Romanian Intelligence Studies Review

ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE STUDIES REVIEW

No. 2(30)/2023

Bucharest
2023

CONTENT

INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY
IN THE 21ST CENTURY

OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE: AN OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND HUMAN RIGHTS AFFECTED AS A CONSEQUENCE

Ainara BORDES PEREZ*

Abstract:

Open Sources Intelligence's (OSINT) landscape has gone through a rapid evolution in the information era. Volumes of open-source information have never been so broad and high, and today's technology is able to monitor interesting topics, contrast and match new data with old, spot early signs and discover previously unknowns, patterns and relationships at a level never seen before. This has not gone unnoticed by Law enforcement authorities (LEAs) and intelligence services (SISs), which, slowly but steadily, have embraced this new environment. OSINT is today exploited by LEAs and SISs for all types of intelligence needs, starting from (near) situational awareness, to investigatory and preventive purposes.

The rapid evolution has, nevertheless, created new, and exacerbated existing operational challenges. Assessing reliability against online data manipulation and disinformation has become a great challenge in the Internet era. While advanced technology is needed to extract and analyse the sheer volumes of data, measuring the outcome of these tools is not easy due to difficulties in traceability, pre-existing human and algorithmic bias, the institutions' need for secrecy and the existing opacity around the vendors and their products. All those challenges can result in inaccurate OSINT products being later used for decision-making. Those, when used by SISs and LEAs, can affect by extension human rights such as the right to freedom from discrimination and the right to a fair trial.

This article analyses those operational challenges and their subsequent impacts on human rights. It does so by doing a comprehensive literature review on the topic through academic articles, national and international institutional reports, and newspaper articles. The study focuses on concrete problematic activities involving the creation and use of current OSINT products and describes examples that are not limited to one jurisdiction. Structuring both the OSINT operational challenges and their

---

* Ainara Bordes Perez is a dual PhD candidate at "Mihai-Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy & University of Malta. Her primary research interests concern Open Source Intelligence and its impact on human rights, email: ainara.bordes.17@um.edu.mt

subsequent impacts on human rights is the novelty of this article. While some academics have addressed several of those challenges affecting advanced mining technologies overall, addressing the operational challenges and their impacts from a single focal point – OSINT, is novel. Addressing them in a structured manner is a necessary first step to carve up the landscape for a potential subsequent legislative evaluation of how to address those operational challenges and their impacts on human rights.

Keywords: *Open Source Intelligence, OSINT, human rights, Law Enforcement, Intelligence Services, operational challenges.*

Introduction

Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) has undergone a thorough and rapid evolution in the last decades within security and intelligence services (SISs) and law enforcement authorities (LEAs). Its role in the Ukrainian war is the latest example of it. From monitoring and translating foreign radio broadcasts and newspapers on the brink of World War II, OSINT capabilities have expanded exponentially over the last thirty years. The creation of the Internet and dynamic user-generated platforms have vastly increased the amount of openly available data online and have created a growing interest among the public and private sectors to approach these data for different purposes.

This interest has also stimulated technological developments aiming to exploit this data, and advances in software have enabled the processing[1] of openly available online data in unprecedented ways. Thanks to today's data mining and analytic tools, SIS and LEAs can collect high volumes of data and analyse them to discover previously unknowns, patterns and relationships at a level never seen before (Bernal, 2016, p. 5; Tavani, 2008, pp. 139-140). Furthermore, today's commercial off-the-shelf products (COTs) are able to offer customised toolkits to SISs and LEAs tailored to their needs, which usually may include multiple software functionalities together, impacting every step of intelligence creation. These toolkits can continuously feed datasets and monitor open

---

[1] This article uses the word "process" or "processing" in accordance with the definition provided by the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). "Processing" according to the GDPR means any operation or set of operations performed on data or sets of data, such as collection, analysis, and sharing.

sources, contrast and match new data with old, and spot early signs in different areas of interest or targets. Also, these COTSs usually integrate further modelling, simulation, and visualisation techniques, allowing the OSINT analyst fluidly to transit between methods and reasoning strategies, interrogate data, and test hypotheses (Akhgar et al., 2015).

SISs and LEAs have – slowly but steadily – embraced these new technologies as today's OSINT capabilities have been perceived as valuable at all levels of intelligence (Rolington, 2013, p. 52; Wells & Gibson, 2017, p. 94). OSINT is currently being used by SISs and LEAs for (near) situational awareness, investigatory, and preventive purposes. It is also employed for the oversight of ongoing events and in evaluating their risks, gaining in-depth insight into a person of interest, group or a phenomenon, detecting early warnings, and combined with other sources, inferring patterns to make predictions on criminality and threats (Wells & Gibson, 2017, p. 94)

This rapid evolution of OSINT capabilities has nonetheless opened the debate surrounding the potential risks new means and uses of OSINT can involve for human rights. OSINT has traditionally been perceived as having no impact on human rights, and apart from information security and intellectual property issues, the (side) effects of OSINT have received little attention in the literature until recently (Eijkman & Weggemans, 2013, p. 289) However, the new OSINT setting is both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the "traditional" OSINT, and the potential impacts of the new techniques are also new.

This report aims at studying those impacts, focusing on the risks deriving from technical and practical challenges of the OSINT process as we know it today[2]. Challenges such as difficulties in assessing reliability and accuracy of the data, or bias in collection and analysis, can result in inaccurate OSINT products being later used for decision-making. When used by SISs and LEAs, these compromised OSINT products can affect, by extension, human rights such as the right to freedom from discrimination

---

[2] Other impacts on human rights are instead inherent in today's OSINT practices due to its nature as a surveillance mechanism. The mere fact of collecting, aggregating, analysing and taking decisions of the (OSINT) outcome can affect the rights of citizens by its very nature. The latter is however out of scope for this article due to constraints in space.

or the right to a fair trial. This article analyses those risks and subsequent impacts by focusing on concrete problematic activities involving the creation and uses of current OSINT products, and deploys examples that are not restricted to one state of jurisdiction. The methodology used for it is qualitative in its nature, focused on analysing existing literature review (academic articles and institutional reports) and several newspaper's articles on the topic. The novelty of this article resides in its structuring of the impact that operational OSINT has on human rights. While there exist, studies focused on single risks or impacts of some of the challenges mentioned in the article, having these impacts analysed from a single focal point (OSINT) is novel. Addressing them in a structured manner is a necessary first step to carve up the landscape for a potential subsequent legislative evaluation of how to address those operational challenges and their impact on human rights.

Bearing this in mind, this study starts with a brief overview of the dependencies of the OSINT environment and its evolution over time (section two). It continues with an analysis of the challenges in reliability and accuracy of today's OSINT products (section three and four). It later examines these challenges all together within the greater OSINT production process (section five) and the study finalises with an analysis of how human rights are affected as a consequence of all the aforementioned (section six).

Dependencies of a good OSINT product

The OSINT creation process is dependent on (i) the nature of its open sources, (ii) the environment in which these exist, and (iii) the state-of-the-art technical capability of transforming open-source data/information into intelligence. These three factors affect the way in which validation and reliability of sources are assessed, and they also impact in the analysis of accuracy of the content (NATO, 2001, pp. 23-24). Validation, reliability and accuracy assessments play an important role in the later analysis of the OSINT product, which ultimately impacts decision-making. Therefore, an analysis of the current challenges on source validation, reliability and accuracy is also an analysis of the current challenges of the final OSINT products and their uses.

If we think of the period prior to the Internet, the main open sources used for intelligence were traditional media (radio broadcasts, television and newspapers), together with limited published material from public institutions (e.g., censuses, cadastres when public), maps, journals, academic papers, and a few human experts and observers (usually) in the field (Minas, 2010, p. 11). These sources were usually limited, unidirectional, multilingual, and especially in the case of traditional media, widely spread. These characteristics posed (and some still pose) certain challenges to OSINT, and subsequently shaped the OSINT production process and its attributed value. For example, the unidirectionality and wide-reaching scope of traditional media often encouraged both state and non-state actors to use these sources to broadcast political propaganda (Mercado, 2004). By extension, this made it hard to ascertain the accuracy of the material, and generated a mistrust in open sources that still remains in certain minds (Pallaris, 2008, p. 3). Likewise, the multilingual nature of the sources has always posed difficulties in understanding foreign content (an important task in attempting to gain insights into a country/region from the local perspective). To overcome this challenge, language skills became very valuable among staff (Pallaris, 2008, p. 3).

The later development of the Internet significantly changed this scenario. The Internet not only brought an exponential increase in available sources, but also extended the type of sources and their characteristics. Advances in the Internet connection (3G, 4G and 5G), the blossoming of user-generated content platforms, and technological advancements such as smartphones, shifted open sources from offline, limited and unidirectional, to online, multi-directional and dynamic, from which today's individuals acquire information, share ideas and interact with each other daily (Hobbs et al., 2014, p. 1).

This new environment generated a new range of opportunities for SISs and LEAs, but it has also created new challenges for the OSINT process, and exacerbated the old ones. The large volumes of available data, the constant motion of online sources, and the ubiquitous nature of the information coming from everywhere and everyone, in all languages and language varieties, have become huge challenges for SISs and LEAs, where separating valuable data from "noise" or "misinformation" has

become both difficult and time-consuming (Hogue, 2023, p. 110; Pallaris, 2008, p. 2; Perrot & Cadenza Academic Translations, 2022, p. 68). The following sections focus on those challenges using the changing nature of open sources and the evolving technical capacities as mainstay.

Difficulties assessing reliability

It can be said the Internet has given voice to all individuals around the world. Some academics call this phenomenon the "democratisation" of information (Tewksbury & Rittenberg, 2012). According to R.D. Steele and Arno Reuser, this "democratisation" enables the creation of a self-governance structure of society where all individuals take part, and where OSINT can be derived from the participation of the whole society (Reuser, 2018; Steele, 2010, p. 45). One of the most prominent outcomes of this concept is "crowdsourcing"[3], where individuals either voluntarily report to the authorities a specific ongoing situation, or the authorities ask for collaboration to citizens through online channels (Couts, 2011; Flacy, 2011; Hogue, 2023, pp. 108–109).

However, the outreach capacity of the Internet can also create several challenges. The "echo effect" is one of those, which can make it easy to misjudge the importance of a certain topic or the reliability of certain information (Akhgar et al., 2016, pp. 105–106) Indeed, the Internet allows individuals to distribute material widely through secondary sources. This can involve individuals replicating the news on other websites, and posting their views around the topic on social media, websites and blogs. The high volume of secondary sources can subsequently overshadow valuable material, and give priority to erroneous information within SISs and LEAs.

Secondly, the evolving cyberspace and associated technologies are also a great opportunity for different entities, organisations, and mainly states for strategic and military purposes (See Molander et al., 1996). Open sources are not free of it, and current open sources are being used to spread ideologies and versions of the truth in the so-called

---

[3] Used today as a common practice among LEAs in Europe and abroad. One of the most prominent examples is the one happening now in Ukraine, where the government set up a chatbot on Telegram (Stop Russian War) and an Android app "Bachu" where citizens were encouraged to share their information with the authorities.

"hybrid warfare"[4]. While the use of open sources for political propaganda is not new, today's online social media are the perfect environment to weaponize these sources to influence citizens through disinformation campaigns, political propaganda and even shaping war narratives (Gunneriusson, 2021; Hogue, 2023, p. 110; Perrot & Cadenza Academic Translations, 2022; Tolz & Hutchings, 2023).

While this report will not discuss hybrid warfare and the strategies to tackle it[5], from an OSINT perspective, current technological capacities allow different entities to spread disinformation that can involve a variety of different tactics. Some of these tactics are the use of bots to widely distribute a particular piece of news or fake news, the microtargeting of disinformation campaigns through aggressive profiling tactics, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) techniques to create not only false written content, but also audio-visual content called "deep fakes" that can be used to imitate faces and mimic human behaviours (European Parliament. Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services, 2021, pp. 7–8, 27, 129–130). OSINT practitioners are being challenged daily by these and other methods of manipulation where assessing reliability can become very difficult.

While there already exist several techniques to detect disinformation and its diverse ramifications, not every LEA or SIS possesses the same technical capabilities. Time constraints can also limit the useability of this technology (Babuta, 2017, p. 18). Moreover, some manipulation techniques such as deep fakes are relatively new and while there are now nascent techniques to verify their authenticity, these are still in their early stages (Masood et al., 2023). To give two examples of the impact deep fakes can make in the international context, in April 2021 several European Members of Parliament (MEPs) were targeted by deep fake video calls imitating the Russian opposition figure, Leonid Volkov. According to the real Volkov, this was an "attempt by the Kremlin to discredit protest leaders and Putin's number two enemy in Russia" (Roth, 2021). Additionally, on March 02, 2022, a deep fake of the

---

[4] For a deeper understanding of 'Hybrid Threats' see Giannopoulos et al., 2020.
[5] For an overview of what the European Commission is doing against disinformation see the European Commission's website on the topic: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/online-disinformation (last accessed on 09 September 2023).

president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, appeared in different social media channels announcing his surrender to Russia's invasion (Simonite, 2022; Wakefield, 2022). While this seems to be the first deep fake ever used in an armed conflict and was easily detected, it does show what is potentially to come in the open-source arena.

Difficulties assessing accuracy

Assessing accuracy of today's open source material is also subject to increased challenges for a number of reasons. To start, the fact that the Internet gives voice to everyone, everywhere, all time, has exacerbated the old challenges of multi-lingualism, while creating new ones on multi-contextuality. While some foreign languages are difficult to translate, beyond language, understanding culture-based and context-based nuances of user-generated content has become a greater challenge to LEAs and SISs. Much open source information (OSINF) is no longer articulated in a "neutral" or "journalistic" style made by a few experts in communication, and open sources are no longer used just for informative (or propagandistic) purposes. Instead, OSINF is now overwhelmingly generated by users with different backgrounds, contexts and feelings, and publications can easily go from informative purposes to opinion sharing, jokes, social interactions and expressions of personal feelings. As a result, sources such as social media, forums and blogs are today full of data/information where the context can vary enormously and meanings of the words and sentences can differ accordingly (Akhgar et al., 2016, pp. 96-98). Exaggerations, humour, sarcasm, irony, are in combination with dialects, slang, typos, non-standard grammar and erroneously-chosen automatically-corrected words. And the latter are only some of the existing resources and language alterations to be found online.

As a consequence, learning a foreign language is often not enough for an agent to be efficient in preventing, detecting and investigating crime/threats for national security within OSINT. Understanding the context in which this information is published is as essential as understanding the language itself. Understanding the context can however be challenging for agents. Diversity and inclusion among staff members could partially help to improve this within the organisation.

The challenge can partially be exacerbated by the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools. The rapid evolution on information technology has been followed by a parallel blossoming of computer technologies aiming at exploiting the new online scenario, and a variety of software tools help today's SISs and LEAs collect large amounts of data, and process, monitor and analyse them. However, these tools can also create new challenges and exacerbate the old ones as explained below.

NLP tools can be very useful for the monitoring of large volumes of available sources, and today's LEAs and SISs already employ them for a variety of purposes such as to monitor ongoing events, to help detect anomalies that may lead to criminal offences or threats, and to improve the efficacy of border controls (Akhgar et al., 2016, pp. 96–103; Williams & Blum, 2018, pp. 23–27). However, accurately identifying meanings of words in context is not an easy task for these tools. The nuances/resources of language may go beyond the tools' design parameters and when an online post or comment is wrenched from its context and fed into a database, this can lead to mangled meaning and harmful consequences, especially when SISs and LEAs decision-making is involved (Edwards & Urquhart, 2016, p. 306). For instance, the word "rape" can mean something completely different in gaming and among hackers from the usual sexual offence meaning (Miller, 2014). If there is contextual confusion, this can lead to serious consequences for users and their police records or profiles (Edwards & Urquhart, 2016, p. 306). Although examples are difficult to go public, one that went viral is from 2012, when two British tourists were detained and deported for tweeting that they were going to "destroy America" during their holidays. According to the affected individuals, the word "destroy" meant "to get trashed and party" within the context. (Huffingtonpost, 2012). Another example is a teenager being arrested for a tweet taken out of context around Pink's concert in 2013. According to the teen, she wanted to make a reference to Pink's song "Timebomb" when she tweeted "I'm ready with my Bomb. Time to blow up #RodLaverArena Bitch" (SocialNewsDaily, 2013). Last but not least, an example of a mistranslation of an NPL tool is the one published by The Guardian in 2017. A Palestinian man got arrested by Israeli police after an artificial intelligence-powered translation tool erroneously translated an Arabic "good morning" into an

English "hurt them" and Hebrew "attack them". According to The Guardian, no Arabic-speaking officer had read the actual post before the arrest (The Guardian, 2017).

Additionally, as pointed out above, the Internet is full of information which is in other than text format. Useful information can also be found in images, videos, audios, and more. While a proper understanding of text-format data can trigger challenges explained above, other formats can be even more challenging. A good example of these challenges is the technical difficulties faced by SIS and LEAs to accurately identify individuals from images disclosed in open sources.

SISs and LEAs may find it valuable to detect, recognise and verify a human face from a digital image or a video frame found in open sources. This can be done manually or by the use of emerging developments on Facial Recognition Technology (FRT). FRT has existed for decades, nonetheless, it has become more prevalent and innovative in recent years due to the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within its systems. Some SISs and LEAs have already used COTs with FRT based on datasets filled with open-source images/videos or with the ability to scrape (near) real-time social media platforms (BuzzFeed News, 2021; The New York Times, 2021). However, the use of AI-based FRT raises significant concerns from an ethical, legal and accuracy perspective (European Data Protection Supervisor, 2022; European Parliament Resolution 2020/2016(INI), 2021; ClearView AI Inc Enforcement Notice, 2022). The following lines look into the concerns related to the accuracy of this technology.

Several studies have demonstrated that current AI-based FRT can have up to 20% error rate when images are captured from real world settings, against their advertised 0.1% error rate with high quality images obtained from settings such as cooperating subjects taking pictures in good lighting (Grother et al., 2019a). When results are broken down by gender and skin colour, numbers get even worse. Studies have concluded that today's technology is significantly less accurate at recognising individuals with darker skin, especially dark-skinned women (Grother et al., 2019b; Najibi, 2020), where the error rate can go up to 34% (Buolamwini, 2017). If these erroneous outcomes are later used by LEAs and SISs, the implications for individuals' fundamental

rights can be profound. To give some examples, in the US there have been three reported instances of false arrest based in part on facial recognition technologies (Detroit Free Press, 2020; The New York Times, 2020a, 2020b). The three cases were later wrongly corroborated by witnesses, which leads to the investigation on the individuals' behaviour in regard to challenging automated decisions Another example is the one happened in the Rhode Island (US) of 2019, where a student suffered death threats due to a facial identification tool that wrongly flagged him as a suspect in the Sri Lanka bombings (Ivanova, 2020).

On the legal perspective, in Europe, facial recognition is considered biometric data[6] and falls under the special categories of data that require a restricted use and protection[7]. Nevertheless, in the legislative framework there is no specific provision for the uses of AI-based FRT and its potential harmful consequences to fundamental rights. The Council of Europe (CoE) issued guidelines on the uses of FRT in January 2021[8] but these have not yet been put onto an explicit legal basis in most of the signatory countries. In parallel, the European Commission (EC) has published a proposal for an Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulation (AI Act or AIA)[9], where remote biometric systems such as FRT using AI are a central concern. However, the proposal must still go through

---

[6] The definition of "biometric data" is understood in this article according to the definition provided by the GDPR, where it means personal data resulting from specific technical processing relating to the physical, physiological or behavioural characteristics of a natural person, which allow or confirm the unique identification of that natural person, such as facial images or dactyloscopic data.

[7] See Art. 6, Modernised Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data, 2018; Art 9 GDPR; Art. 10, Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the Protection of Natural Persons with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data by Competent Authorities for the Purposes of the Prevention, Investigation, Detection or Prosecution of Criminal Offences or the Execution of Criminal Penalties, and on the Free Movement of Such Data, and Repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA, 2016.

[8] Consultative Committee of the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, Convention 108, Guidelines on Facial Recognition, 2021.

[9] Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Laying Down Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and Amending Certain Union Legislative Acts, 2021.

consultations within the EU before its adoption, so there is no solid legal basis for this technology yet in the EU.

In the meantime, more research is needed to explore the specific reasons of FRT's gap in accuracy. One of the studied factors is the lack of diversity in training images and benchmark datasets, which leads to biased outcomes that can ultimately result in discrimination and abuse. This risk is indeed not unique to AI-based FRT, and bias (human and technical) is a central concern in any software.

All individuals have pre-existing knowledge, experiences and societal understanding of the world that affect their decision-making processes, either consciously or unconsciously. The design of data-mining/analytics is not different, and humans' subjectivity plays a role in the design of algorithms. This means that the outcome of a software is dependent on the humanly biased algorithms. In the case of AI-based software, after the initial design phase, AI tools are trained on pre-defined sample data that enables them to recognise relevant patterns from new data. However, the decision of which training data set to employ is also a human decision that is not risk-free from bias[10].

Regulatory bodies have tried to solve this problem adding several pre and post measures to automatic decision-making processes. One of the most prominent is including human oversight to the process[11]. This means that results of the software are later interpreted by an analyst, who should assess the tool's decision and adjust the outcome of the software if necessary. However, this solution may be missing a relevant factor: again, human bias. While the analyst might be able to adjust or "correct" technical errors or "algorithmic-bias" in the tool, it can introduce a second layer of human bias (Dencik et al., 2015, p. 52). This can be particularly relevant when referring to software outcomes. As mentioned by Lorna McGregor, the degree of deference granted to an automated recommendation is generally high, and individuals may be reluctant to go against it (McGregor et al., 2019, p. 317). There is a general perception (or "bias") that an algorithm is neutral or more accurate than a human being. This perception combined with the

---

[10] While training data can be chosen with unconscious human preconceptions or bias, other factors such as the availability of data can also affect.

[11] See Art. 22 GDPR an Art. 14 or the EU Proposal for the Artificial Intelligence Act.

difficulty in explaining why an algorithmic recommendation or decision is overturned may render human oversight ineffective.

Indeed, even ignoring the technical and human bias, understanding how advanced data mining/analytics (AI-based or not) work is difficult for analysts when data architecture systems become vast and highly interconnected. These difficulties to understand (and subsequently explain) the outcome of an algorithm is called the "black-box effect" (Dencik et al., 2015, p. 51). This, combined with the need for secrecy of SISs and LEAs, makes ensuring accountability (and accuracy) a challenging task (Eijkman & Weggemans, 2013, p. 293; Patel et al., 2019). If we combine the above with the fact that OSINT can sometimes be provided by private entities, other state agencies, and/or international partners, tracing the source and its subsequent modifications is a complex task making accuracy one of the greatest challenges for OSINT (Wetzling & Dietrich, 2022).

In conclusion, a diversity of factors affects the proper validation and reliability of sources, as well as the accuracy of OSINF and the OSINT outcome. Some of these challenges are specific to OSINT, others are not, and affect the technology used for it. The table below summarises those challenges:
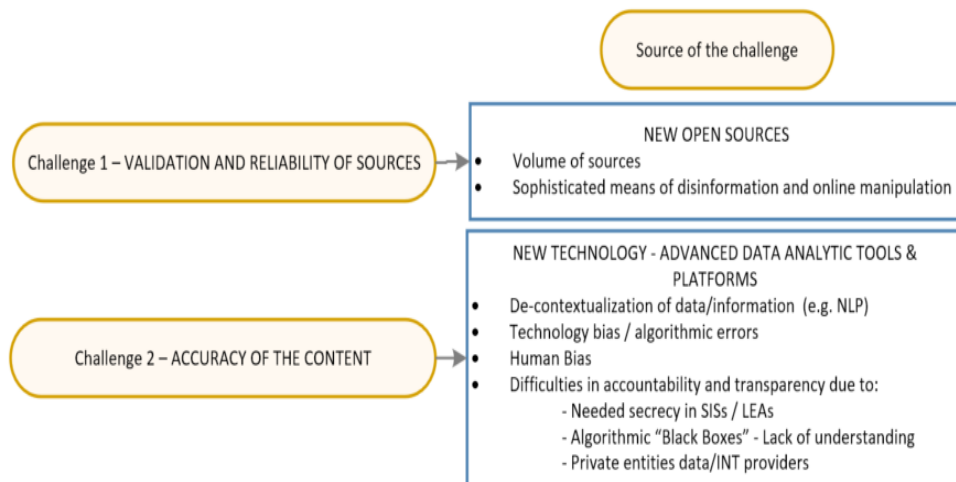
Figure 1: Today's OSINT production challenges (author's idea)

Challenges can be interconnected one to another, and some of them (e.g., disinformation and online manipulation) can affect both validation/reliability and the accuracy-assessment of the material. In addition, none of them are a new discovery of this report. They are all well documented, and experts in the field are trying to overcome them through technical, regulatory or ethical means. However, none of the challenges has a fully satisfactory solution yet, and all together create the biggest challenge from a human rights perspective: the use of a compromised OSINT product by law enforcement and/or intelligence services for decision-making impacting human rights as a result. The following section maps the challenges in the OSINT production cycle and the report finalises with an analysis of the human rights affected as a consequence.

Mapping the OSINT challenges within the greater intelligence cycle

The practical challenges analysed in the previous two sections can be found on each and every stage of the OSINT creation process. If we take the intelligence cycle[12] as benchmark to describe the OSINT production process, we can tell that the challenges on validation and reliability of sources occur in the collection phase, when a piece of material is considered valuable and is collected as a consequence of a compromised decision (human or technical).

---

[12] As aforementioned, the "intelligence cycle" is one of the best-known models describing the intelligence production process. It is an American model created in 1920s designed as a mechanical sequence similar to a manufacturing production-line principle and it consists of five main phases: (1) User's requirements and planning; (2) Collection and retention of raw material; (3) Processing of the material; (4) Analysis of processed material; and, (5) Dissemination or delivery of the end material to the users. In practice, the cycle is not always unidirectional and different phases can be interconnected one to another in different ways. However, the cycle represents a simplified version of the reality that allows us to analyse the challenges of OSINT from a human rights perspective. For further detailed information on the intelligence cycle see (Phythian, 2013).

Intelligence Cycle
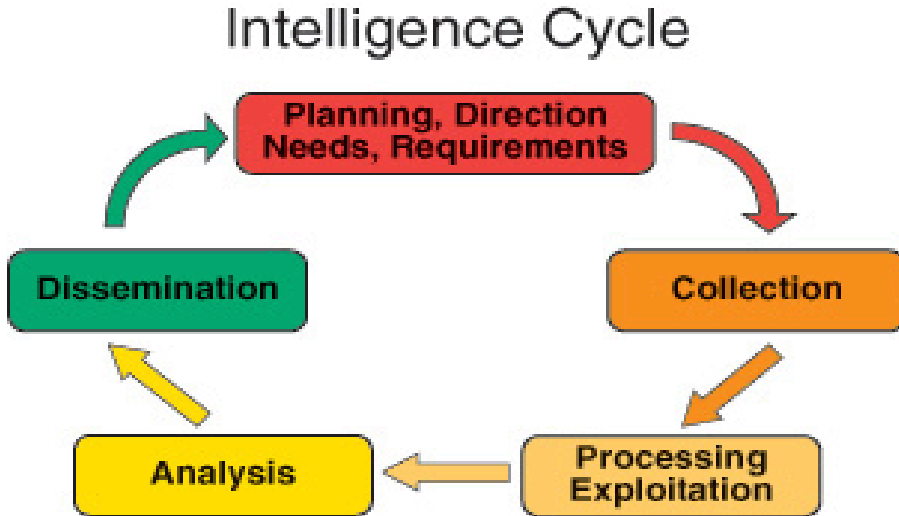
Figure 2: Basic Intelligence Cycle Structure (Source: https:// www.e-education.psu.edu/sgam/node/15, accessed on September 11, 2023)

By contrast, difficulties in assessing the accuracy of the material can happen either in the collection phase or in the later processing and/or analysis phases. The latter will depend on the context of the intelligence need and the technical and organisational capacity of each SIS and LEA. Depending on these factors, (i) time constrains might play a role in the ability to assess material (e.g., a (near) real-time situation vs. a strategic intelligence requirement (Dencik et al., 2018, pp. 1441–1443); (ii) OSINF can be treated by a human (OSINT agent) or software tools with their aforementioned bias; (ii) OSINF can be processed and analysed alone or together with other OSINF/INTs.; and, (iv) the (erroneous) inferred material/assumptions can be further processed and analysed together with other OSINT or non-OSINT for decision-making.

Indeed, SISs and LEAs operate in diverse manners depending on their capabilities and some of them focus more on manual OSINT production while others employ some or most of the existing advanced software functionalities (Akhgar et al., 2016, p. 89; Babuta, 2017, p. 17; CTIVD, 2021, p. 11; Williams & Blum, 2018, p. 36). If SISs and LEAs choose to use software technology, they are often not in-house built.

Openly available tools and COTSs assist them in the OSINT production. Consequently, a third party enters into play in the design of the software. If software tools are openly available, which LEAs are more prompt to use than SISs (Frank et al., 2011, p. 13), the organisation does not necessarily have the design behind it, therefore accountability becomes highly difficult. When those tools are customised for SISs and LEAs, they are parametrised according to the requirements of the institutions (Dencik et al., 2018, p. 1441). However, lack of knowledge regarding the software-design and possible pre-existing databases provided by the third-party as part of the tool can still present (McGregor et al., 2019, p. 317; Wetzling & Dietrich, 2022, p. 14). Moreover, regardless of whether the software is customized or not, bias in both the design phase and the later human-centric analysis are still present, impacting all phases of the OSINT production and resulting in potential unfair inequalities as explained in the following section (Fabre, 2022, pp. 217–227).

Complexity increases when multiple software functionalities are combined in an integrated OSINT platform that impacts on every step of the intelligence cycle[13]. The combination of software functionalities can scan, collect, process and analyse lexical, social, geospatial and other forms of data together. This can reveal new connections that officers/agents take longer or find impossible to uncover. Furthermore, it can detect unnoticed behaviours or leads that a human might not pick up because of lack of capacity. These tools in combination are able to cobble together a deep and comprehensive (but not necessarily accurate) picture of an individual. All these processes can be running simultaneously and the database can be continuously fed (Akhgar et al., 2016, p. 89; Staniforth, 2016) creating an "intelligence-net" rather than a "cycle" where discovered unknown unknowns can re-conduct the investigation and/or drive new requirements from policy-makers (Van Puyvelde, 2017, p. 1404). Ultimately, this technology converts the "cycle" into a vast "net" where an erroneous output/input in any of the phases is very difficult to detect[14].

---

[13] See for example the services offered by Maltego: https://www.maltego.com/products/ (accessed 11 September 2023).
[14] This technology not only converts the "cycle" into a vast" net", but it also inverts the intelligence cycle model itself, questioning the purpose specification of the investigation.

Some COTSs offer the possibility to further analyse OSINF with classified sources such as an organisation's own datasets (The Guardian, 2021)[15]. They can also include functionalities such as data storage, modelling, simulation, visualisation and sharing tools, allowing the data analyst to construct different explanations and explore hypotheses from previously and continuously processed data (Akhgar et al., 2016, p. 89). Keeping track of changes and recording the processes becomes essential to guarantee the reliability of data and reproducibility of results. However, detecting in a timely-manner human/technical bias and erroneous assumptions/inferred data in a highly interconnected and sophisticated platform is again vastly difficult, indeed almost impossible.

Human Rights affected due to practical challenges in OSINT production

The consequences of the aforementioned challenges are dual. On the one hand, compromised OSINT products can affect the decision-making of SISs and LEAs, consequently impacting on their efficiency. However, there is no "quantum" or international accepted performance-standard to measure efficiency in intelligence production, since precise identification of cause and effect of an intelligence product and the later outcome of the intelligence goal is highly difficult (Dover et al., 2014, p. 124; Herman, 1996, pp. 314-326; Rønn & Søe, 2019, p. 13) This report does not deal with this topic since it is outside its brief.

