threats specific to the operational environment. Another way to counter these threats is to constantly monitoring risks by setting up systems capable of regularly assessing risks in order to anticipate new types of threats. Managing threats in the military operational environment requires an integrated and multidimensional approach, based on advanced technology, flexibility, international collaboration and continuous training.

4. The qualities required of a military leader to meet the challenges of the operational environment

Military leaders are faced with complex and unpredictable challenges on a daily basis. To respond effectively to these challenges, military leaders must possess a set of essential skills that enable them to deal with uncertainty and make quick and effective decisions. Among these skills, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, mental agility, adaptability and resilience play a crucial role.

In the operational environment, every decision has major consequences for the success of missions. Critical thinking is essential in this context and involves objective evaluation of information, analysis of complex situations and logical reasoning to make effective decisions. More specifically, critical thinking is "the ability to logically assess the quality of one's thinking and the thinking of others to consistently arrive at greater understanding and achieve wise judgments" (Guillot 2004, p. 3). In a VUCA word, the ability to think critically helps leaders to adapt, solve problems and react appropriately to challenges. Critical thinking is not only useful, but indispensable for ensuring the success of operations and protecting military lives.

Although critical thinking plays an important role in military leadership training, Goleman (1998) emphasizes the importance of emotional intelligence and argues that "without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader" (p.3). In contrast, Grothe (2009), considers both adaptability and mental agility to be two of the skills required of a military leader in the 21st century. While, mental agility is "flexibility of mind and a tendency to anticipate or adapt to

uncertain or changing situations" (FM 6-22, cited in Grothe 2009, p. 16), adaptability is "encouraged by a collection of thought habits that include open-mindedness, ability to consider multiple perspectives, not jumping to conclusions about what a situation is or what it means, willingness to take risks and being resilient to setbacks" (FM 6-22, cited in Grothe 2009, p. 4).

Lastly, resilience ensures that leaders can cope with stress, recovering quickly and maintaining their effectiveness in a highly demanding environment. In the authors' view, a leader who is resilient accepts reality, has clarity about his or her goals, and has the ability to quickly and effectively find new solutions (Coutu, 2002, cited in Sanaghan, 2016).

Thus, critical thinking helps to assess the potential and tactics of opponents, emotional intelligence maintains team cohesion, mental agility enables rapid adjustment to change, adaptability ensures effective use of resources, and resilience helps to overcome failures to continue the mission. These skills contribute to the development of a military leader capable of meeting challenges and leading effectively in a changing environment. These skills are not only necessary, but are becoming an integral part of ongoing training and leadership development in the modern military. Their systematic development and improvement ensures optimal preparation for operational challenges.

In addition to the qualities described above, the well-known military theorist Clausewitz (1989) argues that, primarily, the following two qualities are necessary for a soldier: "in the first place an intellect which, even in the midst of this intense obscurity, is not without some traces of inner light, which lead to the truth, and then the courage to follow this faint light" (p. 102).

To develop and maintain these skills, it is important for military leaders to participate in leadership courses that include such training and in exercises both nationally and internationally, and through simulations and tactical scenarios to solve complex problems under pressure. Performance evaluation is also necessary for the military leader to discover their gaps and work where they need to. By applying these methods, military leaders can develop and maintain the skills needed to successfully face the dynamic challenges of the operational environment. Investing in these essential skills not only improves individual performance, but also supports the cohesion and effectiveness of military structures.

By identifying both the competencies and skills needed by the military leader and methods for developing and maintaining them, we believe the second objective has been achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the research paper, it can be concluded that today's military leaders face a complex set of challenges that constantly test their skills and resilience. Rapidly evolving technology requires military leaders to keep abreast of new technological developments and to integrate them effectively into their operational structures and strategies. Technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous drones and cyber are transforming the way military operations are designed and executed, offering significant advantages but also introducing new vulnerabilities. The ability to rapidly assess the impact of these technologies and make tactical adjustments requires a new vision of modern warfare. The hybrid nature of threats, combining elements of terrorism, cyber warfare and information propaganda, adds yet another layer of complexity to the operational environment. Military leaders need to develop methods for real-time reaction and response to these threats, using multi-dimensional and collaborative approaches. Geopolitical changes also add another layer of complexity, requiring continued flexibility and adaptability in the planning and execution of operations. Last but not least, maintaining troop morale is essential in this context, and military leaders need to inspire confidence, offer clear guidance and provide the necessary support to keep subordinates motivated and resilient under pressure.

The presented study is not perfect, due to the fact that it has some limitations as its qualitative nature or highlighting only a few operational challenges which are presented from a simplistic perspective. For this reason, it is recommended to continue the addressability of the operational challenges from a quantitative and more comprehensive perspective, which should emphasize the manifestation of different challenges from multiple dimensions and in a corelated manner with the main focus on examining the impact of these challenges on each activity of the operations process.

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