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The mixed system of complementing the armed forces – a requirement for the Republic of Moldova

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Abstract

Military service is a complex social and legal phenomenon that is at the basis of the completion and functioning of the armed forces. Depending on the completion system, the armed forces may be composed of conscripts, volunteers and/or professional military personnel. Contract-based military service significantly contributes to strengthening the armed forces' operational capabilities. Conscript military service is the main form for the military training of citizens who are later included in the reserve to ensure the mobilization of the army. The mixed system of complementing the armed forces organized in the Republic of Moldova responds to the interests of the military construction in the new security conditions after the start of the war in Ukraine.

Keywords:

the system of complementing the armed forces; mixed system; military service; type of army; professionalization of the army; reserve of the armed forces.

Article info

Received: 9 May 2024; Revised: 3 June 2024; Accepted: 13 June 2024; Available online: 5 July 2024

Citation: Coropcean, I. 2024. "The mixed system of complementing the armed forces – a requirement for the Republic of Moldova". Bulletin of "Carol I" National Defence University, 13(2): 30-43. https://doi.org/10.53477/2284-9378-24-18

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An important task of military policy in the Republic of Moldova is the organization of military construction in sufficient volume to ensure the military security of the state. Traditionally, military construction consists of economic, scientific, technical, social, political, and military measures. The main elements of military construction are the armed forces. In this context, military service, as a subject of military policy, ensures the effective functionality of the armed forces and contributes to the development of each military member's required capabilities. (Coropcean, Juc and Manolache 2019, 64).

Types of armies and their complement system

Currently, we distinguish among the following types of armies: *mass army*; *professional army*, *and mixed army*. Each type of army is characterized by a method of complementing military personnel and organizing military service. In our opinion, the type of army holds primacy, within which a part is a method of complementing and organizing military service. This is determined by the criterion of volunteering or recruiting military personnel for a predetermined term (soldiers and graduates).

Thus, as a general feature of *the mass army*, we will mention the fact that a significant part of the military personnel, i.e. the military for a pre-determined term, perform the mandatory military service, arriving in the army through conscription. *Conscription*, is a way of recruiting an important part of the army's forces (it is about conscripts or ordinary soldiers), translated into the obligation of all citizens of the country, who meet the conditions provided by law, to perform military training. Among the arguments brought by researchers in favor of conscription are: the emergence and development of the feeling of defending the country; strengthening the link between the military institution and the nation it belongs to; and decreasing costs as there are lower costs for conscription than for professional military personnel; ensuring the necessary and sufficient human reserves in case of war.

The professional army is expressed through voluntary employment in the military institution of the entire military force, all of whom have professional training specific to the positions and functions for which they are assigned. The acceptance or rejection of applicants is done according to complex criteria and, as a rule, through competition. This type of army is specific to developed industrial states, which can massively endow themselves with modern military equipment. We will note that the emergence and evolution of the professional army proves to be an adequate response to the changes produced in the security environment at both national and international levels.

The mixed army represents the military institution in which both ordinary soldiers, from conscription, and volunteers meet, in addition to career military (officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers). The proportion in which

one recruitment method or another is used depends on an extended spectrum of economic, political, social, demographic, and military factors, and trends of evolution of the national, regional, and global security environment. Such a type of army is also found in states with a high level of economic development, which may or may not belong to a political-military alliance (<u>Duţu, Moştoflei and Sarcinschi 2003</u>, 3-4).

In the specialized literature at the beginning of the 2000s, reference is made to the advantages and disadvantages of military service based on conscription, in comparison with the professional one, starting from the natural approach of the factors (internal and international) that determine the transition from the mass army to the mixed army or by professionals. The professionalization of the army is a very sensitive political issue with major implications for the management and structure of the armed forces, and the process of making such a decision involves the analysis of several factors.

Among the international factors that stand out, we could mention: the diminishing or even the apparent absence of the danger represented by a massive external military attack on any European state; the disappearance of interstate wars, at least in Europe, and the intensification of intrastate wars of ethnic or religious origin; the emergence and manifestation on the international level in terms of defense and security, in addition to traditional actors (states), of non-state actors (political-military and other organizations); the emergence and manifestation of new dangers and security threats: international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their specific vectors, organized crime, regional conflicts; illegal migration; the transformation of the political-military organization of which the respective state is a member.

