

THE GENERAL STAFF – Architect of the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation –

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After the disappearance of the bipolar world, the direct threats to the security of the European states have diminished, which has led to dealing with the threats as close to their outbreak as possible. This state of the play has led to an increased number of missions in which the forces of the European states have been deployed in areas of conflict in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, as well as in the Western Balkans.

The author points out that, until the last decade of the 20th century, the traditional threats mainly consisted in territorial disagreements, ethnic and cultural disputes or competitions for gaining access to resources, while today, besides the fact that these threats have not lost their relevance, other types of threats have emerged, such as: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, emergence of non-state actors or asymmetric threats, violation of the human rights and failing states.

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If we carry out a retrospective analysis of the Romanian military body evolution, the role played by the General Staff as the architect of the Romanian Armed Forces transformation, no matter the period in history it may be related to, is obvious. The General Staff's capacity to draw up concepts and the act of command permanently exercised by it have caused the evolution and progress of the armed forces, the outcome being the current modern military institution. The General Staff has been the "brains" of all the decisions that have had a major impact on the armed forces and, implicitly, on the military policy of the country.

These days, when the General Staff celebrates 150 years of existence, we take the opportunity to recall the past and to highlight the distinct moments in its evolution. Thus, on 12 November 1859, the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza signed the order through which the General Staff Corps of the United Principalities Army was

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set up. Its primordial role in the act of commanding the military institution was stated since the very beginning. Therefore, the General Staff Corps was involved, together with the Ministry of War, in the Romanian Army modernisation process, and, when circumstances imposed it, it was able to participate in the first military confrontation modern Romania got engaged in.

The Romanian Army victory in the War of Independence proved the ability of the Romanian Army, through the General Headquarters, to conceive and command military actions at war. Later on, after 1882, the year when we speak of the Great General Staff, its structure and responsibilities in preparing for, and waging, war would increase so that during the Balkan Wars (especially in the Second Balkan War) it played an essential role in preparing and commanding the operations.

In the years that followed, the Great General Staff focused on the shortcomings identified during campaigns and it was able to improve the command of the Romanian Armed Forces' military operations during the First World War, thus contributing to the creation of the Romanian unitary state.

The participation in the First World War, the outcomes of the Paris Peace Conference and the new physiognomy of the European continent, including the map of the reunified Romania, brought about essential changes in approaching the issue of the national territory defence.

In these circumstances, the Great General Staff was the promoter of a new concept for defending the country, which was to be based on bi/multilateral military agreements and treaties concluded at regional level, to be activated in the event the external threats to the new European configuration, and implicitly to our country, were amplified.

This concept was put into practice by specific organisational structures as well as by the adoption of new doctrinal principles, combat manuals and regulations, specific to that period of time. Thus, the Great General Staff directly contributed to the process of drawing up the law necessary for the organisation and operation of the Romanian military body at that time, proving once more its analysis and conception abilities at strategic level.

In this context, the *Law regarding the organisation of the Armed Forces* in 1930 stipulated that the command of the Armed Forces was exercised by the Minister of War, through the Great General Staff and the general inspectors. The Great General Staff had the responsibility of preparing the war waging, military education and training. Military planners in the Great General Staff conducted military-political studies, as well as strategic and operational ones, which contributed to the reorganisation of the armed forces in 1936. The Chief of the Great General Staff at that time was a member of the recently established Steering Committee for the Country Defence that consisted of the president of the Council of Ministers and some other ministers. In 1937, the Chief of the Great General Staff became a member of the Ministerial Delegation for Procurement.

Because of the unfavourable political circumstances, the provisions of the regional military agreements could not come into force, which influenced the

European and regional configuration at the beginning of the '40s in a negative manner. The strategic plans drawn up at that time for allocating forces on the three "battle fronts" the national territory was divided into confirmed the fact that the Armed Forces transformation had been well grounded and that the Great General Staff was demonstrating its sense of responsibility and competency in meeting the functional commitments. However, their application was annulled by political decisions that were rather controversial.

The Second World War was the landmark event of the Romanian modern military history. The developed studies, analyses and plans and, last but not least, the manner of conceiving and leading military actions during the war highlighted, on the one hand, the quality and professionalism of the staff officers and, on the other hand, the shortcomings in the equipment for a *blitzkrieg* and not for a trench warfare as the previous conflagration had been.

After the Second World War, under the political regime that followed, the Great General Staff went through one of the most difficult periods in its existence, marked by the political interference in the functioning of the military body, as well as by ideological constraints. Nevertheless, the Great General Staff managed to maintain the national identity of the military institution, to enhance the combat capacity of the armed forces and to ensure the national defence capability to meet the political-strategic requirements.

