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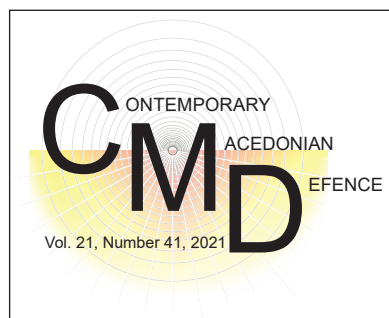
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МЕЃУНАРОДНО НАУЧНО СПИСАНИЕ НА
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EVIDENCE FOR THE VALIDITY AND UTILITY OF A NOVEL DECISION SUPPORT RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL IN A HIGH-STAKES OVERSEAS TACTICAL MILITARY VETTING ENVIRONMENT

Alex MARTIN¹
Ben ITO-SMITH²

Abstract: *Insider threats are among the most pressing challenges that threaten the security and safety of NATO and specialized coalition forces. In particular, the rise of insider threats in Middle East warzones has been linked to inefficient military vetting methodologies. The purpose of the applied research pilot described was to evaluate a novel artificial intelligence enabled voice screening tool and its capability in identifying markers of human risk in a harsh combat recruitment environment. Across two missions of n=762 participants, n=144 of whom were subjected to follow-up counterintelligence interviews, 97.62% of risk-flagged and 100% of risk-cleared automated interviews were confirmed and verified by ground truth measures. Further, the overall accuracy of the automated system was estimated as 97.92%. During the automated telephone interview phase of the screening process, 3.5% of the interviewee pool provided a total of n=17 admissions to either knowing about or being involved in internal threats. Critically, the automated interview correctly flagged 100% of the high-risk individuals also identified by the existing screening and vetting process. The technology also correctly identified n=11 separate threat-associated individuals who were missed by the client's current screening and vetting process. Finally, analyses provided evidence of the non-biased nature of the technology. The findings contribute to the global threat detection literature.*

Keywords: *Counterintelligence, force protection, internal threat, military investigations, national defense, risk assessment, security, terrorism*

Introduction

Regardless of traditional security and training measures instituted for soldiers, civilians and contractors serving in the national defense sector, it has remained extremely difficult to effectively identify the small number of individuals who present insider threats. These dangerous individuals harm the security and safety of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and coalition national security and military institutions through acts of espionage, terrorism, illegal disclosure of classified information, and/or degradation of resources (Department of Defense,

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2017; Greitzer & Hohimer, 2011).

Since 2009, insider threats in Afghanistan, some of which are labelled as “green-on-blue” attacks (i.e., incidents in which a neutral force fire upon the friendly force) have surged (Allen, 2012), culminating in deaths of multiple soldiers from numerous NATO member states. As recently as the first quarter of 2021, while NATO troops started to withdraw from the country after two decades of occupation, insider attacks increased by 82% (Al Jazeera, 2021). These types of attacks are estimated to comprise up to 20% of the casualties in International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), and are pivotal in the strategic decision-making processes of coalition authorities. Experts have been divided as to the root cause of green-on-blue attacks, with some opining that they have been the result of culture clashes, while others have pointed to terrorist organizations who infiltrate Afghan security forces. Afghanistan’s former deputy foreign minister Jawed Ludin, linked the rise of these attacks to the insufficient vetting procedures of security forces (Allen, 2012).

In providing evidence of inefficiencies in key elements of coalition force vetting mechanisms (e.g., slow clearance processing times, incomplete data retrieval, computing infrastructure), security experts substantiate the aforementioned assumption (Sheppard, 2020). Critically, these operational deficits are associated with bottlenecks and exposed vulnerabilities in comprehensive military screening processes. To mitigate these challenges, the adoption of modern, software-based vetting solutions, reformed personnel acquisition practices, and shortened security clearance processing times are greatly required. As such, increased investment in innovative machine learning systems and artificial intelligence ecosystem partnerships needs to be further developed (Schmidt et al., 2021)

Admittedly, the field of artificial intelligence (AI) is relatively new, with milestones regarding its development since Turing’s test in 1950 comprehensively described and summarized elsewhere (Buchanan, 2005; Brynjofsson & McAfee, 2017; Kilichan & Yilmaz, 2020; Rigano, 2018). Compellingly, many machine learning systems have surpassed human-level performance in evaluating a person’s cognitive state, based on facial expression or voice outputs. (Brynjofsson & McAfee, 2017; Junoh et al., 2013; Rigano, 2018). Despite the latter, AI applications are still underutilized and underdeveloped in both the commercial and military realms (Hoadley & Saylor, 2020; Knight, 2020).

Applicable to this real-world evaluation pilot, there are specific outputs of the human voice that are known to (1) be influenced by the speaker’s internal and external environment and (2) carry real-time information not only about a person’s psychological and physiological state, but also his associations and intentions (Hansen & Patil, 1998; Singh, 2019). Some of this information is embedded at such fine levels in the vocal signal, it is not discernible by humans. However, specific AI-powered machines can detect and map the signals, which serve as biomarkers of psychophysiological states, that range from depression to threat-reactions (Hub Culture Davos, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2018). This paper describes a pilot of one such AI-driven automated technology, in particular one that detects human risk.

The overseas military pilot described was ideal for retrospective analysis as (1) the environment and population reflected the real-life conditions wherein the tool was designed to be used, (2) the sample size afforded high statistical power, (3) multiple variables were available for analysis, and (4) verification was available for flagged results.

The primary purpose of the pilot was to determine whether or not the AI-driven automated technology could bring value and be effective in: (1) providing additional data to assist analysts and military personnel in making better-informed decisions during the vetting process, (2) identifying human-based risk (potential threats) the client’s screening tools missed, and (3)

screening large volumes of people in an austere, nonpermissive environment. The secondary purpose of the pilot was to contribute to the literature, by revealing trends associated with interviews.

Derived from the primary study purpose, the following hypotheses were tested: H1a: The automated technology would produce variation in risk assessment outputs; H1b: The overall screening performance of the automated technology would be high (i.e., >70% on most metrics), H1c: No individual pertinent question posed by the tool would outperform the others in effectiveness, and H1d: The automated technology would classify admissions as risk-negative responses. Derived from the secondary study purpose, the following hypotheses were tested: H2a: Risk positive response numbers would not be predicted by ethnicity, age, language, military rank, military unit membership, and province of residence, and H2b: Automated interview results would not be predicted by age, language, and military rank.

Materials

Screening Tool

Clearspeed Verbal™, henceforth referred to as “the automated technology”, is an enterprise-level, scalable voice analytics tool that quickly assesses an individual’s risk association relative to explicit themes or issues by means of an automated telephone interview. By evaluating specific vocal articulation outputs, this automated system detects and quantifies the presence or absence of voice-based risk reactions to client-defined questions. The AI-enabled technology leverages validated voice analytics and technical processes to evaluate responses to specific questions asked during the interview.

Unique Aspects of the Technology

The automated technology enables precise risk alerts based on an individual’s vocal responses in any language, without the need to store personal identifiable information (PII). The tool incorporates the use of issue-specific questions asked during an automated telephonic interview to evaluate the presence or absence of risk signatures in the voice. Researchers have provided evidence that perceptions, cognitions, and emotional arousal are communicated through the voice (Cowen et al, 2019; Simon-Thomas et al., 2009). In the automated process, the voice characteristics evaluated are the result of distinct neurocognitive reactions to specific screening questions and have neural correlates (Dedovic et al., 2009; Farrow et al., 2013; Muehlhan et al., 2013). There is ample evidence that specific information in human voice outputs can indicate the presence or absence, and intensity, of Central Nervous System and Autonomic Nervous System driven reactions in real-world environments wherein the perception of high-stakes is involved (e.g., Brenner et al., 1994; Laukka et al., 2008; Ruiz et al., 1990; Scherer, 2003; Sondhi et al., 2015; Van Puyvelde et al., 2018; Williams & Stevens, 1972). Further, the link between linguistics, vocal cues, and risk markers of fraud detection has been established (Throckmorton et al., 2015). The automated technology described here creates a model of the human voice in any language, for “yes” or “no”

responses to risk-focused questions. The voice model is transformed, processed, analyzed, and quantified using a series of proprietary methodologies which evaluate and classify specific features of vocal responses. Once the voice input completes the processing cycle, a risk level for each response to specific questions is calculated and assigned, from low-to-high.

Technical Process

The typical automated telephonic interview process employs Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) capable of securely conducting hundreds of simultaneous telephonic interviews from anywhere in the world. Although the primary Cloud-based enterprise system uses SIP, for the pilot described, Mobile systems specifically developed for military applications were employed. These systems are housed in rugged MILSPEC notebook computers and equipped with specially configured VOIP telephone instruments to conduct interviews. Upon interview completion, an encryption system packages the user responses, which are securely transferred to an AI-driven risk evaluation system, trained over a number of years via supervised-learning using labeled data. Additionally, multiple Quality Control processes are used to ensure the precision and accuracy of each evaluated response. A report of the evaluation is then automatically created and transferred to the client in the desired format. All data are encrypted both at rest and in transit. Interview results are typically accessed via a secure online dashboard, based on user role and permissions (i.e., the account owner can control and define permissions and restrict information only to those who need to see/use it). At the time of this pilot evaluation, the expected turnaround time for results was within 24-hours of interview completion.

Continuum of Individual Responses and Overall Results

The automated technology's risk framework boundaries are established (i.e., remain constant), wherein evaluation output results fall into one of four risk determinations along a continuum: low risk (LR) which equates to no risk, average risk (AR) which equates to negligible risk, potential risk (PR), which equate to a mid-level of risk, and high risk (HR). In this particular evaluation, due to the seven pertinent questions (PQs) asked, each interview produced a total of seven risk-reaction results, with one of four AI-generated risk scores per question. The highest risk score among all questions determined the overall risk assessment for each interview.

Interview Outcome Categories

Following the automated process, each interview was associated with an outcome result along a continuum: low risk (LR), average risk (AR), potential risk (PR), and high risk (HR). Further, three additional outcomes are: admission (AD), suspected countermeasure (CM), and not completed (NC). The latter three are the result of QC evaluation and scoring. An AD was the effect of a "yes" response to any PQ asked.

A CM was the result of an interviewee showcasing specific behavioral characteristics (e.g., inaudible whispers to one or more questions), described elsewhere (Hughes, 2017; Navarro & Karlins, 2008; Nierenberg, 2011). An NC interview was the result of a technical or similar issue (e.g., bad telephone connection) occurring during the interview. Risk-negative interviews were those in the LR and AR ranges. Risk positive interviews with outcomes of PR, HR, AD, or CM are typically recommended for follow-up.

Methods

During February 2018, a small, experienced team of Clearspeed screening specialists was deployed overseas to support a US-military forces client who sought to pilot the automated technology in two real-world missions within the framework of a pre-existing DoD-approved vetting process in place for recruited candidates and commandos in a non-permissive combat environment.

For each of the $n=762$ total participants chosen from the military program enrollment environment ($n=715$ randomly selected candidates in Mission 1; $n=47$ identified Persons of Interest (POI) in Mission 2), each automated interview (1) was comprised of seven PQs posed in one of two languages (Dari or Pashto), depending on each participant's native language, (2) took approximately 10-12 minutes to complete, and (3) had results processed within 24 hours.

A subset ($n=144$) of participants consisting of flagged Mission 1 candidates and Mission 2 commando POIs underwent additional counterintelligence (CI) interviews based on military leadership directed requirements. Since the CI interviews involved objective (factual) ground truth measures for validation purposes, the results of CI interviews were used to calculate the automated technology's screening metrics.

Design

Mission 1 vs. Mission 2

In Mission 1, the automated technology was implemented to complement the client's bio-enrollment and threat screening protocol for purposes of force protection. Mission 1 Afghan Special Forces Commando candidates were flagged as a result of having failed the current DoD vetting process and/or having produced risk-positive results in the automated interview. The selection criteria for the Mission 1 CI interviews was any flag, due to the biometrics and/or the automated interview process. Specifically, of the $n=107$ Mission 1 candidates who took CI interviews, $n=11$ flagged solely on the client's bio-enrollment process (prior to the administration of the automated interview), $n=60$ flagged solely on the automated interview, and $n=36$ flagged on both the bio-enrollment process and automated interview. Due to the real-world nature of this project, the Mission 1 CI interviewers were unblinded to the bio-enrollment and risk results prior to conducting their interviews.

In Mission 2, the automated technology was used to support a tactical counterintelligence screening mission of persons of interest (POIs)— existing Afghan

Special Forces commandos who were flagged for other reasons (i.e., not as a result of bio-enrollment or automated screening results) by CI personnel. The selection criteria for the Mission 2 CI interviews was any commando identified as a POI, regardless of whether they flagged on the automated interview and/or biometrics process. Of the n=57 Mission 2 POIs identified by existing processes, of which n=47 took the automated interview, n=37 also underwent CI interviews. The Mission 2 CI interviewers were unblinded to 21.6% (n=8) and blinded to 78.4% (n=29) of the automated interview results prior to the CI interviews.

Regardless of mission, each participant represented in this pilot voluntarily consented to take the automated interview as part of the tool’s evaluation. Steps of the client’s screening and vetting process (inclusive of automated interview insertion) are detailed in Figure 1.

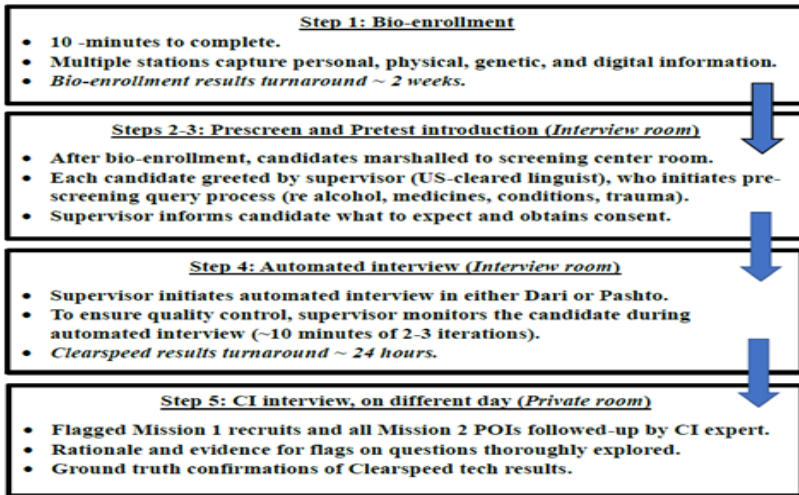


Figure 1: Steps of Overseas, Tactical Military Screening & Vetting Process

Interview Foci

The automated interview approaches and questions were the same for all individuals who participated in the pilot screening. In order to minimize threats to validity, only the most salient issues were queried, reflected in the limited number (i.e., seven) of PQs approved by military officials for the automated interview. These questions were based on a combinatorial approach of a priori knowledge (i.e., client-specified question themes and issues) and information gleaned from in-depth communications with the military client’s executive team, regarding the history, pervasiveness, and impact of the most critical thematic areas. All final questions were approved in writing by the military client.

Since the posed PQs reflected the high-stakes nature of the themes represented, the goal of the automated interview was to determine the presence or absence of risk reaction(s) to knowledge and/or personal involvement questions. Specifically, the

foci of the automated interviews were on knowledge and/or involvement in: falsifying information in order to gain employment, unlawful conduct, vandalism, and green-on-blue acts against allied forces. The interviews were conducted to obtain potentially actionable information to resolve operational issues. (Table 1).

1. **Involvement:** Did you provide any false information about yourself or your background to get this job?
2. **Involvement:** Are you seeking this job to harm American forces in any way, to include providing information to Anti-American persons or groups?
3. **Involvement:** Have you ever provided any type of information about American forces to any anti-American person or group?
4. **Involvement:** Have you ever intentionally damaged any property or facility used by Americans?
5. **Knowledge:** Do you personally know anyone who has harmed or attacked any American in any way?
6. **Involvement:** Have you been personally involved in harming or attacking any American in any way?
7. **Involvement:** Are you seeking this job to harm the Afghan government or Afghan forces in any way, to include providing information to anti-Afghan persons or groups?

Table 1: Pertinent Questions used in Tactical, Overseas Pilot Evaluation

Data Sample

Specifically, to address whether two samples of a population of special warfare candidates and commandos in Afghanistan had ever known about or participated in green-on-blue acts via two missions, data not originally collected for research purposes was obtained from a total of n=762 out of 1,020 individuals in two geographically separate locations, in both the Dari and Pashto languages. The comprehensive data from Mission 1 originated from n=715 completed automated interviews (that transpired over a total of twenty hours between February 10-13, 2018) and n=107 follow-up interviews. The data from tactical Mission 2 originated from n=47 completed automated interviews (that transpired within seven days, February 19-26, 2018) and n=37 follow-up interviews.

When testing most hypotheses, the PQs (independent variables) posed by the automated tool were the stimuli. Other than tool-generated risk outputs (dependent variables), the additional data collected consisted of descriptive details (extraneous variables), such as age, ethnicity, native language, military rank, military unit association, province of residence, admissions of either knowing or being involved in internal theft, and confirmatory details produced by the independent follow-up expert.

Establishing Ground Truth

During the vetting process, information was collected that was objective and real, supported by empirical evidence (e.g., fingerprints, physical info, and DNA matched

against databases; cell phone digital forensics checked for known threat indicators). This factual information was later used for CI interview verification of both cleared and flagged automated interview assessment results. For instance, if a candidate or commando flagged on an automated interview internal threat involvement question, and fingerprint records indicated they had falsified their name, this would be considered confirmation of risk. If an admission was made, factual verification of details relayed was a requirement of validation.

Participants

Descriptive Statistics of Participants

The Mission 1 Force Protection candidate and Mission 2 Tactical Counterintelligence POI evaluation samples respectively consisted of n=725 special warfare candidates and n=47 commandos of a US-based training element in Afghanistan in 2018. Although none of the participants who were scheduled to take the automated interview underwent attrition (e.g., as a result of refusing participate, medical or mental faculty reasons, etc.), ten scheduled interviews of Mission 1 were never completed due to technical reasons. All interviewees represented in this pilot voluntarily consented to taking the automated interview as part of a pilot evaluation of the tool.

With respect to the completed automated interviews of Mission 1, males represented 100% of the n=715 participants; the average age was 24.59 years \pm 5.97 S.D. (range 17 to 50, n=4 unknown). Of the two languages represented, 59.9 (n=428) spoke Pashto, and 40.1% (n=287) spoke Dari. Of the ten ethnic backgrounds represented, frequencies (and respective n) distributed as: 55.1% (n=394) Pashtun, 27.1% (n=194) Tajik, 9.1% (n=65) Hazara, 3.64% Pashai (n=26), 2.52% (n=18) Uzber, 1.4% (n=10) Nuristani, 0.4% (n=3) Arab, 0.1% (n=1) Kazalbash, 0.1% (n=1) Turkman, and 0.42% (n=3) unknown. Of the eleven military ranks represented among candidates, the frequencies (and respective n) distributed as: 75.9% (n=543) soldier, 9.1% (n=65) sergeant, 3.78% (n=16) staff sergeant, 2.8% (n=20) first lieutenant, 2.24% (n=16) sergeant first class, 2.24% (n=16) second lieutenant, 1.82% (n=13) captain, 0.7% (n=5) major, 0.56% (n=4) first sergeant, 0.42% (n=3) master sergeant, 0.14% (n=1) lieutenant colonel, and 0.28% (n=2) unknown. Of the eight military units represented among candidates, the frequencies (and respective n) distributed as: 33.8% (n=242) company 5, 33.3% (n=238) company 6, 29.7% (n=212) company 7, 0.56% (n=4) maintenance support unit, 0.42% (n=3) company 8, 0.14% (n=1) reserves, 0.14% (n=1) company 1, 0.14% (n=1) company 13, and 1.82% (n=13) unknown. Of the thirty one provinces in which participants resided, the frequencies (and respective n) distributed as: 31.2% (n=223) Nangarhar, 20.8% (n=149) Kabul, 7.55% (n=54) Badakhshan, 6.15% (n=44) Kunar, 3.92% (n=28) Laghman, 3.78% (n=27) Baghlan, 2.94% (n=21) Parwan, 2.66% (n=19) Kunduz, 2.66% (n=19) Bamyán, 2.38% (n=17) Kapisa, 1.96% (n=14) Takhar, 1.82% (n=13) Panjshir, 1.26% (n=9) Khost, 1.26% (n=9) Nuristan, 1.26% (n=9) Paktia, 1.12% (n=8) Balkh, 0.84% (n=6) Ghor, 0.84% (n=6) Herat, 0.7% (n=5) Daykundi,

0.7% (n=5) Jowzjan, 0.7% (n=5) Paktika, 0.7% (n=5) Sar-e Pol, 0.42% (n=3) Faryab, 0.42% (n=3) Samangan, 0.28% (n=2) Badghis, 0.28% (n=2) Kandahar, 0.14% (n=1) Ghazni, 0.14% (n=1) Helmand, 0.14% (n=1) Logar, 0.14% (n=1) Maidan Wardak, 0.14% (n=1) Uruzghan, and 0.7% (n=5) unknown.

With respect to the completed interviews of Mission 2, males represented 100% of the n=47 participants; Of the two languages represented, 74.5% (n=35) spoke Dari, and 25.5% (n=12) spoke Pashto.

Statistical Tests

To test the aforementioned hypotheses, the following analyses were executed via IBM SPSS Statistics 23 software: the non-parametric Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test, the rank-based Friedman analysis of variance, cumulative odds ordinal logistic regression, and multiple regression. Additionally, the following analyses were executed via Microsoft Office Excel 2016 software: frequencies of risk score outcomes, Student's t-test, and screening metrics. *NOTE: For the first two analyses types, omitted interviews included those that were assessed as incomplete admissions and/or suspected countermeasures.*

Ethical Standards and Informed Consent

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation [institutional and national] and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Not originally collected for research purposes, the data from the evaluation pilot represented real-world research. The privacy of participants was respected and protected according to established ethical guidelines (Robson & McCartan, 2016), with personally identifiable information either anonymized, kept confidential, or not collected at all.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Individual Response Risk Results

In Mission 1, the n=715 completed and n=10 incomplete interviews resulted in a total of n=5,005 distinct responses (i.e., LR, AR, PR, HR, AD, CM). Of the n=5,005 distinct responses, the PQ risk evaluation frequencies distributed as follows: 33.1% (n=1,659) LR; 38.3% (n=1,917) AR; 14.6% (n=729) PR; 12.2% (n=613) HR; 0.7% (n=33) AD; and 1.1% (n=54) CM.

In Mission 2, the n=47 completed and n=0 incomplete interviews resulted in a total of n=329 distinct responses (i.e., LR, AR, PR, HR, AD, CM). Of the n=329 distinct responses, the PQ risk evaluation frequencies distributed as follows: 35.6% (n=117) LR; 33.1% (n=109) AR; 14.3% (n=47) PR; 14% (n=46) HR; 2.1% (n=7) AD; and 0.9% (n=3) CM (Table 2A).

In both missions, based on the automated evaluation and quality control review,

questions that resulted in admissions were separately analyzed for their associated risk levels, the results of which are presented in a separate section.

Interview Outcome Results

In Mission 1, of the n=715 fully completed interviews, the overall interview assessment outcomes (i.e., based on highest rating across the seven PQs) distributed as follows: 2.8% (n=20) LR; 22.1% (n=158) AR; 24.2% (n=173) PR; 43.5% (n=311) HR; 3.1% (n=22) AD; and 4.3% (n=31) CM.

In Mission 2, of the n=47 fully completed interviews, the overall interview assessment outcomes distributed as follows: 4.3% (n=2) LR; 19.1% (n=9) AR; 21.3% (n=10) PR; 40.4% (n=19) HR; 10.6% (n=5) AD; and 4.3% (n=2) CM. (Table 2B).

A. Distinct PQ Responses		
Evaluated risk	Mission 1 (n = 5,005)	Mission 2 (n = 329)
	Force Protection	Counterintelligence
Low Risk (LR)	33.1% (n = 1,659)	35.6% (n = 117)
Average Risk (AR)	38.3% (n = 1,917)	33.1% (n = 109)
Potential Risk (PR)	14.6% (n = 729)	14.3% (n = 47)
High Risk (HR)	12.2% (n = 613)	14% (n = 46)
Admission (AD)	0.7% (n = 33)	2.1% (n = 7)
Countermeasure (CM)	1.1% (n = 54)	0.9% (n = 3)
B. Completed Interview Outcomes		
Evaluated risk	Mission 1 (n = 715)	Mission 2 (n = 47)
	Force Protection	Counterintelligence
Low Risk (LR)	2.8% (n = 20)	4.3% (n = 2)
Average Risk (AR)	22.1% (n = 158)	19.1% (n = 9)
Potential Risk (PR)	24.2% (n = 173)	21.3% (n = 10)
High Risk (HR)	43.5% (n = 311)	40.4% (n = 19)
Admission (AD)	3.1% (n = 22)	10.6% (n = 5)
Countermeasure (CM)	4.3% (n = 31)	4.3% (n = 2)

Table 2: Comparison of result type frequencies of individual responses and interviews

Pertinent Question Risk Results

In Mission 1, involvement-based PQ4 elicited the highest number of HR responses (17.6%). Knowledge-based PQ5 elicited the highest number of PR responses (16.5%).

In Mission 2, knowledge-based PQ5 elicited the highest number of HR responses (19.6%). Involvement-based PQ7 elicited the highest number of PR responses (23.4%).

Inferential Statistics

Observed vs. Expected Interview Response Frequencies

To test H1a, we conducted a Chi-Square Goodness of Fit test for each mission. In Mission 1, of the n=715 fully completed interviews, n=662 participants completed

interviews consisting of $n=4,634$ responses that were assessed as LR, AR, PR, or HR (as a result of "yes" or "no" responses to the seven PQs relevant to force protection). The statistical test revealed the assessments distributed unequally across the different risk levels, $\chi^2(3, N = 4,634) = 1022.34, p < 0.001$. In Mission 2, of the $n=47$ fully completed interviews, $n=40$ participants completed interviews consisting of $n=280$ responses that were "purely" assessed as LR, AR, PR, or HR (as a result of "yes" or "no" responses to the seven PQs relevant to force protection). The statistical test revealed the assessments distributed unequally across the different risk levels, $\chi^2(3, N = 280) = 40.714, p < 0.001$. Specifically, for both missions, low risk evaluations were most common

Screening Metrics

To test H1b re screening metrics, for each mission and then for pooled results, we conducted a 2×2 contingency table (i.e., error matrix) analysis of actual vs. predicted risk outcomes.

In Mission 1, for the $n=107$ candidates who completed both the automated interview evaluations (i.e., $n=11$ cleared; $n=96$ flagged), and follow-up CI interviews (when automated interview results in thematic areas were scrutinized against objective ground truth measures), the following screening metrics resulted: $n=96$ True Positives, $n=0$ False Positives (α -Error), $n=0$ False Negatives (β -Error), $n=11$ True Negatives. As a result, prediction metrics of the automated technology showed: 100% sensitivity, 100% specificity, 100% positive predictive value (PPV), 100% negative predictive value (NPV), and 100% accuracy, when prevalence was 89.72%.

In Mission 2, for the $n=37$ POI commandos who completed both the automated interview evaluations (i.e., $n=7$ cleared; $n=30$ flagged), and follow-up CI interviews, the following screening metrics resulted: $n=27$ True Positives, $n=3$ False Positives (α -Error), $n=0$ False Negatives (β -Error), $n=7$ True Negatives. As a result, prediction metrics of the automated technology showed: 100% sensitivity, 70% specificity, 90% PPV, 100% NPV, and 91.89% accuracy, when prevalence was 72.97%.

When pooling the interview outcome data for both missions ($n=144$), the automated technology showed: 100% sensitivity, 85.71% specificity, 97.62% positive predictive value (PPV), 100% negative predictive value (NPV), and 97.92% accuracy, when prevalence was 85.42%.

Differences in Pertinent Questions

In Mission 1, for $n=662$ automated interviews assessed as LR, AR, PR, or HR, application of the Friedman test revealed no evidence of stochastic dominance between the PQs for score outputs, $\chi^2(6) = 10.72, p = .097$. In Mission 2, for $n=40$ interviews, application of the Friedman test revealed no evidence of stochastic dominance between the PQs for score outputs, $\chi^2(6) = 2.878, p = .824$.

Consistent with H1c, then, in each mission, there was no evidence that any individual question outperformed the others.

Admission Frequencies and Correlation with Risk Outputs

In Mission 1, 3.1% (n=22) of a total 715 completed automated interviews resulted in admissions during the automated interview phase. With n=33 admissions among n=22 admitters, the average rate was 1.5 admissions/admitter. Of all n=33 admission responses made the rank order and frequency of admissions by PQ were: PQ1 = PQ7 (27.3%) > PQ2 (15.2%) > PQ4 (12.1%) > PQ3 = PQ5 (9.1%) > PQ6 (0%). The first PQ (Did you provide any false information about yourself or your background to get this job?) and last PQ (Are you seeking this job to harm the Afghan government or Afghan forces in any way, to include providing information to anti-Afghan persons or groups?) posed produced the most admissions (n=9 each). PQ6 (Have you been personally involved in harming or attacking any American in any way?) did not result in any admissions.

In Mission 2, 10.6% (n=5) of a total 47 completed interviews resulted in admissions during the automated interview phase. With n=7 admissions among n=5 admitters, the average rate was 1.4 admissions/admitter. Of all n=7 admission responses made the rank order and frequency of admissions by PQ were: PQ1 = PQ7 (28.6%) > PQ2 = PQ3 = PQ4 (14.3%) > PQ5 = PQ6 (0%). The first PQ (Did you provide any false information about yourself or your background to get this job?) and last PQ (Are you seeking this job to harm the Afghan government or Afghan forces in any way, to include providing information to anti-Afghan persons or groups?) posed produced the most admissions (n=2 each). PQ5 (Do you personally know anyone who has harmed or attacked any American in any way?) and PQ6 (Have you been personally involved in harming or attacking any American in any way?) did not result in any admissions.

Consistent with H1d, in each mission, most admissions were classified by the automated technology as risk negative responses. In Mission 1, 60.6% (n=20) were associated with risk negative (LR or AR) results, leaving 39.4% (n=13) aligned with risk positive (PR or HR) results. In Mission 2, 57.2% (n=4) were associated with risk negative (LR or AR) results, leaving 42.8% (n=3) aligned with risk positive (PR or HR) results.

Feature Relationship Analyses

Predictors of Risk Positive Responses in Mission 1

To test H2a, a multiple regression analysis was run to predict risk positive response numbers in Mission 1 interviews based on ethnicity, age, language, military rank, military unit membership, and area (province) of residence. There was linearity as assessed by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals against the predicted values. There was independence of residuals, as assessed by a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.998. There was homoscedasticity, as assessed by visual inspection of a plot

of studentized residuals versus unstandardized predicted values. There was no evidence of multicollinearity, as assessed by tolerance values greater than 0.1. There were no studentized deleted residuals greater than ± 3 standard deviations, no leverage values greater than 0.2, and values for Cook's distance above 1. The assumption of normality was met, as assessed by a Q-Q Plot. The multiple regression model did not statistically predict risk positive response number at a significant level, $F(6, 95) = 0.867$, $p = 0.519$, adj. $R^2 = .56$. Regression coefficients and standard errors can be found in Table 3.

# risk+ responses	<i>B</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>		<i>SE B</i>	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>				
Model						0.58	0.56
Constant	3.002	2.064	3.941	0.478			
Ethnicity	0.009	-0.119	0.136	0.065	0.006		
Age	-0.004	-0.028	0.02	0.012	-0.015		
Language	0.051	-0.234	0.335	0.145	0.016		
Military rank	-0.073	-0.152	0.007	0.04	-0.085		
Military unit	-0.061	-0.218	0.097	0.08	-0.033		
Residence	0.001	-0.017	0.019	0.009	0.004		

Note. Model = "Enter" method in SPSS Statistics; *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; CI = confidence level; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; *SE B* = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = coefficient of determination; ΔR^2 = adjusted R^2 .
* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 3: Multiple regression results for number of risk positive responses

Effects of Age, Language and Rank on Mission 1 Automated Interview Results

To test H2b, a cumulative odds ordinal logistic regression with proportional odds was run to determine the effects of age, language, and military rank on the overall four types of automated interview results (as determined by the automated technology) in Mission 1 interviews. There were proportional odds, as assessed by a full likelihood ratio test comparing the fitted model to a model with varying location parameters, $\chi^2(24) = 36.929$, $p = .054$. The deviance goodness-of-fit test indicated that the model was a good fit to the observed data, $\chi^2(456) = 397.98$, $p = .977$, but most cells were sparse with zero frequencies in 59.7% of cells. The final model did not statistically predict the dependent variable significantly over and above the intercept-only model, $\chi^2(12) = 15.208$, $p = 0.230$. The odds of Dari speaking interviewees having different overall interview results was 1.069, (95% CI, 0.793 to 1.443) times that for Pashto speaking interviewees, $\chi^2(1) = 0.193$, $p = .660$. Additionally, the military ranks of interviewees had no statistically significant effect on interview outcome, $\chi^2(10) = 11.535$, $p = 0.798$. Finally, an increase in age (expressed in years) was not significantly associated with a change in interview outcome results, with an odds ratio of 0.996 (95% CI, 0.969 to 1.024), $\chi^2(1) = 0.065$, $p = 0.798$.

Discussion

In this retrospective pilot conducted in an austere, harsh, tactical military screening and vetting environment, the automated tool alerted the client to key security threats, in the identification of candidates and commandos who either knew about or were actively involved with anti-coalition, anti-American and anti-Afghanistan government acts. The successful pilot also reflected the excellent collaboration between the military client and operational personnel. Ultimately, the client found the automated technology to be an effective risk screening and assessment tool that was operationally friendly, easy to implement, efficient and with results turnaround up to fourteen times faster than their current threat-detection methodologies (i.e., a day vs. two weeks).

Notable Findings

Beyond the statistical evidence that the technology operated significantly better than chance and that the pertinent questions used in the automated interviews were equally effective (in eliciting risk reactions), the AI-driven technology showcased formidable screening metrics of 100% sensitivity, 85.71% specificity, 97.62% PPV, 100% NPV, and 97.92% accuracy (considering the prevalence rate of 75% among n=144 pooled metrics results). The latter is promising, and reveals that the piloted automated technology worked exceedingly well in recognizing and separating flags from clears in the harsh, austere environment of a warzone. Findings are also consistent with research suggesting that high-stakes environments translate to vocal signals that are easier to discern, more robust and more reliable than those derived in the lab (Brenner et al., 1994; Mendoza & Carballo, 1998; Ruiz et al., 1990).

In the pilot, it was additionally notable that most of the admissions made during the automated interview were associated with the absence of risk detected in voice outputs (i.e., no detectable threat reactions). This trend is not new. When averaging other operational data spanning twenty projects that involved similar screening missions, admissions were consistently and significantly associated with higher frequencies of risk negative and lower frequencies of risk positive vocal outputs than their non-admission counterparts (Figure 2). These overall findings corroborate the literature that disclosures serve as points of release, which are reflected in attenuated, acute alert reactions (Farrow et al., 2013; Suchotzki et al., 2017; Verschuere et al., 2018).

As a result of the tool's implementation in the pilot described, the client was able to save on resources while focusing on bad actors. The automated technology accurately classified all high-threat individuals identified by the existing screening and vetting process. The client also confirmed that the technology additionally correctly identified n=11 separate individuals who presented threats, but were missed by the client's DoD-approved CI screening and vetting process. In other words, the incorporation of the automated technology in the client's repertoire of threat detection tools lowered their β -Error rate of threat detection.

Finally, the results provide evidence the AI-driven, automated technology is not influenced by age, ethnicity, language, military rank, military company membership, and place of residence. This underscores the non-biased nature of the technology's algorithm in generating risk result outcomes.

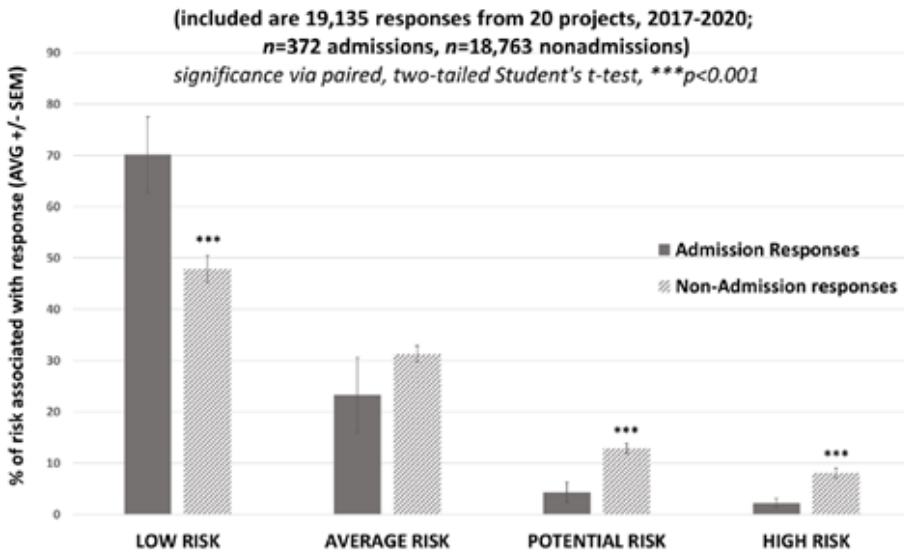


Figure 2: Historical Clearspeed Verbal™ risk frequencies for admissions vs. non-admissions

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations to this pilot field evaluation that should be addressed. First, due to the necessary ethical constraints on the amount of personal information collected (Robson & McCartan, 2016), specific characteristics of the client's operations and candidates (e.g., socioeconomic strata, education level) were not be explored, which could have further enriched the analyses.

