

THE INVOLVEMENT OF ROMANIAN MILITARY LEADERS IN THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND COUNTRY DEFENCE IN RECENT GEOPOLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

*Major General (Ret.) Associate Professor Constantin MINCU, PhD**

Abstract *Many political and military analysts from NATO and non-NATO countries agree, almost unanimously, that for the last 10 years the world has entered a dangerous state of turmoil. From the resurgence and extreme aggression of Islamic fundamentalism to the emergence of new nuclear weapon holders in state-dictatorships and culminating with the political, propaganda, economic and military aggression of the Russian Federation (Georgia-2008, Ukraine - 2014 - up to date) - all these developments must give reasons to worry to the responsible world leaders.*

In this complicated geopolitical context, Romania as a European member-state of the European Union and of NATO has the obligation to remain vigilant on a permanent basis, contributing in good faith to the collective defence, while strengthening its internal democracy.

An important role must also be played by the current Romanian military leaders, who have to give up shyness and passivity, to present courageously to the political leaders, of course within the provisions of the Constitution and the laws of the country, the serious problems facing the Romanian Armed Forces and consequently, Romanian defence.

Keywords: *military leaders, NATO, EU, Islamic fundamentalism, the Russian Federation, Romanian Armed Forces.*

* Entitled member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists, Member of the Honorary Council of the Academy of Romania Scientists, Scientific Secretary of the Military Sciences Section, Phone: 0722.303.015, email: mincu_constantin@yahoo.com.

1. Introduction

I think it is appropriate to take a look at the political map of the world. We will find, without much surprise, that on all continents there are issues in dispute between states, some of them with potential for imminent military confrontation, and others in already hot war zones. In almost all areas of conflict, the great powers are present, having direct interests in the political, economic, military and other nature field, caring to a minimum extent about humanitarian considerations and the fate of the populations - an object of bargaining and pressure.

Various political and military analysts, including Romanians, draw attention to the main dangers threatening the peace of the world, among which the Russian Federation, North Korea, the Islamic State and some resurgent and terrorist movements in the Middle East, Africa and South America.

These are also added the old and new separatist and autonomist movements that haunt Europe with a destructive effect on European unity, peace and well-being of more than 500 million people. A legitimate question arises - who is it that wants and why the destruction of the political and military unity of the EU and NATO. The answer is not too hard to guess.

2. Europe, Asia, US and the Russian Federation policies

2.1. The Russian Federation

The Russian Federation under the current authoritarian leadership of President Vladimir Putin (accompanied by a welded *siloviki* team) quickly and resolutely intends to return to the status of a great power, to the parity with the US, aspiring to the step by step revival of the former USSR, at first by making itself heard to the former Soviet republics, and later expanding political, economic and military influence on its “close vicinity” that can be up to Berlin and then to the Atlantic.

Only those who are naive and unfamiliar to world-wide geopolitical games do not see that the Russian Federation’s political, propaganda, cyber, economic and military actions are continually and aggressively directed against the West, aiming at destroying the political and military cohesion of the EU and NATO.

It is worth studying the books of Russian authors such as Mark Solonin¹ and Victor Suvorov² to find that Russians and Russian politics have not changed over the past 300 years.³ Although they have the largest territory in the world, with immense resources, they want even more.

The powers of the West, headed by the United States, should be more and more aware of whom they are dealing with and taking defensive measures in time.

From my article published in the Review of Military Sciences, of the Military Sciences Section of the Romanian Academy of Scientists, no. 3/2017, entitled “The Russian Federation and the rest of the world”, I brought to attention some of the main coordinates of the Eastern Empire⁴ policy, of which I will only mention some ideas.

Thus, it can be taken from publicly available information, that the Russian Federation has had, has, and will have an aggressive behaviour, first and foremost towards its neighbours and not only (see also the interview given by Armand Goșu, published on Hotnews.ro, 06.11.2017)⁵:

- Maintaining and amplifying conflicts between the Caucasus states;
- Direct military aggression against Georgia;
- The annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the *de facto* breakdown of the East of Ukraine, by hybrid warfare, but also by direct aggression;
- The destruction of Chechnya and its capital;
- The full involvement in Syria in favour of Bashar al Assad’s dictatorial regime and support for North Korea and Iran to hold nuclear weapon delivery vectors;
- The proliferation of threats of the use of force against the Baltic States, Poland and Romania;
- Opening new military bases abroad;

¹ Mark Solonin, *Butoiul și cercurile*, Editura Polirom, București, 2012.

