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THE THREATS AGAINST INTERNATIONAL/NATIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract:

The concept of security has never had a static nature, but after the end of the Cold War, it has become more fluid in nature, and this feature probably will continue into the 21st century. Nowadays we are currently assisting to a redefinition of security rules and the role of international institutions.

The conception of international relations, international security paradigm, the way the threats are perceived and defined, and the methods to prevent and combat them have fundamentally changed, especially after the September 11 attacks.

Nowadays, the new hazards and threats to international security do not recognize national borders, are often interconnected and require increasingly more international cooperation to counter them. No state, no matter how powerful, has the capacity to ensure alone its invulnerability to new threats.

Key words: international/national security, threats,

1. Introduction

The twentieth century, besides being the period of the most powerful empires and their swift disappearance, the only century of the history of world wars and the most extraordinary century of technological revolution is also the time when the phenomenon of "crisis" was conceptualized in principle due large number and the overall effects of such events in many fields.

Nowadays, crisis, like war, has become a universal concept, as a consequence of the broad spectrum of risks and threats in the international security environment, potentially generating crises, causing a wide range of subsequent crisis by nature and the intensity, speed and extent of their development. Although the terms of crisis, threats, hazards are central concerns in the strategies of all international security organizations, UN, NATO, EU or OSCE, within the international environment are circulated several definitions of them, but so far, there is no unanimity in defining these concepts and especially the concept of international crisis, because of the very complex and very broad spectrum of manifestations of this phenomenon.

In recent years, the concept of international security has acquired a new, more fluid character, feature that probably will continue into the 21st century, given that there is a significant increase in the asymmetry of threats as Barry Buzan said, they becoming "increasingly more diffuse and no longer have a purely military." [1] International security environment since the beginning of the second millennium is characterized by an ever higher instability and unpredictability, the redefinition of relations between the great

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powers and increased freedom of action of regional actors (state and non-state), and the general appearance of two major ongoing opposing processes worldwide. On the one hand, it is the trend of globalization and integration in the world, especially regional - European Union, ASEAN, African Union, the Union of South American Nations, etc., and on the other hand the centrifugal tendency of fragmentation bearing the imprint of a variety of factors, most of the asymmetrical nature: ethnic conflicts, separatist or religious actions, fragile new democracy, extremism, terrorism, organized crime, arms trafficking, representing all strategic threats to international security.

The proliferation of terrorist threats, environmental, cultural, and all the other threats to international security appeals the use of various means for combating them - military and non-military, national and international. This lead to an interpenetration of the national security and regional or global security, in order to be able to ensure stability and security by cooperation and coordination mechanisms through regionalization and globalization of military and security relations. Therefore, currently we assist to a redefinition of security standards and the role of international institutions. Interconnection of the strategic global actions of the great powers decisively influences the military status of each state, its military potential, and safety. National security is closely linked to the global/regional security today, in the context of the new global order, as confirmed by the fact that the unilateral state actions have a low efficiency in terms of security.

2. The main hazards and threats to international security in UN vision

The foundation of the United Nations in 1945 aimed at "saving future generations from the scourge of war" [2]. After 60 years since then, the greatest threats to international security transcend by far the problem of classic war between states, extending with the poverty of large part of the planet, the spread of pandemics, environmental degradation, intra-state conflicts, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and not least terrorism and organized crime.

In 2004, a group of UN experts developed an important and comprehensive study - *A more secure world: our shared responsibility. Report on threats, challenges and changes in the international security environment*. Perhaps the main achievement of the report is that it presented a new vision of collective security, which aimed to promote an integrated approach to international society response to major threats to international peace and security. This is supported by the increasingly more visible interconnections between the current threats and existing vulnerabilities in the global international system and the states.

As defined in the document mentioned before, all events and processes leading to damage to life hope or to large losses of human life and undermining the states, as the basic unit of the international system are considered threats to international security [3]. The experts identified six major threats to international security, ranked as follows: economic and social threats, which include poverty, spread of infectious diseases and environmental degradation; inter-states conflicts; intra-state conflicts; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction - nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological; international terrorism; transnational organized crime.

2.1. Economic and social threats

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Current developments indicate a possible persistent worsening of food insecurity in many countries of the world, while the population growth and per capita consumption constantly increase. Land degradation, water resources issues, massive deforestation and alteration of various ecosystems stresses the confrontations for resources and exert increasing pressure on economic development. The 2006 UN report on progress regarding the project Millennium Development Goals [4] - a project launched in 2000 by which the international community pledged to make strides in eradicating poverty by 2015 - shows that no significant progress has been made in the first 6 years. On the other hand, the environmental degradation led to the enhancement of the destructive potential and the frequency of the natural phenomena that could generate disasters. More than 2 billion people on earth were affected by disasters in the last 10 years and taking into account the estimates of future climatic changes, the trend of increasing occurrence of dangerous phenomena will be accelerated.

