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Article

The Influence of the Ukrainian Conflict on Romanian, Polish and Bulgarian Security and Defence Policies

Abstract: *The Ukrainian conflict highlights the recurrent nature of conflicts in human history and their profound impact on societies. Although the post-World War II period was relatively stable, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia marked the end of this apparent stability.*

The theoretical framework of the study is rooted in realism in international relations, which focuses on power and national security. This perspective is used to understand the actions of the states involved in the Ukrainian conflict.

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The study explores the causes of the conflict and the responses from NATO and the European Union, emphasizing how the war has prompted European states to reassess defence priorities and strengthen alliances.

A significant part of the study details the specific changes in the security and defence policies of Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria. Romania and Poland have notably increased their defence budgets and requested additional NATO troops. Poland has modernized its defence infrastructure and boosted domestic arms production. In contrast,

Bulgaria has taken a more passive approach, with fewer initiatives to revitalize its defence industry.

The study's conclusions partially confirm the initial hypotheses, highlighting the increased defence budget allocations in Romania and Poland, but not in Bulgaria. There also are challenges regarding recruiting military personnel and adapting national security strategies. All in all, the responses of the states to the conflict are closely linked to their threat perceptions and specific national interests.

Keywords: *defence industry, national security, realism, security policies, Ukrainian conflict*

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war represents a turning point not only for the two states directly involved, but also for most European states and international organizations. They are thus forced to adapt to a new international environment in which the old order is challenged, and the security of citizens may be endangered. In this period marked by uncertainties and insecurity, states position themselves on one side or the other of the belligerents, depending on the interest of each individual. Considering the proximity, but also the economic ties between the European states and Russia, the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has a strong impact on the states in this area. The dynamism with which the conflict evolves, the measures and metamorphoses carried out by the Western states, the consequences at the international level and also the contemporaneity of the event represent the main arguments why studying the implications of the conflict in Ukraine is topical.

Recent trends in the re-ignition of old conflicts (Israel's armed actions in Palestine or China's maritime and aerial intimidation of Taiwan) may be an indicator of profound changes in the international system. A direct consequence of these changes is also represented by the need to modify certain policies, especially those of security and defence. The study of changes in the aforementioned policies is all the more relevant as they can represent lessons learned for similar future situations. Thus, the work will approach from the whole to the detail not only some of these policies, but also the international context in which they occurred and the structural space in which they took place. The study will be carried out in a conceptual framework that focuses on the states, their specific elements of hard power, but also their tendency to maximize the power they possess. All this in an international system of an anarchic nature. In this case, the realist framework.

In the light of these aspects, I proposed to address the nature of the changes that have taken place at the level of security and defence policies in Romania, Poland and Bulgaria, emphasizing certain elements that can be operationalized, including: GDP allocated to defence, NATO troops stationed in the reference states, the nature and frequency of procurement contracts in the field or the methods of promotion and retention of military personnel. To carry out these analyses, I will use the study of various publications. Complementarily, I will analyse the statements of European leaders or some international organizations to identify the desired and assumed trends in security and defence. Following these steps, I believe that the paper will expose the changes and reactions regarding the current European security optics. In this case, I believe that the study will highlight major increases in terms of: national purchases of military equipment, production of powders and ammunition, NATO contingents on the territory of the analysed states, military personnel recruitment campaigns, but especially in budget allocations in the system of defence.

The proposed objective of the present paper is to identify and analyse the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the security and defence policies of Romania, Poland and Bulgaria. The research question that derives from the research objective is: how does the conflict in Ukraine influence the defence and security policies of the aforementioned states?

The influence will be measured by examining the following variables:

1. Variations in defence GDP allocation, contract approval processes and contract amounts;
2. The number of NATO troops stationed in the specified countries and any requests for external support to increase the number of troops:

3. Analysis of domestic production of powders, ammunition, armaments and imports, considering both quantities and sources;
4. Evaluation of modernization programs, research innovation initiatives and their integration into the defence strategies of the selected states;
5. Examining salary structures, personnel management and the effectiveness of recruitment campaigns in the context of evolving security challenges.

From a structural point of view, this paper aims to study the implications that Russia's aggression towards Ukraine has on the security and defence policies of European states and is divided as follows: in the first part of the research, I will present the perspective of the specialized literature on the causes of the Ukrainian conflict, as well as the NATO's approach of the conflict. Following that, in the second part I will present case studies on the metamorphosis of the security policies of Romania, Poland and Bulgaria as a result of Russian aggression.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Causes of Ukrainian Conflict

In order to highlight the reality of the conflict as faithfully as possible, I will present both the reasons given by the aggressor, as well as the Ukrainian and, implicitly, the Western states' narrative. Even if the speech used by the leader of the Russian Federation is described as full of untrue aspects, contradictions or perspectives inconsistent with historical reality (Government of Canada, 2024). I believe that these arguments must be analysed and taken into account. This consideration is not an arbitrary one, but brings to the fore the "reality" by which tens of thousands of people are guided and for which 43,000 individuals sacrificed their lives (Kramer, 2023). I will begin by illustrating the Russian perspective on the events.

Thus, one of the reasons why the Russian Federation resorted to an armed conflict is represented by the fears of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe, through the accession of states in the former sphere of influence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). At the beginning of the war, Putin claimed that the invasion of Ukraine was an act of self-defence against the West (Vlămăş, 2022).