² Victor Suvorov, *Spărgătorul de gheață*, Editura Polirom, București, 2010 și *Ziua M*, Editura Polirom, București, 2011.

³ Gheorghe Calopăreanu, *Regionalizarea securității în Europa Centrală*, Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare „Carol I”, București, 2011, pp. 22-75.

⁴ Major General (rez.) Associate Professor Constantin Mincu, PhD, *Federația Rusă și restul lumii*, Revista de Științe Militare, Nr. 3/2017.

⁵ Armand Goșu, Interviu, site: www.Hotnews.ro, 06.11.2017.

*THE INVOLVEMENT OF ROMANIAN MILITARY LEADERS
IN THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND COUNTRY DEFENCE
IN RECENT GEOPOLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES*

- The unprecedented intensification, after 1991, of aviation bombing and nuclear submarines in the vicinity of the United States, Great Britain, the Nordic countries, etc.

- Deploying large-scale military exercises near the Western border of the Russian Federation, with more than 100,000 troops and a few thousand tanks and armoured carriers, although Russian officials have declared serenely (in the known *moskirovka* style) that there were at most 13,000 soldiers. These were the combined military exercises West - ZAPAD, 2017, which took place between September 14-20, 2017⁶.

- The expulsion or murder of opposition politicians, journalists and some of the Russian secret services defected agents. The best known is the case of Alexander Litvinenko, assassinated in London in November 2006⁷.

It is worth considering the analysis made by the political-military analyst Iulian Chifu, made in the solid and well-documented material "The Mosaic of Security Threats to the Abrupt Changes of the Trends of Evolution, Down to the Black Sea"⁸:

- The Black Sea region is directly affected by global security threats - most notably are nuclear and cyber, with a major impact - but especially as outlook for the evolution of European crises, especially those of rethinking the future of Europe that divides or creates cohesion, creates faults or ranks 2 and 3 countries among the members in the European Union;

- In the wider Black Sea region, the latest developments show **sudden changes in states' trends of evolution**, especially in the frozen conflicts area, where Ukraine in self-created turmoil and crisis through Saakashvili, speculated by the opposition but creating vulnerabilities easy to speculate by the Russian eastern neighbour, and Armenia signals publicly sensitive feelings, options, and strategic orientations at the population level.

- The space for negotiation and dialogue on the perspective to solve crisis driven of a race to the nuclear weapon mounted on a carrier rocket capable of reaching any place in the world has narrowed terribly after the repeated defiance of the North Korean leader.

⁶ <http://adevarul.ro/international/rusia/zapad-2017>.

⁷ Alan S. Cowell, *Moartea unui spion, povestea lui Alexandr Litvinenko*, Editura Litera International, București, 2009.

⁸ Iulian Chifu, <blogs/iulian.chifu1/19septembrie2017>.

- Such an irresponsible defiance is all the more dangerous as the US cannot let North Korea reach the point of operationalization of such a capability which would pave the way for a regime to blackmail the international community by violating non-proliferation agreements.

A particularly worrying aspect is the improvement and use of digital or cyber weapons by several states and already evidently by the Russian Federation which has directly got involved in influencing electoral processes in the United States, Britain, France, Germany and other states. For Russia, the neighbouring state of Ukraine has already become a test pole by blocking industrial processes and by taking over major critical infrastructure systems. So, **Dan Coats, director of the US National Intelligence**, argued, with clear evidence, that Russia “has taken on an increasingly aggressive cyber stance”.

Many of the weapons faced by the West today have been refined, developed and tested by Russia hackers in the war waged by Ukraine. Among the main threats mentioned in his report⁹, Coats presented possible digital threats to US critical infrastructure, including, or primarily, power grids, public utilities, or the command structure of protection bridges and gates of high security facilities, which thus would open up and create enormous threats to the population, including loss of lives.

By massive cyber-attacks on the Ukrainian energy systems in December 2015 and 2016, with thousands of people left without power for hours, Russia passed a red line, causing huge material damage and loss of life (in hospitals, nurseries, kindergartens and in other places). It is a clear demonstration of this limitless and unscrupulous war.

Another recognized expert, John McAfee, a leading specialist in the US antivirus industry¹⁰, points to major, often deadly, threats:

- At least four countries have cyber weapons capable of destroying another country’s electricity grid: China, the US, Russia and Israel.
- China is undoubtedly the country with the most powerful cyber weapons. The Chinese understood four decades ago that electronics and computers are essential to the future of weapons.