Among the internal factors that determined the transformations within the army, the following can be found: the psychosocial factor: the evolution of mentalities in society, especially those aimed at the "spirit of defense" and the military-citizen connection. An important role seems to have been played by the gaps manifested during conscription as a method of recruiting the military (ranked and soldiers) and the lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the population of compulsory military service; the technological factor: the increase in the degree of technicalization of armaments and the introduction of new technologies, especially of information and communications, require well-trained and specialized soldiers in top fields; the economic factor: more and more European states, after 1990, started to decrease the budgets for defense, given the new geostrategic and geopolitical context; the military factor: the evolution of contemporary conflicts resulting in the quasi-disappearance of mass confrontations in favor of punctual, "targeted" and multifaceted international crises related to a certain form of external aspects of the professionalization of the army, the internal ones being much more important (Duţu 2008, 118-120).

In this framework of analysis, the Romanian researcher A. Sarcinschi emphasizes that in the establishment of a professional army, it is necessary to clearly define how the military



personnel employed on a contract basis will be selected, trained, and professionally improved (Sarcinschi 2005, 36) highlighting the importance of developing a recruitment and professional training methodology for this category of soldiers.

The professionalization of the National Army – between intentions and reality

We will mention that during this period the professionalization of the Romanian Army represented an objective necessity and was successfully achieved. At the same time, at the level of the political leadership of the Republic of Moldova, a clear option was not formulated regarding the type of army that we were going to build. In the absence of a state policy based on feasible calculations and foresight regarding the military security of the state in general and how to complement the armed forces and organize the military service in particular, almost every government and defense minister came up with their own approach on the model of completing and organizing the military service. Thus, in recent years, the aspects of completing the army have seen an oscillation from one form to another.

This includes the intention to professionalize the Moldovan army by adopting Government Decision No. 601 of 27.06.2018 regarding the approval of the Program "Professional Army 2018-2021" (Government of the Republic of Moldova 2018). The purpose of the program was to identify the areas of development of the National Army and to order them according to the allocated resources. The main effort was focused on two aspects of major importance for the army.

The first aspect highlighted the importance and role of the military (individual) within the national defense system. The focus of attention was on the quality of the human dimension, implicitly the selection, equipping, training, and provision of social facilities, which becomes imperative in the context of the diminishing attractiveness of military service and the increased ebb of personnel. The second aspect of the Program concerned the structural reform of the National Army. The need for this reform was imposed by the evolution of the environment, security, and defense systems at the international level.

According to the vision outlined in the Program, "professionalization" implies deep transformations at the level of organization, equipping with modern equipment, armaments and combat techniques, training, and the activity of the military body. Complementarily, professionalization was supposed to intensify the communication relations between the army and society (the political class, civil society, state institutions, etc.), increasing its involvement and presence in various compartments of social life. The implementation of the Program was supposed to be carried out in stages, during the years 2018-2021, in accordance with the budget allocations, the additional resources available, and those provided by external partners. Among the

areas of implementation were:

- The transition from military term service to service by contract by the year 2021.
- Perfecting the process of combat training and mobilization. The efforts were to be oriented towards the standardization of the training process and the gradual provision of military units with modern weapons and equipment. Also here, efforts were to be undertaken to replace obsolete military equipment, including through external assistance. Additionally, it was expected to initiate the process of revising the army mobilization system.
- Revision of the salary system for the military and improvement of the social package. In this chapter, the possibility of moving to unitary pay for all force structures within the national security and defense system was to be identified. Additionally, it was planned to extend the benefits of the social package for the military of the National Army.
- The efficiency and development of the logistic system. In the initial phase of this direction, the organizational structure and the command-and-control component of the system were revised. At the same time, a feasibility study was carried out regarding the reconsideration of the method of insurance with military uniforms of the military by contract, as well as insurance with food ration.
- Modernization of the military and social infrastructure. This measure was aimed at the renovation and gradual construction of some infrastructure objects (barracks, canteens, sports and housing complexes, etc.). Also here, the continuous realization of the Public-Private Partnership projects, which involved the provision of service housing for the contract military, was foreseen.
- The review of the security service and guarding the military objectives of the National Army. This measure has an innovative character at the national level, based on the practice of the armies of the Western states, and aims to make the military service more efficient by reducing the number of personnel involved in guarding activities and ensuring daily life.
- The development of cooperation relations with external partners. Efforts were focused on streamlining cooperation within the Defense Capacity Building Initiative (DCBI). At the same time, it was foreseen to establish the positions of advisers (military attachés) within the embassies of the Republic of Moldova in the partner states (USA, Romania, and Ukraine).