Another reason is to protect ethnic Russians in Ukraine from an alleged genocide directed against them by the Ukrainian government. To date, no conclusive evidence or statements have been brought to light to support these claims. At the same time, the similarity of the reason invoked with the one used for the outbreak of the Russian-Turkish war in 1878 should be taken into account: the liberation of Christians from the domination of Muslims. In this specific case, the real objectives were completely different, namely the construction of a port on the Black Sea, an action that would have increased Russia's influence in the region (Britannica, 2024a). On the same note, the similarity to Germany's stated reason for invading Poland in 1939 is striking, the defence of ethnic Germans in Poland from persecution by the authorities (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021). In this context, it is unexpected how Putin uses the term denazification in relation to protecting ethnic Russians in Ukraine. At first, it may seem that the only purpose of using it is strictly for the impact and substrate meaning it provides. However, through a brutal extension of the meanings of some paragraphs of the UN Charter, a justification with a tinge of legal cover can be provided for Russia's aggressive actions in relation to Ukraine. Thus, according to Article 106 of the UN Charter, "the parties to the Declaration of the Four Nations signed in Moscow on October 30, 1943 and France [...] to

undertake, on behalf of the Organization, any joint actions that may be necessary for the maintenance of peace and international security” (Codification Division Publications 2023). By ratifying the UN Charter, this article contained in the transitional security provisions gives the right to any winner of World War II, a member of the Security Council, to intervene militarily to maintain international peace and stability. This right was offered for a transitory period and in the prospect that would-be successors of the Nazis would try to retake power in Germany or resort to various destabilizing actions. Almost 80 years after the end of the world conflagration, there is no more talk of transitional security measures or Nazism. That is precisely why, at this point, the motive of defending ethnic Russians may seem like a pretext for Russia to achieve other goals, especially since the regions where the alleged genocide was reported are Donetsk and Luhansk, where two-thirds of the population are Russian-speaking (Goncharenko, 2022), and these also represent heavily industrialized areas that have significant resources. Also, in the Donetsk region is the city of Mariupol, which has access to the Sea of Azov and is also of strategic importance (Cicovski, 2022). Upon a brief analysis, a conclusion can be drawn that Russia seeks to strengthen its position by increasing its assets in terms of hard power, but these aspects remain to be clarified later by the competent courts.

Another cause of conflict that the Russian Federation considers relevant is the perception that Ukraine is an artificial state. Thus, at the beginning of the war, Putin declared that Ukraine was formed by the Soviet Union, at the will of its leader, Vladimir Lenin (Vlomis, 2022). The question can be asked: even if Ukraine were an artificial state, is this a sufficiently solid reason to invade and sentence tens of thousands of people to death? Of course, it can be argued that Russia and Ukraine had a common history, that the languages of the two states are similar, that they have the same religion and similar customs, but the culture and even the history of this space pre-dates the Soviet Union (Schwartz, 2022). In all this context, the perception of the population of Ukraine regarding their own identity must be taken into account. Thus, taking advantage of the fall of the USSR, in Ukraine, an overwhelming majority of 90% of 84% of eligible voters voted for independence in 1991 (Britannica, 2024b). All these statistics and verifiable data should at least raise a suspicion about the alleged artificial nature of the state. Not for Vladimir Putin. If such an argument can be easily debunked by a simple check from open sources, why was it even used in the first place? Perhaps because it is not its validity that is decisive, but the way in which it can be used in order to obtain further benefits. Up to this point, the way of thinking of the Russian leader fits perfectly into a realist paradigm, highlighting the determining role of the state in international politics, but especially praising the armed conflict as the only solution for solving interstate disputes.

In the next section I will highlight the causes that most Western officials and specialist publications consider to be at the root of the conflict.

One of the considerations refers to a presumptive pro-Western orientation of Ukraine. In this case, the metamorphosis of Ukrainian leaders’ policies and visions in line with the European *acquis* will eventually lead to prosperity. This result is demonstrated empirically by the successes and economic development of the states, especially the central-eastern ones, following the accession to the European Union (Ryszard and Próchniak, 2009), but also by the relaxation of the states in terms of security. A relaxation derived from the security offered by NATO membership. With the evidence of these results and a solid empirical guarantee of economic development, the choice of a western route seems self-evident. This probable prosperity, with solid democratic foundations, would set a negative example for Russia. The perspective of or-

dinary Russians on the effectiveness of EU policies and macro management could change, taking an unpleasant turn for the authoritarian regime in Moscow (Hill, 2023). In light of these possible shifts in domestic perspective, European officials floated the idea that Putin had started the war to prevent a contagion of the Russian population through identification with Western goals and ideals. A democratized and prosperous Ukraine would have set a precedent and induced the notion that anything is possible... with a different domestic approach.

At the same time, the dominant Western perspective on the causes of the conflict is correlated with the imperialist tendencies of the Russian leader. Putin has repeatedly stated that the dissolution of the USSR was one of the greatest catastrophes of the 20th century (Osborn, 2005). Consistent with his own assertions, journalists, international relations analysts, and political leaders have speculated about Putin's intentions regarding the revitalization of the USSR. That is precisely why Russia's tendencies to undermine Ukrainian sovereignty represented a solid argument in the direction of these suspicions. Furthermore, the frozen conflicts that Russia has maintained and fuelled: Transnistria, Crimea, Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and Ossetia contribute strongly to the negative image that Russia has created of how it wants to act in relative to other states. Thus, the precedents existed and the reasons as well. In short, the Western states believe that the war was caused by the tendencies and desires to change the newly established security system after the collapse of the USSR. Although informal, it can be said that the Cold War had a winner and the loser did not see fit to honour the new security commitments. Especially since these commitments put Russia in a position of inferiority on the international stage. Ego is a common vice in individuals. But the ego of an authoritarian leader can lead to wars. Despite all the alternatives for conflict management and resolution, in the end there is always the option of using force to achieve certain objectives. The reason for invading another state can also lie in the impossibility of reaching these targets, despite the immoral and profoundly inhuman nature of the action itself.