2.2. Inter-state versus intra-state conflicts

In term of inter-states conflicts, even if during the last 60 years they have been significantly reduced [5], unresolved regional disputes in the South and North East Asia and the Middle East or Africa, remains a threat to international peace and security, with more so as they feed and often exacerbate internal conflicts.

Intra-state conflicts, including civil wars were the main type of conflict on the international arena after the World War II (about 45% of all conflicts, see fig. 1). In fact, most of the UN peace support operations occurred in the weakened or collapsed states, hit by internal and often violent conflicts. These countries not only fail in terms of ensuring the existence and development of their societies, but what is more dangerous, they become very attractive for various terrorist groups or organized crime, because of a pronounced power vacuum that appears in such kind of environment, representing in this way a double threat to regional and international security.

World regions	Conflicts			
	Extra-systemic	Inter-states	Intra-state	Internationalized
Africa	11	8	33	17
Asia	6	14	16	9
Middle East	2	10	8	7
America	1	6	6	2
Europe	1	4	21	5
Total	21	42	84	40

3. Fig. nr. 3.1. Conflicts situation between 1946 - 2005¹

Note: Extra – systemic conflicts occur between a state and a non-state group from outside its territory

2.3. Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

This threat has evolved in two ways. First and most worrying is that some states, under cover of the quality of member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, may develop illegal weapons programs or to purchase materials and equipment needed for such

¹ Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research , http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/our_data1.htm

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programs, keeping the option to withdraw from treaty when they are ready to proceed to development programs. The second problem is given by gradual erosion and possible collapse of the entire treaty, given that about 60 states are operating or developing civilian nuclear facilities and at least 40 of them have industrial and scientific infrastructure necessary to build nuclear weapons. In this respect, cases of Iran and North Korea are more than eloquent.

Regarding the radiological, chemical and biological means, the possibilities of development are even greater. For example, in the world there are currently more than 6,000 chemical facilities, some of which may be potential sources for acquisition of chemical agents. Regarding biological agents, there have already been discovered some illegal laboratories belonging to terrorist groups, where biological agents were found - ricin, which unlike anthrax, can not be treated with antibiotics and is lethal even in very small quantities. The same effect can be devastating in a possible attack with smallpox spores - a gram of such a virus could cause between 100,000 and 1,000,000 deaths. Are well known the cases of anthrax threats that followed the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Moreover, the extraordinary development of transportation means conducted to a substantial compression of time, for example the flight time on certain routes is lower than the incubation period for some infectious diseases, which makes any of the over 700 million passengers a year to become a carrier of germs of biological involuntary. For example, acute respiratory syndrome - SARS has spread to more than 8,000 people in 30 states in less than three months, killing nearly 700 of them [6].

2.4. The issue of terrorism

Up to the end of the XX century, this problem was generally treated as punctual events, case by case, but it has become a truly global issue after the events of 11 September 2001. In the past decades, terrorist groups were usually concentrated locally, had clearly defined objectives, and in most cases, financial support and logistics of some states. By contrast, terrorism has become today an international or transnational issue, characterized by the expansion of terrorist organizations at global level, which, thanks to modern means of communication and mobility of financial resources, methods and extent of actions undertaken, transcend beyond the boundaries of a country becoming multinational networks.

The internationalization of terrorism was followed by the extension of its areas of action, by the diversification of its objectives and targets as well as qualitative changes in the methods of action, even if it recourse to the same kind of actions: assassinations, kidnappings, bomb releases, armed attacks, threats, other acts that on the general plan are classified as criminal.

One of the globalization's effects is the possibility of terrorist groups to be in the public spotlight, terrorist attacks are widely publicized because of the special impact that they have on public opinion, thus bringing an indirect support to the propaganda developed by these groups. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 had a considerable impact, not only in the U.S., but on the whole context of international security, given that global economic integration generated by globalization facilitates that a terrorist attack in a part of world to seriously affect people in other regions. Relevant in this regard are the consequences of attacks on 11 September 2001, according to a World Bank study estimated that the attacks have led to an increase in world population living in poverty by over 10 million, and total cost for the world economy is likely to pass 80 billion dollars [7].