The program, however, did not achieve its proposed objectives. We will identify several causes: considering the importance of the defense sector in ensuring the security and sustainable development of the state, the Program was not the expression of the consensus decision of the political class through its approval by the Parliament, being rather a decision of a party, which did not have continuity; the issue of financing the Program was not a priority of the political leadership



and the Government of the Republic of Moldova; the society was not sufficiently informed and prepared for the transition to the professional army. Thus, the delays in the implementation of the Program made the Republic of Moldova repeat the same experience that Ukraine, Georgia (Global Legal Monitor 2023), Latvia (Capital 2024), Lithuania (Capital 2015), but also other states went through. However, the Program was a good platform that the Ministry of Defense used effectively in rethinking the importance of the system of complementing the army by organizing the military service and its multilateral assurance.

Those issues exposed regarding the policies of complementing the armed forces and organizing the military service allow us to identify new concepts of organization and operation, which correspond to the current security architecture and the new challenges to the international and national security environment. The war in Ukraine demonstrated that the mixed complementation system of the armed forces, where alongside the military service by contract compulsory military service is also organized, remains a necessity that ensures the functionality of the armed forces in the context of the new security conditions.

The system of complementing the armed forces through the lens of the war in Ukraine

We will note that before the start of the war in Ukraine, on February 1, 2022, the President of Ukraine signed Decree no. 36/2022 "On the priority measures for strengthening the state's defense capacity, increasing the attractiveness of military service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the gradual transition to the principles of a professional army." We consider that an additional argument for this decision was the previous unsuccessful attempt of Ukraine to switch starting from January 1, 2014, to the professional army (President of Ukraine 2013).

One of the elements foreseen for the year 2022 was the transition to a system of intensive military training and the cancellation of conscription for military service. From January 1, 2024, it was proposed to introduce short-term intensive training for citizens, 3-4 months, gradually increasing the number of those involved and maintaining their skills through regular training (President of Ukraine 2022). This approach preserved the system of training citizens for the defense of the homeland and the formation of a trained reserve with a necessary number of specialists. We will mention that this fact was not taken into consideration by the Moldovan authorities with the intention of professionalizing the National Army in the "Professional Army 2018-2021" Program.

The aggression of the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, prevented the implementation of the mentioned decree; thus, Ukraine entered the war having mixed military service to complement the army. However, the term-military is not involved in combat actions. In the context of the declaration of general mobilization

in Ukraine, incorporation during the war was not carried out. All vacancies in the Armed Forces and other military formations are filled by the mobilized reservists (Interfax 2022). Ukraine has learned its lesson regarding the importance of the system of complementing the armed forces. In the new mobilization law, basic military service is introduced instead of military service. It is to be organized for citizens aged between 18 and 25 years. They will be able to independently choose the period of service until they reach the age of 24. Basic military service in wartime will last up to 3 months, of which at least 1 month will be devoted to basic training and up to 2 months will be for professional training, and in peacetime the duration will be up to 5 months, respectively 3 months will last for basic training and 2 months for professional training (Euronews 2024). In this context, previously organized military term service was the main source that allowed the formation of the required number of trained reservists of the Ukrainian army, and the introduction of basic military service will ensure the possibility of training reservists for the future.

We will mention that the characteristics and trends of evolution of the national, regional, and global security environment since the end of the 20th century, which influenced the transition to a professional army in Eastern European countries, changed radically with the invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine. Both states resorted to the mobilization of reservists, who initially ensured the transfer of military units to the states at war, and later to restore and supplement the losses suffered as a result of combat actions, the formation of new combat units to ensure the rotation of front-line units. The availability of human resources trained and prepared for mobilization is one of the key indicators of the state's military potential (Diplomatic Dictionary 2024). After two years of war, the Armed Forces of Ukraine urgently needed new reservists called up, and for this purpose, amendments were adapted to the mobilization law which expanded the categories of citizens that could be mobilized, including by lowering the age for mobilization from 27 years to 25 years (Parliament of Ukraine 2024). The new provisions of the law will ensure the possibility of rotating approximately 300,000 soldiers on the battlefield out of the nearly 500,000 people who could be mobilized (Forbes 2024).

The importance of the reserve, prepared in time, in the war in Ukraine, led to the reevaluation of the role and place of compulsory military service which is the main form of military training of the citizens and, respectively, of the formation of the reserve for the mobilization of the army. After Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 and the military invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, several states revised their system of complementing the armed forces, advocating a mixed system. The Lithuanian government enacted a law that all men between the ages of 18 and 25 would be conscripted for compulsory military service in the army. Likewise, in Latvia all men between the ages of 18 and 27 will have to undergo 11 months of military training, starting in 2024. In Sweden, compulsory military service was reintroduced in 2018, as not enough were found volunteers for military service (DW 2023). Denmark extended the term of compulsory military service from 4 to 11



months and intends to introduce, from 2026, compulsory conscription for women as well, after it was implemented in Norway and Sweden (Defense Romania 2024).

