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EDITOR'S NOTE

The current edition encompasses no. 1 and 2 in 2019 (vol. 70 and 71) and includes a collection of seven articles, to which is added the ***Dynamics of the Security Environment*** section, followed by *Strategic Dialogue*, *Scientific Event*, the *CDSSS Agenda*, and the traditional *Guide for Authors*.

The journal is opened with the rubric ***Political-Military Topicality***, where one can read the article *Western Balkans: Conditions of (In)stability in the Current European Security Context*, where Cristina Bogzeanu, PhD Senior Researcher focused on the security dynamics in the Western-Balkans region from the perspective of hybrid warfare, *having as a hypothesis the fact that this space can be turned to advantage as lever for heightening insecurity at European level*.

Next, there comes the rubric ***Geopolitics and Geostrategies: Trends and Perspectives***, in which we find two articles. In the first one, General Daniel Petrescu elaborated a research paper on *Wider Black Sea Region*, approaching it as *a unit of analysis*, in which he explains the need to understand the regional dynamics, in order to identify solutions to the problems faced by the states in this area. The paper was presented at the *International Seminar on Regional Cooperation – A Tool for Achieving Security*, organized by CDSSS on May 23, 2019.

The second article is an analysis on *Post Arab Spring inter-regional cooperation in the Middle-East and North-Africa*, made by Mirela Atanasiu, PhD Senior Researcher, in which she advocates that inter-regional cooperation supports cross-border dialogue to materialize common economic, political or environmental interests and the development of capacities to maintain or achieve an optimal regional security environment to ensure the prosperity of states and their citizens.

The third section included in this edition is ***Defence and Security Concepts***, which comprises two articles. The first one, *The conceptual development of strategic communication in the strategic field*, written by Ioan Deac, PhD Professor, in collaboration with Mrs. Ruxandra Buluc, PhD Associate Professor, is an analysis of the way in which strategic communication has evolved in the field of security and defense. The second article, *Theory of Reflexive Control – Element of the Non-linear Russian War*, belongs to Colonel (Ret) Marius-Titi Potîrniche, PhD Researcher, and analyses the theory of reflexive control and the way it was developed during the USSR (the time of its emergence) and its transformation or how it was adapted in the current international context.

There follows the rubric ***Security and Military Strategy***, where you can read an article on *Wargaming as a supporting instrument in operations planning*, authored by Lieutenant Colonel Dan-Lucian Petrescu, PhD Lecturer, who shows that forecast and war game contribute to deducing the the outcome in the confrontation between two sides.

The fifth section, ***Intelligence Studies***, includes the article written by Mr. Teodor Tropotei, together with Ioan Deac, PhD Professor, entitled *Social media in intelligence analysis*, in which the authors analyze to what extent applications, software, websites specially created for the elaborating and disseminating social media content (in audio, video, text etc) between members of social groups may represent challenges or opportunities for specific intelligence processes.

You will also find the section ***Dynamics of the Security Environment (DSE)***, which contains six materials developed by CDSSS researchers. The purpose of DSE is to provide analyses and evaluations on recent evolutions or events in the international and regional security environment, with relevance for the area of strategic interest for Romania. Initially a freestanding publication, exclusively online, this rubric has been introduced starting with the second semester of 2018 in *Strategic Impact*, to promote not only a more efficient dissemination of these assessments, but also to cover a wider time horizon, thus having the possibility to identify the relevant trends according to the topic or the area of strategic interest.



The current edition of the DSE comprises six materials, which address the following topics: Cristian Băhnăreanu, PhD Senior Researcher, brings to attention the *World Economic Forum 2019: Globalization 4.0 – a better version*, Alexandra Sarcinschi, PhD Senior Researcher, approaches the issue of the *refugee and illegal migration crisis in Europe*, based on *main trends in the first half of 2019*, while Cristina Bogzeanu, PhD Senior Researcher, explores *the course of challenges on the European security*. Next, Marius-Titi Potîrniche, PhD Researcher, analyses *Kremlin's broad front of action*, Mirela Atanasiu, PhD Senior Researcher, addresses the topic of *re-tensioning of the US-Iran relations on the background of American foreign policy decisions* and, not least, Mihai Zodian, PhD Researcher, explores the topic of *nuclear weapons in terms of norms, the issue of heterogeneity and world politics*.

In this edition, we publish a ***Strategic Dialogue*** with the Commandant and Rector of “Carol I” National Defence University, Brigadier General Gheorghe Calopăreanu, PhD Professor, on the occasion of his participation at the Conference of Commandants, which took place in Rome, in the period 28-30 May, 2019.

In the section ***Scientific Event***, we bring you a report on the Workshop “România2019.EU: common interests and solutions”, organised by CDSSS on March 21, and on the *International Seminar “Regional cooperation – a tool for attaining security”*, that took place on May 23, 2019.

Within ***CDSSS Agenda***, we bring to your attention the activities of the Centre for the period January - June, 2019.

For those who discover for the first time *Strategic Impact*, conceived by the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies and published with the support of the “Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, the publication is a prestigious scientific journal in the field of military sciences, information and public order, according to the National Council for Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATDCU).

The journal is being published in Romanian for nineteen years and for fourteen years in English and approaches a complex thematic: political – military topicality, security and military strategy, NATO and EU: policies, strategies, actions, geopolitics and geostrategies on the future war trajectory, information society, elements and views regarding the intelligence community. Readers may find in the pages of the publication, analyzes, syntheses and evaluations of strategic level, points of view which study the impact of national, regional and global actions dynamics.

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

Strategic Impact is printed in two distinct editions, both in the Romanian and English language. The journal is distributed free of charge in the main institutions in the field of security and defence, in the scientific and academic environment in the country and abroad – in Europe, Asia and America.

In the end, we would like to encourage those interested to publish in our journal to prospect and evaluate thoroughly the dynamics of the security environment and, also, we invite the interested students, master students and doctoral candidates to submit articles for publication in the monthly supplement of the journal, Strategic Colloquium, available on the Internet at <http://cssas.unap.ro/ro/cs.htm>, indexed in CEEOL international database.

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



WESTERN BALKANS – CONDITIONS OF (IN)STABILITY IN THE CURRENT EUROPEAN SECURITY CONTEXT

*Cristina BOGZEANU, Ph.D.**

Disrupting states' and societies' capacity of functioning, turning to advantage a wide range of instruments is one of the objectives of what it is known on a large scale after the Ukrainian crisis as "hybrid warfare". The present paper is an analysis of the security dynamic in the Western Balkan region from this perspective, having as a hypothesis the fact that this space can be turned to advantage as lever for heightening insecurity at European level. In this respect, the article includes a brief overview on the main European security trends, as well as an insight on the Russian Federation's approach on Western Balkans not only in terms of strategic documents, but also in geopolitical studies. The region's vulnerability is subsequently analysed both from the perspective of the conflict relations between the actors in this space, and in relation to the evolution of these actors in international barometers showing the level of institutions' stability and strength.

Keywords: *hybrid confrontation; vulnerability; influence; division; stability.*

Introduction¹

The series of challenges the Euro-Atlantic community is facing nowadays both internally and externally has often constituted the main reason for arguing that it goes through one of the most serious crises in its existence. US foreign policy under D. Trump mandate, its effects on NATO's cohesion, Brexit, the resurgence of nationalism capitalized within an anti-European, populist political narrative, the increasingly attractive perspective of embracing an EU evolution strategy based on the multiple-speed principle are some of the most illustrative examples in this respect. To all these, there shall be also added the tensed relations between Russia and the Western actors, as well as the instability characterising in various degrees the regions neighbouring the Euro-Atlantic area. In the context of these tensions, the phrase "hybrid confrontation" has become increasingly popular when describing the manner in which conflict is set up especially in the case of the relations between the Russian Federation and Western

¹ A.N: this article disseminates the results of a previous research paper issued under the aegis of the Center for Defence and Security Strategic Studies: Cristina Bogzeanu, *Conflictele din Balcanii de Vest: războaie înghețate? Regiunea vest-balcanică în contextul de securitate european*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019.

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actors. “Hybrid confrontation” concept, its utility and novelty character especially in the area of military science has been the subject of ample debates in the academic environment. For the present analysis, this term will be used due to its utility in defining one of the major specificities conflict has nowadays: “Practitioners of hybrid warfare are often less intent on seizing and holding territory than destroying or disrupting the ability of societies to function”².

A similar hypothesis can be also found within a study issued by NATO Strategic Communication Center of Excellence, *Redefining Euro-Atlantic Values: Russia’s Manipulative Techniques*. According to this paper, the stake in hybrid confrontation is not conquering new territories, but “creating mental landscapes susceptible to political manipulation”³. Furthermore, the Russian Federation’s objectives, as far as the West is concerned, consist in economic weakening, political division and setting Russia as hegemonic power on the European territory⁴.

“Hybrid warfare/confrontation” conceptual evolution is related to the manner in which the Ukrainian crisis broke out and evolved, as well as to the specific of West-Russian Federation relations. Despite all these, security dynamic in areas where conflict has overcome the peak point, but which are still characterized by instability and are conflict prone must not be neglected. Western Balkans are such an area.

Scene for the most violent conflicts after the end of World War II, placed in the vicinity of NATO and EU, Western Balkans have constantly been an area of interest for the two organizations. At the same time, the Russian Federation, Turkey and, more recently, China are among the great powers with interests in the

² Franklin Kramer, Hans Binnendijk, Dan Hamilton, “Defend the Arteries of Society”, in *US News and World Report*, 9 June 2015. *Apud.* Guillaume Lasconjarias, “Deterrence through Resilience: NATO, the Nations and the Challenges of Being Prepared”, ETH Zürich, URL: <http://www.css.ethz.ch/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/ac42738e-f524-462a-bb16-18e5eba459ef/pdf>, accessed on 12 September 2017.

³ ***, *Redefining Euro-Atlantic Values: Russia’s Manipulative Techniques*, NATO Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence, Riga, p. 5.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

region, powers whose relations have recently been increasingly volatile. It is not a coincidence that, in the context of the escalating Ukrainian crisis, different European and US political leaders warned against the possible contagion or extension of instability in Eastern Europe to Western Balkans/South-Eastern Europe. German Chancellor warned that destabilization in Ukraine would question the entire European peace as the respective crisis did not belong exclusively to Ukraine, but also to the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and even Western Balkans⁵. In the context of an EU Council meeting (2017), F. Mogherini said that “the Balkans can easily become one of the chessboards where the big power game can be played”⁶. In August 2017, during a visit in Podgorica, US vice-president, Mike Pence, was more trenchant in this issue: “As you well know, Russia continues to seek to redraw international borders by force. And here, in the Western Balkans, Russia has worked to destabilize the region, undermine your democracies, and divide you from each other and from the rest of Europe”⁷.

1. Russian Federation’s interests in Western Balkans. Strategic vision and geopolitical studies

If, in the case of NATO and EU, Western Balkans’ strategic relevance clearly arises from strategic documents and leaders’ official declarations, the Russian Federation’s strategic vision doesn’t include special references to this region. For instance, the Foreign Policy Concept

⁵ ***, “Angela Merkel warns Russia could seek to destabilise ‘whole of the European peaceful order’”, in *The Telegraph*, URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/angela-merkel/11236622/Angela-Merkel-warns-Russia-could-seek-to-destabilise-whole-of-the-European-peaceful-order.html>, accessed on 7 December 2018.

⁶ ***, “EU ministers: Balkans becoming ‘chessboard’ for big powers”, in *Euractiv*, 7 March 2017, URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/eu-ministers-balkans-becoming-chessboard-for-big-powers/>, accessed on 10 June 2018.

⁷ Remarks by the Vice President at the Adriatic Charter Summit, 2 August 2017, URL: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2437/>, accessed on 10 June 2018.



of the Russian Federation (2016), similar to its 2008 version, refers clearly only to Russia's negative vision on NATO's enlargement, on NATO getting closer its military infrastructure to Russian borders as well as on the Alliance's increased military activity in the regions neighbouring Russia. In Kremlin's strategic vision, all these are violations of equal and indivisible security and determine the deepening of the old lines of separation in Europe and the emergence of some new such lines⁸, thus, evoking a historical experience implying the return to an alarming level of tensions. The Military Doctrine (2014) outlines a similar vision in terms of external military risks, the first one mentioned being the "build-up of the power potential of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and vesting NATO with global functions carried out in violation of the rules of international law, bringing the military infrastructure of NATO member countries near the borders of the Russian Federation, including by further expansion of the alliance"⁹.

It is noteworthy that these strategic documents refer to Moscow's strategic interests in the regions placed in the common vicinity with EU, where obviously actors in the Black Sea Region (especially Ukraine and Georgia) are put to the fore. Not the same happens in the case of Western Balkans, although the evolution of the actors in this space towards NATO integration was followed by Russia's harsh reactions, which can be related to Moscow equalling the Alliance's enlargement to an external military risk.

The same conclusion can be reached through the observation that neither the strategic documents, nor the official statements studied for this research contain a rhetoric of virulent opposition on Russia's behalf regarding Western

Balkan states' adherence to the EU. Also, Russian official discourse doesn't stake on presenting an alternative for Western Balkan states' EU integration, but on enhancing its relations with them. Moscow's strongly negative reactions came in relation to these states joining or getting closer to joining NATO.

Geographic proximity to Euro-Atlantic area, Euro-Atlantic direct involvement in this region, as well as Turkey's interests and its potential role (through its connection with Muslim ethnic community: Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina) are factors making Western Balkans valuable from the perspective of Russian foreign policy's directions. Western Balkans' destabilization would trigger destabilization of Western actors, of NATO and EU, and would contribute to them losing credibility as security actors, determining subsequently a decrease of the magnetism Euro-Atlantic organizations exert on the actors in the common vicinity.

As mentioned before, Moscow does not give Western Balkan actors alternatives to their Euro-Atlantic pathway, but it turns to account and develops relations with a consistent history, with cultural, economic and political stakes. As a matter of fact, one of the main subjects in the public discourse regarding Russia's good relations with Western Balkan states is of cultural and religious nature: the common Christian-Orthodox background¹⁰. Consequently, beyond the close relations with Belgrade, one could also find similar relations with those states, ethnic communities, political entities which share this cultural profile, a good example in this respect being the relation between Moscow and leaders of Srpska Republic (SR). One could refer in the same manner to Russia's involvement in Belgrade–Pristina conflict on the Serbian side, which has been capitalized not only for the partnership with Serbia (through Moscow's veto

⁸ ***, Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016), URL: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6BZ29/content/id/2542248, accessed on 25 August 2018.

⁹ ***, The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation approved by the President of the Russian Federation, 25 December 2014 (translation from Russian), URL: <https://theatrum-belli.com/the-military-doctrine-of-the-russian-federation/>, accessed on 25 September 2018.

¹⁰ A.N.: Speeches of the chief of states on the occasion of V. Putin's visit in Serbia in early 2019 are just one of the most recent examples in this respect. For details, see: ***, "On Visit to Serbia, Putin Accuses Kosovo Of "Illegally" Setting Up An Army", in *Radio Free Europe*, 17 January 2019, URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/head-of-high-level-visit-to-serbia-putin-blasts-west-s-role-in-balkans/29714843.html>, accessed on 20 February 2019.



in UN Security Council regarding Kosovo's independence), but also as precedent for justifying the annexation of Crimean Peninsula. Even more, although Russia's actions in Crimea could strongly resonate with its own experience of losing Kosovo, Belgrade refused to rally to EU sanctions imposed to Russia on this matter, an aspect revealing another dimension of the advantages Moscow gets from its cooperation with Western Balkan states – fostering good relations with states which, at a certain moment, will achieve EU membership which will give them the possibility to influence foreign policy decisions.

In a paper meant to analyse “indirect warfare that the US has demonstrated during the Syrian and Ukrainian Crises”, A. Korybko¹¹ sums up the major coordinates of Russian vision on hybrid warfare. From the perspective presented by the Russian author, hybrid warfare is an indirect warfare led by the US, with two major components: Colour Revolutions and unconventional warfare¹². Korybko argues that Colour Revolutions are new models of destabilizing states, in which foreign actors can plausibly deny their involvement in the internal affairs of a certain state¹³. Furthermore, he identified an „arch of Colour Revolutions”¹⁴ from Central Europe to Central Asia. The states included in this arch are defined by two major characteristics: a) they “vulnerable to the threat of a Colour Revolution”¹⁵; b) a successful change of regime would have negative repercussions on the Russian Federation's foreign policy and Grand Strategy.

In this perspective, Western-Balkan states are partially included in one of the three categories of states identified by Korybko: the Wider Balkan

Region (Hungary, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Greece), the Wider Middle East Region (Turkey, Armenia, and Iran), and Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kirghizstan). In Russia's foreign policy, there are identified sets of strategic interests corresponding to the three aforementioned categories. As far as the Balkans are concerned, they are described as “the best possible opportunity for liberating Europe from the unipolar world and spreading multipolarity into the heart of the continent, thereby representing a major asymmetrical counter-offensive by Russia that can initiate a long-term change in the global geopolitical balance”¹⁶. This sentence stands out through the emphasis laid on the idea of counteracting Western actors' influence, especially US, in Europe. In this perspective, Russia's interest is not related to the actual spaces – as one could argue in the case of the Wider Black Sea Area –, but to the possibility of turning them to account for the Russian Federation assertion as great power.

Thus, in the paper published in 2015, A. Korybko outlined not only elements of the Russian vision of hybrid warfare, but he also pictured Western-Balkan states' importance in the context of Russian assertion regionally and internationally.

2. Western-Balkan region's (in)stability from foreign relations perspective

In a volume published more than a decade ago, the authors mentioned, in relation to Western Balkans crisis, that “(...) even if the peak of the crisis was overcome, it has effects on the long term. Tensions only faded away. If the necessary conditions emerge, it is very possible for them to become active again. (...) Wars in the area inhabited by southern Slaves only determined the disintegration of the Yugoslav Federation and the independence of the states laying here – Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro –, but not to the resolution of ethnic, economic, social,

¹¹ A.N.: A. Korybko is presented as political journalist and analyst in international affairs within Sputnik and member of the council of experts of the Institute for Strategic Research and Predictions. The paper referred to, *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change*, was reviewed by the Russian Diplomatic Academy.

¹² A. Korybko, *Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach to Regime Change*, People's Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, 2015, p. 10.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 77.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 97-98.



national and political issues which are and will be faced by the communities living there”¹⁷.

Clearly, the most serious conflict in Western Balkans remains the one between Serbia and Kosovo. Although Belgrade maintains its position regarding Kosovo status, refusing to recognise it as a separate state, it accepts Kosovo institutions legal authority on the entire territory, including the northern part, mostly inhabited by Serbians. At its turn, Kosovo accepted a certain degree of decentralization and autonomy of the Serbian community which is majoritarian in the north and offers them extended social and economic competencies. In 2013, under EU mediation, was signed the *Brussels Agreement* between the Serbia and Kosovo. The agreement supposing the engagement to normalize relations between the parties allowed Serbia to progress towards European integration. Presently, the agreement is in course of implementation, which also allowed Pristina to re-open negotiations for the *Stabilization and Association Agreement* with the EU (June 2013) and Belgrade to officially initiate negotiations for EU adhesion (within the first inter-governmental conference in January 2014).

One of the most recent initiatives to reach a compromise between the two parties resided in Serbia’s president proposition based on a change of territories between Serbia and Kosovo¹⁸. Not only was this proposition rejected by Kosovo, but it was also followed by a series of decisions made in Pristina, signalling that the tensions between the two parties remain high. In late 2018, a sequence of events were warning signs on the evolution of regional stability – firstly, Kosovo’s decision to impose 100% customs fees on imports from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in response

to Belgrade efforts to prevent the separatist entity to join international organizations; and, secondly, Kosovo’s Parliament decision to transform Kosovo Security Forces in a national armed force (November 2018). The though reaction of the Serbian prime minister in this respect including also the suggestion that Belgrade might respond militarily implies not only additional delays in the process of normalizing the relations between the two actors and in their European integration process, but it is also an episode of escalation of the tensions between the two Western-Balkan actors, endangering the entire regional stability. This even more as the efforts of normalizing Serbia-Kosovo relations have not generated actual results.

The relevance of Kosovo-Serbia conflict does not reside only in the destabilizing potential for the security and stability of Western Balkan region and, implicitly, of the entire Europe. In the context of the tensions between Western actors (NATO and EU) and the Russian Federation after the Ukrainian crisis, Belgrade’s double orientation in foreign policy (both pro-Western and pro-Russian) adds to the factors giving the major importance of maintaining stability and security in this region.

Shortly before Kosovo declared its independence (2008). Belgrade Parliament adopted Serbia’s neutrality status, thus initiating a foreign policy approach based on the principle of non-involvement in armed conflicts or political-military alliances. The declaration enshrining Serbia’s military neutrality also mentions that this status does not exclude the possibility for Belgrade to cooperate with other states in following its national security and defence interests¹⁹. Thus is laid the basis for enhancing cooperation with both the Euro-Atlantic actors and the Russian Federation. For instance, Serbia’s National Security Strategy (2009) mentions that its relations with the Russian Federation are enhanced in the context of EU integration and of strengthening its regional position, which

¹⁷ Mircea Mureșan, Gheorghe Văduva (coord.), *Criza, conflictul și războiul. Vol. 1, Definierea crizelor și conflictelor armate în noua configurație a filosofiei și fizionomiei naționale și internaționale de rețea*, “Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2007, p. 243.

¹⁸ ***, “Președintele Serbiei sugerează o variantă de compromis cu Kosovo”, in *Hotnews*, 9 August 2018, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22629742-preedintele-serbiei-sugereaz-variant-compromis-kosovo.htm>, accessed on 10 August 2018.

¹⁹ Filip Ejodus, “Serbia’s Military Neutrality: Origins, effects and challenges”, in *Croatian International Relations Review*, Vol. 20, No. 71, 2014, p. 50.



“would create a framework for a new dimension of a special relation between the Republic of Serbia and the Russian Federation”²⁰. This snippet accurately reflects the course of Belgrade foreign policy, characterized by a constant hovering between the Western and the Russian orientation.

Concerning the region’s stability evolution, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is by far the most notable case of stagnation and even involution. NATO candidate and EU potential candidate country, BiH has been constantly blocked in constitutional and ethnic disputes, giving birth to a dysfunctional governance and economic standstill. BiH is one of the most notable potential sources of regional destabilization due to the economic and political instability and malfunction, to the increasingly high frustration of the population, to nationalism, as well as due to the terrorism related concerns. Last but not least, to all these there is also the separatist tendency of Srpska Republic.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the Western Balkan actors with the highest level of political fragility. Dayton agreement²¹ (1995) ended the violent confrontations, but it also enshrined the creation of a federal state composed of two main political entities: the Federation Bosnia-Herzegovina (mostly inhabited by Croats and Muslim Bosnians) and Srpska Republic (mostly inhabited by Orthodox Serbians), thus bringing together in a single country the three communities fighting each other during 1992-1995 war. Each one of the two communities composing BiH has a considerable degree of autonomy and can make decisions in all the areas which don’t fall under the central state’s authority institutions. Post-Dayton tripartite governance²², the difficulties in

reaching consensus between the three presidents of the state, as well as the separatist inclination in Srpska Republic can be listed among the main causes of the slow pace of implementing the reforms required for European integration. The country report issued by the Freedom House (2018) was beginning by outlining BiH state of facts as follows: “For years, national governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been hampered by quarrels among politicians who put personal interests ahead of governing for the good of the public”²³.

If, concerning Serbia, Moscow developed a strategic partnership with the Serbian state, in BiH, it is significant that Russia’s cooperation isn’t established with the central authorities in BiH, but with the Republic of Srpska, an entity inhabited mostly by Serbians and with secessionist tendency. For instance, M. Dodik, SR leader, was sanctioned by US for preventing the implementation of Dayton Agreements (January 2017) when he organized a referendum on SR national day (also largely sanctioned at international level, Serbia included, but not by the Russian Federation, which also supported this initiative²⁴). Despite all this, SR leader said that he would also issue a constitution by the end of 2018 and, in 2017, he set up a military parade on the occasion of “SR national day”. In October 2017, SR legislative issued a declaration of military neutrality, with a special reference to military alliance, thus raising a new obstacle in the way of BiH to NATO integration. SR separatist aspiration contributes to maintaining BiH at a distance from Euro-Atlantic integration, by preserving general instability and by preventing the implementation of necessary reforms. M. Dodik election in the triadic presidency as Serb

²⁰ ***, National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrad, 2009, p. 21, URL: <http://www.voa.mod.gov.rs/documents/national-security-strategy-of-the-republic-of-serbia.pdf>, accessed on 10 July 2018.

²¹ ***, The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina initialled in Dayton on 21 November 1995, URL: <https://www.osce.org/bih/126173?download=true>, accessed on 19 July 2018.

²² ***, *Commission Staff Working document*, Bosnia and Herzegovina report 2018 accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social

Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Strasbourg, 17 April 2018, URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180417-bosnia-and-herzegovina-report.pdf>, accessed on 10 June 2018.

²³ Dino Jahić, *Nations in transit 2018. Bosnia and Herzegovina. Country Profile*, The Freedom House, URL: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2018/bosnia-and-herzegovina>, accessed on 11 July 2018.

²⁴ Guy Delauney, “Bosnian Serb referendum challenges peace terms”, in *BBC News*, 24 September 2016, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37453147>, accessed on 25 September 2018.



representative at the beginning of 2018 can contribute to deepening state's instability and to the enhancement of the relations with the Russian Federation. For example, after being elected as member of BiH tripartite presidency, M. Dodik gave to the public his intention of launching a new initiative by which Sarajevo would officially recognize Crimea as Russian integral part. Even more, his strongly nationalist approach could favour the deepening of the disputes between the representatives of the three major ethnic communities and, implicitly, to the heightening of central authorities' instability.

Positive evolutions registered by Western Balkan states are also significant as well as the subsequent international reactions, especially those manifested by Moscow. After being the scene of a tentative coup d'état in 2016, Montenegro joined the North-Atlantic Alliance as full member state in 2017 and is in process of implementing the reforms necessary for EU adhesion. With a population of 642,550, armed forces of small scale (1,950 active militaries²⁵), supported by an extended paramilitary force (10,100), Montenegro's NATO membership has a rather political significance than a military one, contributing to substantiating NATO's open doors policy and to the Alliance engagement unto the stability and security of the actors in this region.

After gaining its independence unto Belgrade in 2006, Podgorica has preserved its good relations with the Russian Federation, being one of the Western Balkan states whose profile was a good basis for capitalizing the common ethnic and cultural background. Consequently, joining NATO determined aggressive declarations on Russia behalf. For instance, the Russian foreign minister declared that Montenegro's adhesion to the Alliance marks a "hostile course" taken by this state and that "the Russian side reserves the right to take retaliatory measures on a reciprocal basis"²⁶.

²⁵ ***, Military Balance 2018. The Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2018, p. 129.

²⁶ David Brunnstrom, "Russia threatens retaliation as Montenegro becomes 29th NATO member", in *Reuters*, 6 June 2017, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nato-montenegro/russia-threatens-retaliation-as-montenegro-becomes-29th-nato-member-idUSKBN18W2WS>, accessed on 9 September 2017.

Regarding Northern Macedonia²⁷, a historical progress was reached with the signing of Prespa Agreement (June 2018), by which Skopje and Athens agreed on the respective name. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM²⁸) NATO and EU accession negotiations have been postponed for a long time due to the dispute with Greece on the name of the Macedonian state, on the one hand, and, on the other, due to the democratic backslides. As a matter of fact, Skopje faced for more than two years one of the most serious political crises after 2001, as described by a report of the European Commission²⁹.

The referendum for the ratification of June 2018 agreement was also the context in which the diplomatic relations between Greece and Russia deteriorated as the Greeks called Russian tentative to undermine the agreement³⁰.

²⁷ A.N.: after the ratification between the two parties involved in the Prespa Agreement, on February 12th, 2019, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia becomes Northern Macedonia.

²⁸ A.N.: the name under which the Macedonian states was accepted within UN, giving the fact that Greece was opposing to the use of "Macedonia" name as, in its opinion, would have involved territorial demands on the Northern part of the Hellenic state.

²⁹ ***, Commission Working Staff Document accompanying the document Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 2016 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy, 9 November 2016, p. 4, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf, accessed on 10 May 2018.

³⁰ V.M., "Grecia critică Rusia pentru încercarea de a submina acordul cu Macedonia", in *Hotnews*, 23 July 2018, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22582102-grecia-critic-rusia-pentru-ncercarea-submina-acordul-macedonia.htm>, accessed on 23 July 2018; R.M., "Grecia: Ingerință a Rusiei în dosarul Macedonean, Atena va lua "măsuri pentru a garanta interesul național" / Kathimerini anunță expulzarea a doi diplomați ruși", in *Hotnews*, 11 July 2018, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22561552-grecia-ingerin-rusiei-dosarul-macedonean-atena-lua-suri-pentru-garanta-interesul-ional-kathimerini-anun-expulzarea-doi-diploma.htm>, accessed on 11 July 2018; I.B., "Presa greacă: Jocul de influență al Rusiei în zona Balcanilor", in *Hotnews*, 17 July 2018, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22561552-grecia-ingerin-rusiei-dosarul-macedonean-atena-lua-suri-pentru-garanta-interesul-ional-kathimerini-anun-expulzarea-doi-diploma.htm>



Additionally, the intention to prevent Northern Macedonia joining the Euro-Atlantic structures is also reflected in Moscow's official position: "The insistent dragging of Macedonia into NATO only confirms that its open doors policy has turned into an end in itself and an instrument for appropriating geopolitical space"³¹.

After the agreement of June 2018, during NATO Brussels Summit (July, 11th – 12th 2018), Skopje officially received the invitation to become an Alliance member state. From this point of view, the evolution of Northern Macedonia is similar to the one of Montenegro. Moreover, in the context of the historical agreement between Athens and Skopje, international mass-media issued not only declarations showing a negative and disapproving attitude of Moscow's regarding Northern Macedonia's accession to NATO, but also warnings regarding Russia attempt to infer in 2018 agreement negotiations³².

3. Instability in Western Balkans: structural causes

In a study published in 2017 under the aegis of the European Council on Foreign Relations, M. Galeotti analysed the manner in which the Russian Federation can act for increasing its influence on the European states in the context

international-22571351-pres-a-greac-jocul-influen-rusiei-zona-balcanilor.htm, accessed on 17 July 2018; "Ministrul grec de externe: Grecia, gata să ia măsuri dacă se încalcă principiile suveranității naționale și respectul față de țară", in *Agerpress*, 22 July 2018, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2018/07/22/ministrul-grec-de-externe-grecia-gata-sa-ia-masuri-daca-se-incalca-principiile-suveranitatii-nationale-si-respectul-fata-de-tara--148786>, accessed on 22 July 2018.

³¹ Briefing by Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, Moscow, July 12, 2018, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, URL: http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/organizacia-po-zapreseniu-himiceskogo-oruzia/-/asset_publisher/km9HkaXMTium/content/id/3293994, accessed on 9 August 2018.

³² ***, "Grecia: Ingerință a Rusiei în dosarul Macedonean, Atena va lua "măsuri pentru a garanta interesul național" / Kathimerini anunță expulzarea a doi diplomați ruși", in *Hotnews*, 11 July 2018, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22561552-grecia-ingerin-rusiei-dosarul-macedonean-aten-a-lua-suri-pentru-garanta-interesul-ional-kathimerini-anun-expulzarea-doi-diploma.htm>, accessed on 20 July 2018.

of hybrid confrontation, as well as the factors that constitute and/or amplify European actors' vulnerability in this context³³. M. Galeotti says that this vulnerability grows as the institutional power of the respective states decreases³⁴. Actually, the weaker the state, the less solid the state's institutions, the greater the chances for the respective state to be vulnerable to the active measures undertaken in the context of hybrid confrontation.

In order to get a bird's eye view on the Western Balkan states' vulnerability on this type of influence, I analysed their evolution in Fragile States Index in 2014-2019, focusing only on some indicators considered significant for those states' institutional capacity and for their internal stability: security apparatus, factionalized elites, group grievances, economic decline, state legitimacy and foreign intervention. Analysing the figure resulted depending on the scores given in the Fund for Peace index, one could notice a stagnation trend and even a slight decrease of instability in Western Balkan states (Figure no. 1). BiH makes an exception as, despite its score decreased in 2018, the country remains in the warning area of the index.

In this context, I also considered significant the evolution of these actors in the Corruption Perception Index, as it is one of the endemic vulnerabilities specific to the region and one of the major obstacles for these actors Euro-Atlantic Integration (Figure no. 2).

The global barometer of corruption issued by Transparency International shows that Western Balkan actors are mostly subscribed in the category of states with relatively high corruption, which requires continuing the efforts for combating this phenomenon. The dynamic of the scores in 2012-2018 reflects a worsening of this vulnerability in Montenegro's case (got NATO membership in 2017), followed by a

³³ Mark Galeotti, *Controlling Chaos: How Russia Manages Its Political War in Europe*, European Council on Foreign Relations, August 2017, URL: https://www.ecfr.eu/publications/summary/controlling_chaos_how_russia_manages_its_political_war_in_europe, accessed on 9 August 2018.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 6-7.

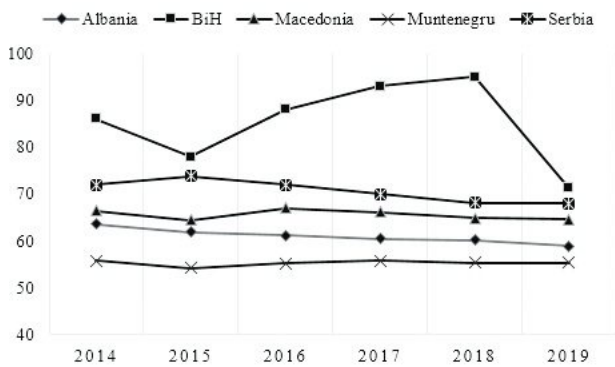


Figure no. 1: Western Balkan states' evolution in Fragile States Index in 2014-2019³⁵

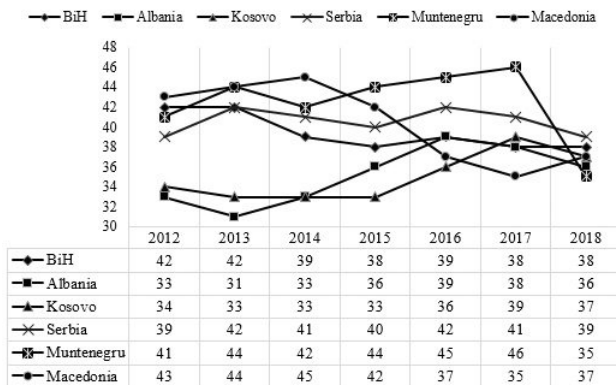


Figure no. 2: Evolution of Western Balkan states in Corruption Perception Index in 2012-2018³⁶

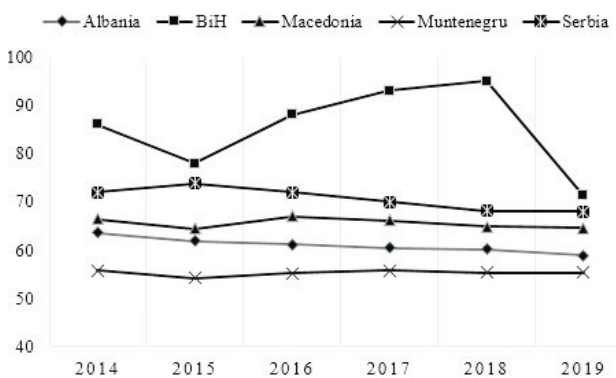


Figure no. 3: Western Balkan states evolution in Democracy Index in 2012-2018³⁷

substantial improvement in the course of the next year. As far as Bosnia and Herzegovina is concerned, it is noteworthy it's stagnancy in an area of corruption alert. At the same time, the barometer also shows in the given time frame a slight improvement for Albania, Serbia, and

Kosovo, the latter still under international administration, at a great extent. Also, after the end of the internal crisis which came to an end relatively recently, Northern Macedonia registers a dramatic decrease in terms of corruption perception.

A similar evolution can be noticed in the graphics resulted from the analysis of Western Balkan states performance in the Democracy Index, published by The Economist Intelligence Unit. The barometer is the result of five major indicators: electoral process and political pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties. This graphic too illustrates the moments when political crises peaked in Northern Macedonia and Montenegro, as well as BiH stagnation in coordinates showing the lack of progress towards democracy. Excepting Serbia, the only state with a fragile democracy, all Western Balkan states fall under the typology of hybrid regimes³⁸.

The current aspects characterizing Western Balkans' evolutions are also related to economic standstill or even recession, associated with social related issues, with a high degree of population grievances, as well as with corruption as specific to Western Balkan states governments. Economic and social disruptions can be explained through the effects of the global economic and financial crisis, which are still felt in the EU and through the decrease of its capacity to provide such

³⁵ Source: Fragile States Index, The Fund for Peace, URL: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>, accessed on 20 August 2018. Fragile States Index is a barometer of states' instability. The greater the score, the more unstable the state.

³⁶ Source: Transparency International, URL: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table, accessed on 10 September 2018. In this index, the higher the score, the lower the corruption perception.

³⁷ Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, URL: <https://infographics.economist.com/2018/DemocracyIndex/>, accessed on 10 September 2018.

³⁸ A.N.: hybrid regimes are characterized by major vulnerabilities in terms of political culture, government functioning and political participation. Also, corruption tends to be wide reaching, and rule of law and civil society are usually insufficiently developed. For details, see: ***, Democracy Index 2015. Democracy in the Age of Anxiety. A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit, URL: <https://www.yabiladi.com/img/content/EIU-Democracy-Index-2015.pdf>, accessed on 20 October 2018.



a support. In this line of thought, it is also of high significance that, although there is a series of states/political entities relatively ethnically homogeneous, South-Eastern Europe is, broadly speaking, a space of heterogeneity. This ethnic diversity is often reflected in the lack of political cohesion, representing a fertile background for corruption, standstill in implementing reforms, economic stagnation and, finally, low standards of living for the citizens of these states. Post-conflict solutions implemented to reconcile the various ethnic groups inhabiting this space have been less oriented towards integrating them within the same states, and have rather continued the conflict prone pattern of the relations between them. Actually, even in the relatively heterogeneous states, ethnic communities are rather homogeneous.

Kosovo separatist republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina are good examples in this respect. After the Dayton agreement (1995), which also includes BiH Constitution, this state functions as a federation, being composed of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (mostly inhabited by Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians) and Srpska Republic (Orthodox Serbs) and Brčko district. Constitution of BiH (Annex 4/ Dayton Agreement) allows the representatives of the ethnic communities to block each other's initiatives which could open the road for development and progress towards Euro-Atlantic integration. "Bosnia's foundational problem is that none of its peoples, or their leaders, like its constitutional order – but ideas for fixing it run in opposite directions"³⁹. Consequently, there is created the premise for maintaining political instability or, better said, of a political "paralysis", which hinders central institutions to function properly, which also reflects upon the country's social and economic state.

Kosovo declared its independence in relation with Serbia in 2008, calling upon the right of people's self-determination. Mostly inhabited

by Muslim Albanese, the dynamic of Kosovo's relations with Serbia can be also analysed from the perspective of the importance held by the capacity and possibility to integrate ethnic community in the context of an actor's stability and security. Furthermore, even in the current de facto state of Kosovo, the Serbian minority is concentrated in the northern part of the province which is not only the background of the frequent requests to reunite with Serbia or to be given a higher degree of autonomy in relation with Pristina institutions, but also of a long range of violent clashes between Albanese and Serbians. Regarding the difficulty to reconcile these ethnic communities, it is also illustrative the fact that the most recent Belgrade – Pristina negotiations regarding the normalization of their relations also included the possibility of an exchange of territories.

In the context of the new evolutions in the relations between the Russian Federation and the Euro-Atlantic actors, Western Balkan stability or instability becomes an important stake. A positive evolution would imply the preservation of Western influence and an increase of Euro-Atlantic security, while a negative evolution would suppose an enhancement of the background for the advancement of Russian influence, offering leverages for destabilization, similar to the situation in Eastern Europe. In this context, it is also noteworthy M. Voicu's remark regarding the fact that Russia does not create new tensions in the societies where it aims to consolidate its influence, but it turns to advantage and amplifies the ones already there⁴⁰.

Conclusions

After looking over Kremlin's strategic vision as it is expressed in its strategic documents, one could reach the conclusion that Western Balkan region doesn't fall under Russia's major foreign security interests, similarly to the ones set for Wider Black Sea Region's actors. However,

³⁹ Marko Prelec, "New Balkan Turbulence Challenges Europe", International Crisis Group, 27 April 2017, URL: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/macedonia/new-balkan-turbulence-challenges-europe>, accessed on 10 August 2018.

⁴⁰ Marian Voicu, *Matrioșka minicinoșilor: Fake news, manipulare, populism*, Humanitas Publishinghouse, 2018, p. 69.



Moscow's relatively recent reactions under the conditions in which Western Balkan states come closer to Euro-Atlantic structures, as well as the internal evolutions of these political entities stand as proof for Russian interests in this space.

Similarly to the Wider Black Sea region, Western Balkans are a space of convergence for the interests of Western actors and the Russian Federation, also constituting a region where the spectrum of instability and conflict has remained constant after the Yugoslavian wars, despite all the efforts of stabilization and reform in which NATO and EU have been constantly involved. In this respect, Serbia-Kosovo relations are illustrative as they remain a source of regional tensions and destabilization, and the direct involvement of Western actors and of the Russian Federation in maintaining regional stability or in strategic partnerships creates a favourable background for exporting instability at European level.

In a bleak scenario with little probability, which would suppose the increase of internal instability of Euro-Atlantic community, concomitantly with the loss of Western Balkan actors' trust in Euro-Atlantic institutions and the escalation of tensions, one could conclude the waste of at least two decades of investing in this region's stability and the growing instability would certainly reflect on European security. In a moderate scenario, with a higher probability, Western Balkans will remain the object of Moscow's secondary interests. Preserving a relative instability, in which dissensions and conflicts would not be solved at least on the short term is one of the most probable scenarios of security evolution in this area. In this line of thought, the resolution of Belgrade-Pristina relations has a low probability. And the prospects of the relations between central authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Srpska Republic is similar.

In our opinion, the importance of Western Balkan region stability and/or instability must be analysed in the current European context, marked by hybrid confrontation phenomenon, as defined in the introductory chapter of the present paper. Not only the conflict relations between

the political entities in this space, but also their structural vulnerabilities, the inadequacy of the solutions implemented after the wars that lead to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the difficulty of finding viable solutions not only for inter-state conflicts, but also for the intra-state ones constitute a good basis for a strategy directed to deepening dissensions. Thus, beyond the volatility of Western Balkan relations and of regional stability, in general, another risk specific to this region is related to turning these regional characteristics to advantage for increasing influence and, even more, for driving these actors off from their Euro-Atlantic integration desideratum and, implicitly, from the aspiration of reaching the necessary standards, and the present analysis brings warning signs regarding the existence of a good ground for such an evolution in Western Balkans.

All these would only add to the internal challenges of Euro-Atlantic community. Brexit, US foreign policy directions, the ascension of populism and political extremism on the European states' internal political arenas are among the factors leading to the erosion of the capital of trust in the two key institutions for the European security, representing, at the same time, arguments which can be turned to good account for emphasising their negative image.

Despite all this, the concern should be moderated by the progresses made by these actors towards democratization, by their engagement for evolving towards European and Euro-Atlantic integration and their willingness to negotiate (even though with difficulties). The active and longstanding presence of Euro-Atlantic institutions, although controversial in terms of their success, creates a good basis for Western Balkan states to act independently on the international arena. Their autonomy in foreign policy is considerably greater than the one held by states at the Eastern border of NATO and EU.

South-East Europe has a major relevance for the recent evolutions, especially in the dynamic of the relations between Russia and Western actors and in the context of tendency of European solidarity erosion. In another plausible scenario,



if efficient solutions for responding to the actions of discrediting these institutions are not found, Western Balkan states' evolution to Euro-Atlantic will become slower. In our opinion, it is important to not ignore the efficiency of the actions meant to damage the image of NATO and EU and to keep Western Balkans as far as possible from getting membership in these organizations. However, the role of this space and its capacity to attract Russia's major interest for increasing instability shall not be overestimated.

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WIDER BLACK SEA REGION (WBSR) AS UNIT OF ANALYSIS

*Daniel PETRESCU**

This paper develops the argument supporting the meaningfulness of the Wider Black Sea Region (WBSR) construct, and explaining the necessity of understanding the regional dynamics in order to find solutions to the problems with which countries and people in the area confront. It concludes that Western standards, ideas and values offer the framework for progress in WBSR. Within this context, opening to Western influence offers a great opportunity for WBSR, bringing to the forefront the soft power of the EU and all of the European and Euro-Atlantic instruments of money, legitimacy and know-how.

Keywords: *geopolitical confrontation; regional cooperation; interdependence; regional identity.*

Introduction

An essay about a region named after the Black Sea inevitably brings into mind the role of the sea in both geopolitical debate and human life.

“Mankind did not take to the sea for any one single cause but for a variety of reasons that are linked to the four attributes of the sea itself, namely, as a resource, as a means of transportation, information and of dominion. Each of these four attributes are intimately connected with each other, and each also exhibits the same cooperative and conflictual tendencies characteristic of international relations.”¹

¹ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower. A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, London. Portland, Or., Frank Cass, 2006, pp. 6-7.

Going beyond sea attributes, this paper addresses the interaction of people, organisations and states, in search for a definition of the space geopolitically known as the Wider Black Sea Region (WBSR). Its motivation is the change that has taken place in the Western perspective about this region.

After years of treating it “as simply a black hole: an area that you pass through in order to get to Russia, the Caspian Basin, central Asia, etc.”², and a short transition period when “the Wider Black Sea area [was] rapidly becoming a focal point of interest for a number of extra-regional actors,”³ we deal today with an area of geopolitical confrontation, where implications of the Russian actions, such as the conflict with Georgia (2008), illegal annexation of Crimea (2014) and continuing destabilizing actions in Eastern Ukraine, go well beyond the regional capability to deal with and tend to destabilize the whole European security construct. As clearly stated by the Allied leaders at the NATO summit in Warsaw, in July 2016, “Russia’s recent activities and policies have reduced stability and security, increased unpredictability, and changed

² Mustafa Aydin, “Regional cooperation in the Black Sea and Integration into Euro-Atlantic Structures”, in *The Role of Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space*, Vol. 1, NATO Defence College, Research Branch, Rome, 31 December 2005, p. 31.

³ Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, “Preface to Ian O Lesser, Global Trends, Regional Consequences: Wider Strategic Influences on the Black Sea”, *Xenophon Paper*, No. 4, November 2007, International Centre for Black Sea Studies, URL: http://icbss.org/media/108_original.pdf, accessed on 13 May 2019.

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security environment.”⁴

Facing this new situation, there is an inflation of opinions presenting the case and steps Western society should take in solving the conflicts and transforming the region. Differences appear mainly in approaching, interpreting and explaining the situation, with studies presenting two extreme causes, namely the burden of history and the struggle for the future. History determines the way WBSR people think and behave, while economic, security and political interests determine the goals of internal and external actors. Both fuel the geopolitical argument and this essay acknowledges them as fundamental for every evolution in the region. However, both are very complex and their analysis is beyond the purpose of the present paper.

Instead, we will focus on defining the region, supporting the major significance of the WBSR construct, and explaining the necessity of understanding the regional dynamics in order to find solutions to the problems concerning the countries and the people in the area. We will identify two main classes of interaction: those among the WBSR countries and those among the great geopolitical actors in relation to WBSR. Acknowledging the role of both in determining the fate of the region, we argue that a fundamental step in improving the role of regional cooperation should be the correct understanding of the area and what makes it unique, thus building on the identity issue.

Too often, in defining the features of WBSR, scholars and diplomats refer to demarcation lines inside this area: a collision point for different security complexes (NATO, Russia, and, potentially, the EU); the incidence of a full array of threats (conventional military power, post 9/11 asymmetric threats, vulnerabilities for the young democratic processes, Russian hybrid and conventional actions); the abundance of the so called ‘frozen conflicts’ (all needing democratic solutions instead of nationalistic and xenophobic

⁴ ***, Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, accessed on 17 May 2019.

approaches)⁵ and, lately, the activation of some “hot” or hybrid conflicts (Eastern Ukraine). In contrast, our reasoned view is that factors that can justify the unity of this region and, consequently, a unitary approach can be identified. In turn, we will argue that this region is also an elaborate latticework of linkages (what happens in one country often reverberates in others), it has a geographic location of importance in relation to the production and transport of energy (energy politics playing a role)⁶, and that the influence of predominant strategic players, such as NATO and the EU, could be factors of providing unity and a unitary approach to the region.

1. WBSR - a unit of analysis

There are several possible approaches to define a region: geographic, historical (involving cultural and social implications) or a more functional, political perspective; this paper supports the political and functional approach. It considers the WBSR as formed by the twelve states of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Project (BSEC)⁷ - Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. This builds on the concept also expressed by Mihail E. Ionescu: “Wider Black Sea Area is a geopolitical concept and it comprises the riparian states and also those that are connected within the same security complex.”⁸

While local countries still name it the Black Sea Region (BSR), the WBSR concept has been

⁵ Coops, Cees, *The Role of the Wider Black Sea Area (WBSA) in a Future European Security Space*, Research paper, No. 24, November 2005, NATO Defence College, Rome, Italy.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ A.N.: Which defines itself as “*the oldest and most mature organization in the geostrategic region that connects three continents, Europe, Asia and Africa*”, according to Ambassador Michael B. Christides, URL: www.bsec-organization.org, accessed on 17 May 2019.

⁸ Mihail E. Ionescu, “Wider Black Sea Region Cooperation: A Historical Survey”, in *The Role of Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space*, Vol. 1, NATO Defence College, Research Branch, Rome, December 2005, p. 24.



acknowledged mostly with US support.⁹ Those who disagree with it, point out the region's high diversity and lack of identity which leads us to the first point of clarification - whether the WBSR is "a meaningful historic or strategic concept or rather the product of the overly fertile imagination of several American strategists."¹⁰

There are several arguments to support the significance of the WBSR concept. Firstly, the WBSR concept brings the advantage of overcoming historical obscurity and placing the area into the forefront of the debate. As argued by Aydin Mustafa, "all the various regions and regional identities, however, are first and foremost the result of region-wide intellectual endeavours. All regions are initially constructed in the minds of people, be they intellectual, political and governmental elites or business communities."¹¹ In other words, "it is the political will of the interested countries and their intellectual engagement that turn a geographical area into a region."¹²

Through the use of language, followed by political action, what is achieved is the regionalisation of the Black Sea (BS) area. Regionalisation builds a sense of interest and a shared identity, facilitates collaborative actions against contemporary problems, encourages members to develop non-coercive attitudes, and reduces tendencies to resort to non-peaceful means in pursuit of national interests.¹³ Additionally, it could exploit an intellectual and bureaucratic tendency of the Western policy establishments, "organised to address regional issues, and especially challenges and opportunities in their immediate neighbourhood."¹⁴

⁹ Ronald D. Asmus (edit.), "Next Steps in Forging a Euro Atlantic Strategy for the Wider Black Sea", The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Washington, 2006, p. 16, URL: <http://www.gmfus.org/doc/BSBook.pdf>, accessed on 13 May 2019.

