

STRATEGIC DEFENSE – A MODERN APPROACH TO NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY

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Abstract: *From the Cold War period until now, several strategies for carrying out wars have emerged, culminating in the "Hybrid War" model. This literature study is a modern approach to strategic defense and brings to the forefront a series of reflective questions needed to build countries' future defense strategies. Is the information war based on speculation of social discontent and the recruitment of radicalized individuals? Who and why is interested in sponsoring contemporary terrorism? What are the operational requirements for substantiating investments in the development of military technologies? These are the questions this study is intended to answer.*

Keywords: *strategic defence, country defense, military lessons learned*

Brief introduction into the concept of country defense

A lot has been written and will continue to be written about war. These works have range from academic studies to various narratives approaches that describe events based on the author's experience or heard from various stories of active participants in events that are later included under the generic term "conflict". One of the recent publications in a brief and descriptive manner that addresses war is that of the well-known author Lawrence Freedman, entitled *The Future of War*. He makes a picture of the events that changed the world, in an interdisciplinary manner, with a pronounced historical character. What caught our attention was that the author concluded that the image predicted by most military forecasters is contradicted by the way the contemporary conflict takes place, even if the value of military power can still influence victory.

Freedman underlines that "*the superficial features of the new wars - their savagery, ethnic polarization and links to criminal activity were the ones that initially attracted the most comment.*"¹ Its conclusion characterizes the reaction of weak states to oppose with instability at their level and justifies the intervention of a military power to defend and protect the region

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¹ Freedman Lawrence, *Viitorul războiului: o istorie*, Editura Litera, București, 2019, p.209.

in the expansion of the conflict to neighboring states or to limit the global information effects generated by that event.

But the principles of warfare remain the same. Only technology and knowledge and the existence or development of international relations can change the course of war.

Therefore, the future of war depends not only on the potential impact of a strike but also on the level of readiness of the population and territory of a country to withstand the energy of that strike. Freedman warned that "*a country vulnerable to crafty enemies as a result of the negligence of politicians and the self-sufficiency of the population*"² will make improbable a decisive combined strike for a nation-state in several areas that ensure its stability. The large number of human losses and the immense damage amount, all of which were determined at the end of the war, will only describe a new history file.

Starting from these hypotheses, we will demonstrate that the need to know the concept of the country defense is a norm for every citizen, not only for the military or for the structures of the National Defense System. Every citizen must understand that only through a combined effort, based on continuous training, can a real response be given to an enemy.

From the author's perspective, this approach represents a new way of proactive reaction, updated to the contemporary warfare requirements determining any evolution of the geopolitical and security environment.

1. Research method

The present study resulted from an office research, analyzing different sources of information in the field of concept of country defense. The present paper was initially aimed at sensitizing political and military strategists on the evolution of the concept of country defense.

Authors have had this goal because they consider that the new technique development is going to conduct to a radical transformation of country defense arena.

² *Ibidem*, p.375.

2. Critical analysis of the historic development of the strategic country defense

In the history of warfare, commanders have chosen defense strategies against an attack that they knew would come. The decisive confrontation is just a game of chance. The lessons learned from the great defense operations have as a common element the fact that the defender invites the enemy to fight a battle that he knows that there are the greatest chances to win. If this strategy works, the attacker will not resist to a counterattack. But if this strategy fails, the defender has nothing to do but surrender.

To support these observations, we will present two models of strategic defense. One is in the First World War - the defense on the "Hindenburg Line" in 1917 and the other is in the World War II, the Battle of Kursk, in 1943.

In both military history events, the commanders decided to adopt defense as a form of warfare. Thus, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, knowing the German army exhaustion in the numerous confrontations on one front with the French and British armies and the Russian and Romanian armies on another front, decides in the winter of 1916, to build lines of defense in the Western and central provinces of the Western Front. The troops of the central powers (Austria-Hungary and Germany) were to retreat in the spring of 1917 behind these lines of defense. All these, in order to shorten the front line, reduce human casualties and restore forces. Later, if Russia lost the initiative in the East, German troops could be redeployed as an offensive force on the Western front.