Another challenge during mission execution centered around the nescience of many interviewees, who represented a population that had an ~ 88% illiteracy rate. While the ability to read is not a requirement of taking the automated telephonic interview, the ability to follow simple verbal instructions is. A number of participants did not comprehend how to take a simple telephone-based interview, despite simple and clear instructions that were provided to every interviewee in his native language at least twice before the automated interview was initiated. The evaluation team overcame this challenge by taking more time with each interviewee before the interviews began. This challenge underscored the importance of asking risk assessment questions in the simplest, most direct way.

More interviews resulted in flagged (PR, HR, AD or CM) than cleared (LR, AR) outcomes, which is not what has transpired in all previous and subsequent screening

projects conducted globally. The high rate of risk positive outcomes may have been a reflection of the increased degree of risk associated with the population queried, or it may have mirrored interviewees' lack of complete understanding about the pertinent questions posed. It was later discerned that although the topics queried were on-target, due to the demands of the client, (1) formal vs. informal dialects were not taken into account during question development, (2) the compound phrasing of some queries did not optimally allow for clarity and comprehension, and (3) too many questions were posed (*Note: current protocols adopt the use of fewer, direct, and simply phrased questions*). Regardless, the pilot's high frequency of risk positive outcomes was successfully managed by ranking the flagged interviews, with the highest priority (of recommended follow-up) given to the candidates who produced the most risk positive responses.

Finally, we underscore that although the screening metrics were impressively high, nonetheless, it is possible β -Error may have been underestimated (thereby inflating the estimates of accuracy, sensitivity, and NPV). False negatives are typically a blind spot in field studies (Fiedler et al, 2012). Future experimental studies will be important to understand false negative rates, specifically. Nonetheless, it is important to note that AI flagged threats not detected by human agents, and appears to improve on current vetting procedures.

Future research should focus on the difference between various levels of stakes in producing risk outcomes using the automated technology, longitudinal studies that demonstrate how human risk changes temporally in individuals and organizations, biomarkers correlating physiological markers of threat reactions with risk results, additional predictors of risk (inclusive of gender), and reliability indices.

Conclusions

We believe the findings described will contribute to the existing body of insider threat detection literature in demonstrating the effectiveness and accuracy of a non-biased, AI-enabled tool in austere military screening and vetting settings for the detection of bad actors and the clearing of good ones. Resilient organizations place a high priority on the value of complementary risk assessment strategies that assess signals, along a continuum from low-to-high, such that actionable steps can be taken to identify, mitigate, isolate, monitor, avoid, transfer, or escalate flagged issues (Gius et al, 2018, Meyer et al, 2011; Tselyutina & Vlasova, 2019). The most rigorous of correctly implemented and contemporary interdisciplinary risk assessment systems are continuous, holistic, layered, redundant, technology-enabled, interdisciplinary, and serve the purpose of helping end-users identify risk in order to make better decisions faster, while allocating their precious resources accordingly (Gius et al, 2018).

We highlight that the effectiveness of the AI-driven automated technology examined in this evaluation is not surprising. Over the last five years, this screening tool has been successfully tested and used in multiple military and commercial environments, for the identification of insider threats, fraud, and insider theft. In several cases where verification details of follow-up interviews have been available, >94% of flags were consistently validated (data not shown).

Finally, we underscore that in guiding national security and armed forces organizations where to focus resources, the automated tool described only distinguishes between risk-positive and risk-negative voice responses; it does not expose the rationale behind the signals. Since even the best AI-assessment tools can't make absolute determinations of "risk" or "liability", in screening situations, they identify, not adjudicate. The neurocognitive reactions that affect vocal outputs (translated into risk) can be due to a variety of reasons other than malfeasance (e.g., auxiliary memories/associations and individual variability). A follow-up team of interview and investigative experts, such as the CI teams described in this evaluation, should ascertain and make a final determination what the resultant risk flags mean. Whereas machines can provide risk-reaction flags, the decisions on how to interpret and proceed with these alerts must be deferred to humans, who comprehend nuances.

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THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE OPERATION OF THE CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE COMPANIES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic, as a crisis of global proportion, has had a significant impact on all spheres of the state and society and the operations of critical infrastructure companies. In general, states' and societies' well-being is highly related to vulnerabilities, risk resilience, business security, and critical infrastructures' efficient operation. Critical infrastructure companies provide and/or deliver goods and services on which all segments of state and society depend. Although a lot of analysis has already been published on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on various segments of a nation's critical system's functionality, insufficient attention has been paid to how critical infrastructure companies have responded to the challenges of the pandemic. The central purpose of the research is to analyse the ways and models of adaptation of critical infrastructure companies to business conditions due to the long-term crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, this review paper aims to identify similarities and differences in the performance of companies in different countries of Southeast Europe to draw recommendations for improving their operations in crisis conditions.*

Keywords: *impact, COVID-19 pandemic, operations of critical infrastructure companies, Southeast Europe*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences represent a global crisis of unprecedented proportions. The crisis has affected all countries of the world, all industries and every individual. According to the World Health Organization Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, globally at mid-November 2021 there have been 254,256,432 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,112,461 deaths (reported to WHO), and a total of 7,307,892,664 vaccine doses have been administered (WHO, 2021). The UN's Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response

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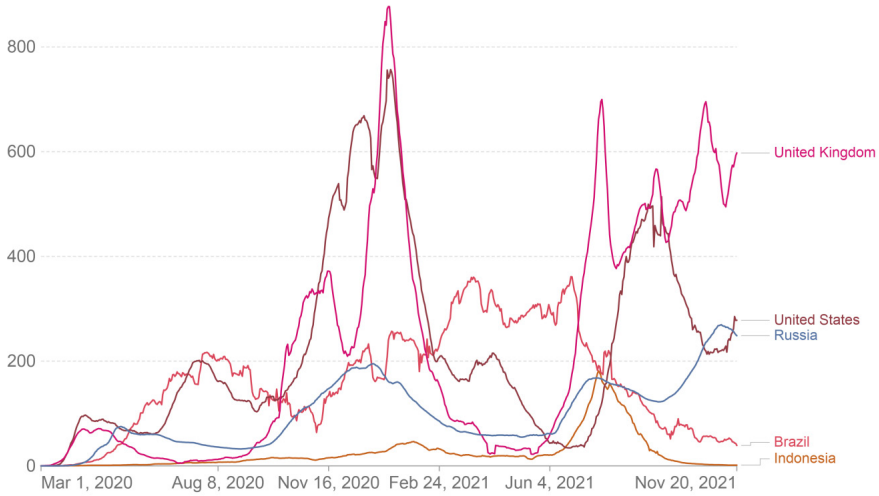
to the COVID 19 Crisis, warns that “the COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent” (United Nations, 2020: 3). According to the Wellcome, independent global charitable foundation, the crisis caused leading to the equivalent of 255 million full-time jobs lost, in terms of working hours, in 2020. Among the worstly hit are the workers in the informal economy, young people and women. Major disruptions have also been reported within the education system, schools were closed across the world. One year into the pandemic, almost half of the world’s students are still affected by school closures. Millions of girls in some countries might not be going back at all, putting them at risk of adolescent pregnancy, child marriage and violence (Wellcome, 2021). A group of scientists has determined that the COVID-19 pandemic will leave more than 50 long-term effects on human health (Lopez-Leon et. al. 2021). Russell Sage Foundation (2021) states that there are already numerous social, political, economic, and psychological consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic to various spheres of society and business, and that their long-term impact has yet to be explored. John L. Clarke points out how the COVID-19 is a “game-changer” in the field of security as well and that the pandemic has affected security across the world (2021a). Additionally, the pandemic fundamentally changes the range of roles, missions, tasks and functions of the armed forces (2021b).

Observing the narrower perspective, at the level of regions and sub regions, COVID-19 pandemic left profound consequences from this point of view as well. In late December 2019, the health authorities in Wuhan detected several pneumonia cases of unknown cause. Most of these patients had links to the Huanan seafood market. The virus then spread rapidly to other provinces when millions of Chinese migrant workers headed home for Chinese New Year celebrations (Thomala, 2021). The virus spread from China to other countries. While in other countries they only just began to unleash the challenges of countering the virus, China has kept up zero tolerance. China was sticking to its approach of strict lockdowns, multiple rounds of mass testing, and centralized quarantine wherever an outbreak was found (Wu, 2021). After no new deaths reported for the first time, the Chinese government lifted the ten-week lockdown on Wuhan on April 8, 2020. Daily life was returning slowly back to normal in the country (Thomala, 2021). Meanwhile, the crisis in other parts of the world was just beginning. The COVID-19 pandemic, the crisis, the uncertainty, the large number of deaths have hit hard both large states and small ones

Picture 1 – Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people in large state

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections.



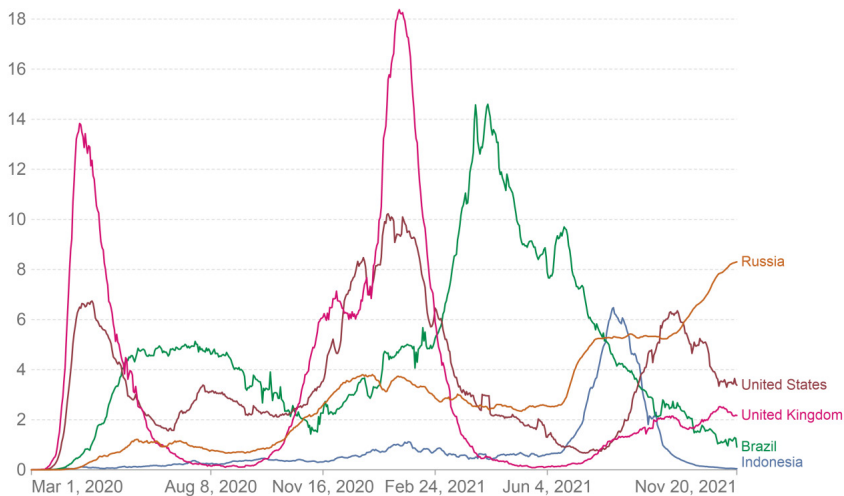
Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

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Picture 2 – Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people in large states

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death, confirmed deaths can be lower than the true number of deaths.

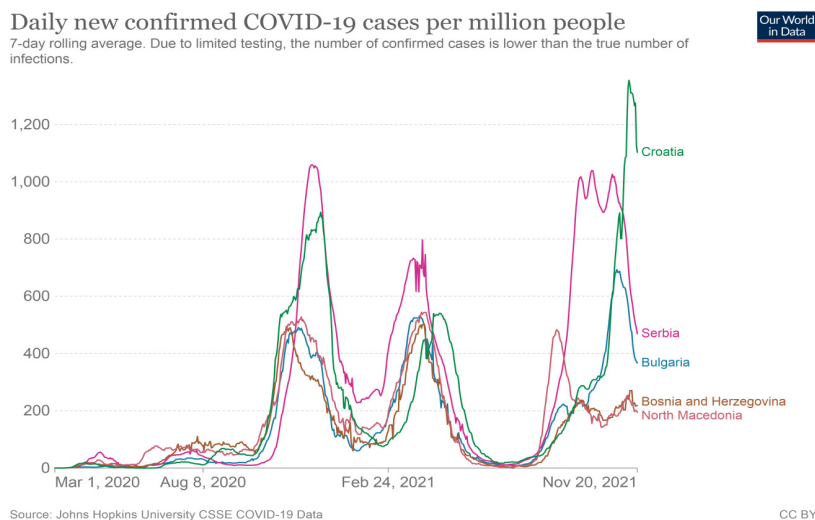


Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

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The pictures show how some of the largest countries (United Kingdom, United States, Russia) are more severely affected than others. Likewise, how COVID-19 pandemic waves are differently spatially and temporally distributed. For the first two countries (United Kingdom, United States) the situation was surprising at the beginning of the pandemic because these two countries have great capabilities, capacities and a developed crisis management system. The issue they had, was the crucial impact of policy on the crisis management system at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic – where politicians did not understand the level of danger or activated available response mechanisms in time – causing a slow response, large numbers of infected and dead, and determined the further direction of dealing with the pandemic. Meanwhile, the whole time, Brazil was facing two negative factors. The first, limited resources for action and the second, the denial of the pandemic by the president of the state. The second factor strongly influenced the first, and those two combined further reduced the possibilities of Brazil's comprehensive approach and action. In Indonesia, on the other hand, since the first case of COVID-19 announced on 2 March 2020, many strategies were made in order to prevent transmission and death from this disease (Yulianti et al., 2020). The Government of Indonesia in early March 2020 declared a national disaster and activated all the resources at their disposal (Darmastuti, 2020). Without going deeper into the details, we see how each country approached the COVID-19 pandemic in a different way, which certainly had an impact on the crisis management capabilities.

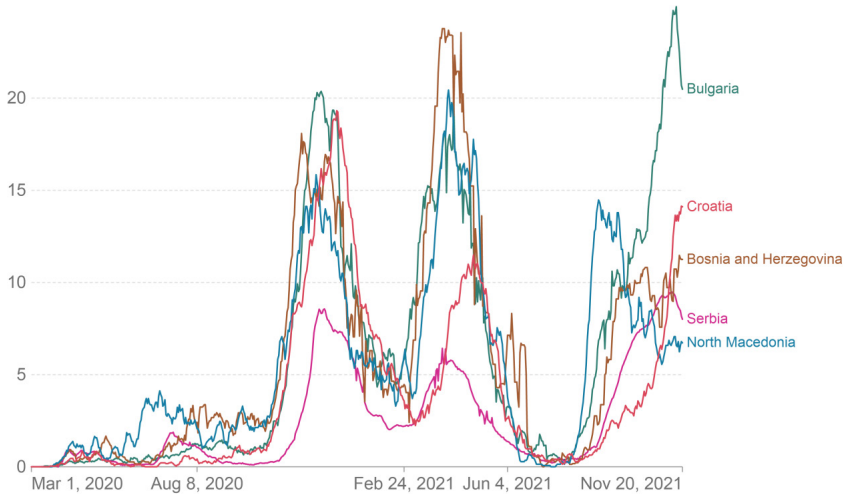
Picture 3 – Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people in some Southeast Europe states



Picture 4 – Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people in some Southeast Europe states

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 deaths per million people

7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death, confirmed deaths can be lower than the true number of deaths.



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

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Regarding the Southeast Europe states, by comparing all pictures, it is visible how they had and still have a significantly higher number of COVID-19 cases and deaths per million inhabitants than large countries. It is especially pronounced in the fourth COVID-19 wave that is currently underway. This situation affects extremely negatively all segments of society, the economy, but also the business of critical infrastructure companies. Here, since it is the same geographical area, the distribution of COVID-19 pandemic waves coincides in time in almost all countries. In addition, the area of Southeast Europe has a number of other challenges and problems, such as: the never-ending transition, weak institutions, lack of all resources, undeveloped national crisis management systems in most countries. All of the above made the approach to and confrontation with the COVID-19 pandemic even more difficult.

Focusing the attention on the critical infrastructure companies, two things need to be pointed out. First, critical infrastructure companies represent an important component of the national security of each country because the threat to such facilities jeopardizes the normal course of life and security of citizens, but also the general functioning of the state. (Mikac et al., 2018: 23). They operate in several different sectors, such as economy, transportation, energy, health care, communication, utility services, food supply, government services, etc. (Mitrevska and Mikac, 2017: 11). Second, the basic variables that determine the functioning of critical infrastructure companies include the exposure to different risks, complexity, interconnectedness and interdependence (Keković and Ninković, 2020: 13). According to the nature of the risk, critical infrastructure companies are exposed and “influenced by numerous natural, technical and technological, and anthropogenic factors” (Mitrevska et al., 2019: 23). COVID-19 pandemic has strongly affected the business of critical infrastructure companies and their ability to provide and/or deliver goods and services on which all segments of state and

society depend. In some industries there have been problems with the supply of parts, speed and quality of Internet connections, the number of cyber-attacks has increased (especially on health care systems), critical infrastructure workers have become a particularly vulnerable segment of the entire business. All of the above has put critical infrastructure companies “under tremendous stress right now, because they are not accustomed to operating in a world where failure is not an option” (Deloitte, 2020: 4).

This research will be structured in the way that the text will be divided into four additional sections after the Introduction. The second section, Theoretical and Methodological Framework, will provide an overview of the research methodology. The third section, entitled The COVID-19 pandemic and critical infrastructure companies operations in Southeast Europe, will present the analysis of how companies responded to the COVID-19 pandemic at its beginning and ensured business continuity. In the next chapter, Discussion, the aim is to identify how the companies continued to operate and what challenges they faced and to draw recommendations for improving their operation in crisis conditions. The last chapter, the Conclusion, will provide a summary of the research and a review of the total collected material and the results of the analysis.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

The crisis management theory is chosen for the theoretical framework of this research. According to Eric K. Stern and Dan Hansén “all societies develop regimes – institutional frameworks consisting of rules, norms, and decision-making procedures which allocate responsibilities among a complex set of public and private actors (Krasner, 1983; Kegley, 1987) – for preventing crises and for coping with those which prove inevitable” (2004: 14). Crisis management is: a) the ability of the actor(s) to prepare for crisis events by developing a rapid and effective response when a crisis occurs as well as effectively managing the challenges and consequences (Kešetović and Toth, 2012); b) the implementation of strategic decisions that include activities related to action within all phases of crisis management (Boin et al., 2010: 18). Each country approaches the organization and implementation of crisis management differently. Marina Mitrevska, researching North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece, and Albania came to the same realization that countries have “a different approach towards the crisis management problem. Namely, this is understandable if having in mind that part of the states in the region have specific experiences and national requirements in regulating this issue”(2011: 79). The situation is quite similar in other Southeast Europe states.

According to Ole Holsti, there are four reference levels of crisis analysis: the state, the organization, the society, and the individual (Kešetović et al., 2013: 29). We are interested in the first two dimensions in this analysis. As far as the state’s crisis management system is concerned, we can freely express the opinion that most of the Southeast Europe states did not develop an effective and integrated crisis management system that would unite the activities of the public, private, academic and civil sectors. This is one of the main reasons for the large number of infected people and deaths during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of million inhabitants and comparing

the figures with other countries. As for the organization level, it is presented in our analysis through the critical infrastructure companies. Those companies are forced to act under the pressure of numerous challenges and within non-existent crisis management systems.

Methodologically, the paper is based on several different research methods. The first one is the desk top qualitative research of scientific and professional literature related to the area of interest. Also, a review of the official websites of a number of critical infrastructure companies from Southeast Europe was conducted to gather the information they published related to business activity during COVID-19 pandemic. The next method used was online correspondence and surveys to gather the opinions of managers directly responsible for the operations of a certain number of critical infrastructure companies in Southeast Europe. Multiple responses were received from North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. The third research method was based on personal interviews with experts working in critical infrastructure companies from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The fourth, and also the last method, is based on the long-term experience of one of the co-authors of this analysis, in a managerial position in charge of the protection and security of JANAF critical infrastructure company from Croatia.

The COVID-19 pandemic and critical infrastructure companies operations in Southeast Europe

This section is based on a cross-section of a previous research in which the same topic was explored during the first half of 2020. By mid-2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and a general unpreparedness for such challenges caused a large number of deaths, significant economic damage and the collapse of many companies around the world, and surprisingly highlighted the considerable unreadiness of international organizations and the vast majority of countries to achieve timely and coordinated responses to the challenges they faced. That has additionally complicated the situation, intensified the effects of the crisis and created numerous cascading effects in all sectors (Mikac, 2020).

Referring to the European continent, due to the delayed reaction, insufficient cooperation and a concrete plan of both the European Union and the member states at the beginning of the crisis, borders were closed, economies slowed down and great uncertainty regarding all important political, business and social processes has emerged. Over time, the situation has partially stabilized – cooperation, coordination and solidarity have manifested, but the situation was still in a state where everybody were chasing the COVID-19 consequences, the crisis was still unbridled and insufficiently managed. In relation with all the afore-stated, great pressure was placed on the critical infrastructure companies, which in circumstances of great uncertainty, closed borders, reduced cooperation and exchange of information had to ensure continuous operation of their business processes, protect themselves and their investments and ensure

uninterrupted delivery of goods and service to their customers, as well as other critical infrastructures (ibid).

The first thing which is necessary to mention is that the normative framework for critical infrastructure protection in most South East states, and in all Western Balkan countries has not been established, and likewise, the system of critical infrastructure protection and coordination of all key actors has not been implemented. It is clear that the activities of various economic entities, as well as those designated as critical infrastructure companies, are regulated by various other laws and regulations, but we believe that the established normative framework and system specifically developed for critical infrastructure protection needs would contribute to a clearer and more effective cooperation of all actors and reduce the unknowns.

The COVID-19 pandemic and crisis caused a number of the same or similar reactions from critical infrastructure companies, while in some situations they reacted differently. In the first place, all respondents emphasized the care for their employees, which are a key resource in the successful implementation of their activities. They tried to adapt as much as possible to the recommendations of state authorities and their guidelines on health care, which directed them to reorganize working hours, ways of working and business processes at both the operational and management level. All the work that could be done from home was organized in this way and all possible epidemiological measures were taken in the companies. Some respondents stated that in the first weeks of the pandemic it was very difficult to obtain the necessary protective equipment (protective masks and disinfectants) in the required quantities because they were simply not available on the market to buy. Some companies had limited the access to their facilities and administrative buildings to the maximum, by limiting contacts, meetings, deliveries and scheduled maintenance to the minimum necessity. Almost all respondents stated that the pandemic and the crisis affected their business, delivery of goods and services and their billing, which in the short and long term is a business disruption and challenge (Mikac, 2020).

Regarding the measures taken by the companies in dealing with the pandemic and the crisis in order to protect and ensure business as much as possible in continuity, all companies tried to adapt to the current circumstances as much as possible. Some companies, such as Sarajevogas (Bosnia and Herzegovina's leading gas distribution company), decided to extend the capital plans and investments for another part of the year. Also, Sarajevogas, organized reserve (alternative) work positions if the basic ones were "endangered" by the infection, and organized external training of employees by the epidemiological service. Montenegrin Electric Enterprise AD Niksic stated that in addition to all the recommendations of the competent authorities that they implemented and constantly monitored – they strengthened the internal communication between management and employees in terms of occupational safety standards, providing support to employees working from home, introduction of new (modern) communication systems for internal and external communication,

implementation of technological systems for payment of bills via payment cards through the corporate portal and mobile application, and on-line coordination of key business processes. In addition to all this, the Elektrani na Severna Makedonija (ELEM) (North Macedonian electricity production company) operator, increased the contacts and interviews with its own employees to help them as needed. While MEPSO (state owned electricity transmission system operator of North Macedonia) took special measures regarding the operation of the national dispatching center, as it is an essential point in maintaining the security and stability of the electrical system. The usual system of work of the employees was changed and organized in shifts of 14 days each during which they were isolated within the center to avoid any possibility of their infection. JANAF (Croatian managing an oil pipeline system company) produced brochures for all its employees on how to act in a crisis and for business partners on how to cooperate with the company during a crisis (ibid).

In conclusion for this part, what is a common observation of the researchers and experts who were contacted, this period was marked, inter alia, with “insufficient coordination with the competent institutions in exchanging information and informing about important activities that they plan to undertake and/or undertook and directly affect the business, provision of services and workspace of the operator” (Mikac, 2020: 8).

Discussion

The first part of this section is dedicated to insights as to how the companies Sarajevogas from Bosnia and Herzegovina and JANAF from Croatia continued to operate during the pandemic, what challenges they have encountered since the previous research and what solutions they have reached.

The main challenges that Sarajevogas has faced and is still facing are the health and financial implications, which are directly, but also indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The emphasis of the business was placed on the health assumptions of their own employees, their families, and the health of the clients, and this relationship has been intertwined throughout the pandemic, and has directly conditioned successful business. The financial implications were related to the purchasing power of the clients in the first nine months of the pandemic (these are no longer an open issue). Namely, during the first period of the crisis, everyone was in great uncertainty, so the consumers used their money only for the essential needs, which led to the situation that some stopped paying for the consumed gas. Due to the restrictions on movement and personal financial control, this “financial policy” of the consumers significantly reduced the inflow of money to Sarajevogas when paying for the amount of gas consumed, and exposed the company to certain financial challenges. With a certain stabilization of the situation and the fact that Sarajevogas is a state-owned company that is a monopolist on the natural gas market in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the consumers quickly changed their stance, continued to pay their bills, and consolidated

the company's financial situation. Looking at the response to the pandemic, it was in principle very good, with all the problems that Sarajevogas witnessed; infection, isolation, testing, sick leaves, stricter control of stays and symptoms, a problem in the reaction of employees to the application of the measures, the problem of reducing cash inflows, etc. Over time, in the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic became from one of the most important business challenges of the company, to the “only” sixth challenge on the list of priorities. The reason for this is that the company “learned to live with the pandemic and the virus”, and had to focus primarily on other challenges, namely: 1) challenges of strategic nature arising from one direction of natural gas supply, without the possibility of alternatives for gas supply through other sources; 2) challenges of economic nature due to the announcement of a significant increase in the price of natural energy sources; 3) challenges of political nature due to the greatest political crisis since the end of the war during 1990s, without any indication or idea of getting out of it; 4) challenges of geopolitical competitions of the great powers that have a direct impact on the situation and developments in the country; 5) challenges of natural and other disasters reflected in the confrontation with them, where floods consequently hit the heart of the Sarajevo gas system, at the Sarajevo field site, as was the case on November 5, 2021, when the site was completely under water some 30-50 cm, and most employees had to be evacuated to a safe area. The overall challenges that Sarajevogas is facing, have led to even stronger action in accordance with its own procedures, development of identified and learned lessons that should be included in the multitasking of today's successful Sarajevogas business, and become the imperative of training and acting of the company on different challenges, primarily the afore-stated. In the coming period, the company plans to strengthen education, analytics, the system of forecasting, identifying, analyzing and preventing challenges and risks that become an integral part of the business.

In the second case, in light of the massive spread of the COVID-19 infection, the management of JANAF had to act decisively to mitigate any possible repercussions of the pandemic to the crucial role it has in oil distribution throughout the region. Rapid development of mitigation procedures had to be implemented to contain early infection detection and provide operation procedures to mitigate the spread throughout the company and its crucial facilities. State law regulations were not prepared for restrictive actions in an overwhelmed spread of infectious diseases, mitigatory steps had to be implemented to raise the consciousness in disease prevention. While trying to find protective tools (masks, disinfectant, thermometers) on the saturated market, JANAF started to publish and distribute an informative booklet to ensure raising health consciousness and introduce protective measures (personal hygiene, room ventilation, safe distance, disease indications, informative prevention points throughout all facilities). To prevent possible fallout, the company implemented a set of organizational measures that included the creation of fixed team personnel in separate work shifts to prevent disease by changing between teams, thus a safe

and secure operation whether or not a team would succumb to an infection spread. Also, inter-company visitations were prohibited. Likewise, preventive measures were implemented for business meetings. Only essential personal business meetings were held – exclusively outdoors with a maximum of five attendees, while other were held online via the Microsoft Teams platform. The “work from home” concept was introduced for non-essential operational work force as a disease avoidance preventive action. Prior to the inception of this concept, a proof of work had to be insured to secure outside network communication for departments like legal, commercial and other administrative affairs. Beside the technical obstacles, JANAF also had to tackle the legal issues, as such a concept was not elaborated in any considerations of the State Labor Act. During the period of adoption of the safety measures, external service providers had to be educated to perform their services according to the implemented action measures. A clear reaction to the pandemic that reverberated throughout the entire professional community was the exemplary commendation issued to the Croatian firefighters community, which gave out recommendations for the firefighters in the fire brigades to use a new working shift (two days’ work, two days off) and the Croatian Guild of Security Guards, which recommended a set of instructions on how to behave and what measures to take during a pandemic. All these recommendations and instructions were implemented in all firefighting brigades and security personnel throughout all facilities.

The situation with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown once again that the state of insufficient normative regulation of legal frameworks makes it difficult for companies to operate in times of a crisis. As these are critical infrastructure companies that have encountered different types of crises many times before, our impression is that they have already developed strong internal mechanisms and procedures for dealing with crises. As for the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, after the initial shock, the companies – faster than other government systems – stabilized their business and “learned to live with the pandemic and the virus”.

Conclusion

This research focused on two interrelated segments. In the first, the focus was on describing the COVID-19 pandemic, its impact around the world, and how individual countries have responded to the challenges. The second part of the research was dedicated to the critical infrastructure companies, namely those from Southeast Europe, primarily from the Western Balkans. The aim of this paper was to research how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the functioning and organization of the work of these companies.

The research confirmed, same as many others before, that the COVID-19 pandemic brought numerous changes at the level of states, international relations, in all industries, as well as in all spheres of life. Many circumstances and common ways of doing business and living have changed significantly, in some circumstances completely. The pandemic exposed everyone to increasing stress, uncertainty and the need to act according to the crisis management mechanisms. Therefore, the crisis management theory as the central framework of this research

is justified. This approach has once again highlighted the fact that most countries either do not have crisis management mechanisms in place at all, or if any, they were not initiated in a timely manner in the initial phase of the crisis. All of the above puts critical infrastructure companies in front of additional challenges and the necessity of orientation primarily towards their own resources and capabilities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the critical infrastructure companies we analysed and contacted, demonstrated a high level of resilience and flexibility to the challenges of the pandemic. They quickly adapted to the crisis and stabilized the business. In contrast to the states for which the COVID-19 has been the primary challenge to deal with all this time, the situation with companies is such that the pandemic is soon “included” among all other challenges they have to deal with. This shows that they have stable internal procedures, which they have upgraded, as needed, all in order to control the situation and the necessity of business continuation. It is certainly easier to organize the activities of companies than the state, but this research also confirmed the need for closer cooperation and better coordination between different actors, especially between states and state critical infrastructure companies.

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WOMEN AND SECURITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Nita STAROVA¹
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Abstract: *Gender equality is, undoubtedly, an essential factor in the development of society. It improves productivity and economic growth, enhances the well-being of all societal groups and thus improves the development of society and future generations, as well as the efficiency of institutions. The emphasis on the importance of women's role in modern society is being seen in all segments of life. One of them is defense and security. The active role of women in the creation and implementation of the security policy of the country is one of the aspects that leads to the realization of gender-conscious policy.*

In 2021 the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in North Macedonia published the Women's study. The Republic of North Macedonia 2020/2021, an interdisciplinary study that gives a comprehensive overview of the position of women in Macedonian society and lays the foundation for further interpretation and analysis.

This paper is focusing and analyzing specific data of the Women's Study in order to measure, describe and explain the attitudes of the women population in the country toward security issues and their position on the involvement of women in security policies. At the same time, it outlines the challenges and measures that need to be taken in order to increase women's participation and contribution to conflict resolution and peace processes.

Keywords: *women, gender equality, security, peace*

Introduction

Today, it is not only academically relevant and scientifically approved that gender equality is an essential factor for the democratic development of society. One can argue that is common sense. Gender equality improves productivity and economic growth. It enhances the well-being of all societal groups. It stimulates the development of the social order and future generations, but it also empowers the efficiency of institutions. In other words, the role of women in modern society is becoming increasingly emphasized in all segments of its existence. One such important segment is the realm of Defence, as well as, the realm of Security. In that respect, the active role of women in the creation and implementation of state security policy is a precondition for pursuing gender conscious policy and that is a necessity of our time. Namely, the rapid spread of globalization, digitalization, and the demographic challenges facing the world in the 21st

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century have had a major impact on expanding security research too, according to which the role and involvement of women in politics in general is becoming a key democratic reference. Also, in the field of international relations there is a paradigmatic shift upon which the concept of security is redefined and further expanded: where the focus is placed on individual, social, economic, international, digital security, etc. Consequently, contemporary states, at least those that are qualified as democratic ones, strive for security policies to synthesize policies in various areas of social and state life in the light of achieving overall (social, economic, political, environmental, health, etc.) security of their citizens.

Having in mind the above mentioned state of affairs in reference to the gender equality and its impact on democratic attributions, there are many relevant researches and data analysis that can serve to demonstrate the ongoing processes related to securing gender equality and its related aspects. For example, the annual published data related to Women Index Peace and Security Index provides insight into patterns and advances in the well-being and empowerment of women around the world. The last, WPS Index Report 2020/21³ analysed 167 countries in the world, including Republic of North Macedonia which was ranked 44th in the general ranking of this list⁴. Compared to the previous report (2019-2020) when RNM was ranked as 37th, it suggests that there is a slight decrease most obviously due to the pandemic situation with COVID-19. Although, it is a common stance that the pandemic has accelerated the negative influence on gender equality on the global level. However, RNM is a country that is making progress in terms of ensuring gender equality and well-being, but there is still considerable room for better improvement.

Similarly, the study "Well-being and Safety of Women" conducted in 2019 by the OSCE Mission in Skopje/NRM, detects a high prevalence of violence against women in the country. According to the study, psychological violence against women is especially prevalent by their intimate partners, since 44% of respondents said they were victims of this type of violence. Regarding sexual harassment, as many as 30% of the respondents said that they were victims of this type of violence from the age of 15. Furthermore, the findings of the same study indicate that 14% of the women surveyed, have been exposed to some form of physical or sexual violence by a partner or another person from the age of 15.⁵

There are also other referent data collections that can be useful in this respect, hence, for the purpose of the length of this paper, we are not citing them. Although, when North Macedonia is in focus, it is important to denote the legislative aspects as well. Namely, Republic of North Macedonia in 2011 signed the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe for the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, but its ratification followed seven years later in 2018. To that effect, the country demonstrated political will to fight violence against women. Anyhow, in order to meet the provisions of the Convention, there was a need to harmonize domestic legislation with the commitments of the Convention. In that direction, indeed the consolidated Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination was adopted, which expanded the ground qualifications for discriminatory practices to the sexual orientation and gender identity. In other words, protection against discrimination of this group

³ The index is structured through three basic dimensions of inclusion and well-being of women (economic, social, political); justice (formal laws and informal discrimination); and security (at the family, community and social level). They are quantified through 11 indicators, which are collected nationally to create a global ranking of 167 countries.

⁴ <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/the-index/>

⁵ https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/4/424409_0.pdf

of citizens was secured via the law. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has also been designated as the competent authority for the implementation of the provisions of the Convention. The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia additionally adopted the National Action Plan for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, which centrally envisages activities to change the legislation in order to translate the standards of the Convention into practice.⁶ The latest report of the European Commission on the progress of North Macedonia points to the fact that earmarked funds are needed for effective implementation of the policies envisaged in the Action Plan.⁷

With the intention of improving the well being of women in NRM via addressing the hottest topics and challenges related to this issue, in 2021 the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in North Macedonia conducted an important research. Accordingly, it published the Women's Study - The Republic of North Macedonia 2020/2021 as an interdisciplinary study that gives a comprehensive overview of the position of women in Macedonian society and lays the foundation for further interpretation and analysis. Here, we as researchers present the related findings, but most importantly, we place special attention to the security and safety of women in NRM.

Women's Study

The Study is based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and techniques, with an analysis of primary and secondary data.

More specifically, the following research techniques were used for data collection:

- Literature preview
- Documentation analysis
- Face-to-face CAPI survey, on a representative / national sample
- Semi-structured e-interviews

The survey questionnaire is composed of the following thematic units:

- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
- VALUES, TRUST AND RELIGION
- FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE
- EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
- POLITICS AND PARTICIPATION
- SAFETY AND SECURITY
- WOMEN'S HEALTH

The interview consists of 10 open-ended questions (with sub-questions) for the same thematic chapters as in the questionnaire, with a section dedicated to demographic data.

For the needs of the survey research, a stratified-quota sample was designed.

For this purpose, official data on population estimates⁸ were used, published on

⁶ https://mtsp.gov.mk/pocetna-ns_article-nacionalniot-plan-za-sproveduvanje-na-konvencijata-za-sprecvanje-i-borba-protiv-nasilstvoto-vrz-zen.nsp

⁷ <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=5657#.X9ZJd9hKg2w>

⁸ Since 2002 no census has been conducted in the country for the time period when the research was conducted.

the website of the State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia,

The female population (aged 18 to 67) was first segmented into mutually exclusive subgroups, according to the country's eight statistical regions and municipalities and age groups. Then, the cases in each segment / stratum were calculated and selected based on the specific ratio of quotas according to: ethnicity and place of residence (urban / rural).

The sample size is calculated according to a formula (with a marginal error of 3% and a confidence level of 95%). The size of the research target population - total number of girls / women aged 18 to 65 in the country is 710 287⁹, hence the size of the projected research sample is $N = 1066$.

For the interview, the sample consisted of 12 female respondents, selected on the principle of maximum variation, i.e. heterogeneous according to demographic characteristics (such as age, ethnicity, level of education, place of residence, employment and marital status). Twelve in-depth semi-structured e-interviews were successfully conducted in the same time period.