¹⁰ Ronald D. Asmus, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

¹¹ Mustafa Aydin, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ *Ibidem.*, p. 29.

¹⁴ Ian O. Lesser, "Global Trends, Regional Consequences: Wider Strategic Influences on the Black Sea", *Xenophon Paper*, November 2007, International Centre for Black Sea Studies, p. 14, URL: http://icbss.org/media/108_original.pdf, accessed on 13 May 2019.

Secondly, the question arises whether, if using the geographical approach, the area of the coast or the entire Black Sea basin must be considered.¹⁵ Neither of two is satisfactory, because they refer to the Black Sea "as a passive geography."¹⁶ Also, referring to countries as building blocks of the region, the question of history and national identity can be raised.

Thirdly, history brings the argument of continuing changes in WBSR: colonized by the Ionian cities led by Miletus in antiquity, the hegemony of Athens, Persian and Scythian Empires, Hellenistic monarchies, Roman, then Byzantine Empire, Ottoman Empire, Genghis Khan's Mongol Empire, the Golden Horde and Russian influence. Throughout such changing historical events, perceptions about Black Sea Region have changed. Eyup Ozveren explains how "seemingly geographical units of analysis are as historically constituted as the processes they purport to explain"¹⁷, taking as examples three classical books: the study of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean by the French historian Fernand Braudel;¹⁸ then Traian Stoianovich's¹⁹ study about the Balkans (a historian of former Yugoslav origin), and the work of Romanian historian George I. Brătianu.²⁰

Referring to the situation in the sixteenth century, Braudel sees the BS not as a separate unit but as an extension of the Mediterranean.²¹ He interpreted the BS through the lenses of a "single expression of a single division of

¹⁵ A.N.: Two million square kilometres and 19 countries- Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, North Macedonia, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Serbia and Montenegro.

¹⁶ Eyup Ozveren, "The Black Sea World as a Unit of Analysis", in *Politics of the Black Sea. Dynamics of Cooperation and Conflict*, Tunc AYBAK (editor), I.B. Tauris Publishers, London & New York, 2001, p. 61.

¹⁷ Eyup Ozveren, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹⁸ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Fontana/Collins, London 1949/1960.

¹⁹ Traian Stoyanovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilisation*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1967.

²⁰ George I. Brătianu, *La Mer Noire des origines à la conquête ottomane*, Societas Academica Dacoromana, Rome & Munich, 1969.

²¹ Eyup Ozveren, *op. cit.*, p. 65.



labour”, or as “distinct civilizational space”. Being a “terrain of contesting civilisations’ at that time, its unity could not be attributed to one “civilizational common denominator.”²² Stoianovich’s view is different and includes the Balkans within the BS world: “the Black Sea became an Ottoman preserve, thereby paving the way to the containment of an economic space under the jurisdiction of a single political structure.”²³ Brătianu places the Black Sea at the civilizational crossroads between the East and West in general terms, but “singles out the North-South axis as the backbone of the Black Sea world.”²⁴

Common to all three approaches ‘is the placement of the Black Sea in the margin of other, allegedly, more important geographical units. Subsequently, the BS remains in obscurity.’²⁵ Braudel’s and Stoianovich’s views pay tribute to the metrics for the units of analysis used in those times (the *Annales* school of historiography). Brătianu’s view is challenged by the raising of a new axe of power represented by the European Union which borders the Western shores of the Black Sea and has a sure aim at the Southern, Eastern and most of the Northern countries.

Fourth, in term of boundaries, a region ends where the “pulling effect” of something comes to a halt.²⁶ Even though WBSR’s boundaries cross some other historically known areas (dividing the Balkans and Caucasus), the salient point now is the aspirations of people living in the region and their opened request to become a part of a European democratic project.

2. The views of the critics: counter-argument

Nevertheless, this geopolitical criterion has its critics because of the questions it raises. They mainly refer to the inclusion of non-littoral riparian countries, such as Greece and Albania; interconnection with adjacent regions of Central Asia and the Greater Middle East, and the way

in which external actors name the region. The question then changes to: what is the relation between the WBSR, Balkans and Caucasus?

There is also another danger pointed out by Pavel Baev. He warns that a geographical widening adds to the functional widening which interprets security in broader terms: “The obvious risk of this double “widening” is that too many extremely serious problems are imported, with the result that the gain achieved by attracting attention is more than compensated by the loss of ability to deal with the issues on the agenda, and the net balance of the whole exercise becomes negative.”²⁷

Accepting that WBSR is only an “intellectually constructed” concept we give a solid argument to critics, which claims that for the littoral countries “the ‘BS identity” was until very recently of secondary importance to their wider international agendas.”²⁸ The issue of identity is used to explain some of the internal regional dynamics and cohesion, as well as providing an argument against wider presence from outside actors. So, we need to clarify whether WBSR has its own identity or not.

We can do that by analysing the main indicators about countries in the region; this will highlight discrepancies and provide a picture of the social and economic complexities. Taking into consideration only the main economic partners for each actor, different patterns and influences could be identified. EU countries are gaining influence in the western and southern littoral states, whilst Russia continues to maintain influence in northern and eastern states. The conclusion is that there is some truth in the statement about the lack of identity but things are evolving and ties between WBSR countries are strengthening.

Analysis of the WBSR countries security strategies shows similarities in views. Some strategies focus on internal risks, whilst others

²² *Ibidem*, p. 69.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

²⁷ Pavel K. Baev, “Evolving Security interests in the Wider Black Sea Area: Managing Revolutions, defusing Conflict, engaging Russia”, in *The Role of Wider Black Sea Area in a Future European Security Space*, Vol. 2, NATO Defence College, Research Branch, Rome, December 2005, p. 51.

²⁸ Mustafa Aydin , *op.cit.*, p. 30.



focus on regional and trans-national or global challenges.²⁹ With the exception of: Romania, Greece, Georgia and Turkey, the remaining WBSR strategies hardly ever mention the BSR.

At the same time, others would argue that the WBSR history constitutes a source of ethnic animosity, fuelling a resurgence of nationalism, with a legacy of weak and low legitimate elites which needed to build the young BS democracies to integrate them into the West. Although history and cultural ties worked well for the integration of the western littoral states into the Western structures, they have created intractable conflicts for the rest of the littoral states.

Credibility, legitimacy crises and nationalism are not the only side effects. The complex regional history accounts also for a lack of democratic tradition, insufficient political checks and balances and immature civil societies.

None of the aforementioned effects are manifesting alone, they interact and fuel each other. Political dynamics are linked to history, embedded habits, memory, and behavioural patterns. The factors above raise questions of how viable the young democracies are in the long run, which creates great pressure in approaching this region.

As a consequence of the issues mentioned, there has been a proliferation of institutions with no synergy of purpose, especially in the immediate decade after the fall of communism. One explanation of this institutional inflation is the genuine need for regional dialog, given the multiple regional challenges. Another explanation is that additional institutions have been created due to a failure of established institutions producing results. As noted by Bruce Jackson, “the single greatest impediment to the development of strategy has been the problem of an alphabet soup of ad hoc institutions (GUUAM, BSEC, CDC, and Black Sea Forum) competing to become the executive agent of the Black Sea project.”³⁰ This problem has led to assumptions

that “the BS area has neither internal nor external potential for region building.”³¹

3. The benefit of defining and crystalizing the WBSR

From the outset, it can be argued that the building blocks of a society are complex (a sense of political community, common institutions, a single code of rights and duties, a united economy, a demarcated bounded space, common mass public culture, shared historical memory and common ancestry, shared religion or common language³²). This is offset when one looks at the same issues for a region, where societal construct is much less constrained (there is a general sense of regional community, some effective regional institutions and increasing interactive economies). With the listed factors in place, we will argue that the European model provides an adequate way forward for the WBSR, providing that the situation in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine can be resolved.

Given its influence that goes beyond the regional consequences, 2014 has been a point of inflection and we must consider the events in every analysis and proposal about WBSR. Even before Crimea, referring to the geopolitical context, Bruce Jackson argued that: “*what is underway in and around the former Soviet Union (WBSR implicitly), is a struggle between the “soft power” of Russia and the “soft power” of the West for the political orientation of the countries in Europe’s East, for economic influence in these regions, and for the extension of their respective alliance systems and multilateral institutions.*”³³

Although different from the days of the Cold War, this new war confronted the West with Russia. The West “has a strong preference for liberal democracies, for free market economies integrated into the world trading system and

²⁹ WBSR countries National Security Strategies, URL: <http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers.html>, accessed on 13 May 2019.

³⁰ Jackson Bruce P., “The “Soft War” for Europe’s East. Russia and the West Square off”, URL: <https://www>.

realclearpolitics.com/articles/2006/07/russia_and_the_west_square_off.html, accessed on 13 May 2019.

³¹ Mustafa Aydin, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

³² Taras Kuzio, “The Nation-Building Project in Ukraine and Identity: Toward a Consensus”, in *Ethnicities*, nr. 1(3)/September 2001, p.14.

³³ Bruce P. Jackson, *op. cit.*



for countries that work well with the European Union's Neighbourhood Policy... and NATO"³⁴ Russia was seeking a "Moscow-dominated system of authoritarian states and the odd dictatorship, a "Near Abroad" economy hostage to Russia's energy monopoly and trade within the Common Economic Space, and the complete rejection of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions."³⁵

In 2014, situation abruptly deteriorated. Faced with the possibility of losing its influence in Ukraine, Moscow took action, initially in a hybrid form (Crimea and Eastern Ukraine), and after that, aggressively displaying its military might, militarizing the region and exacerbating the battle of narrative in its confrontation with the West. "Beyond using conventional military force, Russia is applying asymmetrical means of warfare in this region, aimed at disturbing and incapacitating the nations' sovereign decisions and their processes of democratization and Euro-Atlantic integration."³⁶

Even though these actions have fundamentally changed the regional dynamics, we would argue that the soft power exerted by Russia is probably continuing. This is a long war over influence, alignment, and values. "Both Russia and the West are prepared to organize their "soft power" –economic, financial and diplomatic–to create a region in their own image"³⁷, while Russia continues to emphasize its willingness to use the military instrument of power when necessary.

As far as the West is concerned, Bruce Jackson identifies three distinct campaign objectives: "to protect and perpetuate democracy in Ukraine and Georgia and potentially extend these democratic developments to the resolution of "frozen conflicts" on Moldavian and Georgian territory; to construct a trans-Caucasian energy route that would link the energy supplies of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea to European markets, breaking the monopoly on transit

Moscow currently enjoys and exploits; to ground the newly independent democratic states of Southeast Europe and the former Soviet Union in Euro-Atlantic institutions."³⁸

The way WBSR is conceptualised serves the West in the above described "soft war", offering the advantage of promoting the Western ideas and uniting this region with Western aspirations.

"The initial proponents of this approach were in fact trying to establish a new political and strategic framework for Western strategy that knits together diverse debates over Turkey, Ukraine and the Southern Caucasus and in which the strategic whole was greater than the sum of the individual parts."³⁹

It resembles Helmut Kohl's "integrationist point", when he suggested that we should cease calling the former communist countries "Eastern Europe" and start calling them "Central and Eastern Europe", thus replacing this artificial Cold War concept with a new brand, suggesting that they are closer to the West.⁴⁰

Apart from the strategic dimension, there is also a moral dimension of the Western strategy towards the WBSR. As noted by Bruce Jackson, the West has "a moral obligation to undo the damage of a half-century of partition and communism and to make Europe's Eastern half as safe, democratic, and secure as the continent's Western half."⁴¹

Conclusions

This paper has focused on defining WBSR and explaining the importance of defining it both in relation to building regional identity, and to joint effort in order to manage specific security challenges. We have accepted from the beginning that, in the current context, for WBSR, the implications of geopolitical confrontation exceed by far the effects and results of regional cooperation.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Pavel Anastasov, "The Black Sea Region: A Critical Intersection", in *NATO Review*, online edition, 25.05.2018, URL: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/Also-in-2018/the-black-sea-region-a-critical-intersection-nato-security/EN/index.htm>, accessed on 17 May 2019.

³⁷ Bruce P. Jackson, *op. cit.*

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ Ronald D. Asmus, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁴¹ Ronald D. Asmus, Bruce P. Jackson, "The Black Sea and the Frontiers of Freedom", in *Policy Review*, 1 June 2004, Hoover Institution, URL: <https://www.hoover.org/research/black-sea-and-frontiers-freedom>, accessed on 13 May 2019.



However, we conclude that, despite the unwanted effects of geopolitical confrontation, the region must not oppose outside intervention and persistently try to find unilateral solutions to the problems it is faced with. On the contrary, the opposite of this course of action is a valid one. The players in the region should identify the positive effects of geopolitical confrontation and forge their regional identity needed to make progress on democratization, economic prosperity, peaceful conflict resolution and integration into European and Euro-Atlantic security structures.

Even if this paper does not aim at formulating a strategy, we believe that practical solutions can be identified. Some starting points for such strategy can be the thorough analysis and understanding of the connections between geopolitical competition and the developments occurring within WBSR. The key note is that Western standards, ideas and values provide the framework for WBSR to grow economically, politically, socially, culturally, militarily or environmentally. In this context, the orientation towards NATO and the EU, can represent a major opportunity for WBSR, given that the two organizations will exert their soft power on these actors, while providing legitimacy, financial support and know-how for the actors belonging to this space.

Even if the wish to develop regional cooperation is obvious, this alone will not be the solution for all specific challenges of the region. Moreover, we can notice that, for the world's great geopolitical competitors, WBSR has become a subject of concern. Understanding the balance of the dominant trend, can provide answers to point out how issues in the area should be addressed.

Overall, WBSR's conceptual definition can prove a useful starting point, being one of the essential steps in developing regional cooperation between WBSR states, which could subsequently implement specific programs and initiatives, on the basis of "step by step" policy. Over time, this could set the right context for external actors to implement broader strategies in the region.

These strategies could include an open door policy for access to European and Euro-Atlantic organizations, thus providing viable prospects for integration, financial, military and political support for young, post-Soviet democracies, to push the separation effort from the local authoritarianism and powerful Russian influence, as well as the development of a competitive energy policy. However, in any case, from our perspective, the Western strategy in relation to WBSR must have a strong component of active diplomacy, based on a significant Western support for the states in the region.

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POST ARAB SPRING INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

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Intra- or extra-regional institutionalized regional cooperation facilitates the joint approach to specific issues of countries that generate or can generate and/or export insecurity to other states of the region, but also beyond. Moreover, intra-regional cooperation between countries geographically close to each other supports cross-border dialogue to materialize common economic, political or environmental interests and the development of capacities to maintain or achieve an optimal regional security environment to ensure the prosperity of states and their citizens.

MENA (Middle East and North Africa) is a particular case for intra-regional cooperation. Although the region has the prerequisites for its broad development, due to its ethnic-religious factor and the reserves of oil and gas of most of its states, its ratio of integration and regionalization, even in the classical economic area, is presented by specialists as limited, due to the classical authoritarian forms of government and the divergent interests of the states of the region with different Islamic orientations. In this paper, we analyse the trend in MENA's intra-regional cooperation following the Arab Spring events, starting from the hypothesis that the abolition of authoritarian governments results in states opening towards democracy and dialogue.

Keywords: *cooperation; regionalization; security; change; Arab Spring.*

Introduction

In the context of globalization, states are increasingly interdependent, which makes them unable to act unilaterally to address issues that have become at least regional if not global (environmental degradation, migration, terrorism, poverty, famine, protection of human rights etc.), thus, they need to make use of extended or narrower, more open or more limited cooperation formats for solving them.

In the period previous to the Arab Spring, although MENA region was recognized as a Muslim and Arab majority community with natural advantages (for example, oil and gas resources) and specific problems (the need for democratization, ethnic and religious disputes, authoritarian governance systems etc.), which required a common approach to increase the level of regional security and prosperity at institutional level, this need for cooperation was not fully implemented.

Now, after 2011, MENA suffers a paradox. On one hand, it is a region increasingly fragmented by conflicts (Syria, Libya, Iraq, Yemen, and Somalia), but on the other hand interconnected by similar problems generated by these conflicts, many of which are the natural consequences of the process of abolishing authoritarian regimes and attempts to democratize the states in the region.

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1. The concepts of “regionalization”, “region”, “regional cooperation”

Regionalization is related to the political and cognitive idea of forming regions. Thus, in the twentieth century, regionalization, seen as the ensemble of “regional organizations, systems and doctrines”¹, was a true milestone of research in the field of international relations.

After the World War II, with the shift of authority focus from the centralized state to international organizations, regional organizations multiplied and diversified in nature and purpose, regional systems began to be built, and doctrines in the field attempted describing and explaining the concepts of “region” and “regionalization”.

Widely, since the mid-1980s, a multitude of regional formulae² emerged as a direct result of inter-state cooperation. The current regionalization is closely linked to the changing nature of global politics and the intensification of the globalization phenomenon. Moreover, there are authors who even believe that the region is the central element of current global politics, and, therefore they reject the axiom of nation-state perception as the main actor of the international scene³, encouraging the acceptance of regional organizations as the main global players in the post-globalization era. Also, the concept of the region has historically evolved, currently being perceived according to the geographically covered area, in two forms - micro-region and macro-region.

Micro-regions are a priority in the study of national policies of states, as they are seen primarily as geographical spaces between national

and local levels. As a result of this localization, the corresponding phrases of “micro-region” or “sub-national region”⁴ are also used to express this space.

Micro-regionalization is generally perceived as a transfer of authority from the central state to an intermediate level placed between the governmental and the local levels. Federalization is seen as a result of this type of process which has led to the creation of the decentralized states of Germany, Switzerland or Austria. Of these, only Switzerland can now be perceived in this regard after Germany and Austria have become EU members, with a high degree of regional integration.

However, the term “region” is also used to express wider territorial units such as macro-regions (so-called global or international regions), which exist between the state and the global system. The macro-region is a common topic of international relations, especially since the emergence of the UN as a global entity in Europe, Africa, Asia or America, which encouraged the states of the world to establish regional organizations to maintain peace and security or to solve their common problems. Thus, macro-regionalization has expanded under the impetus of regional cooperation between states and governments. Also, the regional dimension of cooperation implies that the identified problem, whether civil or military (political, economic, financial, social etc.), through its joint and effective management by states can be further transformed in value, opportunity, so that the insecurity factor becomes a security one.

Taking into consideration the geographical area covered by the states involved in this relational type, the regional dimension of cooperation includes intra-regional cooperation and extra-regional cooperation as distinct forms. However, regardless of the type of cooperation, it is based on political, economic, financial etc. interests of the parties involved in the process.

On the one hand, intra-regional cooperation

¹ A. P. Rana, “Regionalism as an approach to International order: a conceptual overview”, *International Studies*, volume 18, issue 4, SAGE Journals, October 1, 1979, pp. 491-535.

² Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Political Science*, SAGE Journals, January 2011, p. 1.

³ Peter J. Katzenstein, “A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium”, *Capsule review*, November/ December 2005 Issue, *Foreign Affairs*, 2005, URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2005-11-01/world-regions-asia-and-europe-american-imperium>, accessed on 15.04.2019.

⁴ Bertrand Badie, Dirk Berg-Schlosser, Leonardo Morlino (eds.), *International Encyclopaedia of Political Science*, 1st Edition, SAGE Journals, Thousand Oaks, CA, 2011 (googlebooks).



is materialized in political and institutional mechanisms and instruments used by states in a geographical proximity in order to materialize common interests, but also to promote national interests through mutual dialogue.

On the other hand, extra-regional cooperation refers to the promotion of regional interests that are usually common to great state powers and/or international organizations in a more remote geographic area or is even a result of the manifestation of individual interests of powerful actors, usually economic ones, in a particular region. Through the increased interconnection of the states and national economies of the region, through cooperation accomplished by the means of political, economic, security, etc. organizations, the regional integration process is initiated and carried out.

2. Intra-regional cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa

Geographically, for a territory to be considered a region, it must have some common natural features such as climate or landscape, or artificial features, such as government, language or religion⁵. Thus, the overall view of the territory of the Middle East and North Africa as “a space that includes countries with historical heritage, religion, language and common culture”⁶ (elements of geopolitics) and the reflection of the Arab world in which Islamic belief is dominant, leads to the assertion that we can call this territory a “region”⁷ for

⁵ ***, “Region”, *National Geographic*, URL: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/region/>, accessed on 10.04.2019.

⁶ More details on this matter in the scientific research study: Mirela Atanasiu, *Influența conflictelor din Nordul Africii și Orientul Mijlociu asupra securității europene*, “Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, p. 15.

⁷ A.N.: Papers that refer to this geographical space as a region are numerous. To be seen: Eduard Soleri Lecha (ed.), *Re-conceptualizing Orders in the MENA Region The Analytical Framework of the MENARA Project*, Methodology and concept papers, No. 1, November 2016; Mohammad Reza Lotfalipour, Samaneh Montazeri, Somayeh Sedighi, “Trade Openness and Inflation. Evidence from MENA Region Countries”, *Economic Insights – Trends and Challenges*, Vol. II (LXV) No. 2/2013; Pamela

the purpose of the present work, in the sense of delimiting the reference geopolitical space based on scientifically recognized conditions.

Different specialists or organizations consider the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as including different groups of countries. Moreover, in the literature of international relations, political science or security, as well as in official documents of regional organizations involved in the management of the various issues of the region, references to this geopolitical space include expressions such as “Greater Middle East”⁸, “The Wider Middle East”⁹, “The New Middle East”¹⁰ and, in some cases, the “Arab World”¹¹ or “The Muslim World”¹². Although these formulations indicate some

Thompson-Hall, *Five ways to increase gender parity in the MENA region*, World Economic Forum, 05.04.2019.

⁸ De Dietrich Jung, Wolfango Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads: Ottoman Legacies and a Greater Middle East*, Zed Books, London, New York, 2001; G.B. Bertino, S. Colombo, M. Izzo, J. Leone, “Greater Middle East” in *The International Spectator: Italian Journal of International Affairs*, Volume 45, Issue 2, Taylor and Francis, 2010; Ivo H. Daalder, Nicole Gnesotto, Philip H. Gordon, *Crescent of Crisis: U.S.-European Strategy for the Greater Middle East*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, 2006. See: Mirela Atanasiu, *Influența conflictelor din Nordul Africii și Orientul Mijlociu asupra securității europene*, “Carol I” National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, p. 9.

⁹ Sabine Fischer, “The EU and Russia in the Wider Middle East”, *EUREN Chronicles*, no. 3, Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI), Paris, July 2017; Shahram Chubin, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, *The United States, Europe, and the Wider Middle East*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2004; Bayram Sinkaya, “Introduction to Middle East politics: leading factors, actors and dynamics”, *Orsam Resource*, no.1, April 2016, p. 15.

¹⁰ Marina Ottaway, Nathan J. Brown, Amr Hamzawy, Karim Sadjadpour, Paul Salem, *The New Middle East*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, 2008; Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, *Plans for Redrawing the Middle East: The Project for a “New Middle East”*, Global Research, 24 February 2016.

¹¹ ***, *The Arab World: An Introduction to Cultural Appreciation an Introduction to Cultural Appreciation*, UK Government, January 2007; ***, *The Arab World Competitiveness Report 2018*, World Economic Forum, Geneva, 2018; ***, *Inequality, Uprisings, and Conflict in the Arab World*, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, Washington DC, October 2015.

¹² ***, “Geography and the Territory of the Muslim World”, URL: https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/islamiccivilizations/files/6511935.pdf, accessed on 10.04.2019.



Table No. 1: MENA states and belonging to the main regional cooperation organizations

| | Intra-regional cooperation organizations | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------|----|-----|--------------------|-----|-------|
| | LAS ¹⁶ | OIC ¹⁷ | AU | GCC | IsDB ¹⁸ | AMU | ESCWA |
| Algeria | X | X | X | - | X | X | - |
| Bahrain | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Comoros | X | X | X | - | X | - | - |
| Djibouti | X | X | X | - | X | - | - |
| Egypt | X | X | X | - | X | - | X |
| Eritrea | - | - | X | - | - | - | - |
| Iraq | X | X | - | - | X | - | X |
| Iran | - | X | - | - | X | - | - |
| Israel | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Jordan | X | X | - | - | X | - | X |
| Kuwait | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Lebanon | X | X | - | - | X | - | X |
| Libya | X | X | X | - | X | X | X |
| Mauritania | X | X | X | - | X | X | - |
| Morocco | X | X | X | - | X | X | X |
| Palestine | X | X | - | - | X | - | X |
| Oman | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Qatar | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Saudi Arabia | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Western Sahara (SADR) | - | - | X | - | - | - | - |
| Syria | X ¹⁹ | X | - | - | X | - | X |
| Somalia | X | X | X | - | X | - | - |
| Sudan | X | X | X | - | X | - | X |
| Tunisia | X | X | X | - | X | X | X |
| Turkey | - | X | - | - | X | - | - |
| United Arab Emirates | X | X | - | X | X | - | X |
| Yemen | X | X | - | - | X | - | X |

regional uniformity, the reality is different. In fact, MENA includes prosperous oil states such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as politically and economically failed countries such as Syria, Iraq or Yemen. Also, MENA region includes some sub-regions such as Maghreb¹³ and Mashreq¹⁴, included in

this category based on some common elements.

The main regional cooperation platforms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are¹⁵: the League of Arab States (LAS), the Islamic Cooperation Organization (ICO), the African Union (AU), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) and

¹³ A.N.: Maghreb is a part of the northern Africa region that includes Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia and Morocco. To be seen: “Which Countries Are Located in the Maghreb Region?” *World Atlas*, 7 January 2019, URL: <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/which-countries-are-located-in-the-maghreb-region.html>, accessed on 10.04.2019.

¹⁴ A.N.: Mashreq is a geographical sub-region that stretches from the western border of Egypt to the eastern border of Iraq, including modern states such as Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. To be seen: “Mashriq. Geographical Region, Middle East”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mashriq>, accessed on 10.04.2019.

¹⁵ A.N.: In this analysis, we focus strictly on cooperation between Arab states or non-Arab states in the MENA region, with the exception of extra-regional cooperation with Western organizations.

¹⁶ Details at: League of Arab States, URL: <https://arab.org/directory/league-of-arab-states/>, accessed on 16.04.2019.

¹⁷ Organization of Islamic Cooperation, URL: <https://www.oic-oci.org/states/?lan=en>, accessed on 16.04.2019.

¹⁸ A.N.: The Islamic Development Bank is a Saudi project set up to promote economic development and social progress in its member states, in accordance with the principles of Islamic law. Currently, 57 Member States are participating in the ISDB on four continents - Africa,



the Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia (ESCWA), in which most or only some of the region's countries (Table 1) participate, most of them mainly pursuing cooperation in the economic field.

Among the regional organizations mentioned above, the current paper will analyse those considered the most important for observing the post Arab Spring cooperation trends in MENA.

The League of Arab States (LAS) is a non-governmental organization established in 1945, the first institutionalized regional organization in the world²⁰. It includes twenty-two African and Middle East Member States and, traditionally, embodies both the idea of pan-Arabism (the Arab homeland principle), and Arab nationalism (respecting the sovereignty of each member state); all Arab-speaking states are included in the organization. The traditional goals of the league are economic cooperation, the demilitarization of the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction and the fight against terrorism.

The League, though declared to be constituted for the achievement of common goals of the member states, has been permanently divided between different orientations caused by rivalries for regional pre-eminence or divergent foreign policy interests. For example, during the Cold War, part of the member states supported the

Soviets, others the Westerners, with the existing one between the traditional monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan) and the new republics (Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iraq) during this period. An issue that held the active and somewhat united League was the common concern of the Pan-Arab States to support the cause of the Palestinians in various ways (through diplomatic, military and, sometimes, financial support, as well as hosting Palestinian refugees).

After the US-led war on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the organization had a dysfunctional reaction, due to the division of inside opinions²¹. But, in the similar issue of the Arab Spring, the League demonstrated more consensus on Libya, where it supported UN action against Muammar Gaddafi's forces and, also on Syria, which was revoked as a member of the organization due to brutal governmental acts on the population. The Arab League's actions against the Libyan and Syrian governments have given it a new prominence after 2011, all the more as they have been used by the international community as a basis for justifying military and humanitarian intervention decisions in Libya. However, with regard to Tunisia and Egypt, the League did not have a coordinated response, which denotes the emergence of limited cooperation and/or consensus.

In April 2019, a League Summit called of "Solidarity and Determination"²² was held in Tunisia, although the mass-media described it as "a gathering of Arab leaders who demonstrated rhetorical solidarity and a theoretical determination"²³. These types of descriptions are based on the lack of factual reaction of the Arab states at this summit compared to the move of the US Embassy to Jerusalem²⁴ in 2018 and the recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the

Asia, Europe and Latin America. The basic prerequisite for membership is that the country wishing to become a member of this organization must already be a member of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Therefore, all member states in the OIC are also members of ISDB, respectively 24.

¹⁹ A.N.: Syria has been suspended by the LSA in 2011 following the brutal rejection of civilian protests by Bashar al-Assad's government forces. In 2018, officials of the LSA member states opened the discussion on Syria's reaction to the league. As a result, a first step towards reconciliation was made in December 2018 when the UAE re-opened its embassy in Damascus, as the US allied states, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, supported the opposition to President Bashar al Assad. In January 2019, Iraq expressed its support for Syria in this endeavour to return to the League. Subsequently, in March 2019, the Egyptian Foreign Minister stated that Egypt had no conditions for restoring Syria's membership in the Arab League. However, the consensus among the Arab states on this issue was not attained at least until April 2019.

²⁰ Silvia Ferabolli, *Arab Regionalism: A Post-Structural Perspective*, 1st Edition, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 8.

²¹ A.N.: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have supported or at least refused to publicly oppose US-led military attacks.

²² Marwan Bishara, "The summit of decline: In defence of an Arab league. Is it time for the Arab League to disband?", *Al Jazeera*, 1 April 2019, URL: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/summit-decline-defence-arab-league-190401102112909.html>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

²³ *Ibidem*.

²⁴ Stephen Farell, "Why is the U.S. moving its embassy to Jerusalem?" *Reuters*, 7 May 2018, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-israel-diplomacy-jerusalem->



Golan Heights²⁵. Moreover, the international mass-media narratives was that “the leaders of the Arab states have condemned these policies but have not announced any future action”²⁶. In fact, these inconsistent positions show that the leaders of the Arab League fail to unite around a nuanced strategy to effectively deal with the various regional and international powers intervening in the Arab world.

Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf (CCG) was established on May 25, 1981 by six Heads of State in the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Kingdom, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Abu Dhabi Oman Sultanate) who signed the Charter of the organization²⁷. These countries are members of the League of Arab States as well as of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), representing a core of countries with significant regional and global economic power, and some of the richest countries in the world.

A number of internal and external trigger factors have contributed to the formation of GCC, most of them taking into account certain similarities between those states, such as Sunni Islam which is their official religion, totalitarian models of governance systems, cultural identities, social and economic homogeneity, the existence of high oil reserves and dependence on oil revenues, which has led to a relational rapprochement between the respective nations and generated the will of those states to be members of a regional organization for cooperation in areas of common interest. Moreover, these countries share the same views on various regional issues as Palestinian radicals, Shia Iranians and immigrant workers, which, in

most cases, outnumber their citizens in these countries.

Although it was built as an organization whose main purpose was economic, scientific and business cooperation²⁸, it was created in the context of the deterioration of the regional security environment at the time affected by the Iranian revolution, the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR and the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran conflict. Subsequently, at the GCC Summit in December 2000, Member States also concluded a Common Defence Arrangement based on a specific principle, similar to Article 5 of the NATO Washington Treaty, that aggression against a member state is aggression against all members. Yet, at present, the GCC states rely heavily on US external support to ensure regional security, failing to lead too far to materialize a specific functional organization to ensure common security.

The Arab Spring has created frictions within the GCC, although the organization led by its informal leader - Saudi Arabia - has managed to maintain its sub-regional affairs, the influence of the Arab revolts on the Gulf monarchies being mitigated by both preventive policies materialized in subsidies and increasing the number of workplaces in the public sector, and through repressive measures, particularly in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Thus, the GCC member states continued to play an active role in Middle East diplomacy, but rivalling each other more incisively.

Regional rivalry among them has contributed to the current diplomatic crisis between Qatar and other GCC member states, which accuses Qatar of supporting terrorist and sectarian groups (including the Muslim Brotherhood), funding groups associated with Iran, and violating the sovereignty of neighbouring states by encouraging opposition policy. In fact, in June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain cut off diplomatic, commercial and

explai/why-is-the-u-s-moving-its-embassy-to-jerusalem-idUSKBN11811N, accessed on 25.03.2019.

²⁵ Chase Winter, “Golan Heights: Why it matters to US, Israel and Syria”, *Deutsche Welle*, 22 March 2019, URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/golan-heights-why-it-matters-to-us-israel-and-syria/a-48019484>, accessed on 25.03.2019.

²⁶ Bouazza bin Bouazza, Samy Magdy, “Arab League Rejects President Trump’s Israel Policies at Annual Summit”, *Time*, 31 March 2019, URL: <http://time.com/5561768/arab-league-trump-israel/>, 03.04.2019.

²⁷ ***, “The Charter”, About GCC, 2019, URL: http://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/AboutGCC/Pages/Primary_law.aspx, accessed on 25.03.2019.

²⁸ Kimberly Amadeo, “Gulf Cooperation Council Countries. Six Rich Countries That Own the World’s Oil”, *The Balance*, 18 December 2018, URL: <https://www.thebalance.com/gulf-cooperation-council-3306357>, accessed on 26.03.2019.



transport links with Qatar, arguing that the Doha regime destabilized the region by supporting terrorist networks such as the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda and through a close relationship cultivated with Iran²⁹, considered to be a provocative agent in the region. Moreover, at the GCC summit in 2018, the Qatar issue was not even on the agenda. Kuwait is making efforts to mediate the re-establishment of the relationship within the GCC, but so far unsuccessfully.

The determinant character of the Arab Spring, as a mass phenomenon affecting the MENA states, is the regionalism of the pro-democracy movement in most of the Muslim countries. Thus, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain, Yemen, Syria and Libya, neighbouring states containing almost 50% of the total population of the MENA region, were immediately and deeply affected by this phenomenon. From North Africa, only Algeria, who experienced its own “spring” twenty years earlier, and a very bloody civil war, was not involved. Iraq has been in civil war since 2003, and Lebanon has a fragile, imperfect but democratic order. Instead, the Gulf monarchies were almost untouched.

Worldwide, the Middle East Arab Region is one of the least integrated in cooperative structures and is described by some specialists as a “region without regionalization”³⁰. Indeed, from a comparative global perspective, the Arab governments are particularly resistant to the transfer of sovereignty to international institutions, which may justify the limitations in regional cooperation that are also evident between MENA states. In this respect, there are some theories that motivate this regional peculiarity through the following characteristics:

- existence of low economic and social interdependencies, different economic performance and conflicting interests³¹ (neoliberalism);

- diversity of political regimes types, sectarian differences, deliberate projection of poorly productive institutions³² (social constructivism);
- resilience of authoritarianism (as was proven in some countries following the Arab Spring) corroborated with the lack of democratic transition³³ (Arab exceptionalism);
- the post-colonial nature of Arab states and continued Western domination³⁴ (post-colonialism);
- the lack of a regionally recognized hegemon that results in the conflict for hegemonic supremacy³⁵ (theory of hegemonic stability).

Also, in most part of the Middle East and North Africa, the development of inter-state cooperation is marked by persistent conflict and post-conflict situations at regional level, and by the direct effects of such manifestations - the large number of refugees and emigrants, political instability and institutional malfunctions, failure to respect human rights and democratic principles, and the existence of gender inequalities. Also, the lack of basic resources (water, food and energy) is a multiplier of conflict between states, governments and regional and international organizations, creating a framework of general uncertainty and distrust.

Following the Arab Spring, the political environment of MENA states is a changing one, which offers both challenges and opportunities to address new dimensions of regional cooperation. The obvious need for democracy, social justice, and the reduction of unemployment and job creation in Arab societies could cause regional actors to explore new ways of promoting

Cooperation Series”, *MEI Policy Paper 2016-5*, Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., 2016.

³² Michael Barnett, Etel Solingen, *Designed to Fail or Failure to Design? The Origins and Legacy of the Arab League*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 180-220.

³³ Larry Diamond, “Why Are There No Arab Democracies?”, *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 21, no. 1, 2010, pp. 93-112, URL: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/articles/why-are-there-no-arab-democracies/>, accessed on 26.03.2019.

³⁴ Silvia Feraboli, *Arab Regionalism: A Post-Structural Perspective*, 1 edition, Routledge, New York, 2015.

³⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1996.

²⁹ ***, “The Gulf Cooperation Council will never be the same”, *Stratfor*, 6 December 2017, URL: <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/gulf-cooperation-council-will-never-be-same>, accessed on 26.03.2019.

³⁰ Paul Aarts, “The Middle East: A Region without Regionalism or the End of Exceptionalism?” *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 20, no. 5, 1999, pp. 911.

³¹ Shahrokh Fardoust, “Economic Integration in the Middle East. Prospects for Development and Stability, Regional



economic growth, which can be achieved by improving regional cooperation. However, to date, MENA history points out that sharing cultural, linguistic, religious and historical heritage does not necessarily imply extraordinary regional co-operation.

After the Arab revolt, there-instrumentalisation of existing regional organizations has been attempted but the evidence shows their fragmentation, as a result of political regimes, economic interests and divergent ethnic-religious trends that have led to insufficient progress in intra-regional cooperation.

Still, the regional countries must be aware that is difficult to envisage a significant improvement in the development prospects of the individual Arab countries if there is no improvement in regional integration. At the same time, the implementation of a new regional economic order also requires a new political order. The main difficulty here is that those countries in the region that have the most economical assets and instruments - the main oil producers in the Gulf - are governed by patrimonial monarchies, not by political forces, and their government paragon cannot be exported. The prospects of the MENA states democratization will also be decided at regional level and will essentially be influenced by the results of undergoing civilian wars that cannot be anticipated, being carried out and fed by various state or non-state actors.

Conclusions

The lack of a hard-set regional cooperation tends to exacerbate most conflicts and security threats. So, the level of cooperation in a region can be considered an indicator of peace and prosperity. Moreover, although economic integration in the Arab region has been a recurring theme and objective since the beginning of Pan-Arabism, the achievements in this regard are quite small. Over the last half century, many regionalization attempts have been launched, but progress has been limited to a rather restricted political, economic and security cooperation, due to the divergent interests of the states involved in this process.

Currently, intra-regional rivalries, in a period of marked uncertainty, have led to a lack of significant regional cooperation. Conflict that is a dispute between Qatar and other US allies, especially the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, blocks the effort to maintain a common front against hostile Iran. Moreover, splitting into the MENA oil community led to the strengthening of ties between Turkey and Qatar, two powers that support or encourage the Muslim Brotherhood, as opposed to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Qatar also linked tighter economic relations with Iran. In fact, most MENA states continue to fight for supremacy, which leads to worsening regional and sub-regional cooperation. An exponent of this conflict is the disintegration trend of GCC and the emergence of new forms of cooperation such as bilateral alliances between similar regimes that are beginning to become prominent. Moreover, the current crisis in Qatar highlights the fragility of relations between Member States in various regional organisations in MENA, this crisis being a specific pattern that clearly undermines any attempt of regional integration of some states, where sovereign pride and sectarian interests always come before the security and prosperity of their states and citizens.

However, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), major political developments take place at regional level rather than at a single state level. The Arab Spring is such a regional phenomenon, and the whole region is now involved in a perpetual conflict. The fact that problem regionalisation has become a specific feature in MENA, makes it necessary that, in the search for adequate economic strategies, to support the democratisation process of these states, the regional dimension cannot be ignored because, as the evolution in most Arab states subject of The Arab Spring show, the purely national recipes did not have much chance of success.

Since 2011, a series of long-lasting dictatorship regimes have been overthrown after the Arab Spring, the MENA region has grown geopolitically on a global scale and has expanded its possibilities of opening up to regional co-



operation. Also, the four strongest actors in the region (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey and Egypt), need to act jointly by promoting interests such as regional political and economic stabilization or solving some pressing issues. For example, major regional energy, water and transportation infrastructure projects are needed to better integrate MENA economies regionally and internationally.

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THE CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN THE SECURITY FIELD

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The first objective of the present article is to analyze the evolution of strategic communication in the field of security and defense, the definitions it has been given, the purpose for which it has been employed and the tools it has been based on. Secondly, the authors will determine the current role of the process, given the changes in context in the last decade which call for the particular approach of strategic communication. This context is generated by the evolutions in IT and public communication which drastically transform the ways in which reality is represented and perceived. Strategic communication can become the most effective process to manage security representations that democratic governments can resort to in order to defend and promote the values of the societies they represent.

Keywords: *strategic communication; positive narratives; target audience.*

Introduction

The present article investigates the usefulness and role that strategic communication has in the field of security in the context of enhanced hybrid threats, informational confrontations, developments in IT and social media,

intensification of attacks from different state and non-state entities against the democratic values that western society is based on. In this ample and complex context, strategic communication interconnects democratic values, public institutions, transnational institutions, such as NATO and EU, communication media, various national and international categories of audience. The process of strategic communication can represent the opportunity that is needed to stop the evolution of illiberal trends (populist and/or extremist) in order to enhance the public's resilience in the face of disinformation campaigns and to promote among young generations and Euro-skeptics the values that have ensured Europe's peace and development for the past 60 years.

1. The conceptual evolution of strategic communication in the field of security

The conceptualization of strategic communication in the field of security initially appeared when the process was first mentioned in *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Washington D.C., 2001. Previously and subsequently, the term has been used in other domains as strategic communication

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is assumed, invoked and practiced by institutions, organizations, companies that want to achieve a major, complex, medium and long-term impact on the target audiences that they relate to and thus promote their fundamental and defining values.

The first important official document that mentions the role of “strategic communication” in promoting the values of a state in the world is *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication* from June 2007. This document mentions US national security objectives in accordance with *The National Security Strategy of the United States*: “1) To champion human dignity; 2) To strengthen alliances against terrorism; 3) To defuse regional conflicts; 4) To prevent threats from weapons of mass destruction; 5) To encourage global economic growth; 6) To expand the circle of development; 7) To cooperate with other centers of global power; and 8) To transform America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century.”¹ In this context, the goals of the processes of public diplomacy and strategic communication were to support the fundamental values and national security objectives, as they have to:

- underscore US commitment to freedom, human rights and the dignity and equality of every human being;
- reach out to those who share US ideals;
- support those who struggle for freedom and democracy; and
- counter those who espouse ideologies of hate and oppression.²

It can be noticed that this first strategy regarding public diplomacy and strategic communication has as a main objective promoting democratic and liberal values internationally, not domestically, that the focus and orientation are not on the internal situation, but on various regional and global contexts and situations, from

the point of view of what the USA considers to be fundamental values for an open and free society. The ultimate and extremely ambitious goal is to ensure security on a global scale by eliminating those elements are run counter to the promoted values.

This strategy also establishes the strategic objectives aimed at foreign audiences:

- America must offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in its most basic values;
- with its partners, America seeks to isolate and marginalize violent extremists who threaten the freedom and peace sought by civilized people of every nation, culture and faith.
- America must work to nurture common interests and values between Americans and peoples of different countries, cultures and faiths across the world.³

At the same time, the strategy also defines the audiences it targets:

- key influencers: those whose points of view can have a ripple effect throughout society;
- vulnerable populations: youth, women and girls, minorities;
- mass audiences.⁴

The analysis of this strategy presents a series of advantages for understanding the public diplomacy and strategic communication processes. It presents clearly the values that must be promoted, the actions that must be undertaken in order to promote them, the objectives that must be met, the target audiences, the measures needed to monitor the process, including the ways in which resources should be allocated. Structurally speaking, this strategy comprises all the elements needed to build an effective strategic communication in accordance with US security interests. Even if it targets foreign audiences, once the objectives are met, the USA also achieves its own domestic security interests.

Even though *The U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*

¹ ***, U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication, 2007, URL: http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/state/natstrat_strat_comm.pdf, accessed on 20.03.2019.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.



offers a clear basis for organizing strategic communication, it does not provide a definition as such for what strategic communication is. However, in order to understand the concept, we can refer to definitions used in the field of security and in other social domains for this process. We shall analyze them in turn, and synthesize a definition of what the process of strategic communication could represent in the field of security.

In 2009, the Joint Staff of the US Department of Defense⁵ proposes in a document the following definition for strategic communication: “the alignment of multiple lines of operation (e.g., policy implementation, public affairs, force movement, information operations etc.) that together generate effects to support national objectives. Strategic communication essentially means sharing meaning (i.e., communicating) in support of national objectives (i.e., strategically). This involves listening as much as transmitting and applies not only to information, but also physical communication—action that conveys meaning.”⁶ This definition obviously serves military purposes, as it is developed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the US military: it refers to the maneuverability of forces, information operations, etc. At the same time, even it seems to express in a somewhat confused manner ideas from communication theories, the definition has the merit of indicating precisely the defining nature of this type of communication: the synchronization of communication processes – “the alignment of multiple lines of operation” – with a view to fulfilling the fundamental missions of the particular institutions – “to support national objectives”. Moreover, the authors include in the definition structural elements, some organizational, others process-related which ensure its functionality: “public affairs, force movement, information operations”. This enumeration is neither random, nor confused

because it encapsulates eclectically the complexity of actions and processes which must be synchronized to give coherence to strategic communication.

In 2008, analyzing the relatively new term at that time, S.A. Tatham proposes a definition of strategic communication in the field of defense for the United Kingdom government: „A systematic series of sustained and coherent activities, conducted across strategic, operational and tactical levels, that enables understanding of target audiences, identifies effective conduits, and develops and promotes ideas and opinions through those conduits to promote and sustain particular types of behaviour.”⁷ This definition is much more synthetic and it comprises both the connotation of the actional synchronization process as well as a clearer connotation for the finality of the process: promoting and developing certain behaviors. This definition clearly expresses the fact that the role of strategic communication is to change and to model behaviors in order to determine the acceptance of the promoted values. It brings to the foreground the influence component of strategic communication. But S.A. Tatham also draws attention to another important aspect: although it was initially understood as a process that targeted external audiences, strategic communication can be used for domestic audiences as well. „A presumption exists that Strategic Communication is aimed at external audiences. This is incorrect; Strategic Communication is as important to internal audiences as it is to external ones.”⁸ This clarification becomes extremely important for two reasons: firstly, because it allows for the use of influence targeted to domestic audiences using the means and techniques of strategic communication, and, secondly, because in the current context it supports the use of strategic communication to promote democratic values.

This new tendency to get involved in strategic communication was also developed in NATO. In August 2010, NATO adopts *NATO Military Concept for Strategic Communications*, which

⁵ Department of Defense, Joint Staff, URL: <https://dod.defense.gov/>, accessed on 20.03.2019.

⁶ ***, Joint Staff's October 2009 Joint Integrating Concept for Strategic Communication, URL: <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a510204.pdf>, p.ii, accessed on 21.03.2019.

⁷ Cdr. S.A. Tatham, *Strategic Communication: A Primer*, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 2008, p. 3.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4.



provides a definition for strategic communication from the point of view of the Alliance: NATO StratCom is a leadership-driven process focused on enhancing the Alliance's ability to coherently articulate its narratives, themes, and messages to external and internal audiences. NATO StratCom provides strategic political and military guidance and direction-based on a North Atlantic Council-approved information strategy.⁹ Once more, it can be noticed that the audiences toward which communication is directed are equally external and internal. An important and novel element that the NATO definition contains is linked to the mention of the element that constitutes the specific difference of strategic communication in comparison to other communication processes: "narratives". These narratives represent the expressions, formulae, ideas that have the capacity to generate new and diverse, but coherent, topics and messages directed towards any member of the target audience on the long or even very long term. By operationalizing these narratives, NATO approach to strategic communication becomes largely communicational in which point it differs from the American one, which is mostly actional and less communicational in nature. Moreover, in NATO, strategic communication represents at the same time a function of management structures not only of executive ones, as it was initially in the US approach.

S.A. Tatham notices in his paper in 2014 that further clarification is needed with respect to what this NATO StratCom strategy is and what it presupposes by clarifying certain key components of the process. In Tatham's opinion, strategic communication presupposes:

- "understanding, informing and engaging audiences to advance interests & objectives by affecting perceptions, attitudes, beliefs & behaviors;
- aligning actions, images, words to support policy and planning, to meet overarching strategic objectives;
- recognizing that all operations and

activities have a critical communication component because everything NATO says and does, or fails to say and do, has intended and unintended consequences, with intended and unintended audiences;

- recognizing that StratCom is not an adjunct function but integral to the planning and conduct of all military operations and activities."¹⁰

In 2017, these ideas appeared in the new NATO military policy on Strategic Communication.¹¹ According to this policy, strategic communication in NATO represents "the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the Information Environment (IE), in support of NATO aims and objectives."¹² According to this doctrine, implementing strategic communication must be based on a joint effort which is based on the following principles:

- All activity is founded on NATO's values.
- Activity is driven by objectives derived from Narrative, Policy and Strategy issued within a framework of political-military direction.
- Credibility and trust are vital attributes and must be protected.
- Words and actions must be aligned.
- The Informational Environment must be understood.
- Communication is a collective and integrated effort.
- Focus is on achieving (a) desired effect(s) and outcome(s).
- Communication is empowered at all levels.¹³

The definition of strategic communication and its principles as they are laid out in the NATO policy from 2017 clearly indicate the fact

⁹ ***, Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communications, 12 august 2010, p. 2, URL: <https://publicintelligence.net/nato-stratcom-concept/>, accessed on 23.03.2019.

¹⁰ S. A. Tatham, R. Le Page, *NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done?*, National Defence Academy of Latvia, Center for Security and Strategic Research, Riga 2014, pp. 4-5.