The *Cold War* period, when Romania was part of the Warsaw Pact Organisation, was initially characterised by the adoption of the rules and principles imposed by the leader of this organisation, the Soviet Union, as far as concepts, organisation and actions were concerned.

In the aftermath of the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia, Romania became more and more independent within the Warsaw Pact Organisation, a fact especially materialised through organisational measures with a special impact on the activity of the Great General Staff.

This way, the development of a national defence doctrine, based exclusively on own effort, was taken into account. In this context, the concept of the *entire people's war* was developed. The foundations of the national defence industry were laid, and the Patriotic Guards were set up, as the main support for the above-mentioned concept, as well as a series of units and large units, especially mechanised and armoured vehicles ones.

During the communist regime, the Great General Staff ensured, through special efforts, the continuity of the Armed Forces transformation, their procurement, the training of commands and troops, as well as the military education modernisation, so that they could meet the requirements of the strategic environment at that time.

While the universal military art was enriched with new principles and rules, mainly determined by the revolution in military affairs and by the more and more sophisticated conflict physiognomy, the Great General Staff had to act like a living

body, connected to the realities of the time and created on the modern scientific bases.

In these circumstances, the military thinking promoted by the Great General Staff had to take into account the developments of the security environment, which changed the continental and global architecture for good.

The 1989 revolution re-asserted the tight link between the armed forces and the people and opened the way towards profound democratic transformations within the Romanian society and implicitly within the military institution. The transition to a democratic society imposed a clear definition of the role and responsibilities of the structures meant to ensure national security and defence, all being sanctioned in the Constitution adopted in 1991.

The end of the *Cold War* and the new trends in approaching the concept of *defence*, in the context of the lack of security guarantees at the beginning of the 90s, resulted in the fact that the military body, in general, and especially the Great General Staff, whose name was changed into the General Staff, had to cope with extremely complex problems, some of them completely new. Thus, the new strategic profile of our country depended, to a great extent, on the solutions provided to those particular problems.

The major global changes, the new relations between states, the new dialogue between the East and the West facilitated a new approach to the concepts of *defence and security*.

Romania's political option to join the European and Euro-Atlantic bodies outlined a new vision regarding the Romanian society modernisation strategy, in its attempt to assert itself in the great European family and to adopt the universal values, the democratic principles and those of market economy, as well as to observe human rights.

Being certain its national interests can be promoted, asserted and pursued only within the Euro-Atlantic security structures, Romania considered that NATO membership was the best solution in order to ensure viable security guarantees.

By the initiation of cooperation projects and programmes, the EU and NATO member countries facilitated the acceleration of the transition process towards democracy and market economy as well as that of the accession process development for the countries in Central and South Eastern Europe, Romania included.

In this context, as an institution with a key role in providing security for the Euro-Atlantic area, NATO offered to candidate and partner countries the possibility to understand the Alliance's philosophy, the essence of interoperability, to know the command and control system, the organisation, information, standardisation and logistics, as well as the details of the defence planning, assessment and decision-making processes specific to NATO.

This framework ensured the support for the development of a unitary and coherent transformation and modernisation strategy for the Romanian military institution, in order to meet the specific NATO standards. Thus, the Armed Forces restructuring and modernisation process, led by the General Staff, was developed

simultaneously with the political and diplomatic actions conducted so that Romania could become a NATO member country, and the process of modelling the future structure of the Romanian Armed Forces has undergone conceptual and actional clarifications.

A priority of this process was the adoption of the main laws and norms, which would ensure the optimal functioning of the military body in the circumstances of the rule of law and market economy.

From a historical perspective, the General Staff was constantly aware of Romania's real defence needs, in accordance with the concrete realities, priorities and national possibilities, and the security context of the '90s, accomplishing its tasks with abnegation and in a professional manner.

The Necessity for the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation

As a result of the security environment profound change and the considerable decrease in the possibility of a major military attack against Romania, the mission types and content have been adjusted, focusing on providing the necessary capabilities to carry out new missions by taking into account the rapid deployment of the forces and their self-sustainment in the theatres of operations.

Taking into consideration the above conditions, the General Staff had to develop new strategies regarding the organisation and use of the armed forces concomitantly with setting up effective technical response capabilities. Based on the threats, challenges and vulnerabilities to the security environment and on the political-military evolutions at regional and global level, the goals and missions have been established, and the structure and size of the Romanian Armed Forces have been correlated with the allocated resources.