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Another important aspect is the shift from tactical to the strategic level of terrorist action. Traditionally, terrorism was a political tactic used, as shown previously, to compel the authorities to negotiate and, consequently, to gain access to the negotiation table as a recognized partner. Currently, some groups, or rather like Al-Qaida network, motivated by religious or nationalist radical and fundamentalist feelings, seek no more only the status of interlocutor in negotiations, but shift to actions whose destructive effect to lead to anarchy, to undermine morale and confidence in the value system of modern society, and to determine the governments to resort to repression and authoritarian methods to protect their citizens and, thereby, to produce extremely dangerous social and ideological tensions.

2.5. Transnational organized crime

In the last decade of the twentieth century, organized crime has ceased to be a domestic problem faced by a relatively small number of countries - Italy, USA, Japan, for example. The development of the a genuine global drug trafficking, the disappearance of barriers between East and West after the Cold War combined with the collapse of the Russian legal system, the development of free trade in Western Europe and North America and the emergence of global financial and commercial systems changed very much the context in which organized crime groups operate.

In recent years the phenomenon has got global dimensions, and we can observe an increasing coordination between criminal structures, turning them into true transnational networks with connections to the various levels of political and economic systems of some states. What is even worse is the tendency of interconnection between various organized crime groups and terrorist groups which generate a new phenomenon that can be called strategic crime, while the effects of such activities may seriously affect even the security of states.

3. The main hazards and threats in NATO vision

A distinctive approach to international security threats is that at the NATO. International security environment characteristics defined by the new Strategic Concept of the NATO in 2010 [8]. This document, which refers to security threats facing the Alliance and how it intends to address the security risks described as "broad and evolving set of challenges to the security of NATO's territory and populations" and gave special attention to threats posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of transport to the target, specially to the ballistic missiles.

Even if NATO recognizes the positive developments in the international security environment that led practically to a significant low risk level for a conventional aggression scale / large scale, it is not entirely eliminated for long-term. The Alliance notes that the "Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low", the document states that the conventional threat cannot be ignored.

Instead, it is considered a higher risk of manifestation of asymmetric threats multidimensional and difficult to predict, some of them non-military, and that the Alliance security interests can be affected by other risks of a wider nature.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is considered to become most acute in some of the world's volatile regions that could generate incalculable consequences for global prosperity and stability.

Terrorism is seen as a growing phenomenon worldwide and a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries. The threat level and the impact of terrorist

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attacks could increase as a result of the more facile access of terrorist groups to modern technology and in particular the possibility to acquire nuclear, chemical, biological or radiological capabilities.

Instability caused by the collapse of states, beyond NATO borders can also directly threaten the Alliance security. If worsening, such kind of situations can degenerate into regional crises or conflicts.

Other potential threats are considered cyber attacks that could disrupt governments, administrations, businesses and also transportation and supply networks or other national critical infrastructures.

In connection with the above issues, another threat results from the increased competition of states for strategic resources, a critical condition for ensuring a continuous national industrial performance and hence a legitimate security issue arises. Perhaps in the future, sources of potential conflicts will be the struggle for mineral resources from central and southern Africa, South America and central and eastern Asia. Hunger for energy, fueled by instability in the Persian Gulf, where the states in this area now controls two-thirds of global oil reserves, the huge resources in the Caspian area and the control over the main pipelines could be the reasons for a political and economic fight at global level.

This last threat is connected with the fact that NATO countries are increasingly dependent by the critical communication, transport and transit routes on which international trade is developed as long as the energy security of member states will probably become more and more dependent on foreign energy sources, on foreign energy distribution networks for their energy needs.

But I consider that the greatest threat could be a combination and inter-relationship of these factors, in the context of activation of terrorist groups possessing weapons of mass destruction.

4. The main threats to the European Union security.

The European Union point of view on the international security threats is between the two above, the UN and NATO. In this respect, the European Union Security Strategy [9] recognizes, as well as in the case of NATO that the risk of major conventional confrontation is very low - and unlikely to present a hierarchy similar to the new threats, which are appreciated as "more diverse, less visible and harder to predict.

International terrorism, the first threat in the EU hierarchy is considered a growing strategic threat in conditions in which terrorist groups are increasingly well supported in terms of logistics, taking full advantage of facilities offered by the development of communications and information technology and also they have often expressed a clear intention to use violence as a means for causing mass consequences.

Although appearing on the second place in the hierarchy, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is seen, in terms of destructive potential, "the greatest threat to security", given that it is estimated that international agreements in the field only slowed the spread of such weapons. An additional element of risk is attributed to developments in the field of biological weapons and delivery systems and carriers - missiles, combined with the possibility that they come into possession of extremist groups.

Another threat is the ongoing or frozen regional conflicts such as those in Kashmir, Korean peninsula or the Middle East, which directly or indirectly affect European interests.

