



CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION AT "CAROL I" NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY IN THE THREE DECADES OF THE POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

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"In a world of misinformation, the university has to highlight the pass to information without forgetting its formative mission."

Starting from the special challenges to the current operational situation and the legitimate requirements of the beneficiary, some obvious questions will arise related to the programs of study to which the university has to answer: What should a graduate know and do? How long does it take to prepare him/her according to the requirements of the beneficiary? Which should be the percentage of technical subjects in the education plans? What subjects will best cover the requirements of the beneficiary? How can practical training be performed and how often? How can competent teachers and instructors from the field be selected and promoted?

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The evolution and the characteristics of the Superior War School from its foundation to the end of the communist period

The Superior War School was founded in 1889 by King Carol I, being the sixth general staff school from Europe after the ones from Berlin, Paris, Torino and Brussels. This was one of the most important moments on the way to the modernization of the Army and of the country, a trend that had begun with ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza and marked the evolution of the Romanian Armed Forces and, through the waggod wars and guarantee of peace, of Romania itself.

I can state this because, from its foundation until today, the Superior War School, regardless of the name it bore over the years, has preserved its profile and mission as the most important institution of superior military education responsible for the formation of the most important commanders of the Armed Forces.

The features of the education process performed here have permanently focused on the study of war, as a complex social and political phenomenon, and was tightly linked to the ruling and the state

policy thus influencing most of the political events experienced by the country and its Army. We can identify in this respect, four distinct periods in the evolution of the Superior War School: 1889 – the end of the First World War; the period between the wars – the end of the Second World War; the communist period; the post-communist period.

These periods can also be divided into sub-periods, which suffered different external influences – the French, the German, the Soviet, the USA (NATO) or, on the contrary, refused the exterior models like in the case of the communist-nationalist period from the Ceausescu Age.

All these political contexts in which the Romanian Armed Forces had to function, together with the invention of new weapons and the advance in military technology had direct and normal consequences on the education at the Superior War School, on **what** and **how** students learned; they began to study the use in combat of different tactical, operative and strategic contexts, inter-arms or joint echelons contexts, and different national and international (alliance or coalition) ones. They also studied the preparation and support of operations and war through logistics and mobilization and also the need for operational and technical interoperability and its particularities related to weapons' and forces' structures in war operations or, lately, in military operations other

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than the war (stability).

Challenges to education from „Carol I” National Defence University in the last 30 years after the communist era

Getting closer to our time, in the “Post-Cold War” period, we should highlight the fact that the disappearance of communism in Europe and the dissolving of the USSR, followed by the problems of the former Soviet subjects now in search of their own identity, allowed Romania to exit the political and military arrangements that tied it to the USSR and to the other former communist countries (Warsaw Pact) and later to the Russian sphere of influence, and later embrace the European and Euro-Atlantic values, a clear policy of getting closer to the Western Countries and to the organizations and political and economic institutions that define them.

The pro-western fundamental option of the Romanian state has not changed in the past 30 years and was strengthened at political and military level thought the signing in 1997 of the Partnership for Peace (PfP), followed in 2004 by joining NATO and the European Union in 2007.

From the historic point of view, this was the situation in terms of national and regional security in which our country has evolved in the last 30 years. Because of the ample and frequent changes undertaken by the military institution, this situation had an impact on the educational trends from the Superior War School, which was required to keep abreast to the changes and reforms.

We should also state that after the toppling of Ceausescu’s Regime, Romania found itself after 45 years of communism and isolation, under the umbrella of the Soviet Union, in the real world, in the conditions offered by a new society, the capitalist one with its liberties, opportunities and associated challenges, marked by globalization and information technology.

The changes in the social and political paradigm had an impact on all levels of Romanian society, the educational and military ones being also reformed. In this way, from the point of view of state and educational structures, officers’ schools became institutes and then academies, while the Superior War School, at the beginning of this analysis, the Military Academy, became “Carol I” National Defence University, following a period of 12 years in which it was the Academy

of High Military Studies (1991-2003) and the National Defense University (2003-2005).

In addition, in the analysis of the challenges to military education from the Superior War School we cannot omit the fact that it followed the changes from the national and European higher education by adopting the requirements of the Bologna Process that referred to the academic studies – BA, master’s and doctoral ones – in 1999.