At the same time with the dissolution of the bipolar world, the direct threats to the European states' security have diminished and moved closer and closer to their breeding ground. This situation has resulted in an increase in the European states' missions carried out in conflict areas in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and the Western Balkans. If by the end of the 20th century the traditional threats were mainly regional conflicts, ethnical and cultural disputes or struggles for access to resources, at present, besides the fact that these threats have not lost their relevance, other new types of threats have emerged, such as: terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, non-state actors' actions or asymmetric threats, human rights violation and failed states. The ability to influence the aspects related to international security by military force represents an essential factor and the need to respond to the current crisis situations stands for many and complex reasons leading to modern armed forces transformation.

The identification of terrorism, together with organised crime and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as main threats to security, have required a change in the physiognomy of war, by increasing the share of military non-classical actions as compared to the conventional ones.

These modifications are directly reflected in the current crisis management operations in which Romania participates either as a member of international organisations (i.e., the UN, NATO or the EU) or within coalitions. Thus, the current operations have an expeditionary character, totally different from the *Cold War* period when a static approach prevailed, focused on territorial defence. The main characteristics of the current operations are: force deployment in the theatre should be at short notice; the objectives are restricted, often limited by constraints; frequently, crisis management operations are long-term missions; the great interoperability is related to the need for the participating forces to be able to operate jointly; the necessity to set up a rapid response force package; the force deployment during operations should be sustainable for a long period of time, according to the assumed commitments; the forces should be trained and equipped accordingly to cope with the full spectrum of missions.

As a result, during the last decade, at the level of the Euro-Atlantic bodies and member states, essential changes have occurred regarding doctrines, training procedures, and forces and organisational structures, new types of equipment and assets being purchased. At the same time, steps were initiated aiming at increasing the usability of forces in operations. Moreover, we can assess that during the last decade, military operations have dethroned the superiority of the technical factor/component, hence underlining the importance of a complex of factors, out of which the most important ones are *interoperability* and *training*.

The Romanian Armed Forces have had to face these challenges and this meant the initiation of an ample transformation process in which the General Staff played and is still playing the leading role.

The accession to NATO initially required the beginning of a restructuring and reform process to cover the entire military body, an ample and complex one, that was conceived, planned and coordinated, as expected, by the General Staff. After accession, Romania's Armed Forces transformation has been planned and carried out as part of the NATO transformation process in order to achieve a modern force structure, downsized, professionalised, adequately equipped, deployable, interoperable, having self-sustainment and multi-dimension protection capacity.

The Romanian Armed Forces transformation process has been associated with the North-Atlantic Alliance transformation where NATO requirements for personnel staffing, the high costs to sustain the troops in the theatre, the significant differences between the military equipment technology of the advanced state members of the Alliance and the equipment of the Romanian Armed Forces are the prerequisites for the transformation process.

In this respect, the General Staff stands for the driving engine of this process and plays an essential role in the transformation of the armed forces from a massive, heavy, oversized structure, having only territorial responsibilities, into a modern, well-equipped and trained military body, able to participate in providing the national territory integrity and security, and to carry out operations on the national territory,

within the NATO area of responsibility, as well as in an extended strategic environment permanently influenced by factors that require change.

The Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy

In order to have unitary coordination and achieve the transformation goals, the General Staff has developed *the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy*, a document that represents the medium and long-term vision on the Romanian Armed Forces size, training and equipment to participate in future operations. According to this strategy, having 2005-2006 as the starting point, and up to 2025, the Romanian Armed Forces transformation process has been carried out and will continue its development in three distinct stages, determined by the forces reorganisation and the deadlines to accomplish the *Force Goals*, and NATO and EU integration requirements.

The Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy, through its stated purpose, sets objectives not only in the force structure field but also at the level of the other central structures of the Ministry of National Defence. To this end, the General Staff has drawn up *the Romanian Armed Forces Transformation Strategy Implementation Plan* that includes goals, timelines and stages, tasks and responsibilities, as well as coordination measures and the necessary resources supply to achieve the transformation goals. The plan also contains details about the structural evolution, the planned financial support and the way to achieve the transformation process synchronisation with NATO transformation process.

Currently, the first stage of the transformation process, the basic restructuring phase, has been completed, the Romanian Armed Forces size matching their new missions and the available resources, a new way to create and conduct forces to take part in stability and support operations being also promoted.

During the current stage that started two years ago, i.e., operational integration into NATO and the EU structures, the main effort will be focused on the continuation of force readiness and of the major acquisition programmes, on the reorganisation of military education, the increase in our contribution to NRF and the EU, as well as on extending the implementation of some interoperability requirements of the *Force Goals* at the level of non-deployable military units. In this context, the concepts development, experimentation and implementation provide a logical basis for organising and relating strategies, doctrines, concepts, processes and procedures necessary to transform the military body, establishing the framework to achieve the capabilities the Romanian Armed Forces need.