¹¹ ***, NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications, 14 August 2017.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibidem*.



that the initial focus on the communicational component of strategic communication has shifted towards the actional framework of military operations, with a clear mission of social influence – invoking narratives, the appeal to values, maintaining credibility and trust – with no distinctions with respect to the type of the target audiences: internal or external, adverse, loyal or indifferent.

2. The evolution of strategic communication in the European Union

The European Union's interest in strategic communication arises in the spring of 2015 and it belongs to the European External Action Service where The Strategic Communications Division – “StratComms” / “StratCom”¹⁴ was set up. StratComms is responsible for coordinating the EU's efforts with respect to public diplomacy and communication in the field of foreign affairs and security policies as well as in foreign actions in general. This division “works to project and promote key EU policies and core values – respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights – globally as well as to audiences at home.”¹⁵ The values and objectives that the European Union wishes to promote are presented clearly in the mission of this division and in the *Action Plan on strategic communication* presented in June 2015 which is written as a strategic communication strategy for the eastern border of the EU:

- “Effective communication and promotion of EU policies and values towards the Eastern neighborhood;
- Strengthening of the overall media environment including support for independent media;
- Increased public awareness of

disinformation activities by external actors, and improved EU capacity to anticipate and respond to such activities.”¹⁶

The communicational mechanisms invoked in the *Action Plan on strategic communication* refer to the positive narratives whose role is to explain to the audience the benefits of being part of the EU, to present the events in the target audience's interest area, in other words, strategic narratives with empathic and resonating potential, expressed in accessible language, that at the same time reflect EU values.

The interest in the eastern neighborhood of the EU is justified since, just one year before, Russia had annexed Crimea by concerted actions specific to hybrid warfare, intensely fueled by manipulative and propagandistic messages and contents. Consequently, East StratCom Taskforce was set up. Its declared goal is to “develop communication products and campaigns focused on better explaining EU policies in the Eastern Partnership countries”¹⁷, but, in fact, it counters fake news and disinformation spread on various channels by Russia and other foreign actors hostile towards the EU. This second mission is explicitly established in the *European Council meeting (19 and 20 March 2015) – Conclusions*, “13. The European Council stressed the need to challenge Russia's ongoing disinformation campaigns and invited the High Representative, in cooperation with Member States and EU institutions, to prepare by June an action plan on strategic communication. The establishment of a communication team is a first step in this regard.”¹⁸ The goal of such communication products is to misinform and weaken the cohesion to European values on the part of eastern European countries, which could eventually lead

¹⁴ A.N.: EU documents alternatively use the acronyms for “strategic communication”: sometimes “StratComms”, sometimes “StratCom”. Regardless of the acronym used, the process to which it refers is the same: “strategic communication”.

¹⁵ ***, Strategic communications, European External Action Service, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/100/strategic-communications_en, accessed on 24.03.2019.

¹⁶ ***, Action Plan on strategic communication, 22 June 2015, p. 1, URL: <http://archive.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Action%20Plan.pdf>

¹⁷ ***, Questions and Answers about the East StratCom Task Force, 5 December 2018, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/2116/, accessed on 30.03.2019.

¹⁸ ***, European Council meeting (19 and 20 March 2015) – Conclusions, URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21888/european-council-conclusions-19-20-march-2015-en.pdf>, accessed on 30.03.2019.



to endangering the EU itself. At this time, EU strategic communication is mainly focused on the fight against online disinformation.

In March 2018, the *Final Report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation* was published. It analyzes the phenomenon of disinformation in the EU and proposes five measures to combat it:

- enhance transparency of online news sharing systems;
- promote media and information literacy to counter disinformation and help users navigate the digital media environment;
- develop tools for empowering users and journalists to tackle disinformation and foster a positive engagement with fast-evolving information technologies;
- safeguard the diversity and sustainability of the European news media ecosystem, and promote continued research on the impact of disinformation in Europe to evaluate the measures taken by different actors and constantly adjust the necessary responses.¹⁹

One month later, in April 2018, was published the *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Tackling online disinformation: a European Approach*²⁰, which analyzes the framework and the causes of online disinformation, the methods of creating and spreading disinformation, and the European approach to tackle online disinformation which relies on a more transparent, trustworthy and accountable online ecosystem and focuses on ensuring secure and resilient election processes because, in an electoral context, for example, disinformation produces dire consequences for

¹⁹ ***, Final report of the High Level Expert Group on Fake News and Online Disinformation, 12 March 2018, p. 6, URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/final-report-high-level-expert-group-fake-news-and-online-disinformation>, accessed on 30.03.2019.

²⁰ ***, Comunicare a comisiei către parlamentul european, consiliu, comitetul economic și social european și comitetul regiunilor. Combaterea dezinformării online: o abordare europeană, URL: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0236&from=EN>, accessed on 06.04.2019.

democratic societies. This aspect regarding the protection of the electoral process is also reflected in the *Action Plan against Disinformation*, issued in December 2018²¹, which puts forth a coordinated, concerted response based on four pillars:

- “improving the capabilities of Union institutions to detect, analyze and expose disinformation;
- strengthening coordinated and joint responses to disinformation;
- mobilizing private sector to tackle disinformation;
- raising awareness and improving societal resilience.”²²

The most recent step taken by the EU to tackle disinformation dates from 18th March 2019 when the Rapid Alert System was launched, a digital platform for rapid response against disinformation. As it can be noticed, the measures taken at EU level are focused almost exclusively on fighting digital disinformation, more precisely, on developing the technological and human capacities to attain this goal and to control this phenomenon.

However, it is our opinion that such control is hard to attain, as disinformation is neither a new phenomenon, nor one whose development can be stopped. One more efficient means of fighting disinformation and its negative effects on liberal democracies is to actively promote the values, principles and accomplishments that these systems have so that the target audiences are no longer vulnerable to disinformation. We shall refer to this role of strategic communication in the following section.

3. The future of strategic communication

Starting in 2010, strategic communication becomes a necessity in the context of the exponential development of social media, of

²¹ ***, Joint communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Action Plan against Disinformation, 12 December 2018, URL: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/action_plan_against_disinformation.pdf, accessed on 06.04.2019.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 6.



the intensification of online disinformation, of the diversification of the means, sources and targets of manipulative influence campaigns, of the increase in the trust deficit in western liberal democracies because of the inoculation and support that illiberal ideologies are given in European countries and in the USA. Strategic communication is the process designed to counter the restructuring effects of disinformation and malicious information whose targets are not only the external audiences, with a view to promoting national interests, but also the internal audiences, with a view to increasing their resilience in the face of information attacks.

Even though the necessity and the importance of strategic communication are more than evident, in this respect there are fewer accomplishments than doctrines. Organizational, technological and informational measures are welcome, in the short term, because they can only block malicious contents, which is no small feat, but it is still insufficient because any technological barrier can be surpassed and any organizational structure can become inoperable. The cause of this situation is found in the very functional articulations of the strategic communication process. We shall explain them in turn.

Developed and applied in the context of peace support, peace enforcement, social reconstruction military operations, the vectors of strategic communication were the structures that already had this mission and that were specialized in this type of processes: PsyOps and InfoOps structures. These have been undertaking social influence activities and state security interests promotion. The support they provide to military missions is well recognized and sometimes they have been at the forefront of planning and executing certain missions. But all these were carried out with an external audience as a target, an audience which was considered adversary if not hostile. And this situation reflected precisely the PsyOps and InfoOps doctrine according to which, the specific actions they carry out do not target internal audiences, but only adversary audiences. As long as PsyOps and InfoOps structures only work to fulfill this mission, no problems arise, but when these structures

work for strategic communication, things are no longer so straightforward because strategic communication's goal is to influence its internal audience as well, which runs counter to PsyOps and InfoOps doctrines. These structures find themselves in an ethical dilemma: should they go beyond the principles that they are founded on or should they fail to accomplish the mission?

This dilemma does have a solution and it not conjectural. In fact, it may become a new doctrine. As previously explained, the first mention of strategic communication as support for military missions appears in the USA, in 2001, at the same time that in the USA had been identified the first enemy that was not an alliance, a state, a group of forces, but a phenomenon: terrorism. The USA started a war against an insidious, diffuse, incessant phenomenon which involves military forces but not only. The war on terror was and still is a war that is waged both within and outside national borders. Otherwise, this war would be lost. As any phenomenon, terrorism does not respect political or cultural boundaries. It manifests itself anywhere it finds security breaches and anywhere it finds followers.

The same is happening at present with another phenomenon that has been given several names, that is manifested under different guises and that is no longer a random series of events. It is based on broadcasting informative contents whose role is to deform the perception of reality, to weaken trust in the social fabric and to destroy solidarity and social cohesion relationships. It has been called manipulation, disinformation, fake news, alternative reality. This last phrase may possibly be the most appropriate for the purpose it pursues because the phenomenon that is unfolding before our very eyes is nothing else than an aggressive attempt to alter public reality. This phenomenon is definitely much more insidious and possibly more dangerous due to its scale and manifestation than terrorism. Terrorism is assumed by its perpetrators, by those who support and promote it. Terrorists can be identified and defined as such. But the authors behind this phenomenon of altering public reality cannot be easily identified, cannot be declared as targets. Especially since, unconsciously,



the victims of this aggression become in turn innocent vectors, further distributing the manipulative contents, the disinformation, fake news, alternative realities that are generated. Thus, we find ourselves in the situation in which these victims become the adversaries inside societies, who live in the same public reality but which they perceive in a distorted manner due to the shaping induced by this phenomenon. The victims and the aggressors become the legitimate members of the same reality, caught in the same social relationships that they value in completely opposite ways. This is a successful formula for social and state dissolution, a formula that was employed in Ukraine in 2014 by the state actors interested in unraveling the social, political, economic articulations of this country.

In this context, it becomes opportune and necessary to redefine the strategic communication doctrine with respect to its mission. Strategic communication must become the means to fight against those informative contents that aim at altering public reality. The ability to accomplish this mission resides in the positive narratives, the elements that represent the specificity of strategic communication. Positive narratives have the capacity to maintain and reestablish the adequate perception of public reality in accordance with the society's security interests and the public interests.

Thus, strategic communication can be directed to internal audiences as well, as S.A. Tatham anticipated in 2008. It is true that NATO StratCom Policy in 2017 did not distinguish with respect to the target audience, but neither was it explicit in this regard, explicit enough to annul PsyOps and InfoOps policy. A recalibration of this nature of strategic communication could surpass the ethical and doctrine restrictions regarding influencing internal audiences, and strategic communication could become an effective instrument at the disposal of democratic governments to tackle the phenomenon of altering public reality. The defining orientation of strategic communication could focus on combating manipulation, disinformation, fake news, alternative realities, but not on influencing the public.

However, it must be said that the phenomenon of altering public reality cannot be combated solely using positive narratives and influence messages that strategic communication could broadcast. Strategic communication can only support such a mission in the medium term. In the long term, the mission of ensuring an adequate perception of public reality should belong to societal educational programs. Together, educating the competences to represent public reality, generate positive narratives and organizational and technological measures have a chance to tackle the phenomenon of altering the perception of public reality instrumented by state actors interested in destabilizing democratic governments and societies.

At present, this fight is left more to the media institutions, as it is considered that broadcasting informative contents, regardless of their purpose or nature, is only a part of the vast process on mass communication. What is overlooked is the fact that it is precisely these mass media channels and new media channels that are the most used by the state actors interested in propagating and supporting the phenomenon of altering public reality. Moreover, the traditional media and new media institutions do not have the mission to identify external informational threats and to calibrate public reality to security interests. This is a mission for the institutions responsible for promoting security culture.

An aspect that remains fundamental to the process of strategic communication is the need to have a strict coordination and consistency of messages so as to produce the desired results. For this reason, strategic communication must be assumed, designed and coordinated at the highest level of government, the same level that issues the national security strategy in order for the two to be synchronized and to transpose into positive narratives the ideas and the messages pertaining to security. And these will be promoted by means of strategic communication campaigns which will follow a series of stages.

Analyzing the target audience to identify the categories it can be divided into with respect to: knowledge regarding the values they share, the security values and interests they pursue;



sources of information; degree of resilience to disinformation.

Setting the objectives of strategic communication for each target group identified; in our opinion, it is impossible at present for a single objective to cover all categories in the target audience; the differences among groups are substantial, dictated not only by the classic aspects: age, gender, education, but also by sources of information used, by the groups the members of the target audience interact with, by personal interests and experiences; the social media era has created the opportunity for each individual to present his/her ideas and has created the premise that each voice can affirm his/her individuality and expect that his/her interests and needs be taken into account in societal action.

Designing the messages at the same time as drafting the action plan for strategic communication under the guise of positive narratives which can transpose the universal values that democratic governments promote: democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, human rights, minority rights, fight against corruption into messages that the people can understand, that they resonate with and that calibrate representations to reality; positive narratives can transpose abstract concepts, information, statistics into narratives that can be easily remembered and reproduced, thus contributing to the modification, influence and adaptation of behaviors.

Evaluating the results of promotion campaigns and monitoring the degree of acceptance for various public and social values which will indicate to what extent the goal of strategic communication has been met, to what extent positive narratives have managed to create the appropriate framework to combat the phenomenon of altering public and social reality, which might be the future avenues of action and proactively adapting positive narratives.

Covering all these stages in an assumed and consistent manner can lead to strategic communication campaigns that fulfill the short and medium term declared goal, namely support the desired public reality for the internal audience so that the people's resilience in the face of

disinformation, fake news, adverse alternative realities can be enhanced proactively.

Conclusions

Strategic communication reflects the need felt by public institutions to have a component that guides public communication activities which are normally undertaken, with a strategic vision. Strategy presupposes planning the medium and long term activities with enough flexibility that it can take into account changes in the public arena which might cause disservice to the mission or the image of the respective institution. The strategic communication process must be coherent, clear and explicit enough to encapsulate the dynamics, complexity, flexibility and usefulness of the concept in organizing the communication campaigns of institutions in the field of security and defense. Strategic communication encompasses various goals and methods specific to different types of communication, united in a unitary approach provided by strategic communication, the focus being of strategy as the integrating elements conducive to the change or influence of the target audience's attitudes, behaviors and values. The end goal of strategic communication is for each member of the target audience to perceive the public and social values, interests and objectives as being necessary and real, if not vital for individual welfare.

Thus, strategic communication, mass media, online communication, public relations, influence communication, organizational communication contribute, as part of strategic communication campaigns, to the efficient and coherent organization of the processes of perceiving and representing public and social reality, addressing a heterogeneous audience, with various profiles, subjected to various kinds of disinformation, who use diverse sources of information with different degrees of accuracy. Without a coordinated strategy, successful communication under these circumstances would be impossible. Strategic communication can offer the necessary framework for the development of flexible, integrating campaigns capable of combating



the phenomenon of altering public reality aggressively supported by state actors interested in destabilizing democratic societies.

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THEORY OF REFLEXIVE CONTROL – ELEMENT OF THE NON-LINEAR RUSSIAN WAR

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The article aims at examining the theory of reflexive control as it was developed during the USSR, the time of its emergence, and the transformation or how it has been adapted in the current international context. Nowadays, innovations in this field are quite scarce, we can talk more about adapting to the user's needs or requests. For this, they are analyzing historical, ideological and psychosocial factors that contributed to the emergence of this theory. The article is a first step towards a more-in-depth study of the theory of reflexive control, as a basic element of the hybrid / non-linear war. It is expected that this material will raise interest, dialogue, differences of opinion and even controversies on this subject.

Keywords: *non-linear war; hybrid war; reflexive control; double thinking; camouflage (Maskirova), finlandization; risk aversion.*

Introduction

Hybrid military action is not new to Russia, nor has it begun with the Ukrainian crisis. Russia has successfully developed and applied the tactics of these types of hybrid actions, especially during the conflict in Chechnya and the crisis in Georgia. The lessons learned from the “Arab Spring” also had an impact on Russia’s capabilities regarding hybrid military actions, called by them, in fact, “non-linear

military actions”. The idea behind this theory is that conventional geopolitical paradigms are outdated. Russia believes that modern military actions must focus on the idea that today the battlefield is no longer restricted by classical dividing lines but it exists in the subconscious of those who participate in such actions. In other words, the new generation of conflicts, from Russian perspective, are considered vital tools that provide additional elements to carry out military action on the ground. The main objectives of the new generation of conflicts are reducing the need for a conventional military power so that both the military representatives of the adversary and the population will be on the attacker’s side. The difference between understanding the concept of “hybrid warfare” between Russia and the West is very big. The key word that can describe “hybrid war” as defined by Westerners is “multimodality”, while the keyword to describe the paradigm of non-linear offensive warfare from the Russian point of view is “penetration”. Specifically, the key elements of the Russian doctrine regarding non-linear / hybrid warfare are derived from the concepts of deep operations, active measures and the theory of reflexive control. In the following we briefly developed the concept of “reflexive control”, to draw attention upon it and this because more and more characteristic elements of it come out.

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In recent years, the dynamics of the information war between US, NATO and EU on the one hand, and Russia on the other, has drawn the attention of military and political analysts. The term associated with this information war by Russia and those familiar with the subject and by specialists in the field of influence and misinformation is that of “reflexive control”. It is a very unpublished and understood topic in the West, which seems to have gained importance in Russia, especially in the military field, and most likely in diplomatic relations as well. Briefly defined, reflexive control means “*the transmission to a partner or opponent of information specially prepared to determine it, so as to voluntarily make a certain decision.*”¹

This article is a preliminary attempt to examine the development, the current situation, the degree of use and the implications for the future of the theory of reflexive control in the current context, being analyzed together with the historical, ideological and psychosocial factors, factors that contributed to the emergence of this theory. Reflexive control is an integral aspect of the decision-making process in the Russian army and, as such, is a reflection of the emphasis placed on intentional control of the combat environment in order to increase the predictability and create the conditions desired by the initiator. The theory is much more scientifically developed than one would think and therefore deserves more attention from national security structures, which is much more intense than before. It should be mentioned that the topic of reflexive control has been classified by the Russian General Staff as “top secret”, and in recent years the interest in developing this theory has grown exponentially.

The article aims to pave the way for a more in-depth study of the theory of reflexive control, as a basic element of the Russian hybrid/nonlinear war. It is expected that the presented material will arouse interest, dialogue, differences of opinion and even controversies on this subject. From the thesis presented here, I hope to establish the

antithesis in the subject related to the theory of reflexive control.

1. Analyzing the context of the theory emergence

After the end of the Cold War, many optimistic Westerners said there was new hope for a rational and collaborative relationship with Russia. Following the analysis of global events, it was concluded that Russia was no longer interested in spreading communist ideas and socialist revolution around the world and that it had become desirable to work with Western countries to establish a new world order based on cooperation and peace. But history, starting with 1918, has shown that Soviet foreign policy cannot be fully believed. Observers continued to regard Russia’s foreign policy as something of a facade, and more importantly, to read off Russian actions in the light of Western interests. Despite an anecdote that said that while French, British and American generals reached similar conclusions when analyzing a problem, Russian generals reached completely different conclusions,² the West persisted in seeing the Russians through their culture. The main reason is related to the ignorance of those in the West regarding the history, doctrine, values and purposes of Russia. It is essential to recognize that all information provided to the West by the Russians has inherent propaganda value and is in fact a story that distorts or changes the perception of Russia. Therefore, the Russians encourage and propagate the misinterpretation of “symmetry” knowing that it is to their advantage to do so. “The main condition for success in influencing propaganda is the masking of each influence factor. For example, this can be done by suggesting that there is symmetry between Russian and American society - you want peace we want peace, you have red ribbon we also have red ribbon, how profoundly similar we are. As a result, according to propaganda plans, the audience in the West had no doubt about the sincerity of the Russian representatives or other

¹ Vladimir A. Lefebre, *Reflexive Control: The Soviet Concept of Influencing on Adversary’s Decision Making Process*, Science Applications, Inc., Englewood, Colorado, February 1984, p. 4.

² Oleg Penkovskiy, *The Penskovskiy Papers*, Doubleday, New York, 1965.



sources of information.³

The West and Russia act under different perceptions and terms of reference. The Russians live according to a completely different and preconceived set of ideas and premises, such as: the reminiscence of the Marxist conception of structuring society and the course of history, a logical process based on Marxist dialectics, opposed to the deductive reasoning of the West, a different set of moral laws and different goals.⁴ Not only are the goals, beliefs and practices of the two systems, the socialist and the capitalist, often diametrically opposed, but even the meaning of the words and concepts is often different.⁵ These differences penetrate and affect every aspect of society, the meaning attributed to science and research, human rights and well-being, the various aspects of military issues, peace and coexistence to name a few of the areas of concern. The basis for these differences lies in the fact that every aspect of life in Russia was explained by the laws of dialectical and historical materialism, while in the West there was no such formal concept. These philosophies served as the basis for the development of the Russian theory of knowledge, all their actions resulting from this. Some basic perceptions of socialism have included the belief that everything in the real world is scientifically explicable, that events have a certain purpose and are generated by laws that govern the nature of the world, are realized through a process of antithesis and synthesis, human knowledge grows and evolves. Accordingly, this theory must be applied and proven by practice (the primacy of practice) where their own concepts tend to become much more eclectic.

A logical extension of the ambiguity inherent in the Russian conception of peace leads us to an

area of “relaxation”, or as the Russians prefer to express it “peaceful coexistence”. The relaxation policy resulted from raising awareness of the catastrophic danger of the “nuclear age”, and from the need to sign ratification agreements to prevent a possible nuclear war. The reasons for establishing a relaxation climate, however, were fundamentally different for those in the West from those in the former USSR. “While the Westerners saw a promise of stability and an end to the “no peace or war conditions that marked the world after 1945, Soviet leaders identified new ways and ways of expanding their country’s power and influence.”⁶ Russia has adopted a position of relaxation that has been misinterpreted by many as indicating a welcome change in Russian doctrine and policy towards global domination. In reality, this situation was imposed by the Kremlin’s awareness that the conditions on the globe were not suitable for an aggressive attitude and in fact represent an attempt to gain valuable time to prepare for a later stage. The contrast between the Russian and Western perceptions of the value of withdrawal from a conflict is that, unlike Russians, who know when and how to withdraw if necessary, Westerners do not have this science.⁷

Open, free societies are natural targets for propaganda campaigns and are highly susceptible to the Russian method of *divide et impera* (“divide and conquer”). Russia’s repeated attempts to exacerbate tensions between different Western factions, to encourage dissidents and division among Western powers and in American society, in particular, to encourage clandestine groups and to provide financial aid to any organization they may influence, can be considered something like an informational war, of particular importance for the Russian objective, that of weakening the “correlation of forces” between East and West for their own benefit. The Russians are fully aware that, at present, the conflict between the Russian and the Western worlds on the front of geopolitical

³ Vladimir A. Lefebvre, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

⁴ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California, Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud William S. Powell, James G. Taylor, *The Soviet Perspective on the Nature and Evaluation of Command and Control*, Alphatech, Inc., Burlington, Massachusetts, 1983, Reshetar, John S. Jr., *The Soviet Polity*, Frederick A., p. 13.

⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 26.

⁶ Stephen P. Gilbert, *Soviet Images of America*, Crane Russak Inc. Company, New York, 1977, p. 17.

⁷ John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy: Principles and Practices*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1973, p. 116.



struggle is as decisive as on the military front, if not even more important. Therefore, the Russians apply a conceptual system in which "... the armed forces can only succeed if they are supplemented by well calculated political, economic, social and psychological campaigns".⁸ It is quite clear that most Westerners have realized the fine difference between the absence of war and the intensification of the information war only in recent years.

In order to understand the theory of reflexive control, it is important to analyze the difference between the intensity of control in Russian and Western societies, a few mismatches between the philosophies of the two systems regarding control must be emphasized and we must retrospectively look at the Russian society as the society with great socialist reminiscences. Russia is a society based on the principles of science and the belief that all phenomena are governed by common dialectical laws. "Socialism is characterized by the control of all spheres of life in society. The scientific control of the economy, the social-political, of the spiritual life is an objective of regularity."⁹

2. The origins of reflexive control theory

2.1. Environmental and historical factors

Throughout Russian history, control has been a concern of the rulers of this country and, surprisingly or not, this has to do with the harshness of the environment and the climate in which the peasants in traditional Russia lived and fought, against the unending forces of nature. It seems that nature and history combined to plant and develop in the Russian character certain traits that helped the rulers establish and maintain the dictatorship over the people. "In the development of communism it should not be omitted that the vast majority of Russians are peasants, and that they are affected and even dominated by the indisputable facts of their inheritance of peasants, of the rural environment, of the peasant traditions."¹⁰

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 288.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 47.

¹⁰ Vakar Nicholas, *The Taproot of Soviet Society*, Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York, 1961, p. ix.

Some of these peasant traits include the ability to endure deprivation, the willingness to bow to the inevitable, and the consent to obey the authorities. The basic social unit was not the person but the household, and the basic political unit was the village. In an incomprehensible way, the individual belonged to these things and could not manifest or think of anything else in daily life outside of these things. The village was a miniature totalitarian society, the legislative, legal, executive and moral authority, all merged into the village leader and it was the duty of the members to obey it. The state's authority in Russia has roots that go much deeper than the police tyranny, the environmental features conditioned externally and by the influence of education and propaganda. "Tradition has helped to create the psychological climate for leaders' claims to be embodied as priests and political officials, to be credited as having the absolute, single and indivisible truth of both the divine truth and the infallible scientific knowledge."¹¹

There is no doubt that the use of force to perpetuate control has been widespread in Russia. The control was carried out by surveillance, but also by other severe sanctions - imprisonment, placement in hospitals of madness, isolation, loss of status and even death, for deviations from social norms and rules. From the purges of the Stalin regime to the exile of Sakharov in the Gulag Archipelago, the injustice and human rights violations of the Russian regime have been well documented. "The fact that the control instruments in Russia have worked so much, so effectively, over time indicates that at a certain level, the party has been supported by a large segment of the population."¹²

2.2. The importance of knowledge

In the hypothesis presented here, most of the Russian success in terms of control can be explained by underlying the theory of reflexive control. Russian driving factors have placed a special emphasis on the concepts of conscience,

¹¹ Mehnert Klaus, *Soviet Man and His World*, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, 1962, p. 54.

¹² Jerry F. Hough, *Soviet Leadership in Transition*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D. C, 1980, p. 7.



knowledge and reflection. Without a full understanding of the importance of reflection on Russian thinking, the theory of reflexive control cannot be understood.

In the Russian vision, knowledge results from the reflection of the material world in the human mind that determines the “social consciousness”. Human intelligence and the process of knowledge are dependent on the sensory awareness of the outer world, which in turn determines the content and size of one’s consciousness. “The sensation is in fact a direct link between consciousness and the outside world, the conversion of energy from an external stimulus to a fact of consciousness.”¹³ Therefore, it is clear that in the Russian vision, control over the human being will be best exercised through the intentional influence of the inputs he receives from the environment in which he lives (for example, by the intentional manipulation and management of perceptions) Everything is done for a reason and therefore, who is fully aware of these flows and is able to influence their form, they will have a very powerful tool at their disposal. Russian leaders believe that the process can be accelerated scientifically by guiding human perception to reflect “objective reality” as perceived and defined by the action leader. The basis of elaborating reflexive control is that: “a leader must control not only the actions, but also the way subordinates think, directing things so that the collective participates in the formation and elaboration of ideas. This is one of the leader’s essential traits.”¹⁴

2.3. The scene of knowledge influenced by reflexive control

This method of transmitting information specially prepared to influence the decision-making process towards a certain solution and

certain desired goals were of exceptional utility to the Russian regime. At first it was the desire to reinforce the sense of need of an authority and a desire to be commanded by a paternal symbol, hence the expression often used with reference to the Russian “father”. “Once the habit of subordination has been firmly grounded in the human psyche, responsibility for one’s own choice may become unbearable for a person who truly believes he or she is dependent on the control of an agent for his or her survival.”¹⁵

The second area that bears the characteristics of reflexive control has to do with the inevitability of socialism. “There are millions of people in Russia who are unhappy under the current system and there are some who hate it, but they also tend to accept the inevitability of the conditions in which they live. This attitude is invaluable to the Russian authorities; who would fight without the chance to win against something that is absolutely inevitable? And who would also waste time complaining? People find it easier to accept some things that seem invariable.”¹⁶ Those citizens who are not won by this influence of the sanctifying and dependent authority of the “father” are nevertheless captured in a slightly different way, on an intellectual level. What can be more direct than the thesis that the evolution of society is governed by specific laws, as in the development of all natural forms of evolution? This belief was widely accepted by the Soviets, with the result that even if socialism does not always work properly it is far better than the capitalist system. This is the practical example of reflexive control in action, which influenced the cultural complex in which decisions are incorporated, so the scene for knowledge was created, or the map of knowledge in such a way that the decision the leaders want to reach the population is the decision made in most cases.

The third major area in which reflexive control has played a role in shaping the knowledge area of the Russian population refers to the concept of “threat”. From the very

¹³ V. V. Druzhinin, D. S. Kontorov, *Concept, Algorithm, Decision (A Soviet View)*, Soviet Military Thought , Vol . 6, (translated and published under the auspices of the U. S. Air Force), 1972, p. 257.

¹⁴ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud V. V. Druzhinin, D. S. Kontorov, *Problems of Military Systems Engineering*, 1976, p. 309.

¹⁵ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, Holt Paperbacks, New York, 1994.

¹⁶ Mehnert Klaus, *Soviet Man and His World*, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, New York, 1962, p. 197.



beginning, “the Russian regime has developed the exploitation of the external danger at the art level. The capitalist encirclement was an opportunity for the propaganda “weapon” in the Russian arsenal, representing a continuous theme in Russia’s foreign and domestic policy, an invaluable means for those in power to suppress the opposition and dissidents.”¹⁷ Again, the pre-Bolshevik historical experience was the one that favored the development of a “siege” over the mentality, the geographical position mainly being the one that required a state of supervision and suspicion towards foreigners, among the inhabitants of these territories. These inclinations were fully exploited by Russian leaders who, each time, described the world as being made of two distinct camps: the socialist camp, which holds the answers to the problems of humanity and the irreconcilable enemy, the capitalist system, who intends to destroy and persecute the socialist hope of the world. From Stalin’s vision of “capitalist encirclement” to the last US president, “wars initiator”, the Russians have been assaulted with the belief that the real threat to peace and their peaceful existence is represented by the capitalist governments of the world, with the US as its main enemy. In this way, any rejection of internal freedom and any restriction of the freedoms of Russian citizens can be easily rationalized by this image of the world divided into two hostile camps, in which, the forces of light, socialism, always fight with those of darkness, capitalism, in a fierce battle that never ends, even when the relations between the two countries seem cordial. It is interesting to note how deeply and honestly Russian citizens believe that their leader¹⁸ represents peace and moderation on the globe while US leaders and other Western politicians are actively supporting war and injustice.¹⁹ For the Russian rulers, the existence of an enemy and the “forces of darkness” was of the utmost importance and

played an important role in developing the emphasis set by Russians on control to include reflexive control, here, in particular.

3. Bypassing the truth as state policy

Russian civilization tells us that it is quite possible that any human reaction which is not dictated by any hidden cunning is a foreign concept to the Russian way of thinking. Lying is the first condition of the Russian social interaction “the Russians being very little interested in being civilized and more in making us believe this.”²⁰ That they are in fact like Westerners, this in order to promote their goals in international relations.

How did this condition appear and what is its connection with conceptual reflexive control? The ambiguous and complex structure of the totalitarian government and the relations it generates between the leaders and the masses matter a lot for the unique feature of the development of the Russian society. Russia presents its citizens with characteristics that are different from the ones that are decisive for those in the West.²¹ The totalitarian apparatus of rigorous censorship, travel restrictions, thought control and general citizens surveillance have become mandatory in recent times to claim that such control does not exist, that, in fact, Russian citizens are much freer than those in the West. The emotional force of the pre-existence of the great Russian messianism has been incorporated into the state policy. This, in turn, resulted in a two-compartment mentality in which the individual’s private thoughts must be separated from the party line, which is often nothing more than a “compulsory official lie” of manipulating perceptions to match the wanted vision on the reality.²²

Therefore, the existence of “double thinking” is a concept. “Double thinking” refers to conscious conformity, living contrary to one’s beliefs, or adapting out of one’s needs, comfort or career. Many consider “double thinking”,

¹⁷ Stephen P. Gilbert, *Soviet Images of America*, Crane Russak Inc. Company, New York, 1977, p. 28.

¹⁸ Robert B. Cullen, *Cover Story: Colin Burke 2*, Felony & Mayhem, pp. 22; 26.

¹⁹ *** *Whence the Threat to Peace*, Military Publishing House, USSR Ministry of Defense, 1982, p. 68.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

²¹ Ronald Hingley, *The Russian Mind*, The Bodley Head Ltd. 1978, p. 108.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 98.



combined with public immorality, to be real and it is at the base of the system's unshakable foundation, deeply rooted in the mentality of the masses. Solzhenitsyn saw "double thinking" as an exclusively moral problem, an ethical problem of the system on which the Russian system is based.²³

Bypassing the truth has to do with the lie and propagation of untruths that have something to do with reality. "The Russian is incapable of telling simply lies, but he seems equally incapable of telling the truth."²⁴ "In no other state are the political words in such great contrast to reality as in Russia, although ... it is a practice of dilution with a splash of truth."²⁵ The lie has evolved into an institutionalized aspect of Soviet society. Leaders trick the masses to influence their cognitive map, to see the Russian reality as they want to appear. The masses use subterfuge as a defense measure when necessary in their relationship with leaders, and society, as a whole, practices *the concealment* in the relationship with the outside world.

The corollary of successfully eluding the truth is the need to maintain censorship and secrecy so that the truth is not obviously out of line with reality. An obsessive focus on secrecy has persisted for centuries, characterized by a strong tendency to keep all information about the country secret. As a result, analysts in the West are frustrated in their efforts to better understand Soviet thinking, the deception inherent in this cultural predisposition to use lies. Of course, this is the main purpose of reflexive control, to keep the adversary confused, uncertain and lacking in knowledge, thereby diminishing the efficiency of a proper response. It seems that a concept like that of reflexive control can easily take root and flourish in an environment where such elements of insecurity and secrecy are accepted as natural features of social consciousness. However, if the relations between the Russian leaders and the masses were not full of ambiguity and

complexity, reflexive control would be less likely to develop as a means of maintaining and strengthening the control of society. This is the paradox of the dynamics of Soviet culture: on one hand, they maintain and need self-terrorism (fear of freedom, humility, the psychological importance of the leader), on the other, they need effective mechanisms (such as double thinking, censorship, reflexive control) to keep the authoritarian government on the waterline.

In order to understand the development of the reflexive control theory, concealment of the truth, in particular, seems to be an important concept for two reasons: in order to achieve the efficiency of reflexive control, the deception must be linked to reality, so that it can influence the target audience without triggering any alarm system, and for reflexive control, it is a two-way process in which the relationship between the transmitter and the receiver is the essence (once again the concept of multi-level awareness is reached). The higher the level of the decision maker's understanding of the target's mental map, the higher the efficiency of reflexive control.

4. The concepts of "masking", "finlandization" and the risk of aversion/excess

So far, the study of origins of reflexive control theory has focused on controlling the actors and the relationship between them. The attention must now extend to the outside in order to finally consider the most important question about how the Russians tried to exercise external control to influence the goals and counteract the actions of their opponents. In addition, in using propaganda as a means of spreading effective misinformation, there appear to be three other factors that need to be examined in an attempt to understand the directed reflexive control over opponents. These are:

- masking - a technique with a predominantly military application,
- "finlandization" - in the field of politics and international relations,
- the Russians' inclination for risk aversion and overconfidence.

²³ Wolfgang Berner, *The Soviet Union 1980-1981: Domestic Policy, the Economy, Foreign Policy*, Volume 6, Holmes and Meier Publishers, New York, 1983, pp. 82-85.

²⁴ Ronald Hingley, *op.cit.*, p. 91.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 97.



The terms were specific to the way in which Russia's action was seen during the Cold War: "awareness of concealment, camouflage and deception are universal features of the Russian military, much more commonly encountered than in the Western defense system. Masking seems to be an integral part of Russia's strategies and doctrines and tactics. They believe in this concept that they are constantly developing."²⁶

"Masking" in the Soviet sense contains a much broader spectrum than the American concept of camouflage in combat, though the two terms are often mistakenly considered to be alike. It is more correctly defined as concealment, camouflage and deception. The main purpose of "masking" is to distort the enemy's vision of the combat missions, positions and objectives as well as to change the perception on the reality on the battlefield's situation, by using doctrinal principles such as nature, variety and continuity.²⁷ An important aspect of the Russian vision on masking, which is also crucial to their perception of reflexive control, namely, to be effective, regardless of the situation, must be for the enemy very plausible and in accordance with both the perspective on Russian doctrine as well as its strategic assumptions. The concept of strategic hypotheses is extremely important for developing a methodology in order to understand reflexive control. "Strategic assumptions usually emerge as genuine causal forces. When strategic assumptions take into account a surprise attack they highlight certain determinants. Strategic assumptions are invariably plausible, at least until the event, they are often reinforced by other collateral fraud actions. Naturally, people put their basic beliefs at risk and can hardly be replaced. This reluctance to look at the facts in their reality as a result of previous beliefs is a warning about a disaster."²⁸

Therefore, masking is used to gain advantage

²⁶ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud Roger A. Beaumont, *Maskirovka: Soviet camouflage, concealment, and deception*, p. 8.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

²⁸ Gerald W. Hopple, "Intelligence and Warning Lessons", in *Military Lessons of the Falkland Islands War: Views*

by denying or distorting the accuracy of perceptions, thereby exercising control over the area of knowledge. The masking can be performed at the tactical, operational and strategic level depending on the needs and extent of the maneuver. Masking became a central theme with increasing importance and sophistication among the Soviet military. "The military power must be seen through the magnifying glass of masking, misinformation. To accept this, it does not have to generate a high sense of anxiety, but only prudence, and further sensitization of politicians, commanders and analysts on the wide spectrum and strange uncertainty."²⁹ A complete analysis of masking should involve a thorough review of other disciplines considered by the Russians to be related to it, such as attention and perception psychology, human factors, physiology, electronics, remote sensing, including optics. It is clear that masking and the broader concept of reflexive control are inextricably linked by common features, and both deserve greater attention from military analysts. It has been shown that skill and satire go against Western traditions regarding linear warfare and, as such, seek solutions in technology and by concentrating forces.

The political equivalent of masking seems to be in the concept of "*finlandization*". In short, *finlandization* describes the process by which Russia influences the internal and external political behavior of nonconformist countries in such a way as to make them follow Russia's policy closely, or be in line with their interests (the term as such has been developed by the country which proved to be least susceptible to such influence by the Russians, Finland). The totalitarian leaders enjoy the advantage in this problem due to control over the public opinion and the sources of information. "No Russian leader has erred in joining the supreme importance of the struggle to win the open-minded way of thinking. All state

from the United States, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1984, p. 102.

²⁹ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud Roger A. Beaumont *Maskirovka: Soviet camouflage, concealment, and deception*, p. 20.



propaganda machinery is directed to neutralize or remove doubts about Russian life information or Russia's unfavorable policy."³⁰ Many analysts who study the strategic surprise and topics related to it, have come to the conclusion that governments are caught unprepared especially for the way people think, both individually and collectively.

One last topic that helps us better understand Russians' motivations is *risk aversion and excesses*. Several studies have examined in detail the features of Russian military and political interventions in cases where the opportunity arose to act in the interest of promoting foreign policy objectives, or in the situation of being forced to act accordingly. It was concluded in these extended studies that, for various reasons, Russia's tendency was to manifest itself as a risk-averse society, one that largely avoids risks that involve a high degree of uncertainty and where the positive outcome cannot be guaranteed. The main reasons for the risk aversion would be due to a considerable asymmetry between the power and capacity of the Russian state and the underdeveloped and backward conditions that exist in Russian society, which may have many dysfunctions. These malfunctions make the Russian system more static, protectionist, more defensive and predictable and less dynamic and aggressive (only if the conditions are so favorable as to guarantee the success of a higher risk). In a typology of socio-economic development of the political system, Russia is a political system still inspired by a program in construction, but which provides abundance and relaxation. This stage tends to contain a very low risk, thus placing Russia among the most cautious systems in the world. There is a hypothesis that states that "the maximum risk that a political system can assume is a constant feature of that system. The intrinsic action of risk, plus the pre-existing threshold of tension will not exceed this constant. As a consequence, it is believed that if this intrinsic risk of the two independent variables, the situation and the voltage threshold, exceeds the constant, the objective of the decision factor will

³⁰ *Ibidem*, apud Leonard Chapiro, *Totalitarianism in Foreign Policy* in London, Kurt, p. 13.

be to bring the risk within the tolerance limits of the constant."³¹

In this sense, it seems that one of the primary goals of the reflexive control theory is to reduce the risk and increase the predictability of the situations in order to allow Russian decision-makers to take decisive and affirmative actions. There is a certain paradox that has emerged in recent years and that requires careful examination. If it is true that Soviet decision makers are not players, preferring a low level of investment and low chances, then how active is the massive war machine correlated with a low risk? This question leads us to consider the subject of excess. The natural corollary of a state that is adept at low risk seems to be the desire to support its own defense and to act from positions of force. A way to secure a position of strength, to maintain reserves and reinforcements to cover any situation that may arise. The Russians achieve this goal by using excess, the quality of exceeding what is considered by others to be sufficient and normal. "Massive military power is perceived as the best defense, not just against a NATO attack. Secondly, the Russian leadership makes much of excesses. It is said that "the Russians feel much more comfortable with three additional armies than three minus divisions. Over insurance is axiomatic in Soviet military doctrine."³²

Another aspect of excess, which is not so common, but of equal importance for the Russian emphasis on maintaining secrecy over its military forces, is the practice of techniques non-repetition. This concept of gaining advantage by using a varied response seems to be strongly influenced by two theories. The first, which states that only variety can destroy variety (Ashby's theories of varying conditions and cybernetics had a far greater and lasting impact in Russia than they had in the West).³³ Second, as a result of the studies on the psychology of attention, academic discipline, which in particular, through

³¹ Hannes Adomeit, *Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1982.

³² Alvin Rubinstein, *Western Europe*, in London, Kurt, (Ed.), p. 102.

³³ Ross W. Ashby, *An Introduction to Cybernetics*, Science Editions, John Wile and Sons, Inc., New York, 1963, p. 35.



its discoveries related to “reflex orientation” convinced the Russians of the value of inducing psychological strain and the inability to cope with a situation by inhibiting the ability to establish certain features.³⁴ These repeated techniques, along with the emphasis on excesses, seem to be very effective tools in trying to reduce the risk and create the proper conditions to gain the advantage and, very possibly, even control the opponent. “The cross-links between Russian, military and engineering psychology are far more developed than in the West and have been since the Bolshevik Revolution.”³⁵

Conclusions

Reflexive control is an identification of one’s own intellectual motivation with that of the opponent and an emulation of the reasons for the objectives, which ultimately lead to the destruction and control of the opponent’s decision algorithm. The reflexive control can be successfully executed independently of the “quality” of the opponent’s reasoning as long as the reasoning is fully and fairly accurate. Reflective control consists of two parts: reflection - a psychological concept, and control - a purely cyber concept. Reflective control is used to influence the actions of the opponent and is achieved by understanding the cognitive map of the opponent to model their perceptions of the situation, without raising suspicions that these perceptions are somehow false and do not come from within the opponent’s analysis system. From this point of view, the attention to the psychological aspects and the subjective factors are of decisive importance. “The control of the enemy presupposes the influence of decisions through the use of profound knowledge of politics, ideology, military doctrine, objectives, status of forces, organization, psychology, personal qualities of the execution personnel,

³⁴ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud Roger A. Beaumont *Maskirovka: Soviet camouflage, concealment, and deception*, pp. 30, 79.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 37.

mutual relations and emotional status.”³⁶

Reflexive control is a special strategic tool because it is discreet and undetectable and allows the optimization of decisions by supporting the decision makers to identify and quantify the best alternative strategies based on correct reflections on the opponent. The flexibility and creativity allowed by the theory provides means of eliminating patterns and vulnerabilities as well as random actions. “The most inventive liar wins in a conflict.”³⁷

Reflexive control is misinformation distributed in order to control a certain situation in a larger context of psychological warfare. The theory of reflexive control also has dual aspects. First, it can be executed in two ways: reflexive control by transformation, processing of enemy information (cognitive) and reflexive control by selecting messages (informational). Moreover, reflexive control can be: obstructive, in which the enemy is influenced to voluntarily make a favorable decision to those who control the message, or destructive in which the means are used to destroy, paralyze or neutralize the procedures and algorithms of the taking process.³⁸ These varied aspects and the applications of the theory add to both the potential for efficiency and the difficulty of discerning in its use. The reflexive control can be performed by means such as:

- transferring false information about the real situation;
- creating a goal for the opponent;
- creating a doctrine for the opponent;
- transfer of decisions;
- neutralizing the opponent’s deductions.

The main types of reflexive control over an opponent are camouflage, misinformation and political manifestation. The enemy’s perceptions of the situation and its goals appear to be susceptible to the influence of reflexive control. In combat, the situation includes aspects of the physical environment, the size and characteristics of forces,

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 310.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

³⁸ Vladimir. A. Lefebvre, *Reflexive Control: The Soviet Concept of Influencing an Adversary’s Decision Making Process*, Science Applications, Inc., Englewood, Colorado, 1984, pp. 144-145.



technological development and current evolution of events. The goals may include the timely fulfillment of the mission, the retention of units and the geographical control of the disposition, all of which may be influenced by the demonstrations of force, the presentation of uncertainties or a situation in which it requires inappropriate countermeasures. The reflexive control of the internal aspects of the opponent's decision algorithm can be difficult to practice, but with an adequate understanding and a correct simulation of the opponent it can be performed efficiently.

An essential aspect of effective reflexive control involves avoiding the underestimation of the enemy's abilities of the degree of reflection, an aspect that can seriously compromise the potential of exercising control. It is also important to apply non-repetitive techniques to prevent the opponent from being able to deduce what is happening and what methods to apply in order to allow him to develop appropriate countermeasures. In conclusion, "the control of the decisions of the opponent, which is ultimately a force of a certain behavioral strategy upon him through reflexive interaction, is not directly achieved by numerous forces but by means that provide him with reasons for which he is capable to deviate from one's own decision, but to an anticipated one, influenced by the opposite side. The process of transferring the reasons for making a decision from one opponent to another is called reflexive control. Any action of deception, provocation, intrigue, deceptive appearance, lie in general are the achievements of reflexive control."³⁹

This theory links the technical aspects with the psychological basis from which they are developed and includes the importance of control, the desire to be prepared for any situation (risk aversion), the supervision and awareness of others (reflection and awareness on levels), the importance of understanding the adversary and influencing the environment for a specific purpose and scientific way to create "the right conditions".

³⁹ Diane Chotikul, *The Soviet theory of reflexive control in historical and psychocultural perspective: preliminary study*, Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School Powell 1986, apud V. A. Lefebvre, *Algebra of Conflict*, p. 34.

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WARGAME – A SUPPORTING INSTRUMENT IN OPERATIONS PLANNING

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Operations planning is one of the most complex and fascinating processes that take place in the dynamics of preparing military actions. Since uncertainty is the most prominent feature of this entire set of activities, we consider that identifying ways to reduce this shortcoming by involving forecast and the methods of testing and validating the resulting estimates is of particular importance. The most prolific method of this type is wargame. Forecast intervenes also within it, contributing to seeing the outcome in the confrontation between two sides. The ways of achieving the forecast results are the operational analysis / research, computer-assisted simulation and the intuitive analysis of the confrontation between the opposing parties, based on the acquired experience and the lessons learned from previous actions. Wargame contributes to the decision on the best course of action and its optimization, in order to be developed in the final operations plan.

Keywords: *operations planning process; military decision; decision point; forecast; operational analysis; operational plan.*

Introduction

Forecast is defined as the prediction for the development of a phenomenon or a process, based on the study of the circumstances that determine its occurrence and evolution in time.

It is an estimate based on the probable values that some uncertain variables, describing the phenomenon / process, will take in the future.

Operations planning represents a complex of activities carried out by the commanders and their staff, at all levels of military leadership (strategic, operational or tactical), in order to prepare and execute military campaigns and operations, respectively the transition and disengagement of forces at their completion. “Operations Planning Process (OPP) to describe how the military supports the NCMP; it describes how the Alliance initiates, develops, coordinates, approves, executes, reviews, revises and cancels operations plans.”¹ The process consists in producing the Operations Plan (OPLAN) that will allow the commander implementing its decision taken upon the options available at strategic, operative and tactical level, in accordance with the political level. “Operations planning requires specific practices and procedures for each level and the establishment of clear links between actions, effects, objectives and the end state and, where possible, the harmonization of military, political, civil and economic planning.”² Looking in more detail within the operations planning, a complex process of analysis and evaluation of

¹ Allied Command Operations Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive/ COPD V2.0, 04 October 2013, pp. 1-3.

² *Idem.*

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the enemy's situation, own forces, neighbors, terrain conditions, season, time and weather, as well as the mission received is developed, and an Operation Plan is determined. It displays the best method of meeting the objectives and achieving the desired end state.

However, the planning process involves a set of complex activities undertaken on the basis of information on some factors with a variable degree of predictability, that are never certain; some of the most important factors are the combat power and course of action of the enemy and allied forces or the weather conditions. In this context, Helmuth von Moltke's assertion that "no plan survives first contact with the enemy"³ becomes undoubtedly justified.

Taken as a whole, planning military actions consists of a logical succession of steps that can be divided, temporarily, into two parts connected at the time of the operation start. Both sides, producing the operation plan and the execution of operation (OPLAN implementation) are confined to the three levels of situational awareness: *perception*, *comprehension* and *projection*. Perception and comprehension are manifested all along the planning process, but each of them is predominantly realized during a particular phase. Thus, we can affirm that perception occurs, in particular, during the phase of initial situational awareness, while the comprehension is realized, predominantly in the assessment of the strategic environment phase. The projection is the most complex part, it is vitally dependent on the first two and is performed during development of (military) response options (Courses of Action/COAs) and OPLAN. During execution, the triad *perception*, *comprehension* and *projection* is carried out continuously, in a cyclical succession, so that command and control process, as well as the OPLAN review and revision, can take place in time and with maximum efficiency.

