

## SECURITY ENVIRONMENT DEVELOPMENTS AND MILITARY POWER IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

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*Starting from the present security environment developments, this paper highlights some dangers to the international security generated or multiplied by the global economic crisis. In this respect is presented the manner in which the military power, one of main powers of humankind, is able to adjust itself to a crisis situation in order to meet the state's security needs.*

**Keywords:** *security environment; dangers; military power and economic crisis.*

### **Developments of the Present Security Environment**

**W**e are now witnessing a global economic trauma which will probably re-set fundamentally the geo-political configuration of our planet. The collapse of Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. revealed the fragility of our world and now mankind is living an economic crisis which is described by most economists as the second Great Depression. This crisis forces old power factors to diminish their weight or to disappear from the international stage, and other state-type factors, political-economic and military integrated systems, corporations and cross-border NGO's, local, continental and global organizations to compete in order to achieve global supremacy. A new World Order is anticipated, even if the frontiers of the old societies are still marked. As a consequence of the deep economic-financial crisis, the traditional industrial societies and particularly the national and local economies, the conceptions and social

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behaviors are being re-shaped, civilizations make efforts with a view to passing as quickly and smoothly as possible through this difficult period.

The present security environment is marked by deep changes in the main fields of the social existence and cannot remain unaffected by these mutations. The Cold War ended by 1990-1991, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia tore apart, NATO and EU extended towards the East to the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus and the Near East region, EU tends to become a world actor, competing in this respect with the US, the Russian Federation diminished its political and military influence, China and India aim at the status of “political and economic superpowers”, the US remain the sole “Hyper power”, globalization is making steady progress, revolutions have occurred in information technology, biology, exact sciences, technology of “exploiting the outer space”, weapons have become more and more powerful and “intelligent”, etc.

The evolution of the political-military phenomenon is mainly influenced by the military activities still carried on in the theaters of operations in Afghanistan, West Balkans and Iraq, by the nuclear dossier and domestic crisis of Iran, the global economic recession, the growing competition between the states in order to control the energy resource areas and the strategic routes of their transportation, by the increase of the risks and cross-border conventional and asymmetric threats (i.e., terrorism, organized crime, WMD proliferation, invigoration of separatist movements, extension of the Islamic fundamentalism, global climate changes).

From the political-military point of view, the security environment can be characterized as follows:

- the trend of increasing tensions between the various power centers continues, due to the different points of view concerning the manner to solve conflicts and manage crises, the so-called “crisis of the perception asymmetry”;
- the expanding competition in promoting the own interests, particularly as concerns the free access to the sources of hydrocarbons, raw materials and water;
- the increasing importance of negotiations and talks, by bilateral summits and also by meetings of international structures;
- the continued process of NATO consolidation and reorganization within NATO, and the redefinition of the inter-relations within EU as well.

➤ the increased pressure some states put with a view to reforming NATO and the architecture of the present security system.

The adhesion of Romania to NATO and the European Union, its major projects after 1989, made it possible that our country became part of the process of global integration; this process is more and more coagulated, accelerated by technological progress, the expansion of the consumer markets and the labor migration, etc. In the framework of this general trend, Romania could not avoid the serious effects of the economic crisis, this financial “tsunami”, which hit first the economies of the main industrialized countries and then affected all the economies worldwide.

#### **Vulnerabilities in the context of the economic crisis**

The dangers threatening the world, worsened by the world economic crisis, are related to the existent material resources, environmental conditions, with multiple natural aspects and with the behavior of statal and non-statal actors.

The resources of energy and raw material are generally limited and irregularly spread on our planet. The industrial expansion and the economic globalization act as factors which “swallow” raw materials and energy products. The energy industry relies upon fossil and nuclear fuel and not on resources which can be regenerated.

The biggest consumers are the US, China and the EU. In the Gulf region there are 70% of the oil reserves of the planet, while Saudi Arabia possesses 25% of the world reserves, Iraq 10%, the Caspian area and Central Asia 7%, the Russian Federation about 5%. As to the resources of natural gases, the Russian Federation is the leader, followed by Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Algeria.