Research results from the women's study – safety and security

In terms of the feeling of safety, according to the cumulative result of the answers "safe" and "very safe", women in the Republic of North Macedonia feel safest in their own home, while they consider themselves of being at risk in the public transport and abroad. There is no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in the answers between the respondents from the Macedonian and the Albanian ethnic community.

There is a significant ($p < 0.01$) (but weak) correlation between the respondents' answers to how safe they generally feel in the country and abroad with their financial situation. The respondents who think that their income provides for all their needs tend to feel safer in the country and abroad.

The greatest perceived security threat for women in the Republic of North Macedonia, according to the respondents, is war and terrorist attacks, followed by a robbery in the home. At the very least, they believe that they are exposed to a security threat at work and at home.

The attitudes about security threats differ significantly among those who have witnessed an armed conflict, i.e. the data showed a correlation of the testimony of an armed conflict with the perception of war as the greatest threat to security. Although the Republic of North Macedonia gained its independence peacefully, in 2001 an armed ethnic conflict broke out in the northern and western parts of the country. As a result, 11% of women said they had witnessed an armed conflict and almost all these respondents had gone through a tense period for the duration of the conflict. This phenomenon is more pronounced among women from the smaller ethnic communities in the country, over the age of 50.

⁹ MAKstat data, State Statistical Office, 2020

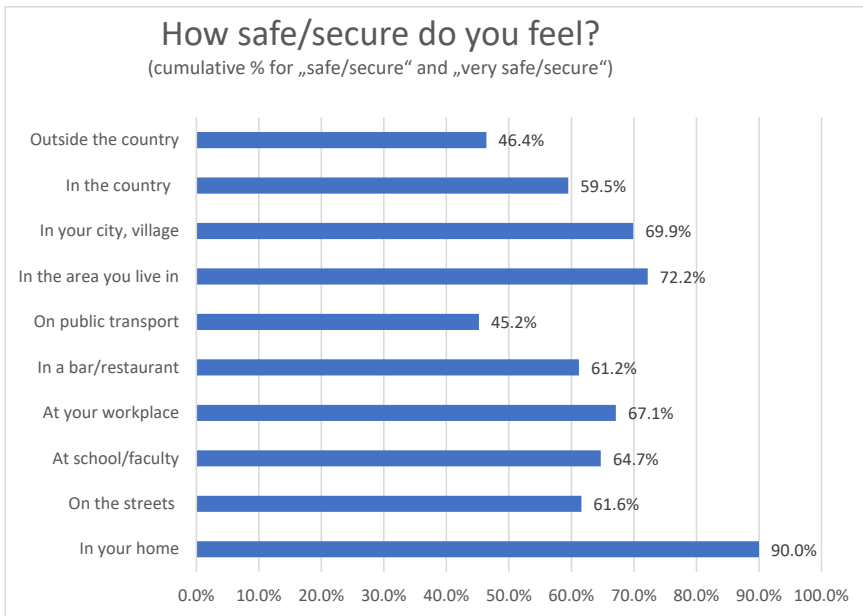


Figure I: How safe do you feel?

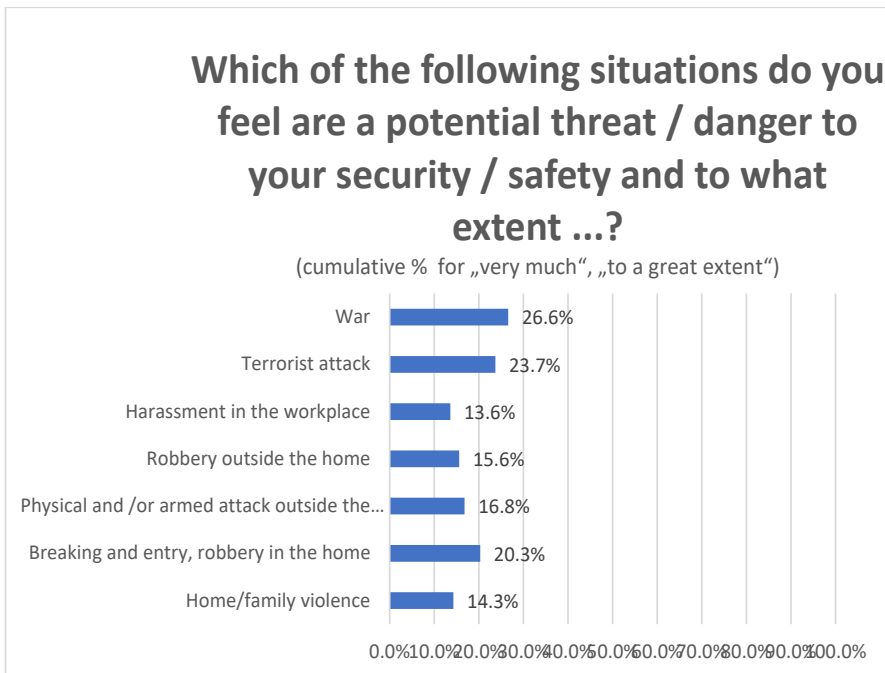


Figure II: Which of the following situations do you feel are a potential threat / danger to your security / safety and to what extent ...?

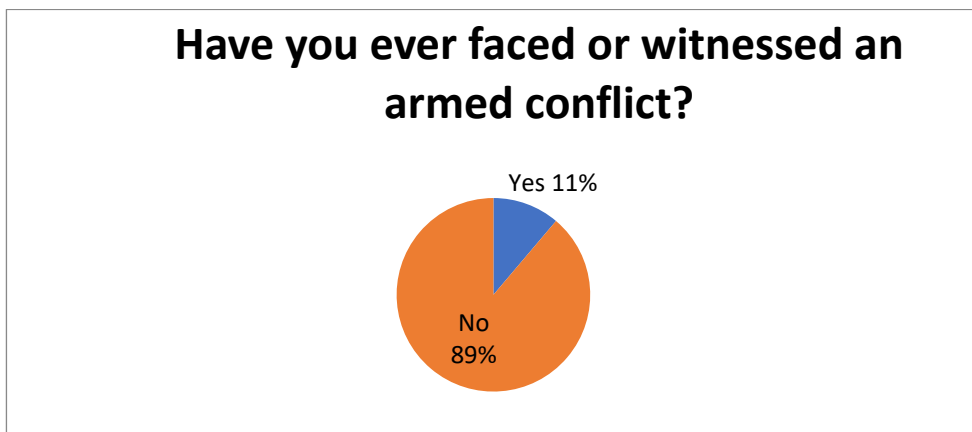


Figure III: Have you ever faced or witnessed an armed conflict?



Figure IV: Have you ever faced or witnessed an armed conflict? (results based on ethnicity)

The answers to the open question “*What do you think is the greatest danger to the safety of women in RNM?*” in the interviews with atypical representatives of the target group indicate the presence of gender-based violence as the most serious threat to the female population, primarily in their own family, and then in the workplace.

This data is in line with the results of the aforementioned OSCE survey from 2019, according to which 44% of the respondents were victims of psychological violence from a partner, and 30% experienced sexual harassment. According to the World Health Organization, every third woman in the world has witnessed physical or sexual violence during her lifetime.¹⁰

D.V.37, *"In my opinion, the biggest threat to the safety of women, including me, is gender-based violence that can occur in any form (physical, psychological, economic, sexual, etc.) by known (partner or other family members) or unknown perpetrators."*

E.S., 29 *"Sexual harassment."*

L.O., 56 *"The biggest threat to mainly women's mental health is their husband, at least in our surrounding. There are certainly exceptions, but from what I see they are rare. A woman, even if she is financially secure though most of them are not, is dependent on the husband and his decisions."*

BS, 43 *"As a person I fear the corona virus, floods, earthquakes ... natural disasters. Maybe as a woman I am afraid of being attacked on the street by a person who is under the influence of drugs to rob me or try to kiss me ... But of course it is my personal experience. "I know women who suffer domestic violence, of course, they are afraid of it, who are afraid of their bosses at their workplace to lose their jobs."*

DS, 36 *"The biggest threat is the attack to personal integrity."*

K.Sh, 26. *"The current problem, which should have disappeared during the development, but unfortunately still exists and will probably exist as long as this is how the future generations are brought up, that the son should inherit everything, i.e. the boy, and the question arises where the wife would go, if there is a divorce. So many women suffer both psychological and physical violence in marriage, precisely because of this, because they have nowhere to go."*

The role of women in peace and security

Advocating for gender equality is not only advocating for economic, political and social empowerment of women, but also advocating for progress and conflict prevention.

For the past 20 years, The United Nations Security Council adopted 10 resolutions under the Women Peace and Security Agenda (WPS Agenda)¹¹, including

¹⁰ <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/violence-against-women>

¹¹ <https://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/WPS-in-SC-Council>

Resolution 1325, affirming the role of women in the field of defense and security, and it has played a major role in the way the international community approaches conflict prevention and resolution and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women, as a factor for international peace and security.

The Republic of North Macedonia has ratified United Nations Resolution 1325, and the gender perspective is integrated in the strategic documents of the Ministry of Defense and the Army. The promotion of gender equality is an integral part of both the new Defense Law on and the Military Service Law at the beginning of 2020. The Ministry of Defense is implementing the second National Action Plan for Resolution 1325 (2020 - 2025) followed by a process of monitoring and reporting on its implementation.¹²

The share of women in peacekeeping missions, but also their share and role in negotiating and making important decisions, since the adoption of the Resolution has seen significant growth, but much remains to be done in this area. The Army of the RNM has seen visible progress in recent years¹³, but there is still invisible discrimination against women, and they are hardly accepted in the military ranks at the beginning of their careers.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women in the Army and in the Ministry of Defense, especially on high ranking and leading positions.

Compared to 2018, there is an increase in the number of women officers, expressed in %, the increase is 1.40%. Increasing the number of women in senior positions is the focus of the Ministry and the Army. Namely, in 2019, the number of women in the rank of colonel has increased by three times. And in 2020 the percentage of women on a higher position (head of department) is 52%.

The majority of respondents (61%) agree with the fact that greater representation of women in the Army is needed.

However, despite the fact that the majority of the respondents believe that a greater representation of women in the Army is needed, still a low percentage believe that they would feel safe if women were placed in key positions related to the country's security. This data indicates that the sense of security of the respondents and their expectations from the security policies in the country are not conditioned by the gender representation of women, which may be due to lack of information about the role and contribution of women in conflict resolution and peace processes in different social contexts.

¹² <https://mod.gov.mk/storage/2021/01/OP-na-MO-za-implementacija-na-2-nacionalen-akciskiplan-2020-2025.pdf>

¹³ <https://mod.gov.mk/storage/2021/04/Godisen-izvestaj-za-napredokot-na-ednakvite-moznos-ti-23.03.2021.pdf>

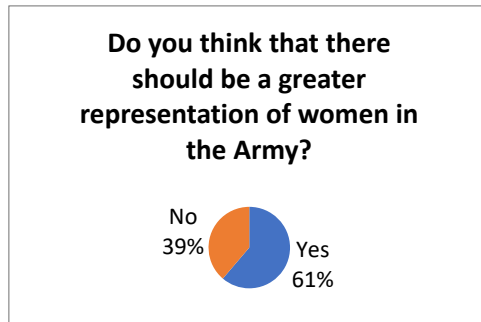


Figure V: Do you think that there should be a greater representation of women in the Army?

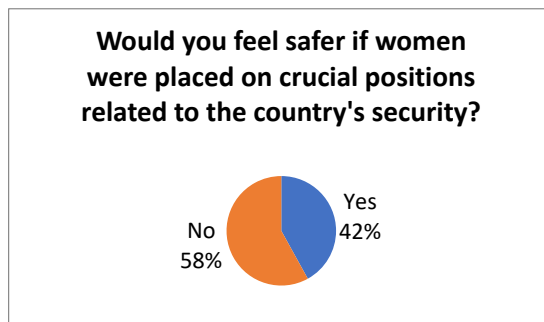


Figure VI: Would you feel safer if women were placed on crucial positions related to the country's security?

Conclusions

From the obtained results of the research it can be concluded that women in the Republic of North Macedonia feel safer at home and at work, while they feel least safe in public transport and abroad, although data from other studies cited in this study indicate a high percentage of domestic violence cases and psychological and physical violence primarily in the home and by the partner. In this context, the legal regulations with the Istanbul Convention are important, especially in the area of the Criminal Code. Active monitoring of the implementation of the National Action Plan for implementation of the Istanbul Convention and opening of opportunities by the competent institutions for greater involvement of the non-governmental sector could lead to improvement in combating violence against women.

Although security threats on the global level are changing, war and terrorist attacks are perceived as major security threats. Such perceptions are supported by data from the World Health Organization which point to the fact that in times of crisis, such as natural disasters and wars, the risk of gender-based violence increases ¹⁴. This applies also to the coronavirus

¹⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/violence-against-women>

pandemic. The assistance for women to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic is crucial both during and after the crisis, with the necessary stakeholders tailoring assistance according to women's specific needs, issues, challenges faced as a result of COVID-19th. The majority of respondents (61%) believe that women should be more represented in the Army, although the same percentage do not think that their placement in positions related to the country's security can have a direct impact on the sense of security. This means that it is necessary to continue the tendency to increase the participation of women in the Army and peacekeeping missions by promoting successful examples of women in high positions in the Army (officers, colonels, etc.), but in the same time to open broader public debate on the impact of women's contribution to conflict resolution and peace processes in different social contexts

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- МТСП. Акциски план за спроведување на конвенцијата за спречување и борба против насилството врз жените и семејното насилство на Република Македонија (2018-2023)
- СЕП. Извештај на Европската комисија за Северна Македонија за 2021 година (октомври)
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RECRUITMENT OF RADICAL ISLAMIST IN EUROPE BEFORE AND AFTER 11 SEPTEMBER 2001

Dragana STAMENKOVSKA ¹

Abstract: *Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has proved to be one of the starting points in the chain of recruiting new adherents of radical Islamism in Europe. After the end of the war in BiH, the recruitment continues to take place in changed conditions of the environment. The primary way of recruiting is top-down recruitment versus bottom-up recruitment. The Hamburg cell is a good example of this way of recruiting. This new practice will show that the new terrorist cells across Europe are part of a series of parallel networks, all loosely connected to each other. The cells in the networks work more autonomously than in the past, and to a large extent they are capable of planning and carrying out attacks almost independently. A specific element of joining radical Islamist groups is the availability of the link to global jihad. Without the knowledge of a gatekeeper, potential adherents of these groups will have no guaranteed success on their path to global jihad.*

Keywords: *radical Islamism, recruiting, cell, adherents, jihad.*

Introduction

Radical Islamism is not a new and unknown phenomenon in the Balkans and in Europe. Namely, this is a process that started in the 90s during the war in BiH and is still ongoing. One of the most important factors contributing to the development of such processes is the recruitment of new adherents of radical Islamism. Most of the radical Islamists in BiH at that time came from the Middle East, but there were also those who arrived from European countries. They were all aimed at building their own organization and recruiting Bosnian Muslims. Recruitment as one of the most important links in the overall process adapts to the changes taking place globally. This paper will explain the processes that led to changes in the recruitment of radical Islamists in Europe and especially the Balkans, i.e. changes that occurred after 11 September 2001. In this regard, this paper will show that current recruitment trends prefer bottom-up recruitment over top-down recruitment. What needs to be addressed in this paper is the recruitment target group. Namely, although Muslims are almost always the target of recruitment, it should be noted that not all Muslims are subject to radicalization. There are certain characteristics that a young European Muslim should possess in order to be a potential supporter of radical Islamism.

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The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The war in the former Yugoslavia in the mid-1990s attracted many promising mujaheddin from the Arab world, but also a small part of Europe. Foreign mujahideen first appeared in central Bosnia in July 1992. A battalion was created for non-Bosnian fighters, where the Arabs were a minority compared to the mujahideen coming from other parts of the world. According to information released by UNPROFOR, there were about 3,000 volunteers, mostly concentrated in central Bosnia. In addition to being integrated into the Bosnian army, they were associated with paramilitary groups known as the Green Legion and the Black Swans². Most foreign mujahideen came from Yemen, Algeria, Egypt, and Afghanistan, and many of them were with combat experience. In addition, several hundred Islamists arrived from European countries including France, Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom. The international community turned its attention to the issue of mujahideen in Bosnia only after it was revealed that a significant number of mujahideen were known to INTERPOL because of their links to Islamist terrorism. As the war went on, the mujahideen were asked to leave, meaning, their services were no longer needed. Some have gone to other problematic destinations, particularly in Chechnya, Algeria and Afghanistan, sometimes accompanied by locally recruited young Muslims. The Mujahideen Battalion was disbanded in 1996 as a direct result of US pressure, and shortly afterwards the VII Muslim Brigade was disbanded. Some former mujahideen have settled in central Bosnia where they have continued to threaten the local population, SFOR and police. Some of them dispersed in 2001, when they were expelled from properties belonging to returned Serb refugees.

Ambitious al-Qaeda at the time actively recruited jihadists in Bosnia, but the initial terrorist network managed to attract mainly Arab volunteers. During this period, important ties and friendships were established surviving the war in Bosnia³. An example of the ideological influence of the Bosnian experience is that of the young Frenchman, Lionel Dumont, of Rubé descent. At a young age, Lionel converted to Islam and left for Bosnia, where he joined the Takfir Val-Hijra Mujahideen. After the war ended he returned to France promising to continue spreading and practicing jihad. In France, he formed the "Roube Gang", composed mainly of French North Africans⁴. With the exception of France, at that time the war in Bosnia had a weak spillover effect across Europe. A 1995 French intelligence report stated that there was a serious security threat in Europe and it was directly linked to terrorist "sleeping" cells trained in Bosnia⁵. The French assessment was correct, as a bombing raid in 1995 established links between

² Balkanpeace (2000). 7th Bosnian Muslim Brigade. <http://www.balkanpeace.org>

³ Emerson Vermaat, (2002). Bin Laden's terror networks in Europe. The Mackenzie Institute`

⁴ Bljesak (2019), „Koja je politika 'oslobodila' i zaštitila zloglasnog teroristu u BiH?“ <https://www.bljesak.info/vijesti/terorizam/koja-je-politika-oslobodila-i-zastitila-zloglasnog-teroristu-u-bih/287585> accessed 19/03/2021.

⁵ Evan F. Kohlmann(2004) Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe. The Afghan-Bosnian Network. Oxford, Berg.

the Algerian GIA (Armed Islamic Group) cells in Europe and mujahedeen leaders in Bosnia and Afghanistan.

After 9/11, information that members of Islamist terrorists were staying in Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania, and that training camps were located in these areas emerged. However, such information, although of great interest to the media, was not confirmed.

After 9/11, information that members of Islamist terrorists were staying in Bosnia, Kosovo and Albania, and that training camps were located in these areas emerged. However, such information, although of great interest to the media, was not confirmed.⁶

Changes in the recruitment process

Jihad recruitment is not a new phenomenon in Europe. The terrorist organizations as Al-Qaeda and Salafists were well penetrated and positioned in Western Europe, where they established covert networks and terrorist cells. In the 90s these networks managed to escape and survive anti-terrorist investigations and only few of them were uncovered. In the last two decades the whole concept of jihad underwent a profound transformation. Basically, what started as a noble intention several decades ago, aimed at helping Muslims in trouble, degraded to the point that jihad is often associated with unreasonable violence against civilians.

Another significant change is the increased surveillance of radical Islamist circles by the government. The indifference towards the radicals and militants which characterized Europe in the 90s, had been replaced by unreasonable efforts to determine whether terrorist operations had been launched from Europe or across Europe after 9/11. The efforts to prevent the recruitments in Europe dramatically increased after 9/11, but with limited results. Slowly but surely Europe qualified the Middle East and Afghanistan as the nest for the recruitment of Islamist terrorists. The self-confidence of the services was replaced by doubt, especially regarding the radical mosques. Of course this also made the recruitments within the mosques difficult. The radical public-speaking imams had been demoted to the role of provocateurs, taking into account the claims of their contacts with key figures of the global jihad. The impact of the loss of Afghanistan as a sanctuary hit the global jihad recruitment structure forcing terrorists to adapt. With the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the fluctuation of the European radical Islamist towards the training camps suddenly stops, thus depriving them of the opportunity to provide military training to the recruits and creating new supporters. Al Qaeda, which created a terrorist infrastructure during the 90s suffered serious setbacks and heavy losses. This network was significantly weakened in the global war against terrorism. The initiative was transferred to the new and younger generation of Islamist terrorists who have very little to do with the original Al Qaeda core. Having very little to do with

⁶ International Crisis Group 2001.

the Al Qaeda core led the new generation of Islamist terrorist to align with the broader goals of the global jihad. The new networks and their cells are highly autonomous, and the operatives do not share the organization history of the old core, rather showing greater independence and looser structure ⁷.

The Iraq war is also a significant factor in changing the recruitment environment. Popular opposition to the war was widespread in Europe during 2003 and had a major impact on the feelings of the Muslim communities. The vast majority of European Muslims were willing to express their opposition with the invasion of Iraq in a peaceful manner. However, there were those who saw the invasion of Iraq as an excuse for a Western conspiracy scenario to subjugate the Muslim World and as a conspiracy to control the natural resources in the Middle East. Only a small part of this group responded to the call for armaments to defend Muslims in Iraq. Before Iraq's invasion, the intelligence and police services marked that radical Islamists use the discussion about Iraq in Europe as fertile ground for recruitments. The message was clearly echoed by young European Muslims attending radical speeches.

On the road to Iraq, Syria appeared as a central base for relocating recruits from Europe to Iraq. In December 2004 the EU coordinator for terrorism, Gijs de Vries confirmed that young Muslims from Western Europe go to Iraq to join the insurgency and expressed his concern that experienced Islamist terrorist would pose a threat when they return ⁸.

Current structure of the recruitment environment

If we have a look at the current trends in the recruitment environment, we need to emphasize one historical characteristic. We are talking about **top-down recruitment versus bottom-up recruitment**. The Hamburg cell is good example to illustrate this phenomenon. Only a few experts have noticed the most striking aspects of the Hamburg cell, which is the absence of any form of top-bottom recruitments and alleged "brainwashing" of conspirators. Future terrorist were devoted in their beliefs and practices, which enabled them to form a network of friendships and preceded the formal introduction in the global jihad. As a group they went through an incubation period of almost two years, while the intensity of their beliefs and sense of brotherhood gradually transformed members beyond recognition. The actual recruitment process of the Hamburg cell can be best described as highly unstructured in any conventional sense and therefore deserves due attention. Mohammed Ata and Ziad Jarah started visiting the radical mosque Al Kuds in Hamburg by the end of 1997. There they became friends with the prominent Afghan veteran named Mohammed Hajdar Zamar, who encouraged them to fulfill their religious obligations and join jihad. Zamar was known as the real recruiter of the Hambur cell. However, Zamar must be noted for his service as spiritual

⁷ Gorka, Sebastian, (2004). Al-Qaeda's next Generation. Terrorism Monitor 2(p.15).

⁸ Gunaratna, Rohan (2004). The Post-Madrid Face of Al Qaeda. Washington Quarterly 27 p.3.

and ideological guide who set the pattern for further action. This view is supported by the fact that several members of the Hamburg cell named Zamar as their main inspiration to join the jihad. The real gatekeeper - the person who could direct them towards other acquaintances – entered the plot in the most unusual way. According to available evidence by the end of 1999 some members of the Hamburg cell had decided to join the Chechen rebels. However, that plan was changed to a chance meeting in a train in Germany, where a person named Kalid Al Masri approached the two of them and started talking about the jihad in Chechnya. Then both of them called Al Masri who referred them to a certain Mohamed Uld Slahi well - known Al Qaeda operative who was staying in Germany. Slahi met these boys and convinced them that travelling to Chechnya was too dangerous and too difficult at that time, suggesting that they should go to Afghanistan on training instead. If they decide to go, they would have met Umar Al Masri at the Taliban office in Quetta, Pakistan⁹. The rest is already well known.

According to available basic information about members of the Hamburg cell, this example about the recruitment process contained the following elements: individual alienation and marginalization, spiritual pursuit, radicalization process, meeting and associating with similar persons, gradual isolation and formation of cells, acceptance of violence as legitimate political means, connection with the supervisor (gatekeeper) and operational work. It should be remembered that the above mentioned stages characterize the recruitment structure of the Hamburg cell and took place before 9/11, 2001. This was essentially a bottom-up generation process and not a structured recruitment controlled by an Al Qaeda branch. But, before we direct our attention to the more personal reasons for joining, we need to establish a general understanding of the recruitment structure.

What was really happening in the field regarding the recruitment covered only a small core of very dedicated individuals. In fact, it was a **process in which only the most radical elements joined the terrorist cell**. This type of **unstructured recruitment** is still practiced today and deserves attention because it is a critical element in the further development of the global jihad. Instead of the **top – down process, where the terrorist organization is actively seeking new members**, it was a bottom –up process when young people volunteer to join the organization¹⁰. Formal association with jihad was in a way a group of phenomenon when friends decided to join jihad together rather than as isolated individuals. Globally, this self-organizing structure has resulted in an abundance of multiple parallel networks, all loosely interconnected. These networks were defined according to the characteristics of the members, certain significant locations and specific procedures. Examples of those networks and their related cells in action are some of the biggest operations of Al Qaeda in Europe. The

⁹ Kean, Thomas. H. and Lee H. Hamilton (2004). The 9/11 Report. The National Commission on Terrorists Attacks Upon the United States. New York, The New York Times.

¹⁰ Sageman, Mark (2004). Understanding Terrorist Networks. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

thwarted bombing of the Christmas bazar in Strasburg in December 2000, the thwarted attack on the US Embassy in Paris in 2001, the failed attempt to blow up the commercial airliner in 2001, involved a number of terrorists who knew each other. These terrorists cannot be seen as embodiment of a coherent and strict organizational structure. However, they visited the same locations, were inspired by the same people and had somewhat similar origins.

Unlike any other international organization, the global jihad seems to be structured around large number of specific individuals with numerous personal contacts, who through these contacts have the opportunity to make some things happen. These persons function as supervisors/gatekeepers, because they know the groups in the radical mosques, former mujahidin and the active terrorists. Although they personally do not carry out terrorist operations, they are able to “open the gate” towards the exclusive community of radical Islam. These gatekeepers are surrounded by more isolated activists, who in turn have limited knowledge and contacts. Low level operatives depend on their personal relationship with the gatekeeper; otherwise they lose the ability to function.

In order to understand how a radical Islamist joins the jihadist circle, it is extremely important to consider the division of labor. The process goes from the bottom-up, because the future members are eager to join the jihad, a process called privileged relationship. The current global jihad develops spontaneously without a specific and dedicated effort of radical Islamist groups such as the current IS. This results in large gaps in the global dispersion of active cells and their replenishment. It is extremely important for the potential terrorist to be able to identify a link to enter the global jihad. A critical and specific element of accession is the availability of the link – connection with the global jihad. Without knowing a supervisor/gatekeeper, the group of friends, students and believers will suffer progressive isolation. The importance of social connections which seems to proceed the operation phase is emphasized. Small clusters are formed rather spontaneously from personal friendships. Regardless of the source of their social connections these clusters experience longer periods of intensive social integration. The closer they get to each other, the more extreme their views are. Their newly discovered beliefs keep them away of previous friendships and contacts, which again leads to an increased isolation from society. But, there are examples when some of these friendships develop such aggressive attitudes that they move away from the original community at the mosque where they first met. As relations with those responsible for the mosques and other worshippers deteriorate, they leave disappointed and find new sanctuary in a close circle of like-minded people. The surroundings of the mosque are the first important step, but later it often happens that they leave the mosque after the radical Islamist begins this personal process of radicalization. The process in which a small circle of friends engage in jihad as a group has strong implications for its growth rate, and depends of that circle’s ability to make connections with experienced people. If the base of potential recruits is made up of isolated people, its growth will be

slow, because each potential member should establish his own contact. However, if the base is composed of groups of friends, families or worshippers, the jihad will experience an explosive growth, because one connection brings groups of new terrorists, each of whom could serve as an effective weak link with new potential members¹¹. This pattern of unstructured growth has major implications. The strength of weak connections makes counterterrorism efforts more complicated because it is impossible to disrupt an organizational structure that does not exist. Group membership seems to be widespread in the European Islamist circles – the gang Rube, the group Kelkal, the Hamburg cell and members of the failed embassy plot in Paris in 2001 are just a few examples of this trend.

Although there are indications of increased support of radical Islamism in Europe after 9/11, the establishment of a key gatekeeper link has become more difficult for the potential terrorists. Individuals who have publically stated their jihadist views are now much more careful about revealing their affiliation with a particular group. An attempt by a potential terrorist to seek advice of a notorious jihadist public person will result in a security service gaining attention. In fact, the recruitment in such conditions began to be conducted more and more secretly.

Such recruitment difficulties have led certain individuals to try their luck on their own. These are the cases when isolated persons try to become radical Islamists without a mediation of a gatekeeper, which is actually a form of self-recruitment.

The recruitment in jihad in Europe shows that the Islamist terrorism is not only a **threat towards the Western world, but also a threat that is increasingly and professionally generated on European soil** ¹².

Security services in Europe in the 90s warned that migration posed a security risk in a sense that terrorists would try to enter Europe (especially in Muslim communities) under the pretext of political and economic asylum. These predictions have been shown to be correct, stemming from the fact that a good portion of returnees from the Middle Eastern battlefields returning to European countries transit through the Balkans ¹³.

Although the concern for **infiltration of terrorists in Europe** was reasonable, the problem lies in the differences of the strategic perspective between Europe and countries directly affected by the Islamist terrorism¹⁴. But, as time went on, the problem of infiltration of foreign terrorists which was present in the past changed its center of gravity and shifted to a **domestic production of jihadists**.

¹¹ Sageman, Mark (2004). *Understanding Terrorist Networks*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

¹² Akerboom, Erik. S. M. (2003) *Counter-Terrorism in the Netherlands*. General Intelligence and Security Service of the Netherlands (AIVD).

¹³ Deutsche welle (2016), „Koj ги контролира македонските цихадисти повратници од Сирија?“ <https://www.dw.com/mk/кој-ги-контролира-македонските-цихадисти-повратници-од-сирија/a-19137910>, accessed 27/12/2020.

¹⁴ Kohlmann, Evan F. (2004) *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe. The Afghan-Bosnian Network*. Oxford, Berg

Recruitment target group

Speaking of radical Islamism, it must be emphasized which group of adherents of Islam is subject to recruitment. One of the arguments in the counter terrorism debate is the problem of Islam. But to distinguish only one religion as the only model for explanation of supporting terrorism reflects an uninformed prejudice. When terrorists manage to hijack commercial airliners, schoolchildren and aid workers, it should not be surprising that they can also kidnap Islam to achieve their cause.

Before analyzing the different types of Islamist terrorists being recruited in Europe, it is worth looking at the terrorists themselves in order to find out more about their recruitment prospects. Studying the publications and manuals of terrorist organizations actively recruiting in Europe for global jihad eliminates most of the speculations associated with them. An excellent source is the al-Qaeda manual (found during a search in Manchester in May 2000)¹⁵. According to the manual, the member (in reality a terrorist operative) should show no less than forty different features. The primary, necessary qualification is the faith in Islam. Completing the strong religious conviction, the member must be fully committed to the organizations ideology in order to get rid of ideological problems. He must be a mature and responsible person, yet willing to sacrifice (even his life if needed) when called upon. He must be able to listen and accept the authority of elder members and never disclose information entrusted to him. Furthermore, he should be in good health, of a calm nature and intelligent. He must show caution and wisdom in his actions, as well as the ability to observe and analyze. In order to be operationally efficient the member is housed in a cell which in the vocabulary of terrorist organizations is part of the “project team”, meaning terrorist cell. In order to understand this structure the monthly internet magazine published by al-Qaeda entitled Al-Battar which served as center for virtual recruitment, propaganda and training is of great help. In addition to articles on weapons handling, survival and communication, the magazine also published a detailed analysis of the creation and functioning of the cell structure of the organization. It described how a “project” (attack) is divided into a number of sub cells, each of which operates independently and reports to a control cell. Each sub cell consists of no more than four persons and is composed of persons who can fit in their environment. The organization of the project team is organized according to functional principles, preferably in four different cells: managing cell, information collection cell, preparation cell and executive cell. It further emphasizes that cell members should neither know about the identities of other cell members, nor should they ask questions. In general, they do not need to have more information than necessary for them to do their job.

The al-Qaeda manual and the Al-Battar article can be considered as a search for quality people who can think and act on their own and have the opportunity to fit in

¹⁵ USDOJ (2004). Al Qaeda Training Manual. United States Department of Justice. <http://usdoj.gov/ag/trainingmanual.htm>

their environment. This situation is coincidentally identic with the current problem of recruitment of intelligence and security services around Europe (while MI5 encourages the candidates of non-British origin, the Islamists seek Europeans).

The fact that European Muslims are the target of recruitment is obvious, but who are those Muslims? Although the exact number of Muslims living in Europe is hard to be determined due to the fact that religious beliefs are a personal issue, however the scope of the radicalization process within the Muslim community or more precisely communities is much more important. The existence of a unique community in the terminology of the Quran called *Ummah* is a result of the imagination in Islamic circles. In reality there are hundreds, even thousands Islamic communities, each of them defined by its religious practices and specific cultures. It is undeniable that the recruitment process is focused on young Muslim men, yet there are certain divisions that cannot be bridged in Muslim communities in Europe. An example of one of those recruitment restrictions is the exclusion of Shiite Muslims. They are considered heretics by the proponents of the radical Islamism. The fact that the Shiite movement Hezbollah has its own supporters and financiers in Europe only increases confusion. Shiites live in different environments, apart from adherents of radical Islamism. Another example is the absence of Turks as a significant component in terrorist networks despite the millions of Turks living in Europe. For sure there are European radical Turks, but it still seems they prefer other places to express dissatisfaction. More precisely they are not the ones who become Islamist bomb manufacturers. From these simple but important observations we could conclude that the global jihad appeals only to a certain segment of European Muslims.

The perspectives of terrorist are shaped in the socio – political reality of their immediate environment which causes a radical response in a religious cover-up. Rejecting the superficiality and the emptiness of the secular modernity, where they do not fit, European Islamists logically became attracted to the religious ideology which promises to fill a vacuum. Islamist ideologists promise only painstaking struggle for personal fulfillment, but it does not seem to discourage their followers, on the contrary, they are more than ready for as long as it has a higher meaning. By resorting to a “traditional religion” which is everything else except traditional, they set out their concerns not for the fate of humanity, Islamic civilization or Islamic communities but for themselves.

Where are the potential candidates recruited?

Before 9/11 European Islamists usually operated more or less openly through certain mosques, Islamic information centers, Islamic schools and charities. There was open, as well as covert support for mujahedeen in Chechnya and Afghanistan. Examples of radical mosques that have become prominent in the jihadist connection process are the Finsbury park mosque in London, the Islamic Cultural Center in Milan, the Abu

Bakr Mosque in Madrid and the Al Quds Mosque in Hamburg ¹⁶. During the 90s these sites served as a gateway to global jihad and sent radicalized young Muslims to train in Afghanistan or on the fronts in Bosnia and Chechnya.

Although these mosques could not be portrayed as recruitment centers, they have played an ambiguous role in the recruitment process, mainly serving as a radicalization agent. Such is the case with the transformation of a group of young Muslims from the Middle East into a deadly cell in Hamburg, and especially their presence in the mosque. The Al Quds Mosque in Hamburg played a key but indirect role in the radicalization process ¹⁷.

The recruitment is still actively pursued although there have been notable changes such as the role of radical clerics. They are no longer able to recruit openly due to the intensive surveillance by the authorities and instead they started mass propaganda by expressing the virtues of jihad, but did so carefully avoiding any direct involvement. The mosques with a bad (radical) reputation were replaced by “underground” mosques, which were usually located in the same cities as the previous ones. This is due to what can be called sustainable environment, which means a situation when there are enough Islamists, former fighters and persons with the necessary connections to maintain an alternative environment.

Conclusion

The increased surveillance of radical Islamist circles by the authorities did not prevent Europe and the Balkans to remain active centers for terrorist support and activities such as propaganda, recruitment and financing. Bosnia and Herzegovina proved to be most suitable for such activities, especially during the war in the 90s.

The current network of groups such as Al Qaeda, the Islamic State or related groups is extremely adaptable and dynamic. Instead of being structured and organized in the traditional organization sense, the mutual support and coordination among members of the network takes place on ad – hoc bases primarily based on shared vision of a common enemy. The existence of several simultaneous operational networks that are largely independent of each other contributes towards their complexity.

When it comes to recruiting target groups, it is obvious that they are European Muslims, but who are those Muslims? Although the emphasis is on young Muslim man, there are still some specifics which affect the recruitment. Another factor is the fact that all groups that advocated religiously justified terrorism were marginalized, to varying degrees, with respect to their religious societies.

Before 9/11 European Islamists usually operated more or less openly through certain mosques, Islamic information centers, Islamic schools and charities. Most of the terrorists were recruited in the mosque, but what is more important is the social environment in the mosque or

¹⁶ Факултети.мк, (2018) „Човекот што ги регрутирал киднаперите за терористичките напади на 09-11“ <http://www.fakulteti.mk/news/11122018/chovekot-shto-gi-regrutiral-kidnaperite-za-teroristichkite- napadi-na-9-11>, accessed 13/02/2021.