All these aspects presented above lead to the hypothesis that in OPP, forecast plays an

³The quotation is a paraphrase variant of "Kein Operationsplan reicht mit einiger Sicherheit über das erste Zusammentreffen mit der feindlichen Hauptmacht hinaus" which means "no plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force".

extremely important role as it is the basis in order to determine the estimates⁴ for developing opposing forces' and own forces' COAs⁵. Validation/invalidation of the forecast results, included in staff estimates, is done throughout the whole planning process, both in the first part, that of producing OPLAN (in the projection sequence) and in the second, the execution of the operation. In order for the unforeseen situations to occur during the execution as scarce as possible, the planners need to take all the necessary measures during the planning process, using all possible methods to make the resulting plan as plausible as possible.

One of the methods used to meet the requirement above is wargame (WG) and even the moments when it takes place reveal, with certainty, its high importance. One moment is that preceding the decision taken by the commander. To be more precise, during the first part of OPP, it is the moment when the commander selects from the proposed BLUE COAs the one that will be developed in OPLAN. Another moment is during OPLAN execution, when WG is used to optimize the current or future actions or to test some variants applicable in critical situations.

Procedures similar to WG have been used by many great commanders in history, to present their intentions to the subordinate commanders, to train them or even to analyze certain tactics. Wargame, in a more recent version, was developed in 1811 by Lieutenant Johann von Reisswitz, an officer in the Prussian army⁶. He developed a set of rules that allowed

⁴ Estimate is a command-led military problem solving process which is applied to ill-structured problems in uncertain and dynamic environments against shifting, competing or ill-defined goals, often in high stake, time-pressured situations. It combines objective, rational analysis with the power of intuition (a combination of experience and intelligence) and its output is a decision about a COA. It is, essentially, a practical, flexible tool formatted to make sense out of confusion and to enable the development of a coherent plan for action. (COPD V2.0, 04 October 2013, pp. 4-32).

⁵ In order to be more specific, we will use the term BLUE COA(s) the own forces Course(s) of Action and RED COA(s) for the adversary/enemy Course(s) of Action.

⁶ Marc Birnstiel et al., *Wargaming – guide to preparation and execution*, General/admiral Staff Officer Course, Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Hamburg, p. 1.



the maneuvers of two battalion size opposing forces to be presented at the sandbox. Later, this procedure has evolved into a whole process that allows achieving multiple goals, integrating participants, instruments, activities and various other methods, which we will present below.

1. Wargame – purpose and conduct

As we mentioned earlier, WG is an important part of OPP. The results and the process itself contribute significantly to the identification and optimization of the best BLUE COA. As a result, we can say that the most important goal of this process is to evaluate the potential of the BLUE COAs to carry out the mission effectively against the RED COAs (most likely and most dangerous). Therefore, the results will be used in the sequence that follows WG, namely in comparing the BLUE COAs to determine the optimum. We must specify that WG is recommended to be used especially in symmetric warfare scenarios, in which conventional forces, means and TTP⁷ are used in traditional force-on-force operations. For asymmetric scenarios, the method of operational analysis is usually used.

Another purpose pursued is to correctly identify the required capabilities, their strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities, as well as the necessary level of coordination. In this way, on one hand, the joint force commander justifies the requests for capabilities formulated towards the strategic level and, on the other hand, he is aware of the activities that he must carry out during the preparation phase of the operation.

WG also allows the commander and his/her staff to synchronize and visualize the conduct of operations in time and space, which is an

⁷ Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures. In the specialized literature (e.g. Joint Publication 1-02, DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms) these terms are defined as follows: *techniques* represent non-prescriptive ways or methods used to perform missions, functions, or tasks (resulting from experience and which can be adopted and applied in particular situations); *tactics* are the employment and ordered arrangement of forces in relation to each other (and / or in relation to the enemy); *procedures* involve standard, detailed steps that prescribe how to perform specific tasks (detailed and standardized algorithms for the execution of tasks / missions).

important goal as it allows him to identify the main elements of the operational design and, after its development, the operation plan. By going through and analyzing step by step the main phases of the operation, the commander and his/her staff can anticipate the critical events that may determine decision points, and can identify potential risks and opportunities and generate procedures or even contingency plans to counter possible threats and / or exploit favorable situations.

WG can be used, on a lower extent, also during the execution of the operation. This time, the purpose will no longer be that of comparing the Blue COAs but the improvement and revision of OPLAN or the development and testing of contingency plans necessary to be implemented in the event of unforeseen situations.

WG can be carried out using three methods⁸. The first one is the most frequently used and involves wargame operations *by phases*, in which the main tasks and / or critical actions are analyzed within time segments dividing both COAs considered (BLUE vs. RED). Depending on the type of operation, these segments may have fixed durations (days or weeks), or may have variable dimensions, corresponding to the operational objectives associated with it. The second method involves conducting WG in order to establish *decisive points/conditions*. In this case, the main tasks are played, to reach one or more decisive points (for traditional force-on-force operations carried out at tactical level) or to achieve one or more sets of decisive conditions (for the operational level) according to the operational design. The way in which the decisive points / conditions are analyzed at individual or group level determines the degree of detail for WG. The third method concerns WG on geographical segments of the operational environment, which allows the analysis of the main tasks fulfillment in different operating areas.

WG implies a laborious activity whose results depend on the coherence and efficiency of its development. To ensure the maximum level, it is

⁸ COPD V2.0, 04 October 2013, pp. 4-72.



necessary to appoint the participating personnel, with clear attributions, specific to the dynamics of the entire process: the director, coordinator, umpire, scribe, duty personnel, liaison officers, specialists in operational analysis, as well as the spokesperson, scribe and other representatives for three cells: RED, BLUE, WHITE⁹.

The *director* bears the full responsibility for conducting the wargame. He presents the initial situation at the beginning of the WG execution phase, sets the initial situation at the beginning of each round and processes each round in terms of content. He does not intervene in the WG progress in order to be able to follow the whole process, records the results in the cognitive phase and manage the information to be inserted in the synchronization matrix.

The *coordinator* is the most experienced person in carrying out WG and decides the method to be used. He is responsible for organizing and completing the WG stages (see below), establishes and trains the participating personnel, ensures compliance with the rules during the activities and coordinates the duty personnel.

The *umpire* is a senior officer with experience and reputation, possibly from another structure. He must be equidistant during the WG execution and has to express the final decision in the event of controversy or when the effect of actions/measures taken cannot be determined during the WG execution, at the director's request.

The *scribe* records the results of the activities performed within WG and inserts the information in the synchronization matrix, as ordered by the director.

The *duty personnel* perform administrative tasks (attend the audience, prepare the room, working tools and documents) and also provide technical support for displaying information, operating computers, securing communications and preparing materials for presenting the commander's selection criteria, constraints/restrictions and the basic rules.

The *liaison officers* provide WG activity

with necessary information, at the request of the director, as well as the feedback for the structures they represent.

Operational analysis specialists simulate and analyze different aspects of the operational situation in order to provide the information necessary for the best performance of the WG (e.g. combat power, loss assessment, probabilities etc.) or estimates/trends within their area of expertise. At the director's request, he advises on the feasibility of the BLUE COA, providing explanations and even additional options. They play a major role in making decisions regarding the outcome of the game rounds, by providing forecasts/estimations with the highest degree of certainty, mostly justified by mathematical methods and logical algorithms.

Cell spokesmen (RED, BLUE, WHITE) describe the actions of their party, either opposed (RED and BLUE) or neutral (WHITE), presenting COA segments and justifying the results on each round. WHITE cell can also be actors such as political, ethnic or military groups or humanitarian-aid institutions. The *cell scribe* supports the appropriate cell in the preparation and execution of WG by recording the relevant information and providing documentation of the results within the cell.

The proper conduct of WG requires specific rules, which must be strictly followed, along with its format, by all participants. First of all, the assumptions and conditions established in the earlier phases of OPP must be strictly adhered to. Last minute changes or adjustments to the information on which COAs development was based are not allowed. WG should not be used to justify or defend a particular COA, so all BLUE COAs must be treated in an equidistant manner. The WG must represent, exclusively, a comparison between the courses of action (BLUE vs. RED) and not a competition between the participants. A very important aspect to keep in mind is that WG is a process and not a forum for discussion, so its purpose is to present facts and to draw conclusions. To keep an unbiased and objective approach is very important and the participants must not jump to conclusions. In this regard, the interventions of the WG management

⁹ Marc Birnstiel et al., *Wargaming – guide to preparation and execution*, General/admiral Staff Officer Course, Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Hamburg, pp. 12-14.

must be firm, timely and without directing the participants towards the confirmation or denial of a specific COA. Last but not least, all results must be recorded in an easily understandable manner. If during the execution of WG it is concluded that a BLUE COA no longer fulfills the essential criteria or fails to fulfill the mission, it is excluded.

The conduct of WG dictate its structure in three stages: *preparation*, *execution* and the *final evaluation of the results*.

Preparation involves carrying out a number of activities, both administrative and operational.

aided simulation and analysis are prepared. The Commander’s COA Selection Criteria are carefully reviewed.

Execution is the main stage, with the highest load in terms of duration and effort, and involves three parts: establishing the initial conditions, conducting the game rounds within the sequences and evaluating each sequence.

Setting the initial conditions aims at introducing in the theater situation and is executed by the WG director. It notifies all participants with the information necessary to understand the operational situation, as it results from the

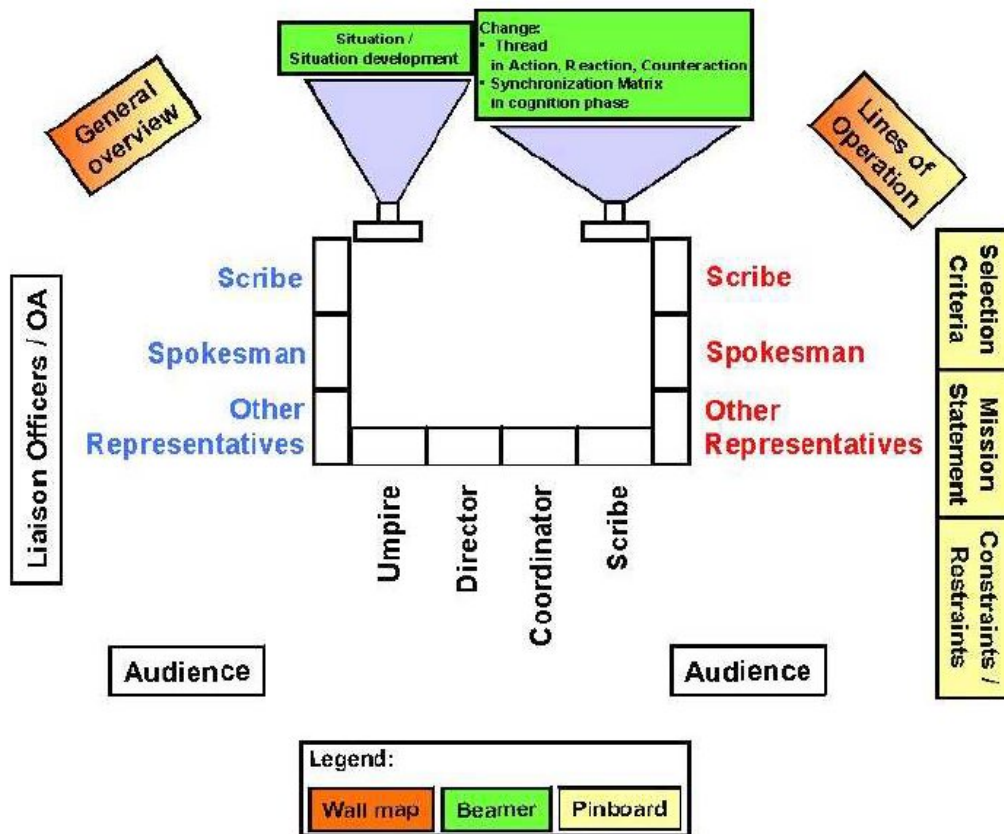


Figure no. 1: Version of organizing the wargame room¹⁰

After establishing the desired results (and the means of recording them) and deciding upon the method of wargame, the WG management selects the participants, including subordinate levels, allies, partners and opponents and assign the umpire, experts in different fields etc. Also, at this stage, the rules of the game are set, the place is properly set (see the variant bellow), and the necessary tools for manual and computer-

previous phases of OPP, and which was the basis for configuring the RED and BLUE COAs. These refer, first and foremost, to the general framework, meaning political considerations, the nature of threats, environmental, social, information and media conditions etc. Then, the Director specifies

¹⁰ Marc Birnstiel et al., *Wargaming – guide to preparation and execution*, General/admiral Staff Officer Course, Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Hamburg, p. C-3.



the most important operational elements, such as those related to the mission (purpose, type of operation, timeframe, area of operation, the desired final state etc.), the operational planning directions from which the limitations are highlighted (constraints and restrictions), the center of gravity (BLUE and RED) and the Commander's COA Selection Criteria¹¹. Last but not least, coordination measures and other information on WG conduct are specified (combinations between RED and BLUE COAs to be analyzed, personnel assignments and tasks, coordination measures, timeframes allocated to WG and for interventions etc.).

The completion of each sequence implies the successive execution of the following activities: the presentation of COAs, the game rounds and the final analysis of the sequence. The number of sequences is equal to the number of combinations between the RED and BLUE COAs (e.g. for 3 BLUE COAs and 2 RED COAs there are 6 sequences). Each sequence (e.g. BLUE COA 1 vs. most dangerous RED COA, BLUE COA 1 vs. most likely RED COA, ...) is divided into rounds (cycles). At the end of each sequence, a final analysis of the results is performed, verifying the correct and coherent completion of the synchronization matrix.

During the *presentation of COAs played*, each spokesperson of the BLUE and RED cells briefly presents the COAs analyzed in the respective sequence using a COA general overview, in order to level the participants' knowledge regarding the two COAs and the basic ideas of the conception of operation (the *initial operational design*).

Playing the rounds within each sequence involves going through cycles "ACTION – REACTION – COUNTERACTION". Each round starts with a brief presentation of the initial situation played, specific to the chosen segment (according to the WG method) and ends with the COGNITIVE PHASE. The game

¹¹ The commander's selection criteria must include what is most important for the accomplishment of the mission regarding the lines of operations, decisive conditions, knowledge, risks etc. They have an important contribution in determining the advantages and disadvantages of each BLUE COA. (e.g. avoiding collateral victims, risk, simplicity, flexibility, tempo, sustainability).

rounds correspond to a timeframe set by the WG coordinator. The initial situation specific to each round addresses the operational and tactical conditions that influence the operation, including political considerations, the nature of threats, environmental, civil, media, information conditions etc. Then Party A acts, Party B reacts and Party A counteracts. The results of each round are analyzed and recorded in the synchronization matrix, during the COGNITIVE PHASE. The last activity of this phase is setting the conditions for the following rounds. Depending on the WG method used, in the next round it can be analyzed a segment chronologically connected with the previous one or a separate segment. If a completed round generates effects on the next one (premature introduction of forces or a larger force dimension), it is recorded in the synchronization matrix, and the initial situation of the next round is adapted accordingly.

Going through a round – The initial situation

At the beginning of each round, the director sets up its execution. He presents the situation in the area of operation, specific to the segment under analysis (either a phase of operation, a decisive condition or an area), presenting the assignment, deployment and combat power of the RED and BLUE forces (and WHITE, if necessary). The coordinator assists the director presenting this information in graphic form. Then, the director decides who has the initiative to start the move.

Going through a round – ACTION

The spokesperson of the party that has initiative (A) presents the segment in the COA using a *thread*¹². He describes, among others, the actions / measures to be taken, the objectives

¹² A *thread* is an instrument that serves as graphic support and narrative text for the spokesman during a round, so is assigned to a segment. It contains important information such as name and timeframe of the segment, deployment of the forces, tasks to be accomplished, forces to be used and objectives to be achieved in the segment, decisive points to be achieved, commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) and the desired end state for the segment. A model is presented in Marc Birnstiel et al., *Wargaming – guide to preparation and execution*, General/Admiral Staff Officer Course, Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr, Hamburg, p. 16.



to be achieved and the cooperation with other structures, at the required level of detail. All the forces and capabilities, tasks received and planned actions (deployment, maneuvers, combat actions) must be considered. The director ensures that the information presented is visible to all participants. The coordinator ensures that the level of detail and the timeframe are respected. If necessary, he can ask questions for clarification. In case of controversial elements, the director asks the umpire to make the final decision. The cells and management scribes record the results and draft the first ideas for the cognitive phase, along with different information and conclusions.

Going through a round – REACTION

The spokesperson of the opposing party (B) presents the segment in the COA using his / her thread. The actions presented must not be exclusively a reaction to the ACTION and may also contain measures or actions independent of it. An important element is the collection of information and the B Party's capabilities of reconnaissance. It is extremely important which of the actions executed by Party A in the ACTION can be reconnoitered. If these cannot be observed by Party B, its reaction must be executed without information about the actions of Party A. If it is possible for Party B to obtain information on Party A, then flexible measures must be taken within A Party's thread (either camouflage or assume that Party B can acquire that information). The duties of the director, coordinator and scribes remain the same.

Going through a round – COUNTERACTION

This is the most flexible part of the "move". The spokesperson of Party A refers to the events presented in the ACTION and REACTION correlated with the options in his thread. For this, he / she must analyze the own reconnaissance capabilities in order to identify the actions within the REACTION that can be observed. The duties of the director, coordinator and secretaries remain the same.

Going through a round – Cognitive phase

The purpose of this phase is to record the information identified by the director and the round conclusions in the synchronization

matrix. The results recorded during each move will be analyzed by WG participants (person responsible – the WG director). For results analysis, the director is advised by experts, LNO and cell representatives. The director determines the important information and conclusions and ensures that all of these are inserted in the synchronization matrix, in accordance with his instructions.

The final analysis of a sequence takes place after all the rounds in a sequence have been completed. The director summarizes all the cognitive phases in order to synthesize them for the final evaluation of the BLUE COA analyzed. The commander's selection criteria are the yardstick for the assessment of the results obtained at the end of the sequence. From here the advantages and disadvantages of the analyzed BLUE COA are determined. These include qualitative assertions regarding the possibility to surprise the adversary and take the initiative or the risks / opportunities associated with the actions. The final analysis concludes each sequence and must take place when there are enough conclusions and information to be done effectively.

2. Final evaluation of the results

This activity is carried out after the completion of the final analysis for each sequence within WG. Based on the information and conclusions obtained, it will be possible to compare the BLUE COAs, so that, in the subsequent sequences of OPP, the commander can make the best choice and, along with his / her staff can optimize and develop it in the concept of operations (CONOPS). The director, coordinator, spokespersons of RED and BLUE cells and experts participate in the evaluation activity. They must use the commander's selection criteria and the results obtained during WG.

The final evaluation of the results concerns the observations and conclusions from the WG. They contain essential information regarding loss estimation, additional strength and capability requirements, synchronization requirements,



decision points (with CCIRs that support them) and the required branches and sequels, significant risks and opportunities depending on RED COAs, tasks of subordinate structures, as well as possibilities of optimizing each BLUE COA and correcting deficiencies.

Recording the results can be done in narrative or schematic form and contributes to creating informational products, some of which to be used in the analysis of each BLUE COA: the list of advantages and disadvantages (from the final analysis of each sequence), the synchronization matrix (completed during the sequences), the map with the analyzed segments within the WG, and the general image of the BLUE COA. The analysis of each BLUE COA is therefore based on the synthesis of information and conclusions resulting from the final analysis of each sequence, in which it was confronted by one of the RED COAs considered. Nota bene that the BLUE COAs can be compared only after determining their advantages and disadvantages.

BLUE COAs comparison is the sequence that makes the most of the information obtained from WG. This activity results, in particular, in selecting a BLUE COA, which will be optimized and subsequently developed in CONOPS and finally in OPLAN. Adjacent, different contingency plans are developed, at varying degrees of detail, depending on the risk generated by the situations they have to solve. Like the entire OPP, this activity of BLUE COAs comparison has a high degree of appraisal at a level that can be increased by using a combination of methods that provide the decision-maker with a series of information that highlight and justify the decision taken. These decision support methods aim to compare BLUE COAs from the *qualitative* and *quantitative* point of view.

Qualitative comparison methods aim at comparing COAs in terms of their advantages and disadvantages, performing the SWOT analysis and comparing the performances (effectiveness), costs and risks of each BLUE COAs against the RED COAs. Each of these three methods provides the decision-maker with structured information whose efficiency lies in a relation of direct proportionality with the

accuracy of completing the resulting products. Both within this set of comparisons and in the quantitative ones, the relevance and veracity of the WG results, as well as the efficiency of their valorization are crucial.

Quantitative methods meet the comparison of COAs according to the selection criteria established by the commander. The BLUE COAs will match these selection criteria at different levels, and the participants in the decision-making process must make available to the commander the products of the informational analysis that highlight best these differences. Quantitative methods generate matrices that present different types of comparison indicators assigned to each COA, depending on the commander's selection criteria. Consequently, applying the quantitative methods results in providing the decision-maker with charts that display the degree to which each BLUE COAs meet the selection criteria, using synthetic descriptors (*high/moderate/low*), weighted numerical indicators or symbolic indicators (+++/+0/-/-).

These methods can be applied in a conjugal manner, but in the whole process of comparison, it should not be forgotten that the whole process remains subjective and must not be changed into a mathematical equation. Finally, their role should not exceed the role of providing the decision-maker with clear and effective instruments for making the decision on choosing the best BLUE COA and optimizing it.

The points presented above are aimed at the main purpose of WG, namely generating the tools necessary to compare the BLUE COAs and to identify the optimal one, but one must not forget the other purposes served by the resulting information. An extremely important role of WG is the validation/invalidation of the estimates made by the staff, as a product of the forecast. Since the operational design and, in particular, the BLUE vs. RED COAs confrontation during WG are configured on the basis of some uncertain information, some of which are still at the level of hypotheses, their validation/invalidation and adjustment becomes essential. In this sense, by going through WG, the commander and his staff has the opportunity to visualize the operation



step by step, in different execution variants, in order to synchronize the actions and, especially, to identify the degree of certainty assigned to the estimates resulting from their forecast. Another very important goal is to determine the necessary capabilities, with identification of their strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities and the formulation of possible requests, in case of finding them insufficient or not suitable. In this case, the efficiency of the operation is directly affected, being in direct connection with the allocation of resources, especially human and material, which gives this purpose a crucial importance in the economy of future military actions.

Another equally important goal reaches the identification of the operational design main elements and, consequently, of the CONOPS that will be further developed from the selected COA. We will refer here only to the decision point, that is “a point in space and time, identified during the planning process, where it is anticipated that the commander must make a decision concerning a specific course of action”¹³. The correct and efficient conduct of WG allows the anticipation of possible events and the identification of potential risks and opportunities for counteracting the threats and exploiting the situations that may arise during the execution of the operation. Usually, the actions resulting from their consideration are developed in contingency plans, designed to configure the optimal response in alternate situations that may be critical or decisive. Analyzing the WG progress, especially the execution of the rounds within sections, it can be seen that the identification of the decision points and the associated branches and sequels (as deviations from the main course of action) is closely related to the way the evaluation of the results of the ACTION –REACTION – COUNTERACTION cycle is carried out. We refer here to the evaluation of the information resulting from the confrontation between forces, especially regarding the probability of meeting the objectives (effectiveness) and the cost to achieve the success (efficiency), as well as

¹³ AAP-6, NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions, 2018, p. 38.

regarding the identification of the possibility of one side to detect the actions of the other. The quantitative and qualitative assessment of these two issues is the umpire’s responsibility, at the request of the WG director. For the first problem – assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the belligerent parties’ actions – the umpire’s decision is supported, most of the time, by the operational analysis, carried out by specialists. Operational analysis involves, on the one hand, the implementation of mathematical and logical models and algorithms, the development of statistical analysis and simulations, and, on the other, the use of specialists’ expertise, as well as operational models and lessons learned from previous actions. Mathematical models and simulations are the core of the operational analysis, but taking only the results from their implementation and analyzing them separately, offer just a limited basis for the decision-making process. They must be read off by specialists and correlated with lessons learned so as to offer more than just tendencies, but viable answers. All of these are used to identify the quantitative and qualitative factors that determine the result of one party’s actions, as well as its opponent’s reaction. Thus, the operational analysis offers a justifying support to the decision-making process, improving OPP by offering a sound support that diminishes the uncertainty of the estimates.

Conclusions

Regardless of the level at which military actions are prepared and executed, their planning involves a set of activities within which the estimate plays a fundamental role. By the possibility offered to the commander to view in a sequential manner different ways of employing his own forces in action, WG constitutes an essential instrument in making the decision regarding the selection of the best military option to be developed in the operations plan. Moreover, the opportunity to systematically analyze the effect of the own forces’ actions, as opposed to those of the adversary’s actions, in the context of the operational environment,



and to identify the decision points in which an adaptation of OPLAN is required, both in terms of capabilities and actions, justifies the need to use the WG. We consider that this process, in an increasingly efficient and effective version, must be part of military operations planning process carried out at any level, tactical, operational or strategic and even at political level. Of course, selecting the response option in a crisis or in an armed conflict, when planning national defense and security actions, implies an adaptation of this analytical method to the decision-making process specific to the political level. In this case, the effects-based approach involves a set of actions that integrate all the state's instruments of power, in order to achieve the desired final state. This condition determines a rethinking of the forecasting instruments that support the decision on achieving the success and raising efficiency of the actions, analyzed sequentially, in the sense of extending the coverage area regarding the data they operate.

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SOCIAL MEDIA IN INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

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The technological boom recorded at the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third one has led to major, unprecedented, mutations in the way people communicate, interrelate and interact on every level of their personal, social and professional lives. Technological inventions and gadgets have subtly, unnoticeably, but indispensably infiltrated into everyday reality.

The article aims at analyzing the extent to which applications, software and websites specifically designed to create and disseminate social media content - in audio, video, text and other formats - between members of social groups can pose challenges or opportunities for the specific processes of the intelligence cycle.

Keywords: *intelligence; social media; intelligence cycle; SOCMINT; OSINT; HUMINT.*

1. Conceptual framework

We intend to achieve a conceptual and contextual delimitation of what we believe will prove to be a significant milestone for Intelligence organizations and will bring about a major change in how they operate. This paradigm shift is due to the emergence of virtual communities, such as those created around projects that use contributors (Wikipedia), personal blogs - that refer to the complexity of

social, political, economic, or cultural aspects (for example, according to feedspot.com¹, the top three are: gatesnotes.com, aliciakeys.com and narendramodi.in), online virtual games (Counter Strike, World of Warcraft, Guild Wars, Final Fantasy Series, according to Jamie Payne's² article), social or professional networks (Facebook, LinkedIn), as well as platforms which allow the distribution of text, video, audio or photo content (e.g. BookCrossing, Youtube, Flickr, Slideshare, Trilulilu etc.).

We will briefly review the concept of *intelligence* in a concise but informative manner. For this purpose, we will use the terminology introduced by Sherman Kent³, in the middle of the 20th century, who defined intelligence in three different, but inclusive, ways: as a form of knowledge, a form of organization and as a form of activity.

As a stage of the Intelligence cycle, the collection of information is probably one of the oldest human activities, probably driven, at

¹ ***, "Top 100 most Influential Bloggers on the Web", last updated Jun 26, 2019, URL: https://blog.feedspot.com/influential_blogs/, accessed on 26.06.2019.

² Jamie Payne, "Top 12 Most Popular MMORPGS, Ranked By Total Active Users", 17 May 2018, Updated April 15, 2019, URL: <https://twinfinite.net/2018/05/most-popular-mmorpgs/10/>, accessed on 03.03.2019.

³ Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Princeton University Press, New York, 1949, p. 151.

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first, by the need to ensure survival, and later to provide a competitive advantage in relation to various economic, military, or political opponents. In this regard, David Kahn⁴ stated that the exchange of information, the survival and evolution of the human species and, later, *intelligence*, were achieved due to the emergence of the spoken language.

In completing Kahn's idea, Eduard Waltz⁵ pointed out that the activities circumscribed to the collection of information are based on an existential need, a need to know, estimate and counteract any developments in potential actions or situations. As a result, information collection was carried out in different ways throughout history: human sources were mainly used up until the Industrial Revolution and, afterwards, technical means of data collection started gaining popularity.

The same author argued that, in the future, the Intelligence activity will be based on the perceptual control of the target or the target audience, and this will be achieved through influence and manipulation.

The concept of Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT) refers to the stages of identification, collection, collation, certification, validation, and analysis of existing online data on social sites using intrusive and non-intrusive methods⁶. More specifically, using data and information obtained from Social Media Intelligence, Intelligence communities, while preserving the rigors imposed by the law regarding their activities, have the chance to:

- monitor individuals or communities/groups of people in order to identify behavioral patterns (e.g. prediction of radicalization processes and violent behaviors in a target group);

⁴ David Kahn, "An Historical Theory of Intelligence", in *Intelligence Theory. Key Questions and Debates*, Edited by Peter Gill, Stephan Marrin and Mark Phytian, in Studies in Intelligence Series, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, London and New York, 2009, p. 4.

⁵ Edward Waltz, *Knowledge Management in the Intelligence Enterprise*, Boston, Artech House, 2003, p. 2.

⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, "Former spy chief calls for laws on online snooping", in *The Guardian*, 24 April 2012, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2012/apr/24/former-spy-chief-laws-snooping>, accessed on March 5th 2019.

- influence, through the Internet, events that could contribute to the occurrence or augmentation of various risks, threats or vulnerabilities to the security environment (e.g. increasing the level of resilience with regard to the appearance and development of radicalization processes within certain categories/social groups).

2. Old weapons, new context

In a recently published article, Tiberiu Lazar⁷ unveils how such an action can be accomplished using an online toolkit, an action that the author calls the *recipe of manipulation*.

Thus, starting from the assumption that, in the online environment, an individual will filter only subjects that are similar to his own system of values and beliefs, an information aggressor will follow these steps: the manipulative message will start from verifiable facts taken from reliable sources; then, the facts will be processed to present a distorted and exaggerated version of reality to which desirable elements will be attached for the target person or target audience; the product will then be disseminated in the social media that the target uses and an important role in taking over and re-circulating these messages will be taken by the (social) media, which will provide validation and continuity to the messages.

The idea proves to be perfectly feasible, with examples abounding in daily social media communication, given the virtual context in which it operates and the unrestricted access of the same thematic content to a global audience. As an iconic, recent and eloquent example of this, we can refer to the reports regarding Russia's interference, through the St. Petersburg Internet Research Institute, in Brexit, the US elections, or the referendum on Catalan independence⁸.

⁷ Tiberiu Lazăr, "Social media, instrument cu dublă utilizare", in *Revista Intelligence*, Bucharest, 16 April 2018, URL: <http://intelligence.sri.ro/social-media-instrument-cu-dubla-utilizare/>, accessed on 05.03.2019.

⁸ Iulian Chifu, "Brexitul forțat pe social media: 150.000 de conturi false de Twitter și Facebook ale fabricii de trol din Rusia. Pulsul planetei", in *Evenimentul Zilei*, on-line edition, 30 Nov. 2017, URL: <https://evz.ro/brexitul-fortat-social-media.html>, accessed on 06.03.2019.



Several reports, studies and published articles reveal that social media platforms are used to manipulate public opinion or to collect data (data mining) about users, their preferences, hobbies, and interests.

Helpful in this regard is the *Facebook and Twitter are being used to manipulate public opinion*⁹ report based on a study by the University of Oxford through the Oxford Internet Institute's Computational Propaganda Research Project which covered nine nations including Brazil, China, Taiwan, Germany, Poland, Canada, Ukraine, Russia, and the United States. The report outlines how social media is used by governments or individuals to promote misinformation or to conduct propaganda actions.

The following are just a few examples of statistics taken from the report:

- in Russia, over 45% of the highly active accounts are bots;
- in Taiwan, there are thousands of automated accounts that share Chinese mainland propaganda;
- in the United States, automated accounts on the two social networks, Facebook and Twitter, have campaigned for candidates to increase the population's confidence in them.

The examples presented above reveal just how relevant and substantial the impact that social networks have on shaping and deforming public opinion is due to the large number of users. Recent data provided by Zephora Digital Marketing (29 of July, 2018)¹⁰ can reveal to what extent the global influence of a social networking community such as Facebook¹¹ can be quantified

and estimated:

- over 2.23 billion active accounts;
- over 1.15 billion active daily users (their online activity totals about 20 minutes a day);
- over 83 million fake profiles;
- over 300 million photos uploaded daily;
- every 60 seconds approx. 510,000 comments and 293,000 user status updates;
- 16 million business pages.

The context, as presented, is able to justify what some field specialists claim to be a revolution in the field of Intelligence¹², shaped by the emergence and development of social media. From the perspective of delivering an Intelligence product, no intelligence organization that uses the intelligence cycle can overlook the social media domain from their planning, collection, analysis, and dissemination activities.

3. The Perspective of Intelligence Organizations

Traditionally, information collection is carried out by using human sources, an activity known in literature as HUMINT. Following the Industrial Revolution, this stage of the cycle has diversified and gained an array of technical nuances: TECHINT (information from technical sources), IMINT (information recorded on film, electronic display devices, or other media), PHOTOINT, (information obtained by aerial photography), SIGINT (signals intelligence), MASINT (electronic signatures), OSINT (information from open sources), MEDINT (information from medical sources) and so on¹³.

Currently, intelligence organizations are increasingly focusing on gathering data from

⁹ Alex Hern, "Facebook and Twitter are being used to manipulate public opinion – report", in *The Guardian*, online edition, 19 June 2017, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/19/social-media-proganda-manipulating-public-opinion-bots-accounts-facebook-twitter>, accessed on 06.03.2019.

¹⁰ *** "The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics", Updated June 2019, URL: <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>, accessed on 10.03.2019.

¹¹ Rob Price, "Facebook's stock is tanking more than 20% after executives warn that revenue growth rates are coming down", Jul. 25, 2018, URL: <https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-q2-earnings-2018-7>, accessed on 12.03.2019.

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¹² Iuliana Florina Tudoriu, "SOCMINT – Oportunități limitate?", in *Revista Intelligence*, June 20, 2017, URL: <http://intelligence.sri.ro/socmint-oportunitati-limitate/>, accessed on 12.03.2019.

¹³ Isabelle Laumonier, *Internet sous l'oeil des services de renseignement*, 2003, URL: http://www.memoireonline.com/05/06/155/m_internet-sous-l-oeil-des-services-de-renseignement8.html, accessed on 12.03.2019.



open sources that can prove to be both viable and extensive. This path has been opened long before using open information sources and involved accessing information from official data, the press, or academic publications.

We believe that it is necessary to focus on the distinction between OSINT and SOCMINT, although, bibliographic sources close to US Intelligence consider SOCMINT as a subcategory of OSINT¹⁴. Nevertheless, we can consider the differences between the two areas, even if, to some extent, the two domains share certain similarities: if OSINT deals strictly with publicly available content (free access), SOCMINT deals with both public and private content as it involves the monitoring and surveillance of information (messages, photographs, etc.) disseminated between people, people and groups, and groups of people¹⁵. Another difference regarding the techniques used to collect information in the two areas is that OSINT involves non-invasive collection of information¹⁶, while SOCMINT involves the use of HUMINT-specific methods and techniques in the on-line environment (e.g. elicitation techniques¹⁷) as well as equipment, software and technologies pertaining to CYBERINT.

Likewise, having emerged in different historical periods, the two concepts refer to different processes. The first mention of OSINT dates back to 1941, when US President Roosevelt allocated \$150,000 to set up the Foreign

¹⁴ Joel Vargas, *A comprehensive assessment of the impact of social media in the United States Intelligence Community*, Contingent Security Services, 2014, p. 26, URL: www.contingentsecurity.com, accessed on 12.03.2019.

¹⁵ ***, Social Media Intelligence, URL: <https://privacyinternational.org/explainer/55/social-media-intelligence>, accessed on 13.03.2019.

¹⁶ A.N.: By accessing *big data*, a large database with unrestricted access.

¹⁷ A.N.: *Elicitation* is a technique used to discreetly collect information from human sources, according to "Elicitation Techniques", URL: <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/elicitation-brochure.pdf/view>, accessed on 02.03.2019; according to DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, February 2017, URL: <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=799027>; *elicitation*, from the perspective of intelligence studies, represents the acquisition of information from a person or group in a manner that keeps the purpose of the interview or conversation covert (JP 2-0), accessed on 02.03.2019.

Broadcast Monitoring Service (FBMS) to record, translate, stenograph and analyze propaganda radio programs directed against the United States¹⁸. In 2011, Sir David Omand, a British Intelligence Specialist, theorized SOCMINT as a new domain, at the intersection between OSINT and SIGINT, and argued that it designated the collection, analysis and processing of Social Media Information, in a technical manner, through specialized programs and applications.

In order to legitimize SOCMINT, the team of British specialists led by Sir David Omand introduced a taxonomy of the intrusive and non-intrusive methods used in SOCMINT, among which we can find:

- Open Source SOCMINT (from open sources) - which involves the collection of information from publicly accessible sources by methods that do not involve interception or concealment (avoiding obtaining private information except when the user has not clearly expressed his agreement in this respect, e.g. open source information taken from Twitter via API-Application Program Interface)¹⁹;

- SOCMINT Directed surveillance (focused surveillance) - used to provide a detailed profile of a person's interests, views and behaviors through open sources and/or analysis of social networks²⁰;

- SOCMINT Covert human sources - similar to HUMINT in terms of applicability and functionality, the use of SOCMINT covert human sources involves the creation of fake digital identities (e.g. fake accounts on social networks such as Facebook or Twitter) to facilitate admission to groups or chat rooms with restricted or closed access; this type of activity also involves interacting with target group members in order to extract information;

- SOCMINT Intercept or Intrusive Covert Surveillance - involves offensive measures aimed

¹⁸ ***, "Ghid OSINT", Centrul de Surse Deschise, S.R.I., URL: http://www.sri.ro/upload/Ghid_OSINT.pdf, accessed on 12.02.2019.

¹⁹ A.N.: According to the British specialists, SOCMINT should be used as little as possible, proportionally with the information collection purpose of the action.

²⁰ A.N.: This type of SOCMINT requires an additional statutory authorization mechanism.



at obtaining information from the communication between two persons by monitoring, modifying or interfering with the transmission system used by a transmitter and a receiver. In doing so, automated solutions are used (such as crawler, spider, scraper), that access information without the permission of the server; the same type of actions include accessing accounts or groups that have restricted or limited access as well as accessing direct messages (DM) accessible only to individuals among whom they are trafficked.

The team of British theorists also identified six principles²¹ to guide the use of SOCMINT, especially when it is used in an intrusive manner (*Surveillance SOCMINT*) in relation to SOCMINT's fundamental human rights and freedoms: a) invasive use could be justified if it is for national security reasons or if it ensures the maintenance of public order and safety; b) each action taken must be justified at each stage of the intelligence cycle; c) the motivation to use such methods must be based on the principles of necessity and proportionality²²; d) establishing a legitimate authority that can validate the actions from an ethical point of view and can assume responsibility for activities that disturb individual privacy and confidentiality in the online environment; e) SOCMINT should not be used if there is a possibility to use several or other types of open sources of information [...] f) the results obtained through the use of intrusive measures need to be positive.

As we can see, the effort of the British research team has focused not only on the area of conceptualizing the new “-INT”, triggered by the adoption at a social and global level of new ways of communication and, implicitly, organization, but, more in the area of the active impact from the viewpoint of respecting and safeguarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens, according to the principle of the balance between

ensuring security and respecting privacy. Moreover, it is obvious that the authors of the article are aware not only of the imminence, but also of the extensive use of social media in the everyday routine of intelligence organizations.

Even though the British researchers exemplify SOCMINT's decisive utility in “identifying criminal activities, early warning of irregularities and threats to the public, enhancing situational awareness in the context of rapid situational changes...”²³, this objective cannot be achieved without the coherent and clear delimitation of the axiological limits, of the framework in which the activities referred to in this article can be carried out.

It is our contention that the process of mapping the new domain, conducted in a rigorous and objective manner both by field practitioners and theorists, is a *sine qua non* condition for creating a set of generally accepted concepts that will allow the clear establishment of SOCMINT's action limits.

4. SOCMINT: opportunities and limitations

Although it may seem an obsolete subject, globalization keeps its current topicality and involves multiple and complex interdependencies which have resulted in a broad, multi-level, process of interconnection and societal metamorphosis which, in turn, has transformed the Internet and, in particular, social networks into a catalyst for the whole process. In fact, our society has developed new methods of communication which, in the case of social media, take the form of virtual persons (avatars), through which opinions, arguments, beliefs, or visions are disseminated in environments that enable the fast spread of information and the crystallization of widely held beliefs. These beliefs can easily take the form of actual manifestations which could generate the emergence of adaptive mutations and transformations within certain categories, social groups or even entire nations.

What are the key features of this new domain and what impact do they have on intelligence

²¹ Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlet, Carl Miller, *A balance between security and privacy online must be struck...*, Demos, London, 2012, pp. 41-48, URL: <https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/intelligence-Report.pdf>, accessed on 02.02.2019.

²² A.N.: Any damage to citizens' rights and freedoms should not exceed the damage that could be caused by the materialization of the threat that is being thwarted.

²³ Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlet, Carl Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 9.



organizations? Although the new “-INT” still eludes a precise definition (having an OPEN SOCMINT level, i.e. information obtained in an open, non-invasive manner, and what specialists call SURVEILLANCE SOCMINT, respectively intercepting interpersonal communication, with a focus on social media platforms), we are going to present a series of features that support, in an eloquent manner, both in terms of opportunities and vulnerabilities, its need to be accepted and used by intelligence organizations:

a. A first advantage of SOCMINT is the fact that it facilitates interconnectivity irrespective of space constraints or geographic location, and allows for data and information to be accessed in real-time.

The use of collected data and, particularly, updates allows for the collection of information about places, people, events, or current situations, regardless of their importance, from individuals that instantly become journalists through the fact alone that they have a mobile phone and are connected to social networking sites.

Illustrative in this regard are events such as: the Arab Spring (2010-2011), which quickly spread throughout the Middle East; the 2011 London riots; the fall of Ponta Government in 2015 as a result of street demonstrations organized through social networks in the aftermath of the Colectiv nightclub fire in Bucharest.

The aforementioned events highlight the need to collect real-time data and information from social networking sites, analyze them and provide analytical products to the decision-makers so that they can take swift action to overcome crisis situations.

However, from this point of view, the speed with which information can be accessed presents an advantage for both the participants in the ongoing events and for the intelligence organizations, so that, in this case, the advantage turns into a disadvantage through the capacity of the decision-makers (on any of the two sides) to take appropriate action.

b. Another advantage of SOCMINT is the fact that it stores, uses and supplies large amounts of information that can be easily processed

and disseminated²⁴, so that it can be instantly accessed.

At the same time, this abundance of information can turn into a disadvantage for intelligence analysts who have to sift through information overload, information intoxication, misinformation, or invalid, but credible information, etc.

In order to illustrate this point, it is more than enough to refer to the amount of data that is spread daily via Facebook which, on March 31st, 2019, had 2.38 billion active users, of which 1.56 billion log on daily with their personal accounts, and 83 million profiles are fake; users spend an average of 20 minutes per day on the social networking site, and every 60 seconds, 510,000 comments are made, 293,000 statuses are updated and 136,000 photos are uploaded²⁵.

c. By using SOCMINT, the costs of collecting information are reduced; as an example, we can refer to data mining programs through which significant amounts of data can be obtained in a short time, data that can subsequently be processed by specialized software at low cost and with performance beyond the capabilities of human operators. The use of such programs facilitates the prevention and anticipation of developments or events, monitoring various courses of action, understanding patterns, and all of these represent opportunities for intelligence analysis.

Aside from the fact that the data thus obtained enables a preemptive character, allowing for an anticipative knowledge of developments or potential evolutions of situations that are of interest, it can also help identify the factors that generate or amplify opinions.

d. Another advantage of using SOCMINT, to the detriment of HUMINT, is that the former ensures the physical safety of the person collecting the information while, in the latter case, this does not happen (history provides an

²⁴ Sir David Omand, Jamie Bartlet, C. Miller, “Introducing Social Media Intelligence (SOCMINT)”, in *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 27, no. 6, December 2012, p. 34.

²⁵ According to *The Top 20 Valuable Facebook Statistics – Updated June 2019*, URL: <https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/>, accessed on 10.03.2019.



abundance of examples, regardless of the time frame, starting with the spies sent by Moses to the Land of Canaan, who were caught and executed by the locals, to the recent cases²⁶ of Richard Sorge or Aldrich Ames).

e. Another argument in favor of SOCMINT is that both data collection and verification are perfectly feasible and, at the same time, desirable, the multi-source analysis approach endowing the analytical product with rigor, coherence and credibility.

f. From an axiological point of view, SOCMINT collection of information through non-intrusive tools and methods is a legitimate way of collection that is, in fact, provided “freely” on social media platforms; after all, such platforms represent, *par excellence*, a medium for dissemination and propagation, a virtual domain accessible through a simple Internet connection and the address of the target space.

Nevertheless, the advantage of accessing such information can quickly turn into a disadvantage if the way in which such tools are used can affect fundamental human rights (e.g. the situation in which individuals find out that, by investigative activities carried out online through an avatar belonging to them, their fundamental rights and freedoms have been violated).

At present, there is no coherent internationally adopted legislation on how SOCMINT is used to collect and analyze data and information, which, we believe, is a major disadvantage of this “-INT”.

g. The toolbox used by SOCMINT allows for the monitoring of actions and groups of interest ranging from fraud to terrorist actions, which may be beneficial from the perspective of intelligence organizations, but the beneficiaries of analytical products are not exclusively members of such organizations, and they can also be represented by entities that are active in online marketing, researchers, terrorist cells, etc. and as such, the way the product will be used is difficult to track or control.

²⁶ Mihaela Adriana Păstrașcu, “Top 5 cei mai faimoși spioni”, in *Historia*, on-line edition, URL: <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/top-5-cei-mai-faimosi-spioni>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

It is important to point out that, according to Jenn Chen’s analysis²⁷, which capitalizes on *Facebook’s 2018 Q4 Report*, in 2018 alone, Facebook’s earnings from the advertising campaigns that it ran, were estimated at 16.6 billion \$. Knowing the functional mechanisms of social media enables an interested party to target a certain audience and manipulate it in order to achieve the former’s own interests, as we have shown in the examples provided by the researchers at the University of Oxford, which confirms that public perception can be easily intoxicated through algorithms and functional mechanisms automatically included in the structure of social networks. For example, Facebook’s “Like” mechanism can lead to a false, quantifiable perception of how a phenomenon or a person are perceived by a large number of members of that social network.

Taking this aspect into consideration, Petrică Alupoae and Flavius Sichitiu published an article²⁸ addressing how “concepts such as manipulation, misinformation, media intoxication, electoral fraud etc. [...] based on sociological (opinion polls, publicity, social engineering, etc.) or psychological tools (of persuasion) developed by malicious state actors, [...] can be easily transformed into silent weapons and used against targets, in a silent war with devastating effects.”

Nevertheless, there are authors²⁹ who have analyzed how terrorist organizations extensively use social media to proliferate international terrorism in what is called the *Jihadosphere*. There are terrorist groups operating within this framework, the most eloquent example being the

²⁷ Jenn Chen, 15 Facebook stats every marketer should know for 2019, April 19th 2019, URL: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/>, accessed on 13.05.2019; the initial data is available at URL: https://s21.q4cdn.com/399680738/files/doc_financials/2018/Q4/Q4-2018-Earnings-Release.pdf

²⁸ Petrică Alupoae, Flavius Sichitiu, “Fereastra Overton”, in *Revista Intelligence*, Bucharest, 10 October 2017, <http://intelligence.sri.ro/fereastra-overton-manipulare-la-nivel-intalt/>, accessed on 13.05.2019.

²⁹ Rareș-Adrian Raicu, Tiberiu-Mihail Lazăr, “Jihadosfera”, in *Revista Intelligence*, 22 December 2016, <http://intelligence.sri.ro/jihadosfera-2-0/>, accessed on 13.05.2019.



Islamic State Organization, which acts on the model promoted by a similar structure, Jabhat Al-Nusra. The Islamic State has used Facebook and Twitter to build a propaganda organization - The White Minaret - which is working to set up a Virtual Caliphate.

h. Virtual communities are created within the environment of social networks. In this respect, they are characterized by the same sense of group belonging as well as similar identity criteria and they generate mechanisms of social conformism identical with those of the virtual group that they belong to. On the one hand, this mechanism can be used to create a group identity and increase the resilience of the group in a positive, pro-social, pro-active manner. On the other hand, as Astrid Tuță³⁰ pointed out, the same mechanisms of social mimicry can be used to transform behaviors into extremist or even radical manifestations in which terrorist organizations, such as Daesh, have developed action strategies that “pay extra attention to young people who spend a lot of time in the online environment and who, because of the need to belong to a group or community, are very vulnerable to radicalization. [...] The advantage of socialization platforms is that it does not involve direct contact with potential recruits who can be marked out, approached and trained only through the virtual environment.”

Intelligence theorists consider the stage of analysis and production the keystone of the intelligence cycle, with the role of integrating, corroborating, evaluating and analyzing collected data, which is often fragmented and contradictory, in order to transform it into a meaningful and complete intelligence product. From this perspective, using the argumentative tools presented from the standpoint of opportunities and vulnerabilities (on qualitative and quantitative criteria that are comparative with other INTs etc.), we consider that SOCMINT (regardless of whether it is regarded as an *all source* or *single source* analytical product),

although a recent arrival in the analyst’s toolbox, has shaped an authentic identity for itself, has defined its area of activity (inaccessible to other INTs) and has imposed, beyond any doubt, the need to be used even if, from an axiological perspective, it is still in the process of setting the limits of its framework of action.

Conclusions

Social Media Intelligence, a concept first theorized in 2011 by Sir David Omand, and further researched by scholars such as Robert W. Taylor, Adrian-Liviu Ivan, Anamaria Claudia Iov, Raluca Codruța Lutai, Nicolae Marius, Kristen Purcell or Aaron Smith, is a form of the intelligence cycle adapted to the current realities, namely to the virtual environment, fully preserving the process that established it. It consists in identifying, collecting, collating, corroborating and analyzing the data and information circulated in the social media, the resulting analytical deliverable being used within intelligence organizations to support the decision making process that ensures national security.

Using methods belonging to both OPEN SOCMINT and SURVILLANCE SOCMINT, these organizations have to strike a fine balance between the need to know and the need to share delicate issues that pertain to the private life of the persons under investigation, while respecting ethical and axiological principles. Moreover, this must be done by also respecting the principle that the activities the organizations themselves undertake require a type of confidentiality, of secrecy.