We have also focused on the military capabilities planning and development to achieve the operational effect required by the specific standards in a designated environment, in a specified period of time and to maintain the effect for a specific period of time, their efficiency being directly connected to the synergy obtained while combining and using them in a definite environment (interoperability).

Thus, during the capabilities development process, to meet the assumed NATO and the EU commitments, we have taken into account the following domains:

➤ *Implementation of the new Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Information, Computer Technology, Surveillance and Reconnaissance concept.* The programmes under development are as follows: command posts, brigade and division size, an integrated communication and information system to equip the structures made available to NATO, C2 air system to integrate within *NATINADS*, C2 air system within *ACCS (NATO Air Command and Control System)*; C3 systems on Frigate 111 and frigates T22R type, Naval Communication and Information System and the Surveillance and Control System for the Black Sea.

➤ *Intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities at the operational and strategic level*, by implementing *SINCER* – Monitoring Integrated System in short wave frequencies, *GISSINT* – Geographical Information System at strategic level, *SIGINT* – Monitoring system for information from electromagnetic sources, *SIBDRE* – Computer Technology System for Electronic Warfare Database, achieving a *HUMINT* national capability able to provide *HUMINT* teams' deployment in support of national contingents participating in NATO-led operations (*HUMINT* Centre of Excellence has already been set up in this respect, available for NATO member states' personnel to be trained).

➤ *Manoeuvre Capabilities by increased rapid deployable forces*, providing airlift capabilities (by our own C-130 and also as party to C-17- SAC initiative), completing with transport aviation – short/medium carrier – C-27J SPARTAN, as well as by our active involvement in the *European Air Transportation Fleet (EATF)* initiative. At the same time, for the air transportation of our troops to/from the theatres of operations and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) missions, IAR-330 PUMA helicopters are currently undergoing a modernisation process in compliance with and according to NATO standards. 11 out of 13 helicopters have already passed the initial evaluation phase.

➤ *Effective engagement capabilities* by carrying out several major procurement programs aimed at ensuring the secure participation of some advanced combat individual systems in multinational operations, in urban area, accomplishing air police missions, engaging in complex missions of air defence and support of ground forces deployed, conducting air-to-air, air-to-ground joint operations completed with precisely striking of targets and operating under any meteorological conditions.

We have also focused on achieving survival and self-protection capabilities aimed at providing effects limitation following any enemy attack with conventional arms and CBRN, including the limitation of terrorist attacks against the own forces and infrastructure deployed in a theatre of operations while providing freedom of movement and reactive capacity to our forces.

A military capability planning process both at national level and in NATO and the EU context represents a key function of the strategic planning process that is accomplished based on a specific algorithm including the following elements: identifying the security environment trends and evolutions; getting to know the new trends in military equipment and technologies; establishing a general military level

of ambition; evaluating the current capabilities while identifying possible shortcomings; initiating concrete measures to fix up the identified deficiencies also assuming the creation of new military capabilities, if necessary.

Further on, we will have to identify that weaker element within any particular capability in order to apply corrective actions. This way, we intend to increase both the quality and effectiveness of the achieved capabilities, and we will be able to develop new capabilities with less effort, eliminating the duplication of our actions.

It is rather difficult not only to create a particular capability but also to keep it operational according to definite standards, if we take into account the continuous decrease in the allocated resources. To preserve the NATO certified units' readiness at the level of assumed standards should become a top priority of all the entitled structures actively participating in this quite complex process in which research and development should play a crucial role in achieving at least minimum appropriate capabilities necessary to meet our international commitments. Therefore, throughout the current phase and the next one as well, this activity should be increased by participating in capabilities' development initiatives since their project phase both at national level and within NATO and the EU or with other partners, on bilateral bases.

From this point of view, conducting different activities specific to the capabilities development process will be focused on those elements that fully contribute to the achievement of a particular capability: training, doctrine, organisation/structure, personnel, equipment, force readiness and deployment capacity; financial resources planning to develop the required capabilities while concentrating the efforts on national key domains (distribution of budgetary resources, share common experience and expertise to meet interoperability standards; prioritisation of those domains involving common projects under NATO and the EU coordination).

It is obvious that the General Staff endeavours aimed at coordinating and accelerating the Romanian Armed Forces transformation process will not end in 2025. They will continue permanently, to ensure the Romanian Armed Forces appropriate pace required by the continuous adaptation to the rapidly changing security environment in order to effectively and efficiently respond to the new security threats at regional and global level.