Twenty-five years later, in World War II, the German and Russian troops face off again. In July 1943 there was a critical situation on the Eastern Front. The Red Army understood that the Germans would attack and correctly estimated the place and time when they would do so. The situation on the front was catastrophic for the Germans, the only way to stabilize it being to attack. The German army, led by Field Marshal Erich von Manstein, was forced to launch the attack because in the spring the ground thawed and became swampy. In addition, West of Kursk, the Russians were in a dangerous situation. Much of the front line was in German territory. The only solution of nazis were to attract the Russians to

develop the penetration and, by counterattacks on both sides, to encircle and separate most of the Russian armed forces from rear echelons. This plan was called "Citadel Operation". In response to this strategy, Marshal Gheorgi Jukov, the commander of the Russian army, prepared an aggressive defense, leaving the Germans to make the first move, following his counterattack.

In both cases, the defense strategy had to take into account the following basic requirements:

Target. Always, military planning specialists must decide on the combat strategy. Either seduce the enemy in the trap and counterattack in order to destroy him or prevent him from carrying out the attack, resisting until the moment that there are favorable conditions for a counterattack. In the first strategy, the enemy must be lured towards you. Afterwards, you have to maintain the initiative but leave an impression of vulnerability. In other words, you have to attract him in a situation from which he cannot withdraw, following the launch of a strong counterattack. The second strategy involves keeping the enemy at distance, building defensive positions so strong that attacking them will cause the enemy huge losses and much suffering.

At Kursk, Marshal Jukov had two clear targets: to stop the Germans from enveloping the Russian army, then to counterattack and destroy the German Army.

At Cambrai, Field Marshal von Hindenburg also has two targets. At first he spared his troops to fight on two fronts. Second, after the British attack began, he stopped the British assault until he could bring his troops to counterattack.

Intelligence. The decision must be based on correct information that determines exactly the intentions of the enemy. Commanders must correctly estimate what to do and what tactics the enemy will use. A defensive battle plan is full of calculated risks. He who defends himself must know what he can and cannot do. He must be careful not to overdo it when trying to do too much. Information is vital so as to understand the enemy's intentions, to know his strengths and weaknesses. If they have this information, they can prepare not only to exploit weaknesses but also to strengthen troops, depending on what they find out.

At Kursk, the Russians had impeccable intelligence. They knew exactly Hitler's plan and exploited this advantage.

At Cambrai the Germans had limited information about British tanks and the terrain on which the battle was to take place. They had no intelligence about the British attack plan.

Time. Commanders must have time to complete their defensive works and prepare the ground to fight.

In France, the Hindenburg Line was set up a year earlier. Hindenburg's troops used the ground efficiently. The defense included barbed-wire fences, machine-gun nests and antitank trenches designed to prevent advancing tanks. Behind them, mobile reserve troops were positioned so that they could reinforce any point at which the enemy would launch the attack.

At Kursk, Jukov was not to allow the Germans to prepare a strong defense. As soon as Jukov learned of Hitler's plan, a fast race began to prepare his defense. He also benefited from unexpected help from Hitler, consisting in postponing the moment of the German offensive until the Tiger and Panzer tanks were brought to the breaking districts. The new date of the German attack was set for July 5. This postponement gave Jukov time to prepare both his defense and counterattack, creating six lines of defense at 170 km behind the front line, with anti-tank trenches and ditches, personnel shelters, numerous anti-tank and anti-personnel minefields etc.

Secrecy. Commanders must hide not only their positions and troops, but also their intentions. If the enemy understands the defensive battle plan, he can change his plan and launch a surprise attack elsewhere or they may not attack anymore. And if he does not attack, the defenders can no longer launch the counterattack. For this, at Kursk, Jukov combined "false" troops to mislead the enemy, hiding the maneuvers of forces to the real counterattack sectors. The general disinformation plan of the Russians included masking the forces with camouflage nets, hiding tanks in caves, mass use of military and civilians in real work but in other districts and in other directions, ensuring that the Germans would not understand anything of these preparations. Also, for keeping the secret, obtaining and maintaining air supremacy is an essential factor. For this, Jukov raised more and more planes to dominate the airspace, not to support the attack but to stop the Germans from spying on their defense works.