The propagation environment and the speed with which information is disseminated on social media platforms can create surprising, domino-like effects, since any user can retrieve a piece of fake news and promote it within his virtual relationship circle that, in turn, will propagate information. Such actions may lead to cohesive social phenomena in the form of riots, demonstrations, etc. that could affect economic entities or democratic institutions.

In the literature, such situations, and especially those that are orchestrated and directed against

³⁰ Astrid Tuță, “Radicalizarea prin rețea. Capcanele socializării virtuale”, in *Revista Intelligence*, Bucharest, August 31st 2017, <http://intelligence.sri.ro/radicalizare-prin-retea-capcanele-socializarii-virtuale-2/>, accessed on 14.05.2019.



real targets, have been called aggressions or hybrid or asymmetric attacks. Countering such threats implies that certain activities such as information collection, analysis and monitoring of possible risks need to be carried out within the social media environment. As a result, intelligence organizations will have to rapidly adapt to mutations occurring in all areas that affect the use of SOCMINT, starting with the judicial, to the social and technological fields. Moreover, such organizations will also have to adapt to the way people, looked at individually or as social groups, provide information in the online environment and build a virtual reality closely connected and interdependent with the real one.

Taking everything into account, it is obvious that the emergence and rapid evolution of social media and SOCMINT reveal aspects that, from the standpoint of intelligence organizations, represent both opportunities and risks or vulnerabilities, the latter being very difficult to overcome. This is partly due to the fact that information is instantly communicated within social platforms and, as a result, it cannot be fully monitored, estimated and analyzed. Even so, the usefulness of using this type of “-INT” is, we believe, undeniable and, with all the ethical and legal limitations circumscribed to its use, will become a *sine qua non* condition for any intelligence competitor, whether governmental or private.

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WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM 2019: GLOBALIZATION 4.0 – A BETTER VERSION

*Cristian BĂHNĂREANU, Ph.D.**

Between 22 and 25 January 2019, the *World Economic Forum (WEF)*¹, the most important annual meeting of political, economic, scientific leaders and personalities, took place in Davos, Switzerland. The central theme of this edition was *Globalization 4.0 (Shaping a Global Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution)*, a concept used here² to explain the new era of intelligent and ubiquitous technologies that will connect everyone and everything in ways that have not been achieved so far by the previous “engines” of globalization – steam, electricity or computing.

Among the participants there was a broad consensus that international relations and the world economy are at a turning point, so that the 2019 meeting was intended to be the appropriate framework for promoting a comprehensive approach to the more complex problems of the contemporary world, unfolding a series of “global dialogues” on various topics of major importance: the geopolitics and a “multiconceptual” world; the future of the

economy and financial and monetary systems; industrial systems and technology policy; cybersecurity and risk resilience; human capital and a new social narrative; institutional reform and economic cooperation³. The working principles underlying all the WEF activities were: dialogue is critical and must be multi-stakeholder-based; globalization must be responsible and responsive to regional and national concerns; international coordination must be improved in the absence of multilateral cooperation; addressing the biggest global challenges requires the collaborative efforts of business, government and civil society; global growth must be inclusive and sustainable⁴.

During the debates, the essential thesis was that the major shifts taking place in technology, geopolitics, environment and society are combining to shape a new phase of globalization, *Globalization 4.0*. This trajectory will largely depend on strengthening the governance architecture at national, regional, international level, in order to ensure its effectiveness and conformation to the changes brought by the new industrial revolution. Specifically, the institutionalized reaction of the states to the influence that innovation can have – artificial

¹ World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, January 22-25, 2019, URL: <https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting#>, accessed on 12.02.2019.

² A.N.: For details see the article of Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, “Globalization 4.0 – A New Architecture for the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 16 January 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2019-01-16/globalization-40>, accessed on 12.02.2019.

³ World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2019 - Overview, Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 22-25 January 2019, URL: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_AM19_Meeting_Overview.pdf, accessed on 14.02.2019.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

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intelligence, autonomous vehicles and the “internet of things” – as well as the extent to which they can keep up with technologies that fundamentally change the society, have been analysed⁵. Given the fact that we are facing a period of global instability caused by a combination of technologies that change the way people live, work and interact, and the realignment of geo-economic and geopolitical forces, it is necessary that this fourth wave of globalization be oriented on the individual and his needs.

This year’s forum was missing some of the world’s most important political leaders, including US President Donald Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron or British Prime Minister Theresa May, staying at home in order to solve some urgent political, economic or social domestic issues, but also, the Russian President Vladimir Putin or Chinese President Xi Jinping. However, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, IMF Director Christine Lagarde, along with 24 other heads of state and government and about 3,000 participants (leaders of international organizations, personalities of civil society, important representatives from business environment, the academic community, religious groups, culture and media)⁶, have tried to find solutions to the question “How to build a better version of globalization?”. Thus, among the topics of interest up for debate during the four days were: peace and reconciliation in a multi-polar world; slowing down global economy; the future scenarios of international migration; how society and institutions are adapting to the evolution of terrorism; the great energy race; the advancing of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative; keeping Russia competitive; the US-China trade conflict; Europe and the uncertainties regarding Brexit; US government blockade etc.

⁵ Cristina Stroescu (coord.), *Politici și orientări UE*, nr. 3, 2019, Direcția pentru Uniunea Europeană, p. 35, URL: http://www.cdep.ro/eu/afaceri_europene.listdocsupl?tip=ags, accessed on 20.02.2019.

⁶ Fon Mathuros Chantanayingyong, Ceri Parker, *Who’s coming to Davos 2019?*, 15 January 2019, URL: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/everything-you-need-to-know-about-davos-2019>, accessed at 12.02.2019.

Amid the backdrop of confidence in the current international order and the exacerbation of nationalism, German Chancellor Angela Merkel pointed out in her speech⁷ that multilateral institutions are indispensable if we want to live well in tomorrow’s world. In a broken world characterized by multiple risks (climate change, terrorism, natural disasters, cyber-attacks), it is necessary to update and transform these institutions to reflect the current global realities and the balance of power, not usurping and replacing them with new ones. The existing institutional architecture, that emerged after Second World War, still forms the basis of the international system and has been very successful so far. She added that a global architecture will only work if we are willing to compromise and is committed in favour of a multilateral world order that provides the best answers to tomorrow’s challenges.

To address all these issues effectively, there is a need for strengthened, more flexible institutions, a clear commitment to multilateralism, because “anything else will not end well”, Merkel concluded.

Economically, the business community in Davos has expressed confidence that the US-China trade dispute will soon be resolved, given the fact that bilateral economic relations are far too complex and extremely important for the global economy. Any disruption of the Trans-Pacific supply chains will seriously affect both countries⁸. Because of this problem, but also those facing the European community (Italy in recession, UK trapped in a “Brexit with no exit” etc.), the growth of the global economy seems to be slowing down. Probably the term

⁷ The Federal Government, *Speech by Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel at the 49th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos on 23 January 2019*, Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 2019, URL: <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/speech-by-federal-chancellor-angela-merkel-at-the-49th-world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-in-davos-on-23-january-2019-1574188>, accessed on 21.02.2019.

⁸ Dave McKay, *Davos 2019: Globalization in a Digital Age*, January 2019, p. 3, URL: http://www.rbc.com/economics/economic-reports/pdf/other-reports/DAVOS_2019.pdf, accessed on 20.02.2019.



*slowbalisation*⁹, used by *The Economist*, best reflects the current stage where the character and pace of the globalization have changed and economic integration has slowed down¹⁰.

In the panel “New Energy Equation”¹¹, the reputed American energy analyst, Daniel Yergin, said that he doesn’t see an “oil peak” too soon. Maybe it can be reached around 2040, but that doesn’t necessarily mean the beginning of a downward trend in demand. Given that the global population is projected to increase in the next 30 years, with about two billion people¹², it is imperative to find ways to make oil more carbon-efficient to fuel that growth sustainably and to use some of the revenue from classic sources of energy to invest in the development of new ones.

The talks on the “Future of the Transatlantic Alliance”¹³ were moderated by German diplomat Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference for over 10 years, and focused on the strength of the transatlantic relations that are now under pressure generated by disputes over NATO commitment, the development of a European “army”, and even some hostile actions on trade, sanctions and cyber-attacks.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg reinforced that, no matter how international

politics changed and irrespective of the challenges that have emerged over time in the security environment, NATO’s role is the same as it was 70 years ago – to protect and defend common interests and values. The Alliance has constantly adapted to new threats, such as cyber-attacks, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, great power competition (United States, China, Russia) and now it is necessary to increase defence spending to protect about one billion citizens. In this context, the Secretary General announced that the European Allies and Canada will add to military expenditures another 100 billion US dollars by 2020 (and even 350 billion US dollars by 2024). Also, in order to prevent conflicts, the fighting capacity of the Allied forces and their number on the Eastern flank of NATO has been significantly strengthened in recent years, and the US has increased its military presence in Europe.

Without denying the importance of the North Atlantic Alliance for the security of Europe and the defence of common values (such as freedom, democracy, rule of law, humanity), German Defence Minister, Ursula von der Leyen, has called for deepening European integration in the field of defence, considering that in Europe there are 28 different armed forces and no efficient planning process. There may be problems in places of major importance for Europe, such as the African continent, where NATO is less likely to intervene.

Former US Secretary of State John Kerry has argued that NATO has always been a proponent of the European project. He has criticized the current Washington administration’s attitude toward traditional US partners and allies, as well as the American disengagement from several fundamental treaties, including the agreement with Iran, taking into account that there are some leaders of major countries who are promoting the new narrative – the liberal order of the West is near the end. He has also expressed concern over Brexit, whether it is the turmoil of several European countries, the exacerbation of a sort of neo-populism and demagogic current, which could endanger Europe’s remarkable quality of life and the low level of violence. It is important

⁹ A.N.: This term was launched in 2015 by the Dutch writer, Adjiedj Bakas, to describe the reaction against globalization.

¹⁰ ***, “Slowbalisation: The steam has gone out of globalization”, in *The Economist*, 24 January 2019, URL: <https://www-economist-com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/leaders/2019/01/24/the-steam-has-gone-out-of-globalisation>, accessed on 20.02.2019.

¹¹ ***, *The New Energy Equation*, WEF Session, 23 January 2019, URL: <https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting/sessions/a0W0X00000EY4OKUA1>, accessed on 21.02.2019.

¹² ***, *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision*, Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP/248, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, 2017, p. 1, URL: https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf, accessed on 25.02.2019.

¹³ ***, *The Future of the Transatlantic Alliance*, WEF Session, 24 January 2019, URL: <https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting/sessions/the-future-of-the-transatlantic-alliance>, accessed on 21.02.2019.



that Europe itself begins to define its common values and interests and articulate with greater strength in terms of defence.

Another issue of the WEF was the analysis, for the next 10 years, of the most important global risks that could occur and their impact. According to the 2019 Report, they will fall mainly into the environmental and technological categories¹⁴. From the point of view of likelihood estimate, the international community will face extreme weather events, failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation, natural disasters, data fraud or theft, cyber-attacks, man-made environmental disasters, large-scale involuntary migration, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, water crises, assets overvaluation in the most powerful economies of the world. Compared to 2018¹⁵, terrorist attacks and illicit trade have disappeared from the top 10 and failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation is more likely.

From impact and possible damages perspective, the most serious risks will be generated by weapons of mass destruction, failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation and extreme weather events. These are followed by several environmental risks (water crises, natural disasters, biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse) and some anthropic risks (cyber-attacks, critical information infrastructure breakdown, man-made environmental disasters), ending with the spread of infectious diseases.

Compared to 2018, food crises and large-scale involuntary migration disappeared from the top 10 and has increased the importance given to the failure of climate-change mitigation and adaptation.

During the year 2019, the intensified risks will be a consequence of the increase of geopolitical and geo-economic tensions and a collective response to these challenges does not seem to emerge soon enough. The political and economic confrontations / frictions between major powers, the erosion of multilateral trading rules and agreements or the cyber-attacks¹⁶ favour the nationalism, strengthen the divisions and weaken the desire to tackle collectively, integrated and multidimensional the emerging global challenges.

Although the WEF does not end with a final statement, we can conclude that the existing core of multilateral institutions is indispensable in the current international architecture. It is not less true that the improvement of these institutions and arrangements, policies and rules through their greater orientation towards the individual, together with the renewal of international partnerships and the commitment of collaboration between governments, the business environment, investors and society, would lead to better cooperation in order to be able to take advantage of the current opportunities in order to reach the common interests of security, stability and prosperity.

¹⁴ ***, *The Global Risks Report 2019*, 14th Edition, Insight Report, World Economic Forum, 2019, p. 5, URL: www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2019.pdf, accessed on 27.02.2019.

¹⁵ ***, *The Global Risks Report 2018*, 13th Edition, Insight Report, World Economic Forum, 2018, URL: www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2018.pdf, accessed on 27.02.2019.

¹⁶ ***, *The Global Risks Report 2019*, p. 12.



REFUGEE AND ILLEGAL MIGRATION CRISIS IN EUROPE: TRENDS IN FIRST HALF OF 2019

*Alexandra SARCINSCHI, Ph.D.**

The main query of this paper is whether, in the first part of 2019, we can still debate the crisis of refugees, asylum seekers and illegal migration in Europe, as official statistics show a decrease in their number. To provide a relevant answer, that can already be supposed, the analyzed issue must be considered in at least four prospects: the number of the reference population that entered the European countries in the first months of this year compared to the previous year; the number of reference population existing in European countries; aspects related to the living conditions of this population and, last but not least, reactions of the destination countries, whether we refer to the institutional measures for managing the phenomenon or the public opinion.

1. Reducing the flow of illegal refugees and migrants does not mean lowering the migration pressure

Although the number of illegal border-crossing on entry between *Border Crossing Points (BCPs) of the external borders of the Member States of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries* has decreased (33,701 illegal border-crossings in January-May 2019¹)

¹ Frontex, *Detections of illegal border-crossings statistics download (updated monthly)*, 05.07.2019, URL: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Migratory_routes/Detections_of_IBC_2019_07_05.xlsx, accessed on 07.07.2019.

with approximately 13,000 crossings compared to the same months of 2018 (46,708 illegal crossings in January-May 2018²), there is still a *high risk of increased migration pressure*. The main causes are tensions at the border between Greece – North Macedonia³ and Turkey – Greece⁴ (at the beginning of April 2019), and the European Parliament's recommendation to the Commission and the Council of the European Union to suspend accession negotiations with Turkey⁵, whose officials have repeatedly stated that hosting migrants in Turkish camps depends on the outcome of negotiations with the EU regarding the accession process⁶ (there are about

² *Ibidem*.

³ Sorin Popescu, "Grecia: Migranții continuă să se adune lângă Salonic, în speranța că vor putea trece frontiera", in *Agerpres*, 06.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/04/06/grecia-migrantii-continua-se-se-adune-langa-salonic-in-speranta-ca-vor-putea-trece-frontiera--287750>, accessed on 06.04.2019.

⁴ Irina Cristea, "Mii de iranieni și afgani s-au masat în ultimele zile la frontiera dintre Turcia și Grecia, în urma zvonurilor pe rețele sociale", in *Agerpres*, 08.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/04/08/mii-de-refugiati-masati-la-granita-dintre-turcia-si-grecia-in-urma-unor-zvonuri-pe-retele-sociale--288289>, accessed on 08.04.2019.

⁵ European Parliament, *2018 Report on Turkey*, 13 March 2019, Strasbourg, URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2019-0200+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

⁶ Safak Timur and Rod Nordland, "Erdogan Threatens to Let Migrant Flood Into Europe Resume", in *The New*

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Table no. 1: Comparison between the number of illegal border-crossing on entry between BCPs of the external borders of the Member States of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries in the first five months of the peak year of the refugee and illegal migration crisis in Europe (2015), of 2018 and 2019, by routes⁸

| | 2015 | 2018 | 2019 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| | January-May | January-May | January-May |
| Black Sea route | 68 | 0 | 1 |
| Eastern Land Borders route | 550 | 262 | 243 |
| Western African route | 113 | 121 | 363 (129 in May) |
| Central Mediterranean route | 47,542 | 13,069 | 2,087 (1,143 in May) |
| Circular route from Albania to Greece | 4,036 | 2,176 | 892 |
| Western Mediterranean route | 2,093 | 8,154 | 7,968 (4,082 in January) |
| Western Balkans route | 50,337 | 2,216 | 4.600 (1,173 in March) |
| Eastern Mediterranean route | 48,931 | 20,710 | 17,547 |
| Other | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Total in the first four months | 153,673 | 46,708 | 33,701 |

3.9 million people of a different nationality than Turkish in search of international protection, of which over 90% are Syrians⁷). Also, the crises in Lybia and Venezuale should not be overlooked

York Times, 25.11.2016, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/europe/turkey-recep-tayyip-erdogan-migrants-european-union.html>, accessed on 05.04.2019; Caroline MORTIMER, “President Erdogan: I will open gates for migrants to enter Europe if EU blocks membership talks”, in *The Independent*, 25.11.2016, URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/president-erdogan-turkey-eu-membership-migrants-refugees-europe-warning-a7438316.html>, accessed on 05.04.2019; ***, “Erdogan in Rome: Let Turkey be full EU member”, in *Euractiv*, 05.02.2018, URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/erdogan-in-rome-let-turkey-be-full-eu-member/>, accessed on 05.04.2019; Selcan HACA OGLU, “Erdogan Says Turkey Can’t Stand Alone Against New Migration Wave”, in *Bloomberg*, 20.02.2019, URL: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-20/erdogan-says-turkey-cant-stand-alone-against-new-migration-wave>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

⁷ International Organization for Migration, *MPM Turkey Migrants’ Presence Monitoring. Situation Report. December 2018*, 31.12.2018, URL: https://turkey.iom.int/sites/default/files/Turkey_Sitrep_12_Dec_18.pdf, accessed on 04.04.2019.

because of the fact that they brought a new influx of asylum seekers and illegal migrants to EU countries.⁸

In the first quarter of 2019, compared to the same period of 2018, the migratory pressure was shifted from the Central Mediterranean route (the maritime borders of Italy and Malta) to the Eastern Mediterranean one (the maritime borders of Cyprus and Greece and land borders of Greece and Bulgaria with Turkey) and the Western Mediterranean route (the land and maritime borders of Spain, excluding the Canary Islands). Yet, the end of the semester shows a greater number of entries on the Western Balkan route (Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Croatia, on the land borders with the countries of the Western Balkans), but also an increase of over 50% of the number of illegal border-crossings in May 2019, on the Central Mediterranean route

⁸ Frontex, *Detections of illegal border-crossings statistics download (updated monthly)*, 05.07.2019, URL: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Migratory_routes/Detections_of_IBC_2019_07_05.xlsx, accessed on 07.07.2019.



(table no. 1). Also, regarding the Western African route, there were more than 50% increase in the number of entries in May 2019 compared to the period January-April 2019 (mainly Moroccan citizens) although, there is no massive flow in absolute numbers (Table no.1).

In the case of the first five nationalities crossing borders illegally in the first five months of 2018, respectively 2019 on the routes where significant changes were registered, the situation is presented according to the Figure no. 1.⁹

Mediterranean route, the Afghans register a significant increase in the number of illegal border-crossing on entry between BCPs of external borders of the Member States of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries in the first five months of 2019, from 1,975 in January-May 2018 to 4,247 in January-May 2019¹¹. There is an interesting phenomenon, namely the massive flow of unknown/undeclared citizenship on the Western Mediterranean route (from 0 in January-May 2018 to 4,905 in January-May 2019);

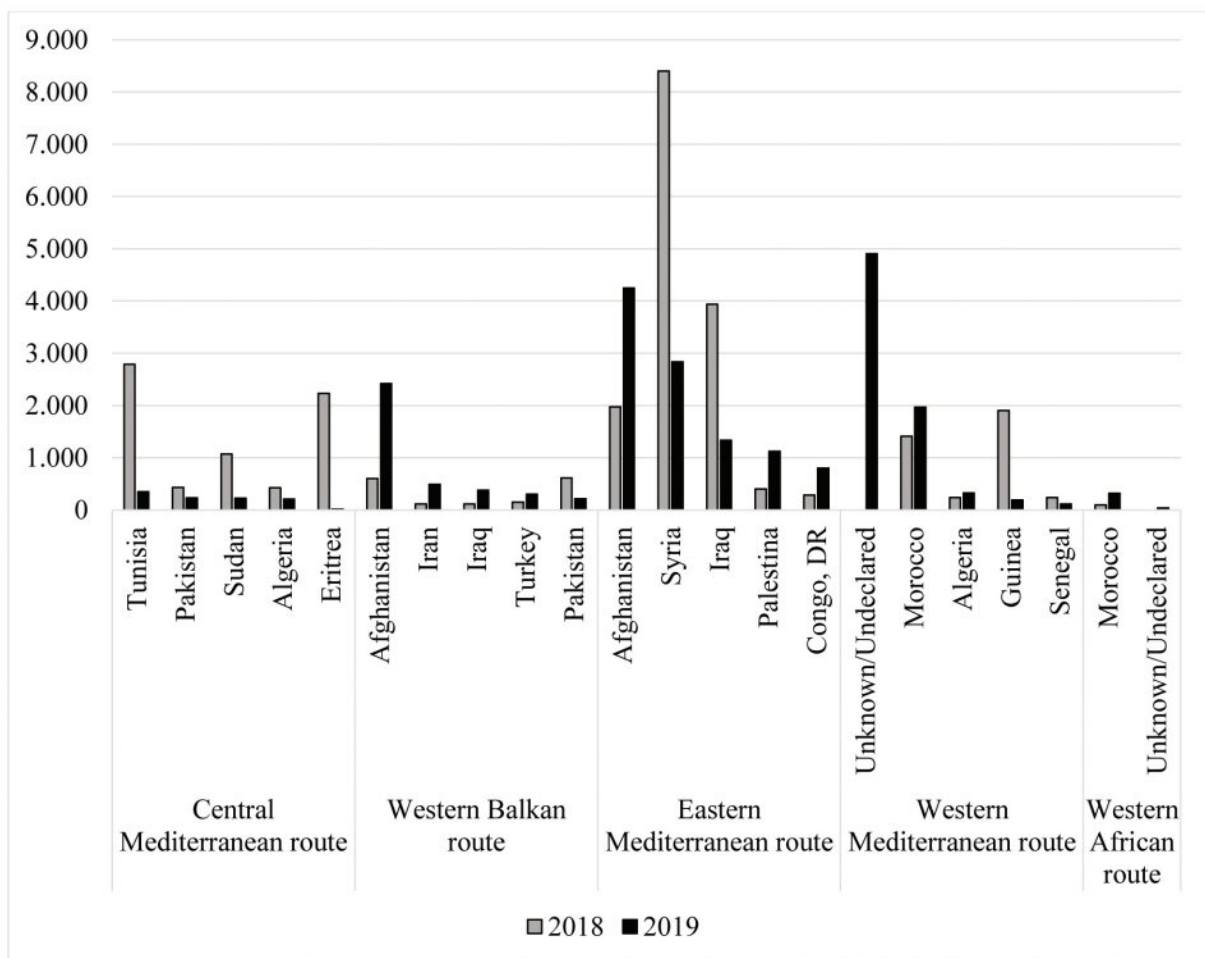


Figure no. 1: Comparison between the number of illegal border-crossing on entry between BCPs of external borders of the Member States of the EU and Schengen Associated Countries in the first five months of 2018 and 2019⁹

Thus, on the Western Balkan route the largest increase is registered for Afghan citizens (from 601 in January-May 2018 to 2,491 in January-May 2019), followed by the Iranians, Iraqis and Turks¹⁰. Also, in the case of the Eastern

also, this phenomenon exists in the case of the Western African route, but at a smaller scale (from 0 in January-May 2018 to 38 in January-May 2019)¹².

The increased flow on the Western Balkan

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² Ibidem.



route, although it is lower in absolute numbers than on the other routes, also implies a new approach to the response to this crisis: for instance, at the end of February 2019, 3,500 people were hosted in eight reception centers at the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Croatia¹³. Also, in early April, Austria announced that border controls with Hungary and Slovenia (established in 2015) should be maintained at least until November, in response to increased traffic on this route¹⁴; the reaction of European officials was negative, the European Commissioner for migration, citizenship and home affairs, Dimitris Avramopoulos, calling on European countries (Austria, Germany, Denmark, Norway and France) to stop border controls in the Schengen area¹⁵.

Also, regarding this route, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) points out that, since illegal migrants can no longer cross the borders between Greece and North Macedonia and between Serbia and Hungary, a route to Croatia has been opened through Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁶.

At the end of 2018 a total number of 150,033 illegal border-crossings was registered¹⁷, less than half of the number of border-crossings during the

peak of the entire period of the crisis (433,620 crossings in October 2015). It can be said that, only in terms of figures, the crisis of refugees and illegal migration in Europe is coming to an end. However, the figures provided by Frontex do not include statistics on the number of persons granted with temporary protection on the territory of Turkey as a result of the agreement between this country and the EU.

2. Is there a risk that Turkey will denounce the agreement with the European Union?

In March 2019¹⁸, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey which brought to the forefront the European fores' concerns on the "serious backsliding in the areas of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association and procedural and property rights"¹⁹. This situation has led to a recommendation to the Commission and the Council of the European Union that "in accordance with the Negotiating Framework, formally suspend the accession negotiations with Turkey"²⁰, although the political dialogue and the use of the funds allocated through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance will keep going. However, the European Parliament recognizes the role that Turkey plays in managing the refugee crisis, especially the refugees from Syria. Since the entry into force of the *EU-Turkey Declaration* (March 20, 2016) until the end of May 2019, the Turkish camps accommodated over 3.6 million Syrians, but also a significant number of foreign nationals with the status of asylum-seekers and refugees (figure no. 2). In this context, Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stated that if the northeastern part of Syria, along the border with Turkey,

¹³ Sorin Calciu, "Migranți: Bosnia se așteaptă la o „escaladare” în 2019 pe ruta balcanică", in *Agerpres*, 08.03.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/03/08/migranti-bosnia-se-asteapta-la-o-escaladare-in-2019-pe-ruta-balcanica--271274>, accessed on 08.03.2019.

¹⁴ Tudor Martalogu, "Austria extinde controalele la frontierele cu Ungaria și Slovenia până în noiembrie", in *Agerpres*, 07.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/04/07/austria-extinde-controalele-la-frontierele-cu-ungaria-si-slovenia-pana-in-noiembrie--288018>, accessed on 07.04.2019.

¹⁵ Raluca Anghel, "UE: Comisarul european pentru Migrație Avramopoulos cere încetarea controlului la frontierele din spațiul Schengen", in *Agerpres*, 09.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/04/09/ue-comisarul-european-pentru-migratie-avramopoulos-cere-inctetarea-controlului-la-frontierele-din-spatiul-schengen--288771>, accessed on 09.04.2019.

¹⁶ Doris Pundy, "Ruta balcanică: noi căi, violențe și victime", in *Deutsche Welle*, 15.04.2019, URL: <https://www.dw.com/ro/ruta-balcanic%C4%83-noi-c%C4%83i-violen%C5%A3e-%C5%9Fi-victime/a-48326974-0>, accessed on 15.04.2019.

¹⁷ Frontex, *Detections of illegal border-crossings statistics download (updated monthly)*, 03.04.2019, URL: <https://>

frontex.europa.eu/assets/Migratory_routes/Detections_of_IBC_2019_04_03.xlsx, accessed on 04.04.2019.

¹⁸ Parlamentul European, *Rezoluția Parlamentului European din 13 martie 2019 referitoare la Raportul Comisiei pe 2018 privind Turcia (2018/2150(INI))*, 13.03.2019, URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2019-0200+0+DOC+XML+V0//RO>, accessed on 06.04.2019.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

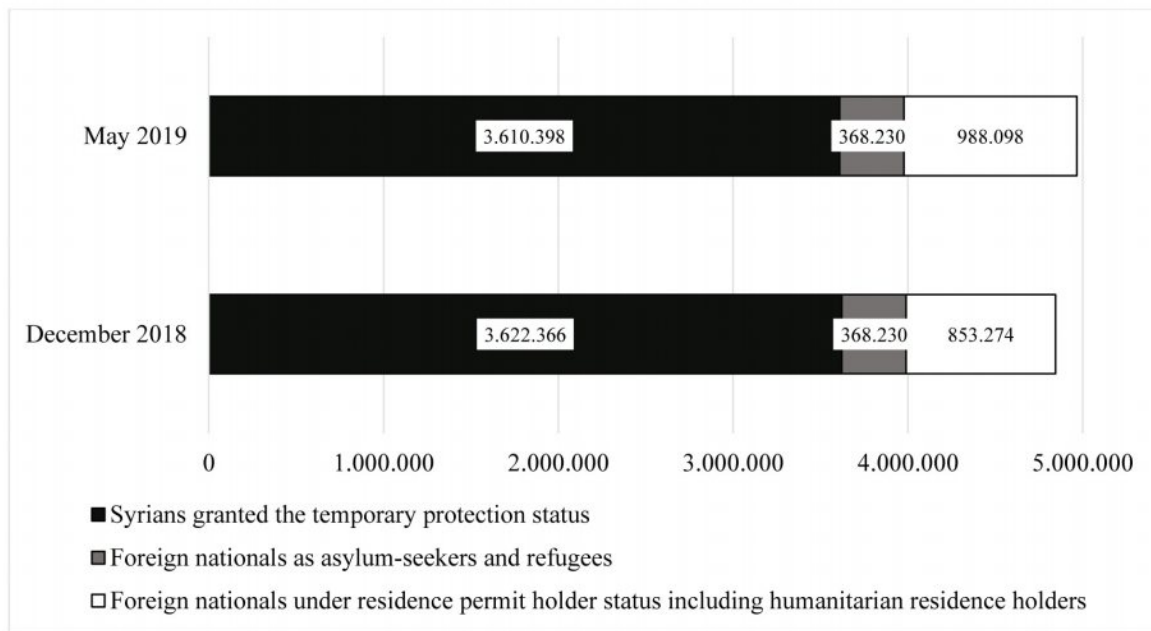


Figure no. 2: Number of persons granted the temporary protection status on the territory of Turkey²³

is stabilized, one million Syrians will return home²¹, but Panos Moutziz, the UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, estimated that Turkey could face a new wave of up to two million Syrians if fighting intensifies in the northwestern part of Syria²².

According to figure no. 2, which illustrates the data published by the IOM, there is an

²¹ Angela Sârbu, “Erdogan: numărul sirienilor care se întorc acasă va ajunge la un milion după înființarea zonei de siguranță în nord-estul țării”, in *Agerpres*, 25.06.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/06/25/erdogan-numarul-sirienilor-care-se-intorc-acasa-va-ajunge-la-un-milion-dupa-ce-va-fi-instaurata-o-zona-sigura-in-nord-estul-tarii--331490>, accessed on 25.06.2019.

²² Violeta Gheorghe, “ONU: Până la două milioane de sirieni s-ar putea refugia în Turcia în cazul intensificării confruntărilor”, in *Agerpres*, 10.06.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/06/10/onu-pana-la-doua-milioane-de-sirieni-s-ar-putea-refugia-in-turcia-in-cazul-intensificarii-confruntarilor--323715>, accessed on 10.06.2019.

²³ International Organization for Migration, *MPM Turkey Migrants’ Presence Monitoring. Situation Report. December 2018*, 31.12.2018, URL: https://turkey.iom.int/sites/default/files/Turkey_Sitrep_12_Dec_18.pdf, accessed on 08.04.2019. The report includes the following updates: 27.12.2018 for “Syrians granted the temporary protection status” and “Foreign nationals under residence permit holder status including humanitarian residence holders”, and 31.10.2018 for „Foreign nationals as asylum-seekers and refugees”.

increase in the total number of persons granted the temporary protection status on the territory of Turkey, especially regarding foreign nationals under residence permit holder status including humanitarian residence holders²⁴. Within five months, their number increased by 134,824 people. The statistics did not publish updated data for May 2019 regarding the number of people from non-Syrian nationals (Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Somalis etc.) with asylum-seeker and refugee status.²⁵

Regarding one of the most important

International Organization for Migration, *MPM Turkey Migrants’ Presence Monitoring. Situation Report. May 2019*, 31.05.2019, URL: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Turkey_Sitrep_05_May_19.pdf, accessed on 27.06.2019. The report includes the following updates: 29.05.2019 for “Syrians granted the temporary protection status” and “Foreign nationals under residence permit holder status including humanitarian residence holders”, and 28.02.2018 for „Foreign nationals as asylum-seekers and refugees”.

²⁴ As regards the case of Syrian refugees, Turkey has implemented a system of “temporary protection”, which guarantees the legal right to stay, as well as a certain level of access to basic rights and services, based on Article 91 of the *Law on Foreigners and International Protection* (April 2013) and the *Regulation on Temporary Protection* (October 2014).

²⁵ International Organization for Migration, *MPM Turkey Migrants’ Presence Monitoring. Situation Report. May 2019*, 31.05.2019, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/>

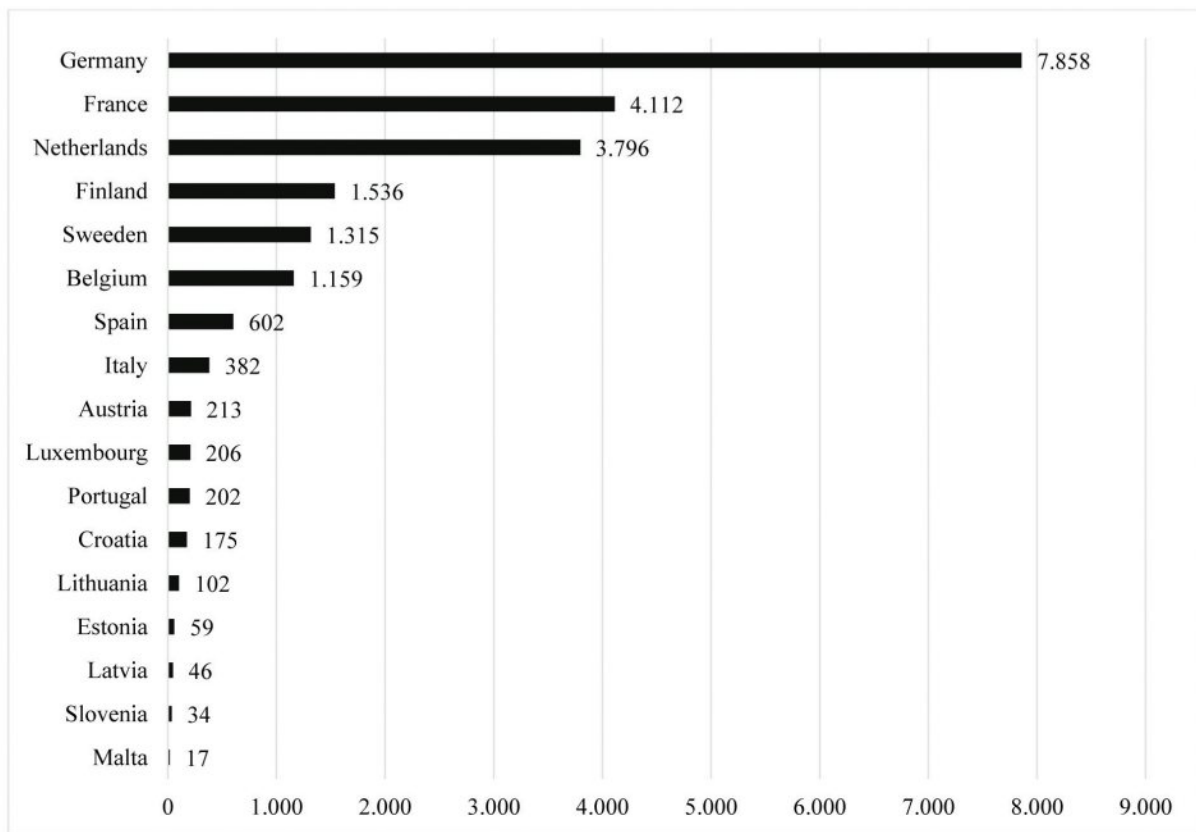


Figure no. 3: Number of Syrians relocated from Turkey to the EU as 30 May 2019²⁵

provisions of the EU –Turkey Declaration, namely the resettlement clause of Syrian citizens (for each person of this nationality returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian from the Turkish camps will be relocated to one of the EU countries), by the end of May 2019, only 21,814 were relocated out of more than 3.6 million Syrians (Figure no. 3). Therefore, the EU countries took over only 0.6% of the Syrians who left the country of origin, the rest remaining on the territory of Turkey.

One of the risk scenarios for both European security, as well as to refugees and illegal migrants is for Turkey to denounce the agreement with the EU, if the latter will suspend accession negotiations. This could bring for the EU the revival of extremist nationalism, terrorist elements entering European countries alongside refugees from Turkey etc., and for the refugees and illegal migrants very poor travel and living conditions, violent confrontations with extremist nationalist movements in Europe

reliefweb.int/files/resources/Turkey_Sitrep_05_May_19.pdf, accessed on 27.06.2019.

etc. The situation is further complicated by the fact that, in recent months, Turkey has shown a special opening of relations with the Russian Federation on several levels - from the energy one (relaunching the TurkStream project) to the military one (cooperation in Syria, acquisition of missile systems that are incompatible with NATO systems)²⁶ – which could lead to an even greater permeability of the population and even of the decision-makers to the Euroseptic and anti-NATO messages. In fact, an opinion poll conducted in the second part of 2018 by the Center for American Progress²⁷ shows that,

²⁶ ***, *Our cooperation with Russia in the area of energy is one of the pillars of our economic relations*, Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, 08.04.2019, URL: <https://tcgb.gov.tr/en/news/542/103852/-our-cooperation-with-russia-in-the-area-of-energy-is-one-of-the-pillars-of-our-economic-relations>, accessed on 08.04.2019; Alice Tidey, “Erdogan and Putin to talk arms sales, Syria cooperation despite US warnings”, in *Euronews*, 08.04.2019, URL: <https://www.euronews.com/2019/04/08/erdogan-and-putin-to-talk-arms-sales-syria-cooperation-despite-us-warnings>, accessed on 08.04.2019.

²⁷ Max HOFFMAN, *A Snapshot of Turkish Public Opinion Toward the European Union*, Center for American Progress,

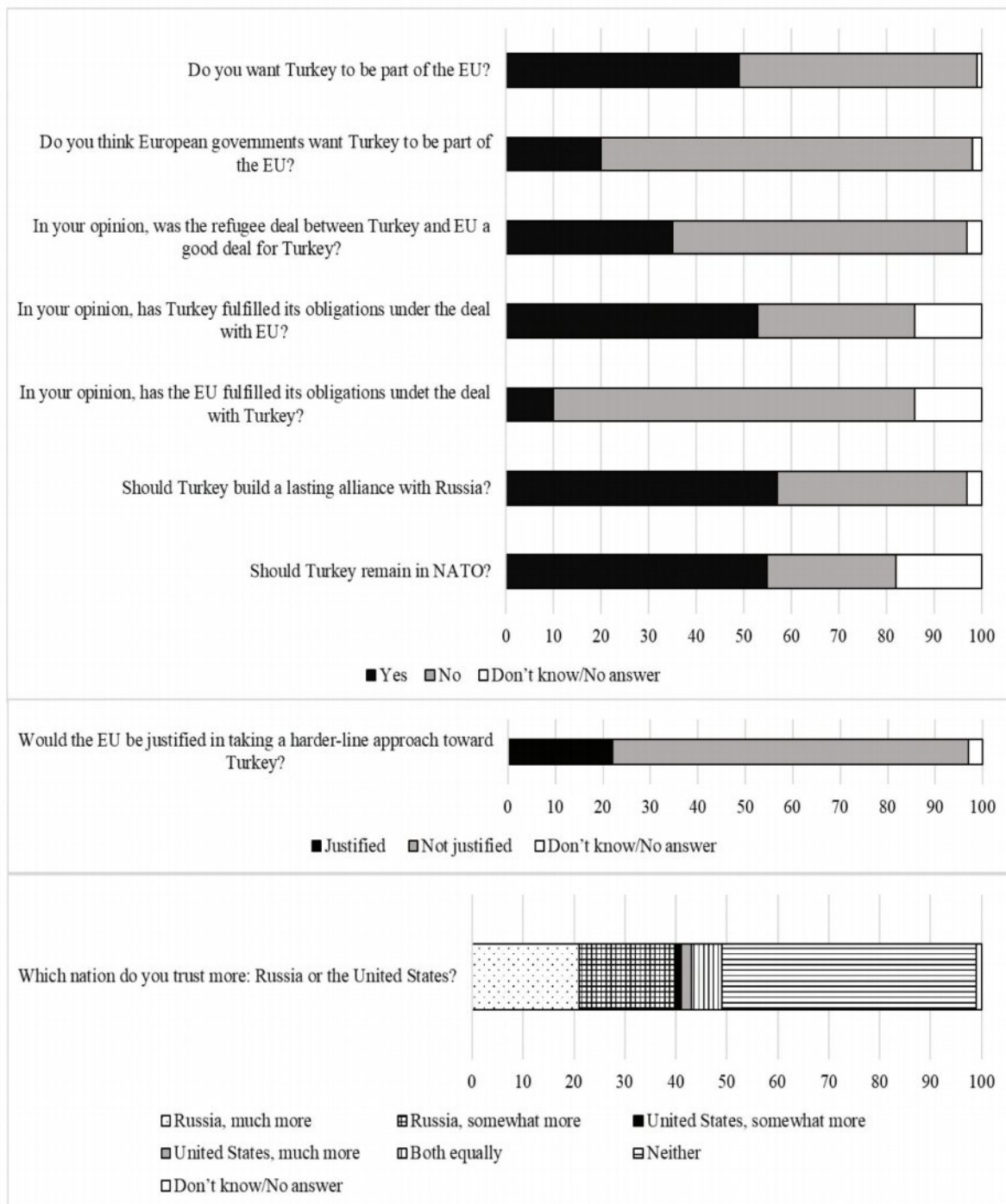


Figure no. 4: Turkish public opinion on Turkey's relations with the EU, Russia and NATO²⁸

despite the fact that in Turkish society there are two completely opposite tendencies regarding EU membership (49% of respondents are for Union membership, while 50% are against), the situation is different with regard to the image of

Turkey among EU countries, the relationship with the Union, the agreement on refugees and the possible sanctions against their country (Figure no. 4).

The results of the survey conducted by the Center for American Progress help us understand

27.09.2018, URL: <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/content/uploads/2018/09/26140215/TurkishSurveyEU-brief1.pdf>, accessed on 07.04.2019.

²⁸ *Ibidem.*



the fact that this configuration of public opinion, correlated with the announcement of the European Parliament, could trigger the emergence and deepening of tensions in the Turkish society regarding the management of refugee crisis and the relationship with the EU, although the economic benefits derived from the implementation of the EU-Turkey Declaration (in addition, the European community is Turkey's main trading partner and Turkey is the fourth largest export market and the EU's fifth importer²⁹) could be considered more important than unilaterally cancelation of the Agreement.

The risk elements identified in the first part of 2019 are complemented by the tensions that occurred at the borders of Greece-North Macedonia³⁰ and Turkey-Greece³¹ at the beginning of April. Following information on social media³², groups of refugees and illegal migrants from camps in Greece and Turkey headed to the borders of these countries with North Macedonia, respectively with Greece, in order to reach the countries of the European Union. Although, at the time of this analysis, the situation was under control of the authorities from both countries, violent clashes can occur in Greece and Turkey, emerging a spiral of mistrust and conflict between the resident population and refugees and illegal migrants.

²⁹ European Commission, *Countries and regions. Turkey*, Last update: 15 Feb 2019, URL: <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/countries/turkey/>, accessed on 07.04.2019.

³⁰ Marius Hosu, "Grecia: sute de migranți și refugiați au părăsit taberele și s-au adunat la frontieră", in *Agerpres*, 05.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politic-ex/2019/04/05/grecia-sute-de-migranti-si-refugiati-au-parasit-taberele-si-s-au-adunat-la-frontiera--287085>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

³¹ Irina Cristea, "Mii de refugiați, masați la granița dintre Turcia și Grecia, în urma unor zvonuri difuzate pe rețele de socializare", in *Agerpres*, 08.04.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/04/08/mii-de-refugiati-masati-la-granita-dintre-turcia-si-grecia-in-urma-unor-zvonuri-pe-retele-sociale--288289>, accessed on 08.04.2019.

³² ***, "Greek Police Clash With Refugees At North Macedonia Border After False Reports", ReliefWeb, 07.04.2019, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/greece/greek-police-clash-refugees-north-macedonia-border-after-false-reports>, accessed on 07.04.2019.

3. The war in Libya and possible implications for the crisis of refugees and illegal migrants in Europe

The first months of 2019 brought to the forefront a new series of events that continue the second civil war in Libya: the military offensive of the head (Khalifa Haftar) of National Army's forces, against the Libyan capital, which is the headquarters of the National Union Government led by Fayeze al-Sarraj, internationally recognized. Military operations have a strong impact not only on Libyans, but also on refugees and illegal migrants from reception centers (it is important to recall the existence of the *Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the fields of development, the fight against illegal immigration, human trafficking and fuel smuggling and on reinforcing the security of borders between the State of Libya and the Italian Republic*, February 2, 2017, which aims at reducing the number of refugees and illegal migrants coming from or transiting Libya, with Italy as the first destination).

Since the summer following the signing of the Memorandum with Italy (June 2017), the number of arrivals in Italy from the Lebanese territory has decreased significantly³³, and, in the last quarter of 2018, Libya was replaced by Tunisia as the main departure country for the detected migrants on the Central Mediterranean route (with 87%)³⁴. Also, comparing January and February 2018 to January and February 2019, there is a decrease of approximately three times the number of those rescued in the operations of the Libyan Coast Guard, but also of those who died and disappeared, while the number of operations was supplemented by four (figure no. 5).

³³ ***, *The Mediterranean and Migration: Postcards from a "Crisis"*, European Council on Foreign Relations, URL: https://www.ecfr.eu/specials/mapping_migration#, accessed on 08.04.2019.

³⁴ Frontex, *Migratory Routes: Central Mediterranean Route*, URL: <https://frontex.europa.eu/along-eu-borders/migratory-routes/central-mediterranean-route/>, accessed on 04.04.2019.

³⁵ International Organization for Migration, *Mixed Migration Flows in the Mediterranean. Compilation of Available Data and Information. February 2019*, 2019,



Despite these positive aspects, the situation in Libya is dramatic not only because of the war that caused the internal displacement of 2,410 people in the first three months of this year³⁶, but also as a result of the humanitarian crisis reported by the humanitarian organizations, which draw attention to the ill-treatment and abuse on refugees and illegal migrants. Furthermore, an UNHCR Report of June 28, 2019 shows that, at the end of the month, 268,629 Libyans were internally displaced because of the civil war, the Libyan

refugees and migrants, accusing the EU of being aware of these practices, but not taking any measure to put an end to them³⁸.

Regarding the EU involvement in managing this situation, in the early 2019, Italy announced its intention to withdraw from the Operation Sophia; this situation would have meant, according to sources close to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the end of this operation³⁹. Still, at the end of March, the mandate for EUNAVFOR MED Sophia was

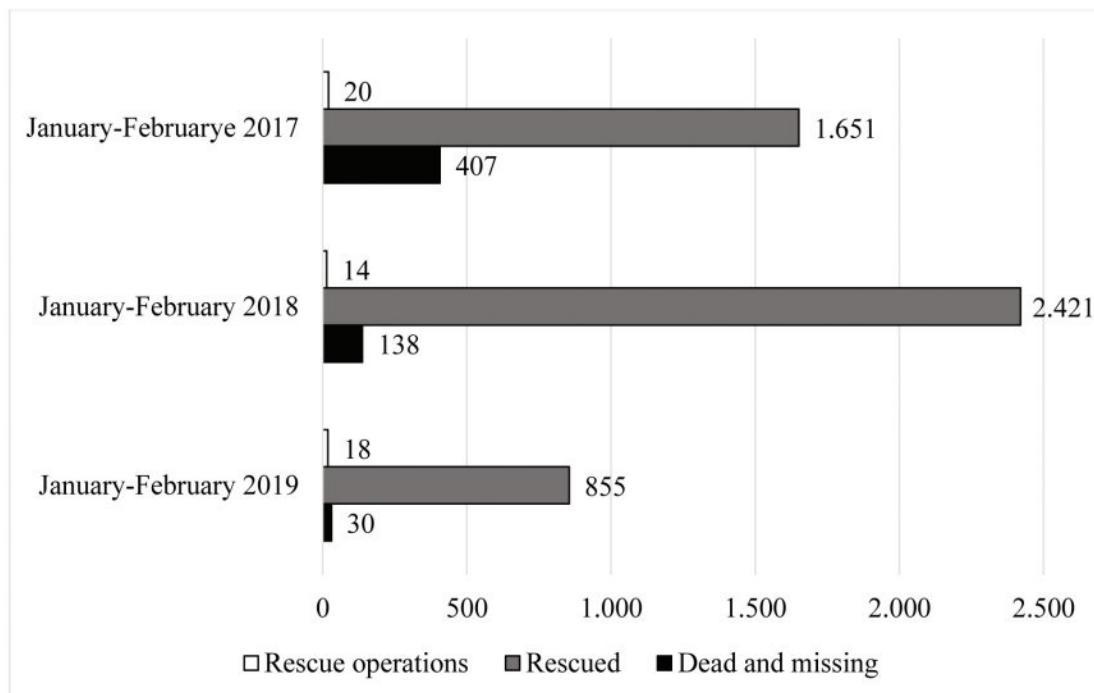


Figure no. 5: Rescue operations by the Libyan Coast Guard and their results (January-February 2017, 2018, 2019)³⁵

Coast Guard conducted 44 operations over six months, and 55,770 persons were registered as refugees or asylum-seekers (44% Syrians, 21% Sudanese, 14% Eritreans)³⁷. Regarding the latter category, the humanitarian organizations draw attention to the ill-treatment and abuse on illegal

extended by another six months, until the end of September 2019⁴⁰. The mandate will strengthen

p. 46, URL: <https://www.iom.int/mediterranean-mixed-migration-flows-mediterranean-compilation-available-data-and-information-1>, accessed on 04.04.2019.

³⁶ IOM, *Libya Update 16-31 March 2019*, 2019, URL: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/libya_sr_20190316-31.pdf, accessed on 04.04.2019.

³⁷ UNHCR, *UNHCR Update Libya*, 28.06.2019, URL: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20Libya%20Update%2028%20June%202019.pdf>, accessed on 01.07.2019.

³⁸ ***, *More evidence of abuses in Libya should spur EU to help people seeking safety*, Amnesty International, 06.03.2019, URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/03/more-evidence-of-abuses-in-libya-should-spur-eu-to-help-people-seeking-safety/>, accessed on 06.03.2019.