The development rate of the new-type energies (i.e., atomic, eolian, solar, based on hydrogen, etc.) is lower than the production necessities. The competition for hydrocarbons seems to prevail in the early third millennium, focusing the attention on the Gulf States, the Caspian area, Eastern and Western Siberia, Western Africa, South-Eastern Asia, the north of South America, Canada. One can easily notice that the competitions and the international conflicts are concentrated in these areas.

The chaotic industrialization and the irrational exploitation of the energy resources, based exclusively on the necessities of the consumption

market led to the permanent degradation of the environment, which critically affects the natural balance of Earth. Global warming, caused by the dangerous accumulation in the atmosphere of some gases (e.g. carbon dioxide, methane gas, nitrogen and sulphur dioxide, chlorofluorocarbons) gradually led to the “greenhouse effect”, the catastrophic thawing of the polar ice caps, to the sea level rise, the damage of soil fertility. The thinning of the ozone layer makes it possible that the ultraviolet rays cause effects similar to global warming.

The lack of food is a particular problem of the overpopulated countries or of those poor in natural resources from Africa and South Asia. Together with the lack of school education and qualified medical assistance, starvation endangers the life of over one billion people.

The poor resources of water are a danger which affects especially the states of Saharan Africa, the Near and Middle East or Central Asia. The most important water resources are in Canada (2.850 cubic km), Papua New Guinea (810 cubic km), Norway, New Zealand, the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. Minimal or poor water resources are found in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Mauritania, Libya, Jordan.

Population growth. The population growth trend is significant in China, India, Southeastern Asia, the Near and Middle East. Towards 2050, the present population of six billion people will double. This demographic expansion (having as consequence economic effects, political and military shocks) takes place in the same time with the ageing and decrease of population in the Russian Federation and even in the US or the EU.

The overpopulation of some countries and regions, corroborated with the worsening of poverty in the same areas stimulates the waves of emigrants who threaten to “flood” the EU and the US.

The lack of balance between the rich countries and the majority of the poor countries affects not only the world economy but also the social stability in vast areas in Latin America, Africa, Asia, etc.

Diseases, poverty, education degradation, amplified by the economic crisis, are dangers which menace the present times; by combination with the present systems of wealth redistribution, they will affect further the local and regional stabilities. Similarly, the depopulation of some vast territories, rich in natural resources, situated near states undergoing demographic expansion, also generates instability. The West-European population

registers a trend of decrease and ageing, which stimulates the emigration afflux from the developing countries and gives rise to a lot of risks, including the impossibility of ensuring pension payment.

Some authors promote the thesis according to which there are three levels of crisis expression:

- a systemic level, when the stability of the international system is endangered;
- a confrontation level, when two or more actors are involved in creating and extending the crisis.
- a decision level.

According to the geographic criteria, there are local and national crises (domestic ones), but also continental and global crises (external ones).

C.F. Herman defines crisis as a situation when objectives of fundamental interest are endangered, and the subjects are taken by surprise; Jean Luis Dufour defines it as a moment of breach within a well organized system. In all cases, crisis creates risks for the national and international security and requires adequate decisions to be made.

An economic crisis can lead to a political crisis and, even more seriously, to a social domestic crisis, with extremely dangerous ways of expression:

- violent demonstrations and meetings;
- aggressive internal activities prepared in time, launched and directed against the independence and integrity of the country;
- attempts against the country;
- interethnic tensions ;
- terrorist activities;
- internal armed conflicts, etc.

The ways to surpass the crisis are different and depend, first of all, on the ability of political factors to manage this kind of situation.

In order to analyze the international crises, which could be generated by an economic crisis, the same reasons can be taken into consideration, except the fact that the referencing system is different, mainly as concerns the framework, the aim, the extent, the participants and the consequences. In this context, one can identify the elements of the international crisis concept, relevant for the economic, geopolitical and geostrategic tackling of the elements which refer to the political-military field, elements whose

expression would critically affect the values of the international right, peace as well as the regional, continental or global security.