¹⁷ Kean, Thomas. H. and Lee H. Hamilton (2004). The 9/11 Report. The National Commission on Terrorists Attacks Upon the United States. New York, The New York Times.

religious institution that contributed towards the transformation of young and alienated Muslims into terrorists.

Jihad recruitment in Europe shows that the Islamist terrorism is not only a threat to the western world, but also a threat that is increasingly and professionally generated in the European soil.

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CO-CONSTRUCTION CURRICULUM OF CROATIAN MILITARY EDUCATION USING THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

Andrija KOZINA¹

Abstract: *Throughout the centuries, military organizations have tried to develop and define the principles of war. These principles have never been a universal contract or agreement containing prescribed common principles and rules. Each military organization attempts to develop its national principles of conducting war based on their military culture, previous war experience and history. Military practitioners rarely apply these principles in the same way; each situation and operational objective requires emphasis of a particular principle. They help us better understand the implementation of each task (including designing the curriculum) and give basic guidelines, not formulas or an easy way to achieve the goal, and are constantly evolving over time.*

Keywords: *Curriculum planning level; Learning outcomes; School function; Military conflicts.*

Introduction

The word curriculum (Lat.) itself carries multiple meanings: competition, course of something, racing, life itself. (Croatian Encyclopedic Dictionary, 2003, p. 199). Etymologically, curriculum denotes course or sequence (of a planned and programmed event) that indicates the most favorable course of action towards achieving a certain goal. The definition of a curriculum can be broad or specific. According to Jackson (1992), the curricular area is ambiguous. Numerous theories of curriculum that approach pedagogy from different fields of philosophy, psychology and sociology make it difficult to understand its core concept. Poljak points out that looking at the history of pedagogy, one can see that the term curriculum appeared at the turn of the 17th century and originally meant "(...) the order of learning by years" (Poljak, 1980, p. 72). In Croatian, the term has a different meaning. Antić (1999, p. 648) states that curriculum is "[...] a variedly used term, for which many languages do not have the corresponding equivalent so the term is increasingly adopted in its original form (...) and encompasses the precise and systematic entirety of the planned education." Many use the word curriculum to mean syllabus due to different translations from foreign languages into Croatian and vice versa. One of the simple and precise definitions of curriculum "[...] is a streamlined approach to education and

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a relevantly reliable, precise and optimal way of implementing a flexibly planned process of learning, education and acquisition of competences" (Previšić, 2007, p. 20).

Cumulatively, curriculum is a set of easily measurable performance goals that focus on the specific skills or knowledge that students should acquire. In fact, all that is taught inside and outside of school, guided by the institution involves what every learner experiences as a result of schooling and creating plans for further activities. In short, "Curriculum is the heart of education" (Null, 2011, p. 1).

To succeed in developing a more modern military education curriculum, it is best to use the principles of war as a guide. The principles of war have evolved over time and they reflect the way societies waged war and how they planned to fight. Chanakya, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Napoleon, Clausewitz, and Jomini², are only a few of the military theoreticians that shaped principles that brought a sense of order and simplicity in the apparent chaos of war. The principles of war as defined in FM 3-0 provide general guidance for conducting war and peace operations at the strategic, operational and tactical level. They are accepted truths that guide combat operations. These principles are the foundations of Army doctrine. First published as a fundamental principle in the Field Service Regulations of the United States Army in 1923, they have endured the test of analyses, experiments, and practice. The principles of war are not a checklist and their application is situational. Blindly observing the principles does not guarantee military success, but deviating from them can increase the risk of failure. The principles of war provide time-tested guidelines for military operations and they serve as a crucial link between pure theory and actual application. In short, the principles of war are "(...) the fundamental truths guiding combat operations" (FM 3-90, pp. 2-3). Paić, however, points out that the principles of war were created on unclear analyses where the principles that were formed in the distant past and/or in recent and most recent times are simply adopted. "With small modifications they become stable and change-resistant components of theories, studies and rules of war." (Paić, 2000, p. 52). The hypothesis of this paper is based on the assumptions of using procedures related to the development or evaluation of professional military education curricula. In other words, the use of general guidelines for conducting a curriculum-appropriate process is applied. In short, under this hypothesis comes the assumption that applying the methods of using the curriculum of military schools can get a quality curriculum that meets all the necessary elements.

With regard to research methods, this paper can be used for a qualitative analysis of content and literature respectively (about the curriculum and the principles of war) that include elements and insights that can help in the research. The logical methods of analysis will be used (curriculum development literature and war proceedings will be analyzed) along with synthesis and induction and deduction in data processing, conclusion and the process of writing itself.

² Sun Tzu (544 - 496 BC) a military strategist and general who served the state of Wu near the end of the Spring and Autumn. Chanakya a counselor and adviser to Chandragupta (321– 297 BC), founder of the Mauryan empire of northern India. Niccolò Machiavelli (1469 - 1527) Italian Renaissance political philosopher and statesman. Napoléon Bonaparte (1769-1821) French general and emperor of the French. Carl von Clausewitz (1780 - 1831) Prussian general and military thinker. Henri, baron de Jomini (1779 - 1869) French general, military critic, and historian (Britannica Concise Encyclopedia, 2006).

National documents that influence the military education curriculum in the Republic of Croatia

National documents that determine the Armed Forces mission and purpose are the most influential and important documents for developing modern military education curriculum. As an example, the Croatian Armed Forces military education curriculum is greatly influenced by national policy and legal documents. The most important documents include:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (1990) which promulgates all national laws. In the Basic Provisions (Article 7, paragraph 1), the Constitution defines the Armed Forces' core mission: "The Croatian Armed Forces protect the sovereignty and independence of Croatia and defend its territorial integrity." Paragraphs 10 and 11 state that the Armed Forces can be used to assist the police and other state bodies, as well as assist in fire protection, search and rescue and protection of the rights of the Republic of Croatia at sea.

- The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia (2017) is the overall national document on Croatian national security policy and is the starting point for other strategic and developmental security documents. The Chapter on Governance Development and Strategic Communication in the National Security Strategy states, "By introducing deep changes into the education system, the detection and development of the potential of young people and the development of their knowledge and skills with a particular focus on information, digital and technological literacy, as well as alignment with the demands of the labor market, will improve. By targeting Croatian youth, the education system and training will foster individuals who are capable of developing society and who are adaptive to change. The concept of lifelong education will be promoted as a need and model of the educational system".

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia emphasizes that education is one of the most important functions in preserving Croatian national identity.

- The Defense Strategy (2002) is a fundamental conceptual document that manages long-term engagement of available defense resources in response to security challenges (Law on Defense, Official Gazette, 73/13, 75/15, 27/16). In the Defense Strategy, section 5. 1. 1 states, "The Republic of Croatia must continue to maintain and develop forces capable of carrying out modern type of joint combat operations in defense of its own territory. Military capabilities must meet the criteria of flexibility and rapid response."

- The Long-Term Development Plan for the Croatian Armed Forces 2015-2024 (2014) clearly defined the concept of military education. The following criteria identify specific guidance:

- a. There must be sequential and continuous training and education that enables an individual to perform tasks at a higher degree of responsibility and ensures acquisition of the optimal level of knowledge for more complex military duties.

b. In co-operation with the academic community, the Croatian Defense Academy has established undergraduate university study programs in accordance with the regulations regulating scientific activity and higher education in the Republic of Croatia, (i.e. Bologna process).

c. There must be a quality guarantee validated through evaluation of educational programs and institutions, internal evaluation, and external audits performed by the Quality Control Department of the Agency for Science and Higher Education.

d. Ensuring the mobility of diploma and transferability of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) points acquired at various domestic and foreign educational institutions. The prerequisites for transferability include the elaboration of the procedures for recognition of higher education qualifications in accordance with the Bologna process requirements.

- The Law on Service in the Croatian Armed Forces (2013) clearly defines the role of military education and training and identifies basic concepts:

"(1) Military education is a time-limited planned process of acquiring theoretical knowledge and skills in schools and other educational institutions for the purpose of training attendees for carrying out appropriate duties in the Armed Forces.

(2) Military education is a permanent process of acquiring knowledge, skills and capabilities of a military person during education, training and other forms of professional improvement.

(3) Military education is an integral part of the professional development of military personnel, and is conducted at the Croatian Defense Academy, at the Armed Forces Training Centers and in military and civilian institutions in the Republic of Croatia and abroad.

(4) Military training is an organized activity aiming at enabling members of the Armed Forces to carry out the assigned tasks."

These national documents articulate the roles and mission of the Croatian Armed Forces. In designing the military curriculum concept, one must not neglect the basic mission of the Armed Forces - to protect the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Croatia.

Military education institutions must adapt and adjust their old plans and programs to new standards, values, goals and competencies. Military education should be congruent and compliant with the existing national documents and new guidelines for EU and NATO basic officer training (Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E&ITD) 075-007). One critical issue concerns the capacity of the military education curriculum to impose professionalism and new values. Although the issue has not generated large numbers of professional meetings and discussions, there is a growing effort to focus on the most important requirements necessary for a new military education curriculum. At the same time, additional program initiatives and perfecting the military curriculum is always appropriate.

Construction of the Croatian Military Education Curriculum

Learning outcomes should be at the forefront of curriculum planning. Learning outcomes are generally associated with the professional competencies a person has gained through the learning process. The terminology in education and training has not yet been fully synchronized, so experts in the field of education use other terms – these include goals, tasks, purpose, etc. This paper uses the term “learning outcomes”. Literature associated with the learning outcomes contains a number of similar definitions:

- Learning outcomes are knowledge, skills and competencies that a person has acquired through learning and which are proven after learning (Deluka-Tibljaš, Karleuša, Štimac Grandić, 2011).

- Learning outcomes are statements that express what a student needs to know, understand and/or should be able to show after completing a certain learning process (Kovač, Kolić-Vehovec, 2008).

- Targeted learning outcomes are statements of expected student knowledge, abilities, understanding and/or abilities that the student demonstrates upon completion of the learning process (Glossary of Core Terms and Definitions in the Area of Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2007).

Within the framework of the Key Competencies for a lifelong learning in the European Reference Framework (2004), the European Commission defined the following: "Key competencies represent a transferable, multifunctional set of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for personal fulfillment and development, as well as active participation in today's society. They need to be developed by the end of the compulsory education or training and should act as the basis for further learning as part of lifelong learning." From this, we can see that certain key competencies are needed for an individual to be fully developed, to live actively, to be socially included and to have employment opportunities. They also comprise what a military school student has to learn during schooling, what he/she needs to know and to make, what values he/she accepts. The military education curriculum has several questions to answer: Why is something being taught? What is being taught? How does one learn? Curriculum planning should take place at the following levels: State i.e. Ministry level, (national curriculum for military education), institution level (military education institution curriculum), and course level (subject curriculum). The national military education curriculum would include curricula and other common content in different types of military education. The military education institution curriculum³ would encompass all activities that the institution conducts in order to supplement, reinforce or extend the educational process. It consists of teaching methods and activities focusing on the competencies and learning outcomes, materials used to improve learning, the learning environment, the system of evaluation of educational achievement, and the military

³ Military institution curriculum is designed in keeping with the Military Training Guidelines given by the Chief of General Staff. It is produced every academic year and is valid for two years.

education institution culture and value system. The subject curriculum consists of all the activities that the teacher performs in his teaching process in order for his students to achieve the learning outcomes and acquire the necessary competencies. Kelly (2004) clearly outlined four types of curriculum: educational curriculum that is fully justified and accepted in the educational sense; total curriculum that must cover more than one manner of planning and be comprehensive; formal and informal curriculum where the former is approved by the appropriate authorities, and the latter is implemented in schools without having been approved.

The curriculum opens up more teaching options for the teacher. "Innovation and improvement of teaching cannot rely only on current instructions." (Jurić, 2007, p. 256) The person who influences the form of teaching is usually the teacher; he or she creates new situations and is ready to adopt contemporary teaching methods and innovations. "Military education facilities are not a blind track for those that we do not need anywhere else or at all." (Genschel, 2001, p. 18) The military education curriculum should be a mixed type of curriculum as it provides the teacher with choices of teaching content to be presented and modernized if he/she so wishes. In this way, the lesson content becomes more scientific and brings new useful information. Smerić (2002) notes that the complexity of the officers' professional roles has increased – as well as the need for numerous new skills and knowledge required for conducting new non-traditional military operations (operations other than war, stabilization operations, peace support operations etc.). As a result, the influence of an educated officers' corps on the design of military-related issues is growing.

With such an approach, the military teacher will reduce the amount of encyclopedic content and knowledge that the officers do not need for professional development. Sekulić-Majurec (2007) emphasizes that only a flexible curriculum encourages a teacher's motivation to improve and innovate his/her manner of teaching. By creating a modern military education curriculum, the transition of staff from the military into the civilian environment and vice versa is also achieved. In military schools, higher education for defense purposes will be provided, and, in addition to military personnel, the institution will educate members of other ministries or state agencies. It will be possible to develop partnerships with educational institutions in other countries, preferably NATO and European Union members. Together, the institutionalization of education for the purposes of defense and security on scientific and higher education principles and compliance with the Bologna process standards create the prerequisites for compatibility with NATO institutions and programs and make the use of NATO and EU resources possible⁴.

⁴ To make it easier to create a network of military researchers, professors, and cadets in addition to the EMILYO (military ERASMUS+) initiative, the establishment of the European Military University (EMU) was launched. Associated partners share ideas and contacts. They do not receive direct European Council grant support for their contribution.

Every school, including military institutions, is constantly searching for successful and easily measurable forms of schooling (methods and procedures). Autor (2018) notes that military schools must be effective in meeting the needs of all stakeholders, from the commander, students and teachers to other military education participants. Glasser (1994, p. 13) observed, "(...) the purpose of any organization, state or private, is to produce a quality product or to provide a quality service." Military education is under the care of the State and officers and NCOs are educated at state expense. "One of the major challenges is that of linking civilian and military education - joint education and training of civilian and military personnel based on a comprehensive approach" (Autor, 2013, p. 139).

Furthermore, in order to develop a military education curriculum, one must be aware of and take into account the school basic functions. The following division (Jurić, 2007, p. 222) clearly shows the basic functions of school: reproductive, pedagogical (educational) and humane.

The reproductive function of school implies the reproduction of the existing contents and forms of society and the preservation of the achieved state and, on that basis, the planning of further development and construction of society as a whole. Schools achieve this through classification, selection and integration. Classification is the training of individuals in the ordinary sense (professional, lingual and social competencies). Selection marks permeability in the system of education and the transition to a higher level depending on the learning outcomes achieved. Integration is the inclusion of a person into society based on accepting social heritage (or status). The pedagogical function of a school is one of the most important because it is used to educate students to be independent and mature. It is achieved through two fundamental concepts: emancipation and maturity. Emancipation means taking care of the full potential of personality with the aim of creating the best opportunities and achieving autonomy in society. Maturity is the level of balance established between the competency acquired by a person and societal demands. (See Pedagogical Encyclopedia, 1989).

The humane function of school. Schools are expected to raise and educate students to acquire knowledge, to be hard working and well behaved. School is a realm of students and teachers. Each student spends at least eight hours a day at school; he or she must spend a certain amount of time on commuting which leaves up to 14 hours for family, company, leisure and sports, and cultural and other needs. It is obvious, therefore, that the school becomes a socio-cultural environment.

"Some of the curricular theories are not easy to 'reconcile' because they are based on opposing philosophical views" (Previšić, 2007, p. 19). Thus, different theoretical starting points have different curriculum methodologies. Creating a school curriculum requires teamwork and necessitates a number of steps to be taken to make planning effective.

The Principles of War as a Means to Structure the Modern Military Curriculum

At the outset of the development of modern military education curriculum, we have to conduct an analysis involving all segments and available resources (employers, military school students, military teachers, all participants in military education and the domicile community). With such an analysis, one should try to:

- define one's own values and attitudes
- construct the school mission statement
- create the school vision
- define the goals and learning outcomes students need to achieve
- develop a strategic development plan.

After defining the basic concepts, one can pursue the logical and accepted steps necessary for the final definition and acceptance of the school curriculum.

We must not ignore the fact that the characteristics of military conflicts have changed: (1) Conflicts are conducted among people instead around people. (2) The governments of states where conflicts break out have no capacity or will to resolve or prevent them. We must enable our soldiers to work with such governments, to help them create favorable conditions for security and building their own military and civilian capabilities. (3) International partnerships are necessary for conducting operations in order to avoid conflicts arising from social, economic and cultural conditions. (4) Parties in conflict, particularly non-state actors, often act covertly or with the help of neighboring countries. They are not bound by internationally recognized norms of behavior and are resistant to traditional deterrence. (5) Hybrid threats are becoming more frequent and more dynamic, resulting from the combination of conventional, unconventional and irregular or terrorist capabilities. (6) Conflicts are more unpredictable. They happen suddenly, unexpectedly, spread rapidly, and emerge and develop in unexpected places. (7) The speed of disseminating information about conflict through social networks is further complicating the nature of modern conflict. (Army Culture and Foreign Language Strategy, 2009, pp. 1-2).

From the US military research regarding Professional Military Education (PME), the following conclusions for curriculum development are stressed:

- professional military education must be ready to anticipate current and future challenges and adapt to them
- there is an increasing need for additional common and specific topics to be addressed in military schools
- lessons learned should be used in professional military education which must not only meet the current requirements, but must be flexible regarding future needs
- officers must prepare for joint military operations and this must be part of the curriculum
- some officers lack the key competencies needed to perform the task efficiently, so military education must address military needs

- military education must enable officers to make independent decisions and take responsibility for their implementation
- the military education curriculum must be subject to change in order to respond to future challenges
- military education must improve teaching practices and adopt the more demanding standards of contemporary teaching methods (Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations: 2010).

Young (1998, p. 74) notes that each curriculum has to answer two key questions:

"(...) • How to increase flexibility? - allow participants to make independent decisions and combine different types of active learning,

• How to improve coherence? - the sense of clarity the learners need in order to understand what they need to learn and a specific education will lead them."

When designing a military education curriculum, the peculiarities of military schools must be taken into account. Moreover, national armed forces also participate in other political or military associations: NATO, the United Nations, the European Union, the African Union, etc.⁵ In order to achieve the competencies necessary for working in multinational commands (NATO, EU, UN), a military school curriculum must be adapted to the NATO education and training directives. In Figure 1, the stakeholders' requirements and identified shortcomings are addressed first in the curriculum development process. We analyze all the data, make the necessary changes to the existing curriculum, develop it and implement it. After evaluating and validating that the curriculum is viable and will achieve the learning outcomes, approval is obtained and it is ready for implementation in military education institutions.

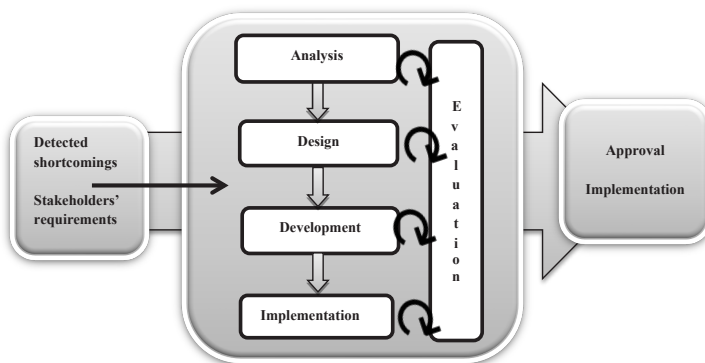


Figure 1. NATO's Training Approach System (Bi-SC Education and Individual Training Directive (E & ITD) 075-007, 2015, p 26)

⁵ The Croatian Parliament 2021 approved the deployment of troops in the peacekeeping operations: the UN KFOR operation in Kosovo, the EU Sea Guardian mission in the Mediterranean, NATO's Forward Enhanced Presence in Poland, the Standing NATO Mine Countermeasures Group 2, EU Naval Force Somalia Atalanta, and UN peacekeeping operations.

Tyler (1949) points out that when designing a curriculum, one must first determine what previous educational experiences, knowledge and skills meet the requirements. They must be organized in such a way that they are the easiest to adopt and learn. After that, the best ways of evaluating the program are determined in order to verify the success of the curriculum through testing and conducting surveys among participants about the program and the process of acquiring knowledge. After conducting an analysis in which clear and precise objectives and learning outcomes are set, the process of designing and constructing of military school curricula can begin. The purpose of curriculum development is to define the best solution that will enable students to achieve certain learning outcomes. At the outset of a curriculum design, one must take into account the materials or services needed to support its implementation. The implementation of the curriculum in military schools is the most sensitive part of the whole process since it is the beginning of its practical use, management, support of its activities and conduct of lessons. All the necessary documents that support the implementation must be completed and approved by a superior authority. Military institutions constantly evaluate and upgrade the curriculum because it is dynamic, constantly changing, and revise it to be as effective as possible.

When designing a curriculum, one must also take into account the four fundamental issues that Tyler stated in 1949 and that each curriculum must answer:

- "1. What educational goals does the school strive to achieve?
2. What educational experiences can help to achieve the educational goals?
3. How can the recognized educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can it be determined whether the educational goals have been achieved?" (Tyler 1949, p. 1).

When designing the curriculum of military schools, there is a need to emphasize and affirm its peculiarity as a variant of innovativeness. The philosophy of military schools and the peculiarities of their curriculum essentially determine their specificity, regardless of whether they are clearly expressed or implied. O'Neill (2015) states that the philosophy of education is actually a statement agreed on by the curriculum design program team on purpose, subjects/disciplines/professional values, required work environment, and key approaches to teaching, learning and evaluation of teaching. Recognizing the school and defining it through durability, progressiveness, pertinence, sustainability and innovativeness is crucial for success. "Contemporary development of society and the democratically elected government as factors in defense sector management have imposed fundamental changes on the armed forces as regards the approach, development, organization, content and character of military education." (Autor, 2014, p. 87). The improvement of the quality of military education generally affects all stakeholders in the military educational process. A school's success is not only apparent in statistics and numbers, but in the satisfaction with the previous achievements.

Each officer is also a soldier who has to be familiar with the principles of waging war. All knowledge is useful and if both the above principles and the principles of

waging war are respected, it will be easier to structure the military education curriculum. It can be concluded from the above that the principles are the proven actions that have to be undertaken in order to succeed. "The principles of war have a special value in training, analysis of previous campaigns, major operations, battles and actions, and also serve as a tool for comparing various courses of action in operational planning." (The Croatian Armed Forces Doctrine, 2010, p. 60). The Croatian Armed Forces Doctrine outlines and explains the principles that need to be observed in order to succeed in the operation or another more complex act or action.

Principles are guidelines for structuring the curriculum and they cannot substitute professional understanding, experience and education. One of the definitions of the principle is "(...) the basis, the foundation from which all originates, all that is, the starting point, the inception, the beginning, the principle" (Anić et al., 2003, p. 779). Principles are historically affirmed actions that need to be taken in order to succeed and have been revised by specific approaches to finding solutions. They are not just a list of actions that need to be unconditionally complied with, but incorporate all the features required for success. They are rarely applied in the same way; each situation requires focus on a certain principle, depending on the action needed in order to achieve a viable goal. They help to better understand the curriculum design and provide basic guidelines rather than formulas and ways of achieving the goal more easily. Given the above, it is obvious that the purpose of a principle is to direct each action to a clearly defined, measurable and achievable goal, which is also the purpose of a curriculum.

Defining goals is the fundamental principle of war that refers to directing operations and activities towards clearly defined and universally understood goals that contribute to achieving the desired end state. When designing and structuring the curriculum, it is essential to know the planned goals and purpose of education. By setting a goal that is feasible and enables development and measurability of the quality of education, the modern military education curriculum will fulfill its purpose. Defining learning outcomes that support the goals of education and enable the acquisition of necessary competencies is the most important part of curriculum planning.

Unity of effort refers to the coordination of all activities with the aim of achieving the maximum joint impact of various factors involved in conducting operations and activities. This principle suggests that there must be a curriculum coordinator who guides and coordinates the work of all powers and resources involved in curriculum development. All stakeholders of military education are involved in curriculum development, from students, military teachers, Deanery and the Croatian Defense Academy Command to the broader academic community. Through synergy of requirements of all stakeholders, we will achieve the set goals of education more easily.

Support as the principle of war encompasses a logistic and personnel organization, that is, the way of implementation of an operational plan or order in which combat power is maintained. The design of the modern military curriculum has the support of the CDA Command, the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces and the Ministry of

Defense of the Republic of Croatia. It is also necessary to anticipate and carefully plan all the necessary material or other resources that will enable the design. By choosing the best people for curriculum design within the entire Ministry of Defense system, it is possible to achieve the quality and feasibility of the curriculum.

Concentration of power is the decisive application of military power, i.e. harmonized use of physical strength and moral, perceptual and doctrinal superiority in order to achieve the desired effects at a critical place and time. Curriculum development, as a comprehensive and complex task, must include a wide range of experts who can use their knowledge and experience.

Economy of effort is a deliberate use of human and material resources as well as time in relation to achieving the set goals. The educational resources of the Armed Forces and the State are limited and therefore, attention must be paid to the economy of curriculum development. To use the existing structure, it must be available at the right time and place.

Adaptability is the ability to respond to changing situations and new circumstances. This principle tells us that the curriculum needs to be adaptable and have the ability to change swiftly, responding to new challenges that the military education system can face. In other words, it must offer solutions for future challenges.

Initiative is recognizing and taking the opportunities that arise and solving problems in a unique way. Every curriculum must be ready to take advantage of every opportunity to improve the existing state of affairs. It has to be able to respond to any change in the situation and provide a solution as to how to detect a change of situation and how to incorporate it in the teaching documents.

Sustaining morale Throughout history, as well as in the Homeland War, the principle that success often depends more on morale than on material advantage has proven to be true. Curriculum design stakeholders need to be highly motivated and aware of their values because only a highly motivated person is doing their best to accomplish the assigned task.

Surprise is the principle of war that has the most effective impact on combat operations and a powerful psychological effect on the opponent. The curriculum needs to be interesting, contemporary and acceptable; it must also give something new and acceptable to the entire community.

Security is formation and maintenance of an operating environment where vulnerability to threats and activities of opposing forces is reduced and, at the same time, the freedom of action of our forces is maintained. It is necessary to create the confidence among all the stakeholders in curriculum design that they will have the support of their superiors for all the necessary actions to be carried out; that they know what to do and are aware of their competences.

Simplicity is the principle of war, which, by simple plans and clear orders, reduces or eliminates the possibility of misunderstanding or misreading. Every curriculum must be simple, easy to understand and acceptable. It must be understandable not

only to the staff who will work on it and implement it, but also to the military schools' students who have to know what is expected of them and which competences they will acquire by completing their education.

Conclusion

Every school, including military institutions, is constantly looking for successful and easily measurable ways of education (methods and procedures). Military schools must be effective and must meet the needs of all stakeholders, from the commander, the entire administration, students, teachers and others involved in the implementation and organization of military education. Modern democratic society influences the fundamental changes of the armed forces with regard to approach, development, organization, content, and character of military education. One of the most important goals of military education is to change and adapt the existing curriculum so that military school students not only acquire knowledge that others had created, but also learn to think critically, draw sound conclusions and construct their own interpretations of the past, the present, and the future.

This paper presents and explains the principles of war that need to be observed in order to succeed in the operation or some other more complex act or action. We can see that the aforementioned principles can also be applied to the military education curriculum because the recognition of the school and its need for durability, progressiveness, relevance, sustainability and innovation, are decisive for success. Also, the curriculum must include content that supports the educational needs of military education, be structured so that it covers all educational areas, and it should not be overburdened with unnecessary subjects. The curriculum of military education consists of the core content, military history, military science and art and must be in keeping with modern techniques and technologies, as well as with academic knowledge. Military educational institutions cannot be isolated because they engage with different cultures, languages and religions every day. They are not only used to acquire academic knowledge, but also take part in shaping the education that will enable the acquisition and development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and responsibilities necessary for functioning in the contemporary world. Since the curriculum is dynamic and is constantly changing and updating in order to be able to complement the existing and build up future officer competencies, there is a constant need for its assessment and upgrading. By using the principles of war as a metric of effectiveness, it can be determined very easily if a curriculum has fulfilled its purpose.

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GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY AND READINESS OF STATES TO RESPOND TO THE CRISIS CAUSED BY COVID-19

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Abstract: *This paper shows how the global health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, pointed to the critical need for the readiness of countries to respond adequately in crisis situations that pose a high health risk to a large part of the population and a great challenge to the entire health infrastructure, but also national economies, political regimes, educational and other social systems. Global health security, which includes preparation, response, and recovery from the emergency situation in public health that negatively affects security, destabilizes the economy, disrupts social cohesion, has been seriously shaken/ disrupted by the threat of the infectious disease Covid-19 in early 2020. Infectious disease pandemics were beginning to be seen as direct threats to global and national security twenty years earlier; but in the meantime, many countries' military budgets have increased, development aid has shrunk and most countries are unprepared for the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. In this paper, we will show how the conditions were built for countries to strengthen and develop their capacities in the face of a pandemic, in accordance with the recommendations of global actors, especially the WHO, but that the responsibility of the countries towards global health security was lacking, as well as the responsibility and readiness for the needs of health security in the national framework.*

Keywords: *Covid-19, public health emergency, health security, readiness of states*

Introduction

As of the beginning of the year 2020, the world has been experiencing the effects of the global health crisis, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which has, unlike any other known disease so far, caused immeasurable human suffering, destabilized global economy (affecting many national economies as well), and directly affected world population, resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of people being infected worldwide³.

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³ As of June 2021, over 178 million people across the world have been infected by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, causing 3,880,450 deaths (WHO, 2021). The pandemic of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has had far-reaching consequences for all parts of society, causing unprecedented disruption of health services as national authorities struggle to cope. Stringent public health and social measures as a response to the current pandemic have grossly affected lives and livelihoods, plunging the world economy into recession, to an estimated amount of US\$ 8.8 trillion (2020–2021), not to mention record unemployment (International Monetary Fund, 2020,2021).

This may not be the first time that the world has been facing a global pandemic, but significant discoveries in the field of science have made noticeable improvements when it comes to public health, average life expectancy, and lowering mortality rate among mothers and children caused by some common health issues. Nevertheless, a wide range of diseases which haven't been eradicated still exist, so it is of utmost importance for many of these existing and upcoming health issues to be dealt with and solved as quickly as possible.

In the last two decades, there have been dozens of outbreaks of deadly contagious diseases, some of them previously unknown to humanity, such as the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), or the middle-eastern respiratory syndrome, or, in case of the Zika virus, diseases that had rarely appeared in the form of an epidemic. Furthermore, some of the old diseases have been altered by mutation into new and more deadly forms, namely the H1N1 and H7N9 types of flu, but also, the old "killers", malaria and tuberculosis have shown to develop resistance to medications. The outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in Western Africa in 2014-2015 clearly illustrated what a devastating effect such an outbreak can have upon a weakly organized and unstable healthcare system. For that reason in particular, the state governments of most African countries came to the conclusion that a robust state healthcare system might be of utmost importance, not only for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis eradication, but also as a front line of defense against possible future epidemic outbreaks, as a form of timely preparation for upcoming regional or global health safety. After this wave of epidemics in the African countries, the question of arrival of the next surge stopped being 'if', and became a 'when'. In anticipation of a new global pandemic to arrive, the term global health security was coined. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), global public health security is defined as "the activities required, both proactive and reactive, to minimize the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger the collective health of populations living across geographical regions and international boundaries"⁴. It is the responsibility of governments globally to protect the health of their populations (Rushton & Youde, 2017). During the previous decade, individual countries and the global health community in general have started to accept the inevitable connection of global health and security and to open up some issues that needed to be resolved on a larger scale.

The global health crisis caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has highlighted the critical need to be prepared to respond adequately to emergencies that pose a high health risk, cover a large part of the population and pose a major challenge to the entire health infrastructure in a country. These epidemics are a sobering reminder of how each country remains vulnerable to new diseases and strengthens the essential role of global health security efforts in our daily lives, and it is the examples of the infectious Zika and Ebola diseases that have attracted international attention and raised awareness of global health security.⁵

Global crisis requires an adequate national level response, which, needless to say, has to be coordinated with the global recommendations to a certain degree, namely those coming from the World Health Organization. This organization is dedicated to promoting the importance of health worldwide and, as such, deals with actions needed in preparation for states of emergency

⁴ World Health Report (WHR), titled A Safer Future: Global Public Health Security in the 21st Century (WHO, 2007, available at: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-security/#tab=tab1>)

⁵ High-level panels have been held by the United Nations, Ambassadors for Health Security have been appointed, new initiatives have been created such as the US-led Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) and the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) is being reformed to assume a more operational role in outbreak response, and the G20 is again discussing health.

and crisis by identifying, reducing and managing risks, as well as monitoring, collecting and making all relevant data available for the public.

According to numerous recommendations coming from global health experts, the absolute necessity is to focus on more efficient financing of the healthcare systems, improving sanitary hygiene, disease prevention and easier access to health services for a larger public, in order to save more lives in the current global pandemic crisis and the possible future ones. Global health issues, as well as issues concerning our own individual, national and international security are firmly connected, so any debate on the subject of existent or possible future contagious diseases is futile until we have dealt with the necessity to first establish Universal Health Coverage (UHC)⁶. The fight against contagious diseases includes dedication to the basic principles of UHC, including financial risk protection, basic health services accessibility and the use of safe, efficient and available medicine. Furthermore, UHC implies that countries and civil society must organize systems that are strong enough to deal with not only the issues of health treatment, but also monitoring and managing the process.

Well-organized health systems, among other things, influence economic growth and ensure that any form of help or assistance intended for individual countries is well distributed. It is necessary to invest in new tools and technologies for preventing, detecting and adequately reacting to the new disease threat. So far, investing in research and development in the area of health was not a priority for most countries. As previously stated, in the case of the Ebola and Zika virus outbreaks, there was a shortage of medicine, diagnostics tools and vaccines in response to the epidemic, which required an urgent mobilization of all available research and development resources, according to the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health - PATH (Hoffman&Silverberg, 2018). These kinds of shortages make the prevention of new health crises impossible as the case of SARS-CoV-2 epidemic outbreak clearly shows.

The UN development program outlines considerable differences in capability of individual countries to deal with and recover from the recent pandemic induced crisis, which has multiple implications (The Human Development report, 2020). For that reason, it is crucial to highlight all the activities and regulations issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) since 2005, whose purpose was to encourage all the world countries to plan their response in accordance to the global strategic plan of action and preparation. It is also important to point out the other international factors that contributed to defining the capacities and the state of readiness of different national health infrastructures to face the pandemic like the one that hit the world at the beginning of 2020.

Global health and security

The connection between health and security has been observed from a rather unilateral stand-point during the second half of the twentieth century, meaning that any kind of military conflict must inevitably cause health problems in the affected population, either as an immediate consequence of combat itself, or indirectly, as a result

⁶ Universal Health Coverage (UHC) has been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a key element in reducing social inequality and a critical component of sustainable development and poverty reduction (WHO, 2014). Universal health coverage should be based on strong, people-centred primary health care. Good health care systems are rooted in the communities they serve. They focus not only on preventing and treating disease and illness, but also on helping to improve well-being and quality of life.

of the devastation of the health care infrastructure, the spread of diseases caused by water shortages, inadequate sanitary conditions, increase in the number of immigrants and other things that create an additional burden for the frail health care system. Immediately after World War II, the connection between health and security started losing its importance for two reasons – firstly, health was considered as less of an issue of security and rather as a human right, and secondly, the rising awareness that most of the infectious diseases were curable by antibiotics had a considerable impact on it. As a matter of fact, most of the Western countries led by the USA announced victory against infectious diseases in the 60s, when it became obvious that the smallpox, as the most widely spread infectious disease, was eradicated. Sadly, this could not be said for the rest of the world, namely in those countries where the majority of the people lived on the verge of poverty. As for the Western World countries, global health became less of a security issue and more of a development problem.

By the end of the Cold War, the security paradigm started shifting significantly, globalization influenced yet another wave of migrations of both people and goods, and consequently, two major events from 1990 and 2000 once again highlighted the unavoidable connection between the issues of security and health. In the year 1990, the CIA gave its estimation concerning the possibility of a global infection threat for the USA, and a year after that, in 2000, the United Nations Security Council discussed the impact of the HIV and AIDS outbreak in Africa and thereupon issued Resolution 1308⁷, which clearly states that, if not controlled, these pandemics could form a serious threat to global safety and stability, particularly for the UN mission in Africa. As of that moment, both HIV and AIDS started being regarded not only as a human catastrophe, but also as a threat to global security and stability. From that moment on, the issue of health became an integral part of most of the Western countries' foreign and security policy agendas and programs. The new reality, when it comes to security issues, indicates an increasing codependency between military and civilian factors in countering peacetime disasters that can manifest themselves through epidemics and pandemics of communicable diseases, when the capacity of the existing health infrastructure is complemented by those intended for military use (Jeftić & Mandić, 2020).