³⁹ Gabriela Ionescu, “UE este gata să pună capăt operațiunii SOPHIA dacă Italia renunță la ea (surse)”, in *Agerpres*, 23.01.2019, URL: <https://www.agerpres.ro/politica-externa/2019/01/23/ue-este-gata-sa-puna-capat-misiunii-sophia-daca-italia-renunta-la-ea-surse--245824>, accessed on 23.01.2019.

⁴⁰ Council of the EU, *EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia: mandate extended until 30 September 2019*, 29.03.2019, URL: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/03/29/eunavfor-med-operation-sophia->



the air support surveillance, as well as support for the Libyan security and maritime military forces in fulfilling law enforcement tasks at sea through enhanced monitoring, including on land; also, the training process will continue. Therefore, at present, the EU no longer has maritime component, but only air: Predator, Falcon 50, AN-28 B1R BRYZA, LUX SW3 MERLIN III and ESP CN-235 VIGMA D4⁴¹.

Considering both the intensification of the civil war in Libya and the withdrawal of the maritime component of the EU operation, as well as the position of the Italian government on the refugee and illegal migration crisis, we believe that *continuous monitoring of the Central Mediterranean route is necessary* (although the flow has slowed down this year), *but also of the Western Mediterranean one*, which, although it did not register a comparable number of people coming from Libya, could nevertheless take over part of the potential war-amplified flow.

4. The crisis in Venezuela and the pressure on the asylum system

The case of Venezuela is another important element for analyzing the trends in the refugee and illegal migration crisis in Europe in the first semester of 2019. Here, the economic and political crisis started since the time of President Hugo Chavez worsened earlier this year, when President Nicolas Maduro, re-elected in 2018, was challenged by the opposition leader, Juan Guaido, self-proclaimed interim president, but backed by the US, most of the EU countries and Venezuela's neighbors. If, initially, there was a very high rate of inflation, poverty and massive emigration, now, under the current president, Nicolas Maduro, the economic crisis has deepened, corruption has expanded, and human rights are violated on a large scale: by the end of 2019, the IMF estimates that inflation will

mandate-extended-until-30-september-2019/, accessed on 29.03.2019.

⁴¹ EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia, Deployed Units, URL: https://www.operationsophia.eu/media_category/assets/, accessed on 04.04.2019.

rise at 10,000,000%⁴², while statistics show that, as of March 2019, 94% of Venezuelans were living in poverty and 25% needed humanitarian assistance⁴³.

In this context, UNHCR registers over 4 million refugees and migrants worldwide, most of them in South American countries⁴⁴. Also, in the first quarter of 2019, the EU registered 10,800 first-time asylum applications of Venezuelan citizens, with 6,600 more than in the first quarter of 2018⁴⁵.

To illustrate the magnitude of the crisis, we must emphasize that during this period, the number of first-time asylum applications made by Venezuelan citizens increased by 158% compared to the first quarter of 2018, the number of first-time asylum applications made by Syrian citizens decreased by 20% (17,900 first asylum applications, compared to 21,290 in the first quarter of 2018), and the number of first-time asylum applications made by Iraqi and Afghan nationals, who were in positions 2 and 3 in the first quarter of 2018, was surpassed by that of the applications submitted by the Venezuelan citizens⁴⁶ (figure no. 6).

The main EU destination countries are Spain (9,730 persons), Italy (375 persons), France (200 persons), Germany (155 persons), Belgium (125 persons) and others (210 persons, in Portugal and even Iceland)⁴⁸.

Figure no. 7 shows that 90% of

⁴² Luc Cohen, "IMF sees Venezuela inflation at 10 million percent in 2019", in *Reuters*, 09.10.2019, URL: <https://in.reuters.com/article/venezuela-economy-idINKCN1MJ1YX>, accessed on 01.07.2019.

⁴³ Michelle Nichols, "Venezuelans facing 'unprecedented challenges,' many need aid – internal U.N. report", in *Reuters*, 28.03.2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-un/venezuelans-facing-unprecedented-challenges-many-need-aid-internal-u-n-report-idUSKCN1R92AG>, accessed on 01.07.2019.

⁴⁴ ***, *Venezuela situation*, UNHCR, URL: <https://www.unhcr.org/venezuela-emergency.html>, accessed on 01.07.2019.

⁴⁵ ***, *Asylum quarterly report*, Eurostat, Data extracted: June 17, 2019, URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/13562.pdf>, accessed on 01.07.2019.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

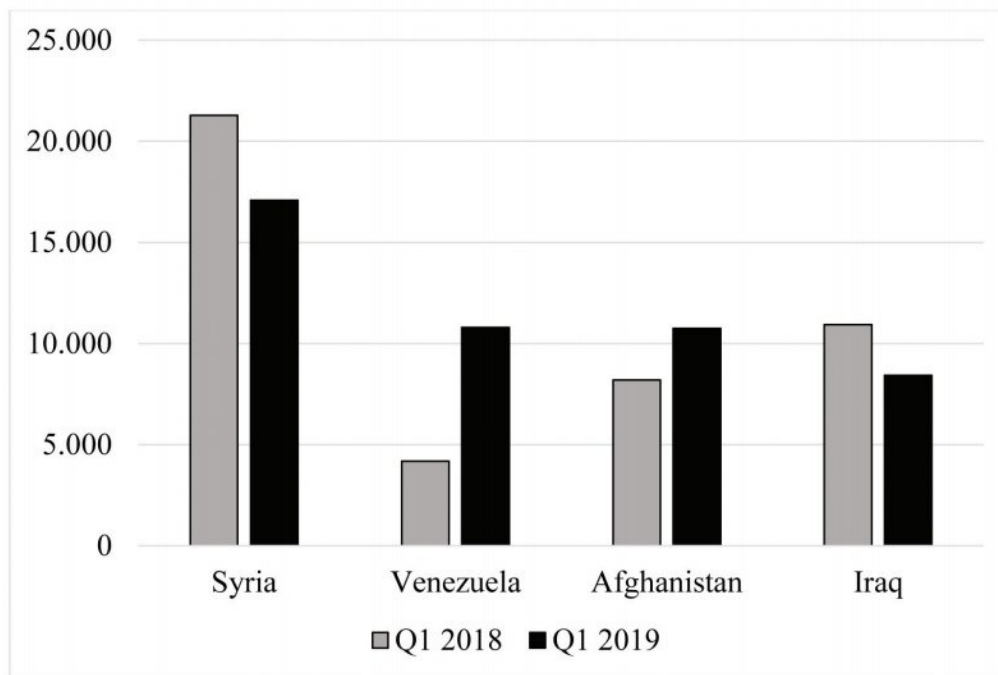


Figure no. 6: First-time asylum applications in the EU (comparison between the first quarter of 2018 and the first quarter of 2019)⁴⁷

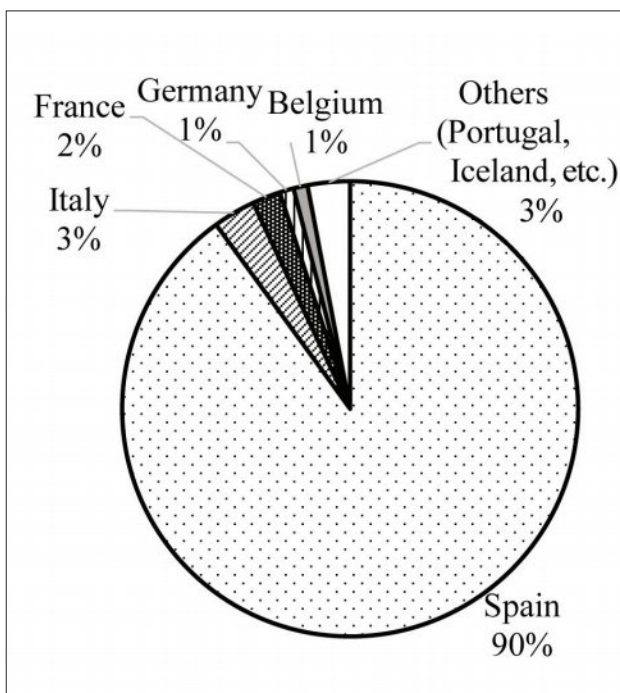


Figure no. 7: Distribution by countries of destination of first-time asylum applications in the EU by Venezuelan citizens in the first quarter of 2019⁴⁹

Venezuelans wish to obtain asylum in Spain, which is explicable, given the common cultural characteristics (mainly, language and religion) of the two populations.

Therefore, in the case of Venezuela, there is a risk of increasing pressure on the European asylum system for three main reasons: the deepening of the political crisis (despite the efforts of the international community to put an end to it), aggravation of the economic crisis and, last but not least, deepening the humanitarian crisis.

Conclusions

In recent years, we have witnessed the dissemination of the oxymoron “illiberal democracy”, as a form of transforming Europe by the populists and the correlated Euroscepticism, the political scene being “flooded” by discourses centered on anti-immigration messages. The cases of Austria, Italy and Hungary are the most widely covered by media. The end of 2018 and the first month of 2019 were marked by the divergence of opinions on the *The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* (adopted by Resolution of the UN General Assembly on December 19, 2018): although its purpose is to find global solutions for managing migration and sharing worldwide responsibility based on international cooperation, some of the countries



directly involved in this process have voted against the Compact (Hungary, Czech Republic and Poland, but also the USA and Israel) and others abstained from voting (Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Latvia, Romania, while Slovakia did not vote)⁵⁰.

In this context, the decision of the EU's Court of Justice (EU CJ), which allows Germany to return asylum-seekers to the country of entry into the EU, *may create new tensions between countries implementing the relocation system and those opposing it*, especially Italy, Hungary and Poland. The main reason for the opposition was that the low social benefits and living conditions, especially in the migrants' countries of origin, that became transit countries for refugees and illegal migrants, are not suitable for returning asylum-seekers. Thus, the EU CJ Decision of 19 March 2019 states that: deficiencies in the social protection system of a Member State should not prevent the return of asylum-seekers; the exceptions apply only in extreme cases, where the applicant concerned lacks basic necessities, such as food, hygiene and shelter; the asylum system in the EU is based on mutual trust and the decisions taken by the states of the Union must respect human rights; asylum applications should be rejected in cases where applicants already enjoy subsidiary protection in another Member State⁵¹.

The correlation between the issue of refugees and illegal migration, on the one side, with Euroscepticism, on the other side, has led to a vocal posture of the Eurosceptic parties in some of the EU countries. Moreover, in Austria, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Hungary, they hold the majority in government (part of a coalition or not). A special case is the Netherlands, where the provincial elections of March 2019 marked the rise in the Upper Chamber

of the Parliament of the Forum for Democracy (FvD), a conservative and Eurosceptic party, which determined the Party for Freedom (PVV), the right-wing populist party of Prime Minister Mark Rutte, to lose the majority. It is important to mention that the FvD leader refused to interrupt the election campaign after the Utrecht attack, amplifying the anti-immigration discourse⁵².

Also, this type of Eurosceptic discourse has also brought changes at the level of European political groups, where the group of European People's Party (EPP) suspended, in March 2019, the Hungarian Prime Minister's Party, Fidesz, due to the existing suspicions regarding the rule of law and PPE values in Hungary. Moreover, the result of the elections for the European Parliament shows that although the pro-Europeans have succeeded in consolidating a tripartite alliance (popular, socialist, liberal), the Eurosceptic and anti-immigration parties have also experienced a revival (Identity and Democracy Party and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Party). *If these parties strengthen their position within the EU, their role in shaping European policies, implicitly in migration and asylum policy, will increase*. The situation is even more problematic for the EU, as structural problems persist, even though the number of refugees and illegal migrants has declined at the beginning of this year.

The analysis of trends in the evolution of the refugee and illegal migration crisis in Europe in the first semester of 2019 does not concern only the population component and (re)configurations of routes and flows or policies component in the field, but also how this crisis can lead to the political reshaping of Europe by using this theme in propaganda, disinformation and *fake news*. The effect of using this theme in Eurosceptic discourses is even greater as it is associated with two other impact themes whose real base is debatable: the economic crisis that could return,

⁵⁰ ***, "Nine EU members stay away from UN migration pact", in *Euractiv*, 19.12.2018, URL: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/nine-eu-members-stay-away-from-un-migration-pact/>, accessed on 26.02.2019.

⁵¹ C.M., "CJUE: Germania poate deporta solicitanți de azil în state UE mai sărace", in *Euractiv*, 19.03.2019, URL: <https://www.euractiv.ro/extern/cjue-germania-poate-deporta-refugiati-in-state-ue-mai-sarace-13914>, accessed on 19.03.2019.

⁵² Shehab Khan, "New Dutch anti-immigration party surges in election days after Utrecht shooting", in *The Independent*, 21.03.2019, URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/dutch-election-fvd-far-right-anti-immigration-utrecht-shooting-a8833826.html>, accessed on 21.03.2019.



being accentuated by the presence of refugees and migrants; the issue of national sovereignty, so-called affected by the EU return decisions.

Therefore, since there still is a refugee and illegal migration crisis in Europe, for the next semester we consider that it is necessary to continue monitoring the traffic on the Western Balkan and Central Mediterranean routes,

the situation at the borders of Greece-North Macedonia and Turkey-Greece, the role of Turkey and Libya in managing migratory pressure at EU borders, the situation in Venezuela that may lead to an increase in the number of asylum applications, as well as how this crisis issue will be reflected in the European Parliament post-election political discourses.



THE COURSE OF CHALLENGES ON THE EUROPEAN SECURITY

*Cristina BOGZEANU, Ph.D.**

The beginning and evolution of the Ukrainian crisis, the aggressive stance adopted by the Russian federation in international affairs, the European refugee crisis, maintaining a deeply conflictive climate in the Middle East, the trends in US foreign policy under D. Trump, the pro-Brexit vote given by British citizens, the rise of nationalist-extremist political parties, populist and Eurosceptic on the internal political scenes of the European states are some of the coordinates in which we have analysed the European dynamics of security and insecurity in recent years.

In the first half of 2019, although we have witnessed significant developments at regional level, European security is marked by the same coexistence of the fragmentation trends with the efforts to consolidate European solidarity, in parallel with the persistence of external challenges. The *relationship with the American partner*, defined by the distinct attitude towards some aspects of international relations, is remarkable in this sense. The fact that the US and European signatory actors have opposite viewpoints on the issue of the nuclear deal negotiated by B. Obama with Iranian officials (Joints Comprehensive Action Plan – JCPOA) is just one of the illustrative examples. The present work includes a brief overview of events with an impact on the dynamics of European security in the short and medium term.

1. US – EU disagreements on the development of European military capabilities

In the same trend we can also note the negative attitude of the US towards the EU initiatives regarding the development of military capabilities. In May, Pentagon and the State Department sent a letter to F. Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in which US expressed its concern about excluding the American companies from two European initiatives for military capabilities development – The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European defence Fund (EDF)¹. The US opinion in this regard is that deepening military cooperation at EU level could generate a setback in the integration of the Euro-Atlantic defence². PESCO and EDF represent tools for developing the EU's strategic autonomy, in line with the *European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy* (2016). Moreover, the development of strategic autonomy and the

¹ Paul McLeary, "State, DoD Letter Warns European Union to Open Defense Contracts, Or Else", in *Breaking Defence*, 17 May 2019, URL: <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/05/state-dod-letter-warns-european-union-to-open-defense-contracts-or-else/>, accessed on 25.06.2019.

² Guy Chazan, Michael Peel, "US warns against European joint military project. Washington letter to Brussels threatens retaliation if American groups are shut out", in *Financial Times*, 14.05.2019, URL: <https://www.ft.com/content/ad16ce08-763b-11e9-bbad-7c18c0ea0201>, accessed on 19.05.2019.

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creation or activation of these mechanisms are in line with repeated US demands for European allies to increase their financial contribution to NATO.

The reply in Brussels underlines the objective and transparent manner in which the two initiatives are launched, the commitment to avoid duplication of effort in relation to NATO, together with the development of interoperability, as well as the fact that PESCO and EDF are part of the European effort to balance *burden sharing* the transatlantic security plan, which was repeatedly requested by the Washington's European allies³. Beyond the importance of this official exchange of views, developments in the EU's security and defence dimension have been less consistent than those of last year. In our viewpoint, two major issues were crucial for this period – *the European -Parliament elections (May 23-26) and Brexit*.

2. The European Parliament elections

In the context of European Parliament elections, considering the large gain of Euroscepticism, populism and failed negotiations for a Brexit, there were justified fears for the rise of anti-European political groups in the Union. The elections of May 23-26 indicated an increased presence of European citizens who went to vote, reaching 50.62%⁴ for the first time in history, thus showing their interest for the future of the EU. Further, the result of the elections did indeed indicate an increase in the popularity of nationalist and populist parties, but the balance was clearly inclined towards pro-European parties, attached to the values of liberal democracy and the idea of European integration. However, despite the pre-eminence of pro-European parties and a lower success of Eurosceptic parties than expected, the results of the political groups EPP (European People's

³ For details, see: Daniel Fiott, *Poison Pill: EU Defence on US Terms*, 14 June 2019, EU Institute for Strategic Studies, URL: <https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/poison-pill-eu-defence-us-terms>, accessed on 25.06.2019.

⁴ ***, European elections results, URL: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/elections-press-kit/0/european-elections-results>, accessed on 30.06.2019.

Party) and DS (Progressive Alliance of Socialists and democrats) could not support a pro-European majority, thus requiring the co-opting of a new parliamentary grouping⁵. Currently, the two political parties hold majority of the European Parliament together with the *Renew Europe* and Ecologists.

If we link the analysis of the European Parliamentary elections to the two major trends in the European security plan – concretion and fragmentation—we can state the 2019 European parliament elections illustrate both. Of the one part, the increase of the level of representation in the European forum of nationalist parties, with a Eurosceptic direction, illustrates the tendency to fragment the European cohesion. On the other, keeping the pre-eminence of pro-European parties, even if we reduce them, as well as the consistent participation in the vote of European citizens, is a proof of their desire and interest for the future of the EU. In the same way, we can also refer to the Declaration in Sibiu (May 9, 2019) of the European leaders, in which their commitment to the common European project is reaffirmed⁶.

At the same time, it should not be underestimated the impact that developments on the internal political scene of the Member States or candidates can have on the Union level. The developments on the internal political scene of the “engines” of the Union, namely France, Germany or Italy are relevant in this regard. In France, the beginning of the year was marked by the continuation of the “yellow vests” phenomenon in parallel with an exponential decrease in the popularity and support of the population for E. Macron's policy⁷. Smaller

⁵ Valentin Naumescu, „Europa după vot. Entuziasmul inițial, iepurii din pălărie și complicațiile care urmează”, în *Contributors*, 31 mai 2019, URL: <http://www.contributors.ro/editorial/europa-dupa-vot-entuziasmul-initial-iepurii-din-palarie-si-complicatiile-care-urmeaza/>, accessed on 3.06.2019.

⁶ *Declarația de la Sibiu. Comunicat de presă*, May 9, 2019, URL: <https://www.ft.com/content/ad16ce08-763b-11e9-bbad-7c18c0ea0201>, accessed on 17.05.2019.

⁷ A.Z., “Popularitatea lui Macron a scăzut din nou în sondaje/ Trei sferturi dintre francezi sunt nemulțumiți de deciziile președintelui”, în *Hotnews*, 4 ianuarie 2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22893936->



anti-government protests took place during this time also in the Czech Republic⁸, Hungary⁹, Serbia¹⁰. In Germany, an exit of the current chancellor from the political life in the medium term is envisaged, and Italy is governed by a far-right party, which is becoming more and more frequent in a conflictual relationship not only with the other Member States, but also with the European institutions, one of the major issues of disagreement being related to recent developments in the migration plan. Relevant in this regard is the Italian prime minister's effort to create an alliance of far-left populist anti-European political parties.

The inconvenience of identifying and choosing the leaders of the most important European institutions shows the internal crisis that the European project is currently undergoing. The most disputed position was that of the President of the European Commission, which was finally filled by the former German Minister of Defence, Ursula Von Leyen.

3. The Brexit quandary

The process of negotiating the conditions under which the UK will leave the EU institutional framework has also undergone notable developments. Towards the end of 2018, after more than two years of intense negotiations between London and Brussels, the parties signed an agreement on the conditions under which

popularitatea-lui-macron-scazut-din-nou-sondaje-treisferturi-dintre-francezi-sunt-nemultumiti-deciziile-presedintelui.htm, accessed on 4.01.2019.

⁸ ***, "Proteste masive la Praga împotriva premierului acuzat de fraudă cu fonduri europene", în *Digi24*, 5.06.2019, URL: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/proteste-masive-la-praga-impotriva-premierului-acuzat-de-frauda-cu-fonduri-europene-1142633>, accessed on 23.06.2019.

⁹ V. M., "Ungaria: Noi proteste împotriva premierului Viktor Orban – «Ne-a ajuns!»", în *Hotnews*, 19.01.2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22922805-video-ungaria-noi-proteste-impotriva-premierului-viktor-orban-ajuns.htm>, accessed on 20.01.2019.

¹⁰ Nemanja Rujević, "Proteste extinse în Serbia: «Primăvara Balcanică» bate la ușă?", în *Deutsche Welle*, 18 Martie 2019, URL: <https://www.dw.com/ro/proteste-extinse-%C3%AEn-serbia-prim%C4%83vara-balcanic%C4%83-bate-la-u%C8%99%C4%83/a-47958182>, accessed on 3.04.2019.

Britain would withdraw from the EU¹¹. Approved by the European Council on December 10, 2018, the agreement failed to obtain the approval of the British parliamentary forum, T. May, the British prime minister who negotiated the terms of the agreement, failing three times to obtain the agreement of the British parliamentarians. The main sticking point was the *safety net (backstop)* offered to Northern Ireland, which aims to avoid the creation of a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland. This means that the UK will remain in the EU custom union until a new solution to prevent border checks is identified, and Northern Ireland remains part of EU market regulations. The provision in question is the source of the fear of Brexit supporters that the UK will remain commercially linked to the EU and will not be able to promote its own trade policy.

Finally, the British Prime Minister obtained an extension of the negotiation period until October 31, 2019, and, shortly, submitted her resignation, at a time when Britain's domestic political scene continued to remain strongly divided. From this viewpoint, the evolution of the negotiations for Brexit, as well as their outcome, depends to a large extent on the orientation of the person who will assume the position of prime minister.

Meanwhile, British Conservatives, led by Jeremy Corbin, support the idea of organizing a second referendum on Brexit. Their opinion is also supported by the results of opinion polls on this topic which indicated that, in the event of a new referendum, British citizens would opt for the majority to remain in the EU¹². Thus, an

¹¹ *Draft Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, as agreed at negotiators' level on 14 November 2018*, URL: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/draft_withdrawal_agreement_0.pdf, accessed on 23.06.2019.

¹² Adam Lusher, "Brexit: Political will of the people must be in question as 55 per cent now want to stay in the EU, poll finds", în *Independent*, 26 March 2019, URL: [independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-will-of-people-poll-leave-remain-eu-second-referendum-vote-centre-social-research-curtice-a8839996.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-will-of-people-poll-leave-remain-eu-second-referendum-vote-centre-social-research-curtice-a8839996.html), accesat la 10 mai 2019; ***, "If there was a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU, how would you vote? (Eurotrack)", *Field work dates*: 13 February 2012 - 13



evolution course, in which British citizens are called back to the referendum remains possible. This is all the more because, beyond the economic implications, a Brexit without agreement would bring to the fore the risk of re-escalating tensions at the border with Ireland, but also attempts to gain independence from Scotland.

Thus, in this period when the domestic politics of the United Kingdom may experience a new turn, it is difficult to predict what the course of the Brexit process will be. A major importance in this context is linked to the person who will be the prime minister. By the end of June 2019, the main favourites for the position of the UK Prime Minister were Boris Johnson (promoter of UK exit from the EU, with or without agreement) and Jeremy Hunt (promotor of Brexit, but with agreement, considering the risky exit from the EU without agreement). An analysis by *The Financial Times* estimated that Boris Johnson would have 93% chance of becoming prime minister, while Jeremy Hunt only 11%¹³. Therefore, in the event of such result, we can expect a harsh approach, somewhat unwilling to compromise, from the UK on Brexit. However, whoever holds this position in the UK government, he or she will face the same problem as T. May – insufficient support in the legislative forum.

If a state decides to leave the institutional framework of the Union, this can be regarded as an EU crisis, questioning its viability and its future, then we can refer to the rate that Brexit became known in the first part of 2019 as a crisis of the process of withdrawal of Great Britain from the EU, “a crisis of the crisis”. The difficulties encountered not only reflect the implications of implementing a decision taken in a context of strong social and political rupture¹⁴,

May 2019, URL: <https://whatukthinks.org/eu/questions/if-there-was-a-referendum-on-britains-membership-of-the-eu-how-would-you-vote-2/>, accessed on 23.05.2019.

¹³ Sebastian Payne, Cale Tilford, Joanna S. KAO, Martin Stabe, “UK’s next prime minister – who are the lead candidates?

A guide to who’s most likely to lead on Brexit”, în *The Financial Times*, URL: <https://ig.ft.com/uk-prime-minister-leadership-contest/>, accessed on 24.06.2019.

¹⁴ Withdrawal of the UK from the EU is a process that started with the official notification of Theresa May and the activation of the Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. At the

but also the difficulty of giving up a series of advantages implied by the status of a member state of the EU, which, in our opinion, is one of the strongest evidence of the viability of the European project, despite the crisis period that it is currently experiencing.

4. Western Balkans, between the West and the Russian Federation

Notable developments were also recorded in the proximity of the EU, also relevant to the interests and involvement of the Russian Federation in these areas. Thus, after a year before the historical dispute between Athens and Skopje on the name of the western Balkan state was resolved, by the Prespa Agreement, North Macedonia signed the NATO accession agreement (February 6), which is currently subject to ratification of the Member States. The Russian federation has openly opposed the change of state name (approved in the Macedonian legislative in January 2019), arguing that the current name does not reflect the will of the people.¹⁵ Moreover, immediately after the ratification act, the Russian president called for attention to an attempt by the West to “impose its dominance in the region”¹⁶, which, in his opinion, is an important destabilizing factor.

Because of the fact that the relations between Belgrade and Pristina experienced a pronounced degradation towards the end of last year due to substantial increase by Kosovo of custom duties for Serbian products, as well as the decision of the

root of the decision was the desire of the British people, who, on June, 2016, expressed themselves in a referendum in this regard for leaving the European Union.

¹⁵ I.B., “Rusia: Decizia de a redenumi Republica Macedonia în Macedonia de Nord nu reflectă voința poporului”, în *Hotnews*, 15 ianuarie 2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22912247-rusia-decizia-redenumi-republica-macedonia-macedonia-nord-nu-reflecta-vointa-poporului.htm>, accessed on 20.01.2019.

¹⁶ I.B., “Vladimir Putin acuză Occidentul că destabilizează Balcanii/Lavrov: Nu putem fi de acord cu cei care spun că Rusia nu își are locul său în Balcani”, în *Hotnews*, 16 ianuarie 2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-22915821-vladimir-putin-acuza-occidentul-destabilizeaza-balcanii-lavrov-nu-putem-acord-cei-care-spun-rusia-nu-isi-are-locul-sau-balcani.htm>, accessed on 20.01.2019.



Kosovo legislature to transform the KSF (Kosovo Security Force) in a national army, during the analysed period, the effort to restore regional stability was remarkable. After the Kosovo party rejected Belgrade's proposal to change the border in the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue (March 2019), A Berlin Summit for the Western Balkans was organised, where European leaders stressed that the Union's priority in the region is stability and not extension politics. Given the serious challenges that the EU is facing internally and its own instability, such a position concerning the Western-Balkans region was to be expected, as was the attempt to mediate the normalization of relations between the two parties, doubly so as the region is one of strategic interest for the EU, and the Russian Federation is constantly strengthening its relations with certain actors in the area.

The visit of the Russian President to Serbia at the beginning of the year was also very important. In the speeches, V. Putin accused Pristina of taking defiantly measures, with reference in particular to the creation of the national army and of regional destabilisation. The agenda also included a possible agreement to create a free trade area between the Eurasian Union and Serbia, as well as the Russia's party intention to invest 1.4 billion dollars in developing infrastructure to enable TurkStream pipeline to transit through Serbia. Turkstream is an alternative to South Stream meant to transport natural gas from Russia, through the Black Sea and Turkey, to Europe. According to Gazprom, possible sale markets for the transited hydrocarbons are Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Hungary¹⁷.

Apart from the economic and energy implications of the Russian President visit to Serbia, the message conveyed to other international actors with interests in the Western Balkans area has a major relevance. In the context of Montenegro's recently accession to

NATO (2017), as well as the unlocking of North Macedonia's accession to NATO and the EU following the Prespa agreement (2018), referring to strain relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the event from the beginning of the year can be taken as a reaffirmation of Russian interests in the Western Balkan area and a measure to strengthen the already existing partnerships.

5. Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Moldova

Significant developments also took place in the eastern vicinity of the European space. In the Republic of Moldova, parliamentary elections were held during February. The pro-Russian Socialist Party accumulated 35 of the 101 seats in the legislative forum, the Democratic Party 30 seats, and the pro-European group ACUM 26 seats, making it impossible for any of the three major political groups to form the parliamentary majority, in the absence of a coalition. After more than three months of internal political crisis, the pro-European party ACUM, together with the pro-socialist party formed a governing coalition, which was at least unpublished and unexpected. The leader of the ACUM party, Maia Sandu, has been appointed to the position of prime minister and this was the trigger of a new political crisis internally (the democratic party declares the new government invalid, invoking the deadline for its formation, president I. Dodon is temporarily suspended from office). Building a coalition out of two political groups with completely opposite directions, pro-European (ACUM) and pro-Russian (PSRM), was regarded either as a compromise solution needed to remove the Republic of Moldova from the political crisis or as an exceptional moment, in which Russia, the EU and the US agreed on an international policy aspect¹⁸ and to create a foundation for the fight against corruption, either as a beginning of increasing Russian influence

¹⁷ ***, "On Visit to Serbia, Putin Accuses Kosovo Of «Illegally» Setting Up An Army", in *Radio Free Europe*, 17 January 2019, URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ahead-of-high-level-visit-to-serbia-putin-blasts-west-s-role-in-balkans/29714843.html>, accessed on 19.01.2019.

¹⁸ Patrick Kingsley, "Moldova Had Two Governments. One Has Finally Resigned", in *New York Times*, 14 June 2019, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/14/world/europe/moldova-new-government.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FMoldova>, accessed on 15.06.2019.



in this state¹⁹. Although the president of the Republic of Moldova has denied the support of the socialist party by Moscow and the fact that the new coalition will be completely western, it is expected that, in the short and medium term, the Republic of Moldova have a dual orientation in foreign policy, in its attempt to strengthen relations with both Western actors and the Russian Federation.

6. Presidential elections in Ukraine

In Ukraine military clashes continue in Donbass, and relations with the Russian Federation remain deeply strain²⁰. Also in this case, notable development took place on the domestic political scene. The presidential election on March 31 was carried out on the basis of multiple high-level corruption allegations, as well as intensification of the confrontation in the eastern part of the country, fears regarding the intention of the Russian Federation to influence the outcome of the elections or possible cyber attacks. Petro Poroșenco placed second, being outclassed by comedian Volodymyr Zelenski²¹, who won the election with a programme based on conflict resolution in the eastern part of the country, and pro-western orientation. After the end of the presidential elections, Moscow announced its intention to smooth the acquisition of Russian citizenship for Ukrainian residents in regions outside the control of the Kiev

authorities²², and the new Ukrainian president warned that this is a move meant to prepare for the annexation of the Donbass region or the creation of a Russian enclave in this area²³. In May, Zelenski announced the dissolution of parliament and the holding of early elections during July.

Notable in this regard is the reaction of Ukraine to the resolution of the Council of Europe, which gives Russia the right to vote (Mai 17, 2019), suspended in 2014. The Ukrainian side described the decision as an act of surrender, while German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas argued that is not in the interest of the Council of Europe to exclude Moscow from this forum²⁴.

Conclusions

On the whole, we can see that, with regard to European security, the same tendency is manifested, in which the forces that are vulnerable to the integrity of the European construction are manifesting at the same time as those acting for its consolidation. In such environment of contrasts vulnerabilities can be accentuated or exploited, even at the level of speech, verbally, in order to gain power and influence. In such environment of contrasts, vulnerabilities can be accentuated or exploited, even at the level of speech, verbally, in order to gain power and influence. For instance, the rise of populist,

¹⁹ Valentin Naumescu, “De ce a mușcat Maia măruș otrăvit? Criza Republicii Moldova și capcana Rusiei”, in *Curs de Guvernare. Opinii și Editorial*, 10 June 2019, URL: <https://cursdeguvernare.ro/valentin-naumescu-de-ce-a-muscat-maia-marul-otravit-crisa-republicii-moldova-si-capcana-rusiei.html>, accessed on 15.06.2019.

²⁰ For details, see: *Crisis Watch. Tracking Conflict Worldwide*, Crisis Group, URL: https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/database?location%5B%5D=73&date_range=last_6_months&from_month=01&from_year=2019&to_month=01&to_year=2019, accessed on 3.07.2019.

²¹ Roman Goncharenko, “Alegeri în Ucraina: Victorie fulminantă a lui Volodimir Zelenski”, in *DW*, 21 April 2019, URL: <https://www.dw.com/ro/alegeri-%C3%AEn-ucraina-victorie-fulminant%C4%83-a-lui-volodimir-zelenski/a-48412657>, accessed on 6.05.2019.

²² ***, “Rusia intenționează să simplifice accesul la cetățenia rusă pentru toți locuitorii Ucrainei”, in *Digi24*, 27 April 2019, URL: <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/rusia/rusia-intentioneaza-sa-simplifice-accesul-la-cetatenia-rusa-pentru-toti-locuitorii-ucrainei-1122136>, accessed on 6.05.2019.

²³ V. M., “Zelenski spune că ucrainenii nu vor accepta oferta lui Putin privind cetățenia rusă și propune în schimb pașapoarte ucrainene pentru ruși”, in *Hotnews*, 28 April 2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-23113099-zelenski-spune-ucrainenii-nu-vor-accepta-oferta-lui-putin-privind-obtinerea-cetateniei-ruse-propune-schimb-pasapoarte-ucrainene-rusilor.htm>, accessed on 6.05.2019.

²⁴ S.A., “Consiliul European a adoptat o rezoluție prin care redă Rusiei dreptul la vot”, in *Hotnews*, 17 May 2019, URL: <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-international-23148435-consiliul-europei-adoptat-rezolutie-prin-care-reda-rusiei-dreptul-vot.htm>, accessed on 20.05.2019.



Eurosceptic, extremist nationalist parties, having an illiberal speech, when governing EU member states is certainly one of the real and impossible issues to ignore, proof of the sanctions imposed by Brussels on Hungary and Poland. The results of the European Parliament elections should also contain reasons for concern and hope from this point of view. However, the same state of affairs is a favourable ground for accepting ideas such as

the one promoted by the Russian President at the end of June 2019, according to which “the liberal idea is obsolete and conflicts with the interest of the overwhelming majority of the population” and it “begins not to exist any longer”²⁵. The same type of vulnerability can be exploited and even amplified in the case of neighbouring EU countries, and, in time, might become sources of instability for European construction.

²⁵ Elements of an interview with Vladimir Putin for The Financial Times. For details, see: Dan Popa, *Financial Times*: Interviu cu Vladimir Putin. “Ideologia liberală a devenit învechită”, in *Hotnews*, 28 June 2019, URL: https://economie.hotnews.ro/stiri-finante_banci-23227831-financial-report.htm, accessed on 9.06.2019.



KREMLIN'S BROAD FRONT OF ACTION

*Marius-Titi POTÎRNICHE, Ph.D.**

1. The involvement of the Russian Federation in the Arctic area

Russia has stepped up its efforts to expand economic and military control over the Arctic with a view to securing long-term resources in the area, expanding its military presence, and gaining strategic advantage over the US and China. On March 20, President V. Putin opened the gas exploitation in Kharasaveyskoye, Yamal Peninsula, in northern Russia¹, along with the plan announced by the Ministry of Natural Resources², which provides for over one hundred projects for the recovery of mineral resources in the Arctic. V. Putin places particular emphasis on investments in the Arctic, considering the area a potential source of economic growth for Russia³ which brings 12-15% to Russia's GDP⁴. Moscow

has continued to expand its military facilities and capabilities in the High North, Admiral Nikolay Yevmenov, the Northern Fleet commander, said Russian armed forces will soon complete an anti-aircraft defense base in Tiksi near the Polar Circle.⁵ In recent years, Russia has considerably expanded its presence in the region with new military capabilities, by installing S-400 and Tor-M2DT systems and ships equipped with anti-ship missiles.⁶ Kremlin aims to strengthen its presence in the region and strengthen its dominant power position in the Arctic, mainly to secure access to natural resources and control of the Northern Seaway. It is expected that Russia will accelerate this effort, knowing that the US has prepared a strategy for the Arctic, which will be presented to the congress in June 2019.⁷

Russia claims control over the Northern

¹ ***, "Launch of Kharasaveyskoye Gas and Condensate Field", in *Oil and Gas Journal*, 21 March 2019, URL: <https://www.ogj.com/articles/2019/03/gazprom-starts-kharasaveyskoye-development.html>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

² ***, "Russia realise Comprehensive Plan for Arctic logistic - Developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources of Russia, Sent to the Government of the Russian Federation", in *The Maritime Executive*, 19 March 2019, URL: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/russia-releases-comprehensive-plan-for-arctic-logistics>, accessed on 01.04.2019

³ Lincoln Edson Flake, "Russia's Security Intentions in a Melting Arctic", in *INSS Military and Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 1, March 2014, URL: [http://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/SystemFiles/MASA6-1Eng%20\(4\)_Flake.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/systemfiles/SystemFiles/MASA6-1Eng%20(4)_Flake.pdf); accessed at 01.04.2019.

⁴ Russian Federation Policy for the Arctic to 2020, 30 March 2009, URL: <http://www.arctis-search.com/Russian>

+Federation+Policy+for+the+Arctic+to+2020, accessed on 01.04.2019.

⁵ Trude Pettersen, "Northern Fleet gets own air force, air defense forces", in *The Barents Observer*, 1 February 2016, URL: <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2016/02/northern-fleet-gets-own-air-force-air-defense-forces>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

⁶ ***, "Russia Will Deploy New Missiles to Defend Arctic, Admiral Says", in *Moscow Times*, 13 March 2019, URL: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/03/13/russia-will-deploy-new-missiles-to-defend-arctic-admiral-says-a64789>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

⁷ Dan Lamothe, "Trump Administration's New Arctic Defense Strategy Expected to Zero In on Concerns About China", in *Washington Post*, 15 March 2019, URL: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2019/03/15/trump-administrations-new-arctic-defense-strategy-expected-zero-concerns-about-china/>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

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Seaway to protect access to future trade on this route and to gain strategic advantage over the US and China. The pro-Kremlin Izvestia newspaper showed that new rules have been introduced that will force foreign military vessels to notify Russia at least 45 days in advance of their plans to cross the Northern Seaway and to accept Russian sailors for piloting ships.⁸ Also, the Russian parliament granted the state company Rosatom (a company active in the field of nuclear energy) extensive rights in the management and development of the infrastructure and security on this commercial route.⁹ V. Putin called for the government to increase the volume of trade on this route as a priority.¹⁰ This effort can be considered part of a campaign to expand the influence on important trade routes across the globe and is encouraged by the lack of response to his action in the Kerchi Strait. Most likely, in the absence of a strong reaction from the US and NATO, this kind of dispute in international waters will continue.

Russia does not have the financial resources to follow its plans in the Arctic, which is why the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources has drawn up a plan to attract private sector investments. For this reason, Russia is also trying to partner with China, one of its strategic competitors in this area. To note in this context is the fact that Beijing declared itself an Arctic power and initiated the “Silk Polar Road” as an extension of the Silk Road initiative.¹¹ China aims to gain

easy access to the Northern Seaway to connect with Europe. At the same time, Kremlin’s urgent need for investment can lead to cooperation and not competition with China in the Arctic, especially since China is an important partner in natural gas exploitation in the Yamal Peninsula and continues to invest in similar projects in the High North. In addition, Chinese and Russian scientists have agreed to cooperate for the joint exploration of this area to which the major powers are increasingly turning their attention.¹² Increased cooperation between China and Russia may limit US freedom of movement in the Arctic.

2. The role of changes in the structure of the armed forces

The Russian army continues the process of reorienting the training of troops, going from preparing for a conventional, large-scale conflict, to defending against hybrid military actions (non-linear in the Russian version). Convinced that the new military-non-military forces ratio is 1 to 4, the Russian Armed Forces are fully involved.¹³ Thus, in order to increase the degree of cohesion of the information operations, President V. Putin approved in 2018 the creation of a Political-Military Direction¹⁴ within the Ministry of Defense, under the command of an officer with combat experience on the Syrian front, former commander of the Western Military District, an appointment that shows the importance given to this structure in the general effort to upgrade the army structures and the trajectory on the future

⁸ Paul Goncharoff, “Russia’s Arctic North Sea Route”, in RussiaKnowledge, 6 March 2019, URL: <http://www.russiaknowledge.com/2019/03/09/russias-arctic-north-sea-route/>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

⁹ On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation, Russian State Duma, 28.12.2018, URL: <http://kremlin.ru/acts/news/59539>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

¹⁰ Daryana Maximova, “Sustainable Development of the Russian Arctic Zone: Challenges & Opportunities”, in *Arctic Yearbook 2018*, URL: https://arcticyearbook.com/images/yearbook/2018/Scholarly_Papers/21_AY2018_Maximova.pdf, accessed on 01.04.2019

¹¹ China’s Arctic Policy, Chinese State Council, January 2018, URL: http://english.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2018/01/26/content_281476026660336.htm accessed on 01.04.2019.

¹² ***, “Russian and Chinese Scientists Will Jointly Study the Ocean, the Arctic, and Antarctica”, in *TASS*,

24.03.2019, URL: <http://tass.com/economy/1050272>, accessed on 01.04.2019

¹³ ***, “Russian and Chinese Scientists Will Jointly Study the Ocean, the Arctic, and Antarctica”, in *TASS*, 24.03.2019, URL: <http://tass.com/economy/1050272>, accessed on 01.04.2019

¹⁴ Foreign Military Studies Office, *Special Operations Forces*, Volum 8, August 2018, URL: <https://aquadoc.typepad.com/files/oe-watch-vol-08-issue-08-aug-2018.pdf> accessed on 03.04.2019

¹⁵ Jeremiah Jacques, “Putin Creates Political Wing for Russian Army, in Chilling Echo of Soviet Era”, in *The Trumpet*, 07.08.2018, URL: <https://www.thetrumpet.com/17585-putin-creates-political-wing-for-russian-army-in-chilling-echo-of-soviet-era>, accessed on 03.04.2019



of the military actions that will be carried out by Russia. The novelty lies in the fact that the Ministry of Defense will appoint officers in each unit, up to company level, officers who report directly to this Political-Military Direction, a parallel command structure that the management factors consider suitable for a modern conflict, with the task of managing the moral and ideological component among the military. "In the context of global computerization and psychological confrontation with the West, the role of politics and moral unity within the army and society grows dramatically."¹⁵

In the context of hybrid confrontation, Russian leaders may fear that adverse information actions will endanger the unity of the country's armed forces. Relevant in this regard is the speech addressed to cadets by the commander of the Political-Military Directorate, who stated that one of his goals is to create "patriotic conscience" throughout the Russian defense system and that, until March 1, 2019, the program of education in the military schools will be modified by including the topics of political-military training.¹⁶ By this change, Kremlin wants to ensure that future generations of officers will be aware of the importance of supporting the efforts of political factors and that their goals will be met more seriously. It is expected that this Directorate will also deal with external political-military propaganda. Kremlin regularly uses the state-owned press to support its information campaigns and will certainly integrate their efforts in achieving its goals.

The announced withdrawal of US military forces from Syria gives Moscow the opportunity to expand its role as a mediator in the conflict in the region, but also to gain access to natural resources in the area, as well as to weaken the

US position in the Middle East in the future. Russia is actively involved in reaching an agreement between the Syrian President and the Kurdish Democratic Forces in Syria, wishing to co-opt these negotiations with his strategic partner in the area, Turkey, in order to involve NATO in one way or another.¹⁷ This does not, however, equate with the intention of Moscow for Turkey to gain territorial advantages in Syria. It is also relevant that both Russia and Iran have begun to exploit the opportunity created by the US withdrawal, and recent developments in the negotiations seem to lead to the transfer of control over northern and eastern Syria to the Russian-Iranian coalition.

3. The Russian Federation and the Ukrainian presidential campaign

The presidential elections in Ukraine can be considered, for the Russian Federation, a decisive moment for future military actions in the east of Ukraine. In our opinion, regardless of the elections' outcome, Russia's political influence in this country will increase. Most of the presidential candidates are, to a certain degree, quite malleable regarding Russia's interests. The current President Petro Poroshenko is the candidate with the highest degree of alignment with the demands of the West, but his popularity has decreased as a result of his failure to launch an anti-corruption reform and this was a result of the intense disinformation campaign supported by Russia. If Petro Poroshenko had won the elections, he would not have had the support of the parliament, as it was foreseeable that his political party would lose seats in the Ukrainian legislature. In contrast, his opponents are populist, eager to make concessions to Kremlin or politicians who have openly expressed support for Russia and Vladimir Putin. Russia is determined to achieve its strategic goals in Ukraine, which is why it has changed the way it approaches political personalities - it invests and

¹⁵ Alexander Knshin, (pro-Russian analyst who outlines the Russian military politics), "Putin Recreates Soviet-Era Patriotic Directorate in Russia's Army", in *The Moscow Times*, 31.07.2018, URL: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/07/31/putin-recreates-soviet-era-patriotic-directorate-russias-army-a62402>, accessed on 03.04.2019.

¹⁶ Mason Clark, Catherine Harris, "Russia's New Tool for Wielding Information", Institute for the Study of War, 15.01.2019, URL: <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/search?updated-max=2019-03-12T17:29:00-04:00>, accessed on 03.04.2019.

¹⁷ Elise Labott, "Bolton Leaves Turkey on Sour Note Over Trump's Syria Plans", in *Politico*, 08.01.2019, URL: www.politico.com/story/2019/01/08/bolton-turkey-trump-syria-plans-1088715, accessed on 03.04.2019.



cultivates relations with several politicians, from across the political spectrum, not just in one candidate or in one single party. We believe that as long as Vladimir Putin is president, Russia will try to control Ukraine. He is determined not to make any concession that will increase the sovereignty of Ukraine, while Ukraine is also determined not to make any agreement that will lead to the loss of the state's integrity. This means that the only way out of this quandary would be for the future president of Ukraine to redefine the red line that cannot be crossed.¹⁸

Kremlin organized a powerful information campaign against P. Poroshenko, emphasizing the negative poll score and alleged involvement in a large money-laundering scheme.¹⁹ The Russian media has focused exclusively on the alleged accusations of its involvement in criminal activities, although independent sources have revealed that its main political rivals are also involved in electoral manipulation and violating the financing conditions of the election campaign.²⁰ P. Poroshenko was the least wanted candidate in Kremlin's view.

4. The new Ukrainian presidency - stake for Ukraine and the West

As we mentioned above, Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian presidential campaign led to the victory of Volodymyr Zelensky in the April 21 elections, an event that pleasantly surprised critics who did not give him a chance, especially since it seems he is an adept of reforms. Kremlin

sees in Zelensky an opportunity to gradually regain economic and political influence in Ukraine, but its presidency presents some risks for both Ukraine and the West.

1. *Zelensky is vulnerable to external influences*, having no clearly defined political position. During the election campaign he presented a limited vision for the future of Ukraine, making only populist promises²¹ and avoiding political debates as much as possible²², being obviously influenced by the team of advisers. The few public statements have shown his lack of understanding the important aspects of society and especially those related to national security. The lack of political experience creates a risk of dependence on external advisers and influential people in society, such as the oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi, who has associates in the president's advisory team²³, and Kremlin will easily be able to influence the staff around him.

2. *The agenda of the oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi could have a negative impact on the progress of reforms in Ukraine*. It is expected that it will influence policies to pursue its economic interests, especially those in banking and energy. It intends to regain control over a state-owned oil and gas business, as well as the largest state-owned bank, after losing control over the previous presidency.²⁴ Also, I. Kolomoyskyi is trying to strengthen his position by creating a coalition

¹⁸ Madeline Roache, "Ukraine Goes to the Polls on Sunday. Can its Next President End the Frozen War with Russia?", in *Time*, 29.03.2019, URL: <http://time.com/5561085/ukraine-elections-stalemate-russia/>, accessed on 01.04.2019.

¹⁹ Daria Shulzhenko, "Pre-election poll gives Poroshenko highest 'anti-rating' of all presidential candidates", in *Kyiv Post*, 28.12.2018, <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/pre-election-poll-gives-poroshenko-highest-anti-rating-of-all-presidential-candidates.html>, accessed on 01.03.2019.

²⁰ Oleksiy Sorokin, "Yuriy Tymoshenko Allegedly Offered Bribe to Quit Presidential Race", in *Kyiv Post*, 07.03.2019, URL: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/yulia-tymoshenkos-namesake-allegedly-offered-bribe-to-quit-presidential-race.html>, accessed on 03.04.2019.

²¹ ***, "Power of people in 'Dreamland': Election program of Volodymyr Zelensky", *112.ua News Agency*, 21 May 2019, URL: <https://112.international/article/power-of-people-in-land-of-dreams-election-program-of-volodymyr-zelensky-38402.html>, accessed on 03.07.2019.

²² ***, "Media Movement Calls on Zelensky to Go to the Press Before April 19", *Radio Svoboda*, 16 April 2019, URL: <https://imi.org.ua/en/articles/media-movement-calls-zelensky-to-hold-press-conference-before-april-18th/>, accessed on 03.07.2019.

²³ Bermet Talant, Matthew Kupfer, "Presidential Front-Runner Zelensky Presents His Team Two Days before Election", in *Kyiv Post*, April 18, 2019, URL: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/presidential-front-runner-zelenskiy-presents-his-team-2-days-before-election.html>, accessed on 03.07.2019.