However, in World War I, on the Hindernburg Line, secrecy was not necessary. In order to stop or delay the attack, the enemy had to understand the huge costs and the difficulties to force and cross the line of defense. The more convinced he was that the losses would be very large, the more likely it was to delay the attack or even not attack at all.

Attack absorption. Troops in defensive positions must be able to face and dampen the energy of the enemy's attack, especially when he is not very violent.

On the Hindenburg Line, until the day of the attack in the evening, the tanks destroyed the German defense positions, captured the supply lines, all announcing an easy victory for the British. For von Hindenburg, the defensive plan was beginning to run, British troops not realizing that they had been drawn to the center of the front, from where they could no longer advance. Thus, 176 of their tanks were easily and systematically destroyed by intact German artillery. Their losses could not be replaced. The defense breach was not obtained. During this time von Hindenburg brought reinforcements to launch the counterattack.

In Kursk, July 1943, Jukov had all the necessary information and exploited the benefits without restraint. He, just before the German fire that was the time of the attack, triggered his own, with a devastating psychological effect for the Germans. In the morning, the Russian troops of General Model came out of hiding and advanced. Supported by tanks and bombing aircraft, they strengthened fighting. The Soviet defense showed signs of giving way. Two Russian divisions were destroyed by Panzer tank attacks. In the background of these battles, Russian General Rokosovsky did not give up the defense line. Moreover, in the south, the tanks of the German general Hoth were advancing extremely hard, the rain during the night making extremely difficult the crossing of the rivers.

Another problem in maintaining the attack effort was the rush to bring in new tanks which, in the heat of battle, had problems adapting to the ground. Many of these proved unsafe in combat, malfunctioning or catching fire when the engine overheated.

Noticing that the German double siege could not be achieved and that Russian troops remained in position, following the tank battle at Prohorovka, with huge human losses, for the Russians it was time to launch the decisive phase - the counterattack.

In Cambrai, the German defense advanced decisively from day one. Then they delayed the English advance to the counterattack.

Realism. The planning and execution of the counterattack must have realistic targets and not go too far. Counterattack is a crucial factor in the defensive warfare. This is almost always the final act. Commanders must not advance too far, their forces being vulnerable to an enemy counterattack.

Von Hindenburg, noticing the exhaustion of the English after 10 days of offensive, began the counterattack with an hour-long bombardment on the weakest point of the British line of defense. For this they used innovative tactics at that time, the forces employed to counterattack being equipped with new weapons such as flamethrowers and machine rifles.

Even though the English were surprised, von Hindenburg did not force a counterattack. He advanced only enough to move the front line to the position it was in before the English attack. The battle ended four days later, after the British retreated to better defensive positions.

In Kursk, once the battle of Prohorovka was won by the Russians, the first phase of the attack was launched in order to push back the Germans. In addition, the evolution of events on all fronts opened by the Germans forced Hitler to withdraw a series of divisions to deal with the invasion of Anglo-American troops in Sicily (July 10), exactly two days before the battle of Prohorovka. Benefiting from this help, Jukov launched three consecutive attacks, winning Harkov on August 13. But Jukov knew the danger of trying to get too much and finding that he had managed to destroy the German formations and that the advance was achievable, they stopped for reorganization, for the battle plans review and for reinforcement. For them, Kursk was a starting point for future offensives.

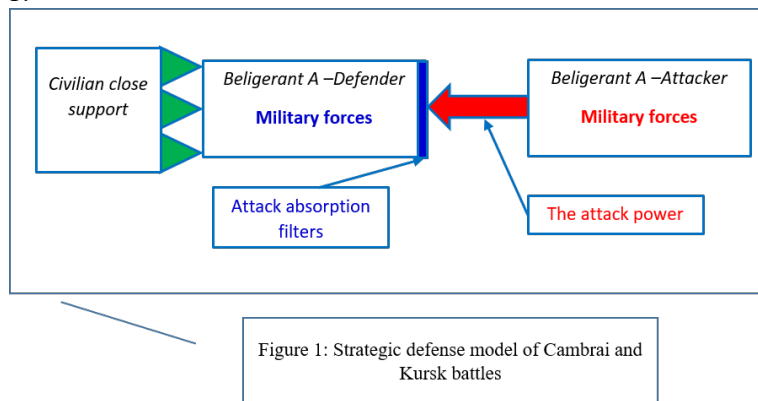
Yet, a strategic defense strategy has two major dangers:

Psychology. This strategy sometimes involves the deliberate sacrifice of combat troops. Therefore, the military assigned to this mission should not know that they are part of a deliberate defensive plan. They should not know that a counterattack is planned if they are captured by the enemy. Their families and other moral supporters, politicians and other citizens of their country may consider this operation as a failure of the initiative, not being able to understand that this is the only way to achieve victory in the end. Psychological influence has an extremely important role

to play in avoiding this danger. The Soviet Union presented this moment as a great patriotic war in which soldiers and civilians were required to make great sacrifices. This explained why the massive lines of defense were built not only by military but also by civilians, all workers in that sector.

Risks. When projecting a defensive battle plan, commanders do not know the intentions or weapons of the enemy, nor the surprises that the enemy may include in their battle plans. In the defensive battle, the enemy is invited to attack, but he may want to limit himself to enveloping the defending troops or he may have a secret weapon, being able to use it.

The general model of strategic defense in both situations is shown in Figure 1:



Results, conclusions and proposals

Although the defensive battle will serve as a form of training through which the military will learn and prepare for future actions, there will always be a need for a commander and a courageous politician to approve such an approach. Attracting the attacker in the area that the defender wants is difficult to approach, the population may have the perception that the army will lose the fight. That is why the population must be persuaded to continue to support the army, which is highly debatable without a strong security culture.

At present, we believe that there are no longer any political or military conditions for a commander to lead a strategic defensive battle, as

broad and violent as those on Cambrei and the Kursk battles. But if it does, the planning and the decision will remain essentially the same.

Moreover, military technologies have modernized and new weapons have emerged. The hybrid warfare model aims to conquer the hearts and minds of the adversary. In other words, in one form or another the entire population of a target-state becomes a victim of the techniques of hybrid warfare.

The lessons learned from the current conflicts included in the general concept of counter-terrorism lead us to the following observations:

The increase of personal ambitions, cumulated with a special capacity of information technology offers the leadership of terrorist organizations an unprecedented capacity to affect and manipulate social events, with global ramifications;

The proliferation of weapons, both traditional and improvised, leads to a special attention of the mass media for the production of appropriate information products, able to sell, the natural purpose being the trade with and through information;

The transmission of information is done with amazing speed. Information technologies benefit from technological advances that allow the use of the performance and outstanding qualities of various electronic devices over an extremely wide range of their dimensions and destinations, in the field of communications and IT. In addition, their interconnection in digital networks has not been a problem for a long time. The Internet and cellular telephony make it possible to connect various household, professional and special, current or occasional uses etc. In this sense, the concept of *Internet of things* is no longer a novelty;

The promotion of messages and other information, under the guise of freedom of expression, allows the stimulation and support of dissatisfaction of any kind. Lack of control and education in the field facilitates the manipulation of segments of the population who, without their desire, will believe in carefully modified messages to stimulate their egocentrism, leading them to believe that they themselves have changed their goals, their will and even their personal agendas to achieve a goal;

The actions of those who react to abuses of any kind, the discretionary way of granting rights and freedoms etc., are noteworthy, but

the terrorist and radical propaganda are unacceptable. However, there are many people who self-radicalize on the background of misperception of personal events.

We consider that the current challenges for ensuring the information society security of a contemporary social system are much broader than the traditional model of strategic defense, even if the principles have remained the same. Today, competition to win the hearts and minds of citizens can also hide online modeling methods, especially through the use of internet social networks. Information technology allows the arming of civilians structures to achieve political, economic, security and state objectives, which in some cases pose threats to national and global security.

If, at first, the hybrid concept referred to those conflicting actions in which civilians were involved and the state did not recognize that it was at war with its own citizens, now it has significance in other areas specific to the functioning of an information society, being encountered in the real life, in biology, culture, mass media, organizations and management etc.