**Military power adapting to the challenges of the security environment**

The military and political planners all over the world are divided between two apparently contradictory requirements: to decrease the military expenses with a view to restraining the financial decline, or to increase the military expenses with a view to slowing down the increase of the global instability and the alteration of the military balance of power.

The British army, very extensive and poorly budgeted, passes through a difficult period: political and military planners are struggling in trying to balance the perceived needs of the very real budget reductions. Meanwhile, the British army is steadily decreased, while the commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan are increasing the constraints on equipment, representing reasons of tension and, with an economy in a state of emergency, both voters and politicians do not want to hear about the need to spend billions on what many view as a misguided help for America's imperial ambitions. As a result, the British defense budget as a percentage of GDP is the highest in the EU, far from that of many neighboring countries.

The Russian economy is falling into the midst of what began to seem like an unbridled race for expansion and completion of the military machine that was in a coma for several decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Funds from oil, supposed to finance a newly equipped Russian army, fell, leaving big plans at the intentional level due to the lack of funds. And as a shame, Russian arms exports, a major source of foreign exchange are declining fast, while the global financial crisis is strangling the credit sources of potential customers.

Without being a race, China's military budget has all the hallmarks of a hundredfold increase in the long term. It is difficult to give exact figures, but experts estimate China's military budget for 2010 at between 100 and 180 billion dollars (officially being about \$ 60 billion). Countries such as India find links on their own and have plans for military expansion, approaching a catastrophic decline in the economic activity, a combination that could lead to internal destabilization and an increase in external vulnerabilities.

Over the last decade, military funders around the world have spent as much as they could: the base budget of the U.S. Department of Defense, except funds for nuclear weapons and about \$ 12 billion per month for the "Global War on Terror" has increased by almost 70% between 2001 and 2009. Trends in economic climate, globalization, global war on terror and the rapid rise of India and China have provided all the reasons and resources both to policy and military experts.

But like any good thing it has come to an end. The global economic crisis, coupled with falling oil prices, has forced both policy and military planners to take a tough line against future military spending. They must make some hard decisions and, as all important decisions in life, the arguments are far from being concluded.

Of the approximately 200 existing nations in the world, seven of them have over 50% of GDP (only California is stronger economically than 193 of them) U.S. own 50% of the military potential of the planet.

The American superiority has always relied on its military infrastructure and its ability to project military power to thousands of miles from its shores, causing fear to any entity. That military industrial complex required a massive productive and successful economy to be maintained. In the past eight years, while replacing its ability to create goods that people needed with complex financial instruments and secured the mortgages as prime export product, America has relied on foreign lenders to supplement the American military establishment and the cost of its foreign wars. However, America cannot act outside the established institutional environment, and lately it has been noticed that the transatlantic relationship is significantly influenced by the following developments:

- lower strategic relevance of Europe as a central area of competition for power at global level and as main concern for security and defense policy of the U.S.;

- strengthening of the European Union and the increase of its economic and political role;

- increased globalization and its influence on perceptions of political and military decision-makers regarding international security features and the use of tools of power and influence in relations between states and NGOs;

➤ U.S. imposition as hegemonic power in the international system and the increasing imbalance of power at transatlantic level.

These developments have led to a change in the structure of relations between the U.S. and its European allies, as stressed out by the fact that foreign and security policies of the U.S. and European members are much less focused on NATO (the transatlantic relationship) compared with the Cold War period. Moreover, the former Secretary of the U.S. Department of State, M. Albright, emphasized that the psychology of partnership that characterized the transatlantic relations in recent decades has been replaced in recent years, by a psychology of U.S. ignoring the European allies, on the one hand, and a competition with the United States by the main EU countries, on the other. From a different perspective, Stanley Hoffman considers that the main cause of this crisis, in fact, of transatlantic relations is driven by the dramatic change of the American concept regarding international relations and foreign policy.