²⁴ Bermet Talant, "Kolomoisky rails against Ukraine and Poroshenko", in *Kyiv Post*, 23 November, URL: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/kolomoisky-rails-against-ukraine-and-poroshenko.html>, accessed on 04.07.2019.



in parliament to support the president, and for this he will have to resort to populist parties or politicians favorable to Russia, if the reformists in the campaign do not support his policy. Ihor Kolomoyskyi is not necessarily an opponent of Russia, although he is acting against separatists in Dnipropetrovsk province by financing local militias. It is expected that he will act mainly in accordance with its financial interests, which could also mean certain concessions made to Russia. Kremlin could choose to oppose it, considering that its interests could slow down reforms, which would be in favor of Russia.

3. *Former power brokers removed from the Euromaidan Revolution of 2014 see a chance of recovery.* Former President Viktor Yanukovich's allies, ousted from power in 2014, expressed their optimism about Zelensky, considering him a chance for change in Ukraine, seeing an opportunity to regain economic and political influence. Their return would mean a major slowdown of reforms and a curtailment of civil liberties.

4. *Zelensky's presidency could polarize the group of reformists in Ukraine.* The Reformists are not united, many of them having doubts about the competence of the current president, moral integrity and political independence, as basic requirements for the support of the administration. The presence of reformists in government and parliament is the biggest gain of the Euromaidan Revolution. Public service has been unattractive to professionals for a long time, but 2014 has given some an opportunity to enter the government and thus be able to capitalize on their competence. Zelensky's presidency threatens to dismantle this small group, and hence the chances for reform in Ukraine.

5. Zelensky's presidency could be a vector for Kremlin to regain influence in Ukraine. The leadership of Kremlin understands that it will not be able to regain its dominant position immediately in Ukraine, which is why they are now focusing on parliamentary elections. Russia's main objective is to keep Ukraine in its sphere of influence. The strategic objective is to reorient Ukraine's policy towards Russia and to ensure that Ukraine does not become a

country with a functional democracy, which will challenge the autocracy of Kremlin and V. Putin. Most likely, Kremlin will try to increase its economic presence in Ukraine, exploiting the favorable feelings of the business class, including those close to Yanukovich, who will gain from trade resumption. In the short term, this plan could increase Ukraine's weakened economy, and Russia, through an information campaign, could create the impression of increasing living conditions for Ukrainians. In fact, it aims to create a large dependence of the Ukrainian economy on Russia and block reforms. Russia aims to limit Ukraine's natural gas production, regaining control over the transit system, thus subordinating the entire economy. Kremlin could reduce military tensions in eastern Ukraine and the propaganda machine would transpose this decision as a step towards peace in Ukraine. Kremlin could also exploit President Zelensky's decision to hold a referendum on potential accession as a member country of the EU and NATO, as the Ukrainian parliament has approved including this aspiration in the country's constitution.²⁵ The referendum is vulnerable to manipulation, so Russia could win. Kremlin could exploit Zelensky's inexperience to turn the military campaign into a political gain in Ukraine. Zelensky has already made several conciliatory statements about the need for a meeting with Putin and the adoption of a ceasefire agreement in eastern Ukraine²⁶, which may indicate a lack of an in-depth understanding of the Donbas conflict and the fact that Russia has the capacity to reduce or increase the conflict level according to its interests. Putin seeks the legitimization of the self-proclaimed republic of eastern Ukraine, because the autonomy of Donbas would allow a permanent influence on Ukraine. Moreover,

²⁵ ***, "Power of people in 'Dreamland': Election program of Volodymyr Zelensky", *112.ua News Agency*, May 21, 2019, URL: <https://112.international/article/power-of-people-in-land-of-dreams-election-program-of-volodymyr-zelensky-38402.html>, accessed on 03.07.2019.

²⁶ Yusuf Hatip, "Ukraine 'ready to negotiate with Russia' says Zelensky", *Anadolu Agency*, 4 June 2019, URL: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/ukraine-ready-to-negotiate-with-russia-says-zelensky/1497104>, accessed on 01.07.2019.



this would create an international precedent, which would in fact legitimize the invasion of a sovereign state, and could be a model for other states that an aggressor may invade a country under the pretence of supporting a minority.

In Russia's view, Ukraine is not so much a buffer state, but a state that is part of its cultural, economic and military values. Kremlin intends to create in Europe areas with states that support the policy it promotes, and their group consists of Ukraine, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova. It is also trying to create a second zone including Hungary, the Baltic States and other non-EU or NATO countries. In achieving this goal, Kremlin feeds the social instability in these states and beyond, supports populist political parties and disseminates its own ideology throughout Europe.

Restoring Russian influence in Ukraine gradually could legitimize aggressive actions. Other states, such as China, may try to adopt this behavior. The increase of Russian influence in Ukraine could lead to a proportional decrease of US and EU influence. The US and NATO could reduce economic and military support programs as well as government reforms in response to Ukraine's ties with Russia. It can be said that Zelensky's election represents a risk to the progress of reforms in Ukraine and integration with the West.

5. Russia continues its campaign to prevent NATO and EU expansion in the Balkans

During April 29-30, in Berlin, Germany and France held a summit in the hope of reopening negotiations between Kosovo and Serbia, a summit that made no progress in establishing borders between the two sides, normalizing trade and recognizing Kosovo's independence to Serbia, which is why a new round of negotiations has been set up in July 2019. The decision of the Kosovo legislature to transform Kosovo Security Forces (KSF) into national armed forces has led Belgrade to launch threats with armed intervention. Also, the 100% custom duties imposed by Kosovo on goods imported from Serbia, after the latter blocked Kosovo's

integration into Interpol, have contributed considerably to the escalation of tensions. Thus, the Kosovo president criticized the EU as being "too weak" and "divided", considering that "because of the EU, Kosovo is the most isolated country in Europe". For this reason, Kosovo has called for the US to play a leading role in mediating disagreements.²⁷ At the same time, the Serbian foreign minister accused Germany and France of pressuring Serbia to recognize Kosovo²⁸, which is why he called for Russia's involvement in these negotiations.²⁹

One of Kremlin's strategic goals is to stop NATO's and EU's expansion into the Balkans, which is why it relies on preventing the normalization of diplomatic relations between Serbia and Kosovo. Kremlin opposed Kosovo's independence from the outset by considering it an "illegal and unilateral act" imposed by NATO on Serbia in 1999.³⁰ Moscow fears that recognition of Kosovo could encourage some autonomous regions of Russia to seek independence, which is why it will continue to use diplomatic pressure to undermine any progress on normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo. In order to promote its interests, Russia has provided Serbia with a comprehensive financial and economic support program in the field of energy infrastructure.

Similarly, pro-Russian Bosnian President Milorad Dodik reiterated that he would block

²⁷ ***, "Pristina: EU Keeps Silent About Serbia's 'Anti-European Behavior'", in *NI*, 2 May 2019, URL: [http://rs.n1info\(.\)com/English/NEWS/a480674/Pristina-accuses-Brussels-for-ignoring-Serbia-s-anti-European-behaviour.html](http://rs.n1info(.)com/English/NEWS/a480674/Pristina-accuses-Brussels-for-ignoring-Serbia-s-anti-European-behaviour.html), accessed on 03.06.2019.

²⁸ ***, "Serbia's FM: Berlin Summit Isn't Format for Belgrade – Pristina Talks", in *NI*, 30 April 2019, URL: [http://rs.n1info\(.\)com/English/NEWS/a480148/Berlin-summit-not-good-format-for-Belgrade-Pristina-talks-FM-says.html](http://rs.n1info(.)com/English/NEWS/a480148/Berlin-summit-not-good-format-for-Belgrade-Pristina-talks-FM-says.html), accessed on 03.03.2019.

²⁹ ***, "Russia in Review: Balkans Campaign Update", Institute for the Study of War, 9 May 2019, URL: <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2019/05/russia-in-review-balkans-campaign-update.html> accessed on 17.07.2019.

³⁰ Speech by the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation A. Lukashevich at a Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council on the 20th Anniversary of the NATO Bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, URL: <https://osce.mid.ru/web/osce-en/-/alexander-lukashevich-on-the-20th-anniversary-of-the-nato-bombing-of-the-federal-republic-of-yugoslavia-28-march-2019?inheritRedirect=true>, accessed on 17.06.2019.



any attempt to incorporate the state into NATO and sabotage any link between the EU and Bosnia.³¹ Moreover, he, as former President of the Republika Srpska, has intensified his secessionist rhetoric³² that threatens to destabilize Bosnia and Herzegovina by expressing dissatisfaction with the current political organization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, promoting the unification of the Republika Srpska (an integral part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, mostly inhabited by ethnic

Serbs) with Serbia. Dodik is trying to build a military force to support his aspirations for an independent republic, encouraged by Russia also using all means to block the eventual accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to NATO.³³

Finally, Russia can leverage its influence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in the Republika Srpska, to destabilize neighboring states as well as the EU and NATO structures.

³¹ ***, "Bosnia Temporarily Suspended from Council of Europe", in *NJ*, April 9, 2019, URL: [http://ba.n1info\(.\)com/English/NEWS/a337048/Bosnia-temporarily-suspended-from-Council-of-Europe.html](http://ba.n1info(.)com/English/NEWS/a337048/Bosnia-temporarily-suspended-from-Council-of-Europe.html), accessed on 17.06.2019.

³² ***, "Bosnian Serb Leader's Call For Wartime Uniforms Tugs At Bosnia's Nationalist Threads", in *Radio Free Europe*, 13 mai 2019, URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnian-serb-dodik-call-for-wartime-uniforms-tugs-at-bosnia-nationalist-threads/29938148.html>, accessed on 18.07.2019.

³³ ***, "Turning Towards NATO: In the United States, Calls to Help Bosnia and Herzegovina Resist the 'Influence' of the Russian Federation", in *RT*, 25.04.2019, URL: [https://russian.rt\(.\)com/world/article/624774-ssha-bosniya-gercegovina-rossiya-vliyaniye](https://russian.rt(.)com/world/article/624774-ssha-bosniya-gercegovina-rossiya-vliyaniye), accessed on 25.06.2019.



RE-TENSIONING THE US – IRAN RELATIONSHIP ON THE BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY DECISIONS

*Mirela ATANASIU, Ph.D.**

The events of the first half of 2019 show that US policy during President Donald Trump has undergone sweeping and radical changes with visible consequences in political, diplomatic, economic and military plans. Among these American foreign policy decisions, which have proven to be upsetting for the security environment, we find the one made in 2018 and that is to withdraw from the long-term military nuclear agreement with Iran (The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - JCPOA) to which the US was a part since 2015, concluded after long negotiations during the Obama administration.

The reactions and consequences of this decision by the Trump administration were among the most diverse, but the most serious of these refers to the degradation of American relations with other actors in the international arena. Particularly in the case of Iran, it is noticeable the augmentation of anti-Americanism and the accentuation of its hegemon tendency in the region expressed by continuing the activity of uranium enrichment, which affects not only the US but all international actors. And the situation is becoming more and more critical.

Thus, the geopolitical analysis of the MENA region in the context of US decisions reflects the return to the forefront of regional policy

of tensioned US-Iran relations, which raises questions about the actual and current American contribution to the security of this space.

Relations between the US and Iran have had a controversial history, the relationships between them being the most diverse, from support to acute tension. An image of this relational characteristic between the two states, with the understanding of traditional causes that led to the frictions and the current mutual distrust, can be a good starting point for understanding the growing tensioned situation in the first semester of 2019, which may accentuate the regional instability in the Middle East and North Africa, already heavily affected by disruption and conflict.

1. The historical context of US-Iran relations before Trump administration

Since the initiation of American-Iranian diplomatic relations in 1856, they were stemmed by cordiality. The mutual relations were marked by the support offered by the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) on the occasion of the re-installment of Iran's Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in 1953, US strategic ally in the Middle East, and in the context of the creation of the Iranian intelligence service Savak, in 1957, with the help and following the American model.

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US-Iranian bilateral relations began to degrade starting with the 1973 Oil Crisis, when Iran refused to lower the oil price, turning, in Washington's opinion, from the "Persian Gulf gendarme" into a "megalomaniac pursuing only its own interests without taking into consideration US interests"¹. In the context of the revolution in 1979, the Iranians ousted Mohammad Reza Pahlavi from power and an anti-Western Islamic government, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, took over. The Ayatollah, who became Iran's supreme leader, proclaimed the US to be the "Great Satan"², urging Iranians to "detox" from Western influences.

The US suspended diplomatic relations with Iran following an attack on the US embassy and the emergence of the American hostage crisis³. From this point, the history of relations between Iran and the US is full of mutual hostile actions and missed opportunities for cooperation. At this time, the US imposed on the Iranian state the first sanctions consisting in "blocking all properties and interests owned by the Iranian government, instruments and entities controlled by the Central Bank of Iran which are in US jurisdiction or are in or entering into the possession or control of persons under US jurisdiction"⁴. At the same time, the incumbent president, Jimmy Carter, declared a state of national emergency to deal with the threat to national security, foreign policy and the American economy constituted by the Iran situation in the context of the hostage crisis.

1 Sam Sasan Shoamanesh, "History brief: timeline of US-Iran relations until the Obama administration", in *MIT International Review*, 2009, p. 2, URL: <http://web.mit.edu/mitir/2009/online/us-iran-2.pdf>, accessed on 12.04.2019.

2 Gerald F. Seib, "A Regime Still Fighting the 'Great Satan'", in *The Wall Street Journal*, 1 March 2019, URL: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-regime-still-fighting-the-great-satan-11551454517>, accessed on 15.05.2019.

3 On 4 November 1979, a number of 52 American diplomats are taken hostages and detained for 444 days. The hostages' crisis closed once with the signing of Alger Agreements on 19 January 1981. This hostages' crisis had as main consequence the full cessation of diplomatic ties of US and Iran, and thus, since April 1980, the overall abolition of formal relations between them. See: Sam Sasan SHOAMANESH, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

4 ***, *Executive Order No. 12170, Blocking Iranian government property*, 14 November 1979.

In the 1980s, Iran accused the US of supporting Saddam Hussein in the context of the Iranian-Iraqi war and that they were responsible for creating instability in the Middle East by invading Afghanistan and Iraq. The US, in turn, accused Iran of permanently supporting Shiite military groups, considered a destabilizing factor in the region and a source of sectarian division between Sunnis and Shiites. In fact, in 1984, Iran was included in the list of "sponsor states of terrorism"⁵. Later, in 1990, Iran was accused of supporting a series of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas and Hezbollah around the world.

In 1997, the reformist Mohammed Khatami was elected president of Iran, and the US withdrew some of the previously imposed sanctions. During Khatami's mandate, in 2001, the US collaborated with Iran to find a political solution for a new post-Taliban government in Afghanistan⁶. The American attitude sharpened again following the attacks of September 11, 2001, at which time the incumbent president, George W. Bush, placed Iran in the worldwide "Axis of Evil", along with Iraq and North Korea⁷. Thus, the relations between the two states were limited, for three decades, to the economic, scientific and military sanctions imposed by the US on Iran.

In 2013, the moderate Hassan Rouhani seized power in Iran and, amid the desire to remove the Iranian state from isolation and release it from sanctions, initiated negotiations with the US. Following these negotiations, in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)⁸, a 25-year nuclear agreement limiting Iran's nuclear

5 ***, *State Sponsors of Terrorism*, Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, URL: <https://www.state.gov/state-sponsors-of-terrorism/>, accessed on 25.07.2019.

6 Ishaan Tharoor, "The key moments in the long history of U.S.-Iran tensions", in *The Washington Post*, 2 April 2015, URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/03/31/the-key-moments-in-the-long-history-of-u-s-iran-tensions/?utm_term=.fced2763482a, accessed on 12.07.2019.

7 ***, "Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address", in *The Washington Post*, 29 January 2002.

8 By this agreement, Iran agreed to limit its sensitive nuclear activities and allow their inspection by international inspectors.



capacity, is concluded between P5 + 1 (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) and Iran, and related sanctions are suspended. In this context, the peaceful evolution of the relations between the two parties seemed a natural course.

2. American politics under the leadership of President Trump

At the analytical level, the perennial US interests declared in relation to Iran include nuclear non-proliferation, regional stability and the fight against terrorism, the promotion of human rights and democracy within Iran, and the normalization of US-Iran bilateral relations⁹. But, the US foreign policy under Trump administration in pursuit of these interests is different from that developed under the mandate of B. Obama, who relied on political dialogue, with the main reference being the signing of the agreement on JCPOA.

This change in politics' approach, from dialogue to confrontation, was reflected in the Trump administration's decision in May 2018 to withdraw the US from the nuclear deal with Iran and to restore previous sanctions on Iran in November of the same year, with both actions resulting in diminishing the power of Tehran in the region. Moreover, in Executive Order no. 13846 issued on 6 August 2018 regarding the re-imposition of certain sanctions on Iran, the main objective stated by the US was *"to exert financial pressure on the Iranian regime in order to find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the full range of threats represented by Iran, including the proliferation and development of missiles and other asymmetrical and conventional weapons capabilities, regional aggression, support for terrorist groups and malignant activities of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its surrogates"*¹⁰. Thus, at

⁹ Kian Tajbakhsh, "Getting Real about Iran", in *Foreign Policy*, 19 March 2019, URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2019-03-19/getting-real-about-iran>, accessed on 12.04.2019.

¹⁰ ***, Reimposing Certain Sanctions With Respect to Iran, Executive Order 13846 of August 6, 2018, Federal Register, Vol. 83, No. 152, August 7, 2018.

present, the US administration is conducting a campaign of "maximum pressure" against it. This administrated pressure is considered by some specialists, but especially the mass-media, to be a prelude to a possible war¹¹. During Donald Trump's administration, immediately after leaving the JCPOA, the list of sanctions against Iran is expanded, being the toughest US sanctions' list ever imposed on the Iranian state, targeting critical sectors of its economy, such as energy, shipping, shipbuilding and financial (Table no. 1).

Still, if one takes into consideration that Iran was the subject of American economic sanctions for three decades, and the recent regional evolutions¹³ are shown that the Iranian presence in the key-fields of American preoccupation did not registered a relaxation or moderation, but on the contrary it is more expansionist and active, one can deduce that the US did not reach their

¹¹ Dina Esfandiary, "The Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign: A prelude to war with Iran?", in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 6 May 2019, URL: <https://thebulletin.org/2019/05/the-trump-administrations-maximum-pressure-campaign-a-relude-to-war-with-iran/>, accessed on 12.06.2019.

¹² As part of legislation implementation efforts, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) publishes a list of persons and companies owned or controlled by the targeted countries or that act on their behalf. Also, the list the persons, groups and entities in the category of terrorist and drug traffickers as found through the unspecific programs of those countries are listed in the same document. Collectively, such persons and companies are called "Specially Designated Nationals" or "SDN". Their financial assets are blocked, and the American citizens or companies are forbidden to trade with these categories of persons. To be seen: "Especially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN) Human Readable Lists", US Department of the Treasury, 25.07.2019, URL: <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/sdn-list/pages/default.aspx>, accessed on 25.07.2019.

¹³ Among the foreign policy winnings for Iran in the late years we consider to be: the signing of JCPOA in 2015 and the afterward suspension of international sanctions related to the nuclear field (imposed by many actors of the international scene, among which US and EU were the most important), allowing the Iranian state to pass through an economic relaxation for a period of time until the re-establishment of US sanctions in 2018; the acceptance of Iran in 2015 to participate in the process of negotiating Syrian peace with the US, Russia and Turkey, which denotes recognition as a regional power; maintaining the JCPOA with the European states even after the American withdrawal.



Table no. 1 – Sanctions imposed on Iran after US exit from JCPOA according to Executive Order 13846, issued on 6 August 2018

| No. | Type of sanction | Subjects of the sanctions |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | Sanctions for blocking the Iran government's purchase of US banknotes or precious metals | Certain Iranian citizens being on the list of banned persons ¹² , the Iranian energy, transportation and shipbuilding sectors and harbour operators |
| 2. | Sanctions on payments related to the automotive sector in Iran | Certain Iranian citizens and traders from the automotive sector |
| 3. | Sanctions on commerce with Iranian oil, petroleum and petrochemical products | Certain Iranian citizens and traders of Iranian petroleum and petrochemical products |
| 4. | Sanctions on the Iranian currency (Rial) | Any foreign financial institution that performed or facilitated any significant transaction related to the purchase or sale of the Iranian currency or concluded derivative contracts in Rial |
| 5. | Sanctions for the hijacking of goods for the Iranian people, the transfer of goods or technologies to Iran, which are likely to be used to commit human rights abuses and censorship | Any person or entity engaged in corruption acts or other activities related to the theft of goods |
| 6. | Prohibition of entry into US territory | Any Iranian citizen having or not having the status of immigrant |

goals regarding Iran, although specialists sustain that the immediate impact of sanctions on the Iranian economy was obvious in the decrease of oil production and GDP, the weakening of Iranian currency and the increase of inflation¹⁴.

The US exit from the JCPOA, as well as restoring sanctions in key areas of the Iranian economy, was the first step towards disrupting the fragile diplomatic balance. Subsequently, a series of political actions and discourses followed, such as Iran's acceleration of the uranium enrichment program, up to a purity of 20%¹⁵, in violation of

¹⁴ Stephanie Segal, "The Economic Impact of Iran Sanctions", Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 5 November 2018, URL: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/economic-impact-iran-sanctions>, accessed on 14.04.2019.

¹⁵ See details at: ***, "Iran president: Uranium enrichment may resume if deal fails", in *The Mainichi*, 9 May 2018, URL: <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180509/p2g/00m/0fp/005000c>; Roland OLIPHANT, „Iran 'could dump nuclear deal and restart enrichment' if Donald Trump pulls out", in *The Telegraph*, 5 May 2018, URL: [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/05/iran-could-dump-](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/05/05/iran-could-dump-nuclear-deal-restart-enrichment-donald-trump/)

the nuclear agreement, and the shooting down of an American military drone. In the same line, in April 2019, Iranian officials threatened to close the waterway¹⁶, in response to the US president's decision to impose sanctions on Iranian oil importers. Subsequently, after a series of attacks on US oil tanks in the Gulf of Oman, especially in the Strait of Hormuz¹⁷ (Iranian officials denied

nuclear-deal-restart-enrichment-donald-trump/ accessed on 08.04.2019

¹⁶***, *The Strait of Hormuz: AU.S.-Iran Maritime FlashPoint*, Council on Foreign Relations, 18 June 2019, URL: https://www.cfr.org/article/strait-hormuz-us-iran-maritime-flash-point?gclid=CjwKCAjw1f_pBRAEEiwApp0JKFaj7MOPEgy2w6Q__aKju04W3Fvs7hggTsCyrMcG_hnVWgKMEAyK4xoC8SIQAvD_BwE, accessed on 20.07.2019.

¹⁷ See details at: Patrick Wintour, Julian Borger, "Two oil tankers attacked in Gulf of Oman", in *The Guardian*, 13 June 2019, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/13/oil-tankers-blasts-reports-gulf-of-oman-us-navy>; Jon Gambrell, "Tankers struck near Strait of Hormuz; US blames Iran", in *AP News*, 14 June 2019, URL: <https://www.apnews.com/2019/06/14/tankers-struck-near-strait-of-hormuz-us-blames-iran>



that they were the initiators of these actions¹⁸), the US deploys USS Abraham Lincoln and a bomber within the US Central Command for the purpose of protecting oil installations in the region from other possible attacks.

During this time, the American relationship with Israel, Iran's main rival in the region, was strengthened. In fact, D. Trump has pleaded since the election period for more US support for Israel and for the restoration of the bilateral relationship, which had deteriorated in particular in the context of signing the nuclear agreement with Iran during B. Obama's presidential mandate; in a speech in Cleveland, D. Trump called Israel "our most important ally in the region"¹⁹. As a result, in order to demonstrate the veracity of his commitment to Israel, after being elected the leader of the American state, Trump has taken a number of major actions, including recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish state and moving the US embassy there, as well as recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which currently belong to Syria. It remains to be seen whether these decisions will contribute to the pacification of the region. Such actions are designed to remove obstacles to Israel's power recognition at the regional level, but by these decisions, the US has created the precedent to recognize other border changes, which have been made through the use of military force.

Another element that shows the materialization of the American support for Israel is the adoption in the US Senate of a measure that settled the military support agreement, signed in 2016, during the Obama administration, by which Israel will receive \$ 38 billion of US funding between 2019 and 2028²⁰. Thus, \$ 3.3 billion is earmarked

for external military funding and \$ 500 million for missile defence cooperation programs.

The consequences of US decisions can be unpredictable not only for the actors directly involved in them, but also for the third parties caught between the American interests and the pressures of the Washington administration and their own interests. An eloquent example in this regard is, in the context of the US decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Agreement, the announcement that the access to the US market and financial sector of Iran's economic partners will be denied²¹, which has triggered discontent in Europe. As a result, the European signatory states of the JCPOA - France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain - refused to withdraw from the Nuclear Agreement. However, companies in the European private sector, fearing US sanctions, withdrew from the Iranian market, which created a visible gap between the speeches of governments and European leaders in favour of the nuclear agreement and the economic development of trade between Iran and Europe. Finally, the EU Member States reacted, constituting a "Special Purpose Vehicle" (SPV), a system to avoid US sanctions imposed on Iran, respectively the instalment of a legal entity to facilitate legitimate financial transactions with Iran²². This financial instrument provides a way to support Iran's promised economic benefits under the agreement, but it also shows the EU's ability to respond to the problem caused by the unilateral US decision. Obviously, US-EU relations suffer from these events.

www.apnews.com/d67714ab8ac344a3b3af19cca1c20192, accessed on 15.07.2019.

¹⁸ Jon Gambrell, op. cit.

¹⁹ Yaakov Katz, "Trump adviser to 'JPOST': president-elect will be best friend Israel ever had", in *The Jerusalem Post*, 9 November 2016, URL: <https://www.jpost.com/US-Election-Results/Donald-Trump/Trump-adviser-to-Post-President-elect-will-be-Israelis-best-friend-ever-472115>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

²⁰ ***, "U.S. Allocates \$38 Billion Military Aid Package to Israel to Boost 'Security'", in *Southfront*, 4 October

2018, URL: <https://www.mintpressnews.com/us-aid-to-israel/250278/>, accessed on 05.04.2019.

²¹ ***, "Iran sanctions: Trump warns trading partners", in *BBC News*, 7 august 2018, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-45098031>, accessed on 09.04.2019.

²² ***, "Europenii instituie un „vehiculul dedicat” - Special purpose vehicle (SPV) -, un troc pentru a evita sancțiunile americane impuse Iranului", in *Adevărul*, 25 September 2018, URL: https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/europenii-instituie-vehiculul-dedicat-special-purpose-vehicle-spv---troc-evita-sanctiunile-americane-impuse-iranului-1_5baa8a2edf52022f75d3e72e/index.html, accessed on 10.04.2019.



3. The regional security framework in the first half of 2019

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, crises and conflicts with diverse identity origins persist, with devastating impact on the social structure of their states and populations. Analysts have identified at least four types of conflict that have manifested over time in this region²³: *internal conflicts*, arising from the creation of disjointed governance structures in the region (manifested by repeated coups d'état in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Tunisia); *transnational conflicts* materialized in challenges at the borders of recognized states (Kurdish insurgency, transnational ambitions of the jihadist movements); *the Israeli-Palestinian conflict* (derived from the creation of the state of Israel); *conflicts arising from the outward projection of Iran* (materialized in the Iran-Iraq war, the Israel-Hezbollah wars); *conflicts associated with Sunni radicalization*: triggered by the defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war and the siege of Mecca in 1979 (jihadists-Soviets in Afghanistan, the September 11, 2001 US attack); *civil wars* triggered by the Arab Spring of 2011 (Syria, Libya, Yemen).

Representative for the first half of 2019 is the unprecedented situation in which almost all MENA states are involved to some extent in one or more ongoing conflicts, ranging from direct military involvement, to arming and training non-state actors. But not only that, the insecurity in the region of the Middle East and North Africa has increased during the reference period, the general causes of the intensification of the tensions being due with a predilection to the state actors, who dispute their power at regional level, and not to the sub-national actors. Some of these

causes were presented in a previous paper²⁴:

- The fall of the Islamic State terrorist organization, which created a power vacuum that regional actors have been quick to cover since 2018 and continuing into 2019²⁵. This is especially true in Syria and Iraq - two of the countries we see as most vulnerable to the impact of regional proxy wars;

- The growth of Iran influence in the region, which dissatisfies a number of actors. Moreover, the most obvious reflection of this dissatisfaction is the openness of Saudi Arabia to cooperate with Israel (Iran's stated geopolitical rival), although the two states are not exactly friends²⁶;

- The goals of Iran and Israel, which are politically-diplomatic and military incompatible, as a result of Iran's recent initiatives aimed at strengthening its regional presence (especially in Syria and Lebanon) and Israel's view that this is an unacceptable challenge to its national security, are another major factor contributing to regional instability;

- The transforming of the dynamics of the internal and external policies of Saudi Arabia and Israel²⁷;

- The interstate divergences fuelled in the context of trying to gain regional supremacy or the international recognition of some rights

²³ Joost Hiltermann, Maria Rodríguez Schaap, *From the depths to the surface: conflict drivers in the MENA region*, Elcano Royal Institute, 12 June 2019, URL: http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/ari68-2019-hiltermannrodriguezschaap-from-depths-surface-conflict-drivers-mena-region, accessed on 15.07.2019.

²⁴ See details at: Mirela Atanasiu, "Consecințe ale retragerii americane din acordul nuclear cu Iranul", in *Dinamica mediului de securitate*, April-May 2018, Centrul de Studii Strategice de Apărare și Securitate, 2018, pp. 4-5, URL: https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_publicatii/DMS_apr-mai18.pdf, accessed on 12.05.2019.

²⁵ The lowering of the influence of the Islamic State terrorist organization in the Middle East towards the end of 2017 allowed the manifest re-emergence of the old lines of geopolitical fracture previously put on hold amid joint efforts to defeat the terrorist group.

²⁶ In recent years, Iran has strengthened its influence in the region, having allies in Lebanon, Iraq and Syria, even in Yemen, through the Houthi rebels. See: Barbara SLAVIN, "The Dangerous Consequences of US Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal", *Atlantic Council*, 7 May 2018, URL: <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-dangerous-consequences-of-us-withdrawal-from-the-iran-nuclear-deal>, accessed on 08.05.2019.

²⁷ In Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman is the architect of more assertive foreign policy efforts, but also of strengthening domestic power, and in Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has changed his political position in recent years to retain the support of its extreme right-wing and ultra-Orthodox coalition partners.



(countries such as: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Qatar);

- The change in the US foreign policy line (while the Obama administration took a more predictable and neutral approach, during Trump's presidency, the US supported traditional regional allies, especially Saudi Arabia and Israel, and took a stronger political position in relation to Iran);

- The US exit from the long term agreement on Iran's military nuclear capacity (JCPOA) concluded in 2015 between the P5 + 1 group (US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) and Iran.

The possibility of a direct confrontation between the US and Iran would contradict President Trump's commitment to avoid US involvement in foreign wars. However, the decisions of the first half of 2019 are contradictory in this regard, which brings unpredictability to the future developments on this issue. On the one hand, we are witnessing a reduction of US involvement in the region by the announcement of the withdrawal of US troops from Syria and Afghanistan at the end of 2018 and currently resumed in 2019. On the other side, in January 2019, the bombings were intensified against ISIL positions in Syria²⁸ and, in March 2019, against the extremist Shabab group affiliated to al-Qaeda in Somalia, as well as there were even suspicions about the involvement of the US military in war crimes²⁹. All this may indicate, in fact, the continued involvement of the US in external conflicts, despite the American president narratives in the annual *State of the Union 2019* speech, who reiterated that "the great nations

do not fight in endless wars"³⁰. The statement supports the decision to withdraw US troops from Syria and Afghanistan, but may contribute to the growing distrust of local partners (in Syria - Kurds, in Afghanistan - the Afghan government), but also of the allies.

Conclusions

After US-Iranian diplomatic relations have been cordial for more than 120 years since their inception, with the oil price disagreements in the context of the 1973 oil crisis, they have become tense at the US level, and since the time of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic was defined by the key principle called *anti-Americanism*. The result of these antagonistic positions assumed by both sides was the cessation of diplomatic relations between the two, in November 1979, for a long period.

Once a consensus on nuclear issues with Iran has been reached, by perfecting the JCPOA during the Obama administration, relations between the two seemed to be re-launched with the cessation of US, EU and UN nuclear-related sanctions.

Also, in the context of relaunching relations and leaving diplomatic isolation, Iran was accepted at the negotiating table in the Syrian crisis, together with the US, Russia and Turkey, which was a proof of its power in the regional plan.

The events took a tense turn in US-Iranian bilateral relations, with the US leaving the JCPOA and the reinstatement of sanctions imposed on Iran, the main consequence of the unilateral withdrawal of the US, until the conclusion of an agreement in new terms, provoking more instability in the Middle East.

What is even more worrying is that the signing of a new nuclear agreement with Iran by the US is currently impossible in the context

²⁸ Trevor Aaronson, Ali Younes, "U.S. ramps up bombing of ISIS in Eastern Syria following Trump withdrawal announcement", in *The Intercept*, 3 January 2019, URL: <https://theintercept.com/2019/01/03/syria-bombing-troop-withdrawal/>, accessed on 02.04.2019.

²⁹ ***, "U.S. Airstrikes In Somalia May Amount To War Crimes, Says Rights Group", in *National Public Radio*, 20 March 2019, URL: <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/20/705090399/u-s-airstrikes-in-somalia-may-amount-to-war-crimes-says-rights-group>; ***, *The hidden US war in Somalia. Civilian casualties from air strikes in lower shabelle*, Amnesty International, London, UK, 2019, p. 7, accessed on 12.04.2019.

³⁰ President Donald Trump speech. See: *State of the Union 2019: Read the full transcript*, CNN, 6 February 2019, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/02/05/politics/donald-trump-state-of-the-union-2019-transcript/index.html>, accessed on 16.04.2019.



of noobvious hostility displayed amidst a diplomatic dispute between the parties, resulted not only in statements, but also in hostile actions such as attacking oil tanks, dropping down drones and violating the 2015 nuclear agreement by enriching uranium, any normalization effort seeming inefficient. Obviously, these actions also affect EU states under pressure from Iran to force the US to reduce its sanctions if they want Iran to continue to comply with JCPOA provisions.

Also, fluctuations in the US-Iran relationship undoubtedly affect Israel, which is currently considered by the US as its main ally in the region, and Iran is considered by Israel to be its greatest external threat. Decisions taken by President Trump regionally in the first half of 2019, such as evidently supporting Israel by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, moving the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights, now part of Syria (where Iran, along with Russia and Turkey, support Bashar al-Assad's government forces and the territorial integrity of the Syrian state in its internationally recognized form), have only strained the situation in the region between the two rivals. Moreover, the decision to withdraw the US from the nuclear agreement, made to honour an election promise, greatly amplifies the possibility of a direct confrontation between Iran and Israel, or even between Iran and Saudi Arabia, another US strategic ally in the Middle East.

The different goals pursued by the states aspiring for hegemony in the region (US, Iran,

Israel, Saudi Arabia) were expressed, during the period under review, at discursive level or by frequent small-scale attacks in the proxy war zones. Although there is a risk that, in the future, as a result of a tactical mistake or an overreaction of either party, the tensions or even low-intensity conflicts will intensify, however we consider that a significant or sustained confrontation is less likely.

Our conclusion is based on at least two relevant elements. The first is that Iran does not want to flagrantly endanger its efforts to maintain the nuclear agreement with the rest of the P5 + 1 states by initiating an open war with Israel (traditional US ally), which would lead to the loss of previously gained advantages. Secondly, neither Israel, at the moment, does not want to degenerate into an Israeli-Iranian military conflict, even with the strong support of the Americans because the focus on the dissensions with Palestine is currently a much more attractive foreign policy direction at the moment and engaging in a war will certainly bring more disadvantages to it than gains in this regard. However, although we consider that none of the interested regional actors does not pursue to enter a direct military confrontation, we cannot rule out the possibility of escalating proxy conflicts with the involvement of military forces, but also that of a direct interstate military conflict on the background of political decisions precipitated with force by one of the actors in positions of adversity to the others.



NUCLEAR WEAPONS: NORMS, THE ISSUE OF HETEROGENEITY AND WORLD POLITICS

*Mihai ZODIAN, Ph.D.**

It was often noticed that topics such as arms control and nuclear proliferation involve a plurality of actors and contexts, a fact which leads to a certain disconnection between policies and actions, even when we are speaking about the same states or institutions, in a broader sense¹. This seems to be supported by the events from the beginning of 2019. We have seen the crisis of a disarmament regime, maybe a lethal one, a short and violent regional conflict between two states with nuclear arsenals and ambiguous non-proliferation diplomacy, alongside other, less salient events. In many of them, there was a lot of confusion and tension between politics.

1. Treaty on intermediary nuclear forces (INF)

One of the basic political tension is the one between the global public good and national interests of the actors, namely between the disarmament obligations and the capacity development policies, in the case of INF², the treaty on short and medium range missiles. The announcement made by the US president last year lead to a series of events, including the White House statement about suspending the treaty (February 2019), a last step before the withdrawal, which must be approved by

¹ Joshua S. Goldstein, Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations*, 10th edition, Pearson, 2014, pp. 4-5.

² *Ibidem*, pp. 218-219.

the Congress. These decisions were justified by blaming Russia for breaking the treaty, especially by the deployment of two land based cruise missile regiments, forbidden by the document. While Moscow denied these charges, NATO supported the US factual statements, while the discussion did not end up with a new agreement³.

The INF Treaty has multiple meanings, both symbolic and practical. At the end of the Cold War, it meant a diplomatic step in reducing the East-West tensions, by solving a political crisis and remained an important element of the arms control agreement between Washington and Moscow, the main nuclear powers⁴. From a practical point of view, the short and intermediary missiles were seen as redundant and dangerous, while the recognition of a common interest in their abandonment has evolved⁵.

One must be aware that, according to both the treaty and the scholars, the short and medium range land based missiles (500-1000 km and 1000-5000 km) represent different

³ Press Statement by Secretary of State, Michael R. Pompeo, "U.S. Intends to Withdraw from the INF Treaty", *U.S Mission to International Organizations in Geneva*, February 2, 2019, URL: <https://geneva.usmission.gov/2019/02/04/u-s-intent-to-withdraw-from-the-inf-treaty-february-2-2019/>, accessed on March 3, 2019.

⁴ Arms Control Association, "The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty at a Glance", 22 October 2018, URL: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/INFtreaty>, accessed on March 1, 2019.

⁵ Arms Control Association, *op. cit.*

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category systems, ballistics and cruise, designed for theatre and regional deterrence, missions and roles, developed by Washington and Moscow⁶. Here we have also political considerations, for example air and sea based missiles are allowed. For other states, these type of weapons can even be considered of strategic value.

The INF treaty (1987) forbade the design, testing, dislocation or possession of short and medium-range missiles and promoted some intrusive inspection systems, considered innovative at that time, or more precisely, that applied ideas proposed since the end of 1940s, which were rejected until then⁷. According to *Arms Control Association*, more than 2000 systems were destroyed, since then⁸. In general, the INF was considered a successful deal, the viability of which seemed guaranteed.

One of arms control regimes paradoxes, often noticed in the literature is that, when needed, in conflict periods, they become vulnerable, because there is no central political authority at international level or by the value divergence⁹. As the relationships between Russia and the West have deteriorated, especially after the intervention in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, is not a surprise that these agreements went through periods of mistrust. The consequences can be far more extensive.

In this international context, several suspicions surfaced about some of the Russian projects, including the models RS-24, RS-26, R-500 *Iskander* and the SSC-8/9M729, the last being the centre of the latest debates, on the questing of INF limits, which complicated the nuclear

diplomacy¹⁰. The Obama administration accused Russia for breaching the treaty requirements. At that time, US followed a diplomatic approach, maybe because the presidency was favourable to the idea of general nuclear cooperation.

The flow of events went faster once president Trump announce that the US will abandon the INT Treaty if the rules stated by it will not be obeyed by Moscow (20 October, 2018), referring to the testing, production and placement by the Russian Federation of SSC-8 cruise missiles¹¹. He also alluded to China's nuclear policy and to new multilateral treaty¹². After a series of talks, NATO supported the new US policy, a two months ultimatum being addressed to Russia, in which the system was called for to be abandoned¹³.

In reply, Moscow's officials denied the charges and responded with their own accusations regarding drones and missile shield, but those were not included, or were explicitly excluded in the INF treaty, as for example, the Romanian diplomacy was underlined¹⁴. Russian representatives stated that the SSC-8 range

⁶ ***, "Treaty Between The United States of America And The Union Of Soviet Socialist Republics On The Elimination Of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles", U.S. Department of States, 1987, URL: <https://www.state.gov/t/avc/trty/102360.htm#text>, (accessed on March 13, 2019).

⁷ For example, the Baruch plan, from 1946. See James Grant, *Bernard Baruch: The Adventures of a Wall Street Legend*, Axios Press, 2012.

⁸ Arms Control Association, *op. cit.*

⁹ John Baylis, Mark Smith, "The Control of Weapons of Mass Destruction", in John Baylis, James Wirtz, Colin S. GRAY, Eliot Cohen (coord.), *Strategy in the Contemporary World*, Oxford University Press, p. 235.

¹⁰ Hans M. Kristensen, "Russia Missile Test Creates Confusion and Opposition in Washington", in *Federation of American Scientists*, 3 July 2013, URL: <http://fas.org/blogs/security/2013/07/yars-m> (accessed on March 11, 2019); Pavel Podvig, "Too many missiles – Rubezh, Avangard, and Yars-M", in *Russian strategic nuclear forces*, 6 July 2013, URL: http://russianforces.org/blog/2013/07/too_many_missiles_-_rubezh_ava.shtml accessed on March 13, 2019; Arms Control Association, *op. cit.*

¹¹ Julian Borger, Martin Pengelly, "Trump says US will withdraw from nuclear arms treaty with Russia", *The Guardian*, 21 October 2018, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/20/trump-us-nuclear-arms-treaty-russia> (accessed in March 2019); Global Security: "9M729-SSC-8", URL: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/russia/ssc-8.htm> accessed on April 11, 2019.

¹² *Ibidem.*

¹³ ***, "Statement on the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty", *NATO*, 4 December 2018, URL: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_161122.htm accessed on March 11, 2019.

¹⁴ ***, "Russia will build missiles if US leaves treaty", *BBC News*, 5 December 2018, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46458604> (accessed March 2019); art. VII, 3 of the treaty, ***, "Treaty Between The United States of America...", Ministerul Afacerilor Externe: "Precizări de presă", October 25, 2018, URL: <http://www.mae.ro/node/47245> accessed on March 14, 2019.



was a little under the 500 km limit specified by the treaty, and made public an alleged model, but they did not convince the other side¹⁵. In the past, though, Russia's leaders had more nuanced opinions about the INF, the possibility of withdrawal being raised, motivated by power differences (implicit reference to China or NATO)¹⁶.

Two months later, in February 2019, US officials considered that Russia ignored the demands of December 2018 and announced the suspension of compliance with the treaty obligations and the intention to withdraw from it, in 6 months¹⁷. An agreement of Congress was also needed¹⁸. A certain diplomatic backdoor was left open for Moscow, having in mind the idea that, if Russia's policy will change, US will change the current course¹⁹.

For its part, Kremlin announced the INF treaty suspension, blaming the US leaders and made public a similar intent of withdrawal²⁰. According to *BBC*, president Vladimir Putin talked about the deployment of new, "hypersonic, missiles and other type of weaponry, while promising to avoid a new arms race²¹. In October 2018, his American counterpart alluded that the Russian Federation cannot afford to sustain this type of

competition²².

Apparently, with the exception of rapid and radical changes, the INF treaty is about to be denounced, seriously weakening the East-West arms control and disarmament regime, but also the one regarding the prohibition of the spread of this type of weaponry. According to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), nevertheless, the nuclear weapon states have the duty to negotiate "in good faith" as to abandon this type of weaponry²³. The consequences of the current dispute can go beyond its direct stakes.

Many results may depend on the motivations, decisions and policies pursued by the US and Russian leaders, while at the moment, there is quite a lot of uncertainty in the eyes of the public opinion. Besides the unavoidable factual ones, the most important are about Russian intentions regarding the SSC-8 (the reason the system was deployed and what is the strategy) while other refer to the US (the change of diplomatic style and, especially, the follow-up)²⁴. There are many possibilities.

Similar to SALT's case, the first possibility would involve prudence from both sides and a tacit observance of the provisions of the treaty, even denounced. The motivation would be that placement of new systems would be more in that advantage of countries outside the European area, not involved in the dispute, such as China, because of costs and new tensions. There are some indications in its favour, like the statements about the intent of not placing large land-based systems, but there are still many obstacles to overtop, including some of Russia's actions.

The second possibility, the diplomatic scenario, invoked also by the US President, as

¹⁵ Tom Balmforth, Andrew Osborn, "Russia takes wraps off new missile to try to save U.S. nuclear pact", *Reuters*, 23 January 2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nuclear-russia/russia-in-effort-to-defuse-u-s-nuclear-dispute-displays-new-missile-idUSKCN1PH15A> accessed on March 14, 2019.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Lesley Wroughton, Arshad Mohammed, "U.S. says to withdraw from arms control treaty in six months", *Reuters*, 1 February 2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nuclear-russia/u-s-says-to-withdraw-from-arms-control-treaty-in-six-months-idUSKCN1PQ4VW> accessed on March 11, 2019.

¹⁸ Walter C. Clemens, "Can Trump abrogate the INF Treaty Without Congress", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 8 February 2018, URL: <https://thebulletin.org/2019/02/can-trump-abrogate-the-inf-treaty-without-congress/> accessed on March 12, 2019.

¹⁹ Lesley Wroughton, Arshad Mohammed, *op.cit.*

²⁰ ***, "Russia will exit INF nuclear pact in six months: Ifax", *Reuters*, 6 February 2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nuclear-russia/russia-will-exit-inf-nuclear-pact-in-six-months-ifax-idUSKCN1PV0Q9> accessed on March 13, 2019.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² Julian Borger, Martin Pengelly, *op. cit.*

²³ ***, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), art. VI, URL: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text> accessed on March 15, 2019.

²⁴ Robert Gramer, Lara Seligman, "Trump and NATO Show Rare Unity in Confronting Russia's Arms Treaty Violation", *Foreign Policy*, 4 December 2018 URL: https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/12/04/trump-and-nato-show-rare-unity-in-confronting-russia-arms-treaty-violation-inf/?utm_source=PostUp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=7795&utm_term=Editor, accessed on March 15, 2019.



seen above, is about the signing of a new treaty, maybe with China. The original document purposely ignored secondary nuclear powers, not only the latter, but also France and The United Kingdom, being considered either less important or less interested in large scale arsenals. The risk here is entering the same problems as INF.

The third possibility is about a mixture of conflict and caution. The overall relationship between USA and the Russian Federation would still be tensioned, an arms race included but, because of the costs involved and of multiple state interests, the impact could be limited or of a regional value. It is a plausible scenario, but a lot depends on the upcoming events.

Perhaps the most pessimistic scenario concerns a new arms race, somehow similar to the Cold War, with thousands of nuclear warheads built, or maybe, a high tech version, an often mentioned possibility in the Western media²⁵. This would mean a failure of the entire arms control regime, not just of the treaties, but also of the evolved habits and expectations of the decision-makers, defence establishments and public opinion, since the 80s onwards. For now, it seems pretty unlikely, and is not clear whether the American and Russian elites are interested, but it is not impossible, since there are unexpected results, especially in security issues.

Going beyond the speculations regarding the proximate future, the INF treaty's crisis shows us that the nuclear agenda is still important in world politics, even if the frequency and the intensity of the disputes are different, comparing them with the Cold War era. It also shows that the personal style, alongside beliefs, values and ideas shared by the decision-makers matter in framing the events, even when facing strong constraints, that are represented here by the system of mutual deterrence between the United States and Russia and by the domestic politics. Some of its consequences may go beyond the

²⁵ For example, Rafael Behr, "Trump and Putin have relaunched the arms race. Hug Europe close, Britain", *The Guardian*, 6 February 2019, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/06/trump-putin-arms-race-british-secutiry-europe-nuclear-weapons>, accessed on March 16, 2019.

bilateral agenda, involving other powers, such as China and European states, and may influence close issues, such as the nuclear proliferation.

2. Global governance and the South Asian conflict

Another ambiguity concerns the intersection of great power politics, regional conflicts and issue-areas such as counterterrorism, counter proliferation and their consequences. Thus, the conflict between India and Pakistan intensified for a short period of time (February 2019), sending a signal on the risks which these phenomena are involving. Both states are in a complex security relationship, somehow analogous to the nuclear deterrence between Washington and Moscow, and are often examples in the debates about proliferation, but, fortunately, the tensions were fast moderated, as a result of the intervention of the international community²⁶.

It started as one of decolonization's legacies, similar to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and even to the crisis in Crimea. Thus, this conflict had at stake the older issue of Kashmir, a historical land shared by India and Pakistan, mainly, claimed by both, their zone of control being separated by an armistice line²⁷. Following the Second World

²⁶ See: Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Better", in *Adelphi Papers*, International Institute for Strategic Studies, Londra, 1981; Scott D. SAGAN, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons", in *International Security*, 18(4).

²⁷ China holds a part of Kashmir, which includes the communications between Xinjiang and Tibet. See Erin Blakemore, "The Kashmir conflict: How did it start?", in *National Geographic*, March 2, 2019, URL: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/03/kashmir-conflict-how-did-it-start/>, accessed on April 3, 2019); Jack Guy, Katie Hunt, Nikhil Kumar, Helen Regan, "Why Kashmir means so much to both India and Pakistan", in *CNN*, 28 February 2019, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/09/30/asia/kashmir-explainer/index.html>, (accessed 2 April 2019); Michel Boivin, *Istoria Indiei*, Editura Corint, București, 2003; James Heitzman, Robert L. Worden, *India: a country study*, Library of Congress, 1966; Aymeric Chauprade, Francois Thruval, "India", "Pakistan", in: Aymeric Chauprade, Francois Thruval, *Dicționar de geopolitică*, Corint, București, 2003, pp. 150-153, 258-261; Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru. Inventarea Indiei*, Editura Paideia, București, 2004; Stuart LAU,



War, the British elites accepted, with reserves and under pressure, the independence of South Asian's territories²⁸. Sketching a complicated history, the division between the states of India and Pakistan was also based, in principle, on the criterion of population's religion, but, for Kashmir, the Hindu Rajah (monarch), was pressured to accede to the first state²⁹. Alongside other factors, this has led to one of the oldest protracted conflicts in the post war period, and was linked to two major wars, and a few smaller ones, some terrorist acts, sometimes influencing proximate countries such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh³⁰.