On the other hand, inaccurate OSINT products that are later used for decision-making can endanger a variety of human rights. These rights vary from case to case and will depend on the context of the intelligence requirement and on the nature of the compromised OSINT product. Unfortunately, obtaining an accurate picture of the rights affected and the number of individuals impacted per organisation is also very difficult. First, measuring the impact is not feasible when SISs/LEAs are not aware of all the inaccuracies in the OSINT process. Second, the opacity of these organisations around the processes and technology used renders the task even more complex (Bernal, 2016, p. 16). In order to provide a

---

[15] See again the options offered by Maltego in https://www.maltego.com/transform-hub/ (accessed 11 September 2023).

picture of the human rights involved, the following lines use pieces of news detailing several past SISs/LEAs errors in combination with studies that have analysed different data-mining and analytic technologies offered to SISs and LEAs.

The most visible human right impact is perhaps when the right of liberty (Art. 5 European Convention on Human Rights, "ECHR") is denied. On several occasions, media coverage has mentioned situations where erroneous OSINT outcomes have triggered the detention of individuals. The aforementioned example of two British citizens apprehended on arrival in Los Angeles due to a joke on Twitter is a good illustration of this, where figures of speech were misinterpreted (BBC News, 2012). The three false arrests based in part on facial recognition inaccuracies in the US are another example (Detroit Free Press, 2020; See The New York Times, 2020a, 2020b). In the latter, not all images/videos used to reach the arrest-decisions were based on open sources, however, the technology behind all of them is the same, hence the risk. Similarly, other difficulties assessing reliability and accuracy discussed above (e.g., online manipulation, de-contextualization of data, human and technological bias) could lead to an inaccurate OSINT product resulting in a false arrest.

At the same time, human input, both in designing algorithms as well as in the analysis and interpretation of the open-source data, remains central to data-driven policing. As analysed above, the latter opens up possibilities for pre-existing human biases to enter predictive policing and intelligence work in the guise of "neutral" data analysis, resulting in possible discriminatory implications (Dencik et al., 2015, p. 52; European Parliament Resolution 2020/2016(INI), 2021). For instance, targeting certain groups in the initial analysis due to pre-conceived ideas creates self-fulfilling prophecies[16] where the initial analysis raises the group's visibility in all future calculations and obscures the rest (Dencik et al., 2015, p. 10). The consequence of this is

---

[16] For this article, self-fulfilling prophecies are understood as the targeting of certain groups in an unconscious manner in the initial design of the software tools and the posterior analysis of the outcome by analysts. This unconscious targeting raises their visibility and can affect future calculations. At the same time, this unconscious focus on a target can obscure other forces of interest to be analysed.

over-policing and harassment of communities that have traditionally been the focus of policing/intelligence, impacting directly in the collective dimension of the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination (Art. 14 ECHR) (Council of Europe, 2017; Levinson-Waldman, 2019, p. 7). As Levinson mentions, this dangerous practice also magnifies the risk of accidentally monitoring individuals belonging to underrepresented minorities (Levinson-Waldman, 2019, p. 7).

Finally, we should mention the criminal procedural issues resulting from inaccurate OSINT products. While OSINT investigations will mostly be used as intelligence steering an investigation, there might be situations where OSINT is used as evidence in later criminal proceedings. However, if reliability and accuracy are difficult to assess, OSINT evidence might not be admissible in courts, or the right to a fair trial can be impacted (Art. 6 ECHR) (Bernal, 2016, p. 14).

The aforementioned are only three of the main impacts an inaccurate OSINT product can produce on individual's rights. These impacts need to always be balanced against a necessity and proportionality test, and in combination with the European and national legal frameworks for LEAs and SISs. State accountability is essential here, where SISs and LEAs can validate on a case-by-case scenario the actions taken and justify their decision through oversight mechanisms. Accountability is characterised by its focus on the rule of law and good governance. However, at the moment of writing this report, the legislator seems to be silence about OSINT practices in the data protection legal framework for both LEAs and SISs (Recommendation No. R (87)15; Modernised CoE Convention, 2018; Directive (EU) 2016/680, 2016; Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA, 2016). Moreover, different national LEAs' and SISs' regulations have a variety of differences regarding OSINT. OSINT as a concept is not uniform among member states[17], and practices around OSINT are also differently regulated. Spain and Romania for instance, have old regulations in place for SISs (2002

---

[17] For instance, the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) in the UK considers contacting individuals in an undercover manner using social media is part of the 'covert activity' of OSINT. The Committee for Intelligence and Security Services (CTIVD) in the Netherlands states the opposite instead, and considers these practices outside the scope of OSINT.

and 1991 respectively), and while their SISs legislations contain some reference to the collection and processing information using technical means, there is no mention to the need for safeguards for processing publicly available data. Other regulations such as the Law on Intelligence and Security Services in the Netherlands has instead introduced the systematic collection of open-source information in the law (Article 38), adding several safeguards to this processing activity. In the case of the UK, the Office of Surveillance Commissioner – nowadays replaced by the Powers Commissioner's Office, has emphasized in several occasions that the repeat viewing of "open source" sites should constitute directed surveillance and regulate it as such (Shere, 2020; The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament of the UK, 2018). However, neither the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act of 2000, nor the new Investigatory Powers Act of 2016 have incorporated those suggestions into the law.

Further study is needed to assess whether the international and European legal framework on human rights and the surrounding European Union and Council of Europe's guidelines and regulations are sufficient to appropriately protect the impacts of today's OSINT practices in every stage of its production and its uses. Addressing current technical challenges of OSINT and their subsequent impacts for human rights is nonetheless a necessary first step to carve up the landscape for a subsequent legal evaluation.

Conclusions

The rapid development of new open sources and the successive advances in data gathering and analysis tools have created some new technical challenges in the OSINT production, which subsequently created a debate surrounding the potential risks new means and uses of OSINT have for human rights. Validating and assessing reliability has become highly challenging with the large volumes of available data online, the constant motion of online sources, and the ubiquitous nature of the information, coming from everywhere and everyone, and in all languages. Differentiating valuable material from "noise" has become more difficult than ever, partially due to the "echo effect" individuals create when sharing secondary sources information. Sophisticated

means of disinformation and online manipulation techniques exacerbate this difficulty. The use of bots to spread disinformation and other hybrid warfare techniques such as "deep fakes" are already being deployed by states and other stakeholders to misinform, create confusion or make "noise" among the large volumes of data, making the work of OSINT agents more challenging than ever.

In parallel, assessing the accuracy of the collected and processed open-source material is also a challenge in the current online environment. While advanced data mining and analytic tools try to overcome the difficulties of finding valuable material in the large "sea" of the Internet, these tools have created new challenges and exacerbate the old ones. Natural Language Processing tools, which are currently being employed by LEAs and SISs for a variety of purposes have difficulties in identifying the nuances of language found in open sources. The "democratisation of information" has led to open-source information overwhelmingly generated by users with different backgrounds. The use of different resources of the language (e.g., exaggerations, humour, sarcasm), in combination with dialects, slang, and grammar errors confuse NLP algorithms, resulting in erroneous OSINT. Moreover, softwares are now switching to AI based technologies, raising additional concerns. Bias in the design of the algorithms, in the chosen benchmark datasets to train the software, and in the final human revision are an added risk to the OSINT production. AI based Facial Recognition Technologies (FRT) are a good example of this, where different studies have demonstrated their gap in accuracy, and the impact of erroneous outcomes when used by LEAs or SISs.

Difficulties in validation of sources affect mainly the collection phase of OSINT, but compromised material is dragged into the rest of the process. Challenges in the accuracy are instead present in every step of the intelligence cycle. While new OSINT environment has great disparities from one institution to another, difficulties in understanding the rationale behind the software decision and bias are an integral challenge of every OSINT process in every institution. Complexity increases when OSINT is provided by private parties, or is later merged with other intelligence and/or shared with other institutions.

The outcome of these technical challenges is compromised OSINT products that can be used in decision-making by LEAs and SISs, endangering a variety of human rights. Obtaining an accurate picture of the rights affected is a challenging task due to the difficulties in detecting compromised OSINT among SISs/LEAs, and due to a lack of transparency of the institutions. Nevertheless, studies show that one of the most visible impacts of inaccurate OSINT is the right to equal treatment and non-discrimination of article 14 ECHR. Bias both in designing algorithms as well as in the analysis and interpretation of the open-source data has resulted in targeting certain groups or minorities due to pre-conceived ideas, and creating self-fulfilling prophecies. The consequence of this is over-policing and harassment of communities that have traditionally been the focus of policing/intelligence, raising visibility of these groups in future calculations and obscuring the rest. Where OSINT is used in criminal proceedings, the right to a fair trial (article 6 ECHR) is also at stake. Compromised OSINT might be used as evidence in courts, where judges (and even OSINT practitioners) might be reluctant to dismiss the OSINT outcome as evidence, despite of the difficulties to understand the rationale behind the product. Finally, and in a case-by-case scenario analysis, other fundamental rights such as the right of liberty (article 5 ECHR) has been proved to be impacted due to compromised OSINT products. Several cases have been disclosed where NLP and AI based FRT have led to inaccurate OSINT products resulting in a false arrest.

These impacts need to be addressed through current regulation and state accountability. However, at the moment of writing this report, there is no specific mention to the collection and processing of digital open-source information by LEAs and SISs in the data protection frameworks, and different national LEAs' and SISs' regulations have a variety of differences regarding OSINT. Further investigation is needed to address the appropriateness of state accountability of today's OSINT practices. Addressing current technical challenges of OSINT and their subsequent impacts for human rights is nonetheless a necessary first step to shape the landscape for a subsequent legal evaluation.

References:

1. Akhgar, B., Bayerl, P. S., & Sampson, F. (eds.). (2016). *Open Source Intelligence Investigation: From Strategy to Implementation*. Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47671-1

2. Akhgar, B., Saathoff, G. B., Arabnia, H. R., Hill, R., Staniforth, A., & Saskia Bayerl, P. (Eds.). (2015). *Application of Big Data for National Security: A Practitioner's Guide to Emerging Technologies* (Elsevier).

3. Babuta, A. (2017). "Big Data and Policing – An assessment of Law enforcement Requirements, Expectations and Priorities." *RUSI Occasional Paper.*

4. BBC News. (2012, March 8). "Caution on Twitter urged as tourists barred from US." *BBC News*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-16810312

5. Bernal, P. (2016). "Data gathering, surveillance and human rights: Recasting the debate." *Journal of Cyber Policy*, *1*(2), 243–264. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/23738871.2016.1228990

6. Buolamwini, J. (2017). *Gender shades: Intersectional phenotypic and demographic evaluation of face datasets and gender classifiers*. MIT Master's Thesis.

7. BuzzFeed News. (2021, August 25). "Police In At Least 24 Countries Have Used Clearview AI. Find Out Which Ones Here." *BuzzFeed News*. Retrieved from https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/ryanmac/clearview-ai-international-search-table

8. *Guidelines on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data in a world of Big Data*, T-DP (2017)01 (2017).

9. *Modernised Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to the Processing of Personal Data*, CM/Inf (2018)15-final (2018).

10. Couts, A. (2011, August 9). "London Riots: Police use Flickr to help catch looters." *Digital Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/london-riots-police-use-flickr-to-help-catch-looters/

11. CTIVD. (2021). *Toezichtsrapport Automated OSINT: tools en bronnen voor openbronnenonderzoek* (No. 74).

12. Dencik, L., Hintz, A., & Carey, Z. (2015). *Managing 'threats': Uses of social media for policing domestic extremism and disorder in the UK. Project report.* Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies.

13. Dencik, L., Hintz, A., & Carey, Z. (2018). "Prediction, pre-emption and limits to dissent: Social media and big data uses for policing protests in the United Kingdom." *New Media & Society*, *20*(4), 1433–1450. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817697722

14. Detroit Free Press. (2020, July 10). *Controversial Detroit facial recognition got him arrested for a crime he didn't commit*. Retrieved from https://eu.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2020/07/10/facial-recognition-detroit-michael-oliver-robert-williams/5392166002/

15. Dover, R., Goodman, M. S., & Hillebrand, C. (Eds.). (2014). *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies*. Routledge.

16. Edwards, L., & Urquhart, L. (2016). "Privacy in public spaces: What expectations of privacy do we have in social media intelligence?" *International Journal of Law and Information Technology*, *24*, 279–310. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1093/ijlit/eaw007

17. Eijkman, Q., & Weggemans, D. (2013). "Open source intelligence and privacy dilemmas: Is it time to reassess state accountability?" *Security and Human Rights*, *23*(4), 285–296. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1163/18750230-99900033

18. European Data Protection Supervisor. (2022). *EDPS Opinion on the possibility to use Clearview AI and similar services at Europol*. Retrieved from https://edps.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/21-03-29_edps_opinion_2020-0372.pdf

19. European Parliament. Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services. (2021). *Strategic communications as a key factor in countering hybrid threats.* Publications Office. Retrieved from https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2861/14410

20. European Parliament resolution 2020/2016(INI), European Parliament, European Parliament resolution of 6 October 2021 on artificial intelligence in criminal law and its use by the police and judicial authorities in criminal matters (2021). Retrieved from https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0405_EN.html

21. Directive (EU) 2016/680 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by competent authorities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection or prosecution of criminal offences or the execution of criminal penalties, and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA, (2016).

22. Fabre, C. (2022). *Spying Through a Glass Darkly: The Ethics of Espionage and Counter-Intelligence* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198833765.001.0001

23. Flacy, M. (2011, August 10). "NYPD creates unit to track criminals on social networks." *Digital Trends*. Retrieved from https://www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/nypd-create-unit-to-track-criminals-on-social-networks/

24. Frank, R., Cheng, C., & Pun, V. (2011). *Social Media Sites: New Fora for Criminals, Communication, and Investigation Opportunities* (021.2011). Public Safety Canada. Retrieved from http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/sp-ps/PS14-5-2011-eng.pdf

25. Giannopoulos, G., Smith, H., & Theocharidou, M. (2020). *The Landscape of Hybrid Threats: A Conceptual Model* (PUBSY No. 123305). European Commission, Ispra, 2020.

26. Grother, P., Ngan, M., & Hanaoka, K. (2019a). *Face Recognition Vendor Test (FRVT) part 2: Identification* (NIST IR 8271; p. NIST IR 8271). National Institute of Standards and Technology. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.IR.8271

27. Grother, P., Ngan, M., & Hanaoka, K. (2019b). *Face recognition vendor test part 3: Demographic effects* (NIST IR 8280; p. NIST IR 8280). National Institute of Standards and Technology. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.IR.8280

28. Gunneriusson, H. U. (2021). Hybrid warfare & theory. *Revista ICONO14 Revista Científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías Emergentes*, *19*(1), 15–37. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v19i1.1608

29. Herman, M. (1996). *Intelligence power in peace and war*. Royal Institute of International Affairs: Cambridge University Press.

30. Hobbs, C., Moran, M., & Salisbury, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Open Source Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century – New Approaches and Opportunities*. Palgrave Macmillan.

31. Hogue, S. (2023). "Civilian Surveillance in the War in Ukraine: Mobilizing the Agency of the Observers of War." *Surveillance & Society*, *21*(1), 108-112. https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v21i1.16255

32. Huffingtonpost. (2012, January 30). "British Tourists Detained, Deported for Tweeting 'Destroy America'". *Huffingtonpost*. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/british-tourists-deported-for-tweeting_n_1242073

33. ClearView AI Inc Enforcement Notice, (2022).

34. Ivanova, I. (2020, June 12). "Why face-recognition technology has a bias problem." *CBS News*. Retrieved from https://www.cbsnews.com/news/facial-recognition-systems-racism-protests-police-bias/

35. Levinson-Waldman, R. (2019). "Private Eyes, They're Watching You: Law Enforcement's Monitoring of Social Media." *Oklahomw Law Review*, *71*(4), 997–1012.

36. Masood, M., Nawaz, M., Malik, K. M., Javed, A., Irtaza, A., & Malik, H. (2023). "Deep fakes generation and detection: State-of-the-art, open challenges, countermeasures, and way forward." *Applied Intelligence*, *53*(4), 3974–4026. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s10489-022-03766-z

37. McGregor, L., Murray, D., & Ng, V. (2019). "International Human Rights Law as a Framework for Algorithmic Accountability." *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, *68*(2), 309–343. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020589319000046

38. Mercado, S. C. (2004). *Sailing the sea of OSINT in the information age* [dataset]. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1037/e741272011-005

39. Miller, C. (2014, January 21). *This is your Brain Online: How Twitter Changed the World 'Rape'*. Retrieved from https://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2014/01/20/this-is-your-brain-online-how-twitter-changed-the-word-rape/

40. Minas, H. (2010). "Research Paper No. 39: Can the Open Source Intelligence Emerge as an Indispensable Discipline for the Intelligence Community in the 21st Century?" *Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS)*, 59.

41. Molander, R., Riddile, A., & Wilson, P. (1996). *Strategic Information Warfare: A New Face of War*. RAND Corporation. Retrieved https://doi.org/10.7249/MR661

42. Najibi, A. (2020, October 24). "Racial Discrimination in Face Recognition Technology." *Science in The News - Harvard University*. Retrieved from https://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2020/racial-discrimination-in-face-recognition-technology/

43. NATO. (2001). *Open Source Intelligence Handbook*.

44. Pallaris, C. (2008). "Open Source Intelligence: A Strategic Enabler of National Security." *CSS Analyses in Security Policy*, *3*(32), 3.

45. Patel, F., Levinson-Waldman, R., DenUyl, S., & Koreh, R. (2019). *Social Media Monitoring – How the Department of Homeland Security uses Digital Data in the Name of National Security*. Brennan Centre for Justice.

46. Perrot, S. & Cadenza Academic Translations. (2022). "L'Open Source Intelligence dans la guerre d'Ukraine", *Politique Étrangère*, *Automne* (3), 63–74. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.3917/pe.223.0063

47. Phythian, M. (Ed.). (2013). *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle*. Routledge.

48. Reuser, A. (2018, May 21). *Online course on Open Source Intelligence*. IntelHub. Retrieved from https://www.apus.edu/academic-community/intelhub/events#reuser

49. Rolington, A. (2013). *Strategic intelligence for the 21st century: The mosaic method*. Oxford University Press.

50. Rønn, K. V., & Søe, S. O. (2019). "Is social media intelligence private? Privacy in public and the nature of social media intelligence." *Intelligence and*

National Security, *34*(3), 362–378. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2019.1553701

51. Roth, A. (2021, April 22). "European MPs targeted by deep fake video calls imitating Russian opposition This article is more than 6 mo." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/22/european-mps-targeted-by-deepfake-video-calls-imitating-russian-opposition

52. Shere, A. R. K. (2020). "Now you [don't] see me: How have new legislation and changing public awareness of the UK surveillance state impacted OSINT investigations?" *Journal of Cyber Policy*, *5*(3), 429–448. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/23738871.2020.1832129

53. Simonite, T. (2022, March 17). "A Zelensky Deep fake Was Quickly Defeated. The Next One Might Not Be." *Wired*. https://www.wired.com/story/zelensky-deepfake-facebook-twitter-playbook/

54. Social News Daily. (2013, July 8). *'Timebomb' Tweet Taken Out of Context Gets Teen Arrested*. Retrieved from https://socialnewsdaily.com/timebomb-tweet/

55. Staniforth, A. (2016, July 19). *Big Data and Open Source Intelligence—A game changer for counter-terrorism?* Retrieved from http://trendsinstitution.org/big-data-and-open-source-intelligence-a-game-changer-for-counter-terrorism/

56. Steele, R. D. (2010). *Intelligence for earth: Clarity, integrity, & sustainability*. Earth Intelligence Network.

57. Tavani, H. T. (2008). "Informational Privacy: Concepts, Theories, and Controversies." In *The Handbook of Information and Computer Ethics* (Kenneth E. Himma&Herman T. Tavani (Eds.), pp. 131–164). Jhon Wiley & Sons.

58. Tewksbury, D., & Rittenberg, J. (2012). *News on the Internet: Information and Citizenship in the 21st Century*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780195391961.001.0001

59. The Guardian. (2017, October 24). "Facebook translates 'good morning' into 'attack them', leading to arrest." *Alex Hern*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/24/facebook-palestine-israel-translates-good-morning-attack-them-arrest

60. The Guardian. (2021, November 17). "Revealed: The software that studies your Facebook friends to predict who may commit a crime." *Johana Bhuiyan*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/17/police-surveillance-technology-voyager?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

61. The Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament of the UK. (2018). *Annual Report 2017-2018*.

62. The New York Times. (2020a, June 24). *Wrongly Accused by an Algorithm*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/technology/facial-recognition-arrest.html

63. The New York Times. (2020b, December 29). *Another Arrest, and Jail Time, Due to a Bad Facial Recognition Match*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/technology/facial-recognition-misidentify-jail.html

64. The New York Times. (2021, January 18). "The secretive company that might end privacy as we know it." *Kashmir Hill*. Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/18/technology/clearview-privacy-facial-recognition.html

65. Tolz, V., & Hutchings, S. (2023). "Truth with a Z: Disinformation, war in Ukraine, and Russia's contradictory discourse of imperial identity." *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *39*(5), 347–365. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2023.2202581

66. Van Puyvelde, D. (2017). "Beyond the buzzword: Big data and national security decision-making." *International Affairs*, *93*(6), 1397–1416.

67. Wakefield, J. (2022, March 18). "Deep fake presidents used in Russia-Ukraine war." *BBC News*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-60780142

68. Wells, D., & Gibson, H. (2017). "OSINT from a UK perspective: Considerations from the law enforcement and military domains." In *Proceedings Estonian Academy of Security Sciences, 16: From Research to Security Union* (pp. 84–113). Estonian Academy of Security Science.

69. Wetzling, T., & Dietrich, C. (2022). *Disproportionate use of commercially and publicly available data: Europe's next frontier for intelligence reform?* Stiftung Neue Verantwortung.

70. Williams, H. J., & Blum, I. (2018). *Defining second generation open source intelligence (OSINT) for the defence enterprise*. Rand Corporation.

ROMANIA'S VULNERABILITIES REGARDING RADICALIZATION AND OBSERVED TRENDS OF THE PHENOMENON

Iulia-Mihaela DRĂGAN*

Abstract:

The terminology of radicalization started to be acknowledged after the 9/11 events, a turning point for international security that marked the beginning of the War on Terror. Practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in the field of countering terrorism focused more and more on the concept of radicalization as a precursor of terrorism, in the sense of being the starting point for preventing the terrorism phenomenon. In this regard, the past terrorist attacks in Europe awakened awareness about the necessity of identifying the incipient signs of radicalization as an early warning instrument for avoiding the probability of manifesting a terrorist attack.

Even though the Global Terrorism Index has evaluated Romania as one of the countries with the lowest risks of terrorism at the international level for the past decade, it is still important to improve the mechanisms for preventing radicalization. In this consideration, Romania could be indirectly impacted by factors related to the global or regional dynamics of terrorism. This paper aims to develop a pattern of radicalization vulnerabilities and observed trends in Romania. In this idea, the analysis of the past terrorist attempts in Romania emphasizes important details in terms of trends of radicalization. Furthermore, the analysis of the specific radicalization features in Romania is focused on identifying the vulnerabilities, following the case study conclusions on radicalized Romanian citizens and radicalized foreigners that were expelled by the national courts.

Keywords: *radicalization, Romania, vulnerabilities, trends, violent ideology, prevention.*

Introduction

This paper aims to develop a pattern of the radicalization vulnerabilities and trends in Romania, based on a methodology that

---

* PhD student in Information and National Security at National Defence University "Carol I" and Researcher at the Centre for Conflict Prevention and Early Warning (CPC-EW), e-mail: mihaela.dragan73@yahoo.com

includes OSINT sources and national court proceedings on judicial decisions that incriminated Romanian citizens for spreading jihadist propaganda or foreigners that were expelled. The objective of the research is to emphasize our country's specific features in preventing radicalization and meant to awaken awareness in this field.

Considering some previous research on radicalization in Romania, a proper observation is that this was rarely approached and was incomprehensively analysed, due to the assumption that Romania is evaluated as a low-risk country regarding the terrorist threat. However, improving knowledge and awareness in this field should be aimed even in a state that has low terrorism risks, and mostly because of its impacting dynamics at the regional level.

Moreover, due to the European trends on radicalization, the EU institutions elaborated strategies on preventing radicalization, which strongly emphasized the importance and the actuality of this security issue. Consequently, considering Romania's contribution to the regional and international security and its responsibility as an EU, NATO and UN member state in consolidating the core values, I consider that this research should be extended to the particular aspects of radicalization in Romania, regardless of the statistics on the low number of terrorist attempts at the national level.

In this regard, the present analysis specifically will incorporate three dimensions for developing a national pattern: the analysis of the radicalization specific characteristics regarding the past terrorist attempts at the national level, and the radicalization cases of the two categories of people – Romanian citizens and the radicalized foreigners that were expelled. In the same manner, the analysis will be focused on accomplishing two objectives in detecting and defining: the national vulnerabilities to radicalization and the trends at the national level, following the framework of the European trends.

The characteristics of the radicalization phenomenon

It is essential to frame the defining and specific elements of radicalization as a phenomenon and as a process. As a phenomenon, it is firstly important to distinguish between terrorism, defined as the ensemble of violent actions, intended or facilitated by individuals or

organized groups in order to obtain illegitimate political, social and economic objectives (Chalk, 1996, p. 22), and radicalization, which represents the precursor of terrorism and the source of supporting the illegitimate goals due to a violent ideology and also being an intrinsic process of incorporating the extremist ideology through individuals in order to render the use of violence legitimate and justified for accomplishing different objectives (Gunaratna, Jerard, Nanyang, 2013, p. 36).

The concept of radicalization hasn't yet been given a unitary definition that is commonly used by researchers in the field. On one hand, the Dutch Security Service (AIVD) considers radicalization as an increasing willingness to pursue, by undemocratic methods, changes in society that pose a threat to the democratic order, whereas the Danish Intelligence Service (PET) defines the concept in terms of an individual process by which a person accepts the use of undemocratic or violent means in order to accomplish a specific political or ideological objective (Borum, 2011). Furthermore, the Canadian National Strategy on Countering Radicalization refers to radicalization as an individual or group process by which individuals adopt an ideology and a belief system that justifies the use of violence in order to advance their cause.

On the other hand, some authors focused more on the intrinsic development within the psychological mechanism of a person by defining radicalization as a set of beliefs, feelings, and behaviours developed in a person in order to legitimate an intergroup conflict or violence and to promote commitment and personal sacrifice in defence of a cause of the radical group (Viejo and Boyé, 2017). Radicalization is equally described as a mental and emotional process that prepares and motivates an individual to pursue violent behaviour as a result of adopting extreme political, social, and/or religious ideals and aspirations (Wilner and Dubouloz, 2010).

My suggestion on the definition of the radicalization concept, taking into consideration the common elements that were identified in the previous definitions, would be: *a mental and emotional individual process triggered by a set of feelings, beliefs, and behaviours based on an extreme ideology that legitimizes the use of violence and motivates the*

individual to promote commitment for the defence of the radical group's purpose, accomplishing ideological objectives by undemocratic methods.

In order to understand the complexity of the process, the researchers tried to identify the factors that determine the predisposition of a person to become radicalized, as a result of the debate over why some people present resilience to radicalization and others don't. On one hand, the development of the radicalization process was explained in the light of social and psychological theories. The pathways towards radicalization may therefore be pursued by a person as a result of the local culture and identity, and the attempts to invoke religion or ideology are based on the perceptions of marginalization or prosecution of the global community of Muslims by Western states, as the theory of norm diffusion and localization explains (Acharya, 2013).

On the other hand, the Islamic radicalization process can be explained by starting from the conversion theory, which explains how an individual may have seeker's motivation to search for solutions to a recent life crisis within a spiritual option, develop affective ties, identify with the religious group dynamics, and then commit to the purposes of the new religious community (Borum, 2011). However, the seven stages of religious conversion are typical for any type of situation when a person changes his/her religious view due to a life-time crisis or a significant event. The pathway through Islamic radicalization is explained as a sub-type of religious conversion in the sense that the phases of the radicalization process follow the phases of a typical conversion process, with two major differences: by choosing violence and conflict reasons instead of peaceful purposes of a religious conversion and by incorporating an extreme ideology instead of the spiritual and philosophical approach within a typical conversion (Van den Elzen, 2018).

Some researchers believe there are four stages in the radicalization process (Schmid, 2011, p. 217-218). The first is *the crisis of confidence*, which is constituted by the identity crisis as a triggering factor (the person suffers traumatic events or life changes that affect his sense of identity) and as the catalyst, which is present even in the conversion theory. Also, the subject gets in contact with and chooses to identify with a new belief system of an extremist ideology, followed by a phase of adopting a different behaviour in society, characterized by a set

of atypical changes compared to the previous belief system (Schmid, 2011, p. 219).

The following stage starts *the legitimacy conflict*, which is defined by interacting with the ideology and seeking reasons and elements in society that support the elements of the ideology. In this manner the crisis of legitimacy starts (the person constructs perceptions whereby the legitimacy of society is shaken, followed by the legitimacy of his own government). In the third stage, the person consolidates the legitimacy of the conflict that started in the second stage. It can be observed how the person starts to legitimize violence or commit to violent purposes instead of peaceful ones by hijacking the legitimacy of society and government perceived as enemies, being attached to a religious purpose, seen as a sacred cause, and being mainly influenced by the narrative of violent ideology (Jones, 2008, p. 64). In the last stage, which is the *legitimacy crisis*, the subject is dehumanized, strongly anchored in beliefs, and motivated to resort to violent actions, being in the stage of advanced radicalization (Slootman and Tillie, 2006).

In terms of the characteristics of radicalization as an individual process, the factors that predispose a person to incorporate extremist ideology and become a radical were identified in many areas of the academic literature as religious, psychological, economic, or cultural factors. In terms of the factors that predispose a person to radicalization, in the literature, opinions may vary among different authors. Regarding the pathological factor, various authors differ from recognizing that mental health issues may be taken into consideration as an element that increases the vulnerability to radicalization (Copeland and Marsden, 2020) to opinions that exclude psychiatric disorders as an indicator of creating the profile of a terrorist but rather focus on personality traits (Al-Attar, 2019) or opinions that don't recognize mental illness as being a predictor for terrorist behaviour (Gill and Corner, 2017). However, the indicator of personality disorders as individual traits of radicalized persons was recognized as a factor that determined the fragility of the person to radicalization.

Authors classified into different categories the psychological factors that predispose the individual to radicalization as psychological vulnerabilities in regards to: feelings of injustice and humiliation

expressed by the theory of deprivation, or the lack of purpose and meaning in life; self-image issues; the loss of identity sense; depression; ego splitting; suicidal thoughts; and even substance addiction. Also, friendship or admiration for a radicalized person, a dysfunctional family environment, or father figure issues can contribute to a person's psychological vulnerability (Campbelo et al., 2018).

Furthermore, at the macro-level, social, cultural, and economic environment factors were frequently emphasized in the literature as indicators of the individual's predisposition to radicalization (Viejo and Boyé, 2017) as social polarization, community exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination, cultural identity issues, and poor economic conditions. However, none of these factors can be evaluated as being particularly the principal determinant of the process without analysing those factors as an ensemble with variables that fluctuate due to the individual's conditions (Schmid, 2016). In support of this idea, in the literature, it is emphasized that there is no single pathway to radicalization (Bailey & Edwards, 2017), nor is there a definitive psychological profile for explaining the causes of the phenomenon (Horgan, 2017).