What exactly has contributed to the fact that health has increasingly been considered as an issue of security? Firstly, the mere concept of security has undergone a transformation so that it refers to non-military security threats more often, which promoted public health as an issue of greater interest for global security. Secondly, of

⁷ Security Council United Nations, Resolution 1308/2000, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4172nd meeting, on 17 July 2000, As written in the summary: "Expresses concern at the potential damaging impact of HIV/AIDS on the health of international peacekeeping personnel, including support personnel; encourages all interested Member States which have not already done so to consider developing, in cooperation with the international community and UNAIDS, where appropriate, effective long-term strategies for HIV/AIDS education, prevention, voluntary and confidential testing and counselling, and treatment of their personnel, as an important part of their preparation for their participation in peacekeeping operations;..... available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/418823>

no lesser importance is the human intervention – that is to say, the power of the action of an individual. The most famous recent examples are those of the former WHO Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland, and the USA Ambassador in the UN, Richard Holbrooke, both, as might be assumed, inspired by somewhat different motives.

Brundtland has stressed the fact that, due to the changed nature of global health in the modern, globalized world, the issue of global health cannot be considered separately from the wider political and social issues and tendencies, and that investing in global health is investing in national security (Brundtland, 1999). It was during her mandate that the term Global Health Security was coined. Following his visit to Africa in 1999, Richard Holbrooke dedicated himself to the problem of HIV and AIDS, and he is responsible for this being included in the UN Security Council Agenda.

Apart from these contributions, it can be said that three major issues led to the final integration of health as part of the security agenda: the spread of infectious diseases (SARS, H1N1, Ebola, West Nile virus, monkeypox, tuberculosis) across the Western World, thus forming an exogenous threat; the HIV and AIDS pandemic (a serious threat for the military (the infection rate among soldiers is five times higher than that of the general population), humanitarians and peace mission staff, economic problem), bioterrorism (after 9/11 and the surge of antrax, the USA have issued a warning against the rising threat of bioterrorism or chemical terrorism – the use of antrax, botulinum toxin, smallpox, etc., easy to make in home laboratories) (McInnes, 2008).

Some of the afore-stated can be seen as a threat to human security and others can be considered as a danger to national security. When considering whose health and security is endangered, it seems that priority is still given to the issues of national, rather than human security. This being stated, it is no surprise that various policies and programs are dominated by the interests of the national security of the West, and the very term global health security refers rather to the protection of the Western countries against health hazards than to the global promotion of health and well-being. It is clear that health affects the economic growth and development potential of all nations, and the interaction between health and security affects the overall stability and security of states/nations. However, in addition to that, the military budgets of many countries in the world are increasing, allocations for development aid are decreasing, and then, as a result, we have the fact that most countries are unprepared for the coronavirus pandemic. Preparing to protect national security, they have reached a point where human security remains unprotected (Stanarević, 2020).

No matter how we comprehend the issue of global health security, it is various global strategies, programs and policies supported by states and their health care capacities and infrastructure that can significantly raise awareness of the common interests within different communities and provide opportunities for health issues to receive more attention and funds if they are part of foreign and security policy.

Strategies, activities and programs of support for countries during the state of pandemic

As already stated, some UN programs and programs by other international organizations outlined the differences among the countries concerning their capacity to deal with and recover from the pandemic induced crisis. They also indicate that there is a need to organize a support system in order to help the countries with weaker health care systems with technical and operational implementation. This support can be organized through globally, regionally and nationally oriented activities and assigned according to the available needs and resources. In order to facilitate the process of global planning, preliminary categorization of states had been conducted, based on the following indicators:

1. Operational readiness capacity based on the tools provided by State Parties Annual Reporting (SPAR), which is basically a self-assessment document required by IHR (International Health Regulations, 2005),

2. Current position concerning the continuous response scenario: readiness, high risk of imported cases, the number of imported cases, localized transmission, and transmission in the community.

The categorization of operational preparedness is additionally specified according to data accumulated from voluntary external evaluations, readiness plans in case of flu epidemics, evaluation of preparedness of individual countries in case of emergencies, foreign country missions, as well as the most up-to-date situation analysis taken for each country. According to a preliminary categorization list of countries given as a part of the situation report by the World Health Organization on 9 June, 2020, the Republic of Serbia was classified as category 3 out of 5 existing categories, according to the following indicators/levels of preparedness: level 1 \leq 20%, level 2 \leq 40%, level 3 \leq 60%, level 4 \leq 80%, level 5 $>$ 80%; According to the same list, some of the countries in the region would be represented as follows: Macedonia is level 3; Montenegro is level 3; Bosnia and Herzegovina is level 2; Croatia is level 4; Albania is level 3.⁸

In 2015, which the UN declared as the evaluation year, the Secretariat of the World Health Organization (WHO), together with the signatory states, initiated the development of a monitoring and evaluation approach (M&A), focusing on basic national capacities, which are integrated in their core and are part of the Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of the International Health Regulations (IHR - Monitoring and Evaluation Framework) and should satisfactorily ensure mutual accountability between signatory states, while simultaneously building trust and recognizing the public health benefits that result from the adoption of a common set of rules inspired

⁸ Categories or levels will be updated periodically through capacity and risk assessments based on continuous evaluation of the crisis caused by COVID 19. The operational readiness index (levels 1-5) is adjusted to the capacity levels of WHO - SPAR. See: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/updated-country-preparedness-and-response-status-for-covid-19-as-of-9-june-2020>

by dialogue and transparency. The IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework consists of 4 components: one mandatory (annual self-assessment report of the signatory state) and three voluntary: joint external assessment (JEE), post-action reviews/revisions and simulation exercises. The annual self-assessment report and the joint external assessment are based on quantitative measures and can be considered as a condition for functional basic capacities. After action reviews and simulation exercises are based on qualitative measures and are focused on the assessment of the functional status of basic capacities. This monitoring and evaluation framework encourages IHR transparency and mutual accountability of the states towards global health security.

Also important for the specific SARS-CoV-2 pandemic is the Strategic Plan for Preparedness and Response (adopted in early February 2020 by the World Health Organization)⁹, which describes the public health measures that the international community is ready to provide as support for all countries in order to prepare an adequate and timely response to 2019-nCoV. This document relies upon all the knowledge of the virus documented up to that moment and transforms that knowledge into strategic action, which can further guide the efforts of all international agents included in creating their own national and regional operational plans adjusted to suit the context of each given country. This gives a possibility to monitor the measures, the way and the extent to which the World Health Organization provided assistance and support, or more precisely, to have a clear insight into how each given country has defined its strategic plans in accordance with this document and the recommendations it provides.

Thus, all the new documentation collected and prepared since the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Preparedness and Response can be registered and analyzed, which is certainly a demanding task, and as a result, provides an opportunity to have a deeper insight into the readiness and preparedness of each individual country.

There are other ways to provide a fairly realistic picture of the state of the national health care system based on the collected data in well-designed and systematized databases, and among them is certainly the Global Health Security Index (GHS)¹⁰. There is no doubt that the world will be facing epidemics and pandemics more often, but the fact is that most countries of the world are not fully prepared to respond adequately. In 2019, the World Health Organization ranked some infectious diseases (HIV, influenza and other pathogens) and antimicrobial resistance among the ten global health threats. It is therefore essential for those who lead the countries to have a better understanding as to

⁹ 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV): Strategic preparedness and response plan

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-for-the-new-coronavirus>

¹⁰ The GHS index is a project of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (JHU) and was developed with The Economist Intelligence Unit - EIU - as a research unit of The Economist, publisher and famous magazine of The Economist) with the idea to encourage measurable changes in national health security and improve the international capacity to address one of the greatest global risks: the outbreak of infectious diseases that can lead to global epidemics and pandemics. To see more: <https://www.ghsindex.org/about/>

how to improve global and national capabilities for preventing, detecting and responding to the threats of infectious diseases. It is the very purpose of the GHS index to shed some light onto the shortcomings in readiness and capacity, in order to express political will and increase funding, thus filling the gaps both nationally and internationally. The GHS index relies entirely on open source information, therefore, data published by the state itself, or published by an international entity (for example - WHO) or regularly published / updated sources. The index was created so that everyone could access this existing data about capacities and plans of their country (which, unfortunately, is not always easily accessible or systematized for better visibility in national frameworks). Indicators and questions that make up the framework of the GHS index give priority to the analysis of health capacities in the context of the wider national health systems and other national risk factors.¹¹

A preliminary review of this database, especially the part related to Serbia, reveals the whole series of interesting indicators that, in some segments, position the state of Serbia closer to the top, in some other segments, it occupies a central position, but there are also questions or categories that place it in the extremely unfavorable position among countries with weak capacities and capabilities.

Questions that are set within 6 categories give priority not only to the capacities of states, but also to the existence of functional, tested and proven ability to stop outbreaks at their source. It is interesting to note that when asked whether the state meets one of the following criteria: Program training on applied epidemiology (such as FETP) is available in the country – resources are provided by the government to send citizens to another state to participate in training programs about applied epidemiology such as FETP – in actuality, there is no evidence that there are available applied training programs for epidemiology, i.e. epidemiologists (such as field training programs for Epidemiology - FETP), nor evidence that Serbia provides resources for sending citizens abroad to participate in such programs.¹²

¹¹ In addition to NTI, JHU and EIU, experts from 13 countries participated in the creation of the GHA index, creating detailed and comprehensive framework of 140 questions, organized into 6 categories, 34 indicators and 85 sub-indicators for assessment of the capacity of each individual state (195 in total) to prevent and mitigate epidemics and pandemics. The categories in which the issues are organized are: prevention (prevention of the appearance or release of pathogens); detection and reporting (early detection and reporting of epidemics of potentially international importance); quicker response (rapid response and mitigation of the spread of the epidemic); health care system (sufficient and solid health care system for treatment of the sick and protection of health workers); adherence to international norms (commitment to improving national capacity, funding plans to address deficiencies and adhering to global standards); risk environment (general risky environment and vulnerability to biological threats).

¹² Based on a review of various training programs provided or organized by the Institute of Public Health “Dr Milan Jovanović Batut”, the Institute of Public Health of Vojvodina, the Institute of Virology, Vaccines and Serum Torlak and the Ministry of Health, there is no evidence that a training program on applied epidemiology is available in Serbia or provided by Government resources to send citizens abroad to participate in such programs. Serbia is not even on the list of countries that participate in training programs provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and TEPHINET.

Furthermore, there is no publicly available evidence that there is at least 1 trained field epidemiologist per 200,000 people in Serbia, nor is there a publicly available source that would indicate the number of trained field epidemiologists in the country.

There has been no precise or valid answer to any of the questions asked, concerning each of the given indicators, with an explanation that “there is no evidence available” to justify that Serbia has conducted any assessment, research, adopted a plan and the like. In some of the above results, it is clearly stated that Serbia is obliged to submit reports as one of the signatory states to international regulations in this area (the same applies to other signatory states). As an illustration, in the indicator 5 within the prevention category, an example of an assessment or answer to the question could be: Is there publicly available evidence that Serbia has made an assessment to determine whether investigations into particularly dangerous pathogens, toxins, pathogens with pandemic potential and/or other multi-purpose researches had been carried out? As a matter of fact, there is no such evidence available in the GHS index database. As a signatory to the UN Convention on Biological Weapons, Serbia is obliged to submit a Report on Confidence-Building Measures. It would be interesting to determine the situation with other countries in the region, but also beyond, as well as the reasons or obstacles that prevented this from being carried out.

As stated, in the 2020 Sustainable Development Report, in March 2020, the Deep Knowledge Group (a consortium of profit and non-profit organizations) released the Covid-19 Safety, Risk, and Treatment Efficiency framework, and indices. The Indices cover 150 countries and they use 72 metrics grouped into three indices (Safety, Risk, and Treatment Efficiency) and twelve underlying quadrants. The data is collected from publicly available sources including the World Health Organization, Johns Hopkins University, Worldometers, and the CDC. Many elements of the methodology and results are proprietary and have not been released publicly. This makes it impossible to fully assess this new index and its sub-components. The top 40 ranks for the “Safety” Index are accessible online. The “Safety” Index includes four quadrants: Quarantine efficiency, Government management efficiency, Monitoring and detection, and Emergency treatment readiness. More details are available in the supplementary material section. Overall, Israel, Germany and South Korea topped the 2020 Covid-19 Safety Index. The Covid-19 Safety Index is dynamic; scores and ranks have already evolved since it was launched and will continue to evolve over time as the health crises unfold (Lafortune SDR, 2020). It is assumed that the best result according to the GHS Index would also be the best in relation to the Covid-19 Safety Index. However, as Guillaume Lafortune from the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) noted, matches or correlations are not present in all countries, which can, moreover, be ranked differently in the two index bases (Sustainable Development Report, 2020).

By reviewing the budgets for 2017 and 2018, there is no evidence that the Government provides funds for sending citizens to training programs to other countries on applied epidemiology. See more: <https://www.ghsindex.org/about/>

A possible explanation may be that the readiness and capacities of certain health security systems are overestimated in some countries, and underestimated in others. Considering the level of uncertainty, it is too early to draw any final conclusions. There are uncertainties related to the accuracy of Covid-19 data including those on incidence and death rate. Besides the degree of uncertainty, the technical choices made in constructing these indices and ranks (including weights given to certain variables or normalization and aggregation techniques) might also explain some of the discrepancies. As author Guillaume Lafortune noted, there are two assumptions for these findings:

1. Has the GHS framework put too little emphasis on testing and the adaptability of health systems (including reserve capacity)?

2. The GHS cannot anticipate political decisions and difficult arbitration (certain countries should have been able to respond in a better way to the Covid-19 health crisis than they did, as they were, in theory, better prepared). Ultimately, the response and management of an epidemic does not depend on health care resources and preparedness only, but also to a large extent, on the ability of political leaders to mobilize actors and take the correct decisive actions at the right time (Lafortune, 2020).

If we tried to present everything we have noticed so far as a form of a challenge in developing a project idea, the key thing would precisely be to pinpoint all the problematic areas of the Republic of Serbia (or any other country in the region or beyond), based on indicators within the GHS index base data, to find new data in relation to the time difference from the last report, i.e. updated data; to conduct an evaluation of specific documents (programs and strategies) so as to establish the weak points in relation to the current crisis, evaluate how successful the measures adopted and implemented have been, because without measuring the effects, community intervention makes no sense. A comparative and contextual analysis (Serbia in relation to the countries of the region and examples of good practice from around the world) would give new qualitative and quantitative insights into the real state of affairs, documenting problems and recommendations as means of resolving them. An additional challenge would be to determine which data our state does not possess (because no competent institution collects them) in relation to the unified methodology and system of supervision of international health institutions (WHO, European Agency for Medicines, European Center for Disease Control and Prevention).

In order to illustrate the complexity of the whole program, it is enough to enlist all the regulations and policy documents (programs, strategies) that need to be analyzed and evaluated, as well as to analyze the work of the health institutions responsible for responding to the SARS-CoV-2 virus epidemic (structural, functional and human resources):

- Law on Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 15/2016 and 68/2020) and accompanying bylaws (Regulation book on reporting infectious diseases...);
- Law on Public Health (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 15/2016)

- Law on Health Protection of the Population (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 25/2019);
- Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management (“Official Gazette of RS” No. 87/2018);
- Protection and Rescue Program – Response of the Health Sector (RS Ministry of Health, 2018);
- Public Health Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2018-2026 (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 61/2018);
- Based on the IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (mandatory Self-Assessment Report, voluntary reports - if any);
- Professional-methodological experiences and algorithms adopted during the epidemic;
- Clinical treatment protocols Covid-19;
- Analysis of the work of four Infectious Diseases Clinics (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Niš) and the temporary, as well as the newly built Covid hospitals;
- Analysis of the work of the epidemiological services in 23 public health institutes and 3 public health institutes, headed by the umbrella Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr Milan Jovanović Batut”.

Including as follows:

- Analysis of the decisions of the Government of RS declaring a state of emergency and the follow-up decision on the confirmation of this decision (including the presentation of the Prime Minister) passed by the National Assembly of RS (April 28, 2020), Law on confirmation of decrees passed by the Government during a state of emergency...;
- Analysis of systemic measures to be taken on the basis of WHO recommendations and the epidemiological situation in the world and the countries in the region, and proposed/prescribed by the RS Ministry of Health (starting from February 26, 2020);
- Daily reports/information on the corona-virus published on the website of the Government of the RS (Ministry of Health - <https://www.zdravlje.gov.rs/sekcija/345852/covid-19.php>, Institute of Public Health of Serbia “Dr Milan Jovanović Batut” - <http://www.batut.org.rs/>);
- Analysis of the data collection methodology, monitoring systems and their processing;
- Analyzing the database related to infectious diseases;
- Reports/information of the WHO Regional Office for Europe (<https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19>).

When it comes to the local level and policy analysis, the focus can be on the following documents and assessments of readiness and capacity:

- Public health plans (whether they exist and what level of implementation is present during the pandemic);
- Public health programs (whether they exist and what level of implementation is present during the pandemic);
- Protection of patients' rights (how it is performed and where the problems are)
- Local health councils (their system of work, if they are founded, their role during a pandemic);
- (Non)synchronization of regulations (horizontal and vertical (non) synchronization – mutual synchronization of regulations at the highest level, as reflected in the local level and synchronization of local regulations with regulations at the national level)
- Allocation from the public health budget (assessment of adequacy and adequate distribution according to the actual needs);
- Health capacities utilization (assessment of the readiness and capacity of the health resources at the local level during the pandemic).

In the meantime, many types of research have already been completed or are currently being conducted worldwide, at different levels and by different project and research teams. One type of effort is to monitor all available research results, analyze, interpret and draw useful conclusions, and another is to conduct independent monitoring, but that is the only way to build a clear picture of how a certain country embraced the pandemic, how successful and timely its response to it was and how their system handled, or is still handling, the numerous consequences of the crisis that have arisen.

Conclusion

The health of the general (world) population, the health of people, and the health of nations are precious goods that are at the basis of multiple-level programs and policies oriented towards the global community, society and the state, and their primary focus is the prevention and recognition of vulnerabilities of all and the growing global interdependence in regards to numerous regional and local specifics. Expanding the scope of public health, so that the principles of national and human security are accepted and promoted, includes the creation of sustainable practices intended to raise the level of human security and health. However, the overall answer (the issue of security included therein) and the readiness of the states for Covid-19 drastically differs among countries and regions and has been presented with varying degrees of success.

The lack of preparedness was primarily reflected in the ad hoc responses of many countries worldwide, with the increase in the number of deaths and health services struggling with immeasurable pressure due to insufficient preparation, undeveloped capacities or inadequate (political) decisions. Even more striking is the individual response to what is, essentially, a homogeneous threat. We know WHO has stated unequivocally that “functional health systems are the foundation of health security”, its role and significance have long been recognized, however, its resources and the capacities it has offered to states and governments are not completely accepted and used. Also, the absence of a coordinated global strategy is noticeable in combating a transnational threat such as a pandemic. Precisely due to all of the above, we must seriously

ask ourselves whether the World Health Organization, individual state governments or other factors internationally and nationally, individually speaking, are the factors that “failed” when it comes to a response to a pandemic, or is a responsibility to be shared by everyone.

If nothing else, Covid-19 has taught us that global crises require trust, cooperation, and strong institutions at both the international and national levels; it is important to recognize, and follow their policies, guidelines and recommendations, and accept support that can improve health, and all other systems whose fragility becomes painstakingly obvious in conditions of serious crises such as pandemics of infectious diseases.

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ANALYSIS AND VIEWS ON THE REPORT OF THE REFLECTION GROUP ON NATO 2030: UNITED FOR A NEW ERA

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Abstract: *During London Summit held in 2019, allied leaders had a substantive discussion, among other political and security issues, to initiate a “reflection process in order to further strengthen the political dimension of NATO. In that regard Secretary General Stoltenberg in 2019 stressed that “as the world changes, NATO will continue to change”. Going back in the past, we can notice that since its foundation in 1949, NATO has faced numerous challenges related to its own survival. All those adaptations have helped NATO to build appropriate tools and mechanisms and gain political and military strength. Today, NATO is strong, but it has to continue to adapt and respond to a changing security environment. Looking up to 2030, the need for collective defence of the Alliance to protect Europe and North America against threats to their physical security and democratic way of life is as strong as ever. Today, and in the future NATO has to strengthen its political and military adaptation by developing a capability for dealing with emerging challenging threats. To continue adapting the Alliance to this unpredictability, Allied leaders launched the NATO 2030 initiative. Today, the world does not just face one clear challenge, but multiple, complex challenges, from pandemics to infodemics, from climate change to disruptive technologies. So far, well-known threats like terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations will persist, even as new risks loom from pandemics and climate change, to the emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) that present both dangers and opportunities for the Alliance. Fulfilling this role will require even greater cohesion and ability to act collectively against shared threats. This is a way for NATO to be in a stronger position than the others, both in the fight to protect the freedom and security of its members and in acting as an essential pillar of an open and stable international order. The initiation of the reflection process is a serious step towards the preparation of a new Alliance’s Strategic Concept that will replace the existing one from 2010 and pave the way for the development of the Alliance until 2030 and beyond.*

Keywords: *Reflection process, adaptation, threats, NATO 2030, Defence.*

Introduction

As in its past, since its foundation in 1949, the Alliance has been continuously adapting to the strategic changes in the security environment and the emerging security challenges, threats and risks in the Euro-Atlantic area. The constant adjustment has helped NATO to respond to tectonic changes in the security environment and to survive on the political scene as one of the most important political and military alliances and as a factor influencing planetary security. The Alliance is an organization in constant change. The past and present adjustments are not

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a guarantee for future success. Therefore, NATO needs to have its adaptation to changes in the strategic environment as the essence of its functional survival and existence in order to survive and remain an effective and relevant collective defence system according to the needs of member states and its citizens. It seems that all strategic adjustments have been preceded by informal groups which shaped the ways of Alliance adaptations. The changes were officially formalized through summit declarations and supporting documents and were used to introduce the adoption of Strategic Concepts.

Going back in the past, we can notice that the first adaptation of the Alliance took place in 1956 when NATO created the `Wise Men Group` to “advise on ways and means to improve and extend NATO cooperation in non-military fields and to develop greater unity within the Atlantic Community” (The Wise Men Group, 1956).

The second more serious step of the Alliance adaptation took place in 1967 with the so-called Harmel Report which argued that NATO’s first function was “to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries” (The Harmel Report, 1967).

The Harmel Report resulted in the adoption of the Alliance's fourth Strategic Concept in January 1968 and the Flexible Response Doctrine. The benefits of the Harmel Report paved the way for NATO to pursue a political role externally, in “pursuing the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved” (The Harmel Report, 1967)’. It seems that the Alliance policy proved to be crucial to win the Cold War. All subsequent adjustments and transformations of NATO have their basis on the Harmel Report findings and recommendations.

In the years of the Cold War, the main challenge for the Alliance was its survival not only as an organization that reflects military power, but also as a credible player on the political scene, and as a relevant political factor in the new environment. It meant its transformation from a "military" to a "military-political alliance". With the end of the Cold War, i.e. in 1991, NATO adopted the first publically released Strategic Concept that was diametrically opposed to the previous classified strategic concepts.

The former communist states, including the successor to the Soviet Union - Russia, were no longer perceived as enemies but as partners. In this way, the Alliance made its greatest adaptation in its existence and opened itself to yesterday's ideological enemies. NATO gradually began to build partnerships with them through institutionally established mechanisms for partnership cooperation. In the years that followed, NATO continued to hold out the prospect of inclusion, via the Open Door Policy, for states that aspire to this status, share its values, and meet the admission criteria (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:8). This "Open Door" policy for the former communist states contributed to the continued expansion of the Alliance with new members that met the NATO criteria and agreed to share the values established by the 1949 Washington Treaty. The enlargement of the Alliance took place gradually in several cycles. The first was carried out in 1999 when it expanded with Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. In this period, terrorism was recognized as a growing threat to the security not only of the Alliance members, but also of the countries outside the Euro-Atlantic area. As one of the responses to preventing the spread of the threat of terrorism, but also for strengthening the counter-terrorism coalition in 2004, NATO made its largest adjustment by admitting seven new members from Central and Eastern Europe (Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania, and the Slovak Republic). In 2008, Croatia and Albania joined the Alliance, and ten years later Montenegro joined the Alliance. The last 30th member became North Macedonia in 2020 (NATO Enlargement, 2020).

The attacks on the World Trade Center in the USA in 2001 and the capability of the terrorist groups to endanger the security of the goods and the citizens of the Alliance member countries were the initiator of the next adaptation of the Alliance. The 9/11 events contributed to the activation of the 1949 Washington Treaty Article 5 for the first time at an Ally request. It announced a new NATO adjustment policy in line with the security environment changes and the new threats. In the years that followed, “NATO supported a military and political agenda aimed at projecting both defensive capabilities and political stability beyond the traditional focus of the Euro-Atlantic area, based on an assessment of the primary and prevailing threats to the Alliance” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 9). In order to support the Alliance's policy of adapting to the recent changes in the security environment, the then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen set up an Expert Group chaired by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, which produced the “NATO 2020 Report: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement” (NATO, 2010). This Report’s recommendations were the basis for drafting the third unclassified and publically released 2010 Strategic Concept of the Alliance.

Four years later, as a result of Russia's aggressive policies following the illegitimate annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Alliance faced the challenge of considering a new set of changes with respect to its policy and behavior. The Alliance adaptation measures began to be formalized at the 2014 Wales Summit, and included improvement of the defence and deterrence posture and fostering an equitable sharing of the burden, benefits and responsibilities of Alliance membership. The 2016 Warsaw Summit established the enhanced Forward Presence mechanism, while the 2018 Brussels Summit established the last two mechanisms, the Readiness Action Plan and the NATO Readiness Initiative. Thanks to that adjustment, NATO now has more mechanisms not only to deter a military threat from Russia, but also to fight terrorism and hybrid and cyber threats.

NATO Political Role in the New Era

The past adaptation is no guarantee for future success; to survive, and remain effective and relevant to the needs of its members, NATO must again adapt to changing strategic circumstances (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 9). Following the 2019 London Summit decisions, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg appointed an independent „Reflection Group“ composed by nine eminent experts and co-chaired by Thomas de Maizière and A. Wess Mitchell. The Reflection Group was tasked to analyze and summarize the changes in the security environment and assess the directions for strengthening NATO’s political role in the forthcoming period. The Report by the Reflection Group “NATO 2030: United for a New Era. Analysis and Recommendation of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General” was officially presented by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg on 25th November 2020. There are 138 recommendations and an analysis in the “Report by the Reflection Group on NATO 2030” - RRG NATO 2030. If all or part of them are adopted and implemented, then they will pave the way for the political development of the Alliance until 2030 and beyond. According to Kuzmanovski² (2021), “If NATO accepts and implements all or

² Kuzmanovski Sasho. (2021). Acting Deputy Head of Policy And Planning Department, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia, 15 February 2021. - “An Interview on NATO 2030: United for a New Era, Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO

more of the 2030 recommendations proposed in this NATO 2030: United for a New Era, Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General, the Alliance will become more flexible, civilized, internationally related, green energy and climate protection oriented”(Kuzmanovski, 2021). Such NATO would be a source of stability for an unstable world (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:10). It is expected that these recommendations will be implemented in the new Strategic Concept that may be promoted by NATO at the next Alliance Summit in 2021. According to the findings and analysis presented in the RRG NATO 2030 today, NATO is facing numerous security threats - two systemic rivals (Russia and China) and their economic and military growth, “the enduring threat of terrorism, instability along NATO’s southern periphery, a dramatically changing technological landscape, numerous, vexing non-state threats, and man-made as well as natural risks” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:9). This sequence complements the readiness of enemies who strive in every possible way to take advantage of the diversity of the Allies and undermine the collective security and cohesion of the Alliance. If NATO members do not show solidarity and cohesion in the process of rapid decision-making, the danger persists that they will face these challenges alone. And neither Europe nor North America, for all their strength, are powerful enough to manage these threats alone, while also dealing with the growing array of non-traditional threats and risks that affect our societies (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:9).

By the end of the decade, no matter the strategic environment, NATO should:

- Remain the strategic center of gravity for collective defence of all its members;
- Strengthen its proactive role among all Allies, by consensus, and proactively seek to forge consensus and build common strategies for dealing with common threats, a world in which a plurality of worldviews and fundamental differences of opinion are no obstacle to dialogue and cooperation;
- Enjoy deeper strategic and mutually reinforcing connections with partners that share these principles of the Helsinki Final Act and possess a stronger relationship and intensify consultation on issues of common concern with the European (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:11).

To achieve this vision, the Alliance needs to step up its overall efforts and allow Allies the freedom to shape their own destinies; share the burden that comes with collective security equally, change the conventional approach to collective defence decision-making and put collective defence, from conventional to nuclear and hybrid, at the forefront of consultation and decision-making on security in the Euro-Atlantic area. And most importantly, enable swift decision-making and policy implementation—preserving the principle of consensus, but ensuring the Alliance is equipped to deal with a changing strategic environment (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:11).

Secretary General, 25 November 2020”.

Main Findings and Recommendations On How NATO Should Adapt

NATO is undertaking very much to face the growing threats in an unpredictable environment, but the world today is changing much faster than in the past. That is why if NATO wants to survive, it needs to adapt much faster to the changes in the security environment (Stoltenberg, 2021).

According to Stoltenberg (2021a), the Reflection process - NATO 2030 has three priorities:

- **Keep the Alliance militarily strong** – to do this, NATO has to invest more in capability development, in robust infrastructure, in new technologies, to strengthen cooperation with partners like the European Union and build in resilience as a collective effort. The EU efforts on investment in defence will help develop new capabilities, also available for NATO Allies and will address the fragmentation of the European defence industry. NATO is the bedrock of the EU security. While 50 percent of NATO's GDP comes from non-US Allies, 70 percent of NATO's defence expenditure comes from the United States, 20 percent from EU NATO Allies and then the rest 10% from NATO European allies and Canada.
- **Make the Alliance politically stronger** - NATO is the only place where Europe and North America come together every single day. It is a unique political platform where Allies discuss issues that affect the Alliance's security, and it is the best venue to address all differences between Allies. Discussion is the best way to figure out differences between all 30 Allies and to coordinate the use of our military, economic and political tools more effectively.
- **Ensure the Alliance takes a more global approach** - NATO should remain a regional organization for Europe and North America. Neither America nor Europe can deal with such challenges on their own because the challenges NATO faces are global. The best way to deal with the global challenges is North America and Europe to be together. Together in NATO, they represent half of the world's economic might, and half of the world's military might. To keep this NATO must adopt a more global approach, as well as to build a community of democracies together with the existing partners, like Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and also to establish new partnership with countries which share the same democratic values like India and Brazil.

In order to achieve this, in due course, NATO needs to make a number of conceptual, political, structural, organizational, military and other changes. These changes imply full or partial implementation of the 14 main findings and recommendations, i.e. 138 detailed recommendations from RRG NATO 2030. The adjustment itself should be aimed at dealing with growing threats, but also ensuring systemic rivalry, i.e. parrying Russia's aggressive policy, which is perceived as a direct military threat to the Alliance's security. Also, special attention needs to be focused on the economic challenge

and growth of China's political influence in Europe because China is the second largest economy in the world and has the second largest defence budget. Additionally, the Alliance should be more focused on the increasingly important role played by the Emerging and Disruptive Technologies. However, to meet all the new challenges, “NATO will also need to embrace the change, by combining a more holistic understanding of security with a more balanced transatlantic core and a truly global mindset” (Billon-Galand, 2021).

Update 2010 Strategic Concept

Having in mind that NATO's external environment has undergone dramatic changes since 2010, it is necessary for the Alliance to update the existing or to develop a new Strategic Concept as soon as possible. The current postulates of the 2010 Strategic Concept envisage building a partnership with Russia, terrorism is treated only in a limited way and it does not foresee at all how to deal with the growing power and influence of China worldwide. The update should address the new specifics of the geostrategic context and the re-emergence of geopolitical competition (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 17) that is closely linked to Russian military threats and with China's economic expansion and growing political influence, then the challenges posed by the pandemics, climate change, energy security and migration flow. All these challenges should be embedded in the Strategic Concept. Updating the 2010 Strategic Concept will show NATO's ability and need to be ready and credible in the eyes of citizens in an era of geopolitical competition on values (Trolle Smed, 2021).

It should also be kept in mind that hybrid threats, cyber defence, EDTs and space capabilities will continue to influence and shape the nature of conflicts. If these changes are not timely incorporated in the Strategic Concept and within its policies and mechanisms of action, then they can seriously weaken and divide the Alliance within by undermining social cohesion and way of life. Thus, NATO “has had to spend an increasing amount of time developing political and non-political tools to counter hybrid activities such as new approaches to attribution, deterrence in the hybrid domain, and tackling disinformation” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:18). All these changes should also reflect on the redefinition and eventual expansion of the current Alliance's core tasks. Any delay in Strategic Concept updating “could impede the process of anticipating main threats, and increase risks of disagreement or improvisation in times of crisis” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:23). The development of the new Concept can be understood as an opportunity to establish clear priorities, strengthen cohesion and take the Alliance into a new strategic reality and distinguish the various threads of adaptation into a single strategic reality.

The establishment of a new "Network Assessment Office" is of great benefit in the continuous monitoring of changes in the security environment and threat assessment. This body should be composed of civilian and military personnel, directly subordinate

to the Secretary General, with the task of classifying and ranking all threats based on a systemic methodology. This approach to assessing security treats will cover the full range of military and non-military mechanisms that NATO has developed over the years. In support of such capabilities, NATO needs to establish a practice of periodic reporting to the North Atlantic Council (NAC) through the presentation of network assessment and threat-based scenarios using new visualization techniques and technologies (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:24).

The prevailing impression is that the need for a new strategic concept is starting to become a realistic reflection. NATO is not a revolutionary, but an evolutionary organization that is slowly but surely and constantly being upgraded in accordance with the new modernity. With this approach, NATO has existed for more than 70 years. According to Kuzmanovski (2021), it is still too early to claim with certainty that the new strategic concept will become present and will fully absorb the recommendations and other conclusions and contents of RRG NATO 2030.

Defence and Deterrence of the Threats from Russia

NATO's efforts to build friendly and partnership relations with Russia based on dialogue and practical cooperation in all areas of mutual interest has proved unsuccessful. The reasons for that are numerous and are primarily related to Russia's aggressive policy against Georgia and especially to the annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia has also violated a number of international conventions, norms and treaties, including the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty), by developing military and non-military capabilities and demonstrating military power that poses a direct military threat to the security of the Alliance and its members. NATO has therefore continued a dual approach to its relations with Russia based on deterrence (nuclear and conventional) and readiness to negotiate. At the same time, NATO should remain open to discussing peaceful co-existence and to reacting positively to constructive changes in Russia's posture and attitude (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:12). It means pursuing a policy of diligence and solidarity in a situation where NATO must develop and maintain capabilities to respond to any kind of threat from Russia, including hybrid and cyber threats (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:25). The Alliance must be prepared to retaliate against any threat or hostile action by Russia in a politically unified, determined and coherent manner in accordance with the international regulations and norms. NATO has to also continue to maintain adequate conventional and nuclear capabilities and show agility and flexibility to counter aggression throughout the Alliance. Such strategic needs have to be supported by all European and non-European Allies through their commitment to sustainable funding and contribution with military capabilities.

In any case, it should not be forgotten that the citizens of Russia do not and should not be blamed for the way the leadership has ruled the country for many years.

The Alliance needs to cultivate a kind humanitarian attitude towards the Russian people, but also to maintain a constructive dialogue with Moscow and to note, welcome and support any positive democratic change. This is compounded by the government's worrying attitude towards the opposition in Russia and "the way how tea is served in that country." A confirmation that NATO must still develop an appropriate approach to Russian civil society comes from the recent demonstrations initiated by the detention of opposition leader Navalny.

According to Kuzmanovski (2021), what is interesting in RRG NATO 2030 is that although Russia together with terrorism have been considered as major threats to the security of the Alliance for the next 10 years, it seems that the document (probably due to sensitivity) does not devote adequate space to the contents, steps, measures and procedures to be taken, as well as the mechanisms to be established to prevent these threats. However, it is increasingly likely that until the adoption of the new strategic concept nothing will be left to chance and what may become available to the general public will be further elaborated and discussed.

China As a Growing Challenge

China's growing influence and its approach to expansion and the implementation of the so-called "The Silk Road and Belt Program" is an opportunity and challenge for the Alliance as an economic and trade partner. The rise of China is shifting the global balance of power, challenging the rules-based international order and increasing geopolitical competition.

China is not recognized as a direct military threat to NATO, but China is more perceived as a challenge for Euro-Atlantic security and the western way of life. In the long term, "China is increasingly likely to project its growing political, economic and military power globally, including potentially not only in the Euro-Atlantic area, but also in the high North" (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:17). This endangers the lines of communication and trade called "global commons". China's ambition is to become a leader in the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) by 2030 and a global technology leader by 2049 (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:27). China is a challenge for the Alliance because it maintains close relations with Russia and is increasingly associated with actors who generate cyber-attacks and hybrid warfare, and dissemination for disinformation. It is desirable that NATO, in cooperation with the EU, develop its capabilities to prevent such action by China, especially in the field of cyber defence, hybrid threats, disinformation, etc. (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 28) including the establishment of de-conflict mechanisms at the military level. To prevent this, NATO must devote much more attention and spend much more time and political energy and act promptly on the growing challenges posed by China. That means defining a clear strategy for global political action that would take into consideration China's growing influence by 2030 worldwide. Such approach requires more time, political resources and action based on an assessment of the national capabilities

of each Ally and their economic heft. It is also necessary to establish an "advisory body", as a platform for coordination and constructive dialogue on which all security issues would be discussed not only from a military and defence aspect, but also from economic, political, technological and other common mutual interests between NATO and China. Special attention should be paid to the issue related to arms control, as well as the assessment of China's technological development and its impact that may affect collective defence, military readiness, i.e. the resilience in the SACEUR area of responsibility in Europe (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 12). NATO has to redouble its efforts to build resilience and keep pace with technology development in response to the weaknesses in critical areas that could jeopardize Alliance security (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:27).