Two features are making this conflict of general interest, one being the connection to great power politics. Even if the regional politics, excepting Afghanistan, were generally separated from global events, Pakistan is a traditional ally of the US and a partner of China and Saudi Arabia, but also a member of Commonwealth³¹. India was one of Non-aligned Movement's leaders during the Cold War, has maintained and still does maintain a close relationship with Moscow, including through a treaty of cooperation with the Soviet Union, is considered a potential great power and it is at least, a regional one, and is essential, alongside Japan and others, in dealing with issue such as the rise of China and the US policy in the Asia-Pacific region³².

Secondly, there is the nuclear issue, and the following matters: proliferation effects (two rival states with similar weaponry), the control of events and the efficiency of mutual deterrence, three themes difficult to reconcile³³. These two

„How a road on China and India's border led to the power's worst stand-off in decades”, in *South China Morning Post*, 6 iulie 2017, URL: <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2101578/how-road-china-and-indias-border-led-two-powers-worst>, accessed on April 5, 2019.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ Jonah Blank, “Thank You for Being a Friend. Pakistan and China's Almost Alliance”, in *Foreign Affairs*, 15 October 2015, URL: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-10-15/thank-you-being-friend>, accessed on April 5, 2019.

³² Aymeric Chauprade, Francois Thruval, *op. cit.*

³³ K. Waltz, *op. cit.*; S. Sagan, *op. cit.*

states are not part of the NPT and their security arrangements, the agreements with US, China or Russia may prove to be insufficient as substitutes. Any conflict between them, even a small one, raise fears about the nuclear stability.

The flow of events is also uncertain. The terrorist organization Jaish-e-Mohammad organized a bloody attack on the Kashmiri Indian police, with over 40 deaths (14th February)³⁴. The group is considered to be close to Pakistani authorities, which were blamed by their New Delhi counterparts, but they denied any involvement, while Beijing was also criticized for supporting the former at UN, and, to further complicate matters, Western experts are thinking that Jaish-e-Mohammad had previously been linked with the Talibans and Al-Qaeda³⁵.

India pursued a strong hand policy and bombed targets in the Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, in Balakot, assumed to belong to Jaish-e-Mohammad organization. During the operation an airplane, probably a MiG-21 *Bison* (modernized) was taken down³⁶. New Delhi stated it was a success and that it hit a F-16 of the rival forces, but both statements are controversial and criticized by the media and Western experts, clear proofs are not public, thus the debates are still going on³⁷. Pakistan replied with its own air

³⁴ ***, “Pulama terror attack: Timeline of conflict between India and Pakistan”, in *Gulf News*, 27 February 2019, URL: <https://gulfnews.com/world/asia/pulwama-terror-attack-timeline-of-conflict-between-india-and-pakistan-1.1551170592587>, accessed on April 3, 2019.

³⁵ Amy Kazmin, “Kashmir terror attack revives old India-China tensions”, in *Financial Times*, 18 February 2019, URL: <https://www.ft.com/content/6068703c-335d-11e9-bb0c-42459962a812>, (accessed 9 April 2019); ***, „Pulwama attack: What is militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad”, in *BBC News*, 15 February 2019, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47249982>, accessed on April 7, 2019.

³⁶ Joseph Treviyhick, “We Cut Through the Conflicting Claims and Misinformation Surrounding India's Strikes on Pakistan”, in *The Drive*, 7 March 2019, URL: <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26836/we-cut-through-the-conflicting-claims-and-misinformation-surrounding-indias-strikes-on-pakistan>, accessed on April 7, 2019.

³⁷ Simon Scarr, Chris Inton, Han Hueng, “An air strike and its aftermath”, in *Reuters*, 6 March 2016, URL: <https://graphics.reuters.com/INDIA-KASHMIR/010090XM162/index.html>, accessed on April 7; Joseph Treviyhick, *op. cit.*; Marcus Hellyer, Nathan RUSER, Aakriti Bachhawat, “India's Balakot Airstrike Shows How Hard Precision



actions in Kashmir, but in this case also, further clarification must be made³⁸.

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi promoted this tough policy, probably an option difficult to avoid for the leader of the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with only a few weeks before general elections³⁹. His popularity increased from 31% to 51%, despite the aforementioned criticism and won, in the end, this competition⁴⁰. On the other side, also nationalistic, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Imran Khan, invoked the risk of an accidental nuclear war, which involved the tensions between the two sides⁴¹.

The great powers called for calm, being probably preoccupied by an escalation of the conflict, when the evolution of events on the ground had become quite complicated, and the struggles in Kashmir partly coincided with the meeting between US and North Korean leaders, which took place in Vietnam. The American President, Donald Trump, stated that it was a “dangerous situation” and promoted a policy of relaxation, including through mediation; for their part, Russia and China stated that India and

Pakistan must give up confrontations⁴². While credible information about motivations and events are still lacking, for now, it is not clear which factor was more important⁴³.

Once Islamabad returned the captured Indian pilot, the crisis seems to have ended, but without significant diplomatic results⁴⁴. Both sides proved their ability to use force, especially in the Kashmir region, but one cannot see profound change of strategy or of objective. The critics of New Delhi strategy suggested the presence of many limits for this type of instrument⁴⁵.

Despite the diplomatic interventions, it is not clear the extend of Great Power’s influence upon this conflict. US improved its relationship with India, while its alliance with Pakistan had some problems, but it still needs both of them, in the regional affairs (Afghanistan etc.), and considering the relationship with

Bombing Is”, in *The National Interest*, March 27, 2019, URL: <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/indias-balakot-airstrike-shows-how-hard-precision-bombing-49397>, accessed on April 7, 2019.

³⁸ Joseph Treviyhick, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Fayaz Bukhari, Sanjeev Miglani, “India’s PM Modi warns Pakistan of strong response to Kashmir attack”, in *Reuters*, 15 February 2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir/indias-pm-modi-warns-pakistan-of-strong-response-to-kashmir-attack-idUSKCN1Q40HS>, accessed on April 8, 2019.

⁴⁰ ***, “National security takes over jobs as key concern, PM Modi’s popularity on the rise after Pulwama: Survey”, in *India Today*, 11 March 2019, URL: <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/lok-sabha-2019/story/national-security-takes-over-jobs-as-key-concern-pm-modi-popularity-on-the-rise-survey-1475731-2019-03-11>, accessed on April 15, 2019; Michael Safi, “India election results 2019: Modi claims landslide victory”, in *The Guardian*, 23 May 2019, URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/23/india-election-results-narendra-modi-bjp-victory>, accessed on April 8, 2019.

⁴¹ ***, “Wars are miscalculated, let’s talk: Imran tells Modi”, in *Khaleej Times*, 28 February 2019, URL: <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/pakistan/Live-Wars-are-miscalculated-lets-talk-Imran-to-Modi->, accessed on April 28, 2019.

⁴² Melissa Quinn, “Trump on India-Pakistan conflict: ‘Hopefully that’s going to be coming to an end’”, in *Washington Examiner*, 28 February 2019, URL: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/trump-on-india-pakistan-conflict-hopefully-thats-going-to-be-coming-to-an-end>, accessed on April 25, 2019; ***, “India, Pakistan facing ‘very dangerous situation’: Trump”, in *Khaleej Times*, February 23, 2019, URL: <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/americas/india-pakistan-facing-very-dangerous-situation-trump>, (accessed 17 April 2019); ***, “Trump Calls India-Pakistan Standoff ‘Very Dangerous’”, in *Radio Free Europe*, February 22, 2019, URL: <https://www.rferl.org/a/trump-calls-india-pakistan-standoff-very-dangerous-kashmir/29785785.html>, (accessed on April 13, 2019); ***, “China urges India, Pakistan to show restraint, seek dialogue”, in *The Economic Times*, 27 February 2019, URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-urges-india-pakistan-to-show-restraint-seek-dialogue/videoshow/68185063.cms>, (accessed on April 12, 2019); ***, “Russia Offers to Help Mediate Between India and Pakistan”, in *The Moscow Times*, 28 februarie 2019, URL: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/02/28/russia-offers-to-help-mediate-between-india-and-pakistan-a64662>, (accessed on April 17, 2019).

⁴³ Asif Shazad, Saad Sayeed, “Ex-cricketer Imran Khan elected prime minister of Pakistan”, in *Reuters*, 17 August 2018, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-primeminister/ex-cricketer-imran-khan-elected-prime-minister-of-pakistan-idUSKBN1L21E0>, accessed on April 17, 2019).

⁴⁴ James Schwemlein, “Trump Doesn’t Want to Play Peacemaker”, in *Foreign Policy*, March 5, 2019, URL: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/03/05/trump-doesnt-want-to-play-peacemaker-india-pakistan-war-pulwama/>, (accessed on April 17, 2019).

⁴⁵ S. Scarr, Ch. Inton, H. Huang, *op. cit.*



China. Controlling also a part of Kashmir, the Chinese decision-makers may have difficulties as potential mediators, while Russia lacks the influence of the former Soviet Union.

These events alluded to the difficulties the decision makers and the international communities are confronting with, when the number of nuclear armed states is growing. The forms of this conflict were diverse, even before the inventions of labels such as asymmetry, combining political means with classical ones, terrorism or guerrilla, nuclear proliferation organized crime and ambiguous relationships. The global and regional levels of interaction have also increased the complexity of things.

On the short run, the most likely prospect is the maintenance of the blockade and the conflict related to the Kashmir region, with a low level of tension, the return to the *status-quo*. The February crisis demonstrated that neither side can prevail under current conditions. Although it is difficult to establish with precision, on the surface, mutual nuclear deterrence kept things under control, from a certain point, at least, even if the stakes of confrontation have increased.

3. Nuclear armament, negotiation and the difficulty of concessions in North-Eastern Asia

While the nuclear weapons control regime is challenged and some of *de facto* nuclear weapon states are in open conflict, things are moving as far as preventing or at least controlling nuclear proliferation. Two summits were held in the first six months of 2019, one of success, the other failed, but the consequences remain to be seen. Alongside speculation regarding the construction of a nuclear plant in Saudi Arabia and the tensions created by the Iranian nuclear file, this fact shows us how difficult diplomacy can sometimes be⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Timothy Gardner, "U.S. energy secretary unsure if Saudi nuclear approvals came after Khashougi killing", in *Reuters*, 28 March 2019, URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-saudi-nuclearpower-perry/u-s-energy-secretary-unsure-if-saudi-nuclear-approvals-came-after-khashoggi-killing-idUSKCN1R92K4>, accessed on April 20, 2019; Jennifer Hansler, Zachary Cohen, "US announces new round of

Thus, the second high-level meeting between US president, Donald Trump and North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, from Panmunjon, at the border between the two Korean states (June 30) was considered as an important moment from a political and a public relations point of view⁴⁷. According to *BBC*, the two decision-makers agreed to continue the negotiations, which were blocked, but the details remained ambiguous⁴⁸. The US president went, for the first time, on the North Korean territory⁴⁹.

Previously, the first summit, from 27-28 February, had ended unexpectedly, since neither party made significant concessions⁵⁰. Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, it coincided with the escalation of the Kashmir conflict. According to US President, his counterpart demanded to remove all sanctions imposed to North Korea, in exchange for the dismantling of Yongbyon nuclear reactor, an insufficient proposal, since it did not cover the entire nuclear program⁵¹.

Last year, the two decision makers announced a political agreement on several issues, including the one in the respective arsenal⁵². This deal followed a series of crises, incendiary statements and testing, which took part in most of 2017, and was welcomed by the international

sanctions on Iran", in *CNN*, March 22, 2019, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/22/politics/state-treasury-iran-sanctions/index.html>, (accessed on April 20, 2019).

⁴⁷ ***, "US-North Korea: Trump and Kim agree to restart talks in historic meeting", in *BBC*, June 30, 2019, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-48814975>, accessed on June 30, 2019.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ ***, "Timeline, North Korean Nuclear Negotiations, 1985-2019", Council on Foreign Relations, URL: <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/north-korean-nuclear-negotiations>, accessed on June 30, 2019.

⁵⁰ Bill Birtles, "Trump-Kim meeting: The big moments from the dramatic summit in Vietnam", in *ABC News*, February 28, 2019, URL: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-02-28/trump-kim-summit-the-key-moments/10853000>, accessed on April 26, 2019.

⁵¹ Everett Rosenfeld, "Trump-Kim summit was cut short after North Korea demanded an end to sanctions", in *CNBC*, February 28, 2019, URL: <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/28/white-house-trump-kim-meetings-change-of-schedule.html>, accessed on April 26, 2019.

⁵² ***, "Trump-Kim summit: Second meeting by end of February", in *BBC News*, 18 January 2019, URL: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46927761>, accessed on April 26, 2019.



public opinion⁵³. The Phenian regime froze the program afterwards, but the deal did not include concrete deals and changes, which also attracted criticism⁵⁴.

The North Korean nuclear program started a few decades ago and led to the construction of an industrial base and a small number of nuclear warheads and missiles. International community's usual policies did not work very well in this case, when Phenian even overstated the size of its arsenal⁵⁵. North Korea denounced the NPT, negotiated with the West, broke a few agreements and is now at the third generation of leadership, following, apparently, the same type of policy⁵⁶.

When Trump administration took office, at the beginning of 2017, new problems emerged, with events intensifying during that year. The communist regime manifested its interest to develop ballistic nuclear missiles with thermonuclear weapons, going to another level. We are speaking here about a series of tests and launches, but also about some sensational statements, which resulted in major progress, especially considering the vectors⁵⁷.

It is maybe easy to foresee that the deadlock will continue, either as an exchange of criticism from both sides, or, similar to last year, in a form where, despite the political agreement, no major changes occurred. A lot of things depend on the way negotiation are pursued, on the offers received and on the question of fulfilling the promises. Neither side seems to be concerned about finding a fast solution.

A success here would represent a major gain for the Trump Administration, considering that the previous US decision-makers found no clear solutions, because, broadly speaking, there are not many options available and the deadlock seems to partially satisfy the actors involved. Both of these scenarios have many variants. For now, we are lacking sufficient information to

indicate probabilities, even intuitively, but caution in estimation is a virtue, especially in this case.

The INF treaty's crisis is raising a couple of questions, the most debated being about what will come after. As it was previously argued in this text, there are two extreme possibilities, an massive arming and a new negotiation, and between then one can find many possibilities, which may influence decisions and procedures inside NATO, for example, an issue such as arms control monitoring. These interactions may also have an effect on the NPT regime.

The relationship between India and Pakistan and the North Korean nuclear file have some similarities, because both deal with the consequences of arms races and conflicts, but, partly, for normative reasons, they are approached from a non-proliferation perspective, more than an arms control one, which is dominated by the US-Russia dyad. Between these two international regimes, there is a grey area of *ad hoc* norms, non-decisions, alongside principles and international resolutions, a situation which may be seen as both problematic and a proof of pragmatism. From here, a series of crisis and conflicts happened, but fortunately, most of them implied limited stakes, at least as long as great powers prestige was not an issue.

Like other American allies, Romania is a NATO member, an institution which includes also the extended deterrence provided by the US and a non-nuclear state, part of the NPT, with a certain national tradition in this area⁵⁸. For these reasons, the events presented have, at least, an informative value, beyond the curiosity and the interest raised by the decisions and actions themselves. Here is important to underline the heterogeneity of politics, goals and actions taken, in relation to the respective topic.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Andreas Lutsch, "Problem solved? The German Nuclear Question and West Germany's accession to the NPT (1967-1975)" and other studies from John Baylis, Yoko Iwama (coord.), *Joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Deterrence, Non-Proliferation and the American Alliance*, Routledge, f.l., 2019; Laurien Crump-Gabreels, "Non-proliferation under pressure. The nuclear debate within the Warsaw Pact, 1965-1968", in: Roland Popp, Liviu Horovitz, Andreas Wenger (coord.), *Negotiating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Origins of the nuclear order*, Routledge, f. l., 2017.

⁵³ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁵ ***, "North Korea Nuclear Timeline, Fast Facts", in *CNN Library*, March 22, 2019, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/29/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-timeline-fast-facts/index.html>, accessed on April 30, 2019.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*.



STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

with the Commandant and Rector of “Carol I” National Defence University, Gheorghe Calopăreanu, PhD Professor

The current interview was taken on the occasion of the National Defence University “Carol I” Commandant’s and Rector’s participation in the Conference of Commandants, which took place in Rome, Italy, between 28 and 30 of May, 2019.

The Conference of National Defence Institute Commandants (the Conference of Commandants – as it is best known, abbreviated CoC), is a three-day annual conference, organized by NATO Defence College (NDC), which brings together the Commandants of the national and other senior defense institutions of NATO, partners, *Non-NATO* entities (NNEs) private companies, universities, think-tanks and other academic bodies under the Chairmanship of the Commandant of the NDC. Traditionally organized during springtime, the Conference of Commandants provides a forum to encourage the exchange of information and ideas between authorities that share similar responsibilities in the field of higher education. In particular, the Conference assists in improving the academic programmes and educational methods, while promoting mutual understanding, awareness and identifying areas where defence colleges can offer mutual assistance or support to each other.

The first conference was held in Rome, from 24 to 26 May 1972. The annual meetings were organized in order to provide a forum in which those responsible for higher education could have fruitful exchange of views.

As a consequence of the changes in the security environment in the late 1980s, the Conference took on an important new dimension. According to the guidelines of the 1991 Rome Summit guidelines on fostering cooperation with the Central and East European countries in the field of education and training, the Conference was enlarged in 1992 to include a number of countries in the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with higher defence education establishments. In 2000, the Conference was further expanded to include the “Mediterranean Dialogue” partners.

With this enlargement, a dual format of the Conference was adopted. The first part was reserved for NATO Commandants, while the second part, the Enlarged Conference, was open to Commandants of higher education institutions in the field of defence in the countries of the Partnership for Peace and Mediterranean Dialogue. In 2003, the NATO-only first day of the Conference was dissolved¹.

¹ Source: Conference of Commandants, URL: <http://www.ndc.nato.int/outreach/outreach.php?icode=1>



- ❶ **Strategic Impact (SI):** *General, you have recently attended an important activity, organized by NATO, namely the Conference of Commandants (CoC). Can you give us details about this activity?*

Commandant and Rector of “Carol I” National Defence University, Gheorghe Calopăreanu, PhD Professor (GC): 70 years later, NATO’s historical mission has remained particularly relevant. With an increasing involvement of the partners in the efforts to develop military education, this event is serving more and more as a discussion forum to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas. For almost five decades, the Conference has been contributing to the improvement of educational programs, cooperation between the establishments involved in the military higher education process and mutual understanding, while also allowing participants to provide assistance and support to each other.

This year, between May 28 and 31, there took place the 48th edition of the Conference, which brought together 113 people, commandants and specialists from the Alliance, as well as partner states. The activity was chaired by NATO Defence College Commandant, Lieutenant General Chris Whitecross, and Lieutenant General Massimiliano Del Casale, from the Centre of Defence Higher Studies (CASD), who hosted the meeting.

- ❷ **SI:** *In this context, can you specify for the Strategic Impact readers what were the most important topics addressed at this edition of the Conference?*

GC: The topics discussed during the Annual Conference of Commandants of military higher education establishments in NATO, EU, PfP member states, Mediterranean Dialogue, the Istanbul Initiative and global partners stem from the current concerns of the North Atlantic Alliance and its allies. The main focus of this year’s edition was on *Leadership in NATO – Challenges for the Future*, theme which was chosen to explore the educational needs of future military leaders. The programme of the Conference focused on developing professional military education (PME) for future leaders, starting with the question: “How do we connect the next generation of leaders to the future security environment, in order for future leaders to think strategically, innovatively and effectively, to offer them the ability to function in the context of multiple changes?”

After a session entitled “NATO at 70: what future challenges for the Alliance?”, the discussions shifted from the perspective of future leaders on strategy and innovation. A special attention was paid to the „Thinking the Unthinkable” concept, which changes the context of leadership and shaped the Conference proceedings.

The rapidly evolving security environment was analysed in terms of global demographic trends and disruptive technologies. Against this background, the second day of the Conference opened with a case study on “NATO Science and Technology Organization Leadership”. Subsequently, leadership was scanned from a historical perspective, as well as in terms of future challenges – including planning elements.

During the second afternoon, three discussion groups were formed to debate issues related to postmodern military education, in particular the imperative to have strategic leadership studies of an inclusive nature, educational methods in preparing non-normative activities, creating educational programmes.



- ③ **IS:** *What novelties do you consider CoC brings to the Romanian academia and what is the impact of NDU's attendance at the Conference?*

GC: This conference is not focused on the developments that can be brought to the academia, but on developing a new approach on training future leaders, mostly from a strategic and political-military point of view and less from the operational level point of view. I invite you to imagine any security scenario that could only take place 10 years from now, under the conditions of technological development, in a field we are familiar with, such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, biotechnology, virtual reality or under the conditions of unforeseen demographic changes, border changes, migration, excessive urbanization or in the context of the emergence of revolutions, civil or religious wars. Now, imagine that this scenario could take place over 10 days, or even faster, over 10 hours. Having this idea in mind, we ask the question: what are the levers and the political, economic, military and technological instruments which the future leader must simultaneously work with so that the losses are minimized? In other words, it is not about training future commandants or specialists, but about future leaders, capable of activating the right levers, leaders who should come out of the clichés of standard procedures and who, first and foremost, be people with vision, high ability to forecast and, especially, very creative people having great ability to adapt in unforeseen situations.

- ④ **SI:** *We can state that this Conference is an important instrument of international cooperation. Do you consider that in this framework, one can identify and highlight other forms of cooperation?*

GC: It is true that the meetings between the commandants of the institutions of higher education set the background for exchanging ideas and projects and, depending on the institutional needs identified in each institution, various cooperation activities can be outlined, either multilaterally or bilaterally.

From the bilateral cooperation perspective, I recall that, three years ago, at the Conference of Commandants, I discussed with my Bulgarian counterpart and we agreed to jointly conduct a staff exercise involving the master's students from the Command and Staff Faculty from the two institutions, exercise that is carried out annually, alternatively, in Romania and Bulgaria. This is just one example of military cooperation initiated during CoC.

From a multilateral cooperation perspective, I wish to mention that, in 2007, at the proposal of the Defence University of Czech Republic, the Central European Forum on military education was initiated (CEFME). It is a regional form of cooperation that brings together the commandants from 10 military higher education institutions from Central Europe, namely Austria, Estonia, Croatia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Baltic College. Also, representatives of the NATO International Secretary (NATO IS) were present at each meeting. Meetings of representatives of military institutions were held twice a year, the first annual meeting being held during the CoC (having an informal role). Currently, however, there is no connection between the two events.

- ⑤ **SI:** *In the past, "Carol I" National Defence University hosted both a CoC edition, and a CEFME edition. What topics are considered within CEFME?*

GC: The country which hosts CEFME is designated by turn. "Carol I" National Defence University hosted a CEFME working meeting on April 5th, 2011, attended by commandants or representatives from military higher education institutions from Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Slovakia, Serbia, Romania, but also from NATO International Secretary.



I would like to mention some of the most important topics debated in the previous CEFME meetings, such as: the effects of the Bologna process on military higher education; the cooperation development in the fields of education, research and training in austerity conditions; developing a curriculum for a common strategic course – an idea in draft stage to which all participating states have contributed. Other important subjects make reference to introducing ERASMUS programmes into military higher education and creating a network of experts/professors/lecturers at the level of higher military institutions. At the same time, it was brought up for discussion the organization, process and updating of military education, scientific research and future cooperation possibilities between the parties, fitting in with the study programmes of the military higher education institutions over the three cycles, at European level. Last but not least, other topics discussed at the conference in previous years referred to cooperation regarding scientific publications, which means publishing articles in specialized journals of the partner institutions, as well as the possibility of expanding participation in this forum for other European countries.

Due to the fact that the topics debated within CEFME Conference in the last years have focused on aspects of cooperation regarding ERASMUS, scientific research in the technological field, as well as on fitting in with the study programmes of the higher military education institutions, especially for the undergraduate studies, we agreed with the commandants of the armed forces academies and, respectively, with the management of the Military Technical Academy, that they represent Romania at CEFME.

- ⑥ **SI:** *Regarding ERASMUS, considering NDU's international cooperation with traditional regional partners, how do you think this programme could be developed?*

GC: In 2014, “Carol I” National Defence University obtained Erasmus+ Charter for Higher Education, and, between 2014-2019 several inter-institutional agreements were concluded with European universities which were the framework for carrying out student, teaching and research staff mobility, out of which over 30 staff mobility (incoming and outgoing).

Our University complies with the standards required by the European Commission through the National Agency for Community Programs in the field of Education and Vocational Training regarding transparency, equal opportunities and respect for the principle of impartiality concerning the selection of students, staff and potential partners within Erasmus+ programme, while also understanding internationalisation as a main objective and a benchmark for increasing the quality of education.

Currently, eleven inter-institutional agreements are signed with the countries participating in the programme, within the action *KA103 – mobility projects in the field of higher education between the participating countries*, of which we mention the following: University of Defence in Brno, Czech republic; the Faculty of Business Administration in Turība, Latvia; “Matej Bel” University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, Armed Forces Academy “General Milan Rastislav Štefánik” in Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia; Military Academy “Georgi Sava Rakovski” in Sofia, Bulgaria; War Studies University, Warsaw, Poland; “Vasil Levski” National Military University in Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria.

In 2019, taking advantage of the opportunity to cooperate with universities in Greece, Turkey and Hungary, we have submitted a first project *KA107 – mobility projects in the field of higher education with partner countries*, hand in hand with the Military University “Alexandru cel Bun” in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, and working together in the “Educational for eDrone” project within ERASMUS+ programme has allowed signing the inter-institutional agreements with the State University from the Republic of Moldova and with the Sannio-Benevento University from Italy, starting-up the procedures for the foundation of such course in our university.



For the foreseeable future, there are steps to conclude Erasmus+ agreements both with universities from the participating countries in the Erasmus+ Programme, and also with military and civilian universities in Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia, partner countries of the European Union and, at the same time, traditional regional partners of our country.

7 **IS:** *Dwelling in the sphere of inter-institutional cooperation, what can you tell us about NDU's international cooperation?*

GC: The international cooperation activity of the institution comprises several components. On the one hand, there are activities that take place in Romania, and on the other hand there are the activities abroad. Although the annual budget of the international cooperation activities is not very friendly, and is, in most cases, insufficient for carrying out all the activities we plan, NDU attaches great importance to international cooperation activities.

NDU participates regularly in several high-profile international activities, such as: Conference of National Defence Institute Commandants (CoC), the European Military Academies Commandants' Seminar (EUMACS), PfP Consortium's Advanced Distributed Learning Working Group.

Our university is frequently hosting working visits of top brass representatives from defence ministries of NATO countries and partners, as well as NATO's Command and Force Structures, representatives of prestigious higher education and research institutions, and study visits of students from prestigious military education institutions. Also, "Carol I" NDU annually receives and trains foreign students who attend one of our study programmes.

Regarding the information-documentation visits hosted by NDU this academic year (o.n. 2018-2019), we were honoured to receive the documentation visit of NATO Defence College in Rome, taking place every two years, the visit of the students from the Institute of Advanced Studies in National Defence of France (IEHEDN) and the study trip of the National Defence College of the Armed Forces Military Academy "Alexandru cel Bun" from the Republic of Moldova. For our part, we organize study trips for our students and trainees at EU and NATO institutions in Brussels and at Garmisch-Partenkirchen, based on a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the "George Marshall" European Centre for Security Studies.

One positive aspect I would like to mention is the significant increase in the number of foreign trainees participating in study programs in our institution. In this academic year, the number of foreign trainees was more than double (144), compared to the previous year (67), most foreign trainees taking courses at the Regional Department of Defense Resources Management Studies (DRESMARA), followed by the Regional Department of Crisis Management and Multinational Operations (CMMOD/DRMCOM) where I used to teach, in my turn, before becoming Deputy Commandant, and later, Commandant of the University. Most of the students come from NATO partner countries, namely Georgia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Moldova, Azerbaijan and Ukraine.

Also, NDU sends, annually, young officers to be trained at the European Security and Defence College in Brussels, the NATO School in Oberammergau and "George Marshall" Center in Garmisch.

Regarding bilateral cooperation, NDU has an ongoing partnership with China, one of the directions of cooperation concerning the setting up of a laboratory for learning Chinese, since 2010, the only of this kind in the region, at least, at that time.

Another partner with whom we have a special collaboration is Bulgaria. Together, we have carried out, during the last three years, *Muntenia* staff exercise, in turns in Romania and Bulgaria, with participation of the master students from the Command and Staff Faculty within NDU and from the Military Academy "George Rakovski", which I have mentioned earlier.



I would also like to point out that NDU is actively involved in NATO's Defence Enhancement Education Programme (DEEP), aimed at providing assistance and support for the reform of the military education system and institutions in the NATO partner countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, respectively the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan, North Macedonia and more recently, Iraq, all of this activities benefiting from full NATO funding. In recognition for the NDU's efforts in this programme, our institution was requested and offered to ensure the position of DEEP national coordinator institution for Afghanistan and the Republic of Moldova as of 2014 and 2015, respectively. Also, related to this programme, I would like to mention that NDU is an integral part of NATO's Education Development Working Group.

International cooperation in the field of research and publications is embodied in the participation of NDU professors/researchers in conferences abroad, of the one part, and in receiving representatives of similar institutions at our conferences, their papers being published in the Conference Proceedings, and indexed in international databases. Because of lack of funds, I must say, with regret, that there is a minimum annual participation of experts and researchers at international scientific conferences, so that, this academic year, only four members went to three scientific events. Of these, I would like to mention the joint deployment of two scientific events, by NDU and AFMA from the Republic of Moldova, in May of this year, namely: CDSSS/NDU organized the International Seminar "Regional Cooperation – a Tool for Achieving Security", and in Chisinau took place, at the same time, the International Conference "Strategic Security Environment: Challenges and trends. MSSPT-2019", in which CDSSS/NDU had the role of co-organizer.

In the past years, we have developed a more consistent cooperation regarding participation in scientific events along with partners in the region – Hungary, Czech Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria.

Complementary, a number of international activities are carried out under the auspices of European – funded projects in which NDU is a partner, ongoing projects this year being PYTHIA and ECHO projects.

At the same time, NDU exchanges scientific publications with partners: for example, NDU is sending *Strategic Impact* journal worldwide to 45 institutions with similar interests, receiving, in turn, prestigious publications, such as *Connections Quarterly Journal* published by the PfP Consortium, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, *Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift*, *RUSI* (Royal United Services Institute) *Journal, per Concordiam*, from George C. Marshall Center and other publications abroad.

- 8 **IS:** *If we refer strictly to the Romanian military education, what do you consider to be its strengths? What about its weaknesses? What improvements could be brought in the field?*

GC: From my position, I can provide an answer regarding the institution I manage and represent. I can say that the uniqueness of "Carol I" NDU in the Romanian academia represents both its strong point and the biggest disadvantage of our university. I am saying this because our university has an educational offer differently conceptualized in comparison with the other institutions of higher education and military education in Romania, given the fundamental mission of educating and training commandants, general staff officers as well as military and civilian experts, at university and post-graduate level, for positions of expertise and command at superior level in the fields of *Military Sciences* and *National Security Intelligence*.

A strong point of the institution is its tradition of excellence, established through hard work for 130 years, recognized and confirmed by the positive evaluations on the educational processes, expressed by both our students and the leaders of military or civilian institutions in which they carried out their activity after completing their studies.



On the other hand, being part of the military system, at the same time with the incremental connection to the educational system, structured on a predominantly civilian framework, permanently places our institution at the junction between the military and the civilian environment, which was also the main disadvantage of our university. It is only through the effort and perseverance of MoD leadership, teaching staff and university staff that the balance line is drawn between the military stoic character and the fluidity of internalization, dictated by our membership to the higher education system.

It should be emphasized that this aspect does not bypass any of the higher education institutions in the military system, all of which are faced with the permanent need to adapt to the specificity of two differently conceptualized systems. Our graduates will carry the imprint of patriotism, as they are continually prone to improve their knowledge, which is why we strive even more to develop an attachment to everything that the Romanian Army and its values within NATO mean. Here, our graduates are, perhaps, different from the international environment and the globalist vision promoted by other higher education institutions. Training officers with a global vision and deeply patriotic feelings is a difficult task, but, given our dedication and the exceptional character of the Romanian officer, I dare to say we succeed.

Another aspect worth mentioning and which may seem challenging, but within “Carol I” National Defence University has always been treated as an opportunity for permanent development, is to ensure the training of the land forces officers and to guarantee a set of skills in connected fields, such as strategic planning, security or geopolitical policies and analysis. The officer of a modern army is a true *Vitruvian man*, whose competences exceed the strict field of the specialization or his weapon. The modern officer knows both the national specificity and the particularities given by membership to international organizations such as NATO, UN, and the EU, is capable of geostrategic analysis, speaks a foreign language and is prepared to carry out any task professionally. We can say that the Romanian officer is the standard of glory of our army and is one of the biggest reasons for national pride.

Regarding the *improvements that could be made*, there are several aspects. But I invite you to take the time back, from a technological development perspective, and to remember a few assertions that had certainty value at the time:

- “*Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible*” – Lord Kelvin, 1895
- “*Airplanes are ...of no military value*” – Marshal Ferdinand Foch, 1911
- “*... (T)here is world market for maybe five computers*” – T. Watson, IBM Chairman, 1943

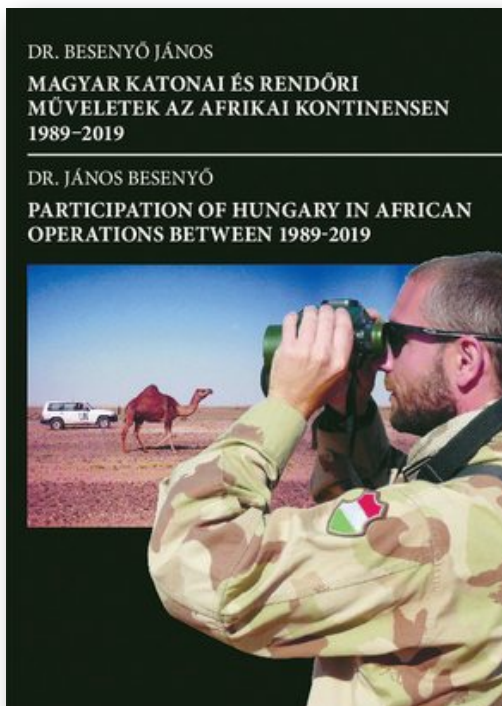
Also, in the last century, cyberspace was an unknown field. Compared to the present times, technological development in the military field has increased beyond our expectations. Now, I invite you to imagine the technological future. What will war of the future look like? What should the young student and master officers be studying so that they are prepared for what is to come?

Obviously, in trying to answer these questions, we should try to find solutions to introduce in NDU curricula new topics that have not been addressed so far and that would have a positive impact on the formation of future commandants as leaders with vision, creativity and strategic thinking, ready to adapt quickly to any form that future threats to the security environment might face.

Translation from Romanian language: Andreea Tudor, Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies, “Carol I” National Defence University, Bucharest, Romania.

BOOK REVIEW

Dr János Besenyő: Participation of Hungary in African Operations between 1989-2019



(Bilingual Edition: Hungarian/English)
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Dr János Besenyő has written an extremely timely, crucial and cutting edge tome, slim and poignant book. The more than one hundred pages volume contains the Hungarian original version and its English translation. Foreword writer Professor Rajnai, PhD (Dean and Head of the University of Óbuda's Security Studies Doctoral School) explains this by the practical needs of immersing the Budapest university's undergraduate students in the English professional idiom; the linguistic side of internationalization that, for reasons of Hungarian's oddly Finno-Ugric/Turkic grammatical structure, is harder to be understood by the most foreign students within the European Union.

The year 1989, that *annus mirabilis*, changed Hungary's foreign policy orientation in a major way. The author of this, hands-on volume, spent years on missions in Darfur (Sudan, now South Sudan) and Western Sahara, as well as being at the heart of Hungary's research efforts in the field of African Area Studies on politics. As an officer with field experience and a deep research commitment, Dr János Besenyő has unified these two strands of expertise. His voluminous research output, doctoral supervision activity, and usage of practical experience in the classroom and in his analyses, are notorious in Hungary.

A prime example of this is the present volume. Although, as he emphasizes, most state archives from around 1989 up to 2010 simply destroyed field produced documentation from the Hungarian participation in UN and EU missions in Africa (due to a misguided lack of interest in Africa after Hungary's tumultuous transition), the author of this volume spared no effort in tracking the participants (all 398 of them) and their respective private archives for information that otherwise could not be accessed.

Commendable in itself, this is not the only unique strength of this volume. The author shows sensitivity to politico-economical situations, human rights issues, transitional justice, while exercising his analytical prowess. While strong on each of his subjects (the Hungarian participation in missions such as UNTAG, Namibia; UNAVEM II, Angola; ONUMOZ in Mozambique; MINURSO in Western Sahara; ECOMOG/ECOWAS backed operations in Liberia; UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone; MINUCI in Cote d'Ivoire; and EU's DRC ARTEMIS; EUFOR CHAD/RCA; EU Naval Operations in the Somali Republic; EUFOR Libya; EUTM Mali: a training mission; and others), he is most deeply engaged with Western Sahara (p. 25 and ff.) and Darfur.



Not neglecting technical requirements for the missions and the early problems with recruitment (Hungary's Foreign Ministry had to second diplomatic personnel to the Army in reserve ranks in order to fill some of the positions at the time of transition when the English language was rare among both police and army officers in the country), the author also deals with the structural shift from classical peacekeeping operations to peacebuilding, transitional justice, women's rights, conflict resolution and mediation, and trust building mechanisms including gun control, anti-smuggling operations, anti-gun running steps, law and order issues, reintegration of former combatants to post-conflict civilian societies. The author does not do this with some kind of wide eyed attitude that would neglect Realpolitik: he gives a critical analysis of France's strategically motivated 'realist' meddling in many instances in the wider Soudan, mentions the tectonic changes with the arrival of BRIC on the international scene, and Africa's heightened importance in the 2000s due to the Chinese threat and terrorism related problems that have appeared in many African societies, prompting US and Western concerns.

The Hungarian engagement is thus presented as a gateway into Africa during an otherwise (sadly) really low intensity phase of Hungarian-African relations (1989-2010 generally, with repercussions even up to present). Closing of Hungarian Embassies, closing a Tropical Area Studies Centre at the University of Gödöllő, the virtual disappearance from the news of Africa in Hungary in the 1990s and early 2000s, were phenomena that defined this sphere of international relations in this period of time. Research results that appeared at the University of Pécs and other places, and the missions that the author focuses on in the tome, are the exceptions.

We might make reference of the fact that Hungary was not alone in this predicament in the 1990s. Giddy about joining global governance structures and missions but bereft of any larger purpose in the South, we might remember how Russia completely withdrew from Africa in the same decade (and with it did Western-oriented Bulgaria, the newly independent nations of the West Balkans, Central Asia, and so did Poland and others). More than that, a lull in the interest in Africa in the 1990s, when it was seen to have lost all strategic value with the disappearance of the Soviet threat, was a global phenomenon. Claude Ake, the famous Nigerian social scientist said of the era that this was when Africa disappeared from the map.

The author of this book tackles this problem with incredibly dense information on the missions, including a magnificent collection of personal photos from the field obtained from participants. And while the maps of the volume are magnificent, Hungarian officers fraternizing with Janjaweed and Sahrawi insurgents presents human interest stories of a relatable kind.

As a textbook and reference book, the volume serves a double purpose: it is a fantastic introduction for undergraduates into the world of peacebuilding operations in general, and Central European, Hungarian participation in them in particular. Secondly, perhaps for graduate students, it is a great resource on individual conflicts and operations. The fact that it is a bilingual edition is the icing on the cake.

Dr János Besenyő has recently enriched the discourse within the global Security Studies community with a sweeping critique of Barry Buzan's securitization theory¹ as it applied to the defeat of ISIS of Iraqi Kurdistan (where he regularly does field research),² engaged in a critical and extremely timely assessment of Russia's new security role in Africa,³ opened *an entirely new field of focus* for our understanding in both the International Relations and Security fields of the new, and

¹ Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen: *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

² "Barry Buzan's securitization theory and the case of Iraqi Kurdish military action against ISIS in 2014", *Journal of Security and Sustainability Issues* 8(3): 295-306., 2019, <http://doi.org/10.9770/jssi.2019.8.3>

³ Janos Besenyő, "The Africa Policy of Russia", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 31:1, 132-153, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2018.1555976.



terrifying role of forest fires as a form of terrorism,⁴ and a case study of Islamic State and its human trafficking practice.⁵ These are grand theoretical and practical issues that command worldwide attention in IR and Security Studies circles.

However, his work entitled *Participation of Hungary in African Operations between 1989-2019* is a hands-on tome that is motivated by personal experience and that comprises lessons especially for young officers, diplomats and NGO workers who hail from the South-East European region. It is now common knowledge that Africa is the continent of the future,⁶ and as for the author's native Hungary it has also recognized Africa's importance in trade, international cooperation, and as this volume also testifies, international cooperation. I salute the author for drawing our attention to such an important, emerging angle of international understanding and responsibility.

Eszter LUKÁCS, Ph.D.

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⁵ Janos Besenyő, "The Islamic State and its human trafficking practice", *Strategic Impact (Romania)* (ISSN: 1841-5784) (eISSN: 1824-9904) No. 3/2016: (60) pp. 15-21, (2016), URL: http://cssas.unap.ro/en/pdf_periodicals/si60.swf, accessed on 10.15.19.

⁶ Vijay Gunther, Robert A. Mahajan, *Africa Rising*, Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

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WORKSHOP

“Romania2019.EU: common interests and solutions” ***- Thursday, 21 March 2019 -***

The Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies within “Carol I” National Defense University organized, Thursday, March 21 2019, the Workshop with the theme “Romania2019.EU: common interests and solutions”.

The scientific event aimed to provide an opportunity for disseminating the results of professional expertise and scientific research of practitioners and theoreticians regarding mechanisms of solid and coherent inter-institutional cooperation, taking into account the following objectives:

- highlighting and analyzing the priorities of the Romanian Presidency at the EU Council;
- analyzing long-term objectives, in the context of promoting efficient strategies in the economic field, especially commercial and financial, as well as cultural;
- identifying and analyzing the factors, characteristics, goals and capabilities that must be taken into account during the stages of the reflection process on how to develop and implement the European project;
- promoting common interests and solutions in the negotiation process for the development and implementation of the Community acquis and, implicitly, for strengthening the cooperation of the Union Member States.

The scientific event was addressed to professors and researchers from educational and research institutions, as well as to master, doctoral and post-doctoral students with concerns in the field.

Participants benefited from the experience and the expertise of specialists from the Defence Staff, the General Staffs of the categories of forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Land Forces Academy.



Group photograph from the Workshop



INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

“Regional cooperation – a tool for achieving security”

- Thursday, 23 May 2019 -

Also, on May 23, 2019, in the Senate Hall of “Carol I” National Defence University was held the International Seminar “Regional Cooperation – a tool for achieving security”, organized by CDSSS in cooperation with the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies of the Military Academy of Armed Forces “Alexandru cel Bun”, Republic of Moldova. At the same time, our partners organized, in Chisinau, the International Conference “Strategic security environment: Challenges and trends. MSSPT-2019”, in which CDSSS played the role of co-organizer.



Group photography from the International Seminar

During the Seminar, the speakers emphasized the importance of regional cooperation in areas such as the management of cross-border crises through NATO instruments and EU mechanisms, regarding both the international missions in which the Romanian Armed Forces and other institutions in the national security system actively participate. Moreover, a central point of the debates was the issue of the security of the Black Sea Region and of the way in which the mentioned tools and mechanisms converge to achieve regional security.

Thus, the audience – made up of military attachés (of the People's Republic of China, the United Mexican States and Ukraine), researchers, professors and students – enjoyed the participation of



Group photography from the International AMFA Conference

professionals in the mentioned fields, representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the structures of the Defence Staff, HQ Multinational Division South-East (MND-SE), General Inspectorate of the Romanian Police, National Contact Point FRONTEX, Protection and Guard Service, General Inspectorate for Emergency Situations.

At each edition, the Scientific Seminar organized by the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies aims to address topical and wide-ranging subjects and to bring together experts and notorious specialists from the country and abroad.

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ACTIVITIES OF THE CENTRE FOR DEFENCE AND SECURITY STRATEGIC STUDIES

JANUARY - JUNE 2019

In the first semester of 2019, the Centre for Defence and Security Strategic Studies (CDSSS) organised four scientific events and published two research papers, as well as a number of articles.

In view of the fact that Romania exercised the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time, CDSSS held, on 21 of March, a **Workshop** with the theme “*Romania2019.EU – Common Interests and Solutions*”, attended by representatives of Ministry of National Defence and Ministry of Internal Affairs.

On 23 of May, CDSSS organized the **International Seminar** on “*Regional Cooperation – A Tool for Achieving Security*”, more details about the event being highlighted in the Scientific Event rubric of this edition.

Furthermore, in this first semester, **two public lectures were held at the National Military Circle**, on the following topics: *Romania – NATO, 15 years after Accession. Contribution to Crisis Response Operations NA 5*, lectured by Colonel Florian Cîrciumaru, PhD, Director of the Centre, and *Refugee and Illegal Migrant in EU: from Humanitarian Crisis to Political Debate Topic*, delivered by Senior Researcher Alexandra Sarcinschi PhD.

Regarding the centre’s publications, there are outlined **two research papers**, one on *Western Balkan Conflicts – Frozen Wars? Western Balkan Region in the European Security Context*, written by Cristina Bogzeanu, PhD Senior Researcher, and one entitled *Perspectives and Implications of the Refugee and Illegal Migrant Crisis in Europe. Socio-cultural Challenges Over the Next 50 Years*, written by Senior Researcher Alexandra Sarcinschi and Researcher Cătălina Todor, as co-author.

At the same time, in **Strategic Colloquium**, the monthly supplement of *Strategic Impact* journal, there were published a series of articles on topics related to national and international security, by PhD students and BA or MA students of “Carol I” National Defence University, as follows: “*Virtual Environment and International Law of Armed Conflict – Jus in Bello*”, “*Civil Military Cooperation in Information Operations*”, “*Civil-Military Cooperation in UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)*”, “*Aspects on Justice and Home Affairs in the EU Administrative Area*”, “*The Cultural Conflict and Acculturation*”.

In the following period, CDSSS is engaged in the steps regarding the organization of the **International Scientific Conference STRATEGIES XXI**, with the theme “*The Complex and Dynamic Nature of the Security Environment*”, which is to take place in November, 14-15, 2019.

Details about the scientific activities organized by CDSSS can be found on the website at: <http://cssas.unap.ro/en/events.htm>.

Raluca STAN*

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GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

We welcome those interested in publishing articles in the bilingual academic journal *Strategic Impact*, while subjecting their attention towards aspects to consider upon drafting their articles.

MAIN SELECTION CRITERIA are the following:

- ✓ **Compliance with the thematic area of the journal – security and strategic studies** and the following topics: political-military topical aspects, trends and perspectives in security, defence, geopolitics and geostrategies, international relations, intelligence, information society, peace and war, conflict management, military strategy, cyber-security;
- ✓ **Originality** of the paper – own argumentation; novelty character – not priorly published;
- ✓ **Quality of the scientific content** – neutral, objective style, argumentation of statements and mentioning of all references used;
- ✓ **A relevant bibliography**, comprising recent and prestigious specialized works, including books, presented according to herein model;
- ✓ **English** language shall meet academic standards (British or American usage is accepted, but not a mixture of these). Romanian authors shall provide both Romanian and English versions of the text.
- ✓ **Adequacy to the editorial standards adopted by the journal.**

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- ✓ **Article length** may vary between **6 and 12 pages** (25.000 - 50.000 words), including bibliography and notes, tables and figures, if any.
- ✓ **Page settings** margins - 2 cm, A 4 format.
- ✓ The article shall be written in **Times New Roman font, size 12, one-line spacing.**
- ✓ The document shall be saved as Word (.doc/.docx). The name of the document shall contain the author's name.

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- ✓ **Title** (centred, capital, bold characters, font 24).
- ✓ **A short presentation of the author**, comprising the following elements: given name, last name (the latter shall be written in capital letters, to avoid confusion), main institutional affiliation and position held, military rank, academic title, scientific title (PhD. title or PhD. Candidate – domain and university), city and country of residence, e-mail address.
- ✓ A relevant **abstract**, not to exceed 150 words (italic characters).
- ✓ 6-8 relevant **keywords** (italic characters).
- ✓ **Introduction / preliminary considerations.**
- ✓ **2 - 4 chapters** (numbered, starting with 1) (subchapters if applicable).
- ✓ **Conclusions.**
- ✓ **Tables / graphics / figures**, if they are useful for the argumentation, with reference made in the text. They shall be also sent in .jpeg / .png / .tiff format as well.

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



REFERENCES

The article shall have footnotes and bibliography, in the form seen below. Titles of works shall be mentioned in the language in which they were consulted, with transliteration in Latin alphabet if there is the case and, preferably, translation in English language of the titles.

FOOTNOTES

The title of an article is marked between inverted commas, and the name of the journals and of books is marked in italic characters.

Example of book: Joshua S. Goldstein; Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations*, Longman Publishing house, 2010, pp. 356-382.

Example of article: Gheorghe Calopăreanu, "Providing Security through Education and Training in the European Union" in *Strategic Impact* no. 2 /2013, Bucharest, "Carol I" National Defence University.

Electronic sources shall be indicated in full, at the same time mentioning what the source represents (in the case of endnotes, the following mention shall be made: accessed on month, day, year).

Example of article consulted in the Internet: John N. Nielsen, "Strategic Shock in North Africa", in *Grand strategy: the View from Oregon*, URL: <http://geopoliticus.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/strategic-shock-in-north-africa/>, accessed on 10.03.2015.

Example of official document consulted on the Internet: Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on the EU's comprehensive approach, Bruxelles, 2014, p. 1, URL https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/142552.pdf, accessed on 06.01.2018.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

It shall contain all studied works, numbered, in alphabetical order, as seen below.

Example of book: GOLDSTEIN, Joshua S.; PEVEHOUSE, Jon C., *International Relations*, Longman Publishing house, 2010.

Example of article: CALOPĂREANU, Gheorghe, "Providing Security through Education and Training in the European Union" in *Strategic Impact* no. 2 /2013, Bucharest, "Carol I" National Defence University.

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Example of article: NIELSEN, John N., "Strategic Shock in North Africa", in *Grand strategy: the View from Oregon*, <http://geopoliticus.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/strategic-shock-in-north-africa/>.

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