

THE INFLUENCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE ON MILITARY STRUCTURES

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Abstract: *The human factor is the main value-creating resource of an army. The presentation aims to highlight the overall influence of the demographic decline in recent years on the process of generating military structures. By analysing the approach to policies adopted to ensure national security and defence, the causal links between demographic indicators and the evolution of economic development, the trend in population size and the characteristics of age generations, the article highlights the creation of a new perspective on attracting human capital to the military profession. Focusing on the study of the evolution of demographic indicators, trends and forecasts, it also reveals the creation of premises in the development of the employer brand of the military institution on the labour market. With more than 12 years of experience in the field of human resources management in the Romanian Army up to their strategic level, both in the field of recruiting personnel for the military profession and in the field of personnel management, I have observed different behaviours of individuals depending on their origin, professional training, financial motivation, age generations, behaviours that I believe are directly influenced by the evolution of demographic indicators on society in general. The article concludes that it needs to be developed in detail in order to draw up guidelines for promoting the military profession, recruiting human resources and building a predictable and stable military personnel management system.*

Keywords: *demographic indicators; forecasting; recruitment; military profession; human resources management.*

In the context of progressive global developments, Romania's demography has been characterized by a negative population dynamics, representing a sharp and continuous decline, which is why specialized studies must address this problem as a direct challenge to the organizational structure of the security system. This challenge is all the more acute as negative demographic dynamics can play a tacit role in intensifying and determining the vulnerabilities of the security environment.

The National Defence Strategy (Presidential Administration 2020) (National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024 2022) for 2020-2024 treats the current demographic process as asymmetric, unpredictable, with a strong influence on the security environment, accentuated by the phenomenon of population ageing and migration (external and internal). Romanian society is going through a period of transition in the mechanical dynamics of the population which influences several social factors, such as: economic development, political-military choices, as well as professional development choices, etc. This demographic transition describes the relationship between social changes and the demographic structure of populations, a phenomenon encountered in Romania, thus establishing the causal relationship between demography and economic development.

There is an interdependent relationship between economic development and demography, which are two different processes of social development, since population is the primary component of a society, of an organisation, and thus the main element of an economy's existence. The change in the size of the population, in terms of number and structure, as a result of births and deaths, described as natural dynamics, has a decisive influence on the satisfaction of human (Aceleanu 2010) needs, constituting the „*general purpose of economic activities*”.

Among the reasons for Romania's political-military option of NATO membership, involving the professionalization of military personnel and abandoning the compulsory

military service, were demographic considerations. Romania's population in 2003 was about 2 million less than at the end of 1990, and even less than in 1977, when a massive increase in population size began. Data from studies carried out in 2002 show that even then Romania was still facing a process of population ageing, which was affecting social and economic life. The trend towards an increase in the older population and a decrease in the number of young people, and thus in the active and employed population, was to confirm the influence on the socio-economic structure.

Against the background of the demographic ageing process, elements such as the active population, able to work, directly influence the structure and size of the military institution but also the resources that society can offer it to carry out specific missions (Duțu, Moștofleu și Sarcinschi 2003) (Duțu, Petre; Moștofleu, Constantin; Sarcinschi, Alexandra 2003). Therefore, the most favourable solution for the military institution, given these demographic considerations, has been to professionalise personnel in order to move from a quantitative to a qualitative approach.

Romania's socio-economic profile is also influenced by the professional choices of the population, a phenomenon that has become more pronounced after the integration into the European Union, against the background of the globalisation trend. The majority of people who choose to establish a career and work outside the country, especially in Western European countries, will no longer find themselves in Romanian society as part of the working population. This social factor probably has the greatest influence on the demographic changes in Romanian society, affecting all the organisational structures of the state, including the military. According to the latest Eurostat data, an official figure of 5.7 million Romanians living abroad is estimated, and there are even approximately 7 million Romanians living mainly in countries such as England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium, etc., where there are perhaps a million or more Romanians each.