The actuality of the mixed system of complementation for the National Army

The war in Ukraine required a comprehensive analysis of the security sector in the Republic of Moldova. The national security strategy, recently adopted, defines the threats, risks, and vulnerabilities that affect or may affect national security. Among the vulnerabilities in the field of military security and national defense that are or can be exploited by internal and external malignant actors, the strategy highlights the low support for the country's defense among the population (Parliament of the Republic of Moldova 2023).

In this context, we will note that the institution of compulsory military service, in addition to the formation of the reserve prepared for mobilization, also acts as an educational factor, in a civic-national spirit, on those who have been active within its structures, thus functioning as an instrument socialization and strengthening of support for the country's defense among the population. Thus, both the conducted studies and the data provided by the opinion poll entitled "L'opinion publique et l'Europe de la Defense" (Duţu and Sarcinschi 2004, 8-10) state that the military institution has the purpose, among other things, to:

- prepare young people for life, accustoming them to discipline and order: performing military service, they learn to conform freely, voluntarily, and consciously to a set of norms and rules specific to military activity and life, but with positive consequences for their future conduct;
- transmit to young people specific traditional values: the instructive-educational activities that young people take part in during military service help them assimilate and internalize traditional values honor, pride in being a citizen of their state, justice, discipline, loyalty, responsibility;
- contribute to the socialization and maturation of young people: the socialization process that young people start in the family continues in school (primary socialization), then it is continued in the army, where they learn, internalize, and integrate essential socio-cultural elements into the personality structure, based on which they can act coherently within society;
- help to integrate young people into society: during military service, young people assimilate values (specific to the military environment, but also common to any democratic society), norms, and rules, that will shape their behavior from a psychosocial point of view (consensus, conformity, solidarity, effectiveness, and traditions) and professionally. These accumulations allow an easier integration into the civilian social environment when they are transferred to the reserve.

The exercise of these social functions acts directly on the qualitative content of the army's mission to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of

the state. If the young soldiers are trained and educated according to the demands of social functions, they will be able to perform all the tasks received in the coordination of the defense of the country. The military service approached as a life experience, continues to have an important contribution to the formation of the social perception of the population on the role, utility, and legitimacy of the army in society.

Thus, the mixed system of complementing the armed forces represents the model in which the armed forces are supplemented by both professional military personnel and conscripts who have been recruited through compulsory military service. In this vein, we emphasize that for the Republic of Moldova the preservation of compulsory military service, through its educational effects, is an essential factor in reducing vulnerability in the field of security and national defense determined by the low support for the country's defense among the population, reflected in the National Security Strategy.

Currently, the National Army is going through an extensive transformation process, a situation that implies the transition from a certain perspective from compulsory (mixed) military service in all military units, to the system of completing some military units only with contract soldiers. In this process, according to the regulations established at the national level, the role, place, and importance of the military profession expands, the emphasis being placed on the number of soldiers and sergeants employed on a contract basis. However, the National Army is currently facing the substantial problem of the reduced capacity to maintain/complete the workforce of sergeants and soldiers employed by contract.

We will highlight the main problems of complementing the number of sergeants and soldiers engaged in military service by contract: the alternative of better-paid jobs; diminishing the social status of the defender of the country; lack of motivation of young people for military service; disinformation attacks and manipulation of public opinion on the military establishment; the material and technical resources needed to carry out daily activities are below the corresponding quality level and others.

The Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine has generated a very strong change in the view of Moldovan citizens towards the National Army and defense issues. Traditionally, the military enjoyed positive attitudes from the general public. If in previous years trust in the army, exposed in the Barometer of Public Opinion, had constantly varied between 40% and 50%, then in the survey of 2022, this indicator has dropped to 27%. Another important aspect can be found in the answers to the question about citizens' willingness to join the armed forces in the event of military aggression against the Republic of Moldova. The willingness of men to enlist in the army in the event of aggression is 41%, while among citizens with military training, the percentage of those who declare themselves willing to participate in the defense of the country is 48.5%. Thus, in the event of aggression, Moldovans will not flee the country but will defend themselves, ensuring the capabilities of mobilizing the



armed forces. This indicator, however, does not come close to similar provisions in Ukraine, Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States, where there is patriotic education and a cutting-edge state information policy regarding the dangers emanating from Russia (Albu et. all 2022, 17).