Social theories explain that, even though radicalization is an individual process, it contains an important social impact that determines the individual's willingness to continue to incorporate extremist ideology and to develop the stages of the process (Helfstein, 2012) by identifying his aspirations with the group's purposes, forming cult-like affective bonds within the group, or becoming affiliated with the group's set of values and rules. Within the dynamics of the social factors involved in the radicalization process, there can be different types of developing the process and becoming radicalized. A method of getting involved in a process, understood in more traditional terms, was the one of coordinated radicalization by a terrorist organization (Horgan, 2005, p. 78), by luring and recruiting members for the organization by offering them a purpose and a sense of integration in the group.

However, the trends in radicalization at the European level (Global Terrorism Index, 2016, p. 45) including Romania, show that the method of self-radicalization is more often met in practice, and in most of the cases, the process is inspired and sustained by the extremist ideology of a terrorist organization. Regardless of the ensemble of

psychological, pathological, and social background that determined the self-radicalization process of the individual (Borum, 2004), researchers emphasize the fact that, even in this case, without the social factor of aspiring to a group objective, or without the interaction with other radical persons sharing elements of the same ideology, the process wouldn't be consumed completely (Helfstein, 2012).

A radicalized person can also undertake actions such as spreading extremist propaganda for terrorist purposes in the online environment or recruiting people to engage in terrorist activities, but at the same time, they may not pursue direct actions as preparatory acts for terrorist attacks. The explanation is the fact that violent behaviour increases in accordance with the phases of the radicalization process. So, the person may pursue indirect actions without committing acts of violence but still facilitate terrorism by violating the immigration regime, helping terrorist members escape from legal sanctions, or covering the terrorist purposes of an organization by facilitating ghost financial activities or non-governmental legitimate covers (VosFellman, Bar-Yam, Minai, 2015, p. 53-54), whether spreading jihadist propaganda. The critical moment when the radicalized person can engage in terrorist attempts or attacks is assimilated into an advanced phase of radicalization, which is characterized by deeply rooted extremist beliefs and also intense hatred feelings against the government and authorities. Therefore, the radicalized person can project his extremist views against a category of people or community that is targeted in order to consume the terrorist act (Horgan, 2005, p. 94).

In the light of the conceptual notions regarding radicalization exposed previously, this article applies the theoretical aspects regarding radicalization using the case studies of Romanian radicalized citizens and radicalized foreigners that were expelled by the national courts. The paper has two significant parts: the first one aims to emphasize the trends in radicalization in Romania by analysing the history of terrorist attempts in the country in order to find the tendencies in radicalization. The second one is dedicated to identifying Romania's vulnerabilities regarding radicalization by analysing the phenomenon at the micro-level (the cases of Romanian citizens and foreigners) in order to construct conclusions for the macro-level.

The radicalization pattern in Romania: trends and particularities

There are three criteria that I believe are useful in order to understand the radicalization trends in Romania: the regional and international context that impacted the state, the social categories that are targeted, and the objectives and interests of non-state actors or individuals in Romania.

Starting from the research on the previous up to the present terrorist attempts in Romania in the period of 1977–2023, the analysis aims to emphasize the tendencies at the national level due to the following criteria: the inspiration for affiliation to a terrorist organization, the modus operandi, the objectives of the terrorist attempt, the interest in a targeted location or social category, and the typology of the attack correlated to the method of radicalization.

In analysing the previous terrorist attempts in Romania, the first particularity can be evaluated from the perspective of a state almost unanimously characterized by terrorist attempts that were undermined in time by authorities, with the exception of the 1984 terrorist attack that was the only consumed attack in Romania. In this regard, the attack was carried out by a foreign student in Romania, coordinated by the indications of the Palestinian terrorist organization Abu Nidal (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 32). The typology of the attack was that of political reasons, in the sense that it targeted a foreign objective in our national territory: the vice consul of the embassy of Jordan. What is important to highlight about that single terrorist attack, which took place in Romania, is the fact that it targeted foreign political objectives and not national targets. However, considering the fact that Abu Nidal had never proclaimed a specific violent ideology to be fundamental for the organization's terrorist objectives and the members performed the attacks only under the coordination of the leader, it is considered that this attack doesn't show its utility for the scope of this analysis.

However, by taking into consideration the terrorist attempts, there were identified three typologies assimilated to a total of ten attempts. We identified six attempts attributed to affiliations with terrorist organizations, two lone-wolf attempts, and two isolated cases.

Regarding the cases that were planned by members of terrorist organizations, there were registered affiliations to the PKK-Kurdistan Labour Party (a Kurdish terrorist organization that targeted a Turkish citizen in Romania), to Babbar Khalsa (an Indian terrorist organization that targeted killing the Indian ambassador in Romania), and to Baader-Meinhof (a left-wing German terrorist organization) in cooperation with Black September (a Palestinian terrorist organization) that targeted occidental and Israeli targets in Romania (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 14, p. 54, p. 60).

Thus, it is clearly seen that the members affiliated to terrorist organizations had objectives only for foreign targets found on the national territory (embassies, consulates) or foreign representatives in official visits in Romania, and the attempts were determined by political reasons rooted around the target's original state. In addition to that, it can be mentioned that members of terrorist organizations transited the national territory from the Red Army or Black September due to the geostrategic position of Romania on the transit route Europe-Middle East (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 38, p. 60). Thus, Romania can be transited by different non-state actors as a route Europe-Middle East for objectives such as Damascus or Turkey due to its geographic position, but this aspect can't be considered as a representative argument for determining the interest of a terrorist organization in Romania.

However, another case that could be an indicator for identifying tendencies is represented by the attempt of an affiliate member of HVIM 64, a terrorist organization from Hungary, that targeted specific national objectives and on a specific date, as the celebration of the National Day on December 1st and, furthermore, advanced to Christmas Day. The attempt also targeted a public, crowded area, and the modus operandi involved improvised explosive devices (IEDS). Considering the particularities of this attempt, it can be said that it is one of the few attempts that are politically motivated by objectives in Romania. Moreover, the individual involved in the attempt showed strong radical beliefs against the constitutional order in Romania and an intense feeling of hatred towards the Romanian government and society. The root of its extremist ideology was based on the political justification of Hungary's

rights to territories in Romania due to the Treaty of Trianon. In this case, the reasons that justify the extremist ideology and legitimize the use of violence in order to achieve the objectives don't have any rational correlation with the actual realities of society, but they provide only the support for nourishing the hate against a government and the desire to undermine the state authority (Court Decision nr. 172/2019).

In terms of the lone-wolf attempts in Romania, it is important first to emphasize the psychology of the lone-wolf terrorism, characterized by the atypical manner of conducting a terrorist attack, the lack of self-governing ideology, and the unpredictable reasons that determine the attack (Spaaij, 2012, p. 17), as theoretical elements that were reflected in the Romanian cases.

The analysis of the lone-wolf attempts in Romania emphasized two perspectives: the first lone-wolf attempt, in 2006, was organized by a Romanian citizen, being the first attempt of a Romanian individual to commit domestic terrorist acts; the second lone-wolf attempt, in 2012, is characterized by the same traits as mentioned in the previous cases: interest in a foreign objective in Romania, planned by a foreign individual, with the difference that in this case, the individual wasn't affiliated to any terrorist organization. Comparing the two lone-wolf attempts, it can be observed that the first attempt targeted national objectives (a Romanian citizen targeting a group of people from his hometown), while the second one targeted foreign objective (the British embassy in Bucharest), planned by a foreign Iraqi citizen (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 326).

Regarding the attempt of domestic terrorism in 2006, it should be mentioned that the Romanian citizen targeted a crowded location in the city of Timisoara, which he had previously studied. The operational method of the attack aimed for the detonation of an improvised explosive device in the crowded space, with the consequence that if the attack had been successful, it would have had the capacity to cause a significant number of casualties. The context of this event falls broadly within the European trends of the terrorist phenomenon started in 2004–2005, in terms of the methods of operation, being similar to the ones adopted in Great Britain and Spain. In the Lesch case, another important detail is the fact that the attempt had the typology of a lone-wolf attack inspired by

the violent Islamic ideology of the Bosnian Islamic Army, aiming at religious objectives.

Analysing the way of radicalization in the case of Lesch (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 230), it is observed that he converted to Islam at the end of the 1990s, gradually following the stages of the self-radicalization process through the Internet. Early signs of radicalization could already be seen in the conversations held within the social and family environment, promoting Islamic propaganda messages and ideas. The psychological level is also observed: his need to assimilate a new identity and a new set of perceptions and values (choosing a pseudonym regarding a former Muslim soldier, member of the terrorist organization, developing intense feelings of hatred against the authorities and Romanian government, affective involvement in the objectives of carrying out the jihad).

Regarding the second lone-wolf attack, that of the Iraqi citizen in Bucharest, it is important to consider the fact that he aimed at a foreign target as an objective – the British embassy in Bucharest. The reason was the involvement of Great Britain in the fight in Iraq, which frames the event in the international context of 2012, considering the implications of the International Coalition in Iraq. The radicalization process can be described as consisting of elements such as feelings of hatred against a government and the desire to undermine authority. Also, the operational method involved cold weapons, falling within the trends of terrorist modus operandi on a regional scale by choosing unconventional methods in order to commit a terrorist attack.

In terms of the two isolated, atypical cases (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 20 and 56) foiled by the authorities, they are based on a pattern of a group of students (15, respectively 100) that were not coordinated by a terrorist organization but had a specific terrorist modus operandi by seizing people from a location (the embassy of Sudan and the embassy of Egypt) followed by the use of improvised explosive devices (Molotov cocktails). The targeted objectives did not involve national interests or a violent ideology connected to illegitimate objectives. Mentioning these cases is, however, useful in relation to a pattern of organized action on the national territory based on a terrorist modus operandi, aiming specific goals through the use of force.

In analysing the attempts aiming for the establishment of a terrorist nucleus in Romania, three previous cases in this regard were discovered. The risk of a terrorist cell's existence on national territory is evaluated as a high-level risk from the perspective of developing internal vulnerabilities related to terrorism. Considering the fact that these attempts were undermined by the competent authorities in the field, the terrorist risks in Romania were maintained and evaluated only from an external perspective.

In this regard, the first attempt to establish a terrorist cell on the territory of the state is attributed to the Kurdish organization PKK in 1992 (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 54). The members intended to finance the organization on national territory without having any objectives related to a terrorist attack against a social category or a state authority. The action falls within the context of the flow of migrants on the Asia-Europe route. Given the fact that the activity of this entity was related to an NGO, this represents another indicator and a common element that can be found in the tendencies of financing terrorism-related activities (by conducting NGOs, detaining phantom commercial companies, or developing actions of charity).

Secondly, another case of an attempt to facilitate the activity of a terrorist organization was represented by the first elements of Romania's interaction with members affiliated with Al-Qaeda in Iraq within the country. A number of Iraqi citizens in Romania facilitated in 2005 the residence visas in Romania of more than 200 people to the country, including five Al-Qaeda members and eight people with ties to the terrorist organization (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 233). The initial reasons claimed by the foreign citizens were disguised as legal ones in order to obtain a residence visa (studies, commercial affairs, marriage to a Romanian citizen). This operational method can be characterized as a leitmotif found in most of the cases of radicalized foreigners who were expelled after a period of time.

The most relevant case for the analysis of radicalization in Romania is the attempt in 2003 (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 198) to create a logistical support nucleus in Romania and to promote radical terrorist propaganda and proselytism by a group of students from Iasi that had a variety of nationalities from the region of Africa and

the Middle East (Omani, Saudis, Sudanese, Pakistani). In this case, it can be observed quite coherently how the method of directed radicalization operated. If the organization had achieved cohesion, the entity's goals would have been oriented towards facilitating the performance of terrorist attacks by external terrorist organizations on the national territory.

The process of coordinated radicalization operated in this case by luring and recruiting young Muslim foreigners, residents of Romania, in order to spread the extremist ideology inspired by the model of Al-Qaeda. The reason for luring young foreigners lies in their lack of attachment to Romania's values and interests. Thus, indoctrinating other foreign residents with hatred against the national authorities and the government would have been much easier to achieve compared to the attempt on Romanian citizens. Young Muslim people were also selected for two reasons: to be more receptive to the extremist interpretation of Islam but also to be eligible to fulfil the religious objectives of the group. Another specific element that was present in the radicalization process consisted of directing their hatred toward the West. This element is specific to all the narratives of the jihadist ideology and is justified by the perception of the so-called oppression of Muslims by Western states.

In this case, young people were indoctrinated through the use of Islamic propaganda through audio and video materials in order to trigger specific psycho-religious factors that usually unleash the radicalization process. Another element commonly encountered in this collectively coordinated radicalization process is the mass murder glorification and violence adoration in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and Lebanon in the name of the Islamic jihad. In addition to that, extremist ideology was taught to the young Muslims using tapes with radical imams' teachings. However, a particularity was the traditional manner of coordinating the collective radicalization process, in the sense that, if nowadays it is mostly met in the online environment, in this case there were available physical meetings in order to facilitate their sense of cohesion and belongingness.

It should be noted the importance given to counter-informative instruction by learning from Al Qaeda's counter-informative training specific techniques to evade illegal actions towards the authorities. The

counter-informative training was also accompanied by a guide to using improvised explosive materials, as well as being indoctrinated with the concept of becoming "martyrs", rooted in the jihadist suicide attacks (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 198).

This model of directed radicalization brings together most of the elements of the traditional model of radicalization that is based on specialized theories: carried out in conspiratorial houses, coordinated by the group's leaders, who trained the members and shaped them into extremist ideologies. This model equally contains both psychological elements that exploit the conditions of personal vulnerability in order to determine their willingness to commit violent acts and ideological elements in order to justify the illegitimate actions of the group. In fact, this model involves luring members through a false sense of belonging but also offering them a false purpose in life for carrying out the jihad by exploiting individual vulnerabilities and isolating the recruited people (Jones, 2008, p. 7).

The impact that some dynamics might have on evaluating the trends in Romania was analysed while using the regional and international context as an indicator. The result of the analysis of past terrorist attempts also gradually showed the interest that a terrorist actor might have in Romania and the type of radicalization that is subsidiary. Lastly, the analysis of the past attempts in Romania emphasized important details in terms of the places and social categories in Romania that can be of interest to terrorist actors. As a result of the previous aspects emphasized by the analysis, the following elements can be considered as making up the specificities of the Romanian pattern in terms of observed trends of radicalization: If the period of the communist regime was characterized by the interests of terrorist organizations to target foreign diplomatic representatives or heads of state from the Middle East region visiting Romania, the objectives of the affiliated members of terrorist groups aimed, in the period after the 1990s, at targeting foreign interest locations (American, Western, or Israeli). Other objectives that can also predispose Romania to being a state of interest for non-state actors consist of its geostrategic position (being a buffer between the high-risk areas of the terrorist phenomenon in the Middle

East and the Western world) and the migration flow (as a transit route Asia-Europe and Europe-Middle East).

Moreover, other sources of interest can be generated by Romania's membership in international organizations with a role in maintaining military stability and peace, such as NATO, and its involvement in military operations, as well as its past experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. The strategic partnership of Romania with the United States of America and its membership in European security organizations can equally increase the hatred narratives, specific to the violent Islamic ideology, projected against the West and US policies.

Another aspect to note is the specificity of the subsidiary activities supporting or facilitating terrorism, which renders Romania a sphere of interest for non-state actors. Consequently, it is highlighted the predisposition for illegitimate actions such as violating the border regime and facilitating illegal migration for terrorist purposes, as well as facilitating the transport of individuals suspected of terrorism. Another aspect regarding the activities of facilitating terrorism is represented by the actions of financing or offering logistical support to terrorist organizations. The actions of proselytizing and promoting jihadist propaganda are also one of the main reasons for incrimination according to the provisions of Law No. 531/2005. Moreover, the typology of the terrorist threat targeting Romania has a jihadist nature. However, isolated cases consisting of political and separatist objectives of the ethnic Hungarians against the constitutional order and the integrity of Romania were observed in the region of the Hungarian community in Romania, namely Târgu Secuiesc from Harghita.

Concerning the social categories that are targeted, the analysis showed that the people most likely to be victims of terrorist attacks are represented by diplomatic personnel from the embassies of strategic partners (USA, Israel) or the embassies of Western states in Romania that are involved in the fight against terrorism, according to current trends. Other people likely to be targets of attempted terrorist attacks are the foreign citizens residing in Romania as well, who have a nationality specifically targeted by the objectives of a terrorist organization abroad (for example, the PKK in relation to Turkish citizens or Hamas in relation to Israeli citizens).

The objectives of strategic interest on the national territory, in the sense of the cities with the greatest predilection for being targeted as locations for the occurrence of radicalization or of the attempts to terrorist-related activities, are primarily represented by the cities proximate to the borders or in the transit route to regions with high terrorism risk according to the trends in terrorism expansion. For example, the trends from 2011-2019 showed Syria and Iraq as areas of high risk due to the expansion of ISIS in their territory, but according to the trends from 2020–2023, the areas of North-West Africa and the Sahel and areas of Central and South Asia indicate the expansion of the Islamic State (Global Terrorism Index, 2023, p. 42-43). The areas that could therefore be considered vulnerable are approximated, either in relation to the migration flows as a factor that can impact Romania in a predetermined period, as a transit route, or in correlation with the areas that are assimilated as being spheres of interest for terrorist groups.

Consequently, the pattern of the Romanian cities considered sensitive in this regard is determined by their geostrategic positioning (Timişoara, Constanţa, Oradea), the criteria of the universities and study opportunities (Iaşi, Sibiu, Bucharest, Cluj, Timişoara), or in relation to the areas of interest for the Muslim community and the existence of Islamic Centres (Iasi, Constanţa, Bucharest, Craiova, Deva, Cluj, Timişoara). At the same time, for the purpose of financing the terrorist organization, an NGO can be targeted in order to create the appearance of a legitimate activity in the same manner as a centre dedicated to charity work. The accommodation centres for disadvantaged or vulnerable people (orphanages, centres for homeless people, rehabilitation centres) can as well be targeted as locations with categories of vulnerable people to radicalization and recruiting or sharing extremist ideology. These people are estimated with a high degree of vulnerability based on psycho-social factors, which predispose the individuals to being triggered by some traumas that can unleash the radicalization process.

In addition to that, it can also be added that the trends in radicalization in Romania follow the model of the European trends in radicalization as a manifestation of the phenomenon at the regional level. In this manner, in the majority of the radicalized cases, whether terrorist attempts or not, ISIS was the terrorist organization that inspired the

radicalization process and is the main source of inspiration in the actions of spreading extremist propaganda. At the same time, religious ideology is the most frequent extremist ideology, framing the trends in Romania in accordance with European trends (Global Terrorism Index, 2023). It is also important to mention that the reports regarding the tendencies of the terrorist modus operandi in the European space have shown the preponderance of jihadist suicide attacks, the use of explosive materials by improvised incendiary devices (IIDS), improvised explosive devices (IEDS), and fire accelerators, but also the unconventional use of cold weapons in pursuing terrorist attacks (EUROPOL, 2023), this modus operandi being similarly available in Romania's cases.

Another common element between European trends and Romanian trends in radicalization is attributed to the cyberspace in terms of promoting extremist propaganda, too. In addition to that, it was also revealed in the literature that recent European trends in radicalization can't be evaluated anymore in the traditional manner and that the virtual role in the process is predominant (Whittaker, 2022). Moreover, the *Romanian Cyber Security Strategy emphasizes* the importance of reducing the risks of spreading terrorist propaganda in cyberspace, which has been identified as an increasing trend of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the following part of the article focuses on identifying Romania's vulnerabilities regarding radicalization by starting from a micro-level analysis of individual vulnerabilities, constituted in the first part by the cases of Romanian radicalized citizens and in the second part by the cases of radicalized foreigners that were expelled. Starting at this point, the article aims to identify the elements of vulnerability at the macro-level and to express the conclusions of the analysis in terms of Romania's vulnerabilities regarding radicalization.

A micro-level analysis regarding Romanian citizens' vulnerabilities to radicalization

Before proceeding to the analysis of the cases of radicalization among Romanian citizens, it should be specified that only the cases that presented a process of radicalization were taken into consideration. In this regard, a person may be incriminated by a court decision for

facilitating or favouring terrorist activities, but at the same time, this fact doesn't automatically imply that the subject is already radicalized or is in the process of radicalization.

The criteria used in the analysis consisted of selecting identifying data available in the court decisions that incriminated acts provided for by Law No. 535/2005, such as average age, sex, religious orientation, level of education, or profession or occupation at the time of radicalization, as well as the city of residence at that time, criminal record, psychiatric record, or traits of personality disorders. In addition to the attempt to build a prototype based on these criteria, the analysis also considered the psychological and social factors that predisposed the person to radicalization. In this sense, the selected period in the analysis of the cases of radicalization was between 2006 and 2021, considered the starting point for the first case of a radicalized Romanian citizen (Romanian Intelligence Service, 2015, p. 230).

Following the analysis of the court decisions in Romania, it emerged that during the period 2008-2021, a number of seven Romanian citizens had gradually developed the process of Islamic radicalization until an advanced phase, but prior to the step of engaging in terrorist attempts (Pitesti Court of Appeal, Decision no. 21/2018; Bucharest Court of Appeal, Decision no. 79/2019; The High Justice Court, Decision no. 54/2022; Decision no. 68/2021; Decision no. 342/2017; Craiova Court of Appeal, Decision no. 110/2017). The cities where the radicalization took place were Mioveni, Timișoara, Cluj, Craiova, and Drobeta Turnu Severin; some of them were cities already previously identified as areas of interest for terrorist-related activities, therefore this confirms the hypothesis.

According to the classification criteria listed previously, it turned out that, out of the seven Romanian citizens, six were men and only one was a woman (Decision No. 54/2022), with an average age between 18 and 43 years at the time of the radicalization. Likewise, the modality of radicalization was self-radicalization in the online environment, with the exception of only one case (Pitești Court of Appeal, Decision no. 31/2018) that assimilated coordinated radicalization. Due to the qualitative analysis based on these criteria, it was observed that the theory that the Internet operates as a conductor for the consumption of

radical propaganda (Whittaker, J. 2022) is applicable. Also, the young age of the radicalized people and the predominant self-development of the radicalization process support the idea that it is essentially a mental and emotional process, determined by intrinsic reasons.

On the other hand, in the case of coordinated radicalization, the analysis showed that this radicalization process started outside the country, in France, and the subject returned to Romania already in an advanced phase (Piteşti Court of Appeal, Decision no. 31/2018). In this case, the applicability of the social theories (Helfstein, 2012) that emphasize the impact of interaction and identification of the subject with a set of values of the radicalized group as factors that determine the initiation of the radicalization process can be observed. Apart from the unanimous inclination towards the specific ideology of ISIS spread online, the similarity between the cases of the radicalized Romanian in France (Piteşti Court of Appeal, Decision no. 31/2018) and the radicalized woman that lived in France for some years (The High Justice Court, Decision no. 54/2022) highlighted that the interaction of these two subjects with radicalized people in France initiated the radicalization process in a foreign country, so therefore, they returned to the country already in an advanced phase of radicalization.

In this idea, it should be mentioned that, in recent years, France has recorded the most terrorist attacks in Europe and also a high number of radicalized people (Global Terrorism Index, 2023, p. 36). The development of the radicalization process in an advanced phase was determined by a fertile environment for radicalization and the influence of the social circle with members who participated in terrorist attacks or fought in Syria in 2012 and 2014.

Likewise, regarding the level of education, the references from the court decisions showed a medium level of education in all the cases. In regards to the psychiatric record, it should be specified that all the subjects had discernment, with the exception of only one case with a low level of discernment (Decision No. 307/2018), but were present factors of psycho-social vulnerability: traits of personality that highlighted the tendencies of instability, impulsivity (Decision No. 307/2019, Decision No. 342/2017), or social vulnerabilities caused by uprooted family environments or the absence of parental authority (Decision No.

342/2017). The inspiration for the violent Islamic ideology was ISIS's ideology and methods of operation. Regarding the criteria of mental health illness understood in terms of vulnerability to radicalization, the article shares the opinion that mental illness issues, even though they may come as elements in the psychological profile of radicalized persons, can't be assimilated as primal reasons for predisposing a person to radicalization. On the other hand, it is confirmed by the analysis that personality traits play a much bigger role in assimilating radical beliefs and the tendency to violence (Misiak B. et al, 2019).

Furthermore, the actions taken by radicalized people were based on similar ideological prototypes: accessing and spreading online videos and imaging materials with an exacerbated degree of violence (beheadings, executions, burning alive the "infidels"), conducting public instigation to hatred and promoting speech against Western states and the USA, trying to attract new followers to join the cause of jihad, and proclaiming actions in the name of Allah. Another aspect worth mentioning is that, usually, the process of radicalization lasts from one to two years until the incrimination of the person in all of the cases.

Regarding the religious orientation prior to radicalization, it should be noted that two citizens out of seven had the Muslim religion from birth (Decision No. 307/2019), but the rest of them converted to Islam at some point, that is, prior to the initiation of the radicalization process. There is a notable gap of years between the two events, a fact also confirmed by the hypothesis that Muslim people by birth were radicalized in a vulnerable period of life. By observing the psychological factors that contribute to people's vulnerability to radicalization, several critical moments can be highlighted: the conversion to Islam as the initial moment, followed by a stage of assimilation of the new religious identity, and the incorporation of the customs and rigors of the Islamic religion. For this reason, the conversion theory has more applicability in these cases than the theory of radicalization as a sub-type of religious conversion (Van den Elzen, 2018), for the fact that the moment of initiation of the radicalization process does not coincide with the moment of conversion to Islam.

So, the moment of conversion to Islam is not the trigger for radicalization but an identity crisis influenced by previous psycho-social

factors. In this manner, the cause of a life-crisis event initiating the process of radicalization, cumulated with other psychological and social factors, can explain the development of the radicalization process as a transformational process (Wilner, Dubouloz, 2010). At the same time, in terms of the criteria for evaluating the psychological vulnerability of the subjects, such as self-image, isolation, social maladjustment, problems with authority, predisposition to antisocial acts, and emotional instability, it was observed that they build their self-image and the new identity by taking on a religious pseudonym (Decision nr. 342/2017, Decision 307/2019), changing habits and behaviour in accordance with religious ideas (Decision nr. 342/2017, Decision no. 54/2022), as strong indicators for occurring the first phase, the *crisis stage*, of the radicalization process.

In some cases, they presented tendencies of isolation in society or social maladjustment in the social or occupational environment (Decision 307/2019, Decision 342/2017), distance from society's values, tendencies of aggression (Decision No. 54/2022) and violence in the intra-personal environment, problems with authority (history of previous convictions (Decision 31/2018, Decision No. 54/2022, Decision No. 307/2019), school absenteeism (Decision No. 342/2017), family or occupational aggression), these signs usually happening in the *legitimacy conflict* of the radicalization process. Equally, the subjects showed resistance and feelings of hatred directed against Western society, government authority, and Christianity, specific elements for "legitimizing violence" against the national government (Decision 79/2019, Decision nr. 31/2018, Decision nr. 342/2017).

The advanced phase of radicalization, identified as the legitimacy crisis, was detected in the cases of repeated acts of spreading jihadist propaganda daily (Decision No. 54/2022), increasing as the subjects most often perceived life and everyday reality as unsatisfying; they manifested the loss of the fear of dying or the fear of killing (Decision No. 342/2017) in order to accomplish the fulfilment of the "sacred purpose" in jihad. It should also be noted that, in terms of following the model of the "martyr" presented by ISIS violent ideology or Al Qaeda, predisposed people to sacrifice for the cause of jihad are represented by people with low self-image and a damaged sense of identity. For this reason, the

person lacks a defined purpose in life and feels the need for a purpose, which he finds in joining a cause perceived as sacred by detaching himself from human values and existence and by embracing the sacrifice in exchange for the afterlife.

In terms of accessing and spreading through the social media platforms the jihadist propaganda, the analysis of the court decisions showed that it included violent materials containing photos and videos of beheadings, burning people alive in the name of Allah, public collective shootings, or manifestos justifying the extremist ideology. The materials glorified terrorist attacks, marked with specific symbols by the actor who proclaimed the attack. In order to explain the symbolism that can be met in the photos of the jihadist propaganda and attributed to a terrorist attack, it can be emphasized that it contains specific numbers as hatred symbols to encrypt motivational phrases from the violent ideology, with quotes from the Qu'ran that are misinterpreted in extremist terms in order to legitimize violence and glorify terrorist attacks.

The analysis of the cases also showed that the jihadist propaganda shared by the radicalized persons contained common elements such as violence adoration, mass murder glorification, and the copycat effect of previous martyrs, elements explained in the literature as being specific elements in perpetuating the idea of "legacy" of the claimant of the terrorist attack (Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann, 2017, p. 31–32). In addition, another element identified in the actions of spreading jihadist propaganda was that it can be promoted not only in the online environment but also inserted in video games with themes of Islamic Jihad (Decision No. 54/2022, Decision No. 342/2017), that are meant to engage people in psychological addiction, disengagement from reality and isolation, weaponry attraction, and violent behaviour.

A micro-level analysis regarding the resident foreigners' vulnerabilities to radicalization

The criteria taken into consideration in order to identify the pattern were: nationality, average age, sex, education or profession at the time of radicalization, immigrant status, origin from high-risk areas, the reason for obtaining the residence visa in Romania, the residence city in Romania, as well as the terrorist organization of inspiration. The analysis

selected the period starting in 2003 as the first attempt to establish a terrorist nucleus on the territory of Romania until the year 2023.

In the period 2010–2022, the Bucharest Court of Appeal expelled 63 foreign citizens based on the facilitation of terrorism, the violation of the explosive's regime, and the dissemination of terrorist propaganda materials and religious proselytizing. From the total number of expelled foreigners, the analysis showed that the predominant nationalities were: 10 Afghans (Decisions no. 113/2019, no. 2048/2016, no. 3450/2013, no. 6055/2012, no.133/2010, no. 1812/2021), 9 Palestinians (Decisions no. 4648/2012, no. 91/2019), 8 Tunisians (Decisions no. 2903/2018, no. 1654/2015, no. 904/2015, no. 933/2015, no. 3015/2017, no. 2339/2013, no. 6386/2012), 7 Syrians (Decisions no. 177/2020, no. 124/2012, no. 2966/2017), 5 Pakistanis (Decisions no. 1668/2018, no. 904/2015, no. 6906/2012, no. 4520/2012), 4 Chinese(Decision no. 7228/2012), 3 Algerians (Decision no. 904/2015), 3 Germans (Decisions no. 672/2017, no. 542/2013), 2 Iraqis (Decisions no. 2774/2016, no. 57/2019), 2 Turks (Decisions no. 928/2021, no. 546/2011), 2 Iranians (Decision no. 1112/2021), 2 Moroccans (Decisions no. 386/2019, no. 904/2015), 2 Jordanians (Decisions no. 3491/2015, no. 3310/2012), 1 Yemeni (Decision no. 4911/2017), 1 Kurd (Decision no. 1826/2012), 1 Egyptian (Decision no. 5971/2011) and 1 Hungarian (Decision no. 927/2014). Also, all the incriminated individuals were men and were inspired by the extremist ideologies of ISIS, Al-Qaeda, the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan, and Hamas.

At the same time, considering the reasons for granting residence visas in Romania, it is observed that the majority of visa applicants were students at the faculties of medicine and pharmacy in Bucharest, Iaşi, Timişoara, and Oradea. Compared to the rest of the people, four visas were granted for commercial activities, five people obtained the visa due to marriage with a Romanian, 12 people entered the country illegally, two people sought asylum, and two were refugees. Regarding the cities that were chosen for residence in Romania, there were Bucharest, Timişoara, Iaşi, Oradea, and Cluj. Another aspect important to mention is the ties these people have developed with the Islamic League in Romania.

Also, two repetitive elements were identified: the origin of the foreigners was from areas with a high degree of terrorism risk, such as

the Middle East and the region of Africa, as well as the reasons for granting visas, which consist in most cases of granting visas for studies in the field of medicine and pharmacy. Another characteristic is the marriage with Romanian citizens shortly after the granting of the visa or establishing residence. Also, in all the cases, the foreign citizens were born-and-raised Muslims. At the same time, another aspect that is relevant for the analysis is the period of residence in Romania, which in most cases stretched from one year to up to 20 years. In this regard, the majority of foreigners were integrated into society and not at all in transition to the territory. Moreover, some of them had families with children who were Romanian citizens.