The defence of the country, in the event of a conflict, is not only carried out by the participation of professional structures but also involves the effective participation of the reserve. Thus, in a summary analysis, with a population of just over 19 million people (15.8% under the age of 14 and 16.1% over the age of 63), on 1 July 2022, according to World Population Review data, with an active population estimated at 8.2-8, 5 million people down from the 2011 Census results of over 9.1 million (www.recensamantromania.ro/ n.d.) and with 5.7 million people outside the country (about 70%), there is only one realistic and tragic military conclusion: Romania's army can exercise its constitutional prerogatives of *ensuring national sovereignty, independence and unity of the state, territorial integrity of the country and constitutional democracy* (Romanian Constitution, art. 118 2003) relying on less than one million Romanians and at the same time the recruitment pool for the military institution is shrinking.

One aspect of the demographic distribution is the ethnic factor which, according to the official data of the National Institute of Statistics, the main ethnic group in Romania is the Romanians who represent 88.9% (www.worldometers.info 2022) of the total population. The next most important ethnic communities are the Hungarians, who represent 6.1%, and the Roma, 3.3% of the population. Other ethnic communities are the Germans, Ukrainians, Lipovenes, Turks, Tatars, Serbs, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, Ruthenians, Jews, Czechs, Poles, Italians and Armenians, who represent 0.6% of the total population.

This simple demographic analysis provides a clear perspective on the process of providing human capital to the military structures of the Romanian Army and therefore a broad vision of the security services offered to the state, which is why demographic policies must be carefully elaborated and provide a predictive value in identifying recruitment pools for the military institution. Current demographic trends are strongly accentuated by the processes of urbanisation and the provision of minimum living conditions.

Conventionally, in demography there are three study variables (Trebici 1982): population size, age structure and gender distribution. Given the political and especially military changes and the intensification of globalisation in recent decades, specialists in the field have been forced to take into account other behavioural characteristics such as place of residence, education level and labour force participation when conducting demographic studies. Thus, the multidimensionality of demographic analyses has also highlighted the fact that educational attainment is as important a variable as gender distribution and age structure in terms of population structure and determining its relationship to economic development. In this situation, it is necessary to develop the qualitative demographic perspective of the population as much as possible and to neglect the quantitative one, but there can be no quality without quantity.

Strategies to implement national population policies such as population growth, reducing morbidity conditions, encouraging family formation and childbearing, managing population distribution and internal migration, reducing international (external) migration and hence population structure are invariably underpinned by sustained economic growth, sustainable development, reproductive rights and health and sustainable development.

Although the progressive global context shows a real demographic explosion, with a continuing trend of world population growth of about 74 million (World Population Prospects Total Population - Both Sexes 2022) by 1 January 2022, countries from the former Soviet area of influence, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and countries of the former communist bloc are facing a significant reduction in population, and according to studies it is likely that by 2050, the number of inhabitants will decrease by more than 38%.

Relevant to highlight the future demographic trends for Romania are the conclusions mentioned by the World Population Review experts: „Between 2007 and 2015, about 3.5 million Romanians went abroad to escape poverty and corruption in Romania. Many of those who leave Romania are highly educated and seek better opportunities elsewhere. This has a major impact on Romania's economy, which is already struggling”.

According to the studies, given the demographic trends in recent years, defined by high mortality, falling birth rates and increasing external migration, the following situation is expected for the evolution of Romania's population size:

- by 2040: 17.3 million (8.4 million male; 8.9 million female);
- by 2050: 16.3 million (7.8 million male; 8.5 million female);
- by 2060: 15.2 million (7.2 million male; 8 million female);
- by 2070: 14.1 million (6.7 million male; 7.4 million female);
- by 2080: 13.3 million (6.4 million male; 6.9 million female);
- by 2090: 12.5 million (6.1 million male; 6.4 million female);
- by 2100: 11.8 million (5.7 million male; 6.1 million female).

Changes in population structure and dynamics are the direct result of demographic developments. From this point of view, the level of migration (internal and external), the natural increase (the difference between the birth rate and the death rate in the reference period) and the increase in life expectancy are the basis for explaining the demographic structure.

Negative developments in demographic indicators can have an overwhelming influence on the attraction of human and therefore economic capital, on the labour market, on sustainable development and, not least, on the social security system.