⁹ Dan Coats, US National Intelligence Director, Presentation at the Cybernetics Summit, Washington DC, September 2017.

¹⁰ HotNews.ro, Interview Vlad Barza taken to the American Antivirus Industry Specialist John McAfee, February 23, 2017.

- If a country did start a cyber war to destroy another state, the consequences would be catastrophic because we risk general destruction (author's note - here, Russia does not get involved in moral processes and tries to destroy cyber and military Ukraine).

- What would happen if America went completely out of power? We would all die, we would not have food, communications or emergency services, we would return to the Stone Age. A recent study presented to the Congress estimated that in two years 90% of Americans would die if we were out of electricity (author's note, the dramatic effects will also be on the population of any attacked country).

- Will there be a destructive attack on another state? It is too dangerous, and I think the world would not survive even if the attack were on a single country, because it would be retaliation. The difference between classical and cyber weapons is that it costs you a lot to build a nuclear bomb, but when a country builds a cyber weapon, it can make a million copies at a minimum cost because it merely involves digital data.

- Against fake news we cannot struggle with artificial intelligence software. If we, humans, are not able to judge what is false and what is not, how can we build software to do that?

- The various "Internet of things" devices are marketed with little care for informational security and no account is taken of how hackers think.

The mentioned interview - instructive and full of lessons is a wider one, and whoever is interested may study it entirely.

We must, however, take note that the complex and topical issue of cyber-attacks and cyberwar cannot be clarified in a simple journal article.

The goal is only to raise the awareness on these issues of those interested and to find the most effective protection solutions.

2.2. Europe

It is possible to elaborate, on the basis of the political events of the past 4-5 years, various possible scenarios of the evolution of the European Union over the next ten years.

The study of some of the papers, statements and positions taken by the main actors in the European construction goes from the optimistic scenario to the relatively short term accomplishment of a full political integration

into the so-called “United States of Europe”¹¹, to the variable of a more and more visible dissolution, due to a complexity of political, economic, financial, social and cultural factors. At this point, it is difficult to appreciate which trend has chances of success.

However, I think it is necessary to make an inventory of some of the causes that have weakened EU cohesion:

- The existence of an undemocratic and non-transparent structure for decision-making and the maintenance of a marginal role for the European Parliament;
- Practically, decisions are dictated by Germany and France affecting everyone and requiring other important European states to sometimes associate with them;
- Not solving the economic and financial difficulties that arose with the 2008-2012 crisis;
- *De facto* imposing a two-speed Europe by deepening the gap between Western European and Central European countries;
- Excessive bureaucracy and regulations that have frightened the business environment, but also ordinary citizens;
- Weakening the solidarity between European states and the assertion of national interests, to the detriment of EU treaties and founding principles (Great Britain - the Brexit process, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, but also other member countries);
- The questioning of the existence and expansion of the Schengen area due to the migrants’ crisis and reintroducing controls at the EU’s internal borders;
- Existence of political, economic and financial relations with non-EU countries (especially with the Russian Federation), affecting the legitimate interests of other Member States, neglecting the common interest (examples: Germany, France, Italy, Greece, and Hungary);
- Addressing the complex energy file from a purely national perspective, according to the “each one stands alone” principle (see “Nord Stream” case);

¹¹ Constantin Mincu, *Uniunea Europeană – Evoluții posibile în următorii zece ani*, Revista de Științe Militare a Academiei Oamenilor de Știință din România, Nr. 3/2016.

*THE INVOLVEMENT OF ROMANIAN MILITARY LEADERS
IN THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND COUNTRY DEFENCE
IN RECENT GEOPOLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES*

- Recently, abandoning the EU's neighbouring countries - the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia (probably to save Russia);
- Overcoming the interests of large multinational corporations at the expense of smaller companies and citizens;
- Great Britain's exit from the EU deepens the crisis and creates conditions for other failures;
- Resuscitation, often violent, of autonomous and secessionist tendencies in some European countries (Catalonia in Spain, Piedmont and Veneto in Italy and others);
- **Generalized disinterest** in common defence policies and the manifested weakness of military forces in member countries (as regards effective budgets, weapons systems, coherent policies, etc.).

There are some signs of optimism in presenting Jean-Claude Juncker's speech of 17 September 2017 in the "European Union situation" statement from which we recall:

- Solidarity, equality, and the rule of law as an absolute reference, and the replacement of brutal force with the force of law and justice - a great achievement of historic Europe in the first half of a common and peaceful European century.
- President Juncker says he has grasped the successive criticisms of recent EU developments;
- **Without a Eurozone parliament that divides, it does not jointly unite all of Europe at a single speed;**
- The need for a profound institutional reform to give the EU personality and strength;
- We will have to give back to the states those skills that are required, after thorough analysis.