For these reasons, the analysis showed the applicability of the theory of norm diffusion and local culture in the cases of the foreigners that were expelled. Most of the radicalization cases in Romania are generated by foreigners coming from another cultural region, predominantly the Middle East that has another set of cultural habits and perceptions about Western society highly anchored in the collective mindset, concerning life norms or rules. This opinion is also supported in the literature by the fact that it is more likely for radicalization to happen among young immigrants or refugees due to community violence, histories, and cultural stressors from their country of origin (Sieckelinck et al., 2015). Therefore, the vulnerabilities to radicalization regarding the foreigners can be approximated by taking into consideration as predisposal factors the areas that they came from as having a different cultural background compared to the Western region (Butt and Tuck, 2014). Also, the macro-system theory implies that the political, social, and cultural indicators that shape the society to which a future radicalized individual initially belongs contribute to an increased vulnerability to radicalization in terms of the belief systems and radical ideas that justify violence (Viejo, Boyé, 2017).

By also taking into consideration the macro-level indicators for the foreigners as having another cultural and socio-economic background, the article shares the opinion that the main individual vulnerability seen in most of the cases of the foreigners might have a root in the lack of awareness regarding the true essence of Islam. This fact is sustained by the argument that in the cases of the foreigners that were

expelled, the background is defined by born-and-raised Muslims, coming from other cultural regions where they might have already interacted with radical beliefs or a set of different values that were not democratic as in Western society. This assumption is also supported by the concept of "faith reinterpretation", specifically for those who are Muslims by birth and who develop a motivation in which they alter the religious tradition through introspection, finishing by following an extremist form of Islam (FBI's Counterterrorism Division, 2006).

In addition to that, an important step in avoiding vulnerability regarding the predisposition to radicalization is an authentic interpretation of the texts from the Qur'an, which is contrary to the Islamic extremist ideology promoted by radicalized individuals or terrorist organizations (ElSayed Amin, 2014, p. 2). For this reason, avoiding the texts or materials interpreted by radical imams in contradiction with the essence of the Qur'an combined with an authentic knowledge of religious teachings is the first step for Muslim persons to eliminate an incipient vulnerability.

On the other hand, regarding the theory of crisis psychology (Horgan, 2005, p. 78), where the main vulnerabilities are evaluated in terms of the level of integration of the Muslim community in a foreign country, Muslims connection to a new society's values, and the perceptions of persecution they feel in a Western territory, the article doesn't share this theory as having applicability in Romania's cases of expelled foreigners. By analysing the cases of the foreigners, it can be undeniably observed that they spent a long period of time in the country, had stable jobs or businesses, and had families with children who were Romanian citizens.

In the same manner, theories state that there is a link between radicalization and the set of misconceptions of society against Muslim people, in the sense that it determines the revolt and frustration towards the authorities and the injustice of Western states, so therefore, it creates the legitimacy to pursue violent actions and behaviours against the authority (Borum, 2004, p. 19). However, this theoretical assumption to explain vulnerabilities to radicalization is not sustained in the cases of the radicalized foreigners in Romania. The analysis showed that most of the foreigners showed regret when the Court declared the decision to

expel them from the country in order to leave Romania. Also, the foreigners emphasized that they were completely integrated into Romanian society and didn't feel persecuted or unaccepted at all by Romanians.

In terms of psychological factors, it was observed that the predilection of foreign students who come to study in Romania is to be lured by the jihadist propaganda because of the lack of purpose, being in search of an identity and a direction in life, and at the same time, being receptive to new mentalities, life directions, orientations, or experiences. Thus, this is a huge psychological factor that can become a vulnerability to be exploited by terrorist groups in their recruitment.

The macro-level deductions in terms of Romania's vulnerabilities to radicalization

In order to emphasize the macro-level deductions in terms of national vulnerabilities regarding radicalization, the starting point should be the definition of national vulnerabilities expressed in the Romanian National defence Strategy 2020-2024 as functional-systemic deficiencies that can be exploited to materialize threats or risks, weakening the resilience of the state as well as the ability to protect, defend, and promote national values, interests, and objectives.

The micro-level analysis of the cases of radicalization in Romania showed the fact that most of the cases of radicalization are constituted by foreign immigrants coming from high-risk areas in terms of terrorism manifestation – the Middle East and Africa. Also, it has revealed a young average social category of radicalized persons. However, in terms of Romanian radicalized persons, self-radicalization and spreading jihadist propaganda happened in the online environment, whereas in the cases of expelled foreigners, the social interaction within the groups (being available even after the collective expulsion) accelerated the radicalization process. Considering the fact that the cases of the foreigners showed a high level of stability in the Romanian society, such as a long period of residence, employment stability, and having a family with Romanian citizens, the factors should be approximated more in terms of increasing awareness of the phenomenon than combating its manifestation.

Consequently, the national vulnerabilities can be approximated in terms of the low level of security culture and awareness in terms of radicalization among civil society. Another aspect is also the fact that there are neither mentions nor substantial documents in terms of risks to radicalization at the national level, in order to help the civil society, become aware of incipient signs such as radical speech, attempts to be lured or recruited by terrorist members to inflict the ideology, elements of jihadist violence in online games, or anti-Western speech on the online platforms. Considering the impact of the online factor, it is equally important to mention the cyber vulnerabilities that were exploited in spreading jihadist propaganda and jihadist video games in order to accomplish anti-democratic objectives by the radicalized persons. In this manner, by taking into consideration the fast dynamics and the variety of cyber instruments, competent institutions must be currently adapted to evaluate new methods to control the spreading of the phenomenon and reconsider their instruments to prevent and combat it in the cyber area.

In addition to that, a low level of cooperation and dialogue between the national authorities and the Muslim representatives, figures as a vulnerability that can contribute to the acceleration of the phenomenon in the long term. Thus, the Muslim representatives of the communities in Romania can be included as guidance figures in programs in order not only to dispel misconceptions about Islam oriented towards Romanian society but also to dispel errors of religious interpretation or radical speech that can affect the perception of the Muslim community. Moreover, **the legislation in the national security area must be adapted** to the needs of the state, and reinforcing the competences in the counter-terrorism area can also contribute to creating adapted instruments in the area of preventing radicalization.

Conclusions

The analysis showed that radicalization in Romania follows, in terms of trends, the elements that other European states are confronting with: online radicalization, predisposition to self-radicalization instead of the traditional type of coordinated radicalization, radical propaganda

inspired by ISIS ideology, and a young average age of radicalized persons. Regarding this aspect, the prevention efforts should be oriented to constantly finding adaptive manners to decrease the probabilities of manifestation in the areas where this phenomenon is more likely to appear: virtual space, targeting young social categories, but also in regards to the instruments that are usually used in the self-radicalization process: social media platforms and violent jihadist games.

Hence, a recommendable aspect is to multiply the number of awareness programs regarding radicalization in Romania. These programs should be addressed to the civil society in order to increase awareness regarding the risks and manifestations of the phenomenon, especially in the national educational environments (universities, schools, and high schools), considering that young people and students are predisposed, as social categories, to radicalization. The education about the risks generated by radicalization is equally an effective tool to get the civil society familiarized to identify the early signs of radicalized people (extremist narrative, attempts at coercion, or incitement of civilians to violence based on widespread propaganda), whether to increase awareness in terms of radical content met online that incites violence, undermining the official powers, or hatred speech against Western societies, proclaimed in the name of Islam.

In terms of decreasing the macro-level vulnerabilities to radicalization, as the analysis showed that most of the radicalized cases in Romania consist of Muslim resident foreigners, it is necessary to increase the dialogue with the religious communities and the Muslim representative figures in order to offer more substance within the Muslim community regarding the dangers of Islam fundamentalism and the radical interpretations. In addition to that, increasing the dialogue between national authorities and the Muslim community would contribute to dismantling perceptions of persecution or discrimination against Muslims, frequently used in radical narratives.

Considering the fact that an objective of the Islamic and Cultural League in Romania is to "*eradicate*" the misconceptions about Islam in Romania and to dismantle the urban myths that assimilate Islam with Islamic fundamentalism, it can be emphasized that this objective could also be oriented to increase awareness regarding the extremist

interpretations offered to the Quran by the terrorist organizations within the Muslim community. However, it is advisable on the part of the Muslim community in Romania to demonstrate responsibility for the fulfilment of the objectives proposed by the Islamic associations in the country, based on the assumed exercise of the rights of religious freedom. The practical dismantling of urban myths and misperceptions towards Muslims is realized by ensuring transparency to society and authorities in Romania about the interpretation given to the Islamic teachings.

By taking into consideration the important role that the religious guidance of Muslim people has in order to give them a sense of belonging in the community and to raise their awareness about the dangers of adopting a radical approach to Islamism, the involvement of the religious figures of the muftis within mosques can be a huge factor in decreasing the vulnerability to radicalization in the Muslim community. On the other hand, the role of imams should demonstrate their involvement in strengthening the discernment of the Muslim community regarding a balanced and authentic interpretation of the texts of the Qur'an. Also, it is essential to warn the community against the misleading interpretation of key concepts in Islam spread by radical materials. This fact is also supported in the research area as being an important factor in decreasing the probabilities of radicalization in the Muslim community.

References:

Documents:
1. Court Decisions incriminating Romanian citizens based on Law no.535/2004: Pitesti Court of Appeal. Decision no. 21/2018; Bucharest Court of Appeal. Decision no. 79/2019; The High Justice Court. Decision no. 54/2022, no. 68/2021, 342/2017; Craiova Court of Appeal. Decision no. 110/2017
2. Court Decisions regarding the foreigners that were expelled based on Law no. 535/2004. Bucharest Court of Appeal: Decision no. 133/2010, Decision no. 5971/2011, Decision no. 546/2011, Decision no. 1826/2012, Decision no. 3310/2012, Decision no. 4520/2012, Decision no. 4648/2012, Decision no. 6055/2012,

Decision no. 6386/2012, Decision no. 6906/2012, Decision no. 7228/2012, Decision no. 542/2013, Decision no. 2339/2013, Decision no. 3450/2013, Decision no. 927/2014, Decision no. 904/2015, Decision no. 1654/2015, Decision no. 933/2015, Decision no. 3491/2015, Decision no. 2474/2016, Decision no. 2048/2016, Decision no. 2966/2017, Decision no. 672/2017, Decision no. 3015/2017, Decision no. 124/2012, Decision no. 2903/2018, Decision no. 1812/2018, Decision no.1112/2021, Decision no. 928/2021, Decision no. 177/2020, Decision no. 113/2019, Decision no. 386/2019, Decision no. 91/2019, Decision no. 57/2019, Decision no. 2903/2018, Decision no. 1668/2018, Decision no. 4911/2017

3. Court Decision nr.172/2019 based on Law no. 535/2004.

Books and studies:

4. Acharya, A. (2013). *Radicalization and Diffusion of "Ideology": A Preliminary Discussion. Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 5(8), 7-9. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/26351172

5. Al-Attar Z. (2019). "Extremism, Radicalisation & Mental Health: Handbook for Practitioners." *RAN Centre of Excellence and The RAN H&Sc Working Group*.

6. Bailey & Edwards. (2017). "Rethinking Radicalisation: Micro radicalisations and Reciprocal Radicalisation as an Intertwined Process." *Journal for Deradicalization*, 10, 255-281.

7. Borum, R. (2011). "Radicalization into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories." *Journal of Strategic Security*, *4*(4), 7-36. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/26463910.

8. Borum, R. (2004). *Psychology of terrorism*. Tampa: University of South Florida.

9. Butt R., Tuck, H. (2014). "European Counter-Radicalisation and De-radicalisation: A Comparative Evaluation of Approaches in the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Germany." *Institute for Strategic Dialogue, Cross-Country Evaluation Report*.

10. Campelo N., Oppetita A., Neauc F., Cohena D., Bronsarde G. (2018). "Who are the European youths willing to engage in radicalisation? A multidisciplinary review of their psychological and social profiles." *European Psychiatry*, 52, 1-14. Retrieved from DOI10.1016/j.eurpsy.2018.03.001

11. Canada National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence (2018). Retrieved from https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcs/pblctns/ ntnl-strtg-cntrng-rdclztn-vlnc/index-en.aspx#s4

12. Chalk, P. (1996). *West European Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism – The Evolving Dynamic*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan Press.

13. Copeland, S. and Marsden, S. (2020). "The Relationship Between Mental Health Problems and Terrorism." *The Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats.* Retrieved from www.crestresearch.ac.uk

14. Dutch Security Service (AIVD), 2005.

15. ElSayed, A. M.A. (2014). *Reclaiming Jihad – a Qur'anic Critique of Terrorism*. UK: The Islamic Foundation.

16. Europol (2023), *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

17. FBI's Counterterrorism Division, (2006). The radicalization Process: From Conversion to Jihad. Retrieved from https://cryptome.org/fbi-jihad.pdf

18. Gill, P., Corner E. (2017). "There and Back again: The Study of Mental Disorder and Terrorist Involvement." *American Psychologist*. American Psychological Association, 72:3, 231-241. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000090

19. Gunaratna, R., Jerard, J., Nasir, S. M. (2013). *Countering Extremism-Building Social Resilience through Community Engagement* (vol.1). London: Imperial College Press.

20. Helfstein, S. (2012). *Edges of Radicalization: Individuals, Networks and Ideas in Violent Extremism*. Combatting Terrorism Centre at West Point. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep05592

21. Horgan, J. G. (2005). "*The psychology of terrorism*", (Routledge New York, Taylor& Francis Group.

22. Horgan, J. G. (2017). "Psychology of terrorism: Introduction to the special issue." *American Psychologist, 72*(3), 1990-204. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000148

23. Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Terrorism Index 2016: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Sydney, 2016. Retrieved from from: https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2016.2.pdf

24. Institute for Economics & Peace. *Global Terrorism Index 2023*: *Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, Sydney, March 2023. Retrieved from http://visionofhumanity.org/resources

25. Jones, J. (2008), *Blood that cries out from the earth: the psychology of religious terrorism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. p. 7.

26. Law no. 535/2004 regarding preventing and combating terrorism, Retrieved from https://www.sie.ro/pdf/legislatie/535.pdf

27. Misiak, B., J. Samochowiec, K. Bhui, M. Schouler-Ocak, H. Demunter, L. Kuey, A. Raballo, P. Gorwood, D. Frydecka, and G. Dom. (2019). "A systematic review on the relationship between mental health, radicalization and mass violence." *European Psychiatry* 56 (1): 51-59. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1016/j.eurpsy.2018.11.005.

28. Nagra, B., &Maurutto, P. (2022). Canadian Muslim Youth and the Complex Dynamics of State-Driven "Radicalization" Narratives. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, *7*(2), 216-231. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/ 48696286

29. PET, (2009). "Radikaliseringogterror," Centre for Terror analyse (Denmark). Retrieved from http://www.pet.dk/upload/radikalisering_og_ terror.pdf

30. Romania Presidential Administration. (2020). National defence Strategy 2020-2024. Bucharest: Romania Presidential Administration.

31. Romanian Government, Decision nr. 1321(2021). *Cyber Security Strategy of Romania for 2022-2027.* Bucharest: Romanian Government.

32. Romanian Intelligence Service (2015). *SRI Monograph from 1990-2015*, Volume 1. Bucharest: RAO.

33. Romanian Intelligence Service (2015). *Counterterrorism Calendar-40 years of anti-terrorism in Romania (4th edition)*. Bucharest: Romanian Intelligence Service.

34. Schmid, A. (2011), *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*, New York, NY: Routledge.

35. Schmid, A.P. (2016). Research on Radicalisation: Topics and Themes. *Perspectives on Terrorism,*10:3, 26-32.

36. Sieckelinck S., De Winter F., De Winter M. (2015). "Neither Villains nor Victims: Towards an Educational Perspective on Radicalisation". *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 63:3, 329-343. Retrieved from DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2015.1076566.

37. Slootman M., TillieJ. (2006). Processes of Radicalisation: Why some Amsterdam Muslims become radicals. *Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies Universiteit van Amsterdam.* Amsterdam: IMES.

38. Spaaij, R. (2012). *Understanding Lone Wolf Terrorism Global Patterns, Motivations and Prevention*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing. Retrieved from DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-2981-0.

39. Van den Elzen, J. (2018). "Radicalisation: A Subtype of Religious Conversion?" *Perspectives on terrorism*, 12(1), 69-80. Retrieved from http:// www.jstor.org/stable/26343747

40. Vidino L., Marone F., Entenmann E. (2017). *Fear Thy Neighbour. Radicalization and Jihadist Attacks in the West*. Milano: Ledizioni Ledi Publishing.

41. Viejo, J. P., & Boyé, Á. M. (2017). "An Analysis of the Psycho-Social Factors Involved in Jihadist Radicalization Process and Terrorist Violence." In A. Sroka, F. C.-R. Garrone, & R. D. T. Kumbrián (Eds.), *Radicalism and Terrorism in the 21st Century: Implications for Security*, 91-106. Peter Lang AG. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2t4bgx.8

42. Vos Fellman, P., Bar-Yam, Y., Minai A. A. (2015), *Conflict and Complexity. Countering Terrorism, Insurgency, Ethnic and Regional Violence*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing. Retrieved from DOI 10.1007/978-1-4939-1705-1.

43. Whittaker, J. (2022). Rethinking Online Radicalization. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *16*(4), 27-40. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/27158150.

44. Wilner A. S., Dubouloz C. J., (2010). Homegrown terrorism and transformative learning: an interdisciplinary approach of understanding radicalization. *Global Change, Peace & Security (formerly Pacifica Review: Peace, Security& Global Change)* 22:1 (38).

INTELLIGENCE, SECURITY AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

ZERO SUM GAMES - ISLAM AGAINST EVERYBODY ELSE. CONTENT ANALYSIS AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN ISLAMIC PRIMARY SOURCES

Andra Mădălina URSU[*]

Abstract:

The current paper analyses narratives used within the Quran regarding Islam and its relationship/opposition to other religions – focusing on how Islam portrays its mission against other religions as a zero-sum-game.

Born in times of war, conquer and geographical expansion, Islam understands its da'wah mission (the act of calling people to embrace Islam) and calculates its gains in terms of losses for its adversaries. As Jihad sums up to be an obligation of any orthodox Muslim, and since many Ayyat (Quranic verses) describe conflict, revenge, war-waging and punishment for the kufr (disbelievers), Islam seems to understand its rapport to other religions in a zero-sum-game logic; briefly put, in order for the one true religion to win, all others must lose.

Complementary, after every historical win, a victorious Islam continued to perpetuate this zero-sum-game logic in relations to non-Muslims, described as disbelievers, constructing a system of "you are either on our side, or against us" when addressing communities from conquered regions; this rationale is perpetuated by DAESH today in Syria, and by Boko Haram in Nigeria. In light of the above, the present paper uses content analysis to describe how Islam and its primary source - Al Kitab (The Book, referring to the Quran) see Islam's relation to the other two Abrahamic religions. Our conclusions indicate that Islam views itself and its scope as a photographic negative (and better option) to other religions, and while it defines its primary objective to defeat others, in its perception of itself, Islam can only win as long as everybody else loses.

Keywords *Islam, narratives, zero-sum-game, game theory, politics.*

---

[*] Researcher in the communication and former student at ANIMV, email: andramadalinaursu@gmail.com

An introduction to the zero-sum-game theory and its applications

The mathematical zero-sum-game theory, originally applied in the sphere of game theory, was developed (*or explained*) by the eccentric mathematician John von Neumann (1903-1957) in its seminal work co-authored with Oskar Morgenstern – *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* (1944). In a classical approach, game theory is understood as the discipline of conflict where two players confront/play against each other, each being under pressure to take a decision, a course of action, a strategy (Kelly, 2003). Decisions of a player will directly affect the climate and its adversaries. Morgenstern and von Neumann focused on a two-players-matrix situation and concluded the following: each player will calculate a possible course of action of his opponent and will develop a strategy to minimize the outcome of his rival and maximize their own outcome. In game theory, a zero-sum-game (*such as chess*) provides that each player has a clear purpose (*own note: of winning against somebody*) which is perfectly opposed to other players (Morgenstern, von Neumann, 1944). In other words, every player's objective is for everybody else to lose.

The most common applications of the zero-sum-game theory are economics and political affairs – including or especially international affairs. As such, power players will aim for more influence, leverage or resources and the zero-sum-game had been the rationale for World Wars, gun trade, or the recent American-Chinese race for world domination. Even the digital coin market respects the same philosophy – Bitcoin has a fixed quota and all buyers aim for those available. Nevertheless, there is one nuclear power plant under construction in Eastern Europe, and one player will supply with gas and petrol.

Considering that people worldwide have witnessed the rationale of "*one or the other*" for as long as they can remember, the "*I against others*" or the realist motto "*homo homini lupus est*"[1], no wonder Islam have eventually developed its narratives in opposition to everybody who is not "*them*", or "*us*".

---

[1] Simply put, man will act in his best interest and will not shy off from stepping onto bodies in order to achieve what he has set to.

As per our knowledge, the concept of zero-sum-game had not been yet applied to Quranic narratives, and content analysis of the Quran verses, both qualitative and quantitative, had not been a matter of interest for scholars, regardless of their area of expertise. A reference about using secular tools for analysing religious documents was made in *Violence and Islam: Conversations with Houria Abdelouahed* (Adunis, 2015, p. 116); the author indicated that *The Book* (referring to the Quran) could use a visceral analysis of its corpus using secular tools and methods.

There are, however, references of Islam's relationship to "*the other one*", the non-Muslim community, citing that the traditional Islamic thinking views the world as purely Islamic in social terms. From a cultural point of view, Adunis makes the following observations on how the Quran describes the world in axiomatic terms (Adunis, 2015, p. 64):

i)   Tawhid or the paramountcy of Allah[2]
ii)   Creation of the world by Allah
iii) The paramountcy of the Quranic scripture
iv)   Uniqueness of the Islamic universe[3]
v)   The Exclusion of other religions[4] and compulsoriness of others to revert to Islam[5].

Consequently, even if Islam was posterior to other religions and civilizations, it didn't manage to inherit or exceed them in terms of tolerance or respect for what is different (Adunis, 2015, p. 38). The cited linguist and poet also highlight that by assuming that the other Abrahamic religions have falsified the sacred text (but without the Quran mentioning what was falsified and how), the Quran has attacked every other religion – especially The People of the Book –, which represents an act of violence in itself towards the two other monotheist religions, Judaism and Christianity. According to the Quran, **dialogue with other religions is not possible** and refused, and the Quran uses violent terms

---

[2] There is only One God – and that God is Islamic.
[3] There is only one universe, and it is an Islamic one.
[4] There is no place for any other religion in the world and no other place for non-Muslims within an Islamic society.
[5] The world must convert/revert to Islam, because there is no other religion and no other way.

when referring to the other two Abrahamic religions – the aforementioned source summed up 80 verses referring to Hell, while torment and punishment in an eternal hell are mentioned in 370 verses. The cited author interprets the conflicted relationship of Islam with violence, the latter being a characteristic of the victorious, living in a society which praises violence and ordeal, extreme pain, suffering – therefore the call to Jihad and war against alterity and "the other" by all means and tools at hand in the name of Allah seem all natural and disconnected to sin (Adunis, 2015, pp. 64-66).

A source which peripherally discusses segregation between people of different religions, violent acts and narratives against the other two Abrahamic religions is the memoir of English-Pakistani activist Maajid Nawaz (*Radical: My Journey out of Islamist Extremism*, 2012*).* Nawaz describes the lack of compassion for non-Muslims of Hizb-ut-Tahrir members in the context of 9/11, caused by the "suffering of his people". According to the same source, dehumanizing other religious communities empowers Islamism and violence against "the other", which facilitates marginalization, persecution and desensitization for those willing to commit terrorist attacks (Nawaz, 2012, p. 128).

Methodology and purpose

The purpose of the present paper is to dissect the relationship of Islam to the other two monotheisms, Judaism and Christianity. Our objective is to identify whether the choice of words within the primary source of Islam leaves room for interpreting Islam and its role in the world in opposition to non-Muslims and to identify whether the pattern of zero-sum-games can be found in presumed interactions between Islam and the non-Muslim world.

The analysed *Ayyat* (Quranic verses) refer to or mention other religious, non-Muslims communities, mainly Judaism and Christianity. We used tools of content analysis to describe the view of Islam on non-Muslims, about its role in the world and its course of action.

The Quran associates other confessions with "disbelievers"/ *Kufar*/*kufr*/kafir, reason why the present paper also diverts its focus to analysing the context in which *Al Kitab* refers to disbelievers (non-Muslims) and their opposition to the *Ummah* (community of Muslims).

In this respect, we will both analyse the passages referring to the People of the Book (*species*), as well as those with disbelievers (*genus*). Non-Muslims are referred to and associated with "those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are truly the disbelievers" (Al-Maidah 5:44, similarly in 5:47); when dealing with other confessions (mainly Jews), they are the "wrongdoing people" (Al Maidah 5:51)[6], "most of which are rebellious" (Al Maidah 5:59), "who deserve a punishment from Allah (...) who earned Allah's condemnation and displeasure – some being reduced to apes and pigs and worshippers of false gods. These are far worse in ranks and farther astray from the Right Way" and "have fallen to disbelief" (Al Maidah 5:72).

We have chosen the method of content analysis, focusing on both qualitative and quantitative indicators; this was preferred to statistical analysis (as the former contains a component of statistical analysis) considering that the later will plainly indicate the number of occurrences for a given term, but will not understand the sense of the phrase (e.g. will not have a proper explanations for terms which have a negation in front of them, so the results retrieved may be false positives). Complementary to statistical analysis, content analysis performed with QDA miner focuses on qualitative indicators – number of occurrences for a term in terms of numbers and percentages, but also of co-occurrences – which refers to the semantic fields of the terms associated to Jews and Christians (portrayed as disbelievers). Content analysis brings added value to our understanding of the Quran, its message and meaning, considering that the choice of words associated with the other two monotheisms, Judaism and Christianity, sheds light on the rapport to its exterior Islam has and designs.

We have analysed all passages of Quranic Ayat which contain references to representatives of the other two Abrahamic religions, while respecting the quotation rules of Islam (which is never quote a word-count lesser than 13 words, so as not to contaminate the meaning of the Ayat and Surrah), with a mixed technique of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. Whenever the case, for analytical purposes,

---

[6] O believers! Take neither Jews nor Christians as guardians – they are guardians of each other. Whoever does so will be counted as one of them. Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

we have replaced species-terms with genus-terms, to achieve accuracy and clarity (example: reducing "disbelievers" to "disbelieve", which will include more segments into the analysis, in order to compensate for QDA shortcomings). Also, for a clearer result, we have equated the terms "Jews" and "Christians" with the term "People of the Book" – although the phrase "People of the Book" is more frequent than "Jews" or "Christians". Lastly, connectors such as "and", "or" and neutral verbs such as "to be" were eliminated, according to traditional methodology, in order for the analysis to provide with an accurate result.

Ethical concerns

While Quran is indeed Holy for Muslims and has religious and dogmatic relevance, it might be argued that analysing religious content with research tools (laic in their nature) would be qualified as blasphemy. In our view, the Quran is indeed the primary source of religious and theological knowledge in Islam; yet, its significance and roles exceed the one of a religious text, as the Quran was and is the basis for internal laws and regulations, social life and family life, economic and trade regulations and others. Since Quran is, besides a religious source, also a treaty of political thinking, social manifesto, ethical and even environmental philosophy etcetera, it also has an unreligious dimension, thus we argue that content analysis can generate new understanding of its meaning and message.

As the theoretical approach may leave the impression that it could furthermore result in more segregation and alienation of confessions, the intention behind the study is to merely understand how Islam portrays itself, its role in the world and its relation to Non-Muslims (i.e. disbelievers), so as to highlight a potential instrumentalization of Islam and the Quran by fundamentalist and political Islamist factions. While Muslims all around the world are peaceful and have virtually no intention to cause harm to people considered alien to their practices, lifestyle and philosophy, the author feels that the portraying of non-Muslims as adversaries might lead itself to conflicting thinking, with all due considerations for the political context and époque when the Quran was revealed.

Quantitative Content analysis

"The People of the Book", "Jews" and "Christians" (to whom the Torah and Gospels have been revealed) are mentioned in 46 Ayyat (*Quranic verses*) and in 13 chapters, most of them in the first section of the Quran[7].

As we will further demonstrate, references to the People of the Book are mostly negative – with two exceptions, where the Quran is less negative about other religions: "You will surely find the most bitter towards the believers to be the Jews and polytheists and the most gracious to be those who call themselves Christian. That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not arrogant" Surah Al Maidah 5:82, as well as "You (Muslims) are the best community ever raised for humanity – you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah. Had they (People of the Book) believed, it would have been better for them. Some of them are faithful, but most are rebellious" Surah Al Imran 3:110. This results in a percentage of 4, 34% of all references to the two monotheist religions in positive (or mildly positive terms), leaving all other to be negative (e.g.: wrongdoing, evil, malicious) as we will indicate in our qualitative content analysis. Disbelievers (*kufr*) and its derivatives are mentioned in 54 chapters and 518 Quranic verses, entirely in a negative register, in connection to diverse punishments and negative outcomes (this counts for 8, 30% of the verses within the Quran).

Qualitative and Quantitative Content analysis

As represented in the word cloud below in Figure 1, non-Muslims monotheist religions (denominated as "People of the Book", "Jews" or "Christians") are indicated as "disbelievers" and firmly condemned – Christians especially – for they have fallen into disbelief due to proclaiming Jesus as the son of Allah (Surah Al-Maidah 5:17, 73)*;* own note – the dispute regarding the Holiness of the Trinity for Christianity is condemned by Muslim scholars and clerics as blasphemy, according to the Quran and Sunnah), a crime for which they "will be afflicted with a painful punishment" (Surah Al Maidah 5:73).

---

[7] The Quran contains 114 chapters and 6236 ayyat/verses, excluding Bismillah (the Arabic phrase at the beginning of each chapter meaning "in the name of Allah").

Figure 1: Word cloud chart designed with *wordart.com*
by the author indicating the most frequent word occurrences

Subsequently, People of the Book are directly accused of "denying the revelations of Allah" (Surah Al-Imran 3:98)[8] , and that they "turn the believers away from the Way of Allah" (Surah Al-Imran 3:99), therefore the ones "who disbelieve from the People of the Book and the polytheists will be in the Fire of Hell" (Surah Al-Bayyinah 98:6). Furthermore, the "People of the Book" are placed in opposition with "believers" (Muslims), as they "resent us (own note: Muslims) only because we believe in Allah" (Surah Al-Maidah 5:59). Segregation on the criteria of religion is recommended, as Muslims are directly encouraged not to take neither Jews nor Christians as guardians, for the latter two are the wrongdoing people (Surah Al-Maidah 5:51). Similarly, Surah Al-Maidah 5:57 places Muslims (denominated as believers) in opposition with Jews and

---

[8] "Say, 'O Prophet', O People of the Book! Why do you deny the revelations of Allah, when Allah is a Witness to what you do?"

Christians, who "resent Muslims" for their faith (Surah Al-Maidah 5:59). Non-Muslims (especially Jews) are directly associated with pigs and apes, thus denying them the condition of human beings (Surah Al-Araf 7:166[9], Surah Al-Maidah 5:60[10]) – a technique used in world wars, as it legitimizes the use of force against them.