A final argument promoted in European society, which I consider relevant, regarding the causes of the conflict, is the division of unity within the continent's major organizations: NATO and the EU. Thus, in numerous online publications, the argument that Putin wanted to destabilize the Western states through the conflict in Ukraine is brought to the fore. He believed that the dependence on Russian gas will create a fierce debate within the organizations, which will lead to the avoidance of taking a quick decision in support of Ukraine, thus losing the strategic opportunity (Bugayova, 2023). Such a scenario was plausible given the difficulty with which the EU manages to take decisions. At the same time, "all NATO decisions are taken by consensus, representing the collective will of all 32 member states" (NATO 2024a). Putin bet on a decision-making deadlock. "Putin's fundamental problem with NATO was that it offered an alternative route to states that Putin believed were within Russia's sphere of influence or even control. The "colour revolutions" that so alarmed Putin were, after all, the manifestations of those countries that dared to choose the way of life, governance and values that the West represented, over Moscow. NATO threatened Russia by simply existing, promoting its own values, which undermined Russian influence over these states. But Putin saw the ability to control the former Soviet states as an essential condition for the restoration of Russia as a great power" (Bugayova, 2023). These attempts at destabilization would not have had prospects if there had not really been a real foundation regarding a lack of harmony in European organizations. This less beautiful European face has been shown during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, ignoring their own mottos of unity, freedom and equality, many of the EU states sent immigrants back to

their countries of origin (Omandi, 2021). And 9 European states chose to close their borders during that period (Rettman, 2020). In a paradigm where Putin wanted at all costs to destabilize the EU and NATO, the beginning of actions that would put the European states in the position of making difficult choices may seem like a constructive idea.

2.2. NATO's Approach of the Conflict

“The purpose of NATO is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members by political and military means” (NATO, 2022a). NATO promotes democratic values such as: human rights, equality before the law, the right to opinion, limitation and separation of powers in the state. NATO's political component focuses on providing advice and cooperation in the field of defence and security, with a view to long-term conflict prevention. There is also the unfortunate possibility that an amicable agreement cannot be reached, and at this point the military component of NATO intervenes. In this case, NATO has the necessary capabilities to undertake defence operations of the member(s) involved in the conflict. All this is carried out under Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and is exclusively dedicated to the members of the alliance. This preamble was intended to highlight the fact that NATO guarantees security only for its members. Following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, numerous hypotheses were expressed for and against NATO intervention in Ukraine. Pertinent questions and dilemmas were raised by both sides of the debate. If NATO ensures the security of its members, why would it intervene in a conflict in which no constituent state of the alliance is involved? If it decides to support one of the states, what is the limit it can reach without being directly involved? Some of the answers to these questions can be found by looking back. Thus, the essence and purpose of NATO should not be viewed through the lens of the cold terms of the constituent treaties, but in their spirit. These are best highlighted by the famous statement of the former US president, Dwight Eisenhower: “we do not maintain security establishments only to defend our property, territory or rights. We maintain security forces to defend a way of life” (NATO, 2022c).

In another light, through the prism of official documents, NATO brings to the fore the fact that the alliance was formed to serve three major purposes (NATO 1990):

- discouraging the expansion of the USSR;
- preventing the revival of national militarism in Europe through a strong North American presence;
- encouraging European political cooperation.

From this point of view, NATO had a real success. In 1991, the USSR ceased to exist. Extremist movements in Europe have not been able to return to the political forefront. Lastly, the implementation of the Marshall Plan led not only to the restoration of the infrastructure destroyed in the war, but to the construction of a systemic framework conducive to political cooperation. A framework that was the basis for the formation of the European Communities and later the most ambitious international organization, the European Union. Therefore, after a brief analysis of these three objectives, it can be stated that they have been fulfilled to a very large extent. So, what is NATO's role anymore? However, if we look in the spirit in which these objectives were proposed, the answer is relatively simple: the existence of NATO on the continent has led to the harmonization of European interests and an obvious de-escalation of conflicts. Why would you end a project that has proven to be successful?

Why does NATO support Ukraine? For the defence of a way of life, for the support of inalienable rights, because war is not the optimal solution in any situation and also because integration and cooperation are possible. Finally, NATO supports Ukraine because the status quo is challenged.