From the analysis of the following demographic indicators: the resident population, defined as the total number of persons with Romanian citizenship, foreigners and non-citizens, who have their habitual residence on the territory of Romania, and the population by residence, defined as the number of persons with Romanian citizenship and residence on the territory of Romania, delimited by administrative-territorial criteria, it is possible to determine

the volume of the population that can be accessible to the military institution, segmented by age structure.

Given the specific conditions of accessibility of the military profession, it is likely to have a higher volume of population for one category of personnel and a lower volume for another category of personnel.

The natural surplus (Trebici, What is demography 1982) (of a population, referred to a given period, as absolute values, represents the difference between the number of live births and the number of deaths in the reference period, and the 0-14 age segment can give us a medium-term perspective of the volume of people who will express their intention to attend a national military college. As one of the determining factors in Romania's demographic decline, the volume of the population in this age segment is around 3.15 million children, or 15.8%. In the context of continued decline and negative natural increase, by 2040 the 0-14 age segment will be 1.8 million children. To this result we apply the demographic factors: territorial structure, level of education, level of health and we will result the accessible volume on this segment for the military institution. From this trend of demographic development of the population we can have a forecast on the development of interest in the military secondary, post-secondary and higher education institutions.

Any organization by the activity it carries out, which is initiated or exists within a state, generates the need for work. This need for work in the military institution is expressed by the most sensitive category of human capital: the corps of professional soldiers and ranks, since it is the largest body of personnel. This body of personnel is described by a standard portrait of the professional soldier characterised by courage, tenacity, discipline and ambition, moral and professional values characteristic of the military institution. At first glance, it is perhaps the most accessible of the military personnel corps, but in addition to this it is also the most difficult to manage in terms of personnel management.

The recruitment pool of this workforce is much wider, being concentrated in the 18-50 age segment, targeting both males and females, and is 44% of the total population. Due to the professional and financial stability, expressed by about 78% of those interested, the military profession through this corps is also attractive for those working abroad.

If the main motivation for those who choose this profession is financial stability, in the process of managing this corps of personnel, competition on the labour market comes into play, competition for the attraction of the workforce, which is why many of those who leave the military system from the position of soldier and professional ranks have been financially demotivated in relation to other professions on the labour market, a demotivation also accentuated by the weight or lack of socio-professional mobility.

The economically active population is defined as all persons who supply or are available to supply labour for production activities included in the production limits of the national accounts. It includes all persons who meet the requirements for employment or unemployment (European Union 2010).

According to the results of the 2011 Census (www.recensamantromania.ro n.d.) Romania's working population was estimated at 9.18 million, of which 5.10 million were male and 4.08 million female, and the inactive population was estimated at 10.94 million, of which 2.99 million were pupils, 4.26 million were pensioners, 1.18 million were homemakers, 1.66 million were in the care of others, 0.20 million were in the care of the state or other private organisations, 0.18 million were supported from other sources and 0.44 million were in other situations.

The employed population is made up of employees and other categories such as private entrepreneurs. The phenomenon is not entirely caused by cultural-value valences, but is related to the legislative regulations in the field of labour as well as to the fiscal policies existing in our country. The development of new professions and the evolution of the

occupational field have been driven by the progress of information technology and the use of the internet.

According to statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the distribution of the employed population by economic sectors is significant in the economic sectors of agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing industry and wholesale and retail trade, where the largest part of the employed population, estimated at 3.85 million Romanians working in these economic sectors, is concentrated.

The literature on the analysis of the volume of the employed population and its occupational trends analyses the future occupational structure of the labour force in European countries and highlights the dynamics of demand for certain occupations and professions in Europe and suggests possible reasons for the change in demand.

The analysis describes the state of continuous mobility in the labour market, with changes in the occupational structure of the workforce, reflecting the main development trends in the field. In recent years, the main occupational trend has been the increasing interest in highly qualified professionals, an elite professional segment. Trends also show that there will be a significant increase in demand for specialists in health, engineering and technological innovation.

At the same time, due to the replacement of computers by modern technology and the automation of routine functions, demand for basic occupations is expected to increase. However, due to the globalisation phenomenon, the interest in basic occupations will be directly proportional to the negative evolution of the total number of semi-skilled jobs.