Content analysis tools indicate the further most associations of the phrase "People of the Book" (or Jews, Christians) with "disbeliever", "ignorance", "bovine", "judgment" and "death", placing them in a negative and somewhat apocalyptic register. The inclusion of the People of the Book into the category of disbelievers/kufr represents for fervent Muslims the greatest sin ("shirk" or "Shirk-al-Akbar", described as associating anyone with Allah, or believing in more than one God – directly referring to the Trinity, saints, monks or Christian scholars, or to associate Allah's attributes with someone else); further content analysis of the verses regarding the disbelievers will determine the rapport of Muslims with disbelievers, including the People of the Book.
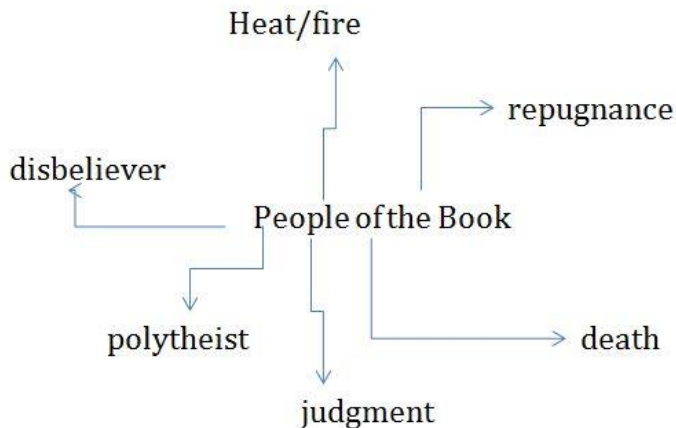
Figure 2: The most frequent co-occurrences associated with the terms "People of the Book", "Jews" and "Christians", designed with Tropes by the author

---

[9] "But when they stubbornly persisted in violation. We said to them. Be disgraced apes!"
[10] "Some being reduced to apes and pigs."

Disbelievers are directly indicated as enemies of Allah and of the believers, with clear intentions of harming Muslims, as stated in the following examples: "they will not stop fighting you until they turn you away from your faith" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:217); "People of the Book wish to mislead you 'believers'" (own note – as a consequence, People of the Book are not believers) (Surah Al-Imran 3:69, 3:99); "O believers! Do not associate closely with others who would not miss a chance to harm you. Their only desire is to see you suffer" (Surah Al-Imran 3:118); "Disbelievers would wish to see you neglect your weapons and belongings, so they could launch a sweeping assault on you" (Surah An-Nisa 4:102); "disbelievers conspired to capture, kill, or exile you" (Surah Al-Anfal 8:30); "Prepare against them what you 'believers' can of 'military' power and cavalry to deter Allah's enemies and your enemies" (Surah Al-Anfal 8:60); "Our Lord! Do not subject us to the persecution of the disbelievers" (Surah Al-Mumtahanah 60:5).

Muslims are encouraged to battle non-Muslims if they are malicious, with every mean at hand: "destroy the disbelievers" (Surah Al-Imran 3:141); "I will cast horror into the hearts of the disbelievers. So, strike their necks and strike their fingertips" (Surah Al-Anfal 8:12); "Fight those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day, nor comply with what Allah and His Messenger have forbidden, nor embrace the religion of truth from among those who were given the Scripture, until they pay the tax, willingly submitting, fully humbled" (Surah At-Tawbah 9:29); "O believers! Fight the disbelievers around you" (Surah At-Tawah 9:123).

The described scenario places "believers" (Muslims) on the righteous side, and "disbelievers" on the side of evil. The verses describing the kufr paint an image of conflict, war, massacre and danger: "Indeed, there was a sign for you in the two armies that met in battle – one fighting for the cause of Allah and the other in denial" (Surah Al-Imran 3:13); "Believers fight for the cause of Allah, whereas disbelievers fight for the cause of the Devil" (Surah An-Nisa 4:76); "So fight in the cause of Allah" (Surah An-Nisa 4:84); "disbelievers conspired to capture, kill, or exile you" (Surah Al-Anfal 8:30); "Fight against them until there is no more persecution" (Surah Al-Anfal 8:39); "So when you meet the disbelievers 'in battle', strike 'their' necks until you have thoroughly

subdued them, then bind them firmly" (Surah Muhammad 47:4); "If the disbelievers were to fight you, they would certainly flee" (Surah Al-Fath 48:22); "Struggle against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm with them" (Surah At-Tahrim 66:9).

Among the prayers in the Quran, we mention "My Lord! Do not leave a single disbeliever on earth" (Surah Nuh 71:26). However, there is a single verse which advices Muslims to deal with non-Muslims peacefully[11] (Surah Al-Ankabut 29:46).

Disbelievers are associated with fire/hellfire, which shall be their eternal punishment in the following verses: Surrah Al-Baqarah 2:39[12], 162[13], Surah Al-Imran 3:24, 88[14], 118 – cited above, 131[15], 151[16], 197, Surah An-Nisa 4:56[17], 169[18], Surah Al-Anfal 8:50[19], Surah Al-Anbya 21:98[20], Surah Al-Azhab 33:64, 65[21], Surah Fatir 35:36[22], Surah 36:63, 64[23], Surah 38:27[24], Surah Az-zumar 39:72[25], Surah Ghafir 40:6[26], Surah

---

[11] "Do not argue with the People of the Book unless gracefully, except with those of them who act wrongfully." And say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to you."

[12] "But those who disbelieve and deny Our signs will be the residents of the Fire. They will be there forever."

[13] "They will be in Hell forever."

[14] "They will be in Hell forever."

[15] "Guard yourselves against the Fire prepared for the disbelievers.'

[16] "Fire will be their home."

[17] "We will cast them into the Fire. Whenever their skin is burnt completely. We will replace it so they will 'constantly' taste the punishment."

[18] "Hell, to stay there forever and ever."

[19] "Taste the torment of burning."

[20] "Certainly you 'disbelievers' and whatever you worship instead of Allah will be the fuel of Hell."

[21] "Surely Allah condemns the disbelievers, and has prepared for them a blazing Fire to stay there forever and ever."

[22] "As for the disbelievers, they will have the Fire of Hell, where they will not be ⸢allowed to be⸣ finished by death, nor will its torment be lightened for them."

[23] "This is the Hell you were warned of. Burn in it Today for your disbelief."

[24] "So, woe to the disbelievers because of the Fire."

[25] "It will be said to them." "Enter the gates of Hell, to stay there forever."

[26] "And so, your Lord's decree has been proven true against the disbelievers – that they will be the inmates of the Fire."

Al-Ahqaf 46:20[27], 34, Surah Al-Fath 48:13[28], Surah Qaf 50:24[29], Surah 57:15[30], 19[31], Surah 64:10[32], Surah 76:4[33].

Similarly, to alienation from non-Muslims, the Quran recommends alienation from disbelievers: "Believers should not take disbelievers as guardians instead of the believers" (Surah Al-Imran 3:28); "Believers! Do not take My enemies and yours as trusted allies, showing them affection even though they deny what has come to you of the truth (...) do not take them as 'allies', disclosing secrets 'of the believers' to the pagans out of affection for them" (Surah Al-Mumtahanah 60:1). Also, Surah Al-Imran 3:110 compares believers and disbelievers, placing non-Muslims in antithesis with Muslims, the later again on an ethically superior level[34].

Differences in religious convictions offers grounds for further separation and distinction, according to Surah 109:1-6: "Say, 'O Prophet', O you disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship. I will never worship what you worship, nor will you ever worship what I worship. You have your way, and I have my Way."

While the only outcome described places believers in Paradise on the righteous side, disbelievers will burn in an eternal Hell, the punishment being that they will forever torment with their skin replenishing, so they would permanently have to suffer for their disobedience. This paints a strongly emotional narrative in a binary logic, the text having a rather argumentative style forged to impress and generate strong emotions with somewhat strong visuals.

---

[27] "Watch for the Day 'when' the disbelievers will be exposed to the Fire."

[28] "We surely have prepared for the disbelievers a blazing Fire."

[29] "It will be said to both angels." "Throw into Hell every stubborn disbeliever."

[30] "So today no ransom will be accepted from you 'hypocrites', nor from the disbelievers. Your home is the Fire."

[31] "But 'as for' those who disbelieve and reject Our signs, it is they who will be the residents of the Hellfire."

[32] "As for those who disbelieve and reject our revelations, they will be the residents of the Fire, staying there forever. What an evil destination!"

[33] "Indeed, we have prepared for the disbelievers' chains, shackles, and a blazing Fire."

[34] "You are the best community ever raised for humanity – you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah. Had the People of the Book believed, it would have been better for them."

The two antithetic communities are facing each other, but the righteous one shall be victorious in an apocalyptic battle of epic proportions. Most verses are constructed in clear opposition, describing the two adversaries in clear antithesis (e.g. believers will go to Paradise, disbelievers will not; believers will be victorious, disbelievers will lose; Allah helps the believers, disbelievers have no helper and no protection).

Content analysis of verses describing disbelievers/kufr indicates the following results:

1. the most frequent terms are "Allah" (or "Lord"), "disbelieve" (with the derivatives "disbelief", "disbeliever"), "punishment", "prophet" (referring to Muhammad, Jesus or without clear indication), "book" (most verses regarding disbelievers also mention "People of the Book"), "fire", "evil", "Hell", "suffer", "torment" etc. (see figure 3). The proportion of the verses indicates that almost one half of the text (after eliminating connecters) consist of either term related to "God" and from the semantic field of "disbelieve";

	FREQUENCY	% SHOWN %
ALLAH	239	20.2%
DISBELIEVE	178	15.1%
PEOPLE	52	4.4%
PUNISHMENT	47	4.0%
LORD	41	3.5%
PROPHET	41	3.5%
BELIEVERS	41	3.5%
BOOK	34	2.9%
FIRE	33	2.8%
SURELY	31	2.6%
EVIL	29	2.5%
REVEALED	25	2.1%
HELL	23	1.9%
WORSHIP	22	1.9%
TRUTH	21	1.8%
DAY	19	1.6%
REVELATIONS	18	1.5%
SUFFER	16	1.4%
SIGNS	15	1.3%
MESSENGER	14	1.2%
GOOD	14	1.2%
HEARTS	14	1.2%
FAITH	13	1.1%
TRUE	13	1.1%
EARTH	13	1.1%
FIGHT	13	1.1%
CONDEMNED	12	1.0%
REWARD	12	1.0%
TURN	12	1.0%
TORMENT	12	1.0%
HOME	12	1.0%
GUIDE	11	0.9%
CLEAR	11	0.9%
LIFE	11	0.9%
DEEDS	10	0.8%
DENY	10	0.8%
FOREVER	10	0.8%
JUDGMENT	10	0.8%
LIGHT	10	0.8%
MAKE	10	0.8%
PAINFUL	10	0.8%

Figure 3: The words with the most frequent occurrences retrieved
with a QDA miner analysis of the Quranic Ayat referring to
"People of the Book", "Jews" and "Christians" (Author's analysis)

2. the proximity plot of the terms and phrases mentioned below, as indicated in figure 3, places the "disbelievers" close to the term "Allah' (as the disbelievers deny/do not believe in Allah), but also close to "revelations" (which they also deny), and also to "fire", "evil", "punishment", "suffer" and "deny signs";

3. the term "disbelievers" is most often associated to the following terms, as shown in the proximity plot diagram: "Allah/Lord", "fire", "punishment", "Prophet", "hell", "evil", "suffer", "torment" (see figure 4).
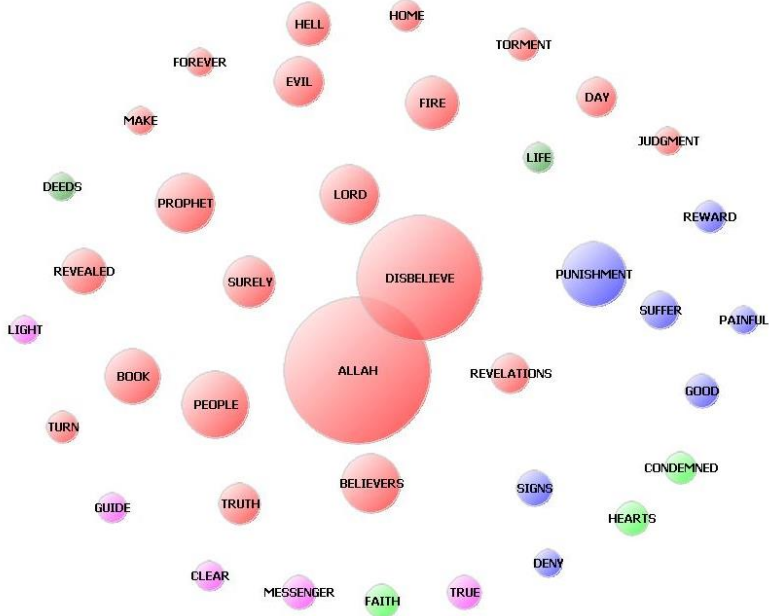
Figure 4: Proximity plot indicating the most frequent associations
of the term "disbelievers" retrieved with QDA Miner,
designed by the author

4. the narratives of the verses constructs the following timeline, as indicated in the Proximity ploy in Figure 5 and the Dendogram in figure 6: a) there are believers in Allah and disbelievers; b) the Book was revealed by the Prophet, containing the truth; c) there will be a Day of Judgment, when the Lord (Allah) will cast torment and evil in an eternal Hell fire for the disbelievers, for not considering His signs; d) a painful punishment awaits disbelievers for their lively deeds; e) they and their hearts are condemned for not having Faith.
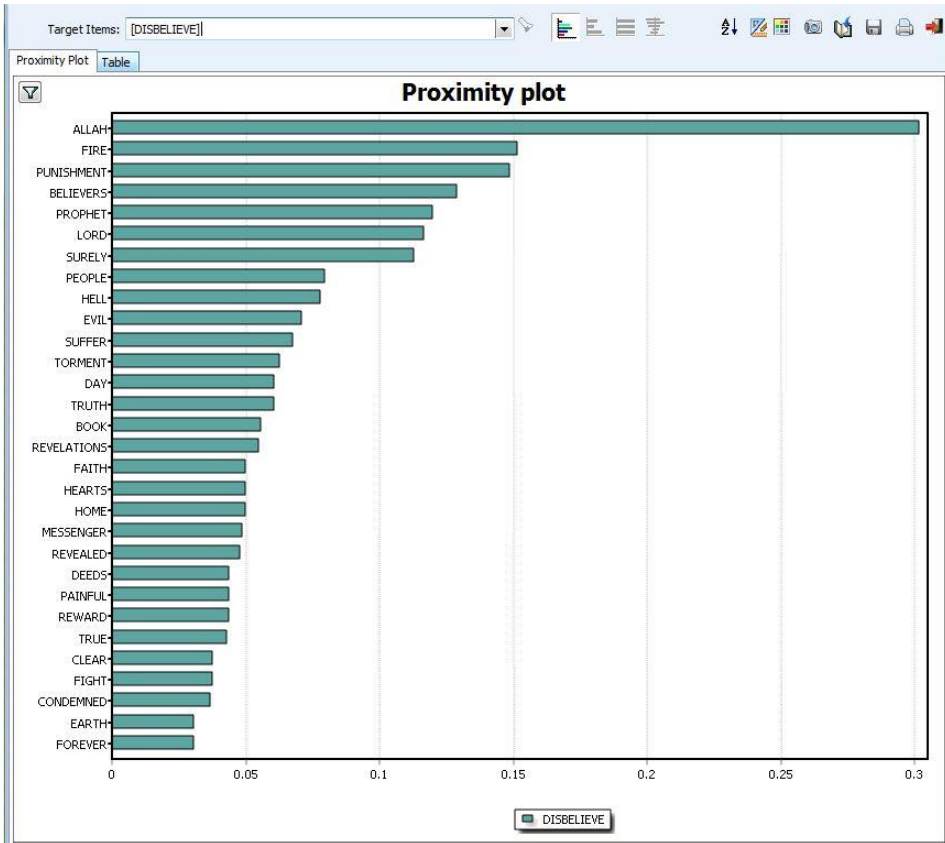
Figure 5: Proximity plot indicating the argumentative style of the text and the construction of its main narratives, retrieved with QDA Miner (author's design)
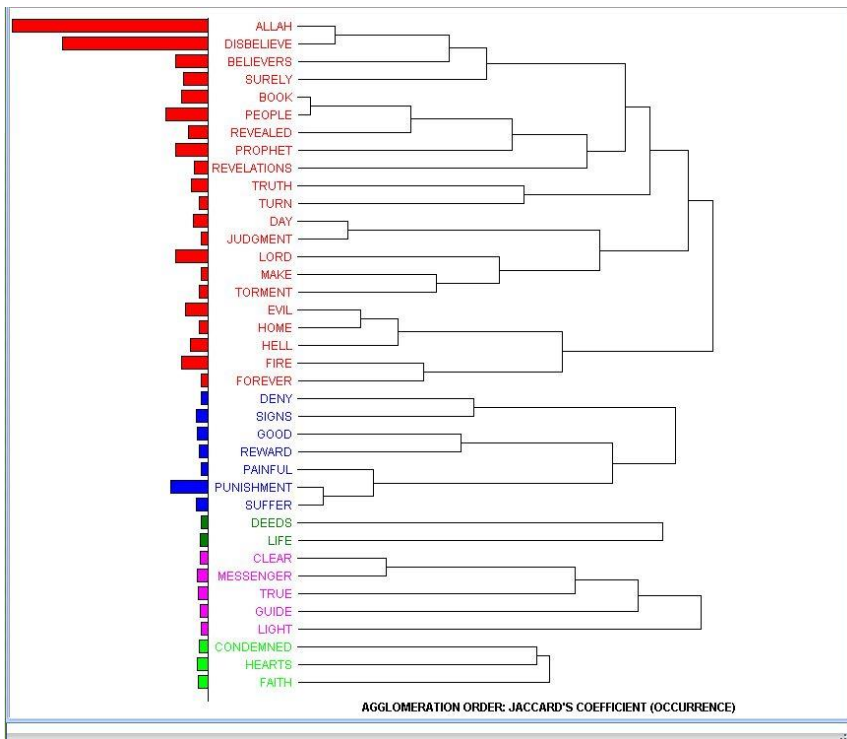
Figure 6: Dendogram retrieved with QDA Miner indicating
the principal co-occurrences, showing the main narratives
and how the text is constructed using antithesis (author's design)

The style of the Quran is rather argumentative, delivering a very emotional narrative based on antithesis with a rather concise and well-constructed epic plot. The Quran describes People of the Book in opposition to Muslims, with clear intentions of mixing truth and falsehood and leading "believers" (in Allah and the Quran) astray from their faith. The rationale uses antithesis and the argument is constructed using induction.

By directly qualifying non-Muslims as "disbelievers"/ "kufr", the Quran draws a border between the two categories and describes a perpetual confrontation opposing the two, in a zero-sum-logic scenario, with one single possible outcome – "disbelievers" and their even existence are a threat to "believers" and "Allah", and must be annihilated or converted.

Most references to the People of the Book, qualified as disbelievers, are negative (46 negative, in comparison to 2 mildly positive), while references to disbelievers as a category are entirely negative. Non-Muslims are indicated as species of the "disbelievers" genus and firmly condemned. Their association (usually of Jews) with animals (pigs, apes) deny them human condition, making them inhumane, an adversary easier to combat. Thus, our content analysis indicated that most associations of the phrase "People of the Book" are made with "disbeliever", "ignorance", "judgment" and "death", placing them in a negative register.

Al-Kitab mentions "disbelievers" often, highlighting the level of danger, and the need for Muslims to reduce the level of evil in the world. "Disbelievers" are directly qualified as enemies of Allah and Muslims, with clear intentions of harming them. Therefore, Muslims are encouraged to fight disbelievers (category which includes non-Muslims) with their being and every instrument at hand. The battle portrayed in the Quran achieves epic proportions, with angels fighting alongside Muslims. There can only be one result – eternal submission to Allah and a wipe-out of those who do not submit to Allah (Islam means submission).

The portrayal of the rapport of Islam to non-Muslim communities as confrontational historically allowed fundamentalist and terrorist organizations to use the Quran as an instrument to legitimize violence and criminal activity throughout the world. For example, the creation of a caliphate by the Islamic State made intense use of an alleged fight against disbelievers/ infidels to attract human power and brains, while spreading chaos.

Across history, individual identity had been determined by common features the members of a community shared. In Medieval times, those features were religious; for Europe and later the American continent, that common identity was shaped by nationality or statehood; but in the Middle East, religion is still the major item individuals use to define themselves. Adding the arbitrary design of borders of the Middle East by the dominating West with no account for the distribution of tribes and ethnicity, the very opposition to colonial forces and alienation using religion shaped their very identity; facing the colonial background

of the Middle East and Northern Africa with their religious identity historically led to a rather violent personality of the peoples in these regions. As the year 2023 faces us with transnational identity of people who join each other in the multiverse based on sharing an idea or a concept, Islamism and extremist ideologies are more prone to spread from buds of intolerance and lack of sympathy for "the other".

In our view, a "reading grid" of the Quran with a clear differentiation of devotional aspects, political, social ones and customs would reduce the *ad litteram* interpretation of the Holy Book, thus a moderate interpretation of the Quran within the Muslim world would only benefit and continue the present study.

References:

1. *The Quran*. Retrieved from htpps://www.quran.com
2. Adunis (2015). *Violence et Islam. Entretiens avec Houria Abdelouahed*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.
3. Nawaz, M. (2012). *Radical - my journey from Islamist extremism to a Democratic awakening*, London: Ebury Press.
4. Adunis (2001), *Al-Kitab*, Tehran: Zahidah Darwish.
5. Al-Tabari, Tarikh. *The History of Al-Tabari* (volume 9). Retrieved from https://www.kalamullah.com/tabari.html
6. Von Neuman, J and Morgenstern, O (*1944*) *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
7. Kelly, A (2003), *Decision making using game theory*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

UNDERSTANDING CONSPIRACY THEORIES –
A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

Ruxandra BULUC[*]
Cristina ARRIBAS[*]
Ana ĆUĆA[*]

Abstract:
The present research addresses one of the most pressing current challenges in fighting disinformation: conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories have always existed in societies, however, at present, they have gained momentum due to their easy spread and appeal in social media. Moreover, they have begun to corrupt people's understanding of the world and their willingness to listen to experts and authorities in times of crisis and not only, thus threatening not only the further development of societies but also the very health and security of the communities they lived in. The present research has two main objectives. Firstly, it analyses what conspiracy theories are and what their most prominent characteristics are, and, secondly, it examines three case studies to verify if the traits identified in the literature are reflected in actual conspiracy theories. We believe that this analysis can form the basis for better countering and mitigating the effects conspiracy theories have on democratic societies.

Keywords: *conspiracy theory, characteristics of conspiracy theories, case study, debunking, democracy.*

Introduction

Conspiracy theories have gained more ground in contemporary societies with the advent of social media which allow for their fast

---

[*] Senior researcher, PhD, "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, DOMINOES project member, email address: buluc.ruxandra@animv.eu

[*] Researcher, University Rey Juan Carlos, DOMINOES project member, email address: cristina.arribas@urjc.es

[*] Research Support Officer, University of Malta, DOMINOES project member, email address: ana.cuca@um.edu.mt

dissemination and increased numbers of supporters and promoters. Their effects on democratic societies cannot be understated as they corrode the knowledge foundations and common understanding of facts and events which allow for the adoption and promotion of the best possible policies to ensure societal progress.

The present research focuses, firstly, on providing a definition for conspiracy theories as well as a set of characteristics that they exhibit based on an extensive literature review and, secondly, on three particular case studies regarding three conspiracy theories that have circulated in European countries. Employing a case study research design, the second part of the article verifies what characteristics are common to the three conspiracy theories analysed and how these characteristics could be addressed in order to limit the spread and diminish the impact these conspiracy theories have in democratic societies. The case study research design has been considered the most appropriate for a better understanding of what makes up a conspiracy theory, what aspects make it become popular in a society and the reasons why it may affect democratic societies.

Definition of conspiracy theories

Understanding and countering the negative effects that conspiracy theories have on contemporary democratic societies means that first and foremost, it must become clearer what conspiracy theories are and how they can be distinguished from actual conspiracies that have and will continue to exist in society. J. Uscinski proposes a definition for a conspiracy: "a secret arrangement between two or more actors to usurp political or economic power, violate established rights, hoard vital secrets, or unlawfully alter government institutions to benefit themselves at the expense of the common good" (Uscinski, 2018, 48). Uscinski also stresses the fact that a real conspiracy refers to events that proper authorities have determined that have actually occurred. The proper authorities have at their disposal the instruments needed to investigate and they are also comprised of people who have the verifiable and certifiable competencies and skills to evaluate and establish what events have actually happened. Problems arise in contemporary societies because there is an increasing distrust in competent authorities

as well as in expert knowledge and this fuel the public suspicion of official explanations and their quest for alternative ones, which often contradict official reports and endorse conspiracy theories.

One very well-known example of a conspiracy theory is that 9/11 was an inside job. This conspiracy theory has multiple strands: a) 9/11 was planned by the American government; b) the American government knew in advance the attacks were going to happen and did nothing to prevent them; c) the attacks were, in fact, planned demolitions staged as terrorist attacks, in order to justify the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and/or to curtail civil liberties by the measures that have been taken since, and/or to create a globalist government.

However, examples do not ease the difficulty of providing an accurate, synthetic and workable definition of conspiracy theories. One of the best known and most widely accepted is Uscinski's: a conspiracy theory refers "to an explanation of past, ongoing, or future events or circumstances that cites as a main causal factor a small group of powerful persons, the conspirators, acting in secret for their own benefit and against the common good" (Uscinski, 2018). Keeley approaches the definition of conspiracy theories from a logical point of view and as such characterizes them as unwarranted as they propose "an explanation of some historical event (or events) in terms of the significant causal agency of a relatively small group of persons – the conspirators – acting in secret" (Keeley, 1999, p. 116). Prooijen & van Lange (2014) and Douglas & Sutton (2018) also emphasise the secrecy and nefariousness of the plots expounded in conspiracy theories, as well as their explanatory prowess. R. Brotherton (2015, p. 125) points out that conspiracy theories are "are easy ways of telling complicated stories" which provide a means of eliminating complexity and clearly identifying causal relationships and perpetrators.

As previously mentioned, conspiracy theories go against official explanations provided by legitimate, epistemic authorities (Brotherton & Eser, 2015). They make use of weak evidence, small unaccounted for details, endow the conspirators with sinister goals and above average competence. However, no matter how outlandish they may appear, they

have serious social consequences: reduced civic engagement, negative attitudes towards environmentalism, vaccination etc.

Moreover, as Q. Cassam (2021) and Oliver & Wood (2014) argue, conspiracy theories have political motivations and promote political ideologies, by providing the compelling explanatory narratives that sway public conviction in the desired ideological direction.

In brief, extrapolating from the above-analysed definitions, we propose the following integrative definition for conspiracy theories: they are explanatory causal-based, ideologically laden narratives which depict significant social events or crises as perpetrated by a group of powerful secret actors who solely follow their own nefarious interests, irrespective of the good of the masses. This definition acts as a starting point for the analysis of the characteristics of conspiracy theories. Understanding precisely what conspiracy theories are is a necessary first step in identifying them and possibly limiting their spread and countering their effects in democratic societies.

Characteristics of conspiracy theories:

1. Conspiracy theories are *speculative*, meaning that they are "based on conjecture rather than knowledge, educated (or not so educated) guesswork rather than solid evidence" (Cassam, 2021). This aspect is doubled by other characteristics stemming from the fact that they are based on fringe science: they are esoteric, as in they promote strange alternative explanations to official stories. They rely on circumstantial rather than direct evidence, on conjecture rather than solid evidence.

2. Conspiracy theories are *contrarian* by nature (Cassam 2021, Brotherton, 2015, Wood & Douglas, 2013, Oliver & Wood, 2014, Keeley, 1999). They run counter to the official narrative or view, to the obvious, plausible and acceptable explanations of events. The obvious answer is never correct, as conspiracy theories cast doubt on everything, even the best scientifically supported explanations. An example in this direction is the flat earth conspiracy theory which claims that the scientifically proven fact that the Earth is round is a conspiracy. Instead, conspiracy theories identify the source of any event or of

scientific facts in unseen, malevolent forces who aim to harm people and societies and hide their nefarious actions.

3. As a consequence of the fact that they are based on pseudo-science and fringe science or ignorance of science, conspiracy theories are *amateurish*, as B. L. Cassam (2021) explains, referring to the qualifications of amateur sleuths and internet detectives who produce and promote them.

4. Conspiracy theories are *premodern* (Cassam, 2021, Keeley, 1999, Douglas and Sutton, 2018, Oliver & Wood, 2014), meaning that they attempt to impose order in a random, complex, uncontrollable world in which events, crises are seen by conspiracy theorists to occur as a result of evil machinations not as a result of a conjunction of numerous factors, causes and even coincidence that cannot be and are not controlled by any one person or group of persons. They are based on a Manichean, simplistic worldview, clearly divided into good and bad forces, with no grey areas, and no place for randomness. The lack of control that people experience when faced with tragic events is compensated for by attributing agency, be it malevolent, to a small group of powerful people who could bring about doom. Conspiracy theorists are not paranoid or delusional, but they do experience the need to identify and/or assign intentionality in the environment. They need to rely on the idea that things happen for a reason, that there is a design behind the randomness of events, that a pattern can be identified in haphazard stimuli.

5. Conspiracy theories are *self-sealing* and *self-sustaining* belief bubbles which makes them unfalsifiable (Cassam, 2021, Brotherton, 2015, Vermeule & Sunstein, 2009). They are difficult to challenge because any counterargument is met with the challenge 'They would say that, wouldn't they?' which basically incorporates the contrary information into the conspiracy theory itself. This type of logic is unassailable, as any contrary evidence is interpreted as proof that the conspiracy is at work, hiding its machinations from the eyes of the public with a smokescreen of counterarguments. "Self-

insulated logic which makes them immune to refutation and they actually thrive on it" (Brotherton, 2015).

Being self-sealing and self-insulating also makes conspiracy theories strong since they are able to incorporate any apparently anomalous piece of information into the unifying theory they propose. As B. L. Keeley (1999) explains, conspiracy theories operate with unaccounted for data (data which is not included in the official explanation of the event) and contradictory data (data which goes against the official explanation of the event). These two types of data give rise to questions, which can, in turn, lead to conspiracy theories. As R. Brotherton (2015) posits, in essence, conspiracy theories are unanswered questions, which try to reveal hidden plots and to alert the masses that the truth is not the one officially presented, but different, always somewhat out of reach, just beyond the next data incongruence.

6. For these reasons, conspiracy theories are much *nuanced* and *complex*. The simplest explanation is never sufficient because it cannot account for everything, it cannot account for randomness and coincidence, and it does not provide the all-encompassing explanation that the conspiracists' premodern mindsets seek. "Unified explanation is the sine qua non of conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories always explain more than competing theories, because by invoking a conspiracy, they can explain both the data of the received account and the errant data that the received theory fails to explain" (Keeley, 1999, p. 119). The rule of logic Occam's razor is suspended, due to the fact that simple does not mean fully explanatory and, therefore, more complexity is needed, even if it is not warranted.

7. In order to reach its end, a conspiracy is, by definition, *unknowable* to and *untraceable* by the larger public. This leads to the contradictory nature of conspiracy theories and theorists, who, on the one hand, view conspirators as all-powerful masterminds who are able to protect secrets, control the population, are responsible for all the bad things that happen in the world, etc., and, on the other hand, the

conspiracy theorists overvalue their own abilities to catch them, to divine their plans and intentions (Cassam, 2021, Brotherton, 2015, Vermeule & Sunstein, 2009). This raises the question "If the conspirators are so clever, how come they have been rumbled by a bunch of amateurs?" (Cassam, 2021) This question remains unanswered and conspiracy theorists are unfazed by it as they believe they are engaged in a David vs Goliath struggle and that the apparently weak, but in fact vigilant person can outfox the greatest and most potent conspirators. D. R. Grimes (2016) points out that it is human nature for conspirators to leak information in the case of real conspiracies. Secrets are hard to keep due to human nature, but once the flaws in human nature are also doubled by technological weaknesses which allow for leaks or hacking, secrets become increasingly hard to handle. Moreover, the more time passes, the more likely people are to talk more freely about that secret, which is why, Grimes argues, it is not feasible to believe in long-standing conspiracy theories. If they had truly existed, they would have become evident.