In this context, the statements of the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, are relevant: "I always emphasize that this is not charity. It is an investment in our own security and our support makes a difference on the battlefield every day" (Stepanenko, 2024). So, what is at stake is not only apparently utopian Western values, but the protection of a system. Rational calculations regarding the metamorphosis of the international scene are illustrated. Each of the actors involved in the conflict pursues its own interests, including NATO. Its immediate interest is to preserve the current established order, without ceding the rights won after the Second World War. The geopolitical implications of the conflict are not limited to the regional level. Jens Stoltenberg declared that "a Russian victory would embolden Iran, North Korea and China. That matters for the security of Europe and it matters for the security of America" (NATO 2024a). Multilateral relations between states have become so close that, at the present time, a conflict can hardly be categorized as regional. Thus, the leaders of the states have once again come to look at the events from a realistic perspective. A perspective where there are winners and losers, where win-win situations become improbable. Therefore, the calculations in terms of power, GDP, geographical settlement, population, etc. are brought back to the fore. This statement has its foundation in the statements of world leaders. In this case, the NATO Secretary General illustrated that "for a small fraction of annual defence spending, the United States helped Ukraine destroy a large part of Russia's combat capability. Without endangering a single American soldier" (NATO 2024a). Of course, no American citizens were put in danger, unlike the Ukrainian ones. In the light of these reasonings, the assiduous promotion of the concept of equality may seem demagogic. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken agrees with Stoltenberg. It states that "90% of the security assistance we have provided to Ukraine has been spent here in the United States, benefiting American businesses, workers, communities, strengthening our nation's defence industrial base" (US Department of State 2023). All these statements emphasize the exact opposite of the values that are constantly being promoted on social media, including unconditional support for Ukraine. Finally, the beneficiaries appear to be other entities as well. In addition, the support and protection of the values that NATO promotes, sometimes seem to be subordinated to the perspectives and personal values of certain characters. In this case, the support provided by the US in Europe can be withdrawn at any time or can be provided under certain constraints. The statements of possible future US President Donald Trump shed a much more nuanced light on how business can be done internationally, despite signed treaties. Thus, he specified that "no, I would not protect you. In fact, I'd encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You have to pay" (Shalal, 2024). This statement refers to a possible Russian invasion of a NATO member state that did not contribute 2% of its GDP to the Alliance's budget. Donald Trump is known for his controversial and questionable statements, but the power he can wield as President of the United States is real. Through the will of an individual, a paradigm and a system that has been contributed to for decades can be radically changed. Where else would Western values be intensively promoted? A statement of this kind can be reduced to the following form: you pay the tax, you are protected and you benefit from certain rights. So, these values are conditioned by money. A harsh

reality, but which according to ActiVote, is approved by approximately 52.7% of American voters (Allis, 2024).

In addition to the statements of various leaders on the conflict, its onset had diverse and complex implications not only at the level of NATO, but also in the case of most European states. Thus, many of these perceived Russian actions as threats to their own national security, and probably still do. An argument in this sense is represented by the expansion of NATO after February 22, 2022. In this case, starting from April 4, 2023, Finland officially becomes a member of the alliance (Chatterjee, 2022). This action comes as a result of the collective memory of the population regarding how the USSR related to Finland in the Second World War. As a result of long battles that took place during that period, Finland lost 10% of its territory, managing to remain unoccupied. Although militarily neutral, it trains approximately “21,000 conscripts annually and maintains a reserve of 900,000, with 280,000 callable personnel in case of war” (Chatterjee, 2022). It should be noted that Finland’s neutrality was implemented in 1948, representing a peace condition imposed by the USSR. In fact, the NATO-Finland partnership began as early as 1994, contributing significantly to the alliance’s efforts to promote regional security. Following the accession, Finland has already met the target of 2% of GDP allocated to defence and added another 1,340 km of land border with Russia to NATO.

The conflicts of the last period led to the change of priorities both on the part of individuals and states. We are in a tumultuous time, marked by international tensions and overlapping crises. All these elements lead to a change in thinking in relation to the events that surround us. The outlook on security and safety is changing as the fighting in Ukraine continues. This change does not only take place in the logic of each individual, but can be observed especially at the level of states and major organizations, especially European ones. The metamorphoses in the international space thus led to legislative and economic changes in the policies of the states, especially the policies related to security and defence, changes that I will summarily present in the following section.

3. The Metamorphosis of the Security and Defence Policies of Romania, Bulgaria and Poland as a Result of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

The outbreak of the Ukrainian conflict has led to a change in the perspective of states on how security should be achieved. The emergence of a new threat leads to the taking of decisions consistent with its nature. That is precisely the reason why, in order to address these emerging risks and threats, states are adopting new perspectives and directions of action. In this chapter, I will analyse legislative changes regarding security and defence in Europe, highlighting the cases of Romania, Poland and Bulgaria

3.1. Methodology

In order to carry out the research approach, I chose to go through and analyse the articles published both in Romania, but especially the publications from abroad. Furthermore, I analysed the statements of Western officials and correlated them with the actions that followed those statements. In order to suggestively highlight the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on the European states, I chose to initially carry out case studies on Romania, Poland and Bulgaria.

Afterwards, I performed a comparative analysis of the defence policies of the 3 states from a temporal point of view, in this case before and after the outbreak of the war. I concretized all this in correlation with the specialized bibliography, capturing all these elements by means of a specific theoretical framework.

3.2. Changes in Romania's Security and Defence Policy Following the Conflict in Ukraine

Like Ukrainians, Romanians went through tragic episodes as a result of the communist regimes that ruled for several decades. Memories are fresh on both sides, and the fallout from the removal of the old regimes is still reverberating. However, the trajectories of the two states were different. With great efforts, Romania managed to join the most important European organizations, NATO and the EU, while Ukraine continued a strange symbiosis with Russian Federation. These different perspectives have led to the adoption of legislation on discordant notes.