Emerging and Disruptive Technologies

Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs) are not only a challenge, but also an opportunity for NATO and the EU, as well as the social life of citizens. In the next decade, EDTs will play a more significant role in shaping the security environment not only in the Euro-Atlantic area but also globally, perhaps beyond the basic military defence capabilities of countries. Access to EDTs is not only a fundamental, but also a strategic challenge that may impede NATO's ability and change the fundamentals of deterrence, defence and warfare. Therefore, NATO needs to build a clear strategy for the implementation of EDTs that should be reflected in the requirements that NATO has for its members to develop military and other capabilities. This means incorporating EDTs into NATO's defence planning process. This process also needs to be tailored to develop the capacity and capabilities to respond to the threats posed by the uncontrolled access to EDTs by third-parties. At the same time, new technologies offer a historic opportunity for a strategic advantage in dealing with the new types of conflict and information sharing (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:29). New technologies will greatly influence the role of space in modern warfare, change the nature of warfare, and enable new forms of attacks with hypersonic missiles and hybrid operations (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:19). Achieving dominance in key EDTs should be a strategic priority for the Alliance. This means maintaining constant communication between governments and the private sector in order to identify vulnerabilities in collective defence cooperation on all security issues and strategies related to AI, norms and research and development, as well as joint defence against aggressive and unauthorized use (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:13). The Alliance should also encourage the incorporation of AI into strategic and operational planning. It should exploit the power of AI-driven technologies to enhance scenario planning exercises and long-term preparedness. In the long term, NATO needs to develop a long-term game plan to counter China's Military-Civilian Fusion Strategy (MCF) in Europe, which involves China investments in major research and development centers in Europe for military purposes. "The MCF strategy seeks to effectively break down

barriers between the private sector, academic community, research technologies and (PL Army) enabling it to employ any dual use industries and technologies for military advancements and capabilities development” (Kuzmanovski, 2021). To meet this challenge, NATO needs to invest in the development of its own Defence Advanced Research Project Agency with the task of supporting innovative strategies among its members in this area with the ultimate goal of developing AI- focused agenda for R&D within the Alliance (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:31). NATO should go digital and strive to identify new technologies early on, strive to accelerate their development and adopt them across the whole Alliance.

Counter Terrorism

Terrorism is and remains one of the most immediate asymmetric threats to Allies and causes deep concern among its citizens, but also continuously erodes the internal cohesion of the Alliance. In the 2010 Strategic Concept, terrorism was mentioned, but not included in the Alliance core tasks. Countering terrorism more explicitly is addressed in the Alliance 2017 Counter-Terrorism Action Plan. The fight against this evil is extremely unpredictable because terrorists constantly change their strategies, tactics, methods of action, and their communications. Also, an additional challenge is the spread and availability of EDTs to terrorists. All this requires continuity in action and call for adaptive and innovative counter terrorism strategies, means and methods for its successful suppression. That is why NATO must take the fight against terrorism more explicitly to a new level as part of hybrid warfare and cyber defence and integrate it as an integral part of its core tasks (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:13). This includes the preparation and inclusion of various scenarios of a possible terrorist attack within the collective training of the Alliance forces, and especially in international exercises. The growing likelihood that terrorists will gain access to the technology to manufacture and transport weapons of mass destruction, as well as EDTs, is a particular concern. NATO should strive to improve the current practices of intelligence-sharing among Allies to achieve better, common situational awareness in key areas, including emerging safe havens and terrorists’ use of EDTs, as well as hybrid tactics. It also includes exchanging tactics and methods which allies can use to respond to the appropriate threats posed by terrorists. That is why NATO needs to expand its approach in the fight against terrorism by involving not only all government institutions (Whole of Government Approach), but also by involving all stakeholders in the country (Whole of Society Approach) (Kuzmanovski 2021). To achieve this, it is necessary that the Allies develop appropriate Capacity Targets within the NATO defence planning process based on their individual assessment on national resilience, and minimum capability requirements, as well as to strengthen national capacities for civil preparedness and homeland security. Allied nations retain the primary responsibility for their domestic security, and for their own resilience. “NATO could offer a surge capacity to individual countries whose capabilities may be overwhelmed by e.g.

a terrorist attack involving non-conventional means including chemical, biological, or radiological substances” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:33). NATO cannot focus on one direction, and it has to be able to address challenges from all directions at the same time because they actually merge, they go together from the east, from the south, from the west, from the north, for instance, cyberspace is all over (Stoltenberg, 2021a).

Protect Alliance Southern Flank

NATO needs to build a clear and principled position and approach to the South (its southern flank), taking into account the traditional threats on the one hand, and Russia's growing presence in the Mediterranean and to a lesser extent China on the other, with growing asymmetric threats. All this, coupled with the massive and uncontrolled migration from the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, is a serious threat to the security of the Alliance. The uncontrolled migration is closely linked to the security of the Alliance's Eastern Flank, and the main geopolitical link between the East and the South is the Western Balkans. This underscores the importance of investing in the Alliance security on its southern flank and the inclusion of all Western Balkan countries in NATO. The approach to the South should include capacity building of the partners involved from the South Wing, and their neighbours, increasing the Alliance's awareness and risk monitoring, increasing resilience and responsiveness to security threats and challenges arising from the South. Also, this includes maintaining political initiative and raising political consultation at the NAC level, as well as closer cooperation and coordination with the EU, the African Union and other relevant regional and international organizations in the framework of a coordinated approach (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:34).

Arms Control and Nuclear Deterrence

In recent years, the traditional framework of arms control in Europe has changed, primarily due to Russia's provocative behavior in relation to the Vienna Document 11 and due to the violation of the INF Treaty, as well as the suspension of the Conventional Forces Treaty in Europe. Russia is secretly developing new missile technology with precise, dual-purpose guidance and deploys missiles at new locations contrary to the agreement within the INF Treaty. The modernization of the Russian Armed Forces also includes the nuclear forces modernization program. The Alliance must also consider the modernization of China's conventional and nuclear armed forces, as well as its growing long-range capabilities. It is therefore necessary for NATO to reaffirm its support for arms control and disarmament efforts and at the same time maintain nuclear deterrence capabilities that have been the basis of collective defence since the founding of the Alliance. „Conventional capabilities along AI equally serve as an efficient deterrence tool“ (Kuzmanovski, 2021). NATO must pay more political attention to the new forms

of arms control with a more proactive approach in new technologies regulations (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:36).

Support means enhancing its role as a forum for debate on all arms control issues. This issue should include the development of a common policy to deter and respond to the use of chemical weapons and to ensure the protection of Allied forces from these weapons. The Alliance's position should be aimed at China's involvement in arms control negotiations, especially with regard to nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. This includes support in strengthening the effective regime for verification, control and enabling monitoring capabilities and mechanisms for carrying out arms control. The Alliance also needs to develop an appropriate agenda and mechanisms for international arms control in key areas of the EDTs, as well as further adapting defence and deterrence to the Intermediate Range Nuclear Force Treaty (INF Treaty) existing threats arising from new Russia nuclear doctrine and the new military capabilities (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 13). NATO Allies should maintain political pressure on Russia to return to compliance with the existing arms control agreements.

Energy Security

The Alliance's views are that energy security is an integral part of their common security. Any disruption of energy supply could affect the security of Allies and partners and have an impact on NATO's military operations. Energy security is a key element in building the Alliance's deterrence capabilities and in fighting hybrid threats. Although, the energy security is a primary responsibility at a national level, it is estimated that the competition for scarce energy resources will intensify in the next decade. Therefore it is necessary for the Allies to closely monitor, evaluate and consult with each other on all issues related to energy security (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 39). Experience shows that energy can be used as part of the foreign policy and mechanism of hybrid warfare and cyber threats. Stable energy supply through various routes is critical because it increases flexibility and contributes to building resilience. NATO's position is therefore to ensure continued access to energy resources for Allied forces at all times. In order to realize such views and visions of the Alliance, it is necessary to establish political consultations at a strategic level between the allies, and it is desirable to involve partners on all issues related to energy security. It is also necessary to pay more attention and invest more funds in the protection of critical energy infrastructure. It is advisable to design individual training courses in the Energy Security Center of Excellence, and create scenarios in the exercises and collective training to address the issue of energy security and hybrid warfare tactics. The ultimate goal of the Alliance is to build capabilities and capacities that will enable and ensure continuity in the energy supply of all Allies (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 39-40).

Climate Changes

Climate change will continue to shape NATO's security environment and is a multiplier of threats that could have serious implications to the Allies' security and economic interests. The consequences of climate change, such as rising sea and ocean levels, melting of polar caps, and the destruction of the most densely populated coastline, will cause mass migration of populations into the interior of the Alliance. The warming and melting of polar caps will open up strategically shorter new transport corridors such as the Northern Sea Route in the High North, which geopolitical rivals are seeking to control and exploit (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 19). However, climate change should be viewed not only from a military-geopolitical dimension, but also from a societal and humanistic perspective and in view of protection of human environment (Kuzmanovski, 2021). In 2014, NATO adopted the Green Defence Framework, which aims to reduce the impact of military operations on the environment and enhance the Alliance's resilience by investing in green technologies that will reduce energy use and carbon emissions. NATO should lead by example and act as a catalyser for climate action by supporting Allies in their emissions reduction and adaptation efforts (Kertysova, 2021). Climate change is so important that it is not enough only to talk and write about it. NATO needs to do something concrete to reduce emissions (Stoltenberg, 2021c). NATO needs to reaffirm the policy that climate change is shaping and will continue to change the strategic environment and incorporate such views into its documents. Closely, NATO has to address the security consequences of climate changes (Stoltenberg, 2021b), and they should be embedded in an updated Strategic Concept and put on the top of the political agenda, starting with the next NATO summit (Kertysova, 2021). A confirmation of the importance of climate change comes from US President Biden, who has rejoined the United States in the company of countries committed to the Kyoto Protocol. From a NATO perspective, the "Reflection Process NATO 2030" includes the development of a strategy that in the context of defence and deterrence will take into account the possible release of strategic northern transport routes and that possible strategic reality will be incorporated in defence and deterrence plans. In order to provide a continuous assessment of the climate change impact, it is considered an "essential need" to establish a Climate and Security Center of Excellence. The Center will contribute to raising awareness of the situation, early warning and sharing of information and the impact of climate change and other non-military threats, such as pandemics on the security of the Alliance member states. The impact of climate change should be embedded in NATO's defence planning process, in exercises and collective training, in resilience and crisis management, and in the development and implementation of better "green military technology".

Pandemics and Natural Disasters

COVID 19 demonstrates that pandemics not only affect public health, but also affect the economy, social resilience and security and can disrupt the normal sup-

ply of energy and resources to countries. Dealing with the pandemic is the primary responsibility of national governments, not of the Alliance. However, the pandemic affected the Alliance's decision-making ability and limited the readiness of the forces. The pandemic reaffirmed the need to constantly update and enhance the Alliance resilience. According to Kuzmanovski (2021), any potential future pandemics should be seen as a huge potential for geopolitical influence in the world. This can be well argued by the COVID 19 consequences, and the way of (non) effective management and "disrupted" plans for distribution of vaccines and immunization of the citizens. It therefore reaffirms NATO's "ability to handle numerous simultaneous events of a disruptive and non-traditional nature and to meet the basic requirements of resilience: minimizing damage, restoring stability quickly, and catalyzing improved strategies for similar challenges in the future" (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:44). Dealing with the pandemic is primarily a national responsibility, and we must all work together for an "approximately" equal approach and a common solution. So far, the analysis of the impact of pandemics and natural disasters on the Alliance resilience is too short and raises too many questions for which no specific answers are offered. Too short to be comprehensive...How, when, what to do ...many questions remain to be raised (Kuzmanovski, 2021). However, one thing is clear, namely, in order to achieve the necessary resilience in dealing with pandemics and natural disasters, the Alliance must continue to implement the lessons learned from dealing with COVID 19 with a particular focus on assessing deterrence and defence capabilities in such situations. Also, different scenarios should be developed for practicing the procedures for dealing with such situations in the future by simulating natural and man-made disasters.

Hybrid Threats and Cyber Defence

From a historical perspective, hybrid methods of action are well known to the Alliance. However, hybrid and cyber-attacks are not a threat by themselves, they are tools used by foreign services, state and non-state actors to create the perception of a threat. These methods of action are popular with some actors because it is very difficult to determine with certainty who is behind such threats. The targets of such attacks are usually the countries that are considered to be the weakest link and which have certain vulnerability, especially in case of a crisis. NATO has established cyber as an operational domain since 2016 and has developed "National Cyber Effects" which are sometimes also referred to as 'offensive cyber'. NATO Allies have used that in a very effective way for instance in combating Daesh, ISIS in Iraq and Syria. National Cyber effects are also part of what NATO has developed over the last years, and, will continue to strengthen its cyber defence (Stoltenberg, 2021b). In order to strengthen resilience in the cyber domain, the Alliance has committed its members to develop appropriate strategies to combat cyber attacks and hybrid threats. NATO needs a common political framework to define how NATO should assess, attribute and respond to hybrid and cyber incidents in a crisis") (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:45).

This implies a stronger role for the Public Diplomacy Division in combating hybrid threats and disinformation. The Alliance “should strengthen its capacity to support Allies against cyber attacks and hybrid threats” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:45). If this is not done, there is a serious challenge for one of the Member States to call for the activation of Article V. According to Stoltenberg, Allies “will never give a potential adversary or enemy the privilege of telling them exactly when we're going to trigger Article V... But what we have clearly stated is that is that a cyber attack might trigger Article V” (Stoltenberg, 2021b).

The second segment in this context refers to strong consultations and political dialogue under the auspices of Article IV. It is also necessary to clearly and unambiguously define the nature of hybrid threats at strategic and operational level, as well as to include scenarios in collective training and exercises by using hybrid threats. NATO should periodically exercise response options to hybrid threats which are based on realistic scenarios, in the closest possible cooperation with actors representing all diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement (DIMEFIL) instruments. The political response to hybrid threats should include the development of a scenario to expose disinformation, but also the development of a political set of measures and tools to deter hybrid threats (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:46).

Outer Space

Space as a domain of warfare is gaining in importance in the geopolitical competition between great powers. The importance of Outer Space is primarily due to the development of sophisticated new military technologies by Russia and China that threaten Allied security in this domain and have made outer space a new theatre for geopolitical competition. To ensure space security, NATO should become the essential transatlantic forum for consultation on space security and NATO Secretary General should promote information-sharing and regularly update on the level of interoperability achieved in the space domain in the NAC. It should also be incorporated into NATO defence planning process or in resilience planning, and promote a joint dialogue with the private sector on the opportunities and challenges offered by outer space shared R&D among Allies (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 47), and establish a NATO Space Center of Excellence. All these activities are aimed at promoting NATO Space Policy and making it available to the public.

Strategic Communications, Public Diplomacy and Tackling Disinformation

Strategic communications are the strongest weapon of today and tomorrow and are a critical deterrent and defence mechanism for the Alliance. Information is a domain of competition between the involved actors, while disinformation and propaganda are especially dangerous in a time of drastic technological development. The best mechanisms for the Alliance to defend itself against disinformation are voluntary

sharing of information among all Allies, and informing citizens in a timely manner about its policies, operations and activities. In that way, the trust of the citizens in the Alliance and in the realization of its goals will be significantly strengthened. Furthermore, in tackling disinformation, NATO needs to strengthen its cooperation with partners, the private sector, NGOs, the academia and the media. They all have a role to play in tackling disinformation and information sharing. In support of such activity, it is desirable for NATO to use more disciplined and strategic measures as ministerial and summit declarations and supporting documents as a public communication tool. In that regard, “these analyses and recommendations will be more visibly offered to citizens for discussion” (Kuzmanovski, 2021).

Strengthening NATO’s Political Cohesion and Unity

Maintaining and strengthening the political role, cohesion, unity, consultation and decision-making are key aspects of security (Kuzmanovski, 2021). This must be an unequivocal priority for all Allies and shape their behavior. Any strengthening of the Alliance's political cohesion must be in line with shared values and ideas, guided by democracy, the rule of law and individual freedoms (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:50). NATO must reaffirm its commitment as a defence institution in the Euro-Atlantic area and “must continue to purposefully upgrade the political ways, means, and ends of its work” (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:22). This will contribute to a clear definition of the Alliance's new political role in the 21st century, which should rely more on prevention mechanisms to achieve goals than on the use of crisis management tools and their consequences. All Allies must abide by the Alliance's agreed obligations and policies, especially achieving the burden - sharing requirements and a reasonable challenge. The consequences of COVID 19 in the coming years, especially after 2023, could have a serious impact on the reduction of defence spending, both in the percentage of GDP and in real terms. NATO will need to maintain its unity and detect obstacles to collective action, but also strengthen its capacities and capabilities for collective defence and nuclear deterrence. Political cohesion is stronger when all members adhere to the established principles. Public diplomacy should engage more in terms of providing guidance on enhancing the cohesion and unity of the Alliance (Kuzmanovski, 2021). Any concession in front of its democratic values will have an erosive effect on the unity, collective defence and security of the Alliance (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 20). The strengthening of political will and political identity will contribute to the preparation of the Alliance for the next decade. The Alliance must reassert its key identity, which is based on the principles of democracy and Allies need to consider establishing a Democratic Resilience Center of Excellence. This Center will be ready at any moment and at the call of any ally support it in strengthening the societal resilience in dealing with hostile activities, as well as in strengthening their democratic institutional capacities and processes. Many of the projects are speaking about economic resilience, about democratic resilience, how to

fight disinformation, how to keep our democracies healthy and strong (Geoană, 2021). In a situation where disputes arise between allies, the Secretary-General should continue to mediate in those disputes, and consider more closely involving other Allies as informal mediators (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:14).

Strengthening Alliance`s Political Consultations and the Decision Making Process

Political consultation remains the most important means by which NATO can resolve disagreements, mitigate differentials in threat assessment and reinforce political cohesion. Reaching a consensus in decision-making within limited time is a challenge for the Alliance, especially in a situation when the number of members has reached 30. Strengthening consultation and decision-making will be crucial to ensure the Alliance's ability to act collectively in the following decades. It is therefore necessary to strengthen transatlantic consultations on the basis of a systematic, credible and more powerful way (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:53). Significant strengthening of political cohesion among the Allies will only be achieved if NATO is treated as a forum to discuss all issues of strategic importance to the Allies. This means that Allies must strengthen the importance of the NAC, which must remain the platform for debate on all political and strategic issues affecting the Allies. To achieve this, strengthened and more frequent meetings are needed not only at the ministerial level, but also at the lower level, and when possible these meetings should be held in an expanded format with partners (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:14). Allies should be encouraged to inform the NAC of any innovations or changes in their policies that may affect the interests of other Allies. Changes and innovations in Allied policies are recommended to be in line with the Alliance`s official policies and interests in order to avoid confrontation among members as much as possible. According to Kuzmanovski (2021), there is a possibility for the so-called "Soft and Hard Approach" in building a "convergent" opinion and views on certain differences where disagreement and informal (un) consensus should not mean disunity and division of the Allies. This is in addition to the change in policy-making mentioned below, which is perhaps as important a recommendation as any other. This recommendation is in direct support of one of the main points: "to make the Alliance politically stronger".

Strengthening the Relations between NATO and EU

NATO and the EU should seek to reinvigorate trust and understanding at the highest levels. Over the past decade, the Alliance has focused its energy on defending security on Europe. When the democracies promoted by NATO and the EU come together, then they are a significant force for a stable and open international order. Together they have the ability to shape the international environment proactively and much better. This dimension has to be strengthened by sharing the burden with the European allies and developing deeper relations between the allies on both sides of the Atlantic. Communication between them would be improved if an institutionalized

staff link between the two organizations is established through a permanent political liaison element in NATO's IS and the EEAS. This means holding special meetings at the highest level between NATO and the EU where the key areas of cooperation of mutual interest would be considered and evaluated. NATO and the EU must work on the implementation of the existing mutually agreed mechanisms and arrangements. This includes renewing the progress in the seventy-four agreed areas of mutual interest. Cooperation should include coordination in the development of skills that need to support each other. NATO should develop a strategic dialogue with the EU in the field of Artificial Intelligence in order to enhance the Allied ability to share data and consult with the EU. It is of great importance to establish a synergy between NATO military research and development and EU financial research and development conducted by the EU's private and public ethnicities (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020:57). Slightly different from the general relations of cooperation is the position of Kuzmanovski (2021) who believes that there is a possibility for coherence of the policies of the two organizations. He is of the opinion that this must be approached in principle with equal access in all forms. There must be a principled attitude towards the opening of the accession talks of the Republic of North Macedonia with the EU leaving the process of "good neighborly harmonization" between North Macedonia and Bulgaria in a parallel that does not indicate the interest in resolving the misunderstandings or the desired integration of the region. This is in a way of recommendation and a reflection of NATO commitment stated in the recommendation to strengthen the partnership with the EU to have the same approach in order to prevent the more frequent blockade by individual EU members by involving bilateral disputes at the EU level.

Strengthening the Partnerships

NATO has a partnership policy with many countries established on a different basis. Partnerships for the Alliance are a crucial instrument of cooperative security, knowledge and information sharing, cooperation and capacity building. Political dialogue with partners is essential for building measures of trust and mutual understanding, as well as for exchange of expertise. Dialogue with partners is the basis for the development of guided partnership programs for cooperation. In the near future, NATO should make a plan for better strategic use of the partnerships in pursuit of its interests. The "Open Door" policy should remain open to all European democracies that aspire to join NATO and be supported and strengthened. NATO needs to invest more in strengthening its partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia, but also in fighting destabilization and preventing Russian influence in the Western Balkans. It is necessary to build deeper and closer relations with the partners who are one step closer to Alliance membership in order to promote regional stability. In the near future, NATO should invest more in deepening consultations and cooperation in NATO +4 formats with the Indo-Pacific partners - Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea. NATO should consider launching internal discussions on possible partnerships with India and

Brazil as countries that share the same democratic values on which NATO's existence rests. The strengthening of the partnership in the Indo-Pacific region becomes even more important for the future role of the Alliance.

Political Decision – Making Changes

The principle of consensus is the cornerstone of the Alliance, but NATO must be confident and maintain the ability to reach consensus and implement decisions. Ensuring consensus is one of NATO's key challenges, as only one vote against can prevent NATO from acting quickly in case of need. Namely, a large part of the activities of Russia and to some extent of China are aimed at individual countries that are considered to be the weakest link and which can be influenced at some point to use veto in the interest of a third party. In recent years, some Allies have raised their bilateral disputes to the NATO level, calling into question its cohesion and the relevance of the Alliance's decision-making process. In order to prevent more frequent blockades by individual allies through the involvement of bilateral disputes at NATO level, it is necessary to consider options for changes in the decision-making process on certain key issues and to apply the principle of consensus minus one. This will avoid such blockades at the ministerial level and will contribute to preserving the unity of the Alliance. NATO must act quickly by consensus within 24 hours in the event of a crisis. In the long term, if such disputes are not prevented, they can adversely affect and seriously disrupt the functioning of the Alliance (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 21).

Military Adaptation

NATO needs a strong political dimension to achieve its military adaptation. NATO's ability to deliver policy directives, i.e. directions, is directly related to its leadership, position and the resources at its disposal. The use of resources also requires political approval, and bureaucracy is an unavoidable segment of that process. NATO must therefore strive to adapt its organizational culture to changes in the strategic environment to become more flexible and to limit bureaucracy where possible. To simplify and speed up the action process, NATO should delegate greater powers to the Secretary-General in decision-making on personnel and budgetary matters. It is necessary to redouble the efforts to attract talented staff by ensuring its geographical diversity. To that end, it is necessary to establish a Center of higher learning to cultivate future talents outside NATO, as well as to promote the Harmel Fellowship Program to increase student exchange and attract more talented students. Until 2009, there was a process of education and training of young individuals from the member states on how the Alliance works. Following the example of the Alliance, in parallel and on its own initiative as partners within the then Mission of the Republic of Macedonia to NATO, a process of self-learning was established where a dozen younger colleagues from different institutions were trained and introduced to the work process in the Mission (Kuzmanovski 2021). Political control over NATO must be visible at all times.

The military adaptation is again relevant and includes: the development of capabilities, the level of readiness and the mechanisms of resilience. Resilience mechanisms are necessary within the political and military decision-making structures. Allies need to increase civilian budgets, and those with less proportionate share of civilian budgets need to increase their national contribution (NATO 2030: United for a New Era, 2020: 15). Any increase in funding must be clearly visible and linked to policy goals.

Instead of a Conclusion

The Report of the Reflection Group on NATO 2030 proposals are actually an agenda for what needs to be done to utilize this unique opportunity to open a new chapter in transatlantic relations. NATO has to update its Strategic Concept as soon as possible anticipating further development of the findings and main recommendations provided in the RRG NATO 2030. The update on Strategic Concept will jointly address the changing strategic environment to recommit the Alliance values and will reinforce the transatlantic bond (Stoltenberg, 2021d). This is a unique opportunity to rebuild alliances, reenergize and strengthen the transatlantic bond of both sides of the Atlantic.

For the purpose of the Report by the Reflection Group on NATO 2030 perspectives and recommendations, the conclusion can rely on several prominent quotations that arrange the scope of future developments.

Today, and in the future, the Alliance should adapt and be able to continue to protect freedom, democracy and the rule-based order that has brought peace and prosperity for so many decades. To do this, NATO needs to ensure an increased common level of collective defence and resilience of all member states. NATO has to adopt clearer and more measurable national resilience targets to ensure a minimum standard of shared resilience among Allies (Stoltenberg, 2021d). Resilience is split across eight key domains and lies really at the heart of NATO's ability to defend and to deter in 2030 (Latici, 2021). Security does not just rely on military strength. NATO needs strong, resilient societies, infrastructures and economies too. Today's challenges that NATO faces are more and more unpredictable and global. So, if NATO wants to survive, it has to strengthen its role in the world and needs to take a more global approach to deal with global challenges. The only way to do this is by being a regional Alliance, with a global approach.

One way to adapt is by increasing the political coordination among Allies with broader consistent consultations on more issues, including economic matters, new technologies, climate change influences, all related to security. NATO has procedures in place to do more, but more political will is needed to implement them today. NATO should "consult more broadly, also on issues which are important for security, but which are not always purely military". This close consultation should be not only on defence and foreign office ministerial level, or chief of states and governments, but needs to include for instance, periodical meetings of national security advisors, ministers for interior and political directors. Broader consultations also mean that NATO should closely consult with partners, for issues related to the rise of China and a more assertive Russia (Stoltenberg, 2021d).

NATO should enhance political dialogue and practical cooperation with like-minded partners to promote democratic values and protect common interests. The Alliance has to play a greater role in defending and shaping it (Stoltenberg, 2021d). NATO needs to aim at enhancing the cooperation between NATO and the European Union, and appoint a NATO Special

Representative for NATO-EU relations. Also, the Alliance should focus more on its engagement with partners in the increasing geopolitical importance of the Indo-Pacific region and the need to enhance Allies' collective understanding of China's regional activities and global influence (Fleser, 2021). It means to work closely with all partners including those from across the globe, even to build new partners with countries who share the same democracy values like India and Brazil, and may be the African Union. Also, NATO members must continue to innovate and invest in the right forces with the right capabilities to remain competitive in a more competitive world (Stoltenberg, 2021b).

NATO can do more to combat and adapt to climate change and its implication to the geopolitical situation and the Alliance security. All Allies need to invest more in "Green Defence Framework" and develop more green technologies for military purposes. Climate change might make it harder for military forces to keep security in the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO can do more for climate changes, and set green targets for defence planning, and such targets could include a 25 percent fuel efficiency increase, higher standards for military facilities, or cleaner equipment and support solutions (Kertysova, 2021). The Alliance needs to address the security implications of climate change. NATO should set the gold standard on reducing emissions from the military sector and contribute to the goal of net zero carbon emissions and conduct an annual assessment of how climate change might impact NATO troops and deployments (Stoltenberg, 2021d).

The next area of Alliance's interest is to preserve the technological edge which is closely related to the growing challenge of Emergency and Disruptive Technologies and NATO needs to take a proactive approach in their development and adoption. "Traditionally, new technologies were very much developed by the military. To preserve the technological edge and to promote interoperability and boost transatlantic cooperation on defence innovation, NATO should adopt and implement defence innovation initiative (Stoltenberg, 2021d). Today, a substantial portion of the technology is developed in the private sector... the link between the NATO entity on technology and the crucial cooperation link with the private sector, including start-ups, which we know are so important for new technologies (Stoltenberg, 2021c).

Also, NATO should focus on Allied reinforcement, cohesion, unity and coherence. These mean that NATO has to increase common funding in support of core deterrence and defence activities. Spending more together would contribute to fairer burden-sharing and would demonstrate the strength of NATO's commitment to Article 5, and the Alliance's promise to defend each other. This would support Allied battle-groups deployments in the eastern part of the Alliance, air policing, maritime deployments and exercises (Stoltenberg, 2021d). NATO has proven extremely able to adapt and change when the world is changing and now needs to change again. The implementation of the recommendations and the main findings proposed in the Report on Reflection Group NATO 2030 prove that NATO is able to adapt for the next decade and beyond.

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AFGHANISTAN - CROSSROADS OF ASIA

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Abstract: *Mentioning Afghanistan associates with a turbulent history, wars, Soviet occupation, mujahedeen, Taliban, large numbers of ethnic communities, constant confrontation, armed conflicts, refugees, unstable country, harsh climate and unfavourable living environment, illegal drug production, poor population, international military interventions and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations. These are a large number of issues that will lead many to ask the question why, despite all the negative sides, Afghanistan is constantly the subject of interest of the great powers. We will find a number of studies in the professional and scientific literature that analyse the military and security aspects of the country and its neighbourhood, but Afghanistan is much more than that. Its geopolitical position, the multi-ethnic composition of the population, relations with neighbouring countries and natural resources are key to understanding past and present events and predicting the future. Utilizing the potential of the country for further development and not for prolonging internal conflicts as well as confronted external interests is a state to be aspired to as the population of Afghanistan deserves it.*

Keywords: *history, geopolitics, natural resources, multi-ethnicity, wars, conflicts, interests.*

Introduction

Central and South Asia are important regions in which social developments affect neighbouring regions, but external developments also affect the wider region of Central Asia. This region is characterized by insufficient security, conflicting interests of global players and their polarization. Due to the imperial heritage, this region is also called “the periphery of empires”. The central position of Afghanistan in this region is a motive for a more thorough study and understanding. In the past 20 years, Afghanistan has attracted the attention of the world public after the fight against the Taliban and NATO military presence on its territory led by the United States. It is not our intention in this paper to explain in detail the military aspects of NATO-led ISAF mission (the International Security Assistance Force) conducted in the period from 2001 to 2014, nor the current NATO-led Resolute Support Mission for training, advice and assistance, which we witnessed a dramatic completion in August 2021. We will also not explain the military

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aspects of the U.S. Government's declared Global War on Terrorism through Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2014) and Operation Freedom's Sentinel, which started on 01.01.2015². Our purpose is to provide an answer why Afghanistan, despite all the problems, is still important, what its advantages are, whether it is a poor country without resources or exactly the opposite. To arrive to these answers, we analysed the geopolitical situation of Afghanistan, the turbulent historical development and the past rulers of Afghanistan, its strategic natural resources, and the complex relations arising from the multi-ethnic character of the population. Through such an analysis we will understand the reasons for the frequent wars and military conflicts on its territory and the continuous interest and presence of great and regional powers in this region. Security for generations of ordinary Afghans is a vital need, which should alleviate their already difficult lives, but a brighter future for Afghanistan is possible by achieving political and economic stability for which the country has potential.

Geostrategic position of Afghanistan and multi-ethnic composition of its population

In international geopolitics and geostrategy different views and interpretations frequently appear as to what the borders of certain regions are and which countries are part of them. This is also the case with the regions of Central and South Asia, with the question of how far the Middle East extends, which countries are covered by the Greater Middle East and the like. The same problem applies to the exact definition of which of these regions Afghanistan belongs to. If we take a look at the map of the countries in the region of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), Afghanistan is not always included in the southern borders of this region. It is the same case with the map of the South Asian region (which includes Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka), where Afghanistan is occasionally included in the northwest. There is less of a dilemma when using the definition to describe a region with a relatively new name - the Wider Middle East. This region includes the countries of the so-called Arab world, plus Israel, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Different interpretations of which geopolitical region exactly Afghanistan belongs to actually provide the answer to its extremely important geostrategic position in the wider Central Asian region as a "crossroads of Asia".³ The territory of Afghani-

² Operation Enduring Freedom is the official name of the US Government's Global War on Terrorism. The operation began on October 7, 2001, with airstrikes on al-Qaeda and Taliban targets in Afghanistan. Less than three months later, on December 20, 2001, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1386 which established NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan. In late 2014, to continue the Global War on Terrorism, instead of Operation Enduring Freedom, the US Government announced Operation Freedom's Sentinel as part of a new NATO-led mission in Afghanistan - Resolute Support Mission, which started on 01.01.2015 and ended on 31.08.2021. Source: "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan" (June 2020). U.S Department of Defence.

³ Akhilesh Pillalamarri (2015). "Asia's Crossroads: A Better Definition of 'Central Asia'." <https://thediplomat.com>.

population knows and uses both languages. Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country made up of over 40 ethnic communities, predominantly Muslims (99.7%). The majority of the Muslim population belongs to Sunni Islam (75%) and Shia Islam (25%). Larger ethnic communities are Pashtuns (42%), Tajiks (27%), Khazars (9%), Uzbeks (9%), Aimats (4%) and Turkmen (3%). Smaller ethnic groups include Nuristani, Pasha, Kizilbash, Baluchi, Arab, and Pamiri. The smallest ethnic groups consist of Yugis, Atsetts, Brahuis and Kyrgyz. Also, there are small non-Muslim groups such as Sikhs and Hindus.⁵ The richness of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society can be an advantage, as well as a frequent occasion for provoking confrontations, tensions, a desire for domination, and ethnic and religious conflicts. Such was the conflict in the 1990s, when the majority Sunni Pashtuns tried to make large numbers of Shiite Khazars extinct. Many Afghanistan ethnic communities are made up of peoples from neighbouring countries, and such ethnic communities maintain close relations with them. Neighbouring countries, through their minority communities, exert political and cultural influence and economic interests in Afghanistan. When the traditional tribal division and the conservative way of life of the communities is added to this situation, unfavourable conditions are created for functioning of state institutions throughout the whole territory, and processes for undermining its homogeneity and stability.

Historical facts about the creation of Afghanistan and its rulers and leaders

The large number of ethnic communities, their rivalry, the desire for domination, the connection with the neighbouring countries and putting the interests of the great powers into function, had impact on the historical development of the Afghan state. To understand the connections with the past and the complexity of the current situation, we will give a brief chronological overview of the dynasties, rulers and leaders who ruled in Afghanistan from the 18th century to the present.

The territory of present Afghanistan has been inhabited for thousands of years. The modern history of Afghanistan begins in 1747 with the creation of the Durrani Empire. Ahmad Shah Durrani was a Pashtun military commander in the army of the Persian ruler Nadir Shah. After the assassination of Nadir Shah, Durani founded Afghanistan, which was dominated by ethnic Pashtuns and occupied the territory between Persia and the Indian Mughal Empire. The Durrani Empire collapsed in 1823, after which a leader named Muhammad Khan who conquered Kabul in 1826 proclaimed himself ruler of Afghanistan and founded the Barakzai Dynasty.⁶

For most of the 19th century, Afghanistan served as a buffer zone between the Russian and British empires and in their efforts to consolidate their control of the Central Asian region and the Indian subcontinent. The British fear of expansion

⁵ "Country Profile: Afghanistan". Library of Congress Country Studies on Afghanistan. August 2008.