However, in this context, highly influenced by global economic crisis, achieving security in its many instances is an essential condition of survival and further development of the social systems. In high centers of decision, security is addressed in terms of national interest and international cooperation/competition, defense of territorial integrity, welfare, reducing vulnerabilities, risks, dangers, and threats to local, regional or global level. Great traditional consumers of military equipment, such as the Gulf States, feel the effects of lower oil prices and reconsider their major military projects. Their decisions strike the British, American, French and other traditional arms exporters. If the crisis continues, reconsiderations will turn into cancellations, affecting both the income of the providers of defense systems, and also the income of workers in defense industries throughout the western hemisphere.

As long as the economic crisis continues, countries around the world have become accustomed to the idea that its impact will affect economies and it is reasonable to believe that defense budgets will stagnate if not decline for the next few years in the hope that economic downturn will not turn into a military crisis.



### **Conclusions**

It is increasingly obvious that the economy is one of the main sources of military power because it produces means to materialize it. Information-technological power will prevail in the armed conflict of the future and become a real military power multiplier, and the physiognomy of the new threats and new conflicts, influenced by the financial power, will lead to reshaping the military power of the armies of the world, both in terms of organization and force structure as well as of changes in the *modus operandi*, technique and means of waging the war .

The modernization of NATO continues in the direction of transforming it in an alliance with global calling, even if it is still burdened by the gap in capabilities, while the EU continues to develop its military component.

The U.S., as the main pole of world power, has shown lately to be more willing to dialogue, cooperation and compromise with other major actors on the international arena, especially as regards the interests identified as common. As a result, it appears that the U.S. administration intends to build a relationship "on equal footing" with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, which remains a state with significant potential to maintain global stability; political leaders in Washington have confirmed, through statements and high-level meetings, that the United States considers the Russian Federation a great power. Bilateral relations include negotiations on the new START-2 treaty, which will replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty START-1, the Iranian and North Korean nuclear dossiers consultations, security situation in Afghanistan and the peace process in the Middle East. In this respect, the dynamics of the politico-military phenomenon might be influenced by: the implementation of the new directions for U.S. foreign policy in the Obama Administration's approach, the new NATO Strategic Concept, the adoption of the EU Constitutional Treaty, the developments in the Iranian and North Korean dossiers of nuclear armament, the depth of the global economic downturn and the management by the G8, G20 of its impact on the political, social and military level, the developments of the security situation in theaters of operations, foreign policy, energy, climate, and military steps/actions promoted by some major international players in relations with NATO, EU, AU, ASEAN as well as within UN, OSCE, CIS, CSTO, SCO, etc. Even if

the economic crisis makes large holes in the budgets and great efforts are made to strengthen peace, security and cooperation between security organizations, the number of conflicts has not changed, stressing again the need for a credible military power, able to cope with the multitude of risks, dangers and threats to overall security. Russia, though no longer has the economic capacity to support a major military power, yet has significant military capabilities. China has not actually shown its military power, but its economic development effort can any time support a major armed confrontation. India and Japan are trying to develop modern military capabilities to deal with regional problems. The United Kingdom, Germany, and France continue the process of reshaping their own army, both within NATO and the EU.

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According to some sources, today we are witnessing one of those rare epoch-making events that occur perhaps once in a millennium, i.e., the disintegration of an empire. It is said that this economic crisis, by its consequences and global valences will proclaim as the last victim the hegemony of the American Empire.

For over a year, while the U.S. economy was buried in recession and exporting its economic disasters around the globe, the main political and business leaders of U.S. institutions were declaring that the fundamentals of the economy were strong, while throwing money on corporations and financial institutions "too big to fail" in a desperate attempt to make the flow of financial failure not invade the whole economy. Since nobody can predict exactly what the final result will be, the likely outcome of this economic and financial apocalypse can be practically the end of the American power as ruler of the planet.

In a world where the U.S. dominance is still a condition of stability and security, the armies of the contemporary world are striving to adapt to the new conditions of the security environment, depending on the financial capacity of states, and are still not sufficiently prepared to prevent and counteract all new types of threats.

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