From the defence point of view, in the recent period, Romania allocated the following budgets to the Ministry of National Defence:

- 2017: 16.3 billion lei, of which 4.1 billion are personnel expenses, representing 1.7% of GDP;
- 2018: 22.5 billion lei, of which 5.07 billion are personnel expenses, representing 1.8% of GDP;
- 2019: 32.89 billion lei, of which 7.4 billion are personnel expenses, representing 1.8% of GDP;
- 2020: 34.5 billion lei, of which 7.8 billion are personnel expenses, representing 2% of GDP;
- 2021: 40 billion lei, of which 7.77 billion are personnel expenses, representing 1.9% of GDP;
- 2022: 36 billion lei, of which 7.73 billion are personnel expenses, representing 1.7% of GDP;
- 2023: 72 billion lei, of which 9.5 billion are personnel expenses, representing 2.5% of GDP;
- 2024: 95 billion lei, of which 10.2 billion are personnel expenses, representing 2.3% of GDP (MapN, 2024).

Following a simple analysis of the sums allocated for defence, it can be seen that it doubled in the year following the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. At the same time, the allocation of a 32% higher amount in 2024 compared to the previous one is a solid indication of the new trend in terms of defence allocations. In order to achieve an overall picture, it is necessary to highlight how the money allocated to provide added value in the national defence system is used. In this case, military procurement and endowment. Considering the large amounts of money allocated, but also their destination, the purchases of military-specific equipment and techniques are carried out on the basis of the *Endowment Plan of the Romanian Army*. For the period 2017-2026, the Supreme Council of Defence of the Country approved the implementation of 8 endowment programs worth 9.8 billion euros, with the involvement of the national defence industry. In addition, for the purchase of the Patriot systems, a government to government (G2G) contract was initiated with the USA (Gavrilă, 2017). In order to carry out such an approach, it was necessary to initiate and approve some legislative changes in the

field. It should be noted that at the time, G2G purchases were exempt from the offset. This exception, but also the assignment of “97% of the procurement budget on G2G agreements with the United States” (Cozmei, 2018) raised suspicions about the true purpose of paying contracts. Also, through G2G contracts with the USA, in 2018 the purchase of HIMARS artillery systems worth \$1.5 billion and the purchase of F-16 aircraft worth \$700 million was completed. At the same time, Romania bought radars worth tens of millions of dollars, as well as 8x8 Piranha V armoured personnel carriers. All these purchases sparked controversy in public opinion, following numerous speculations brought to light by journalistic investigations carried out at the time (Manole, 2022).

As a result of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, the *Endowment Plan of the Romanian Army* for the period 2017-2026 underwent certain changes. In this case, the Supreme National Defence Council approved in 2023 a new endowment plan for the Romanian Army for the period 2024-2033, which contains 15 other endowment programs. Among the purchases stipulated in the plan are listed:

- MANPDS portable anti-aircraft systems (tender cancelled in 2023);
- 90 155mm calibre self-propelled howitzers worth 2 billion euros;
- 3 self-propelled howitzer systems on tracks;
- NSM missile systems worth 375 million euros;
- Class I mini UAS drone systems;
- 48 Oerlikon Model GDF 103 guns;
- C4ISTAR systems;
- C-UAS anti-drone electronic warfare systems;
- 2 intervention star vessels for divers;
- self-propelled howitzer systems on wheels;
- 1059 lightly armoured ATBTU type 4x4 all-terrain vehicles worth 0.74 billion euros;
- anti-aircraft systems with short and very short range (SHORAD/VSHORAD) worth 4.2 billion euros;
- 249 tracked infantry fighting vehicles;
- 1 military satellite;
- 32 F-35 aircraft worth 6.5 billion dollars, with the possibility of purchasing a number of 16 more aircraft. This purchase is made in G2G format with the USA (Dumitrache, 2023).

By the time the conflict in Ukraine began, the Romanian Ministry of National Defence (MApN) had 45 ongoing endowment programs in various stages. After the conflict, CSAT approved the running of another 15 new major programs, starting in 2024 (Cozmei, 2024). Differences did not occur only at the level of endowment. Regarding the GDP allocated to MApN, in the period 2017-2022, it had 2%. The following year, according to Law 36/2022 on the state budget for 2023, MApN had 2.5% of GDP at its disposal.

The change of the security paradigm in the European space started as early as 2014, as a result of the annexation of Crimea by Russia. In order to clarify the new direction that NATO member states should take, the Warsaw Summit was held on July 8-09, 2016. Following this meeting, various initiatives were presented. Of these, the following directly targeted Romania:

- establishing a multinational unit for the integration of NATO forces in Bucharest;
- increasing NATO’s capacity to consolidate infrastructure projects and increasing the flexibility of the rapid movement of forces on the national territory;
- establishing a headquarters of a South-East multinational division;

– the positioning of the Adapted Forward Presence which resulted in the creation of the Southeast Multinational Brigade from Craiova (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016).

As far as powders and ammunition are concerned, the case of Romania is a special one. Following the fall of the communist regime in Bucharest, the entire industry of our state switched to the market economy. The large state-owned companies were privatized or, most of them, were abolished or downsized. The defence industry does not discount this post-December trend. Currently, in Romania, the main producer and exporter of military products is ROMARM

Regarding the personnel employed within the MAPN, Romania has 81,300 active military personnel and 55,000 reservists. At the same time, in the event of a mobilization, approximately 7.8 million people are eligible for military training (Global Fire Power 2024a). To reduce personnel deficit, Romanian Ministry of Defence runs numerous recruitment campaigns. Information of interest to potential candidates is posted on dedicated military social media accounts. At the same time, for the presentation of the military career, various events are organized in which civil society can participate.