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State collapse is considered as another major threat by its components - poor governance, corruption, and abuse of power, lack of trust in state institutions that can erode the stability of states.

Europe is regarded as one of the first target of organized crime. This is regarded as an internal problem of the union, with a strong external component, materialized in cross-border traffic of drugs, women, illegal immigrants and arms and ammunition, not excluded the potential connection to terrorist activities.

5. The main hazards and threats to Romania's national security

National security threats are perceived mainly from the perspective of a member country of NATO and the European Union. Under these conditions, the danger of a classical war and of a conventional military aggression is considered very unlikely, but the focus is put on the management of other kind of risks – asymmetrical ones, that could address the existing security vulnerabilities in the Romanian society and affect its national security and the ability to act to fulfill international obligations.

Basically the classification of the threats that may endanger national security [10] follows the European Union model, and the model defined in former NATO Strategic Concept from 1999.

The National Security Strategy from 2007 defines international terrorism, structured in cross-border networks is regarded as the most serious threat to life and human freedom, democracy and other fundamental values of a democratic community.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is another very serious threat in terms of potential damage, given that access to such resources becomes easier in terms of technology and their acquisition, and the temptation to get them increases more and more.

Regional conflicts are seen as a threat with strong implications for regional and European peace and security, the main causes of them being ethnic or religious disputes, with a strong political background. An important element is that some of these conflicts are still open in the proximity of Romanian national borders.

Transnational organized crime is a global developing threat by its increasing capacity to influence the states politics, and it is seen as a direct expression of the proliferation of negative phenomena which are amplified in the context of globalization, as well as a direct consequence of inefficient management political economic and social changes occurred in the region.

These main threats are supplemented by a list of other threats in the Romanian National Defense Strategy from 2010 [11], as follow:

- Drug trafficking and consumption,
- Maintaining a high level of instability and insecurity in the Black Sea area,
- Continuation of uncertainties in the Western Balkans,
- Fragility of the international financial system,
- Espionage and other hostile activities of intelligence services, informative activities of non-state actors aimed at influencing the decision making, including political decision, the media or public opinion,
- Proliferation of radical, irredentist and extremist manifestations that may affect the human rights and freedoms, social cohesion and inter-ethnic relations,
 - public health and pandemic risks,
 - environmental degradation and natural disasters, including those posed by climate change.

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6. Conclusions

As we can observe, there are some differences in identifying the main threats to international/ national security, but under a different name they are identified within the strategies or other basic documents of major international organizations and in the Romanian national strategy. What differs, depending on the type of organization, their interests and priorities is the hierarchy of threats.

UN, for example, as a global security organization, has, rightly, in the forefront the economic and social threats, while the specific problems of this domain affect a large part of its member states and can generate causes for the majority of other threats – intra-state conflicts and some inter-state conflicts and also the organized crime.

In contrast, NATO, by definition a regional collective defense alliance, which is currently in the process of transformation into a security organization and the European Union stress the importance of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism as the main threats, within the context that their member states do not face major problems of economic or social nature which could affect their security.

UN	NATO	EU	Romania
Economic and social threats	Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction	International terrorism	International terrorism
Interstates conflicts	International terrorism	Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction	Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction
Intra-state conflicts	Failed States	Regional conflicts	Regional conflicts
Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction	Cyber attacks	Failed States	Organized trans-national crime
International terrorism	Competition for resources	Organized trans-national crime	Conventional war
Organized trans-national crime	Conventional war	Conventional war	Other threats

Fig. 2. Comparative situation of the hierarchy of the threats to the international/national security.

In Romania's case, I appreciate that the hierarchy given in National Security Strategy was made primarily from the desire to approach and to reflect as close as possible NATO and the EU provisions in the field, than the realities faced by the Romanian state.

In the current geopolitical context, domestic and regional, less the world - which in principle I appreciate that can affect national security less than the first two, I think the order of these threats should be changed. On the first place probably should be placed the ongoing regional conflicts, frozen or potential disputes arising from ethnic disputes (Kosovo, Bosnia), religious (Kosovo, Bosnia), or geo-political (Moldova, Georgia, Macedonia). They can always escalate / re-open, with effects that go beyond the regional area - massive movements of refugees, amplification of the phenomenon of organized

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crime. Also, under special conditions, by the solutions that could be adopted - for example granting Kosovo independence, these frozen conflicts could generate the revival of separatist sentiments in Romania.

Then perhaps we should place organized crime issues - mainly manifested in corruption, and in future it is possible that in this area to add and enhance immigration, as Romania became an EU border country.

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