⁶ Ali Ahmad Jalali (2017): "A Military History of Afghanistan – From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror". University Press of Kansas. <https://www.jstor.org>.

of Russian influence to the south sparked three Anglo-Afghan wars in the period from 1839 to 1919. During the wars against Great Britain, Afghan leaders sought and received help from Russia. During World War I, Afghanistan remained neutral and resisted pressure from the Ottoman Empire to join the Pan-Islamic Alliance against Russia and Great Britain. During the reign of King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) the third British-Afghan war took place in which Afghanistan won a victory and declared independence from Great Britain. With the Treaty in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, signed on August 8, 1919, Afghanistan was internationally recognized as an independent country. After a brief takeover by ethnic Tajik King Habibullah Kalakani, King Mohammad Nadir Shah reaffirmed Barakzai's rule. In 1933, Barakzai was succeeded by his son Mohammad Zahir Shah. During his rule, as the last king of Afghanistan who ruled until 1973, the country got its Constitution (1964), which established a legislature and promoted the freedoms and rights of women.⁷ During the bloc division and the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, King Zahir led a successful policy of balancing between the United States and the Soviet Union and managed to receive economic and military assistance from both superpowers. In 1973, King Zahir was ousted from the throne by his cousin Mohammad Daoud, who abolished the monarchy and proclaimed himself the first President of the Republic of Afghanistan. In 1978, led by the leaders of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammad Taraki, military officers ousted Mohammad Daoud and killed him. According to the agreement between the two leaders, Taraki became president, but only a year later, in 1979, his rival Hafizullah Amin staged a coup and ousted him. The two leaders came from the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which enjoyed the biggest support from rural ethnic Pashtuns and tried to bring about radical social change in traditional Afghan society. Such policy provoked a revolt among the strictly Islamic parties - the mujahedeen, who advocated respect for Islamic laws, regulations, rules and traditions.

On December 27, 1979, the USSR sent troops to Afghanistan and occupied it in order to prevent further strengthening of the positions of the mujahedeen Islamic fighters. After the occupation, the USSR replaced the self-proclaimed President Hafizulah Amin with another leader of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Babrak Karmal, who came from the Pashto ethnic group. During the occupation, the USSR deployed more than 120,000 troops to Afghanistan, assisted by the Army of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan which numbered up to 40,000, and additional 20,000 paramilitary forces. However, despite the large number of armed men, the USSR and the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan were unable to establish control in rural areas. On the other hand, Islamic mujahedeen fighters received military help by the United States and Pakistan. The mujahedeen were well organized and coordinated by seven major parties, which in 1989 formed a government-in-exile or

⁷ "Afghanistan profile – Timeline" (9.September 2019). www.bbc.com.

Afghan Interim Government.⁸

During the occupation of Afghanistan, the Soviet army suffered heavy losses and the number of their soldiers killed was more than 13,000. This development negatively affected public opinion among the Soviet population. In 1986, when the reformer Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the USSR, the Soviet government decided to replace Afghan President Babrak Karmal with the director of the Afghan Intelligence Service at that time, Najibullah Najib Ahmedzai, from the Pashtun ethnic community in eastern Afghanistan. In April 1988, the UN demanded that the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan and Mikhail Gorbachev accepted the request, and by February 1989, the USSR army withdrew completely from Afghanistan. After this period, the United States and the Soviet Union tried to find a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 accelerated this process with Washington and Moscow reaching an agreement in late 1991 to end military aid to the conflicting parties in Afghanistan. Earlier, in January 1989, the United States closed its embassy in Kabul, while the Soviet Union completely abolished its diplomatic mission, a situation that remained until the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The pro-Soviet President of Afghanistan, Najibullah Ahmadzai, after the withdrawal of the Soviet Army in 1989, did not have the full capacity to run the country and was forced to step down in March 1992.

In April 1992 began the period of unstable mujahedeen rule in Afghanistan. They formed an interim government, predominantly made up of ethnic Uzbek and Tajik military leaders. Representatives of a number of Islamic parties confronted the quest for more power and control in Afghanistan's new government. Ethnic division was a major obstacle to cooperation as their neighbouring countries (Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan) also exerted their influence and interests through the minority ethnic communities. In such a situation, the leader of the small party of Afghan National Liberation Front, Sibghatullah Mojadeddi, was appointed president in April 1992, but he remained in office until May 1992. With a new agreement between the major Islamic parties in June 1992, the leader of the largest Tajik party, Burhanudin Rabbani, was appointed president with an agreement to hold office until December 1994. However, after this term terminated, President Rabbani refused to step down and a crisis and confrontation arose between the leaders of the mujahedeen parties over who was to take power. In those political turmoil, Rabbani briefly agreed with one of the mujahedeen leaders, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar (backed by Pakistan), that he should be the President and Rabbani the Prime Minister. However, the mutual distrust continued, so that Hikmatiyar practically failed to exercise the presidential position in full capacity, and Rabbani the prime minister's likewise.⁹

⁸ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

⁹ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

During this period from 1992 to 1996 of unstable rule of the mujahedeen, the position of Minister of Defence was held by Ahmad Shah Masud, or as his supporters called him the “Lion of Panshir”. Masood belonged to the Tajici ethnic community in Bazarak, Punjab Province in north-eastern Afghanistan. He enjoyed great authority among the population because with his 5,000 mujahedeen he distinguished himself in the guerrilla struggle against the Soviet army and their supporters in Afghanistan.¹⁰ Another influential leader who was dissatisfied with the distribution of powers was Abdul Rashid Dostum, a leader of the Uzbek ethnic community from Jawzian Province in northern Afghanistan.¹¹

In that period, in parallel with the political turmoil between the leaders of the mujahedeen parties and fractions in Afghanistan (especially among the leaders of the Northern Alliance) supported by Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United States, Orthodox Islamists and students in Afghanistan mostly from rural Pashto community formed the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan (Student Movement). Most of their followers were former mujahedeen who, due to the ongoing conflict, went to Pakistan where they attended religious schools - madrassas (followers of Wahhabism). This practice of the Taliban was also in line with the conservative Pashtun tribal tradition. The Taliban considered Rabbani’s government weak, corrupt and against the interests of the Pashtun community. The Taliban used the ongoing armed conflict between the mujahedeen and the civil war between 1992 and 1996 to create a public image that they were capable of stabilizing and leading the country and launched military operations to establish control in Afghanistan’s larger provinces and cities. Thus, in 1994, they occupied Kandahar, in 1995 Herat and came near Kabul. In September

¹⁰ Grad, Marcela (2009). “Massoud: An Intimate Portrait of the Legendary Afghan Leader“. St. Louis: Webster University Press.

¹¹ Abdullah Rashid Dostum is an influential and controversial Afghan politician, leader of the National Islamist Movement of Afghanistan, which has the most influence in the northern provinces of Balkh, Faryab, Jawzian and Samangan. He is a former guerrilla leader and a general of the Afghan Army who in 2020 received the title of Marshal of the Army. By the last pro-Soviet president, Najibullah Ahmadzai, he was named “Hero of the Republic of Afghanistan” for his success in fighting the mujahedeen in the northern provinces. During the Soviet occupation, he distinguished himself in guerrilla warfare, when he led over 20,000 armed police officers in the provinces of Juzgen and Balkh and provided a kind of autonomy for the local population. In 1992, he ousted the pro-Soviet President Najibullah Ahmedzai with military forces along with Ahmad Shah Masood. He often changed allies, gave and withdrew support for certain leaders. During the power struggle between the mujahedeen factions, he was initially against Gulbuddin Hikmatiyar, and later in 1994 when President Burhanuddin Rabbani refused to step down, he supported Hikmatiyar to become president. Since 1996, along with Karim Khalili and Ahmad Shah Masood, they have been at the forefront of the fight against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. In 2001, before the United States launched attacks in Afghanistan, Dostum established cooperation with the United States in the fight against the Taliban. He is most credited with defeating the Taliban in Kunduz, Balkh and Jawzian provinces. In 2005, he was appointed Chief of General Staff of the Afghan Army by President Hamid Karzai, and later Deputy Minister of Defence. Following the victory of Ashraf Ghani in the 2013 presidential election, he was appointed his First Vice President, a position he held until February 2020. <https://www.afghan-web.com/biography-of-abdul-rashid-dostum/>.

1996, they occupied Kabul, entered the UN premises where the ousted last pro-Soviet President of Afghanistan, Najibullah Ahmedzai, had taken refuge, and carried out his public hanging in Kabul.¹²

This horrific event marked the beginning of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan which lasted from September 1996 to November 2001. During the Taliban regime, Mullah Umar was appointed supreme leader of the country. The country was almost completely isolated from the international community, and strict Islamic rules, principles and ways of living and governing were introduced. Television, listening to western music and dancing were banned. Girls were not allowed to attend school or work outside the family. In March 2001, the Taliban destroyed the monumental, centuries old Buddha statues carved into the rocky mountains above the town of Bamiyan. During their rule, the Taliban worked closely with various terrorist groups, and al-Qaeda had a stronghold in Afghanistan. In the late 1980s, al-Qaeda operated in Afghanistan and the Peshawar region of Pakistan, then relocated to Sudan in 1991, and again found refuge in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s. The success of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was directly linked to the withdrawal of the Soviet army and the strengthening of Taliban positions, as it provided them with a territory to stay, train, logistics and planning of terrorist attacks and large-scale operations. For these reasons, in October 1999, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1267, establishing the so-called Al-Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee. Meanwhile, defeated Afghan mujahedeen leaders united in the Northern Alliance continued to fight and oppose the Taliban regime and rule in Afghanistan. The most prominent mujahedeen leader in the Northern Alliance was former Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masud, who received support from the United States and some Western European countries. Masood was a serious military threat to the Taliban. In 1998, the Taliban tried to win him over by offering him the position of Prime Minister, but Masoud turned down the offer. To strengthen cooperation with the Taliban, al-Qaeda carried out an assassination on Masoud on September 9, 2001, after which he succumbed to the injuries. The assassination was a serious blow to continuing the resistance against the Taliban in Afghanistan. Some counterterrorism experts believe that the assassination, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, provided protection for al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden under the Taliban. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda operatives hijacked passenger planes to carry out terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center buildings in New York and Pentagon headquarters in Washington, D.C., while the fourth hijacked plane crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. After these terrorist attacks, the U.S. President George W. Bush declared a war on terror and called on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to hand over to the United States all al-Qaeda leaders hiding in their territory or to share their fate.¹³

¹² Ali Ahmad Jalali (2017): "A Military History of Afghanistan – From the Great Game to the Global War on Terror". University Press of Kansas. <https://www.jstor.org>.

¹³ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional

On October 7, 2001, the United States, supported by Great Britain (and with the promised support of Canada, Australia, Germany and France) launched airstrikes on Afghan territory. On November 14, 2001, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1378, which called for the establishment of a transitional government in Afghanistan and called on UN members to send peacekeeping forces to provide stability and aid to the population. On December 5, 2001, in Bonn, Germany, the UN convened a conference with representatives of the major Afghan parties and factions, particularly the Northern Alliance. After the conference, the Bonn Agreement was signed, which was also approved by the UN Security Council with Resolution 1383. With this agreement, an interim administrative authority was established in Afghanistan, led by Hamid Karzai. As a result of the Bonn Agreement, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1386 on December 20, 2001, establishing the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF), led by the NATO Alliance.¹⁴

The interim government in Afghanistan, with the support of the United States, NATO and the international community, continued its efforts to create interim institutions that will enable holding the first democratic elections. According to the tradition of the largest ethnic community Pashto, a loya jirga or a grand assembly was formed with 1550 delegates from all provinces. On July 13, 2002, they appointed Hamid Karzai¹⁵ as the head of the transitional administration in Afghanistan and elected representatives of the transitional government. With these decisions, the difficult path to stabilization of the country, to drafting a new Constitution, to constitution of central institutions and to holding the first democratic presidential elections continued. On January 4, 2004, the 502-member parliament passed the new Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. According to the Constitution, Afghanistan is an Islamic and democratic state and nation. A presidential system of government was established, with the division of power into executive, legislative and judicial. Although the Constitution does not explicitly state that it is an Islamic law, it affirms that no Afghan law “can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of Islam”.¹⁶ In the first democratic presidential election in Afghanistan in October 2004, Hamid Karzai was elected president, having won 21 of the 34 provinces. In the second presidential election in November 2009, Hamid Karzai won again and continued to

Research Service.

¹⁴ “The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020” (2020). The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

¹⁵ He is an ethnic Pashtun of the Popalzai tribe, born 24 December 1957. He was the president of Afghanistan from 22 December 2001 to 29 September 2014. He is also the leader of the Popalzai Durrani tribe of Kandahar. He served as Deputy Foreign Minister in the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani. In July 1999, Karzai's father, Abdul Ahad Karzai, was gunned down early in the morning while coming home from a mosque in the city of Quetta. Reports suggest that the Taliban carried out the assassination. Following this incident, Karzai decided to work closely with the Northern Alliance, which was led by Ahmad Shah Massoud. On 4 November 2001, American special operation forces flew Karzai out of Afghanistan for protection.

¹⁶ “Afghanistan profile – Timeline”, (9.September 2019). www.bbc.com.

serve as president of Afghanistan. In the third presidential election in September 2014, Ashraf Ghani was elected president while his opponent was Abdullah. Due to the fact that Abdullah did not recognise the election results, a national unity government was made with the mediation of the United States. According to the agreement, Abdullah acknowledged the election results and Ashraf was named president, and a position for Abdullah was created so that he would become chief executive officer of Afghanistan.

During 2014, the U.S. and NATO partners prepared to complete the ISAF mission in Afghanistan and to create conditions for continued military advice and assistance to the Afghan National Security and Defence Forces (ANOS) in another form. In this regard, the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan was reduced, the ISAF mission handed over to ANOS more than 800 military bases, as well as the responsibility of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). From 01.01.2015, the international military presence in Afghanistan continues through NATO Resolute Support Mission (RSM).¹⁷

The fourth presidential elections were held in September 2019, when Ashraf Ghani again defeated his rival Abdullah. However, Abdullah did not immediately acknowledge the election results and the official announcement of Ashraf's victory was postponed and confirmed in February 2020. To avoid a political crisis, under the auspices of the United States and its allies in May 2020, President Ashraf signed an agreement with Abdullah appointing him as head of the High Security Council and authorizing him to lead peace talks on behalf of Afghanistan with the Taliban, which had begun between the United States and the Taliban on February 29, 2020 in Doha, Qatar.

The security situation in Afghanistan is complex even after the end of the 20 years international military presence and support for building a strong Afghan National Security and Defence Force, numbering about 150,000 personnel in the Afghan National Army and approximately 130,000 personnel in the Afghan National Police. In reality, however, the government's defence and security forces cannot deal with the armed Taliban and their supporters on their own and without U.S. and NATO support. In many provinces, the Taliban controlled territory and settlements and had the capacity to carry out major armed operations.

Following the decision of the US and NATO administrations to complete the Resolute Support mission by the end of August 2021 and to withdraw NATO forces, the Taliban intensified their combat activities in all provinces in Afghanistan. This dramatic turn of events allowed the Taliban to seize major administrative centers in almost all provinces in a relatively easy way and to enter the capital Kabul with virtually no resistance and seize power. It is ironic that after 20 years of international presence and support for the functioning of Afghanistan's government institutions, the Taliban have taken power and are once again the deciding factor in Afghanistan's

¹⁷ "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan" (June 2020). U.S Department of Defence.

future, as they did in 2001.

Consequences of the war from the period of Soviet occupation, the civil war during the unstable mujahedeen rule, and armed conflicts during the Taliban six-year rule in Afghanistan have left 2 million Afghans dead, 700,000 widows and orphans, and 1 million Afghan children growing up in refugee camps outside Afghanistan.¹⁸ Despite the fact that a large number of refugees returned to the country, there are still over 2.7 million refugees outside Afghanistan (mostly in Pakistan and Iran). The Taliban takeover of Kabul in August 2021 also created a new wave of migration for thousands of Afghans.

Relations with the countries in the region and the great powers

Pakistan

Pakistan is a neighbouring country that has the greatest impact on Afghanistan's security and stability. Officially, the Pakistani leadership is committed to cooperating with the president-elect and government of Afghanistan and supports the agreement between the United States and the Taliban to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan through political negotiations. However, unofficially, Pakistan has been assisting Taliban fighters in Afghanistan and allows them to cross the border in order to take refuge on its territory. The promotion of the cooperation between Afghanistan and India is not in Pakistan's benefit, so Pakistan is taking measures and activities to prevent it. A major security, economic and humanitarian problem are the 2 million Afghan refugees still in Pakistan who are being pressured to return to Afghanistan¹⁹. Relations are also strained by Afghanistan's disagreement over the extension of part of the internationally recognized interstate border with Pakistan. The United States plays a major role in maintaining and advancing Afghan-Pakistani relations, initiating and mediating a number of economic and security cooperation initiatives. The agreement on economic cooperation and use of Pakistani road infrastructure and ports by Afghanistan is especially important. However, due to hostilities between Pakistan and India, Afghanistan is not allowed to use Pakistan's corridors to export and import goods to and from India.

Iran

Like Pakistan, Iran is Afghanistan's neighbour with a significant impact on its security. Iran has historical influence in Western Afghanistan against Afghanistan's Shiites and other ethnic groups that use the Dari (Afghan Persian) language. Iran has opposed the international presence of forces in Afghanistan, especially the U.S. military presence, which is considered a threat to its security. On the other hand, the United States accuses Iran of supporting non-Pashtun Shiite Taliban groups and pro-Iranian

¹⁸ Data was accessed in the "Defence Casualty Analysis System" on May 4, 2020.

¹⁹ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

Hazara Shiites operating in Afghanistan and allowing high Taliban representatives to take refuge and operate on its territory. Iran does not support the agreement between the United States and the Taliban to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan because it was not signed by representatives of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries which are affected by its implementation.²⁰

Iran's official policy is to develop relations with the authorities in Kabul, which has been accepted by the Afghan government. Until the return of the Taliban, the official government in Kabul tried not to be an arena for disputes between Iran and the United States. Iran has an interest in supporting Afghanistan in the fight against ISIS, because in that way it will protect itself from the activities of this terrorist group on its territory. A problematic issue between Iran and Afghanistan is resolving the status of 1 million Afghan refugees in Iran and 1.4 million Afghan migrants in that country. Iran is pushing for a faster return of some refugees, but at the same time is recruiting and using many of them in the fight against the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. In terms of economic cooperation, Iran has a constructive attitude towards Afghanistan and has provided more than \$1 billion in aid, which is used to build roads and bridges in Western Afghanistan. Iran, in cooperation with India, is building roads in Western Afghanistan, connecting Afghanistan with the Iranian port of Chahbahar in the Persian Gulf.

India

India supports the Afghan authorities and initiates regional cooperation to prevent the spread of international terrorism. India's goal is to have better relations with Afghanistan, at the expense of Pakistan, as radical Islamist organizations that find support in Pakistan could expand their operations in the territory of India. During the civil war in Afghanistan (1992-1996) between the mujahedeen and the Taliban, India provided support to mujahedeen leaders grouped in the Northern Alliance, while Pakistan provided support to the Taliban. Economically, India is one of the largest suppliers of \$3 billion in aid to Afghanistan. Support includes humanitarian aid, construction of large infrastructure facilities, assistance in education, security system and more. In 2011, Afghanistan and India signed a strategic partnership agreement.

Russia

Russia certainly does not like the military presence of NATO and the United States in Afghanistan and the wider Central Asian region, but from the point of view of the fight against international terrorism, it has an interest. In the early years of U.S. and NATO military presence in Afghanistan, Russia did not oppose the use of the northern road and air lines and corridors for the transport and logistical support of forces in Afghanistan. In Tajikistan, Afghanistan's northern neighbour, Russia has its

²⁰ "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan" (June 2020). U.S. Department of Defence.

own military base with a division of about 7,000 troops. Russia has been pursuing a policy of cooperation with the central government in Afghanistan, but also maintains ties with Taliban representatives, especially after the U.S. diplomatic initiative to start negotiations with the Taliban to resolve the conflict in Afghanistan. The United States has accused Russia of backing the Taliban, who have used their military aid in attacks on Afghans and members of the U.S. military and NATO. Relations between Russia and Afghanistan have been burdened by the Russian occupation and the ten-year military presence in Afghanistan. But over the past decade, Russia has increased its economic and social assistance to Afghanistan to more than \$1 billion.

China

China is primarily interested in developing economic cooperation with Afghanistan which includes exploitation of mineral and oil resources. It is also interested in developing transport and road corridors that pass through Northern Afghanistan and build on the Chinese One Belt, One Road. In its relations with Afghanistan, China also cooperates with its ally Pakistan, to which it helps to reduce India's influence in Afghanistan. In terms of security, China is interested in controlling the activities of Islamic extremists in Afghanistan in order to prevent their cooperation with members of the Chinese Muslim Uighur. In recent years, China has increased its assistance and cooperation with Afghanistan, for which in 2012 they signed an agreement on economic and security cooperation. Many Afghan police and soldiers are educated and trained in China, as well as over 3,000 local administrators and provincial officials. Since 2017, the border between China and Afghanistan has been secured by joint border patrols.

Central Asian States

The northern neighbours Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are also crucial to Afghanistan's stability and security, especially in the successful implementation of the United States' New Silk Road initiative, which should help Afghanistan become an economic junction between South and Central Asia.

Tajikistan

More than a quarter of Afghanistan's population is ethnic Tajiks. Tajikistan and Afghanistan have deep historical and cultural ties. Most of the mujahedeen leaders of the Northern Alliance come from ethnic Tajiks and have been at the forefront of the fight against the Taliban, with support from Tajikistan. After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, Tajikistan allowed its territory to be used for the transit of non-military assets for NATO purposes in Afghanistan, for which it received significant economic assistance from the United States.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has taken a “positive neutrality” position towards Afghanistan since the first Taliban rule. Turkmenistan has not allowed its territory to be used for logistical assistance to the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Of the total population of Afghanistan, the Turkmen ethnic community (Turkmens) make up 3%, with whom Turkmenistan maintains and nurtures close ties. Economically, the most important project is the construction of the TAPI Gas Pipeline in Central Asia (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India), which will start from the gas fields in South Turkmenistan.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is developing good neighbourly relations with Afghanistan and is particularly interested in supporting the Uzbeks who live in the northern border region of Afghanistan with Uzbekistan. Their main regional ethnic leader is Abdul Rashid Dostum, based in Mazari and Sharif. Uzbekistan has allowed the U.S. and NATO forces to use its Karshi-Khanabad and Navoi air bases to provide logistical support to NATO forces in Afghanistan. The Taliban in Afghanistan are backed by the extremist Islamist group called Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which operates in the border region between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

Natural resources and opportunities for economic development

In this chapter we will analyse what natural resources Afghanistan has, how much world and regional powers are trying to control its resources and what are the opportunities for development. Many wars and civil conflicts have hampered research and development of industry, energy sector, and economy in Afghanistan. For these reasons, Afghanistan is forced to import strategic raw materials from neighbouring countries, such as oil and gas. For years, Afghanistan’s economic and budgetary stability has relied heavily on foreign donations and aid. In the past, there has been interest from the United States in exploring Afghanistan’s natural resources. Afghan authorities offered U.S. geologists to conduct surveys to find natural resources, but because of the remoteness of the markets and the aftermath of World War II, their interest decreased. During the Cold War, the USSR increased interest in Afghanistan and in the 1960s and 1970s sent its own geologists to map and estimate Afghanistan’s natural resources. Their research resulted in the discovery of large reserves of copper, iron, chromium, carbon pipelines and rare minerals. The quantities and reserves were large and it was estimated that if they are exploited and put on the market, they will affect the world prices of these products. In fact, one of the main reasons for the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1978 was the exploitation of these natural resources. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, the United States has shown increasing interest in more in-depth exploration of Afghanistan’s natural resources. Thus, using modern and highly sophisticated technique and equipment,

radiometric and magnetic measurements were performed and gravimetric photographs were taken, with which a detailed assessment of the resources was made. By cross-referencing and comparing databases created by Soviet and British geologists, the United States confirmed Afghanistan's rich natural resources. According to estimates, Afghanistan has 3.6 billion barrels of oil, 36.5 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves and \$1-3 trillion in ore, which is enough to meet the energy needs of the country and to export²¹. Interest for Afghanistan's strategic resources also show China and India, which are successfully competing each other in the exploitation of copper, iron and oil fields, and many other resources that enable Afghanistan to enter the world mineral market.

Most of the oil fields are located in northern Afghanistan, such as the Angot oil field, which is estimated to have 60 million barrels of oil reserves and is operated by the local Afghan company Ghazanfar Neft Gas. Another oil field is Amu Darya, whose rights for exploitation were obtained by the Chinese company China National Petroleum and whose exploitation reserves are estimated at 145,000 barrels of oil per day. The Afghan-Tajik basin is estimated to have 950 million barrels of oil and 7 trillion cubic meters of gas, and the exploitation rights have been given to the Turkish state-owned company Turkish Petroleum International Company (TPIC), the Dubai oil company UAE's Drago Oil And Ghazanfar Neft Gas. A large oil field is also located in Balkh Province, with reserves of 1.8 trillion barrels of oil, and the exploitation rights have been obtained by the Chinese company China National Petroleum.²²

The United States, through the USAID program, develops gas exploration projects in northern Afghanistan. Such is the Shehbergan Gas Development project, which includes gas wells, construction of a 200-megawatt gas fired power plant and a pipeline from Shehbergan to the main regional center and town of Mazari and Sharif in Balkh Province. The research was awarded to the Turkish Petroleum International Company. Another USAID project is the development of gas filling stations and vehicle conversion for the use of compressed natural gas. In 1998, the United States supported a project to build the TAPI Pipeline in Central Asia (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India). A Los Angeles-based consortium Unocal Corporation was formed for that purpose, with an initial capital of \$7.5 billion. The consortium includes companies from the United States, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Pakistan, Japan and Turkmenistan.²³ The pipeline will run through gas fields in southern Turkmenistan, enter western Afghanistan and pass through the cities of Herat, Farah and Kandahar, to the border with Pakistan. The pipeline ends in Pakistan, with the possibility of continuing to

²¹ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

²² John F. Shroder (2014). "Natural Resources in Afghanistan: Geographic and Geologic Perspectives on Centuries of Conflict". University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA. Elsevier Science.

²³ "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security and U.S. Policy" (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

India. The United States supports Afghanistan's integration into the regional energy market. Under their auspices, Afghanistan and Pakistan signed the Transit and Trade Agreement in 2011. In 2004, the United States and Afghanistan signed the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), according to which most of Afghan exports to the United States has a duty-free treatment. The next U.S. regional initiative is the establishment of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Reconstruction Opportunity Zones, which would function as Qualified Industrial Zones, mediated by Israel and Jordan. ²⁴In addition to assisting the military, police, and security system, from 2002 to the 2021, the United States provided assistance to Afghanistan in all areas of social life. Such assistance is provided directly to the government through national support funds in health and education, through construction of road infrastructure (roads, bridges, and railways), electrification, in agriculture, telecommunications, aviation and more. Over the past 20 years, the United States has provided more than \$114 billion in aid to Afghanistan.²⁵ For example, in 2002 the aid was 909 million dollars, in 2007 almost 10 billion dollars, in 2010 approximately 15 billion dollars, in 2018 over 5 billion dollars. It is clear that the United States and the international community have made great efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and to build effective government institutions. On the other hand, due to the lack of modern technologies and insufficient development, the state cannot explore, exploit and process natural resources on its own. In that case, external influence and dependence on developed countries is inevitable. We can conclude that Afghanistan has great potential for development, which can change the negative perception of a poor and underdeveloped country with a high level of corruption. The use of natural resources opens up opportunities for the development of other industries and for the completion of road and rail infrastructure in Afghanistan. Such a development would positively affect the life and standards of the population and would limit or end wars and armed conflicts in the country. Afghanistan's economic development is one of the main ways to achieve long-term stability in the country.

Conclusion

The main goal of the paper was to find the answer to the question - What are the reasons for the centuries-old conflicts in Afghanistan and the continuing interest of the great powers?

Through the analysis of the geopolitical situation of Afghanistan, we have seen that its territory, as "crossroads of Asia", has always played an important role in pursuing the interests of the great powers and the countries of the region. After the Cold War and at the beginning of the 21st century, the rivalry between the United States, Russia, China and India

²⁴ John F. Shroder (2014). "Natural Resources in Afghanistan: Geographic and Geologic Perspectives on Centuries of Conflict". University of Nebraska at Omaha, USA. Elsevier Science.

²⁵ "Post-Taliban U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan". (2017). Congressional Research Service. Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress.

over who will establish or maintain a strategic presence in the wider Middle East region where Afghanistan has a significant geostrategic position is particularly pronounced.

The next important factor we have observed was the multi-ethnic character of the population in Afghanistan. The large number of ethnic communities, religious and cultural diversity contribute to instability and threaten the cohesion in Afghan society. The fact that all neighbouring countries have minority communities in Afghanistan settled in the border regions contributes to their interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. There are many such examples, both in the past and in the present. Division on ethnic, religious, linguistic and tribal grounds creates intolerance, mistrust and conflict. The example of the civil war between the mujahedeen and the Taliban clearly confirms this, as does the current 20-year-old armed conflict between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Building state institutions, ensuring equitable representation and inclusion of almost all major ethnic communities, is a complex process. Such multi-ethnic diversity created opportunities to the external factor to exert influence and create supporters who will work for the realization of foreign interests. Such a statement is supported by a chronological explanation of the rulers and leaders who ruled Afghanistan in the last two to three centuries. We can divide them into two groups. One group of rulers emerged from internal struggles and confrontations between ethnic groups over who would play a dominant role in government, and a second group of leaders who were enthroned with foreign help and support by the great powers. We have seen that some of the Afghan leaders tried to remain neutral or not to take sides in the confrontation of the big players, which did not always end with the desired result.

The part that explains the relations with the neighbouring countries confirms that the stability, security and the overall social life of Afghanistan, in addition to the great powers, are also influenced by neighbouring countries. The most influential are Iran and Pakistan, which maintain close ties with Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns: Iran with the Afghan Pashto-Shiites, while Pakistan with the Pashtuns who practice the traditional form of Islam - Sunni. The influence of other neighbouring countries Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan is also significant, especially in the regions of Afghanistan where parts of their peoples live.

The analysis of natural resources has shown us that Afghanistan, despite all its problems, has significant mineral resources, oil and gas fields, untapped water potentials and opportunities to use alternative energy sources. Afghanistan, as a poor country, does not have the technologies and industry to exploit its natural resources, which leads to competition and involvement of developed countries to become its dominant trade and economic partner. By looking at the geopolitical situation of Afghanistan, the multi-ethnic composition of its population, relations with neighbouring countries and the natural resources at its disposal, we came to the answer we were looking for. All of these factors, in their own way, have contributed and continue to contribute to Afghanistan's turbulent historical past, security, economic and social problems. These factors were decisive for the interests of the imperial powers in the past, for the current geostrategic interests of the great powers, as well as for the interests of the neighbouring countries and the countries in the region.

Two scenarios are possible for Afghanistan, one pessimistic and the other optimistic. Pessimistic implies the continuation of internal armed conflicts, violent rule by the Taliban, insecurity of the population, refugees, possible future military interventions, interethnic, religious and tribal divisions, the operation of radical Islamist groups, high levels of corruption, terrorism, drug production and trafficking, foreign interference in internal affairs, underdeveloped education system, large illiterate population, non-utilization of strategic natural resources and insufficient economic development.

The optimistic scenario means ending internal armed conflicts, reconciling members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban, finding a political solution to hostilities, and forming a concentrated transitional government between the Taliban and former Afghan officials. Stabilization of the state and creation of conditions for conducting democratic elections. Return of refugees, use of natural resources for future development, improvement of living and working conditions. Promoting international and regional cooperation and creating a new generation of young Afghans who will work for a better future for their country.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS IN THE MILITARY ACADEMIES

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Abstract: *The goal of the military academies is to produce highly qualified staff for the needs of the Defence Sector (Armed Forces). In order to achieve this goal, each academy developed its own techniques and methods for recruitment and selection of suitable candidates. Regardless of this goal being the same for each academy, there are certain differences in the recruitment and selection process, which are noticeable for the methods that are used to attract potential candidates, and for the positions for which the training is carried out. Another noticeable difference is the duration of the education or the training in the academy, which can be from several weeks to several years, depending on the prior educational and military training that the candidates possess. In other words, the military academies can be set up as officer schools or as higher education institutions.*

Key words: criteria, process, selection, military academy, recruitment.

Introduction

Human resource (HR) management is an important part of every organization, because it is the most responsible for implementing appropriate recruitment processes, selection of new candidates, and sustaining processes related to retaining existing employees and improving their performance. Its importance and applicability of the HR role is found in the fact that if an organization does not have properly defined recruitment and selection processes, it may end up hiring unsuitable candidates who in turn can cause problems in the work process in the future, or problems in achieving the goals of the organization.

The need for precisely defined processes for human resource management is evident in the defence sector, especially when it comes to officer positions. For this, the Defence Sector in all countries establishes military academies which provide training and education for new officers, as well as attracting candidates who possess leadership skills. In the Republic of North Macedonia, the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" - Skopje, is the only institution responsible for recruiting and training new officers. Since the improvement of the recruitment and selection process should be continuous and developmental, this imposes the need for analyzing the processes in detail and assessing the shortcomings thereof. In order to assess the adequacy of the selection process for officer candidates at the Military Academy "General

¹ Military academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" - Skopje

² Military academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" - Skopje

Mihailo Apostolski", a comparison will be conducted between the methods and techniques that are applied at the world leading military academies in the United States and United Kingdom. Following the admission trends in the leading military academy in the NATO member countries, the results derived from this comparison can be used as a developmental platform for future improvement of the recruitment and selection process for admission in the Military Academy. Furthermore, they can provide a strong basis for editing the criteria for the candidates for future officers, resulting in accepting better suited candidates, with better qualities.

MAIN BODY

The recruitment and Selection Process for candidates for new cadets in the US Military Academy "West Point" consists of the following steps³

- 1) Before applying, the candidate has to be at least 17 but not older than 23 on July 1 of the year they enter West Point, not be married, not be pregnant, not be legally responsible for support of any children. Besides these criteria, there are also medical criteria for the basic psychophysical ability and criteria for the physical readiness.
- 2) On line application – which begins when the candidate fills in the questionnaire and is the basis for creating a file for the candidate.
- 3) Applying for nomination – obtained from the Representative in Congress or from a Senator, in order for the candidate to be eligible for admission at the academy.
- 4) Fill in the West Point online forms - the admissions office reviews the questionnaires filled out by the candidates.
- 5) Consideration of nominations.
- 6) Complete testing – In this step, the candidate undergoes medical examination, fitness assessment and college entrance exams⁴. The aim of this information gathering and tests is to analyze the different abilities possessed by the candidates and to identify candidates who display the highest level of leadership skills and potential for future leaders, i.e. officers. For this, the candidates' academic success and different extracurricular activities during high school are taken into account.

Thus initially, all candidates must take an SAT or an ACT test⁵, and to achieve above average results⁶. The candidates' high school curriculum should include four years of English, college preparatory math including algebra, geometry and trigonometry, two

³ <https://www.usma.edu/SitePages/Home.aspx>

⁴ ACT PLUS Writing and/or SAT with Essay

⁵ Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT)

⁶ 2016 | Topics: Education U.S. Embassy Marshall Islands | 27 June, "Admission to the United States Military Academy Class of 2020," U.S. Embassy in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, September 7, 2016, <https://mh.usembassy.gov/admission-to-the-united-states-military-academy-class-of-2020-2/>.

years of a foreign language, two years of science, and a year of US history⁷. Besides the academic success, in addition, the candidates' leadership skills are assessed⁸. Through these criteria West Point identifies the candidates who have shown leadership skills in the past which shows that they have leadership potential. The physical fitness of the candidates is assessed through several disciplines, within appropriate time limit (overview given in Table 1).

Events	Begin time of test	Duration of event	Rest time after event	End time of test
Basketball throw	0 Minutes	2 Minutes	3 Minutes	5 Minutes
Cadence pull-ups	5 Minutes	2 Minutes	3 Minutes	10 Minutes
Shuttle run	10 Minutes	2 Minutes	3 Minutes	15 Minutes
Modified Sit-Ups	15 Minutes	2 Minutes	3 Minutes	20 Minutes
Push-Ups	20 Minutes	2 Minutes	8 Minutes	30 Minutes
One mile run	30 Minutes	Until Complete		End of Run Event

Source: Admissions Catalog of the United States Military Academy West Point, pp. 46 (available at https://www.usma.edu/admissions/Shared%20Documents/wp_admissions-catalog_2013-14.pdf)

The testing of the candidates is carried out not according to minimal number of completed exercises, or minimal result that the candidate needs to achieve, but the selection process for each discipline entails certain time limit. The candidate should strive to achieve the highest possible result within the allotted time for each discipline individually. Table 10 presents the average results obtained during the candidates' tests.

	Basketball throw	Cadence pull-ups	Shuttle run	Modified Sit-Ups	Push-Ups	One mile run
Men	20,4 meters	9	9.1	72	54	6:43 (minutes)
Women	12,5 meters	3	10	68	33	8:06 (minutes)

Source: https://www.usmma.edu/sites/usmma.edu/files/docs/Candidate%20Fitness%20Assessment%20Instructions%20%28002%29_3.pdf

⁷ Rod Powers, "Overview of West Point Military Academy," *The Balance Careers* (The Balance Careers, September 4, 2019), <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/the-united-states-military-academy-3344741>.

⁸ West Point Admissions, "How to Get into West Point: 10 Ways to Get Your File to the Top of the Pile," blog (blog, October 13, 2021), <https://www.blog.westpointadmissions.com/single-post/2017/03/01/How-to-Get-into-West-Point-10-Ways-to-Get-Your-File-To-the-Top-of-the-Pile>.