3.3. Poland – a New Security Perspective

Poland is a state that has gone through multiple delicate moments throughout its existence. Thus, I remind its occupation by the German and Soviet invaders during the Second World War, but also of the communist regime established in the years 1952-1989. These periods shaped to some extent the character of the Polish population, even reaching the propagation of a stereotype regarding their characteristic hardness. This may also represent a reason why the reactions of Polish officials following the Russian-Ukrainian war were considered so harsh (Stanciu, 2023).

Leaving aside speculation about the presumed characteristics of the Polish population, I will highlight how they reacted to the outbreak of war. So, the Polish government allocated the following amounts for defence spending (Statista 2024):

- 2017: 37.7 billion zlotys, representing 1.9% of GDP;
- 2018: 41.1 billion zlotys, representing 2% of GDP;
- 2019: 44.7 billion zlotys, representing 2.2% of GDP;
- 2020: 49 billion zlotys, representing 2.4% of GDP;
- 2021: 57.7 billion zlotys, representing 2.2% of GDP;
- 2022: 73.6 billion zlotys, representing 2.4% of GDP;
- 2023: 97.4 billion zlotys, representing 3% of GDP;
- 2024: 137 billion zlotys, representing 4% of GDP.

It can be seen that before the conflict in Ukraine, Poland had stabilized its investments in the defence sector at a level around 2% of GDP. This aspect later changed, even reaching the desire of the incumbent president, Andrzej Duda, to invest 4% for defence and security needs. Moreover, he strongly requested that the other NATO member states also increase their defence contributions to 3% of GDP (Churlish, 2024). These sums of money are also to be found in the perspective of the acquisitions of weapon systems and military equipment undertaken by the Polish government.

Currently, Poland's main endowment programs are:

– the purchase of 6 Patriot anti-missile systems. This effort is part of the WISLA national program which focuses on the implementation of a complex anti-missile system. The value of the contract for 3 batteries is approximately 4.75 billion dollars (Adamowski and Judson, 2022);

– strengthening the anti-missile system by implementing stage II of the WISLA program. Thus, the American companies Raytheon and Lockheed Martin undertake to implement repair, maintenance and production facilities for LTAMDS radars and PAC-3 MSE missiles on the territory of Poland. The contract amounts to approximately 1 billion zlotys (Ministry of National Defence – Republic of Poland 2023);

– the creation of an anti-aircraft defence system capable of countering aerial threats such as cruise missiles or fighter jets within a 40 km radius. This project is implemented through the British company MBDA in collaboration with PGZ, a Polish company. The stated goal of the two entities is to create more than 1,000 long-range modular anti-aircraft missiles. The contract amounts to 4.9 billion dollars. In addition, the two entities also successfully collaborated in April 2023 when they managed to conclude a \$2.4 billion contract for short-range missiles (Ferran, 2023);

– the purchase of 43 modified armoured vehicles from the Research and Development Centre for Mechanical Devices, a Polish company. The contract is worth 179.6 million dollars, and the company undertakes that the vehicles will be delivered at the end of 2028. Also, through the same company, the Polish army will benefit from 120mm calibre ammunition for the M120 Rak self-propelled guns. It is to be delivered at the end of 2024, and the value of the contract is approximately 256.3 million zlotys (Gourly, 2023);

– purchase of 250 M1A2 Abrams SEPv3 tanks from American companies. The contract includes technical support, a logistics package, but also the training of personnel in order to use military equipment. The Abrams tanks are intended to replace the Soviet-made T-72 and PT-91. The contract is worth 4.75 billion euros (Adamowski, 2022a);

– purchase of 180 K2 tanks, 212 K9A1 howitzers and 48 FA-50 fighter aircraft. In addition, the contract stipulates that 820 tanks will be produced under license in Poland. Purchase contracts were signed with South Korean companies Hyundai Rotem, Korea Aerospace Industries and Hanwha Defence. The military equipment is to be delivered by the end of 2026, and the value of the contracts is approximately 14.5 billion dollars (Daehan, 2022);

– the purchase of missile launchers. In this case, the Polish government intends to procure 18 HIMARS systems, but also to continue the HOMAR program. No further details were given in this regard. But in the same area of missile launchers, Poland concluded a \$4.36 billion contract for South Korean CHUNMOO systems (Czulda, 2023).

The presence of foreign military personnel on the territory of Poland can be categorized as follows:

1. The presence of NATO soldiers:

– North-East Multinational Corps from Szczecin. The main objective of the corps is to take over the command of the joint military operations of the north-eastern flank of the alliance. It became operational starting from 1999, the year of Poland's accession to NATO (MNCNE, 2024);

– North-East Multinational Division from Elblag. The purpose of the division is to coordinate the activities of the Battle Groups deployed in Lithuania and Poland. The division was established in 2017 as a result of negotiations during the 2016 Warsaw Summit (MNDNE, 2024);

– Joint Forces Training Centre, Bydgoszcz. It is tasked with the training and education of alliance forces, as well as providing consultancy to a variety of entities. The centre was established in 2004 (JFTC 2020);

- NATO Forces Integration Unit. It is responsible for facilitating the rapid deployment of the NATO Response Force;
- Allied Counterintelligence Command. It has the role of detecting, preventing and neutralizing risks and threats resulting from espionage, sabotage and subversion of NATO facilities;
- Forward Presence Battle Group from Orzysz. It is composed of the 3rd Squadron / 2nd Cavalry Regiment of the USA – 857 soldiers, a Croatian self-propelled battery – 80 soldiers, a Romanian air defence battery – 120 soldiers, a British reconnaissance squadron – 140 soldiers (NATO 2019);