As a result, military higher education has changed, too easily according to some, without applying specific filters and regulations that were specific to the civilian field and to the new condition and challenges that appeared after the adoption of the National Law of Education in 2011. The consequence of this enterprise is that today we can talk about the academic studies in the military system, including the Superior War School, only in the parameters imposed by the civilian law, particularizing it to the military field through plans and programs designed by each academic institution based on the principle of academic autonomy.

In this period, according to the profound changes in the Armed Forces, with the inherent problems that consumed resources due to the implementation of reform, some subjects were included or disappeared from the curricula such as: the study of different tactical and strategical-operative echelons (Joined Forces, division, aviation regiment, air base, aviation group/ army corps, aviation corps and air defense, aviation fleet, aviation group/division, brigade, joint forces, etc.) while the planning process was changed and become more flexible according to the NATO (British and American) model of interoperability.

Teachers, in turn, had to get through the tribulations of the new changes and adapt or not to the new situation; some left, probably too soon, and the others became academic teaching staff, completing their doctoral studies and obeying the regulations imposed to the whole academic education system in Romania.

Could the education from the Superior War School have performed better in this period of profound changes, in terms of fulfilling their fundamental mission? I consider that this question has to be addressed not only to the military institution, but also to the whole Romanian society and the answer cannot be other than YES, with a number of explanations...

It is true that the major changes in the military education that evolved over a century in a pyramidal logics had a profound impact on the symbol-institution of the Romanian Armed Forces – “Carol I” National Defence University (“Carol I” NDU). So, the transformation of military schools into military institutions – academies – with their own academic development, recognized by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (RAQAHE)/Ministry of National Education had a major impact on the education basis from the university, on the military BA programs, because it was now related to the Bologna Process and Law of National Education by offering officers career opportunities through the recognition of alternative academic studies in other civilian academies and universities.

Under these circumstances, “Carol I” NDU, built around the Combined Arms Faculty/Command and Staff Faculty, has evolved trying to preserve its identity and live up to the heritage of the Superior War School by accomplishing its entrusted mission.

“Carol I” National Defence University, nowadays Superior War School, functions with two faculties - Command and Staff Faculty and the Security and Defense Faculty, having the mission to generate and transfer knowledge in order to:

- Train, specialize and improve at academic and post-graduate level the commanders, the staff officers and the military and civilian experts in order to build their command expertise in the field of “military science, information and public order”;

- Organize and perform scientific academic research in the field of “military science, intelligence and public order”;

- Ensure the professional training of human resources from the Ministry of National Defence, from the national defence and security system, from other institutions and public organizations in the country and abroad.

As seen above, “Carol I” National Defence University will ensure even in the current situation the need for training required by the beneficiary – Defence Staff/Ministry of National Defence and by the labor market in the field of security and national defence.

The mutations in the dynamics of international environment and the features of modern armed combat

The new conditions refer to both the legal aspects I have already mentioned and the international environment marked by information advancement and multidimensional globalization.

What comes as a real novelty is the fact that the effects of information advancement and multidimensional globalization do not affect only the international actors, but all individuals, having an impact that is hard to quantify on the whole human civilization; we witness the movement of capital, of goods and people or the cultural leveling, but they seem to be hard to control. Smartphones, internet, airplane, at the same time cause and effect of this process, did not make the world smaller, but incredibly smaller, transforming it into a “global village”, and resulting in building more virtual borders.

At the same time, the dynamics of international security is very high, experiencing movements whose consequences are difficult to anticipate and control. This results in more international state and non-state actors who question the international status-quo, while great powers are literally racing to disobey the agreements and treaties they have negotiated for years, thus making use of a broken logic and taking into account the mutual potential for destruction and the examples offered by others who followed their own egotistic security interests.

This would be theoretically the security environment in which “Carol I” NDU has to ensure the best education of commanders/leaders and specialists in the field of security and defense so that they will serve the interests of the country and of the security institutions we have joined.

In my opinion, the academic studies offered by both faculties and the independent departments have to achieve unity in diversity, according to their missions and the requirements of the programs of study at the same time underlining the unicity and purpose of the university in order to provide the beneficiary with the desired product.