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst aims to select candidates who have potential to be officers⁹. In order to be admitted to the Academy, candidates must meet the requirements for admission to the British Army and then be able to apply to the Academy. The selection process for admission to the Academy is realized through appropriate tests and activities that are conducted during four days¹⁰. The first day is scheduled for introductory talks, written tests, psychometric tests and tutorials - conduct of outdoor assessments and planning exercise brief. The second day is scheduled for conducting interviews, outdoor exercises (group exercises and practical tasks for problem solving, training for planning exercises). During the third day, the candidates have to perform several activities: planning exercise, command task, obstacle course, lecture, individual task course. On the fourth day the candidates participate in the final exercises, which are realized through an open competition between different groups.

In order to assess the physical preparedness of the candidates for officer, four tests are defined that they need to pass during the selection process, which include:

- Shuttle run
- Other tests such as sit-ups and push-ups.
- The 1.5 mile run.
- Body Mass Index – which is also taken into account and is acceptable to be between 18 and 28.

The further recruitment and selection process is realized in three parts, i.e. trainings lasting 14 weeks, while the complete training lasts 44 weeks.¹¹ The full course is divided in three parts: First part: basic military training; Second part – development of leadership skills and academic component; Third part – testing of acquired knowledge through tactical exercises¹². Through each part of the course, the candidates acquire specific skills and knowledge, which are conditions for advancing to the next stage. Upon successful completion of the three parts of the training process, the officers become part of the British Army.

What sets Sandhurst apart from other military academies is the process of recruiting new candidates. The Army Officer Selection Board selects the applicants from active personnel which is already part of the Army. The selection methods ensure that the selected applicants display high level of capability, knowledge and skills for further

⁹ “Rma Sandhurst,” The British Army, accessed October 21, 2021, <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-schools-and-colleges/rma-sandhurst/>.

¹⁰ “Army Officer Selection,” Army Officer Selection (AOSB) - British Army Jobs, accessed October 21, 2021, <https://apply.army.mod.uk/how-to-join/joining-process/officer-recruitment-steps/army-officer-selection>.

¹¹ “Rma Sandhurst.” The British Army. Accessed October 21, 2021. <https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-schools-and-colleges/rma-sandhurst/>.

¹² *ibid.*

development as an officer in the Army. In order to identify candidates with leadership potential, the leadership skills of future officers are assessed by the Board assessing the candidates' ability to cooperate with each other, their ability to work under pressure, and their intellectual ability to cope with the assigned tasks¹³. The evaluation of the candidates for the required abilities is realized through the Memory and Attention Test (MAT), assessment of personal characteristics and assessment of mental abilities.

The test for assessing the personal characteristics is conducted through interviewing the candidate, whereby upon completion of the test a profile with the personal characteristics of the candidate is formed. The leadership potential of the candidates is also assessed by assigning a task where no leader of the group or team is appointed (leaderless tasks). This type of task makes it possible to identify candidates who will assume the role of leaders and who will make possible the successful completion of the task.

Comparative analysis of the different models for recruitment and selection of candidates for admission at the Military Academy

The recruitment and selection processes are the initial processes that aim to provide a sufficient number of suitable candidates for admission to military academies. The new candidates should demonstrate appropriate skills, abilities and knowledge in order to meet the requirements of the positions for which new staff is required. The recruitment and selection processes are developed based on the position for which the academy trains the candidates. The leadership skills and the potential for leader can be identified through the activities involved in the selection process, but also through a specifically defined recruitment process. In order to analyze the processes of recruitment and selection of the military academies a comparison was made, in addition to the comparison of the very goals of the academies in the respective defence sector. (Table 2).

¹³ "Army Officers Selection." Accessed October 21, 2021. <http://www.armyofficersselection.co.uk/psychometric.html>.

Table 2: Overview of activities in the recruitment process of the military academies

	General Mihajlo Apostolski Military Academy – North Macedonia	West Point USMA – USA	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst – United Kingdom
Online Application	Yes (Basic level)	Yes	/
Recruitment	No	Yes	/
Recommendation required	/	Yes (Senator or Representative in Congress)	Army Officer Selection Board
Benefits for attracting candidates	Yes	Yes	Yes
Admission of candidates for general positions	/	Yes	/
Admission of candidates for officer positions	Yes	Yes	Yes
Partnership with a higher education institution	Yes	/	/
Independent application	Yes	Yes	
Recruitment of candidates from the Army ranks	/	Yes	Yes
Degree of personalization in the recruitment process	Low	High	High

Comparing the recruitment process of the military academies in the USA, the United Kingdom and the Republic of North Macedonia, it can be concluded that all academies use traditional recruitment methods, and some, in addition to these, use modern methods to attract new candidates. It can be noted that most often on the academies operating in developed economies there is a higher degree of utilization of social networks and other digital channels to recruit new candidates. In this regard, the Military Academy in the Republic of North Macedonia still lags behind in the degree of utilization of modern recruitment methods. The reason for the insufficient use of social networks and digital channels is found in the fact that the required number of interested candidates is relatively smaller compared to that in the more developed economies.

Taking advantage of the benefits from applying online is evident in all of the academies. The online application of the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" is realized through sending an e-mail, which makes this academy different from the others in this comparison. Other academies allow the application process to be completed by filling in the appropriate fields and answering the appropriate questions, which leads to the conclusion that they have a more advanced application process for new candidates, compared to the online solution in R.N. Macedonia.

The recruitment process between the academies also differs in the part of the source for new candidates. Namely, the academy in the USA attract new candidates from within the Army ranks and from external sources. On the other hand, the Military

Academy in the Republic of North Macedonia recruits new candidates solely from external sources. The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst recruits new candidates from the ranks of those who have met the requirements for joining the British Army.

Recruiting new candidates from external sources provides an opportunity for mass recruitment of candidates, an opportunity for greater selection of the most suitable candidates. However, such an approach would be accompanied by higher recruitment costs. At the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the target group for recruiting new candidates is the Army staff, which means that these candidates have already gone through the selection process and basic military training. This approach can be accompanied by lower recruitment costs, as well as the admittance of candidates who are already familiar with the military activities, leadership skills and abilities needed for the Army.

Another difference which exists between the academies is in the position for which the new candidates are recruited. West Point recruits candidates for both general entry and officer entry positions. In contrast, the Military Academy in North Macedonia and Sandhurst train candidates solely for officers. Two out of the three academies considered here have established partnership with a higher education institution.

Prospective candidates would have numerous questions regarding the application and admission to the Military Academies, as well as questions about the positions in the Army. Therefore, the recruitment process should provide a way to retain candidates by answering relevant questions and directing. In this regard we can define a degree of personalization which exists in the recruitment process of the military academies in the United States and the United Kingdom. The personalized application process gives prospective candidates access to various recruitment centers, face-to-face conversations, and communication through social networks and digital channels. Unlike these academies, the level of personalization in the application process in the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" is relatively low. Analyzing the methods and approaches in the recruitment process, it can be concluded that the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" should increase the use of social networks and digital channels to attract new candidates. What all the military academies in question have in common is the fact that they all use the traditional candidate selection process, and they all identify the future leaders during that selection process. The activities for selection can test basic criteria that the candidates must meet, or criteria that require appropriate psychological and physical fitness or intellectual capacity. (Table 13)

Starting with the basic criteria, the academies have defined a minimum age limit for candidates who want to apply, which is the basic elimination criterion for all the academies under review. Deviation from the age limit criterion can be observed in the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst where there is no clearly defined age limit, since it recruits its candidates from the ranks of military personnel. Education is a

prerequisite for entry into all academies, which means that candidates must have completed secondary education or 12 years of education.

Table 3: Review of the criteria for the selection process of military academies

	General Mihailo Apostolski – Republic of North Macedonia	West Point – USA	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
Age	18 to 21 years	17 to 22 years	/
Education	High School	Above average results in high school	High School
Security measure	Yes	Yes	Yes
Success from High School	Yes	Taking tests	Yes
Success in specific subjects	Math English Language	Math English Language Foreign language	Math English Language
Testing writing skills	/	Yes	Yes
Health exams	Yes	Yes	Yes
Body Mass Index	/		28
Physical fitness test	Yes	Yes	Yes
Psychological testing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes

The selection process in the military academies in the Republic of North Macedonia, USA and the United Kingdom requires that the candidates have achieved the required success in the subjects such as Mathematics and the English language, with West Point in addition requiring knowledge of a foreign language.

The testing of candidates' writing skills is conducted at the military academies in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" has not defined such testing in its selection process, and this noted difference should be taken into account, since the Military Academy in the R.N. Macedonia trains future officers the same as the other academies.

The academies have defined certain criteria for testing the leadership potential of the candidates and use specific tests as an integral part of the selection process. An appropriate process of selection of future leaders should be composed of appropriate

tests and exercises (tasks) and it should be a process that will be able to make a full profile of the candidates, not only in terms of their physical fitness, but also in terms of their personal characteristics (intelligence, analytical skills, numerical skills, verbal skills, teamwork, etc.).

On the other hand, the process of selecting candidates with leadership skills at West Point excludes the practical exercises during the initial selection. Namely, in addition to the required success in prior education and the success achieved in the relevant tests, West Point identifies the leadership skills of the candidates based on their activities and behaviour in the past. Selection process defined in this way allows selection of those candidates who show continuity in their behaviour and ability to become leaders.

The selection process at the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" shows certain deviations from the processes applied in other academies. Namely, the selection of candidates with leadership skills incorporates the success achieved in the past (education) and the achieved results on the interview and the tests that are conducted. The selection process does not involve identifying candidates' past behaviour, except for the requirement of a certificate of no prior convictions. The most obvious difference is that the Military Academy in Skopje has not defined practical and realistic exercises within the frames of the selection process. Due to this, it can be concluded that at the moment, the academy is not able to assess the behaviour and the reasoning of the candidates during realistic exercises and their ability to take the initiative as leaders.

The similarities between the academies during the process of identifying leadership skills can be found in the part of interviewing the candidates, which gives the opportunity to create a certain profile of the candidate's personality.

For the remainder of the selection process, there is a noticeable unification of the goals and criteria for testing the candidates and identifying leadership skills. In other words, the candidates from all academies have to go through a series of psychological tests, medical tests, physical fitness tests, and interviews. Although all of the academies require mandatory testing of candidates' physical fitness, there are still some differences in terms of testing disciplines.

In addition to the psychological and medical condition, the military academies also test the physical fitness of the candidates. In order to complete the comparison of the selection process, the tests and criteria through which the assessment of the physical fitness of the candidates is performed should be taken into account. (Table 4)

Table 4: Disciplines for checking the physical fitness of the candidates

	General Mihailo Apostolski – North Macedonia	West Point – USA	Sandhurst – UK
Standing long jump	180 centimeters	/	/
Pill ups	3	9	/
Sit ups	25	72	50 sit-ups in 2 minutes
Running	1600 meters	1 mile (1600 meters) 6 minutes and 40 seconds	1,5 miles (2400 meters) 10 minutes and 30 sec.
Push-ups	/	54	44 push-ups in 2 minutes
Basketball throw	/	20,4 meters	/
Shuttle run	/	9.1 seconds	10.2
Mobile application for fitness tests			

The most differences in the selection process of the selected academies are noticed in this part. For example, the Standing Long Jump discipline is part of the selection process for the candidates for the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski", while in other academies this discipline is not included as a criterion. Deviation in the disciplines can also be observed for the push-ups discipline for the candidates of the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski". Table 14 shows that candidates in the United States and the United Kingdom should do the appropriate number of Push-Ups, while candidates in the R.N. Macedonia are exempt from this discipline. In addition, the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" does not use the Shuttle Run test, which is part of the tests for physical fitness test for the other two military academies. The Sit-ups as a discipline are used for selection in all reviewed academies. However, there are differences in terms of the results that the candidates should achieve. The candidates of the Military Academy in North Macedonia should achieve the lowest results, i.e. to do 25 sit-ups. It should be noted that the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst has a time limit within which candidates must make the required number of sit-ups (50 sit-ups / 2 minutes).

Probably the most complex way to test the candidates' fitness is carried out at the West Point Military Academy in the United States. It is interesting to note that the other academies have set minimum results that the candidates must achieve, while the

testing at West Point is realized in a different way. West Point has defined a time frame for each discipline, and the candidate should strive to achieve the highest possible score within the allotted time.

Based on the criteria for checking the physical fitness of the candidates, it can be concluded that the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" has the lowest requirements and results that should be achieved by the candidates.

Conclusion

The management of the human resources plays a crucial role in every organization's functioning. Having the best suitable people on every post is the focus and the goal of the HR management. For this to be done, the HR department should define appropriate recruitment criteria for new candidates, and processes related to retaining existing employees and improving their performance. The defence sector, as any other civilian sector, possesses the need for human resource management, especially when it comes to officer positions. One crucial mechanism for providing trained officers, and suitable candidates for manning key posts in the defence, are the Military academies. The Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" - Skopje, as the only Military Academy in the R. N. Macedonia needs to develop its candidate selection process following the trends for admission to leading military academies, NATO member states and the world. In order to assess the adequacy of the selection process for officer candidates at the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski", there is a need for their analysis and comparison with the methods and techniques that are applied at the world leading military academies in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The analysis of the processes provided a more detailed grasp of the way in which the military academies in developed countries recruit and select new candidates, and initially drew a conclusion that the recruitment and selection processes applied at the Military Academy in RN. Macedonia are similar to those of the other military academies. However, it cannot be omitted that there are some differences and shortcomings that would form the basis for further development and improvement of the processes for selection and admission of candidates.

Starting from recruitment, the application process of the Military Academy in the Republic of North Macedonia has a lower level of use of software solutions compared to the application process of other academies. The Military Academy may need to improve this part of the recruitment process. However, an analysis of the costs and the real needs to adjust and modernize the application process needs to be carried out. The reason for the need for this assessment lies in the fact that the number of candidates who are enrolled at the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" is drastically lower than those who apply in other academies under review.

Another difference that exists relates to the source of new candidates. Namely, the Military Academy in the R.N. Macedonia attracts new candidates from external sources, while the other academies recruit new candidates from external and internal sources or exclusively from the Army's internal resources (as is the case with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst). Because the Military Academy in the R.N. Macedonia recruits candidates only for officer positions, it might be appropriate to recruit and select future leaders from existing pool of human resources that would provide numerous benefits in terms of identifying candidates with leadership skills.

The next thing that can improve the selection process is the implementation of activities that would ensure a better selection of candidates with leadership skills, through practical exercises which will identify the behaviour of the candidates in real situations, working under stress, generating solutions in a short time, delegating tasks and organizing. The starting point for changing the selection process can be the selection processes at the RMA Sandhurst, which enables the evaluation of candidates in terms of their ability to impose themselves as team leaders and their ability to lead. Other aspects of improving the selection process is the test of the candidates' written skills, which is practiced at the world leading military academies, but not in the selection process at the Military Academy in the R.N. Macedonia.

Another part of the selection process that opens the possibility for further development, are the identified differences in the physical fitness test. Certain tests and disciplines for testing the physical fitness which are applied at the Military Academy "General Mihailo Apostolski" are either not applied in other academies, or require higher results. The mission of the defence sector and the military is driven by competent leaders, and all the shortcomings in fulfilling that mission is paid in human lives. That is why selecting those recognized quality leaders is the crucial job for the human resource management in the earliest phases of the process. This is where the need for continuous development of these processes arises.

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PANDEMIC SECURITY – ETIOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Aleksandar PAVLESKI ¹

Abstract: *Approximately a quarter of all deaths in the world today are due to infectious diseases. In decades and centuries past, an outbreak of infectious disease was often limited to the area in which it occurred. However, the pace of global travel, migration, and commerce has increased dramatically in recent decades, and that increase poses an increased global risk of disease occurrence. It means that the globalization process increases both risks and opportunities. The global community has been suffering recently with the newly emerged pandemic of today, known as Covid-19. In this regard, this paper analyzes the link between infectious diseases/pandemics and security. Actually, the focus of the paper is on analyzing the perception and acceptance of the pandemic as a security issue, with a special attention to the etiological aspect of pandemic threats, pandemic effects on the security and securitization of pandemics.*

Key words: *infectious diseases, pandemic, security, securitization, Covid-19*

Introduction

Treating the international spread of infectious disease as a matter of high politics is nothing new. As early as 1851 infectious diseases already became the subject of international diplomacy when delegates of the first International Sanitary Conference gathered in Paris to consider joint responses to the cholera epidemics that overran the European continent in the first half of the nineteenth century. Still, during the 20th century, the concern about controlling potential pandemics gradually receded. (Elbe, 2010)

The main reason for such approach could be located in the more dominant imperatives of avoiding the threat of wars as well as in reducing the potential for a nuclear confrontation. In this regard, the 20th century “deep addiction“ to war, coupled with important advances in medicine and public health, reinforced the view that the world was moving in a direction in which infectious diseases would eventually be controlled. As a result, the security concept has become ever narrower in its focus on the deployment of military forces in international relations. Therefore, the risk of war and violent conflict as well, has long been the centre of reflection of both security and security studies. Traditionally, this has been translated into the study of war or legally recognized armed conflicts between organized groups. (Kraues, 2010) Still, this narrower/traditional view of security has significantly changed under the globalization process influence. Actually, by the end of the Cold War such a traditional security approach had become insufficient and inadequate in explaining the new landscape of security issues and actors. As a result, a new decentralised thinking of security began to emerge. This approach was stimulated first by the rise of the economic and environmental agendas in international

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relations and later by the rise of concerns with identity issues and transnational crime. (Buzan, Waever, De Wilde, 1998)

The main feature of the decentralized security approach is supporting the expansion and deepening of security. The first one, security expansion refers to security understanding of not only the military sector, but also by incorporating the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of security. It means that security is affected by factors in all of those sectors. On the other hand, the deepening of security refers to the units of analysis and the introduction of new security reference actors or objects (besides the state). (Buzan, 1998) Specifically, in addition to the state, other important reference objects in this sense are individuals, regions and the international system.

Related to the research focus of the paper, it should be underlined that the political, economic, social and environmental dimensions of security enable the creation of a broader security vision which, among other things, includes the most important human values, such as human life and human health. Actually, there are several included important aspects of human life and dignity in such a broader security perception within all the previously indicated security sectors.

The wider and deeper security agenda on the one hand and the characteristics of the contemporary security environment on the other hand, have increasingly emphasized the importance of the new types of security of today. Such are: cyber security, food security, financial security, energy security, biosecurity and pandemic security. In this regard, it can be emphasized that the state and individuals as reference objects of security, should have equal importance, i.e. that they are equally vulnerable to the new security threats. Regarding the research issue in this paper, the main analysis focuses on the links between the pandemics and security, especially through the prism of pandemic threats, its effects on the security and the securitization process.

Pandemics threats – etiological aspects

From a theoretical point of view, an epidemic is defined as “the occurrence in a community or region of cases of an illness . . . clearly in excess of normal expectancy”, while a pandemic is defined as “an epidemic occurring over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries, and usually affecting a large number of people”. (Porta, 2014) Pandemics are, therefore, identified by their geographic scale rather than the severity of the illness.

Generally speaking, pandemics are for the most part disease outbreaks that become widespread as a result of the spread of human-to-human infection. (Doshi, 2011) Beyond the debilitating, sometimes fatal, consequences for those directly affected, pandemics have a range of negative social, economic and political consequences. These tend to be greater where the pandemic is a novel pathogen, has a high mortality and/or hospitalization rate and is easily spread. Actually, as a result of its international, cross-border nature, pandemics have the potential to weaken many societies, political systems and economies simultaneously.

According to Jones, K.E pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. Evidence suggests that

the likelihood of pandemics has increased over the past century because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment. (Jones, 2008)

The current Covid-19 pandemic shows that such trends are still present and are likely to continue and will intensify. Therefore, correctly identifying the cause of any disease is necessary for identifying the proper course of treatment. In this regard, the study of disease is called pathology. It involves the determination of the cause (etiology) of the disease, the understanding of the mechanisms of its development (pathogenesis), the structural changes associated with the disease process (morphological changes), and the functional consequences of those changes. (Britannica online, 2021)

Related to the current Covid-19 pandemic today, it could be noted that researchers recognize many different kinds of coronaviruses but not all of them cause disease. The coronavirus identified in 2019, SARS-CoV-2, has caused a pandemic of respiratory illnesses, called COVID-19. The first case of COVID-19 was reported on 1 December 2019, and the cause was the then-new coronavirus later named SARS-CoV-2. From an etiological aspect there is still no scientific answer about the origination of SARS-CoV-2. The assumptions are that it may have originated in an animal and changed (mutated) so it could cause illnesses in humans. The main aspect for such a perception is the fact that several infectious disease outbreaks have been traced to viruses originating in birds, pigs, bats and other animals that mutated to become dangerous to humans in the past.

Much is still unknown about coronaviruses, but SARS-CoV-2 spreads faster and farther than the 2003 SARS-CoV-1 virus (Asia was worst affected by the SARS-CoV-1 virus in 2003). This is likely because of how easily it is transmitted person to person, even from asymptomatic carriers of the virus. It is also significant that there are different variants of today's coronavirus. Mutations enable the coronavirus to spread faster from person to person which may cause a more severe disease. In that context, more infections can result in more people getting very sick and also creates more opportunities for the virus to develop further mutations.

As of now, researchers know that the coronavirus spreads through droplets and virus particles released into the air when an infected person breathes, talks, laughs, sings, coughs or sneezes. This is why mask-wearing, hand hygiene and physical distancing are essential to preventing Covid-19.

However, from an etiological aspect, we must distinguish between several broad categories of pandemic threats.

Namely, on one hand are the extreme pathogens that have high potential to cause truly global, severe pandemics. This group includes pandemic influenza viruses. These pathogens are transmitted efficiently between humans, have sufficiently long asymptomatic infectious periods to facilitate the undetected movement of infected persons, and have symptomatic profiles that present challenges for differential diagnosis (particularly in the early periods of infection). A second group of pathogens presents

a moderate global threat. These agents (for example, H5N1 and H7N9 influenzas) have not demonstrated sustained human-to-human transmission, but could become transmitted more efficiently as a result of mutations and adaptations. A third group of pathogens (for example, Ebola) has the potential to cause regional or interregional epidemics, but the risk of a truly global pandemic is limited because of the slow pace of transmission or high probability of detection and containment.

Pandemic effects on the security

It is without a doubt that security in its essence is a variable category. Actually, the meaning of security is dependent on the context in which it is being used and by whom it is being used as well. Compared to the traditional security concept, primarily based on the state as the main reference object, human/individual security is based on the fact that the security of each individual is essential for the creation of peaceful and stable societies. The main reference object of human security is the human being and hence its focus is the protection of individuals and groups from various threats and risks aimed at their health and life.

In this regard, human security recognizes that the personal protection of the individual and the preservation of his integrity do not come primarily from the protection of the state, but from the approach to the personal well-being and the quality of life. (Митревска, 2012)

Related to the previously mentioned, it is without a doubt that the pandemics could be also analysed as a serious security threat to human security. In that context, regarding the question on how have the links between pandemics and human security been drawn, it could be noted that the human security components are endangered, both by the very nature of the pandemic and by the manner in which the social actors exercise social functions, which violate these tenets by restricting the freedoms and rights of citizens, resulting from the introduction of restrictive measures for combating infectious diseases and pandemics.

In addition, pandemics can also be linked with national security as well. In this regard, traditional views of the association between infectious disease and security have often focused on the effect of health on military success. For example, discoveries made in the 20th century, including the tracing of the natural history of diseases, such as the yellow fever and malaria, were studied initially in an effort to protect military forces. Hence, traditional views of the relationship between diseases and security have focused on the threat of disease spreading across borders.

Still, the process of broadening and deepening the security concept increased worldwide attention about the effect of infectious diseases and pandemics on other concepts of security. In this regard linking pandemics and national security implies that the social, economic and political stability of communities (and even entire states) could be undermined in the long run by a large disease burden. The national security

dimension of pandemics can undermine economic growth, exacerbate social tensions, diminish military preparedness, create huge social welfare costs, and further weaken already beleaguered states. In countries with weak institutions and legacies of political instability, pandemics can increase political stresses and tensions. In these contexts, outbreak response measures such as quarantines could initiate violence and tension between states and citizens.

Generally speaking, we can speak of three groups of pandemic effects on the security. The first one is related to the direct mortality and morbidity initiated by pandemics. Actually, the most obvious effect of pandemics that may result in the instability of a nation or region is the toll of some diseases that have high mortality rates. Such diseases, especially if highly prevalent, can pose a direct risk to a nation security by threatening to sicken and kill a significant portion of a country's population. HIV/AIDS as well as today's Covid-19 pandemic are pandemics often cited in this regard. There are several aspects of how HIV/AIDS and Covid-19 could weaken a state to the point of instability or failure. Such are: undermining the national economy, weakening political institutions, producing new political tensions over access to life-prolonging medicines.

The second group is related with the economic loss. Actually, an outbreak of disease, or even the perceived threat of an outbreak, can have significant repercussions on the industry, manufacturing, trade and travel sector of the affected nation. The economic effects of infectious diseases—whether endemic, e.g., malaria, or epidemic, e.g., cholera, or pandemic, e.g., Covid-19, can be devastating. Many of the economic effects are indirect (e.g., loss of productivity and commerce), but there are also direct economic costs (e.g., culling of animal herds and medical costs of treating humans) that may affect security and relationships between nations in need and those able to provide assistance to control outbreaks.

Social and governmental disruption is related to the third group of pandemic effects. In this regard, it should be noted that infectious diseases cause significant social disruption through fear and anxiety about a disease (based on accurate or inaccurate information), the loss of people in key social positions due to illness or death, discrimination against groups affected by a disease, and the loss of the majority of (or entire) specific demographic groups. Since it was first diagnosed in 1981, HIV/AIDS has accounted for approximately 20 million deaths worldwide. Half of new infections occur among the 15- to 24-year-old traditionally productive segment of society. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there have been around 5 million (4.961.489) confirmed deaths as a result of Covid-19, by 27 October 2021. (WHO online 2019)

Securitization of pandemics

As a result of the wide range of negative impacts that pandemics can produce in almost all social life spheres, as well as due to their international, cross-border nature, pandemics have been increasingly perceived as a serious non-traditional security threat since the end of the 20th century.

From a historical point of view the securitization of infectious diseases and pandemics can be traced back at least as far as 1992 when, an influential report issued by the Institute of Medicine in the USA, *Emerging Infections: Microbial Threats to Health in the United States*, warned:

” . . .some infectious diseases that now affect people in other parts of the world represent potential threats to the United States because of global interdependence, modern transportation, trade, and changing social and cultural patterns . . . “. (Elbe, 2010)

Three years later, in 1995, the World Health Assembly (WHA) agreed to revise the International Health Regulations (IHR), the only international legal framework governing how WHO and its member States should respond to infectious disease outbreaks, on the grounds that revision was needed to take “effective account of the threat posed by the international spread of new and re-emerging diseases”. (WHO, 1995)

In January 2000, the United Nations Security Council considered a health issue for the first time, concluding that HIV/AIDS presented a threat to the economic development, global security, and the viability of states, while in the same year 2000, the Group of Eight (G8), at its meeting in Okinawa, Japan, acknowledged the need for an international mechanism to fund the surveillance and control of infectious diseases. (JCIE online, 2021)

Associated with the current Covid-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic with the new coronavirus Covid-19 on 11 March 2020, due to the fact that the virus had spread to several continents. In this regard, the World Health Organization sent a strong and clear message to all countries in the world that the situation with Covid-19 was extremely serious and that every country, in accordance with its set-up and health system, must begin to prepare for dealing with the crisis. From the securitization aspect, precisely the urgency about the application of urgent and emergency measures in dealing with the pandemic, initiated the Covid-19 pandemic to be posed as a security issue, i.e. as a matter of an existential threat.

Actually, according to the theory of securitization, such an approach confirms that pandemics (HIV/AIDS, Covid-19), exceed the level of the so-called politicization and that they become a securitized issue that needs to be addressed with an urgent, serious and multidisciplinary approach. In this regard, a given object/issue becomes securitized by virtue of the pronouncement of a securitizing actor, appropriately positioned, permitting it to be shifted from the order of ordinary politics to one kind or another of exceptional politics. (Burgess, 2010) Therefore, the above mentioned approaches at

international level, confirmed pandemics as existential threats, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure.

Related to the basic actors involved in the security analysis of the securitization approach, such as: referent object, securitization actor, functional actors and a public/audience that needs to be convinced and accept the necessity of securitizing a particular issue (Buzan, 1998), in the case of pandemics it can be noted that human individuals are main referent object. It is no doubt that human health and lives are directly exposed to the pandemic impact and effects. Still, we should not forget the multitude of indirect reference objects in almost all sectors that have been mentioned above. Actually, the most recent Covid-19 pandemic, which has paralyzed and transformed a world in a very short time like no other threat before, illustrates that pandemics could have a range of negative social, economic and political consequences. As mentioned above, as a result of its international, cross-border nature, pandemics have the potential to weaken many societies, political systems and economies.

In terms of the securitizing actor/s, it is specific that pandemics usually have two categories of such actors. The first one consists of the representatives of the scientific and medical field, who are usually responsible about the declaration of the pandemic as well as about the measures and activities that should be used as a response to the pandemic. The second category consists of representatives of political elites who animate the public about the problems recognized by the scientific agenda and who consequently, accept political responsibility for dealing with the problems and managing the pandemic security. Therefore, political elites create public awareness about the problem and provide common tools for solving it.

Concerning the functional actors, there are a multitude of direct and indirect actors that impact the dynamics associated with the process of pandemic management, and pandemic security in general. Still, the most prominent functional actors are the pharmaceutical industry and the medical personnel directly involved in dealing with the pandemic implications to human health and life. The pandemic management is actually a process which is directly dependent by the activities of the indicated functional actors. However, in addition to them, the group of indirect functional actors also includes all entities that are in any way involved in the control and in the implementation of the adopted measures and activities for dealing with the pandemics. Such as: the media, security forces (army and police), transport entities, commercial entities, educational entities, as well as all other social entities that are directly or indirectly involved in the implementation and observance of measures and activities in dealing with pandemics. Finally, the fourth actor in the process of securitization is the public itself, which should be convinced of the correctness of all measures and activities taken for dealing with the pandemics. The case of the current Covid-19 pandemic shows that an insufficiently convinced public can initiate a serious challenge to successfully dealing with the pandemic. Moreover, an insufficiently convinced public can be a serious trigger for initiating political instability and challenging the legitimacy of the ruling elites.

The indicated framework of securitization theory shows that pandemics can and should be considered as a security issue that needs to be addressed with a number of urgent measures which should also be accepted by the general public.

Conclusion

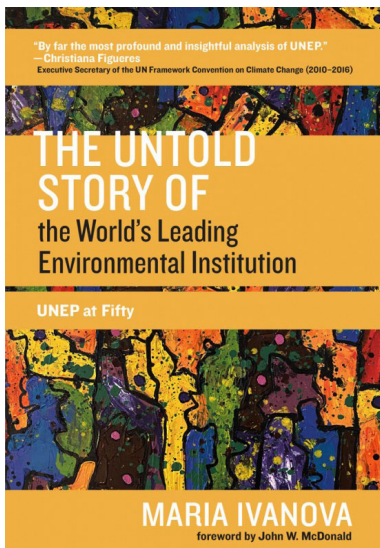
The analysis in this paper presents how pandemics could acquire a greater security salience in today's modern security understanding. Actually, today we could talk about a new evolved security paradigm that links infectious diseases and pandemics to security, recognizing the broad effects of pandemics on societies. In this regard, the most current Covid-19 pandemic has shown that despite the advanced technological and scientific development, today's modern society is still seriously vulnerable to risks and threats of a non-military nature. Actually, the lack of real information, the lack of a universal approach in dealing and preventing the pandemic combined with the different approaches of local, national and global authorities, has greatly hampered the successful management processes regarding this issue. It is often said that global problems require coordinated global solutions, but the various responses to the pandemic by states suggest a notable lack of a consensus amongst the international community.

This situation confirmed the necessity of a better and a more serious consideration and understanding of the challenges posed by infectious diseases and pandemic threats. Actually, the global threat posed by pandemics required a global approach to security as the rapid transmission of the disease in a globalized world means that capacity failures in any state could place any other state or society in peril. Therefore, it is without a doubt that in the coming period much more attention would have to be paid to the promotion and further development of the concept of pandemic security. Such a development should provide a clearer perception of the main approach on which pandemic security would be based, i.e. whether the attention would be focused on the so-called medicalization of security or on securitization of human health.

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Book review**Toni MILESKI****“ANCHOR INSTITUTION FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME” - MARIA IVANOVA**

Several concurrent environmental crises present serious governance challenges – a biodiversity crisis, a climate change crisis and a consumption and waste crisis. These global concerns demand a collective global response. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading environmental authority in the United Nations system and uses its expertise to strengthen environmental standards and practices while facilitating the implementation of environmental obligations at the national, regional, and global levels. Over the past five decades UNEP’s mission has been to provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment through inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

Operationally for UNEP, this has resulted in core substantive work in multiple areas. They are currently engaged in seven thematic areas: climate change, disasters and conflicts, ecosystem management, environmental governance, chemicals and waste, resource efficiency, and reviewing the health of the global environment. UNEP also

provides the secretariats of several multilateral environmental agreements protecting biodiversity – the Convention on Migratory Species, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the various conventions on chemicals and waste – and research bodies, aiming to convene nations and the environmental community to tackle these complex problems. Notable successes have included the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007 and the phasing out of the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances through the development and implementation of the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Since 1972, the organization has gone through several iterations and changes in order to better serve the natural world and those that depend on it. The launch of Professor Maria Ivanova's new book *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty* has been welcomed by many leading voices and contributes to the ongoing discussion – how can we better solve global environmental problems and how can the world's anchor institution for the global environment support the resolution of these multiple crises?

In the book, Ivanova offers a detailed account of UNEP's origin and history and a vision for its future. The book draws on extensive interviews she conducted with UNEP's past and present staff and leaders, two former UN Secretary-Generals – Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, and the current Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed. Ivanova provides rare insight into the organization's functioning and shows that UNEP was able to resolve problems and launch important processes when it had financial and political support. But, she acknowledges that UNEP faltered when the environment slipped as a priority, leadership waned, and connectivity was challenged.

One of the key narratives I found interesting in the book was the shift that UNEP needed to take from being a wholly normative organization to one with a strong operational role as it experienced increasing demand for concrete technical assistance and support. Based in Kenya and at the forefront of environmental challenges, UNEP was on the frontline of witnessing the tensions among a growing population, development demands, pressure on dwindling resources, degradation of ecosystems, and threats to human security. This strategy has both helped and hindered UNEP's overall effectiveness.

UNEP's origin story is a key part of the book and through its creation, Ivanova refutes the idea that the organization had an in-built "deficiency by design" narrative. She also argues compellingly that UNEP's institutional design, its form and function, is not the limiting factor and root cause of the coordination and coherence challenge. Capacity and credibility are.

Ivanova's book contributes significantly to the ongoing discussions on how UNEP can best achieve its goals. As UNEP turns 50 in 2022, governments and non-governmental organizations could seize the moment to address the challenges and create opportunities for the next fifty years and beyond. The analysis in *Untold Story* starts the

conversation. Ivanova wants to see UNEP increase its capabilities as a connector in the UN system and beyond, as a supporter of increasing awareness and capacity to address environmental concerns, and as a positive influence in launching and implementing an ambitious environmental agenda. She also argues that UNEP should become the authoritative scientific voice on the environment and pull together a dynamic platform where environment ministers can learn, supported by teams of transdisciplinary science advisers. Yet, Ivanova understands that many differing opinions on the way forward for UNEP need to be heard. Her suggestions were also outlined in a recent piece in *Nature*.¹ Ivanova points out that UNEP can be the convener, catalyst, and the champion of Earth that it was created to be, and the planet and its inhabitants will be better off.

The Untold Story has been well-received. Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (2010–2016) endorsed the book saying that “Ivanova's book, by far the most profound and insightful analysis of UNEP, combines the author's research rigor with her heartfelt humanity².” Inger Anderson, the current Executive Director of UNEP noted that, “This is a must-read for anyone interested in the genesis and evolution of global environmental governance³.”

During the launch for the book in March 2021, Professor Ivanova brought two of her PhD mentors, Gus Speth, Dean, Yale School of the Environment (1999–2009) and Daniel Esty, Hillhouse Professor of Environmental Law and Policy and Director of the Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy.⁴ Engaging the various global environmental professionals who attended the virtual launch, Ivanova, Speth, and Esty how to improve global environmental governance.

Ivanova and her team at the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston launched a website for the book inviting input and further untold stories from those who have engaged with the institution in the course of its 50-year history. Visit <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/untold-story> and engage on Twitter #UNEP50.

¹ Nature, 2021. At 50, the UN Environment Programme must lead again. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00393-5>

² Center for Governance and Sustainability, 2021. <https://www.environmentalgovernance.org/untold-story>

³ World Economic Forum, 2021. 7 ‘Champions for Nature’ tell us their must-read books <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/03/world-wildlife-day-7-champions-for-nature-must-read-books>

⁴ Book Celebration: “The Untold Story of the World’s Leading Environmental Institution UNEP at Fifty” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCxyFVjnH4A>

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International scientific journal "CONTEMPORARY MACEDONIAN DEFENCE" is a theoretical journal published by the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of North Macedonia. The magazine comes out regularly twice a year and once a year there is a special issue on a particular topic. The magazine publishes original scientific papers, reviews of books in the field of defence, security and peace, on a national, regional and global level.

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