8. Conspiracy theories form a *monological belief system* (Goertzel, 1994; Wood, Douglas & Sutton, 2012; Prooijen & van Lange, 2014). This means that each belief supports every other belief, and the more conspiracies a monological thinker believes, the more likely they are to believe new ones as well, regardless of their topic. As R. Brotherton (2015) further explains, the conspiracist mindset operates according to the slippery slope logic: if one conspiracy theory is true, it could become evidence for others being true. Wood, Douglas & Sutton (2012) and Douglas & Sutton (2018) have discovered the reason behind this. More precisely, the researchers discovered that this monological belief system is not determined by individual conspiracy theories, but by "agreement between individual theories and higher-order beliefs about the world" (Wood, Douglas & Sutton, 2012, p. 768), such as the idea that the authorities are deceptive and act against public good. Therefore, if a new conspiracy theory

is presented in which authorities are seen as being manipulative and secretive it is more easily accepted if the recipients already hold this belief, and, in this case, it will not matter if it contradicts another previously held conspiracy theory.

9. Conspiracy theories purport that people are not merely kept in the dark, they are being *actively fooled* by the authorities, as all appearances are misleading, and the elites do not have the people's best interests at heart. Official accounts are only meant to distract public attention from what powerful elites have actually planned, and their intentions are invariably evil and nefarious (Brotherton, 2015; Oliver & Wood, 2014).

As it can be seen from the characteristics of conspiracy theories identified in the literature, they are quite insidious in societies as they play and prey on the citizens' pre-existing beliefs, misconceptions, cognitive mechanisms, insecurities and anxieties and promote alternative, hard to disprove explanations to crises and shocking events which discredit official, scientifically proven explanations and narratives. The next section of the research focuses on three case studies, provides detailed accounts of the events that occurred and of the conspiracy theories that were generated as a basis for verifying if the characteristics in the literature can be identified in these particular cases, thus forming the basis for a discussion of means of countering conspiracy theories and their effects.

Case study 1 – the 5G technology global conspiracy

As 5G technology started being deployed around the world in 2019, several strands of conspiracy theories began to appear. Stop5g groups, campaigns and sites have appeared in several European countries. Their messages are quite similar and revolve around three main focuses:

a) The health impact of 5G technology

According to conspiracy theorists, 5G technology affects the cells' DNA structure, causes various types of cancer, halts metabolism, affects eyesight, has neurological consequences, because of the increase in

frequency and wave length "which reaches the microscopic dimensions of tissues, cells and neurons and causes a series of extremely grave biological effects in absolutely all living organisms, by the phenomenon of resonance" (post Stop5gromania, 27 May 2019). Videos on stop5g webpages have titles such as: "where 5G was installed, birds and insects have disappeared"; "Testimonies about the malefic microwaves".

Public figures are quoted as speaking out against 5G technologies and about its effects on human health, even if they simply voiced concerns and required further proof. One such example is the Belgian Environment minister, Céline Fremault, who declared "I cannot welcome such technology if the radiation standards, which must protect the citizen, are not respected, 5G or not. The people of Brussels are not guinea pigs whose health I can sell at a profit. We cannot leave anything to doubt" (The Brussels Time, 2019).

5G conspiracy theories emphasising its detrimental effects on the human body gained even more traction in 2020, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As EUvsDisinfo monitored the situation, numerous sites in various countries, from Europe, to Russia, to Arab speaking countries promoted disinformation regarding the connection between the advent and spread of 5G technology and the appearance of the COVID-19 virus and its subsequent mutations.

b) The environmental impact of 5G technology

Videos on stop5g webpages have titles such as: "5G and dead birds", "Dead tree in the proximity of 5G antennae". Moreover, there was a signature collection campaign (signstop5g) which detailed the effects that 5G could have on the environment and why it should be stopped. Under the heading "destroying our environment" it mentions:

"With 5G the amount of connected electronic devices, antennas and satellites will explode. Unsustainable energy consumption, radiation emissions, harmful mining and pollution will follow, which will endanger biodiversity and natural habitats."

The site goes further and mentions that several the reason the EU is considering accepting 5G technology is the lacunae in its own legislation such as:

"Why has 5G not been environmentally assessed? Because impacts of digitalization are exempt from environmental assessment in EU law."

"Why are the Resource and Energy Waste not Considered? Because wireless electronic devices are not included in the current Ecodesign Directive…".

"Does EU Classify Wireless as a Pollutant? No. But insurance companies do."

These claims are closely linked to the idea that governments and international ruling bodies act against the citizens' best interests, in an attempt to affect their well-being, as well as to bring prejudice to the environment, only to serve their own financial interests.

c) Government control and 5G technology

This is one of the most prolific conspiracy theories related to 5G technology as it has several strands. One is connected to conspiracy theories regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and it states that the vaccines against COVID-19 also contain a microchip, linked to 5G networks, which can track the people's movements and social behaviours and it will allow governments to control their citizens. Another conspiracy theory focuses on the idea that 5G technology allows for massive surveillance of the population, especially once it is doubled by the use of artificial intelligence. These two technologies will enable the massive collection of data and the manipulation of the oblivious public in the directions desired by the deep state and shadow governments. A more radical conspiracy theory states that 5G is actually part of a weapon system and it is only disguised as a technology in order to allow for its rapid spread. The 5G radiofrequency transmitters could be used as energy weapons, against targets ranging from people to assets.

All these conspiracy theories regarding 5G technology have had real life consequences as numerous arson attacks have taken place against telecom masts all over the world – 60 such attacks in the UK, 22 in Holland, three in Ireland, etc. (Cerulus, 2020). Moreover, public opinion surveys show that these conspiracy theories are very popular and that a large proportion of the public have at least heard of one form

of the conspiracies, and as many as 20% believed that 5G technology could have negative effects on their health (Sims, 2021).

As far as the traits that these conjoined conspiracy theories exhibit, our analysis has revealed the following: they are speculative and amateurish meaning that they are not based on an actual, scientific understanding of how 5G technology functions, but on assumptions and comparisons which do not follow objective criteria (e.g., comparing 5G technology to microwaves). These conspiracy theories are also contrarian because they do not acknowledge official and specialised explanations, provided by both scientists and policy-makers and they prefer to point out exceptions, such as one politician expressing their wish to consult the evidence in more detail or for more tests to be carried out. They are also premodern in their attempt to explain phenomena such as the disappearance of birds from an area or dead trees by linking them to 5G technology. The alternative amateurish explanations they propose are very complex, combing various obscure, distorted, convoluted and fringe scientific interpretations which their audiences do not necessarily understand but which mimic the language of actual scientific theories. These theories also claim to have uncovered a nefarious plot perpetrated by the deep state or the shadow governments whose aim is not only to actively fool, but also to exploit and mistreat the general unsuspecting, naïve public, and it is only these conspirators that are able to uncover them. Given the interweaving of 5G technology conspiracy theories with COVID-19 conspiracy theories, as well as with the overarching and self-sealing conspiracy theory regarding shadow governments or the deep state which controls everything and everyone in the world, we would argue that they are part of a monological belief system.

Case study 2 – The murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia

Daphne Caruana Galizia was a very well-known Maltese reporter, editor, columnist and blogger. Her blog Running Commentary had a very high reach, comparable to the main media houses in Malta. Her continuous challenging of political power structures through her reporting on corruption, sleaze and crime, made her both liked and disliked by many (Borg, 2017). Throughout her career, Daphne Caruana Galizia received threats and was the target of several forms of

harassment because of her journalism. On 16 October 2017 Daphne was assassinated outside her home in Bidnija, Malta, by the triggering of an explosive device planted under her car seat. The investigation of her assassination further exposed the corruption of the government and institutions who were accused in a public inquiry of having created an atmosphere of impunity (Camilleri & Schembri, 2021).

A Maltese businessman, Yorgen Fenech was charged with having been the mastermind behind her assassination, but the trial is still ongoing. Three other people, Alfred and George Degiorgio and Vince Muscat were convicted of making, planting and detonating the car bomb that killed the journalist. In spite of the fact that the Police Commissioner has declared that all suspects in the case have been arrested and many of them have already been convicted, the case is still causing many controversies.

One such controversy is the conspiracy theory developed by Simon Mercieca, an Associate Professor at the University of Malta who employs his blog *Simon Mercieca's FreePress* to share a number of fake news and conspiracy theories on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from Maltese politics to COVID-19. According to him, Yorgen Fenech is innocent, while Daphne's assassination was organised by her husband (Peter Caruana Galizia) and her son (Matthew Caruana Galizia). According to his theory, the Caruana Galizia family is "hampering the investigation process and the court's operations so that the whole truth behind Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder will never be known. To achieve this scope, main witnesses of the prosecution, including Matthew Caruana Galizia are using the media and giving interviews to siphon issues to fit their agenda and condition the public" (Mercieca, 2021a).

Mercieca's theory has all the usual characteristics of conspiracy theories. Firstly, it is speculative. There is no actual evidence that the Caruana Galizia family is hampering the court's operations, nor that they have in any way deceived the prosecution or the public. Mercieca claims that Daphne's son, Matthew, decided to take the law into his hands and destroy potential key evidence, albeit there was never any official information to support this claim. The key word in this theory is potential**.** Mercieca's theory relies on conclusions which are drawn based on circumstantial evidence, offering an explanation that is different from

the official media reports and from the evidence presented in court. This leads to the second conspiracy theory characteristic – it is contrarian. Mercieca capitalises on the fact that the Maltese public is still divided on the subject of Daphne's assassination, with some groups arguing that the investigation and prosecution have not been carried out in the most transparent and efficient manner. However, instead of aligning himself with those who sought justice for the journalist's assassination and her family, his conspiracy theory argues the opposite that while justice has not been served the victim has been the Maltese businessman accused of murdering Daphne Caruana Galizia, namely Yorgen Fenech. He claims that Daphne's family have intentionally hindered the investigation and sought to gain money from the investigation, by putting the blame on a well-known Maltese businessman. Moreover, he argues that Daphne's family didn't put pressure on the authorities to bring Yorgen Fenech to justice, in the hope that as more time passes they will be able to build the case on false information and hide traces that could lead back to them (Mercieca, 2021b). This argument goes against official information and ignores existence evidence gathered in the case and presented during the criminal trial, including the testimonies of the people convicted for making, planting and detonating the car bomb that killed the journalist. Instead, the theory develops a scenario of demonization, whereby the real "malevolent forces" involved in the case are Daphne's family, who not only harmed Daphne but are now harming Yorgen Fenech and the Maltese society in general.

This conspiracy theory shows how, by taking a complex situation, one may very easily build a theory that will be widely spread on the premise of a simplistic, premodern view assigning intentionality to Daphne's family to not only harm her but the whole Maltese society. This conspiracy theory is built around self-sealing conclusions, built on information taken out of context, which makes it hard to refute and essentially self-sealing. Moreover, the conspiracy theories are monological, built one upon another, as in Mercieca uses the idea of "malevolent forces" seeking to discredit him (e.g. they would say that, wouldn't they?) as an argument against all criticism received in relation to the other ideas promoted. This can also be seen as an indicator that he

does not have any other counter-arguments/evidence that he can bring in support of his theories.

Case Study 3 – Conspiracy theories on the August 17 terrorist attacks

On August 17, 2017, the worst terrorist attacks in Spain, since the Madrid train bombings of March 2004, took place in the Catalonian towns of Barcelona and Cambrils, with 16 deaths and more than 120 wounded (RTVE, 2017). The attacks temporarily coincided with preparations for the 1 October illegal referendum conducted by Catalonian secessionist parties and the Catalonian local administration.

In this context, some national and local news media, together with pro-independence political actors introduced the idea of a covert participation of Spanish intelligence in the attacks. The conspiracy theory was compounded by the decision made by the highest Spanish court (Audiencia Nacional) that rejected the request made by one of the victims' lawyers (and pro-secessionist member of the Catalonian parliament) to investigate the alleged connections. These two events led to the creation of the basis of a contrarian explanatory theory.

This conspiracy theory has had different versions but in essence all of its iterations attribute the responsibility of the attack to the Spanish state through its intelligence services. Sometimes, alternative, speculative theories point out to direct implication, but other versions of this conspiracy theory authorities and security services are accused of negligence and lack of action when counting with intelligence on the impending attacks. As far-fetched as it may appear, this malicious narrative can be captured in the following sentence: "The sewer of the state work to harm Catalonia" (*El Pais*, 2012).

It is easy to note the similarity of this conspiracy theory to those related to the "Deep state" that have circulated in other countries.

Description of the facts: The events began on August 17, 2017 on the Paseo de Las Ramblas in Barcelona where at 5:00 p.m. a van ran into a crowd of passers-by. On board was a single driver who managed to flee. Hours later, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack

through the Amaq news agency. During the early morning of August 18, in the nearby town of Cambrils (Tarragona), another vehicle broke into the promenade, and ran over five pedestrians and a policeman. The vehicle was intercepted, and the terrorists shot dead (*El Mundo Internacional*, 2017).

These events were connected to the explosion of the previous day (August 16) in a house of Alcanar (Tarragona, Spain). Two people died because of those explosions, including Abdelbaki Es Satty, leader of the cell and imam of Ripoll as it was later discovered. Another terrorist who was later tried for the attacks was wounded (*El Mundo Internacional*, 2017). According to the instructions carried out and the content of the judicial sentence, a large attack with "van bombs" was being prepared in the Alcanar house. The explosion precipitated the subsequent attack in the Ramblas, and Cambrils since there was an ongoing police investigation and perpetrators knew they might get arrested (Jones, 2021).

Origin of the conspiracy theory: On 16 July 2019, almost two years after the attacks, a well-known Spanish digital newspaper published the results of a journalistic investigation reporting alleged evidence on the fact that the terrorist cell was being surveyed by Spanish intelligence and that the Imam of Ripoll was a human source for the Spanish National Intelligence Centre (CNI) (Bayo, 2019). The journalistic pieces included images of a hypothetical surveillance report prepared by the Spanish intelligence, as well as the messages allegedly exchanged between the imam and the service through the dead drop system (Bueno & Carranco, 2019).

This conspiracy theory also exhibits several of the traits previously detailed. It is contrarian since it goes against the official explanation of the events and against the terrorists' own claim to responsibility. It is also amateurish as it substitutes intelligence expertise with that of journalists in claiming to have found evidence regarding the real perpetrators. This is complemented by the untraceable nature of the conspiracy theory which argues that the deep state, which controls intelligence services, has fabricated the official explanations in an attempt to hide its own involvement and it is actively fooling the unsuspecting citizens. This conspiracy theory is also premodern, as in the absence of all pieces of

information, something not unusual in criminal and intelligence research, different actors, sometimes with political interests, fill the gaps with unsupported assumptions.

Our analysis of the three case studies, based on documents, articles, posts, blogs, and videos freely available online, has verified that the three conspiracy theories exhibit several of the characteristics presented in the literature, as table 1 shows.

Table 1. Characteristics of the analysed conspiracy theories (authors' idea)

	Conspiracy theories traits	**5G technology global conspiracy**	**The murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia**	**August 17 terrorist attacks in Spain**
1	Speculative	X	X	X
2	Contrarian	X	X	X
3	Amateurish	X		X
4	Premodern	X	X	X
5	Self-sealing Self-sustaining	X	X	X
6	Complex	X		
7	Untraceable	X	X	X
8	Monological	X	X	
9	People are actively fooled	X	X	X

All three conspiracy theories analysed exhibit most of the characteristics identified in the literature. The 5G technology conspiracy theory reunites several complementary conspiracy theories and it is, therefore, the most complex of them all. The other two refer to particular events and our analysis did not focus on how they have been appropriated into other, more expansive conspiracy theories, which explains why they lack features such as monologicality.

The characteristics that they have in common prove that conspiracy theories go against official, scientifically proven explanations,

in an attempt to eliminate the inherent complexity and randomness of events and to provide easily understandable explanations that can give people a sense of control over the world. They all start from the belief that a nefarious elite, acting in its own self-serving interests, controls the world events, without leaving visible signs of their involvement and with no regard or respect for the ordinary people that their actions may negatively impact.

The fact that conspiracy theories are based on this ingrained belief and that they are formed by speculations and amateurish, conjectural data makes them particularly hard to counter and raises the question of what could be done to extract people from the rabbit hole of conspiracist thinking and involve them in informed, educated public debates, based on accurate facts and information. The next section of this research is aimed at identifying the possible solutions to this question which has implications for the well-being of democratic societies.

Countering conspiracy theories

The need to counter conspiracy theories stems from the fact that their effects on society are grave. They challenge truth, and consensual truth matters greatly in a society as it is the foundation on which constructive and progressive dialogue is built. Without such dialogue, democratic societies at least are thwarted in their development by the polarization of the citizens who find themselves unable or unwilling to interact with others who have diverging opinions. If there is no common denominator of understanding and no common reference points, then debate becomes impossible, and arguments deteriorate into quarrels. All aspects of societal knowledge and function can be affected by conspiracy theories: science is altered when people believe that scientists are actually corrupted representatives of big corporations, the democratic processes suffer when people exercise their voting rights based on conspiracy theories and not facts and data, society is harmed when policies are enacted not based on knowledge but on conspirational beliefs, international relations suffer when disinformation outweighs facts and real events.

As dangerous as they are, the main challenges regarding conspiracy theories stem from the fact that they are difficult to counter.

Despite the fact that their consequences for society are perilous indeed, they also appear very resistant to being debunked. Researchers into the field are unanimous in their assessment that effective debunking strategies of conspiracy theories should be multifaceted and include both a political and an intellectual dimension (Cassam, 2021) to which others argue that an emotional component should also be attached as conspiracy theories reflect identity forming beliefs and, therefore, supporters are likely to feel aggrieved when facing counterarguments.

1. The *intellectual* dimension of a debunking strategy should focus on constantly rebutting the theories, by telling the truth. The truth may not dissuade die-hard conspiracy theorists, but may make it clear for the undecided that the conspiracy theory does not actually account for the events as they took place. West (2018) explains that rebuttal should be reinforced by the constant reference to the trustworthiness (or lack thereof) of the sources that conspiracy theorists gather their information from. If the source can be shown to be wrong on any account, then they might begin to question its reliability on all accounts. Moreover, conspiracy theorists should be exposed to new, accurate information constantly, so as to challenge their beliefs and possibly make them reassess them.

2. The *political* dimension of the debunking strategy should focus on exposure of any political interests the conspiracy theory might be serving, thus proving that it is part of political propaganda and not the truth. The ideological component of the conspiracy theory should be revealed and criticized, and people should be made aware of the fact that the respective theories are merely a political tool for a certain interested party to attain a benefit. Vermeule & Sustein (2009) explain that in order not to trigger a backfire effect and make a conspiracy theory even more popular during attempts to debunk it, authorities should not focus on debunking one particular such theory, but rather an ensemble of such theories, more precisely their points of commonality. Moreover, education with respect to debunking conspiracy theories and any form of disinformation should start as early as possible so as to prepare future citizens with the instruments they need to accurately assess the information they are presented with, and separate facts from lies and misconceptions.

3. West (2018) provides a *personal* interaction dimension to the strategy of debunking conspiracy theories. He proposes three steps that could be undertaken to this end:

a) Maintain effective dialogue which means that the debunker needs to understand what the conspiracy theorists are thinking and why, to be polite, respectful, open, to attempt to find common ground so as to validate their concerns if not their manifestations. Aggressive behaviour will sever all lines of communication and have the backfire effect of actually strengthening conspiracy theorists' views.

b) Supply useful information which could counter the backfire effect, by showing the conspiracy theorists what mistakes they have made, why their sources may not be reliable, what information about the topic they missed, and what other details on the topic are available, thus helping them gain perspective.

c) Give it time means that the change cannot and does not take place immediately, and that patience and reiteration are required.

Of these three stages, arguably the most important is to build back common ground. As previously mentioned, the greatest challenge with conspiracy theories is that they erode the common ground vitally important for communication and progress in a society. A polarized society cannot reach consensus on anything, as dialogue is impossible with no common framework of understanding of how the world functions. Dennett (2014) offers a three-step process to enable the rebuilding of common ground:

a) Re-express the conspiracy theorists' position better than they do themselves, based on the principle of charity. This means that by restating the argument even better than initially presented, the debunker proves understanding, does the work to make the conspiracist details actually work, so that when the flaws are revealed, the conspiracy theorists are more likely to listen to them because they come from a person who understood them and what they were saying, that had built common ground.

b) List points of agreement, especially uncommon points, through a gradual exploratory process, that will slowly and patiently take the debunker through the arguments, until such commonalities are identified. They could be specific or general, but they are almost always there, and they once more set a stable common ground from which to start. If in the respective conspiracy theory none such points could be identified, then another more uncontroversial topic could be explored so as to have the needed starting point of agreement.

c) Mention anything that you have learned from the conspiracy theorists as this increase rapport, proves that real communication has taken place, and thus common ground is reinforced. This step might also include a validation of the conspiracy theorists' genuine concerns so that they feel heard and understood, rather than high-handedly dismissed.

Vermeule & Sustein (2009) also suggest a more radical and somewhat difficult to implement tactic for breaking up the hard core of extremists who supply conspiracy theories: "cognitive infiltration of extremist groups, whereby government agents or their allies (acting either virtually or in real space, and either openly or anonymously) will undermine the crippled epistemology of believers by planting doubts about the theories and stylized facts that circulate within such groups, thereby introducing beneficial cognitive diversity" (Vermeule & Sunstein, 2009, p. 219). However, this would be a very dangerous tactic to apply, because if the infiltrated agent were to be uncovered, then the group would take it as further proof that there is a governmental conspiracy at work, which would radicalize their belief in the conspiracy theory even further.

There are no silver bullets when it comes to countering conspiracy theories. In any given situation, a combination of the above-analysed debunking strategies, adapted to the characteristics of particular conspiracy theories. The more complex a conspiracy theory is, the more strategies will need to be employed at more levels, ranging from the personal to the intellectual.

Conclusion

The present research was aimed, firstly, at identifying and analysing the characteristics of conspiracy theories in the literature with a view to understanding their appeal and rapid dissemination. Secondly, three case studies were selected and examined in order to verify that they exhibit the traits identified and how they evolved. The end goal of the case study analysis is to provide a clearer image of what conspiracy theories are, what most prominent characteristics are and to turn these elements into building blocks for raising public awareness with respect to the inner mechanisms of conspiracy theories and for building societal resilience. To this end, the last section of the research focused on methods of countering conspiracy theories which are applicable at several societal levels, starting from the personal and increasing in range to the intellectual.

Debunking conspiracy theories may be difficult and very time-consuming, however, it is more needed than ever, as people seem more likely than ever to hide in their respective bubbles and break all forms of communication with anyone who disagrees with them. Such polarization, not solely along political lines, but also along understanding of facts and relation to reality, can only lead to dysfunctional societies.

References:

1. Bayo, C. E., (2019) *El cerebro de la masacre de Las Ramblas fue confidente del CNI hasta el día del atentado.* Available at: https://www.publico.es/politica/exclusiva-iman-ripoll-1-cerebro-masacre-ramblas-confidente-cni-dia-atentado.html (accessed 20 January 2023).

2. Borg, J. (2017). Daphne Caruana Galizia obituary. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/21/daphne-caruana-galizia-obituary (accessed 15 November 2022).

3. Brotherton, R. (2015) *Suspicious Minds: Why We Believe Conspiracy Theories.* Bloomsbury Sigma: London & New York.

4. Brotherton, R., & Eser, S. (2015). "Bored to fears: Boredom proneness, paranoia, and conspiracy theories." *Personality and Individual Differences*, *80*, 1-5.

5. Bueno, J. G. & R. Carranco (2019) "El independentismo abraza la teoría conspirativa sobre el 17-A", *El País*. Available at https://elpais.com/ccaa/2019/07/26/catalunya/1564165566_085516.html?event_log=oklogin (accessed 20 January 2023).

6. Camilleri. N, Schembri Orland K. (2021). "Public inquiry holds The State responsible for Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder." *Malta Independent.* Available at https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2021-07-29/local-news/Public-Inquiry-holds-state-responsible-for-Caruana-Galizia-s-death-6736235558 (accessed 10 November 2022).

7. Cassam, Q. (2021). "Bullshit, Post-truth, and Propaganda." *Edenberg, E. and Hannon, M., Political Epistemology*, 49-63.

8. Cassam, Q. (2021). *Conspiracy Theories*. Polity Press: Cambridge.

9. Cerulus, L. (2020) *How anti-5G anger sparked a wave of arson attacks.* Available at https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-5g-arson-attacks-online-theories/?fbclid=IwAR07MVKRgEgE1CWeaFpsUGeZzgE1_3NYNWY7RPrmu4z7N_e3XLjnLlOhIo0 (Accessed 10 November 2022).

10. Dennett, D. C. (2014). *Intuition pumps and other tools for thinking.* WW Norton & Company: New York & London.

11. Douglas, K. M., & Sutton, R. M. (2018). "Why conspiracy theories matter: A social psychological analysis." *European Review of Social Psychology*, 29(1), 256–298.

12. *El Mundo Internacional*. "El Estado Islámico reivindica el atentado de Barcelona" (2017). Available at https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2017/08/17/5995eecb468aeb39228b45cd.html (accessed 20 January 2023).

13. *El Pais*. "Mas accuses 'sewers' of the state of trying to influence Catalan elections" (2012) Available at https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2012/ 11/21/inenglish/1353502495_401040.html, (accessed 20 January 2023).

14. EUvsDisinfo (2020) *5G technology is harmful to human health*, available at https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/5g-technology-is-harmful-for-human-health (accessed 24 August 2023).

15. EUvsDisinfo (2020) *5G systems increase cancer incidence* available at https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/5g-systems-increase-cancer-incidence (accessed 24 August 2023).

16. EUvsDisinfo (2020) *Coronavirus mutation may be due to 5G networks* available at https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/coronavirus-mutation-may-be-due-to-5g-networks (accessed 24 August 2023).

17. EUvsDisinfo (2020) *The Coronavirus story is a lie… It's all about 5G* available at https://euvsdisinfo.eu/report/the-coronavirus-story-is-a-lie-its-all-about-5g (accessed 24 August 2023).

18. Facebook post on page STOP 5G România. (27 May 2019) Available at https://www.facebook.com/stop5gromania/photos/a.2351384491805267/ 2353523491591367/?type=3 (accessed 17 August 2023).

19. Goertzel, T. (1994). "Belief in Conspiracy Theories." *Political Psychology*, *15*(4), 731–742. Available at https://doi.org/10.2307/3791630 (accessed 17 August 2023).

20. Grimes, D. R. (2016). "On the viability of conspiratorial beliefs". *PloS one*, *11*(1), e0147905.

21. Jones, S. (2021). *Three men jailed over 2017 Catalonia terror attacks*. Available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/27/ three-men-jailed-over-2017-catalonia-terror-attacks (accessed 20 January 2023).

22. Keeley, B. L. (1999). "Of Conspiracy Theories", *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 96, No. 3, pp. 109-126.

23. Mercieca, S. (2021a). *The Caruana Galizia family should be made responsible for the money that is being wasted by the state because of their antics. Simonmerecia.com.* Available at: https://simonmercieca.com/2021/11/25/ the-caruana-galizia-family-should-be-made-responsible-for-the-money-that-is-being-wasted-by-the-state-because-of-their-antics/ (accessed 10 July 2022).

24. Mercieca, S. (2021b). *The truth is out: Yorgen Fenech did not want Daphne Caruana Galizia killed. Simonmerecia.com.* Available at: https:// simonmercieca.com/2021/11/26/the-truth-is-out-yorgen-fenech-did-not-want-daphne-caruana-galizia-killed/ (accessed 10 July 2022).

25. Oliver, J. E., & Wood, T. J. (2014). "Conspiracy theories and the paranoid style (s) of mass opinion". *American journal of political science*, *58*(4), 952-966.

26. RTVE. *Doble atentado en Cataluña Los atentados de Barcelona y Cambrils dejan 16 muertos y más de 120 heridos* (2017) Available at https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20170827/atentados-barcelona-cambrils-dejan-14-muertos-mas-120-heridos/1599361.shtml (accessed 20 January 2023).

27. Sims, M. (2021). *Why have anti-5G campaigns been so successful?* Available at https://www.policytracker.com/blog/why-have-anti-5g-campaigns-been-so-successful/ (accessed 1 September 2023).

28. *The campaign Signstop5g*, available at https://signstop5g.eu/ (accessed 20 August 2023).

29. *The Brussels Time, Radiation concerns halt Brussels 5G development, for now* (1 April 2019) Available at https://www.brusselstimes.com/55052/radiation-concerns-halt-brussels-5g-for-now (accessed 25 August 2023).

30. Uscinski, J. E. (2018). *Conspiracy theories and the people who believe them*. Oxford University Press, USA.

31. Van Prooijen, J. W., & Van Lange, P. A. (2014). *Power, politics, and paranoia: Why people are suspicious of their leaders*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

32. Vermeule, C. A., & Sunstein, C. R. (2009). Conspiracy theories: causes and cures. *Journal of Political Philosophy*.

33. Videos "where 5G was installed, birds and insects have disappeared"; "Testimonies about the malefic microwaves"; "5G and dead birds"; "Dead tree in the proximity of 5G antennae". Available on https://stop5gromania.ro/video/ (accessed 4 September 2023).

34. Wood, M. J., Douglas, K. M., & Sutton, R. M. (2012). "Dead and alive: Beliefs in contradictory conspiracy theories." *Social psychological and personality science*, *3*(6), 767-773.

35. Wood, M. J., & Douglas, K. M. (2013). "What about building 7?" A social psychological study of online discussion of 9/11 conspiracy theories. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *4*, 409.

36. West, M. (2018). *Escaping the Rabbit Hole: How to Debunk Conspiracy Theories Using Facts, Logic, and Respect*. Skyhorse Publishing: New York.

SECURITY CULTURE AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

SECURITY CULTURE – FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY

Bianca-Elena STAN[*]
Ana-Rodica STĂICULESCU[*]
Marius-Răzvan PREDOANĂ[*]

Abstract:

Security culture represents an extremely important concept nowadays, as a consequence of the security issues that were characteristic for the last decade and which rose, even close to Romania's borders. Security culture has been and continues to be a powerful tool in the process of ensuring state security. In brief, security culture is a combination of knowledge and attitudes toward the security issues of the state.

Since 2010, the concept has been emphasized in the Romanian national defence strategies, which support the need to consolidate such a culture. Due to these strategic documents, authorities in the field of national security have pointed their efforts in the direction of strengthening security culture among citizens. In order to carry out optimally these efforts, it is important to know the evolution of the security culture concept, which elements of the past could hinder the current process of consolidating security culture and what are the issues on which authorities should pay more attention.

The way security culture has been shaped during the communist regime is extremely relevant for today's efforts. Also, it is important that the process of consolidating security culture starts from a good knowledge of the Romanian national culture. Therefore, the main objective of this is to present relevant information about the characteristics of Romanian culture and data about how security culture has changed over time, from the communist period to the democratic actual regime. The research method used was "literature review" by integrating multiple data from different findings and perspectives.