We believe that the initiation and implementation of a campaign to promote the positive image of military service in the National Army is of major importance. There is a need for a system/program of military-patriotic education of the young generation and the formation and promotion of security and defense culture, as well as the culture of memory in society. Patriotic education should be seen as a systematic activity of the state authorities, the army, the school, civil society, and the family for the formation in citizens of high patriotic consciousness, feelings of loyalty to the homeland, readiness to fulfill civic duty and constitutional duties to protect the interests of the homeland. We will note that Government Decision No. 1263 of 24.12.1998 regarding the approval of the concept of military-patriotic education of the youth (Government of the Republic of Moldova 1998) was repealed in 2012, without an adequate replacement for the new security requirements.

At the same time, the actions to increase the attractiveness, the quality of the military service, and the guarantees of social protection of the military by ensuring an appropriate social package for the employees are opportune. In this context, in 2023, the Government of the Republic of Moldova approved an increase in the salary of the term-military from 150 to 500 lei per month, and the right to a food ration for the contract-based military was introduced once a day (at lunch), per diem of the National Army soldiers deployed in a peace support mission in the Security Zone was increased, the salary principles for the corps of sergeants and soldiers were adjusted in accordance with international practices.

At the same time, the Ministry of Defense started some programs for the development and equipping of the National Army with modern weapons. This became possible thanks to the support of external partners, as well as the support of the defense sector by the political leadership in the current security conditions, which allowed the increase of the budget intended for defense, which for the year 2024 constitutes - 0.55% of GDP (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova 2023). The social protection actions of the military, on the one hand, and the development and equipment of the army, on the other hand, represent a factor of strengthening citizens' confidence in the army's ability to carry out its constitutional mission and respectively increase support for the defense of the country among the population.

Keeping the mixed system of complementing the armed forces offers the possibility of preparing the reserve of the armed forces at the expense of the soldiers who are released after completing the military service. The armed forces of Romania faced the problem of the insufficiency of the prepared reserve, after the abolition of compulsory military service in 2007. In order to return to normality, in 2015, the

Law on the Status of Voluntary Reservists was adopted, which provides for an initial training period for citizens who have not completed active military service for the accumulation of basic military knowledge, after which the annual call for training takes place for 15 calendar days (Parliament of Romania 2015). At the same time, considering the lessons of the war in Ukraine, the Ministry of National Defense has prepared for 2024 a draft law on voluntary military training for women and men that will regulate the possibility of those who wish to have military training, having an age between 18 and 35 years, to undergo training for a period of up to four months, with certain incentives for this (Free Europe 2024).

We believe that this example should be taken into consideration by the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova in the context of the opportunity to continue to keep the mixed system of complementing the army. Moreover, national legislation does not limit the proportion, a fact that allows for gradual professionalization. The need to improve the legislation in force regarding the training of the military reserve also remains current.

Conclusions

Taking into account the changes in the international and regional security environment, after the National Security Strategy was adopted, in the Republic of Moldova there is a complex process of designing the strategic framework for defense planning, which includes the elaboration of a set of strategic documents such as the National Strategy of Defense and Military Strategy.

We will note that at this stage of the practical implementation of the political decisions, it is recommended that the Ministry of Defense ensure the planning of the construction and development of the National Army not only through the prism of streamlining the structure, organization, management, training, efficient use, equipment, deployment but also by keeping the mixed system of complementing the army. In the National Defense Strategy, it is recommended to mention that the mixed system of complementing the National Army is the main method by which the Republic of Moldova can prepare its citizens and its own reserve of armed forces for the defense of its homeland. In perspective, the professionalization of the army can be examined through the lens of the existence of updated external/internal conditions, on a broad platform of political support and multilateral assurance of the process, the launch of a system for organizing the military training of young people/citizens to create reserves, as well as the establishment of voluntary military service in reserve.

At the same time, defense is a joint effort that involves both military and civilian institutions, and, last but not least, the responsibility of the citizen. There is a need for a strong security culture, promoted in a sustained manner among the population and political decision-makers, for the formation and consolidation of knowledge



and information regarding national security values and needs, the knowledge of which attracts the development and promotion of behaviors necessary for the defense of the state in the face of internal or external dangers. Thus, the meaning of the Constitution (art. 57) will be understood correctly (Parliament of the Republic of Moldova 1994), by which it is mentioned that the defense of the homeland is a right and a sacred duty of every citizen which is primarily achieved through military service in the armed forces.

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