How the European Union will respond to the causes that have weakened it as an organization will give meaning to evolution - closer integration or dissolution.

What the "Union" will be in the first semester of 2019 when Romania will take over the organization's half-year Presidency remains to be seen. However, it is clear from previous experience that the presidency of the smaller states could not in any way influence the important events, these being the self-assumptions of the main powers - Germany and France.

2.3. Asia

- The entire Asian continent from Japan to the Ural Mountains and from the Northern Arctic Ocean to Southern India faces many economic, political, military and demographic issues.

There is a perception that world public opinion is not aware yet of the major global threats that can be generated from the vast continent. Thus, we can make an inventory, even if a brief one:

- **The North Korean file.** The dictatorial regime in North Korea continues to defy the international community by developing its nuclear capabilities and transport vectors to the target. Direct threats are targeting the US, Japan, South Korea and Australia. It should be noted that recent evidence shows that this country was strongly supported by Russia and China for the development of its military programs.

- **China** - taking advantage of its enormous economic power, its demographic potential and its resources, it is becoming more and more powerful as a global military force, operating sophisticated weapons systems and expanding its military presence in foreign countries. In the case of China, it remains clear how far the “alliance” with Russia will go (policy coordination at the UN and in other international organizations, military intelligence exchange, joint military manoeuvres, etc.).

- **The Middle East** is characterized by instability, war and major conflict expansion potential, mainly in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, and recently in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Although it suffered important defeats and losses, the self-declared “Islamic State” continues to produce casualties in the area, but also in other countries in Europe and the United States.

- **As a conclusion** - almost all of the Asian states have problems with their neighbours, from border disputes, to controlling the ever more limited economic resources.

2.4. The United States of America

The world’s main power, at this time, also has many problems, first and foremost, of credibility among the world’s countries after the Trump Administration was installed. It has created the impression that the US acts emotionally and unpredictably, leading to major conflicts at any moment. This issue of global importance must be carefully followed by all the

countries of the world, including by the Romanian political and military leaders.

3. Possible and necessary involvement of Romanian military leaders in institutional strengthening and country defence

The short presentation of potential dangers made above, including military ones, is aimed at bringing to the attention the need for permanent vigilance from Romanian political and military leaders who should be aware that they have no respite and that in case of neglect, Romania may have major security and defence problems.

At this point, we can make an inventory as accurately as possible with arguments, on legal, economic, financial, human resources and defence equipment dysfunctions in the last thirty years, as follows:

- **The political factor** (President, Parliament, Government, and Ministry of Defence) treated with disinterest and with great superficiality the problems of the Defence. There have been long periods in which no one has spoken about Defence and no reasonable and necessary efforts have been made for training and equipment.

Defence budgets were on paper between 0.4% of GDP (Văcăroiu government) and 2% of GDP in 2017. In reality, the actually allocated budget did not exceed 0.9% - 1.1% of GDP without anyone realizing it and solving the problem (the Supreme Defence Council of the Country, Parliament, Government, Defence Minister, etc.).

- **The indigenous industrial defence base** has been destroyed, knowingly remaining small islands and marginal production entities (concrete details may be provided if needed).

- **The current status of the Army** is at the level of failure, with low chances of return. In this respect, some arguments can be given:

- The so-called Armed Forces reform has resumed to a single dimension - the destruction of many military units and the massive reduction of troops;

- These irresponsible and anti-national reductions have not been offset, as promised, with modern weapons equipment and systems;

- Defence budgets have been reduced without a rational basis;

- Active and reserve militaries are daily attacked and insulted, since 2010, by the voice of top politicians in the state (it is a world premiere);

- In the army's top military functions (and other institutions) those who are increasingly aggressively promoted are the obedient and politically supported people, instead of professionals and those who still believe in patriotism and moral values;

- It has been obsessively repeated, since 2002, that we no longer need to have an army due to NATO's defence. This is simply stupid. NATO can defend us if we are able to defend ourselves. In fact, many foreign analysts tell us this quite bluntly (see statements by STRATFOR founder - George Friedman);

- Older or newer weapon systems and equipment are devoid of normal maintenance and repair work (for example, the RTP/RMNC Military Communications Network has been abandoned since 2008 to date, reaching over 3,000 parts and subassemblies with repair needs and rapidly approaching the total collapse, under the gentle contemplation of the "responsible" persons);