Keywords: *security culture, communism, democracy, change, Romanian culture.*

[*] PhD Student, University of Bucharest, email: bianca-elena.stan@s.unibuc.ro
[*] Professor, "Ovidius" University of Constanta, email: ana.staiculescu@unibuc.ro
[*] PhD Student, University of Bucharest, email: marius-razvan.predoana@s.unibuc.ro

Introduction

Once the communist regime has been installed in Romania, our country went through a difficult period that brought major changes in the collective mentality. The ruling class pursued its own interests without any regards to the negative effects of their actions/decisions on the life of the citizens. Fear was the main tool used by leaders of the time in order to impose their vision as the right one. They relied on the lack of reaction coming from people. Restricted rights to freedom of expression and information were pillars of the communist governance. Leaders relied on obedience to carry out their plans, so they sought to indoctrinate people from an early age. The communist leadership used to dictate the way one should live, act and get informed. The lack of a comparative perspective determined many individuals to live accordingly to the communist rules, without complains. The values, norms and beliefs of the people were imposed by the ruling political class, so it is important to emphasize the fact that culture was shaped in accordance with the communist vision, not with the reality of that moment.

As for the security culture, it was also imposed by the state authorities. The former state security has imposed strict control on all individuals, so freedom of choice did not exist.

But how the Romanian culture is characterized today and how security culture has been transformed from the communist period up until now? Finding an answer to these questions represents the main objectives of the article. As a research method, it was used "literature review".

What is security culture?

Security culture can be defined as a set of ideas and knowledge about the values of a nation, but also about the risks and threats to national security, which determine specific behaviours that are indispensable for the individual and state defence. Clausewitz (Ustun, 2010) was the first one who advanced the idea of security culture, emphasizing the importance of people and the mobilization of the masses in winning the war. Gray (Ustun, 2010) considered security culture a way of thinking and acting, influenced by perceptions of

national history and the concept of responsible behaviour in terms of security. So, the security culture involves a series of actions in accordance with the perceptions formed. The process of consolidating security culture at a societal level has a special importance, because it dictates, to a certain extent, the possibilities of influencing desirable attitudes, behaviours and actions. In a similar way to Gray, Booth (Ustun, 2010) defines security culture as a set of values, symbols, traditions, attitudes, behaviours and particular methods of adapting to the environment and solving problems in order to eliminate the threat.

Over the time, in Romania have been identified four pillars that underlie the concept of security culture: wisdom, active adaptation, realism and experience (Malița, 2012). The first pattern of security culture was the one made by "Mica Brad" Society, an anonymous mining society in Romania. The pattern focused on a strategic vision, a social system and action oriented towards the following directions: culture of mind, health, work and spiritual culture (Beldea, 2018). The essence of this pattern was rational action, motivated by certain knowledge and substantial research. Creating a security culture among people was one of the main objectives of the system for better prevention and management of crisis.

Security culture in the ruling process

The concept of security culture represents a powerful tool of the ruling class in the process of ensuring national security, fact which led to the concept being included in several strategic documents of the Romanian state. For example, the guide of National Defence Strategy for 2015-2019 approaches in a prior manner the concept of security culture, which is defined as a set of values, attitudes, actions and norms that determines the understanding and assimilation of security concept and other derivatives (national security, international security, collective security, insecurity, security policy etc.) (Presidential Administration, 2015). The values and the actions of people can be oriented in various directions, but this depends significantly on different factors such as: the level of development of the countries, the level of education of each individual, the main image of the institutions responsible for ensuring security and, last but not least, the current social context. Therefore, the

consolidation of security culture at a societal level is a difficult goal to achieve, considering that it depends on many factors, but it is absolutely necessary for the ruling process.

The importance of security culture is also included in the National Defence Strategy for 2020-2024. According to this Strategy, the security culture "must follow an upward trend of development and inclusion of as many society and generation segments as possible" (Presidential Administration, 2020, p. 10).

Consolidating security culture among people has always represented an important goal, not only in the strategic documents of nowadays, but especially (also) in the communist period (when the state stability used to be threatened by many factors, as the government did not have people's support). Even though the importance of security culture did not change during time, the essence of it suffered major updates. Before showing how security culture has changed over time, it is important to briefly present the concept of national culture, for a better understanding of how Romania individualizes itself when it comes to culture.

The main characteristics of Romanian national culture

The Dutch scientist Geert Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (1980, p. 86). Geert Hofstede, along with professors Gert Jan Hofstede, Michael Minkov and their research teams, developed the model of national culture by capturing six dimensions. These dimensions refer to a series of citizens' preferences and can represent the starting point in comparing different national cultures. Country scores are relative, each individual is unique, but they largely encompass the cultural characteristics of a state.

The cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede are the following (Hofstede et al., 2010):

a) **Power Distance.** This measure refers to the way individuals expect and accept the unequal distribution of power inside the state. The biggest struggle is how a state deals with human inequalities. In societies with a high score at this index, citizens respect a hierarchical order and accept their place. By

contrast, in societies with a low power distance, people try to standardize the distribution of power and force the state to justify inequalities. According to Hofstede research, Romania has a score of 90 in terms of power distance. The high score indicates that Romanians accept a hierarchical order, as well as the place they occupy in society. They claim no other justification for the unequal distribution of power. This high score can be influenced by the period of Roman occupation and, also, by the authoritarian rulers of the time (Ciupercă, 2011). Achieving a high score for this dimension is an advantage for the ruling class. Also, this dimension was a key factor for the implementation of communism in Romania.

b) **Individualism / Collectivism.** The dimension refers to the individual approach in terms of "I" or "us" of each member of society. In societies with a high level of individualism, people care about personal and family well-being, while in collective countries people belong to groups and show interest in common good.

  In individualistic states people focus on their own gain. In such a society, the values are represented by: power, personal achievement, hedonism (Ciupercă, 2011). On the other hand, the collective countries place more value on respect, mutual aid and cohesion.

  With a score of 30 (Hofstede et al., 2010) for the "individualism" dimension, Romania is considered a collectivist country, whose individuals are less oriented towards competition and gain. Loyalty is a central value and citizens show a strong commitment to other members of the community. The emphasis is placed on strong social relations, rather than on the desire to obtain high performance indices. This side of Romanian culture could be explained by the inherited values promoted during the communist period.

c) **Masculinity/ femininity.** This dimension refers to the values of a society. A masculine society is characterized by competition, assertiveness and the desire to achieve rewards. The opposite of these societies are feminine societies that are

stimulated by values such as cooperation, goodwill, solidarity, modesty. In feminine societies, success is defined by the quality of life. According to Hofstede research, Romania is a rather feminine country (with a score of 42 for masculinity), with values focused on equality, negotiation, sobriety, compromise. Conflicts are resolved peacefully, as a result of open discussions and a collaborative environment (Ciupercă, 2011). Romanian citizens value more the free time and flexibility, rather than material gains.

d) Uncertainty avoidance. This index describes how society relates to the uncertainty of the future. This captures the extent to which uncertainty causes anxiety among citizens in their attempt to avoid such situations. Countries with a high score for this dimension are rigid countries, strongly influenced by rules and intolerant of new ideas. By contrast, countries with a low score for this dimension have a better attitude and are oriented towards practice and change rather than adherence to principles.

With a score of 90 (Hofstede et al., 2010) for this dimension, Romania is a country guided by rigid codes and behaviours. There is a need for rules and people are characterized by the desire to be constantly busy and to work diligently. Moreover, Romanians show high anxiety about future, uncertain actions and prefer to focus on the security of the near future (Ciupercă, 2011).

e) Long / short term orientation. This dimension refers to the decision of a society to focus on obtaining present or future gains. Societies pay more attention to the present/future in different ways. Countries with a long-term approach are characterized by ambition and adaptability, constantly pursuing future rewards. On the other hand, short-term oriented societies are more influenced by tradition and past. Regarding the long-term orientation, Romania has a score of 52. Romanians' options are more influenced by the past, which is why they do not foresee very distant perspectives. This

approach restricts change, development of the country and perspectives on the future.

f) **Indulgence / Coercion.** This measure describes how a society constrains/allows a person to satisfy its own impulses. An indulgent society allows the gratification of pleasure, while a coercive society suppresses the satisfaction of certain needs by imposing extremely rigid social norms. According to Hofstede research, Romania has a low level of indulgence (20) regarding pleasure and entertainment of life. Romanians do not accept opposing views, reject minority voices and advocate for consensus.

Security culture – from communism to democracy

The intelligence services have always been responsible for an in-depth study of society's state, which is extremely important to be aware of, in order to monitor evolution of the national, regional and international security environment. During the communist regime, monitoring population mentality was considered of vital importance. The security services paid attention to those attitudes that could lead to serious premeditated acts. Hostile actions, such as conspiracies, sabotage, manifestations of hatred and revenge, could derive from these attitudes (Bejenaru, 2008). They also monitored mass emotions that arose through transfer, contamination or suggestion.

Mass emotions were an important factor in the process of ensuring security, so the security authorities not only sought to know the mood of the population, but also tried to change it when the direction was not in line with the communist vision. They were afraid that mass emotions developed within society were spreading rapidly from community to community, unifying opinions and attitudes. The focus was to discover the source of these emotions and to stop their spread throughout the population in order to prevent internal crisis.

To identify the mood of the population, the security apparatus used numerous means such as censoring correspondence or infiltrating in the communities they wanted to control. Extensive summaries were often made around public events to describe the mood of the population and to anticipate their intentions. Moreover, there was established an

office that was dealing with people who were considered to have different political views than those of the Communist Party (Bejenaru, 2008). The communists wanted a construction of the individual who obeys and never challenges the values, norms and directions of the state.

So, before 1990, the Romanian security culture was imposed by the state, by the Communist Party, being defined as revolutionary vigilance and socialist ethics, which lead to social conscience (Felea, 2018). The communists wanted to instil the individual with their own values from an early age, realizing the hurdle of imposing an influence on the characters already formed. "Şoimii patriei" was the organization of pre-schoolers and schoolchildren between 4 and 7 years old, under total leadership of the Communist Party. This organization aimed to educate children in the spirit of homeland, love of country and respect for the Communist Party.

According to the Regulations of "Şoimii Patriei" (1977), the main objectives of this education institution included the following:

- assimilation of knowledge about the major problems faced by the Romanian people, the Romanian Communist Party etc.;
- knowledge of the greatest achievements of the time and of the greatest producers, as well as knowledge of the most beautiful parts of the homeland;
- educating children in the spirit of respect for work, for the work of others and for the collective good;
- educating children in the spirit of love for parents, respect for teachers and help for the elderly;
- cultivating "diligence, honour, courage, modesty etc.";
- identifying and supporting talent, as well as developing a taste for beauty.

These objectives were meant to outline the culture of children in communist Romania, but in a way that promotes the image of the Communist Party and its actions. The ruling party realised that culture was a strong tool for imposing its objectives without being challenged, without creating riots and without offering to the opposing powers the possibility to show their influence on the Romanian people. Consolidating culture at an individual level would make foreign manipulation more difficult to manifest.

As for the consolidation of security culture, it was also outlined in accordance with the vision of the Communist Party. In order to prevent the emergence of harmful attitudes among the population, the security apparatus obliged every citizen to report any irregularities and disobedience from the policy of Communist Party. Providing relevant information about those who were not supporting the Communist Party was mandatory, even vital. This was known by every individual from an early age; children were taught to obey, to cooperate and to help the security representatives and the ruling party to fulfil their mission (Felea, 2018). The support provided was a duty for every Romanian citizen.

This duty of taking part into the process of ensuring national security was more or less respected, depending on the exposure of propaganda materials developed by the Communist Party. Those who "benefited" from an education in a communist spirit from an early age had a better understanding of the role they played in the process of ensuring state security and acted accordingly. However, those who received an education in a communist spirit later hardly accepted the demands imposed by the Party. Depending on the level of understanding of this role, the individual could act differently: he/she could collaborate from his/her own initiative with the representatives of the Romanian Communist Party and the security representatives, he/she could collaborate, but without his/her own initiative or could refuse to cooperate, thus placing himself/herself and his/her family on extremely dangerous grounds.

Those who were members of the Communist Party, who had a privileged status compared to the rest of the population, were often the ones who imposed terror among the citizens. Studies have shown that the party's executive apparatus (whose members were secretly decided) represented a political police body, accused of serious violations of civil rights and freedoms. In addition, the first secretaries of the Romanian Communist Party were responsible for all these violations (Ursachi, 2007). In a public opinion poll conducted in 2010 by The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile (IICCMER, 2010), at the question "In your opinion, was the communist regime in Romania a criminal regime?" 41% of respondents answered "No", which is absolutely surprising given the multitude of

documents proving the opposite, as well as the public debates regarding the conviction of communist torturers. Similarly, the answers to the question "In your opinion, before December 1989, was Romania better or worse than now?", the percentage of those who answered "yes" was 49%. These beliefs about the collective welfare during the communist regime were explained by most respondents through job stability (62%) (IICCMER, 2010). It is also possible that people tend to see things in a more optimistic way, because of the cultural values they were exposed to and which they assimilated over time.

It is important to mention that the process of shaping the security culture at that time was influenced not only by the communists' efforts to settle knowledge about their views, but also by the activities of the security apparatus, which were meant to spread terror among common citizens. The impossibility to express their points of view made most of them rally and support the steps pursued by the Romanian Communist Party, although their convictions were different most of the time. There was no right to free speech, no right to choose what to read, what to listen to, what to learn, so there was no way to create a security culture through own experience and choices.

Even though the security culture was practically imposed by the ruling regime during the communist period, afterwards, the individual gradually gained the freedom to choose to be informed, as well as to choose what to believe in. After the Revolution of 1989 and the gradual establishment of a democratic regime, the country was in a continuous process of modernization, especially in the political field. Romania had begun to take small steps towards the European Union and NATO, which was an important move towards democracy and freedom of choice. Thus, after 1990 security culture was shaped differently, through own perceptions and beliefs, because people were free to choose what topic was of interest to them or not.

In order to have a better understanding on how security culture has changed over time, it is necessary to highlight the transition from communism to democracy. The first step towards democracy was a new Constitution, as well as the transition to free elections and alternating state governance. Another element that led to democracy was the diversification of the political scene and the emergence of several

Romanian parties. The 1996 elections produced a first alternation of the government, which significantly influenced the level of trust among population (Pippidi, 2002). In September 1995 the trust in Government and the Parliament was 31%, respectively 24%. Only one year later, the percentages increased to 62% and 57%, an unexpected high increase, considering previous experiences and the scepticism created during the communist regime (Pippidi, 2002).

So, the country was not only going through a broad process of change towards a democratic regime, but the Romanian citizens were also taking quick steps towards new mentalities and attitudes regarding the leading factor. It is clear that such a change requires a great deal of time, as well as continuous effort to implement new governance strategies. People's trust in the ruling class is extremely important when it comes to the stability of a country and its development prospects. Moreover, this trust is fairly relevant in building the security culture, because the knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the security problems of a state are, undoubtedly, influenced by the credibility given to the messages, approaches and decisions of those in power.

Another important step towards democracy was represented by the protocol between the social-democratic government and the Hungarian Democratic Union in Romania, because it was promoted for the first time the idea of multiculturalism and protection of minority groups in our country. Therefore, Romania was moving further and further away from its past and closer to the values promoted by the West: openness, tolerance, peace.

The most important step towards a democratic country was the accession to NATO and the EU, as this led to a higher level of credibility on the international stage. The conditions for integration were quite challenging, and the time necessary for their fulfilment required very rapid progress. For our country, the major objectives were related to national security, as well as to economic development. Strictly speaking on the level of national security, Romania's accession to NATO and the EU involved, on the one hand, a lot of new responsibilities, and on the other hand, a great knowledge support for the responsible national authorities and for the Romanian citizens. So, once in NATO and EU, the security culture was definitely reshaped.

In order to talk about security culture at a societal level, we must constantly refer to the events that marked the past of our country and especially the collective mentalities. Probably, at the mere utterance of the word "security", those who lived during the communist regime will relate their thoughts to the State Security Department, as this instrument of maintaining terror had a significant psychological impact on citizens. Today, 33 years after the fall of the communist regime, the mass mentality is largely redesigned, although it permanently overshadows the painful memory of an intelligence service manipulated by the political class. Such memories cannot be erased from people's memory, but it is the duty of the Romanian security authorities to constantly promote their vision and missions, so as not to be shuffled with the old institutions on which they were founded. This step is absolutely necessary for the consolidation process of security culture among people in Romania. Greater transparency in the objectives/activities of national security authorities would increase citizens' awareness and, as a result, motivate them to support and even get involved in pursuing national security interests.

Recent research on Romanian security culture

The first research regarding Romanian security culture was published in April 2018. It was conducted by the Institute of Political Science and International Relations of the Romanian Academy along with LARICS – Informational Warfare and Strategic Communication Laboratory. They launched a security culture barometer that focused: on the level of trust in institutions with responsibilities in the field of national security; on the fears of Romanians and on Romanians views concerning NATO and EU.

The architecture of the barometer consists of seven dimensions that should be extensively analysed (LARICS, 2018):

- trust / distrust – this dimension refers to the level of trust of the citizens in institutions that have responsibilities in the sphere of national security and, also, in the political class of Romania; 56% of respondents opted in 2018 for distrust, concluding that at that time politicians and authorities should pay more attention to this dimension and develop better communication channels with people, especially with young ones;

- localism / globalism – this dimension refers to European identity vs. Romanian identity, defence budget vs. budget for certain social fields, protection of the Romanian interests vs. defence through international aid; only 36% of the respondents have been situated on the globalism dimension, which means that many people do not understand the security opportunities given by international organizations;
- realism / liberalism – this dimension wants to describe/assess the importance given by people to military power/economic power; most of the respondents (47%) situated themselves on the liberalist dimension, comparing to 39% – the percentage of those on the realist dimension; the results indicate that Romanians tend to give more credit to economic issues than to the military ones;
- optimism / pessimism – this dimension describes Romanians' ability to deal with a threat to national security, as well as the perception of an eventual armed conflict near national borders; unfortunately, only 38% of the respondents expressed optimism; this dimension in extremely relevant in the context of Russia – Ukraine 2022 conflict, because it can anticipate the masses mood and attitudes towards such a threat; having a pessimistic attitude on security context can determine desperate decisions, which is why authorities should take more responsibility in correctly informing the population;
- security / rights – this dimension refers to the reluctance of citizens to accept restriction of certain civil rights and freedoms in exchange for increased national security; the results for this dimension were quite similar: 41% would choose security, while 45% would opt for rights;
- involvement / apathy – this dimension shows people's availability to authorities calls, but also their desire to get involved in the process of ensuring national security; this dimension also refers to the desire of Romanian citizens to leave the country for a better living standard abroad; surprisingly, most of the respondents (52%) were placed on

the involvement dimension, which means they would answer "Yes" to authorities calls (only 35% were on the apathy dimension); in this situation, Romanian authorities should take into account to create more opportunities to involve people in such activities, because it would bring not only knowledge, but also trust in the leading act;

- conspirativism / rationalism – this dimension describes the way people choose to get informed, the degree of awareness of media manipulation, as well as their views on the existence of a hidden global government; 52% have been situated on the conspirative dimension, while 32% on the rationalist one, concluding that authorities should work harder to inform in a correct manner their people.

Conclusions

In the process of consolidating security culture in Romania, the ruling political class should consider the fact that Romanian culture is characterized by a high score of distance power, which means that people respect a hierarchical order and accept their role in society without question marks. Also, the ruling class should actually take advantage of the fact that Romania is a country characterized by collective values, which means that people value more the relationships with the others than their own material gains. This is relevant because the national security interests can be achieved only through a common human effort, not through self-interest attitudes. Considering that Romania is a country with rather feminine values, the political factor should adopt measures that promote cooperation, equality and free discussions.

Leaders need to pay attention to the fact that Romania has a high score in terms of avoiding uncertainty, which means that people are anxious about the future. Calming messages would be very useful in the public communication process of authorities. In addition, the ruling class should consider the fact that Romanians do not have a long-term orientation, which is why they need to make more visible the issues that take longer time to be achieved. There should be given concrete data about possible current threats, but especially about future threats, as

well as clear information/rules on the way people can get involved in the process of countering national security threats. Unclear data may confuse the common citizen.

The communist period was a turning point in Romanian culture, as communist representatives tried to impose a certain type of culture on people. Individuals were taught how to think, behave and act in the society. As for the security culture, it has also been imposed by the state. People were taught about the biggest risks to the state security (people who opposed the communist vision or foreigners), but also about the proper way to get involved in solving security issues (collaborating with intelligence services and adopting a "no comment" attitude day by day). People were aware of the fact that they could get tortured in case of no response to the needs of the authorities. Basically, the security culture was determined by terror, fear and the struggle for survival.

Once with the Revolution of 1989, Romania's path to democracy was largely open. It was the time for changes, even in the security field. Newly formed intelligence services were built in accordance with democratic principles, so people were given the right to choose how to get informed about national security issues and to decide individually whether or not to get involved in solving them. Accession to NATO and EU has brought knowledge and awareness among population about the security threats that Romania had to counter in a greater geopolitical context.

The security culture has undergone a lot of changes over the last 33 years and, fortunately, most of them have been positive. However, the changes that have taken place in Romania were not enough to permanently erase the cultural values imposed by the communist regime. The most affected people are those who had a direct experience with the communist period, especially those who were raised in the communist spirit from an early age. Their culture, and implicitly their security culture, are still heavily influenced by the old habits of the Department of State Security. Many of them even consider that the current intelligence services are just an extension of the Department of State Security. Therefore, we believe that in order to strengthen the security culture among the Romanian population, it is imperative for the intelligence services to focus their efforts on eliminating the

misperception about the Department of State Security which still exists. As we mentioned in this article, trust in institutions is extremely relevant for the process of consolidating security culture, which is why we consider that this may be the first step: removing from the collective mind the shuffle between former security apparatus and current intelligence services.

The second important step would be to ensure good information processes/channels for the population, because people tend to give more credit to the conspiratorial dimension, as we showed in the last chapter. The third important step in strengthening the security culture would be involving citizens in concrete actions to ensure national security, since, as we have shown, people are largely eager to get involved (for instance, teaching people how to identify signs of a possible terrorist, of a cyber attack or of an espionage act).

References:

1. Bejenaru, L. (2008). "Manipulare şi dirijare prin observarea stării de spirit a populaţiei. Studiu de caz: festivalul mondial al tineretului şi studenţilor de la Bucureşti (2-14 august 1953)". *CNSAS Notebooks – Journal published by the National Council for the Study of Security Archives, 2, 251-265*.

2. Beldea, R.A. (2018). *Cultura de securitate în contextul geopolitic contemporan*, retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/34451292/Cultura_de_securitate

3. Ciupercă, E. M. (2011). *Populaţie, cultură şi schimbare socială: repere sociologice*. Bucharest: MVNIA Publishing House.

4. Felea, C. (2018). *Cultura de securitate, semnul unui spaţiu al civilizaţiei şi democraţiei,* retrieved from http://www.contributors.ro/cultura/cultura-de-securitate-semnul-unui-spa%C8%9Biu-al-civiliza%C8%9Biei-%C8%99i-democra%C8%9Biei/

5. Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind (*third edition). New York: McGraw-Hill Education Publisher (first publication in 1991).

6. Hofstede, G. (1980). "Culture and Organizations". *International Studies of Management & Organization Journal*, 4, 15-41, DOI: 10.1080/00208825.1980.11656300.

7. Malița, M. (2012). *Cuminţenia Pământului: Strategii de supravieţuire în istoria poporului român*. Bucharest: Compania Publisher.

8. Pippidi, A. M. (2002). "Romania's 'end of transition' deconstructed". *PolSci Papers*, 2, 186-195.

9. Presidential Administration. (2015). *Ghidul Strategiei Naţională de Apărare a Ţării pentru perioada 2015-2019*, retrieved from http://old. presidency.ro/static/Ghid%20SNApT_2015-2019_AP.pdf

10. Presidential Administration. (2020). *National Defence Strategy 2020-2024. Together for a safe and prosperous Romania in a world marked by new challenges*, retrieved from https://www.presidency.ro/files/userfiles/ National_Defence_Strategy_2020_2024.pdf

11. LARICS. (2018). *Barometrul Culturii de Securitate din România*, retrieved from http://larics.ro/barometrul-culturii-de-securitate/

12. Șoimii Patriei Organisation. (1977). *Regulamentul organizaţiei Șoimii Patriei.* București: "Bucureştii-Noi" Publisher, retrieved from www. cnsas.ro/documente/istoria_comunism/documente_programatice/1977%20 Regulament%20Soimii%20patriei.pdf

13. The Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile. (2010). *Atitudini şi opinii despre regimul comunist din România – Sondaj de opinie publică*, retrieved from http://www.iiccr.ro/pdf/ro/evenimente/perceptiile_romanilor_asupra_comu nismului/raport_sondaj_opinie.pdf

14. Ustun, C. (2010). *Turkey and the European Security Defence Policy*. New York: Tauris Publisher.

HISTORY AND MEMORY IN INTELLIGENCE

CHRISTOFASCISM –
AN UNPRECEDENTED THREAT TO INTELLIGENCE
SERVICES IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Alexandru IORDACHE[*]

Abstract:

The main themes covered in this study concern the relationship between the far-right nationalist movement and religion in Interwar Romania, following the transformations that occurred in the political and legal status of the representative institutions, in the sense of protecting their own identities and objectives, as well as in the direction of obtaining a role as important as possible at the decision-making table in the state. Also, relying on the analysis of the recently declassified documentary fund in the Romanian Intelligence Service Archive, I have aimed to obtain a well-documented answer regarding the way in which the religious rhetoric promoted by radical groups in the Legionary Movement amplified the adversity towards the authorities - whether they were military, intelligence, political or religious – sometimes leading to violent disputes with them.

Keywords: *christofascism, religious fanaticism, Romanian Orthodox Church, propaganda, intelligence.*

Introduction

As Traian Sandu, Roland Clark or Oliver Jens Schmitt pointed out, among others, one of the most significant current challenges for the intelligence community in Romania, from the perspective of preventing the destabilization of Romanian democracy, is the recrudescence of archangelism and religious fanaticism, in fact a potentially aggressive imitation of interwar right-wing extremism (Clej, 2020; Grădinaru, 2022). This aspect is favoured by the outburst of possibilities for the

---

[*]Postdoctoral researcher, PhD, "Valahia" University of Târgoviște, Doctoral School, History specialization, email: alexisiordache1986@gmail.com

propagation and dissemination of radical right-wing ideology, especially in the online environment.

Thus, the risk factors we analyse have become particularly significant in the last five years, as violent actions have been re-transposed into practice at the local and global level (in the United States of America, for instance), most of them using religious symbols and aspects of spiritual doctrine characteristic of the Archangel Michael Legion as an action. For example, for the benefit of neo-legionary propaganda and indoctrination, new prayers and akathists have occurred during recent years, in which some of the legionary leaders from the interwar period, especially Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, have been invoked or posed as messengers of divinity. Also, in the Christian-Orthodox rituals currently performed by the priests with neo-legionary visions, some extremist practices from the interwar period have been reintroduced, such as the parastases in the memory of the legionary "martyrs" or the invocation of God's blessing for some nationalist actions[1].

Therefore, taking into account the fact that the relationship between religion and far-right nationalist movements is still one of the most debated topics in political and theological historiography, in the current article I have aimed to carry out a methodological delimitation of legionary christofascism[2], by means of which the defining attributes that characterized the phenomenon in the interwar period can be emphasized not only from a conceptual point of view, but also from an affective and attitudinal consideration. In this sense, the theological writings of the main legionary theoreticians were particularly useful, as from the analysis of their content there can be highlighted the intensity, the extent, the relays of propagation, the visibility or the extent of the phenomenon I am analysing, of course with the attitude of reserve

---

[1] Such a conclusion results from the analysis of documents in rough form or in synthesis found on the official websites of some contemporary neo-legionary groups as: https://www.miscarea.net, https://www.miscarea-legionara.net, https://buciumul.ro, https://gogupuiu.ro, https://marturisitorii.ro

[2] The term Christofascism was introduced by the German theologian Dorothee Steffensky-Sölle to define that far-right ideology that sums up intersecting characteristics of fascism and Christianity.

caused by the authors' intentions to distort social-political reality for propaganda purposes.

For the same purpose, in the first part of the presentation, I will bring forth arguments for positioning the religious fanatic, anti-Semitic substrate, as a foundation for mobilizing and indoctrinating the social masses in favour of the Legionary Movement and I have defined, by referring to the pattern used in different concrete situations, the actual level to which fanatical religious precepts and beliefs have been appropriated by individuals, groups and various structures within the extremist organization. Equally, the scientific analysis aimed at establishing the stage of appropriation of religious and anti-Semitic fanaticism by the decision-making factors of the Romanian Orthodox Church, respectively the way in which fundamentalism was taken over and adapted to theological and ritual objectives, practices and dogmas[3].

In the next part of my study, my intention has been to demonstrate the fact that the Christian-Orthodox doctrine was symbiotically united with the perceptions of a nationalist nature, religion representing the perfect alibi for the justification of some violence or atrocities of the radical legionnaires towards those considered to be responsible for the social and national problems of Romania.

In the second part of the paper, I have aimed to obtain a well-documented answer regarding the way in which the religious rhetoric promoted by radical groups in the Legionary Movement amplified the adversity towards the authorities – whether they were military, intelligence, political or religious – sometimes leading to violent disputes with them. In this sense, different stages were highlighted in the evolution of the relations between the Legionary Movement – the Church – the authorities, during which distinct forms of support or counterattack to

---

[3] To fulfill these research objectives, I critically studied the works of well-known historians in the field, such as Ionuț Florian Biliuță, Radu Ioanid, Armin Heinen, George Enache, Marius Turda or Mihail Stelian Rusu. In the same sense, the theological works produced by the main legionary theoreticians were particularly useful. From the analysis of their content it is possible to highlight, of course with the reserves of rigor caused by the authors' intentions to distort the social-political reality for propaganda purposes, the intensity, the extent, the relays of propagation, the visibility or the extent of the phenomenon we are analyzing.

the initiatives of the other institutions were drawn, depending on the organizational interests of the moment.

In order to accurately substantiate the conclusions on this issue, I proceeded to the analysis of the recently declassified documentary fund in the Romanian Intelligence Service Archive, adding up a total of 657 new files related to the involvement of intelligence structures and public order, sometimes with the support of some people in the Church, in managing and combating the social and political manifestations generated by legionary religious fanaticism. Also, in order to approach and reproduce as correctly as possible, i.e. understanding the specific aspects of the informational research of the Legionary Movement, I also discussed with former officers with experience in the informational community and prominent members of the historiographical and archival community in Romania, among them mentioning Silviu-Marian Miloiu, professor and vice-chancellor of Valahia University in Târgovişte and Cristian Aniţa, director of the National Archives of Romania.

The religious factor in the extremist legionary politics[4]

In the Romanian historiography (Marius Turda, Radu Ioanid, Cristian Troncotă) there is, to a good extent, a consensus from the perspective of designating right-wing extremism – whose main exponents were the legionnaires – as the pole of maximum internal vulnerability for public order and the internal and democratic security of the interwar Romanian state[5]. Moreover, their opinion can also be

---

[4] The main scientific works supporting this chapter are: Rusu, M. S. (2021). "Staging Death: Christofascist Necropolitics during the National Legionary State in Romania, 1940–1941". *Nationalities Papers*, 49, 576-589; Meale, J. (2016). "The Romanian Iron Guard: Fascist Sacralized Politics or Fascist Politicized Religion?" *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe, 36*, 61-74; Cârstocea, R. (2014). "The Path to the Holocaust. Fascism and Antisemitism in Interwar Romania." *S.I.M.O.N.-Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation, 1*. Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 43-53; or Biliuţă, I. F. (2016). "Sowing the Seeds of Hate. The Antisemitism of the Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period." *S.I.M.O.N.-Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation, 3*. Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 20-34.

[5] Despite the major public interest in the subject of the involvement of intelligence and public order structures in the prevention and countering of extremist propaganda, very little has been written on this topic, often tangentially. Up to the present, no complex

validated through the scientific research of the archive documents issued by the intelligence agencies of the time, the following action characteristics having to be highlighted: the importance assigned to the field through the establishment of a distinct team within the Secret Service (Team I), having operative work directions and targets from among the extreme right and right-wing groups as means of searching for information (SRI Archive, 48.340, 132-141), the unreserved allocation of resources and means (for the resolution of cases there were allocated as means "everything at hand"), the short time set for the intervention of the cadres – usually 48 hours after receiving the information note (SRI Archive, 835, page 194)–, respectively the permanent informative monitoring of the legionnaires known as having concerns and predispositions towards violent action denial (SRI Archive, 650, 10-20).