2. US military presence:

- The European Phased Adaptive Approach in Stages. It represents the US contribution to the missile defence system in Europe. This is installed as an integrated part of the system at the Redzikowo naval base (Judson, 2024);
- 4 battle teams deployed in Zagan, Skwierzyzna, Swietoszow, Boleslawiec. They consist of 3,300 troops, 975 wheeled vehicles, 85 tanks and 390 tracks. The disposition of these elements was a result of the 2016 Warsaw Summit and aims to improve interoperability and strengthen relations between the US and allies through these security commitments (US Embassy & Consulate in Poland, 2017);
- A combat aviation brigade with related logistic support elements. It has the mission of medical transport and providing support for multinational exercises under the auspices of NATO;
- A division headquarters in Poznan. Represents the operational centre for 4,000 US military personnel undertaking training and multinational operations in partnership with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania;
- Detachments 1 and 2 of Operational Group 52. Detachment 1, deployed in Lask, has the role of maintaining ready combat capabilities and training together with Polish counterparts. Detachment rotations include Air National Guard personnel operating F-16 and C-130 aircraft. Detachment 2, deployed in Mirosławiec, consists of MQ-9 Reaper aircraft with the role of flying over Polish territory (US Embassy & Consulate in Poland 2017).

As can be seen, the presence of the US and NATO military on the territory of Poland is multiple and diversified. Mainly, most of the deployed support elements represented measures taken following the Warsaw Summit, also in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine. At that time, the annexation of Crimea in 2014. A direct consequence of the war in Ukraine was the increase in troops on the eastern flank. Thus, the number of NATO troops deployed in Poland increased from 1,010 to 10,500 (Augstein, 2022). There have also been repeated requests by President Andrzej Duda to increase the number of American soldiers present on the territory of Poland. The requests, however, were denied by the Biden administration. The demands of the Poles do not stop there. At the end of April 2024, Duda stated that Poland is ready to host US nuclear weapons on its territory (Dress, 2024). Poland is not itself a nuclear weapon state. The US has tactical nuclear weapons in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey (Dress, 2024).

Poland faced the same problems that all former Soviet states faced: widespread corruption and a lack of know-how. Despite the similar conditions they were in at the time, some of them made decisions with positive impact in the medium and long term. An example in this direction is the defence industry of Poland. Before the 1989 revolution, Poland produced military systems and equipment of Soviet origin, in cooperation with Czechoslovakia, including: T-54,

T-55 and T-72 tanks, thus becoming the most equipped non-member Soviet state of the USSR (Lorincz, 2022). After the regime change, the defence sector was not privatized, but methods of revitalization and modernization were tried. Initially, the old armament factories began to produce their own tanks, the Twardy. The solution was insufficient and precarious, and the first substantial reform took place only in 2001. This aimed to modernize anti-aircraft systems, lightly and heavily armoured vehicles and Mi024 combat helicopters. At the same time, in 2003, a contract was signed for the production of Rosomak model armoured vehicles of Finnish origin. It should be specified that production took place in factories in Poland (Lorincz, 2022). Over time, companies appeared in the defence industry with Polish capital. They had small production contracts. Among them is the Lucznik armament factory. The strategy that Polish companies relied on was buying licenses from abroad and nationalize the purchased equipment.

In terms of military personnel, like Romania, Poland faced a period marked by mass desertions from the national defence system. Thus, in 2022, approximately 9,000 soldiers chose to leave the system in various forms. To address this issue, President Duda proposed and adopted the Homeland Defence Law that simplifies the recruitment process of new candidates for defence structures. The government authorities proposed through this mechanism that the number of troops reach 300,000 people (Tilles, 2022). On the other hand, the program was considered a real success. In this case, 13,742 new soldiers were recruited through it in 2022 (Tilles, 2023). However, another issue is brought to the fore: the soldiers who left the system were qualified and experienced people, while the new recruits do not have comparable skills in this field. An example of this is the *Train Like a Soldier program*.

3.4. Bulgaria's Answers to the Ukrainian Conflict

Accession to NATO and the EU played a very important role in Bulgarian metamorphosis. Thus, Bulgaria was forced to gradually adopt various legislative changes in most areas. Defence was one of these, leading to the Bulgarian army becoming interoperable with the other NATO armies.

The war in Ukraine represented a critical moment, and the response of the Bulgarian state materialized including changes in the budget allocations for the army, as follows (O'Neill, 2024):

- 2017: 1.31 billion leva, representing 1.22% of GDP;
- 2018: 1.75 billion leva, representing 1.45% of GDP;
- 2019: 3.95 billion leva, representing 3.13% of GDP;
- 2020: 2.1 billion leva, representing 1.59% of GDP;
- 2021: 2.34 billion leva, representing 1.52% of GDP;
- 2022: 2.45 billion leva, representing 1.51% of GDP;
- 2023: 3.47 billion leva, representing 1.87% of GDP;
- 2024: Bulgaria's defence chief, Admiral Emil Eftimov, strongly supports an allocation of 2.5% of GDP. To date, the Bulgarian rulers have not reached a consensus on the amount they should allocate in 2024 (Yordanov, 2024a).