- The main provisions of the "National Strategy for the Defence of the Country"¹² are not systematically followed, with the pen in hand, to see what has been achieved and what not (and who are the political and military officials who regard the document as a mere paper);

- "The Guide of National Strategy for the Defence of the Country for the period 2015-2019" has remained a theoretical document, with no practical relevance;

- Multiannual endowment plans are a myth, a legend and have never worked. Each Government and every defence minister is changing everything and scraping it from scratch. It is well-known that a complex system of weapons or equipment cannot be achieved in one year. For some, 10-15 years are needed, with rhythmic budget allocations, to the level required by plans and projects. But who can understand the phenomenon?! Until now, no government has understood or wanted to understand;

- The Romanian Armed Forces is as low as possible in important chapters for deterrence and reprisal, for example: multirole combat aircraft, attack helicopters, anti-tank means, tanks and armoured transponders with enhanced capabilities for hitting and survival in combat;

¹² *National Strategy for the Country's Defence for the period 2015-2019* (June 09, 2015).

*THE INVOLVEMENT OF ROMANIAN MILITARY LEADERS
IN THE INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING AND COUNTRY DEFENCE
IN RECENT GEOPOLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES*

- The fighter's equipment is still obsolete and far from modern standards;

- The force at peace (on paper 70,000 troops, in fact fewer) represents only 0.33% of the country's population, one of the lowest percentages in the Northern Hemisphere. Who cares?!

• **The role of current Romanian military leaders:**

- The short presentation above brings to attention only a small part of the problems faced by the army;

- We do not offer advice to current military leaders, but we urge them to review their job description to better understand what responsibilities they have;

- It is already necessary to leave aside the shyness of the current political leaders and to give up total indifference to the vital problems of the country's defence. One way of action could be a detailed and honest presentation of the **Chief of Defence Staff** to Parliament on "**The Real Status of the Romanian Armed Forces**". If the leaders of the two Chambers refuse (as expected) the report can be made public, assuming responsibility for the institutional and personal consequences.

In conclusion, we find data and information from public sources that the Defence of the Country has been left with the knowledge and bad faith of losing out in the 28 years. Unfortunately there are no signs that the situation could improve in the short and medium term, despite the development of planning documents and laws. When the Prime Minister in office declares serenely on September 12, 2017 that Romanian MoD has achieved until that date only 8.5% of the 2017 Endowment Plan, nothing remains to be said.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

*** *National Strategy for the Country's Defence* (June 9, 2015); Decision no. 33 of the Parliament, dated 23 June 2015, Official Gazette, Part I, no. 450, 23.06.2015 (In Romanian: *Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării* (09 iunie 2015); Hotărârea nr. 33 a

Parlamentului, din 23 iunie 2015, Monitorul Oficial, partea I, nr. 450, 23.06.2015).

*** *The Guide for National Strategy for the Country's Defence for the period 2015-2019*, Supreme Defence Council of the Country Decision, no. 128 of 10.12.2015 (in Romanian: *Ghidul Strategiei Naționale de Apărare a Țării pentru perioada 2015-2019*, Hotărârea CSAT, nr. 128, din 10.12.2015).

*** Documents from public sources on the websites of the Presidency, Government, Parliament, Ministry of National Defence and other institutions in the region and abroad.

*** *The Journal of Military Sciences of the Academy of Scientists from Romania*, 2015-2017.

CHIFU I., blogs/iulian.chifu1/19septembrie2017.

COATS D., US National Intelligence Director, presentation at the Cybernetic Summit, September 2017.

COWELL S.A., *Moartea unui spion, povestea lui Alexandr Litvinenko*, Editura Litera International, București, 2009.

GOȘU A., Interview, site: www.Hotnews.ro, 06.11.2017.

HotNews.ro, Interview Vlad Barza took to the American antivirus industry specialist John McAfee, February 23, 2017.

<http://adevarul.ro/international/rusia/zapad-2017>.

MINCU C., *Federația Rusă și restul lumii*, Revista de Științe Militare, Nr. 3/2017.

MINCU C., *Uniunea Europeană – Evoluții posibile în următorii zece ani*, Revista de Științe Militare a Academiei Oamenilor de Știință din România, Nr. 3/2016.

SOLONIN M., *Butoiul și cercurile*, Editura Polirom, București, 2012.

SUVOROV V., *Spărgătorul de gheață*, Editura Polirom, București, 2010 și *Ziua M*, Editura Polirom, București, 2011.