The formulation of a definition of this concept is not the purpose of this article. We just want to point out that "hybrid warfare" has more to do with politics and international power, which involves managing diplomatic conflict amid strategic intelligence processing. We consider that the hybrid dimension accumulates an amount of information produced by activities with various origins, the complexity of its definition being given by the evasive and incomprehensible way of the forms and models involved. Thus, even if some are clear, clean and distinct, others can be misleading, manipulated and controlled.

Another aspect that we want to emphasize is that related to a strategic defense in multiple directions. We could confirm it with the resistance against a siege in which the defender retreated behind the walls of the fortress. Such a model can be approached if there are sufficient resources for the duration of the siege. But even in this situation the principles of the concept of strategic defense remain the same. In this situation the second objective of strategic defense becomes a priority. This involves keeping the enemy at distance, having strong defensive elements, being able to absorb attacks, inflicting heavy losses on his forces, and last but not least, being able to counterattack. This requires a high resilience capacity for the entire defense infrastructure. The staff involved must also

receive psychological support. It is obvious that there will be losses and casualties. Therefore, the support of the defender must be provided by other strategic partners to put pressure on the attacker in all areas. To this object, strategic communication and diplomacy must be used for preventive purposes, so that there are strong and mutually trusting relationships.

The counterattack must be carried out in a synchronized manner so as to amputate the enemy's logistical resources, to identify the vulnerabilities of its defense, to hit the strong points and, at the same time, the propaganda to support the attacked microsystems. Such a solution should be avoided, but if it is reached, isolation only continually erodes any strategic defense system.

Currently, when we can see that information, based on the unprecedented development of information technologies, has exceeded the other dimensions of the combat environment, we consider as a model of an effective defense strategy that a state can adopt the one shown in Figure 2.

In this regard, we believe that the consolidating strategic partnerships in all areas, an activity that our government practices, is commendable. However, regardless of the type of attack, the resources must be inside the fortress and not outside it. The systems must be prepared in advance so that they can absorb the energy of the attack. And this can only be done through education and training. In addition, resilience must be determined by the quality of systems that implement new technologies and specialized personnel.

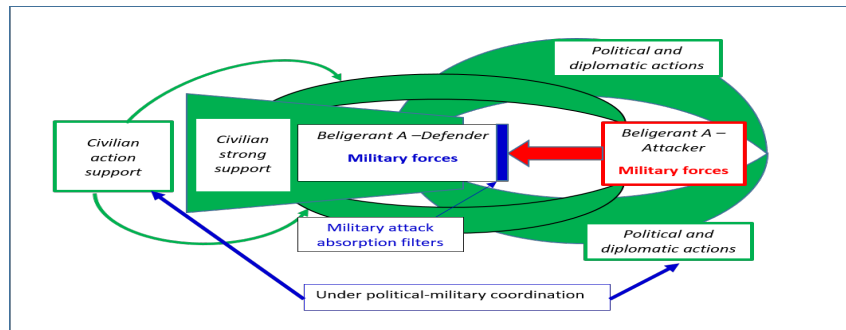


Figure 2: The New Strategic Defense Model

The concept of the developed multilateral person does not increase the quality but only the quantity. And if the population increase is relatively low and the quality of knowledge is limited, they will certainly have a big problem for adopting the method of strategic defense.

In order to be able to start or develop some systems included in the National Defense System, we propose the following directions:

Primary elements:

- Additional investments in education and specific technologies;
- Understanding cultural, religious differences, differences in faith and human behavior, promoting attitudes of peace, freedom and equality for any person;
- Identifying and eliminating the sources generating social instability;
- Maintaining and developing strategic information, strategic and diplomatic communication.

Secondary elements:

- Establishment and implementation of a system of surveillance and monitoring of sources of social destabilization and prevention of attacks;
- Improving the performance of systems or other elements designed to protect the population.

Subsequent elements:

- Preventing the spread of social instability of any kind;
- Development of early detection systems for sources of terrorism and other threats to national stability;
- Adopting effective resilience, counseling and support measures for potential victims;
- Adopting effective measures to promote national interests and values both outside and inside the country, as well as measures of consolation for the affected population.



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