Linking the demographic structure of recent years with the demand on the labour market, the generally accepted model has identified four generations on the labour market: Baby-Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), Generation Y (Millennials) (born between 1981 and 1996), and the youngest generation, Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012), each with different values, ambitions and working styles (Dimock 2019).

In terms of generational career intentions, Baby Boomers aged 58 to 76 are ambitious individuals who believe in working hard both individually and as a team, with sacrifice, even workaholics, Generation X aged 42 to 57 are also called „twenty-somethings”. They were raised in the shadow of the Baby Boomers' influence and are the first generation to make their "to do list", appreciating a flexible work schedule, autonomy, interesting work and opportunities for professional growth, Generation Y (Millennials) aged 26 to 41 are a generation of intelligent and developed mindsets that often seem incomprehensible and Generation Z aged 10 to 25 are the first generation born into a digital world where instant access to information is constantly available everywhere. They are avid consumers of technology and fans of the digital world and they like independence without clinging to authority which they often challenge.

From this point of view of generational structure, Millennials and Generation Z are the generations that are accessible to the military establishment. As their social perception it is highlighted that individuals are realistic, flexible, socially engaged, more stable and independent than previous generations, but with a greater need for organizational balance. Millennials, in particular, value job stability, while Generation Z is willing to change jobs more often, a decision largely determined by organizational orientation.

Social inclusion, the positive impact that the organisation has on the community, specifically the military institution on society, flexibility of working hours, motivation and stimulation of the work environment, development through training and mentoring programmes, genuine commitment and involvement of organisations to the concerns of employees and concern for their wellbeing manifested practically, not just declaratively, are

factors that categorically influence the socio-occupational behaviour of people of these two generations.

Socially, the values they value are: achievement, work, professional mobility, responsibility, self-direction, individualism, multiculturalism, self-expression, creativity, civic work and activism, internal or external migration for study, work or a better life.

The demographic decline that our country is currently experiencing and that will continue to deepen in the coming years will also have an impact on the military structures in terms of ensuring the necessary conditions to continue the process of achieving the planned objectives, in accordance with the missions, responsibilities and specific commitments assumed. Thus, the implementation of the Programme for the transformation, development and equipping of the Romanian Army, called Army-2040, may require an adapted response to the asymmetric demographic evolution, since the military institution, as an employer, is mainly addressed to the young segment of the labour market (Directorate General Human Resources Management 2021).

The medium-term demographic forecast for the 14-26 age segment is unfavourable for the recruitment pool for the military institution, a worrying phenomenon due to factors such as school dropouts and external migration, factors determined by the standard of living.

Considering that the choice of a profession is determined by several factors - native inclinations, accessibility of education, labour market conjuncture, cultural environment of education, the promotion of the values of the military institution and the diversity of specializations could be an asset to be exploited, respecting the characteristics of the target generations.

The military institution needs to build and better understand its recruitment map by analysing local, regional and national demand and supply of manpower and to develop targeted medium and long-term recruitment strategies. The implementation of such recruitment strategies, based on the analysis of existing data, leads to a significant optimisation of the expenditure of scarce resources and return on investment.

Extensive studies in the field of promoting the military profession among students from different social backgrounds have revealed their preferences for this profession. Young people express their intention to pursue conventional, traditional professions, including military careers, which are perceived as a highly skilled profession. Young people's perception of the military institution is reflected in values such as discipline, respect, honour and financial stability.

At the opposite pole, the military profession also presents some vulnerabilities in social perception due to the low level of information about the institutional profile of the Romanian army, which is, by definition, an institution designed to defend the national territory and participating in actions in theatres of operations, seen by young people as active only in the sphere of war. In the same vein, the fields of study and activity, as well as the conditions of recruitment and admission to military educational institutions are accessible and known by young civilians to a limited extent.

If in the post-pandemic period, conclusions on the level of attractiveness of the military profession focused on the need to increase the employer brand of the military institution on the labour market, the regional conflict in Ukraine increases the risk of strong trends in terms of the basic demographic structure: population volume. Thus, in this context of the conflict which has the risk of increasing the phenomenon of external migration, demographic studies with a focus on the values of the military institution and the versatility of the military profession are needed.

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