So, the students from the programs of study that address officers from both faculties need to be well prepared and trained as leaders for the leading positions in the new conditions offered by the modern war. Some of these spectacular changes

have already been mentioned above, but among them, I would mention the following:

- The demassification of combat and discontinuity of the frontline;
- The extraordinary impact of technology and modern systems of weapons on combat (greater precision and firepower; the command – execution cycle, in real time) and new contents for old concepts: defense-attack, defensive – offensive;
- The increased importance of Special Forces/ reaching the operational and strategic objectives by the combat entities at tactical level;
- The information advancement and the problem of achieving supremacy of electromagnetic environment;
- The shift of airspace control to the air-cosmic one;
- The permanent information and cybernetic actions associated with different types of threats: hybrid, conventional or both;
- The wide use of unmanned vehicles (drones) and especially of those that operate in the airspace - UAV^{1/}UCAV^{2/};
- The change in the use of the nuclear weapons and the multiplication of actors and platforms that transport them to the target;
- The presence of mass media and the pressure put by public opinion.

It is evident that all the changes mentioned before, which altered the image of armed combat, should deserve an exhaustive paper, but this was not the purpose of the present endeavor.

All these changes are important and it is difficult to build a hierarchy as far as their importance is concerned with the exception of possession and use of nuclear weapons.

Still, I would draw the attention to the fact that, due to the scope, the rhythm and the access to the technological program, drones (UAV /UCAV) have started to be widely used around the world both in the civilian and military field, and this situation will have dramatically impacted the way in which the human civilization will live and wage war on this planet³.

At the current rate of technology advancement and due to its availability, could we imagine what the daily life will be like in a world of drones, more or less controlled by minidrones and microdrones? What about the war? If we add to drones the artificial intelligence – AI⁴ – we will have the

complete picture of the framework in which we will need to operate.

What is to be done? Conclusions

The fact that the equipment in this technical and operational framework, which, most certainly, has already shaped the image of contemporary combat, is not present as it should be part of the endowment of the Romanian Armed Forces does not mean that we should not study it more at theoretical and conceptual level by including related subjects in the plans of instruction of different programs.

At the same time, students from the programs that prepare civilian specialists in the field of security and defense, according to the programs of study, need to learn the particularities of modern armed combat; however, their education should also be based permanently on this reality and the consequences that shape the phenomenology of contemporary war.

In this dynamic and complex operational environment, the requirements of the beneficiary for military and civilian leaders, in terms of desired abilities, could be organized after the model of other Armed Forces⁵ as follows:

- The ability to understand the current environment of action and the effect of all the instruments of national power;
- The ability to anticipate and adapt to surprise and uncertainty;
- The ability to recognize change and lead transition;
- The ability to take decisive action through trust, delegation of authority and understanding;
- The ability to make ethical decisions based on the values of military profession;
- The ability to use critical and strategic thinking in applying the principles and concepts of war in joint operations.

The multiple faces of operational reality presented before and correlated with beneficiary's requirements will represent the challenges to the education from "Carol I" NDU. They will have to be addressed differently in the programs of study by designing flexible and updated plans, respectively by deepening the scientific knowledge ensured by the content of the programs.

Starting from these specific challenges brought by the current operational situation and the legitimate requirements of the beneficiary, there

are some questions that might arise related to the programs of study to which the University should have an answer: What should a graduate know and do? How long does it take to prepare him/her according to the requirements of the beneficiary? Which should be the percentage of technical subjects in the curricula? What subjects will best cover the requirements of the beneficiary? How and how often should practical training be performed? How could the competent teachers and instructors from the field be selected and promoted? Etc.

In order to meet these challenges, regardless of the beneficiary and university's obligations, the decision-makers involved should encourage and preserve the proactive and prospective attitude of all the teaching staff and students who should possess not only high academic standards but also those related to their belonging to a military institution.

The guaranty of these standards and, in my opinion, the unifying element, according to the University Charter, are represented by the values of "Carol I" NDU which should lead the mindset and action of all the academic community on long term – *academic excellence, academic freedom, permanent development of knowledge, integration, collaboration and patriotism.*

NOTES:

1 Unmanned Aerial Vehicle – Vehicul aerian nepilotat.

2 Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle – Vehicul

aerian de luptă nepilotat.

3 At the time this article was being written, an unidentified attack, possibly involving drones, against Saudi Arabia, destroyed half of its capacity of refining oil, despite the fact that the kingdom has a powerful air defense system (Patriot missiles).

4 Artificial Intelligence – Inteligență artificială.

5 American Army – *Desired Leader Attributes for Joint Force 2020.*

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