In order to make a comparison of the budgets allocated in the period 2017-2024 to defence in Bulgaria, I will rely on statistics, not on the statements of some temporary politicians in office. Therefore, following the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, Bulgaria did not allocate a much higher amount to defence than in previous years. In terms of GDP, the difference was only 0.36%, much smaller compared to other NATO states.

However, equipping the military is one of the main objectives of the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence. To address this issue, the Bulgarian government developed and adopted the Defence Capability Development Program of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria 2032, or Program 2032 for short (Metodieva, 2021). It includes major procurement programs including:

- purchase of 183 Stryker combat vehicles worth 1.37 billion dollars. They are produced and delivered by the American company General Dynamics Land Systems (Adamowski, 2023);
- the purchase of 8 F-16C/D Block 70 combat aircraft for the amount of 1.3 billion dollars. These were to replace the MiG 29 aircraft, out of service in 2023. The 8 aircraft are to be delivered in 2025 (Adamowski, 2022b);
- the production and purchase of 2 patrol vessels from the German naval manufacturer Fr. Lurssen Werft GMBH & CO.KG. The first vessel is in production and is to be delivered in 0225, while the second vessel is stipulated to reach the end of 2026 (Bivol, 2023);
- the purchase of submarines, the modernization of own frigates and the development of the operational capacity of a Command for Communications and Information Support and Cyber Defence. All of these are in the draft stage. Concrete actions in this direction could not be identified (Metodieva, 2021);
- equipping F-16 fighter aircraft through the purchase of 3D radar. At the moment, the contract is in the stage of appointing the supplier. Companies such as Lockheed Martin, Leonardo, Elta, Indra and Thales are entered in the competition. It is estimated that the value of the contract is around 221.7 million dollars, and the delivery date of the devices was agreed to be 2025 (Nikolov, 2023).

The military contingents located on the territory of Bulgaria are the following:

-1 multinational battle group in Kabile. It became fully operational on 1 March 2022 with the initial transformation of the 42nd Bulgarian Mechanized Battalion. It was metamorphosed by the substantial contribution of Italy which deployed a number of approximately 740 soldiers. The total strength is approximately 1,000 people from Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Italy, North Macedonia, Turkey, USA and Montenegro (NATO 2022b). As a result of Russia's constant aggression on Ukraine, the Bulgarian government requested to increase the group's strength to 1,500 soldiers (Nikolov, 2024).

Following the Second Black Sea Conference, hosted in Sofia, Secretary of State Antony Blinken brought to the fore the strategic importance of the Black Sea and the need for NATO to address its security. Next, Blinken affirmed the necessity of forming new maritime bases in Romania and Bulgaria. The Bulgarian state would host 5,000 NATO soldiers. A first step in this direction was the establishment of the Black Sea Mine Action Group, formed by Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria (Yordanov, 2024b).

The procurement activities of the Bulgarian military are not only carried out through foreign-owned companies. Thus, in order to arm its own military, the Sofia government relies on the contribution of Bulgarian companies in the field.

In terms of personnel, Bulgaria has 37,000 military personnel and 3,000 reservists. In the event of a conflict, approximately 2.6 million people can be recruited (Global Fire Power 2024b).

The salary level of the military depends on numerous factors, including specialization, completed studies and the time worked in the Ministry of Defence. In 2024, the average salary is 2,000 leva. The military vocation, for certain categories of personnel, can be remunerated better than most jobs in other fields. However, there is constant dissatisfaction with the level of pay among the military, which has led to a staff shortage of around 20% (Ozturk, 2023).

3.5. Results

Changes in security and defence policies were closely correlated with the perspective with which each individual state viewed the conflict. Some of these have chosen to allocate more money to defence, initiate major endowment programs, and try to satisfy staff with certain benefits. Others opted for a passive reaction, taking advantage of certain considerations on the international stage. Of course, the interests of each individual state must be taken into account, but also defining elements such as population, geographical location or economic power.

4. Conclusion

The declared objective of the European institutions was to promote and perpetuate peace, European values and the well-being of citizens in the European space, including by ensuring strict compliance with international law (European Union, 2016). It was flagrantly violated by the Russian Federation when it decided to carry out military actions against another sovereign and independent state, Ukraine. The years preceding the conflict were marked by significant periods of disarmament, through compliance with the provisions of treaties such as the New Start Treaty, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe or the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). These apparently successful processes have led to the formation of new visions of how states' policies can be developed, emphasizing cooperation and collaboration. In a space thus created, the interests of various state and supra-state actors seem at least convergent. The sudden change of paradigm, as an effect of the Russian-Ukrainian war, brought back to the foreground visions that previously seemed outdated. In this case, the leaders of the European states highlight realistic perspectives. They were implemented within the defence and security policies by increasing the GDP allocated to defence, recruiting new military personnel or by starting extensive procurement and endowment processes of the national armies.

In the case of Romania, Poland and Bulgaria, the conflict in Ukraine led directly to the governments' attempts to increase the power they have, that power defined by Morgenthau as including the "technological, economic and military capabilities" (Morgenthau, 1993: 115) held by a certain state. Thus, within the limits of their own economic possibilities, each of the 3 states tried to increase the amounts allocated for defence. Worth noting is Poland's attempt to double this amount. At the same time, the acquisitions of military technique and equipment increased and were diversified according to the needs of each army. National arms and ammunition production capabilities are flourishing or in the process of being revitalized. The emphasis falls more and more on the national interest. States begin rearmament, contrary to the values they promote.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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