In fact, the legionary movement appeared in Romania as a denial of democracy, the affirmation of the totalitarian state and the exaltation of Christian virtues in the spirit of the cult of autochthony and Romanianism. Legionarism had a pronounced revolutionary character, reshaping the Romanian society with the aim of constantly challenging the entire post-war socio-political system, a system which in their opinion could no longer ensure national progress.

---

work has been developed in this sense, and no historian has undertaken a systematic research of the ideological and organizational confrontation between the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the secret intelligence community, whose main exponent was the Secret Service (later Special) of Information. The analysis is also flawed by some historiographic currents regarding the study of the Legionary Movement. Thus, although most of the historians and political scientists adopted a critical, praxeological rhetoric of Legionaryism, in the academic and scientific environment there were stages (with influences up to the present) in which the tendency was to abolish ideology, to deconstruct it. It is, first of all, about the works made during the communist period, when the legionary myth had to be blamed, justifying the organizational repression. At the same time, another part of the scientific environment adopted an encomiastic attitude towards the Legionary Movement, basing their research almost exclusively on the books published after 1989, which was obviously an error. These works mostly grouped together different elements of legionary memorials which belonged to legionary political prisoners, the ideology of legionary action being recreated and defined according to the individual judgment of each of them.

Impersonating as the expression of a pure national community, most of them being young people (Biliuţă, 2013, p. 166), the legionnaires considered themselves as the embodiment of celestial beings, archangels, educators and moral purifiers of the society in which they lived – a "world" converging with the internal agitations and disturbances that characterized the stage of consolidating Greater Romania (Ornea, 2015, p. 148). In this sense, the legionnaires assumed the task of vigorously punishing the sins of the Romanian politics and accused the Jews – but also those who ran business or mutually helped the Jews – as participants in "undermining the legitimate national interest of Romanians" (Solonari, 2015, pp. 34-36). In the light of the post-war legionary discourse, the Jews were the source of all "evils" in Romania, whether we refer to alcoholism, poverty, Marxism, social inequity, corruption or even ecological problems (Cârstocea, 2014, p. 48).

Exalted nationalism with a Christo-fascist rhetoric and the specific paramilitary organization gradually gained more and more popularity, attractinga wide range of adherents among the sympathizers and members of the Legionary Movement, from members of some noble families (Cantacuzino, Ghica, Sturdza) to young cultivated people (Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, Mihail Polihroniade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Traian Herseni, Mihail Sebastian, Haig and Arşavir Acterian, Marietta Sadova etc.), many of them university graduates fascinated by professor Nae Ionescu, partisan of an authoritarian regime that would end the sterile agitation of political parties (Ornea, 2015, p. 41).

Although in historiography there are discussions regarding a prevalence of those with studies in Germany, I believe that we can rather speak of a primacy of those who completed their university studies outside the country: Emil Cioran studied German philosophy with the support of a Humbol scholarship, context in which he was definitively fascinated by the personality and extremist ideas of Adolf Hitler, Mircea Vulcănescu and Mihail Sebastian studied in Paris, Constantin Noica based his master's studies on Kant on research carried out in France and Germany, and Traian Herseni specialized in Letters and Philosophy in Berlin (Bejan, 2023, pp. 85-97). Also, Prince Alexandru Cantacuzino studied in The Hague and Paris, his uncle, General Gheorghe Cantacuzino, "The Border Guard", attended university in France, and Prince Alexandru Ghica completed his studies in Berlin and Grenoble.

I would like to point out the significant influence that the mothers of some of the legionaries with principled origins had on their evolution in ideological and doctrinal terms, the untainted presence in their case of the heroic spirit manifested by the willingness to fight and sacrifice for the faith, respectively a close interpersonal connection with Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (prince Alexandru Ghica, for example, was a colleague of the legionary commander at the Military High School at Mănăstirea Dealu) (Iordachi, 2014, p. 377-394; Biliuță, 2013, p. 228).

In their opinion, the real change of Romania could only be achieved by the "new generation of young people", a category independent of biological age and correlated with a certain level of spiritual freshness (Enache, 2012, pp. 280-281).

In the stage of formation and ideological consolidation, this "generation in powder", as Dan C. Mihăilescu described it (Petreu, 2016, p. 9), despite the doctrinal effervescence, limited the violent actions towards the members of the system they were attacking only at the level of the discursive register. Traian Brăileanu, socialist and legionary intellectual, wrote in "Sociological Notes" that "the people have made a mistake and must be punished". In his opinion, all those who opposed the legionary victory should have been exterminated, even if the approach would have led to the disappearance of the last Romanian (Troncotă, 2008, pp. 120-124).

But, when the system began to deny and combat their efforts, the opponents were considered to be enemies of renewal, creating an insurmountable organizational and ideological divide. Starting with the year 1933, in order to punish the movement's opponents of any nature, the so-called "death squads" were for the first time recruited and trained from the ranks of the most radical of these "young people" (Rusu, 2016, p. 254), essentially people programmed to apply from the simplest corrections to their physical elimination (Enache, 2012, p. 285).

It is striking that these terrorist actions and methods, obviously incompatible with biblical norms, were ignored in the legionary discourse. In order to distract attention from their manifestation, the legionnaires adopted the tactic of minimization, placing them in the register of passing organizational manifestations, in the shadows, without disrupting the dissemination of other "promotional" themes,

such as the Christian issue and the institutional association of the Legionary Movement with the Romanian Orthodox Church[6]. Precisely these considerations still produce controversies at the historiographical level, the legionary action ideology (with an emphasis on the intrinsic component of religious fanaticism) being difficult to define, especially in a comparative analysis with other movements of a fascist nature in interwar Europe (Heinen, 2006, pp. 435-460).

From our point of view, at least for the interwar period, the religious factor was assimilated to the legionary trend primarily for reasons of doctrinal individualization. At the stage when, at the European level, fascist, totalitarian ideologies encompassed thousands of young people with extremist right-wing visions, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, similar to the "young people" of the "new generation", felt the need to impose himself on an individual level (as an organization domestically and as a state internationally), harmonizing these beliefs with Romanian specificity. In the legionary conception, the national specificity of Romania could only be a Christian, Orthodox one (Meale, 2016, p. 67), an aspect that would have also led to an ideological superiority in relation to the other extreme right-wing interwar doctrines, fascism and Nazism (Cârstocea, 2014, p. 49).

With such a motivation, at their first programmatic manifestations, in the absence of a pre-existing religious canon, the legionnaires masked their ideology of action with the precepts of Orthodox Christianity and the concept of unity between religion and the Romanian nation. On these grounds, the acceptance of membership in the extremist organization was conditioned and mystically correlated with the recognition of faith in God (Voicu, 2023). The explanatory presentation of the two concepts, legionary and Orthodox believer, had

---

[6] The first manifestations of this nature (terrorist-paramilitary) were recorded in September 1923 when, only with the benefit of the intelligence possessed by the police and security bodies, effective measures could be put into practice to prevent plots and attacks planned by legionnaires to the directors of the newspapers *Lupta*, *Adevărul* and *Dimineaţa*, people with Zionist orientations and critics of the organization and the legionary trend. Later, in 1933, other attempts of the legionary assassin groups were annihilated by the Security, this time on Victor Iamandi or Nicolae (Troncota, 2008, pp. 165-170). In both situations, legionary propaganda preferred to adopt the measure of dissimulation or protection.

to suggest similar notions, which were supposed to be confused (Webster, 1986, p. 10). However, the practice of Orthodoxy was not a limiting condition for joining the Legionary Movement, as all those with an unlimited faith in God, including Christianized Jews, were accepted into the organization (Cârstocea, 2014, p. 49).

The obtained result was the development of an organizational hallucination to which thousands of Romanians zealously adhered, the legionary religious fanaticism being assumed and intrinsically applied with faithfulness, as the followers were convinced that in this way they could testify to God. On the same basis, the legionnaires claimed that their way of working was the right one, as it had been inspired by divinity – a reason why the only precepts and religious manifestations they appropriated were those of legionary emanation. Thus, with the same aim, many works of ritualistic and legionary dogma were elaborated, such as the legionary songbooks or the behavioural guidelines in which a series of religious landmarks were also inserted, e.g., "fasting as a decisive element of victory", the altar and the prayer (Zelea Codreanu, 2012).

In other words, religion was used by the legionnaires as a means for making propaganda, influencing and mobilizing the masses. In this respect, religious symbolism and rhetoric were also directed to fill the ranks with new followers and to ensure an apparent public justification of violent anti-Semitic or extremist-anarchist actions (Ioanid, 2004, pp. 437-438).

The skilful combination of elements of legionary ideology with Christian-Orthodox substratum from the aforementioned categories of works generated, in certain situations, the manifestation of vehement behaviors such as political assassinations, the legionnaires being indoctrinated to act prophetically, under the protectorate of God. As a result, the legionnaires had a continuous willingness to fight, to martyrdom, and their sacrifice was to be rewarded with glory in the afterlife (in fact, these are elements of ideology specific to fundamentalist, ultra-radical communities) (Meale, 2016, p. 63). Against this background, the leaders of the Legionary Movement promoted action exaltation, order and discipline, and also devotion to the own organization. In my perspective, such action ideals could only be achieved by cultivating community desensitization, the removal of the

followers from any social form that could vitiate the accomplishment of the missions outlined by the legionary leadership.

With the same goal, in order to promote the organizational and action prophetism of the Legionary Movement, the legionary martyrs were presented to the followers as models of holiness, considering that they deserved to be honoured by all the people and the clergy. "The legion kneels in front of the crosses of the nation's braves and martyrs" and "defends the altars of the Church which the enemies want to remove" were life guides for the legionnaires, any action performed for their benefit being assimilated and necessary for redemption and collective salvation for the afterlife (Zelea Codreanu, 2012). At the same time, by venerating, exhuming and reburying their remains in sumptuous religious ceremonies, the legionnaires once again sanctified their struggle, the halo of the fallen ones being hypothesized as the sacred guarantor of the political order they proposed (Rusu, 2021, pp. 576-579). The funeral ceremonies also had occult practical connotations, as legionary songs were sung alongside the council of priests, and the presence of the spirits of the legionary martyrs among the participants was invoked (by shouting the legionary salute "Present" in chorus, after mentioning the name of each martyr), and taking oaths to continue the legionary cause for the salvation of the Romanian nation.

The extent of the cult would sometimes reach heretical heights, as the legionnaires assigned Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, depending on the historical context, some prophetic characteristics, as a predestined hero (the reincarnation of Joan of Arc) or a prophet (Turda, 2005, p. 145; Ioanid, 2004, p. 438), or even messianic attributes, such as resurrection and direct connection with God (Rusu, 2021, pp. 580-585). For the same purpose, the legionnaires were instructed to keep an icon with the face of the legionary commander in the pockets of their coat, alongside iconographic representations of the saints, (Haynes, 2008, p. 122).

On the same foundations presented above, the legionnaires designed major strategic objectives to influence and control the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR), an achievable step due to the priests and hierarchs that they were going to direct inside this religious institution, after they had confirmed that they were sympathizers or authentic members of the extremist movement. Their management was

much more complex, aimed at the introduction of nationalist precepts and autochthonous and anti-Semitic fanaticism, respectively expanding the capacity of influence inside as many religious communities as possible (Ioanid, 2004, p. 436-439; Țiu, 2012). In this respect, the legionnaires preached the active co-optation of priests in the reformation of society by returning to ancestral Christian traditions. As a matter of fact, to increase the success rate, legionary propaganda also involved an initiation of priests at legionary schools (Grigore, 2020, p. 58; Meale, 2016, p. 66). Moreover, with the same goal, in the elections of 1937, out of the total of 103 candidates on the lists of the *All for the Country* party, 33 were priests (Ioanid, 2004, p. 436).

Officially, at least in the first post-war decade, the church institution rejected the legionary ideology and condemned the organization's violent actions. Even in the second part of the 30s, when the popularity and penetration of the Legion reached its peak, many priests refused to associate and remained outside the extremist Legionary politics.

However, in interwar Romania, under the impact of the rise and charisma of the Legionary Movement, a large part of the Orthodox clergy self-radicalized or was radicalized, and the theological and religious discourse promoted by them was imbued with racist and anti-Semitic ideas (Biliuţă, 2016, p. 12). Thus, although the attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the Jews was a tolerant one before the First World War, in the interwar period the Jewish population, mirroring the leitmotifs of the legionary discourses, was theologically transposed as an ungodly one, an exploiter of economic resources or the most morally corrupted among the ethnic groups in Romania (Biliuţă, 2016, pp. 21-23). The aggressive anti-Semitic message, presented by legionnaires and priests alike, when the optimal preaching opportunities arose, was also put into practice "with enthusiasm" (Oldson, 2002, p. 305).

On the other hand, although in the 19th century the role of the religious factor in the development of national communities was minimized or even denied by the intellectual and academic elites, after the end of the First World War religion became a remedy for cleansing European societies affected by the horrors of the war. In the case of Romania, the resurrection of the Orthodox religion as a pillar of the

indigenous ancestral society was dependent on the internalization in such environments of the need to combat a new social danger, namely the spread of Bolshevik ideas and the actions of Jewry and Freemasonry.

In Nicolae Iorga's opinion, these risk factors could be managed through the emancipation and then assimilation into the "soul" of Romania of the "good Jews" from Wallachia (Ioanid, 1992, pp. 467-492), a more difficult approach to achieve in the case of the so-called "bad Jews" from Moldova, a Jewish population of a different ethnic "quality", difficult to be assimilated after the war (Oldson, 1991, p. 139). As Valentin Stoian also notes, two types of anti-Semitism were developed against this background among the intellectual and academic elites of the first interwar years, categories separated by the arguments on the basis of which the harmfulness of the Jews was described: cultural anti-Semitism caused by the cultural-religious and social substratum of Jewishness and the biological anti-Semitism caused by a hypothetical maleficity of their "blood" (Stoian, 2013).

The fact that Orthodox theologians developed, under the influence of legionary fascism, speeches and fanatical ideas towards the Bolsheviks and the Jews was also favoured by the evolution of the theological teaching and student body after the first great world conflagration. Thus, the replication of the Prussian or Habsburg theological educational model cultivated among the students a more rational political thinking, more expressive from an action point of view, so they substantially embraced fascist radicalism. The religious demonstration carried out on March 2, 1930 by a group of Orthodox theological students from Bucharest "for the commemoration of the martyrs who sacrificed their lives under the cruel persecutions of the Soviets" can be included in such a perspective (SRI Archives, 920, 12-14). Their demonstration, held under the coordination of Emil Pavel, Ion Constantinescu and Dumitru Cinciu, delegates of the theological studentship, abounded with fanatical-religious, legionary-type meanings (being preceded by a "CALL To all Christian students"), risking to degenerate violently as a result of the provocative intention associated with the last part of the event – procession and prayer in front of the Russian Church.

Moreover, on this basis, the Orthodox theological students developed missionary ideas, embodying themselves as enlighteners of the national student population regarding the importance of nationalism and anti-Semitism (Biliuţă, 2016, p. 24). In this respect, the fundamentalist theological theses propagated by Alexandru C. Cuza, legionnaire mentor and economics professor at the University of Iaşi, and the doctor and physiologist Nicolae Paulescu, represented real sources of inspiration. According to them, the Jews were the key element for the spread of Bolshevik and Masonic ideas, a fact that threatened the very existence of the Romanian nation due to socio-economic decomposition and racial alteration. In this respect, the Jews, a race presented as inferior, intruding and uncontrollably interbred (Cuza, 1915, p. 182), should have been blamed for all the misfortunes that affected the Romanian population, thus imposing their exile from Romania (Ioanid, 2004, p. 425).

Moreover, Nicolae Paulescu had no qualms about obsessively using medical studies for propaganda purposes, basing part of his scientific theories on anti-Semitic concepts. In his morbid optics, the Jewish population was compared to "a parasite", "bedbugs", "lice" or "an unsleeping worm" that "sucks the energy of the country" and "poisons the sons", thus requiring to be exterminated (Paulescu, 1915, p 55). In fact, Nicolae Paulescu was the extreme right-wing theoretician who propagated the pseudo-scientific theory of the biological inferiority of the Jews ("the brain of the Jews weighs much less than the brain of the Arians", "congenital anomalies of the Jewish brain give rise to disorders in the development of the bones of the skull, body and limbs"), a theory that was also popular in Nazi Germany (Paulescu, 1928, pp. 18-20) and based on which the Romanian doctor brought into discussion the danger of sexual intercourse between the Romanians and the Jews (Paulescu, 1928, p. 10).

Moreover, regarding the institution and the position of the church, Alexandru C. Cuza, a self-declared atheist with no religious beliefs (Biliuţă, 2016, p. 17), condemned Romanian Orthodoxy for the lack of resistance to the Jewish danger, thus infringing an honourable national duty to protect the rights, hopes and future luck of the Romanians. In the theological work he wrote in 1925, "The Teaching of

Jesus. Judaism and Christian Theology", Alexandru C. Cuza had no qualms to condemn the Romanian Orthodox Church for being bought by the Jews, respectively for having corrupted the dogmas and rituals so that the Jewish problem could be tolerated and unsanctioned. Against this background, Alexandru C. Cuza promoted the introduction of the messianic struggle against the Jews and their demonization as an attribute of Orthodoxy (Cuza, 1925, p. 7). Moreover, in a Christo-heretical way (as priest Ilie Imbrescu accused him), Alexandru C. Cuza demanded the reformation of the Romanian theological education by excluding the study of the Old Testament from the curriculum of religious classes, a biblical document that he considered to be "corrupted by the Jewish materialistic spirit" (Biliuță, 2016, pp. 24-25).

At the same time, the religious radicalism of a large part of the students and the Orthodox clergy developed, initially feeding on the fundamentalist ideas of some legionary essayists or philosophers (or sympathizers of the legionary doctrine) such as Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Nichifor Crainic, Mircea Eliade, Mihail Polihroniade, or Traian Brăileanu, and from the theological discourse typical of Romanian Orthodoxy which was promoted, for example, owing to the interwar magazines *Gândirea* and *Cuvântul*. By means of these channels, anti-Semitic ideas sometimes had exaggerated expressions, without theological support (Jews are a damnable population for the arrogance of not admitting that Jesus Christ is Messiah, without salvation in the absence of a mass conversion to Orthodoxy), creating controversies even among legionary theorists (Biliuță, 2016, pp. 27-29).

Later, under the same editorial logo, some of the legionary theorists promoted and adapted the ideas of the superiority of the Aryan race specific to German Nazism, declaring their support for their partial application, only in the particular case of Jews and not of other races. Thus, Orthodoxy was presented as the opposing cult of Judaism, the aversion being caused by the Jews' rejection of the resurrection. In other words, the two religions could only be antagonistic, the doctrinal matrices being incompatible and reactive (Crainic, 1935, pp. 59-66). Mihail Sebastian and Eugen Ionescu categorized these ideological manifestations as forms of affirmation of "hooliganism", of the process of "rhinocerization" (for "the rhinoceros", God became the state), and of the

decline of humanity after the moment of the so-called extremist conversion (Bejan, 2023, pp. 274-277).

Actually, such theories also corresponded to the interests of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and the ecclesiastical and monastic staff almost obsessively rejected the Jewish community as part of occult, atheistic or anti-Christian organizations or environments. In fact, some of them had no qualms about publicly presenting their aversion to the mentioned environments, in which context they placed the Jewish community at the centre of the threats to national ethnicity. Such a conclusion can be clearly obtained by analysing the content of the article called "Our Church and the Jewish Danger", which was published by Haralamb Vasiliu, councilor of the Diocese of Moldova, in November 1934 in no. 113, year IX, of *Chemarea* (SRI Archives, 1160, leaf 315).

The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Legionary Movement

As a result of this evolution, the Legionary Movement gained great sympathy among the priests, monks and Orthodox theological students, who were some of its most zealous and effective representatives. The official assumption of Orthodox Christianity by the Legion or the concerted involvement of its members in activities of a religious nature (building churches, erecting roadside crosses) contributed decisively to this situation – aspects that were not specific to other organizations or political parties.

At this point in the study, we must make a clarification. Although the nationalist mystique constituted the central element of attraction for the Romanian Orthodox clergy due to the ideological similarity, above any type of political sympathy, the collaboration between the Legionary Movement and the Church materialized more at the level of individuals and less at the institutional level (Grigore, 2020, p. 57). In Constantin Iordachi's view, this situation was generated by the fact that, for the priesthood and petty ecclesiastical personnel, with local influence, especially among those who were active members of the Legion, there were no dogmatic and ideological differences between Orthodoxy and Legionarism (Iordachi, 2004, p. 36).

This situation was caused by the pressures of the state authorities, who judged the legionary religious manifestations as political propaganda and made efforts to limit the religious actions of the legionnaires and prevent the involvement of the priesthood in politics. These pressures were meant to limit the influence of the legionnaires in society through the Church and benefited from great support from the old Romanian political and church elites because, in their opinion, they might have represented an additional obstacle, thus affecting the positions they held in favour of legionary revolutionism.

At the same time, the restraint of the church authorities in presenting an organizational position closer to the Legionary Movement may have been also caused by a number of value factors, in the end the Legion being a secular movement and not a religious one (Iordachi, 2004, pp. 35-36).

Actually, we should not neglect the fact that the attitude of the Church leadership also evolved in line with some public reactions of the legionnaires. Thus, the reactions of the hierarchical superiors towards the Legionnaire Movement experienced stages of tacit support, "reproach" or express criticism, mirroring the extent of the situations in which the legionnaires sanctioned their haric vices. Such aspects were not approved by the Orthodox hierarchy as they sometimes targeted it directly, some of the people within it being stigmatized by the Legion as apostates and traitors (Enache, 2012, p. 286).

The first public confirmation of this type of closeness became evident in the context of the assassination of Prime Minister Ion G. Duca by a legionary death squad, on the platform of the train station in Sinaia. In the conditions in which the regrettable event of December 29, 1933 was treated equivocally by the Holy Synod, without reprimanding or directly sanctioning the organization in whose name the assassins had acted, the attitude of the priesthood and monastic staff towards the legionnaires remained in a positive register, without any changes. As a sign of "gratitude", the members of the Legionary Movement got even more involved in organizing work camps for the benefit of the Church, in order to repair some Orthodox worship buildings or construct new ones (Heinen, 2006, pp. 302-304).

Another event which certified and encouraged the closeness at an individual level between the legionnaires and the representatives of the Church was the funerals of Ion Moţa and Vasile Marin, legionnaire leaders who died in the civil war in Spain[7]. The religious ritual circumscribed to the funeral, appreciated as honoring the "modern martyrs fighting for faith" (Voicu, 2023), was performed by three Orthodox hierarchs accompanied by an impressive procession of 200-400 priests (Săndulescu, 2007, p. 265) and about 30,000 people. It was noted the presence at the event of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Bălan, one of the most influential members of the religious elite of that time and a follower of the philosophy according to which the Church, in order to maintain its social influence, should always be in the proximity of the ones who hold the power or can direct the power on a certain course. Practically, by his participation and the large number of hierarchs of different ranks at the funeral event or at the religious ceremonies held beforehand in the stations where the train with the mortuary wagon was stopped, Nicolae Bălan certified the claims of the Legionary Movement for access and possession, in a relatively short interval, of the governance in Romania (Săndulescu, 2007, pp. 264-265)[8].

Immediately after the analyzed event, in March 1937, at the initiative and blessing of Nicolae Bălan, the similarity of some aspects of ideology was further strengthened. From that moment on, in Nicolae Bălan's public speech, the legionary theories regarding the need to isolate the Freemasons and the Jewish population had a central role, communities of this type being hypothesized by the high hierarchy as nefarious, sources of corruption of the political and economic environments in the direction of anti-theism and the communization of Romania (Biliuţă, 2016, p. 30).

---

[7] Priest Ion Dumitrescu-Bocşa was also among the legionnaires participating in the civil war in Spain.

[8] To go deeply into the study regarding the relationship developed by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan with the Iron Guard, one could consult Ilarion Ţiu`s works, available on the reasearchgate.net platform (https://reasearchgate.net-profile/Ilarion-Tiu) or the research made by Oliver Jens Schmitt: Schmitt, O. J. (2022). Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. *The rise and fall of the 'Captain'*, the second edition, Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.

In contrast with Nicolae Bălan, patriarch Miron Cristea, the leader of the Orthodox hierarchy, otherwise promoter and continuator of the anti-Semitic measures initiated by Alexandru C. Cuza and Octavian Goga (Oldson, 2002, p. 304), initially had a somewhat critical attitude towards legionary practices, disapproving any form of church solidarity with the radical groups of the Legionary Movement. In this vein, Miron Cristea tried at first to determine the bishops to completely abandon political activities (such as participation in legionary ceremonies or even integration into the Legionary Movement) or supporting legionary rhetoric and propaganda at the level of symbolism (through the presence of legionary elements – such as the legionary flag – in religious institutions or the consecration of flags).

In spite of Miron Cristea's appeasing position, in the same month, the Holy Synod, influenced by Nicolae Bălan and probably by pecuniary interests, refused to condemn the possible involvement of the ecclesiastical and monastic staff in supporting "All for the Country" legionary party. The legion was presented, without being expressly nominated, as the political entity that best corresponded to the moral precepts promoted by the Romanian Orthodox Church. The claim of the Church not to separate the state from the religious institution (calling for the disappearance of the spirit of secularism) and the permission for the continued operation of legionary labour camps around churches and monasteries also proved to be on the same direction (Heinen, 2006, pp. 296-297).

The decisions of the Holy Synod were welcomed by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, the legionary leader assimilating the moment as a successful first step in the national battle to eliminate the entities that were consuming Romania from the inside (Biliuță, 2016, p. 30).

After this moment, especially after being appointed on February 11, 1938 as prime minister, Miron Cristea abandoned any moral-theological restraint in supporting the anti-Semitic objectives propagated by the legionnaires (an aspect valid despite the specificity of the Carlist regime of which he was an exponent – the anti-legionary regime) being directly involved in the implementation of the racist legislation sponsored by the legionary commands. The Holy Synod rallied to the policy of its leaders and later to the national-legionary

decisions regarding the application of anti-Semitic legislation. Thus, the legionary influence also determined changes in the application of the ritual of the Orthodox Holy Mysteries (the Sacrament of Baptism was invalidated in the case of Jews as a result of their racial origin) or from the point of view of ecclesiastical financial management – all rental contracts for spaces owned by Jewish people, in which Orthodox religious objectives functioned, were canceled (Catalan, 2003).

The optics of the Church in relation to the Iron Guard changed radically after the assassination of Prime Minister Armand Călinescu, on September 21, 1939, by a death squad made up of eight legionnaires. The attack on the state leader was virulently contested by the new patriarch, Nicodim Munteanu, the former metropolitan of Moldova, who criticized the assassins of the late prime minister (Enache, 2012, p. 294). According to the patriarch's opinion, the crime was also punishable by divine laws as the victim represented the state, and the moment, immediately after the outbreak of the Second World War, was one of European crisis (Bănică, 2007, p. 173). In my opinion, we should not disregard the hypothesis that Nicodim Munteanu's reaction was also determined by the fact that, at the time of his appointment as future patriarch, King Carol II held consultations with Armand Călinescu (Roşca, 2019, p. 81).

After taking over political power on September 6, 1940, the legionnaires tried to promote a so-called regenerative, progressive policy (through which the "new man" was educated, the only one capable of innovating the Romanian state), purifying and spiritual at the level of all state institutions, an aspect that did not exclude the Romanian Orthodox Church (Săndulescu, 2004, p. 350). The macro-state project that the legionnaires assumed and popularized clearly differentiates them from their governing partner, General Ion Antonescu, against the background of the soldierly, more balanced, paternalistic formation, the latter being presented as the guarantor and protector of the old values. Against this background, after a surge of activities with mystical-religious resonance (requiems, reburials of legionary "martyrs" during the regime of King Charles II), among the first decrees issued during the national-legionary government there were some whose object was the regulation of current Christian activities, particularly those of a church nature (Enache, 2012, p. 292). Such measures were in correspondence

with the new legionary social ideas, whose substance was reconciliation with divinity and the ancestors as a condition for a better future of Romania, purpose for which, in their opinion, the intensification of anti-Semitic propaganda against sectarian and neo-Protestant cultures was required. In this direction, on September 9, 1940, after the proclamation of the national-legionary state, the legionnaires admitted the freedom of worship for "traditional" Christian religions (such as Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Calvinism or Lutheranism) and for Islam, prohibiting in return the specific practices of other sectarian religious associations. Although it was taken into consideration by the legionary authorities, the practice of Judaism was not regulated in terms of concreteness, and was to be carried out after a "later" analysis (in our opinion, probably until the finalization of the agenda of persecuting the Jews), only within the limits of the laws of the new political regime (Deletant, 2006, p. 58).

At the same time, the legionnaires assumed the creation of order in the relationship between the state and the Church, according to which they initiated an extensive campaign of reforms in the Church, through which the streamlining of religious activity was officially pursued. As such, discussions were initiated with General Ion Antonescu regarding the replacement of the patriarch, the involvement and consultation of the Holy Synod in the application of anti-Semitic legislation, the issuance of a new law on the organization and operation of the Orthodox institution, the standardization of worship and theological education at all levels or regarding the functioning of monasticism.

For the same reasons, a rapid campaign was started to remove and replace church personnel who "did not inspire confidence" or who were no longer compatible with the "new times", with obedient members of the Legionary Movement.

The legionary actions were motivated by the fact that most of the Orthodox hierarchs had been supported for appointment by the ideological opponents of the Legionary Movement and some of them, as in the case of Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu, had publicly adopted a critical position towards the legionary doctrine, precepts and actions. However, the legionary actions were not exclusively revengeful. In the legionary reformist vision, the Orthodox hierarchy, made up of "trustworthy" people, was intended to have increased attributions and

responsibilities, being agreed upon a restoration of the traditional power that the bishops used to have (Enache, 2005, p. 93).

However, a possible reform of the ecclesiastical top management was not a simple step, because any replacement among the church hierarchies could only be based on a decision of the Holy Synod, as established by the legislation on the organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church, adopted in 1925. In this context, through various interpellations and with the support of the mass media they controlled, the legionnaires repeatedly requested the emergency convocation of the Holy Synod.

In these circumstances, in order to prevent the situation from getting out of control, Nicolae Bălan, the Metropolitan of Transylvania, despite the fact that he shared the anti-Semitic legionary beliefs and was a sympathizer of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, acted directly to cancel the legionary interferences at the level of Orthodox internal politics, requesting and receiving assurances of support in this regard from Ion Antonescu. In exchange for his position, the Romanian general demanded that the church hierarchy publicly take his side, without any room for controversies or interpretations (basilica.ro, 2010).

On this background, on December 2, 1940, after a discussion with the head of state, Nicolae Bălan, supported by Tit Simedrea, Metropolitan of Bucovina, addressed the Holy Synod, discreetly rejecting the legionary requests for reform and reiterating support for the new Romanian political reality, „led by General Ion Antonescu" (Enache, 2012, p. 296). Along with the reorganization proposals, the legionnaires also demanded, among other things, the rehabilitation of the priests who had been killed as they belonged to the Legionary Movement, the provision of reparations for the priests persecuted for legionary sympathies or the review of the crematorium issue, aspects towards which the members of the Holy Synod did not show reluctance.

Although the decisions of the Holy Synod were not among the most convenient for legionary propaganda – "the Holy Synod decides to stick to the current law", "there is no reason to require a modification of the organic law of the Church" (See more on basilica.ro, 2010) –, they were accepted by the Government, practically certifying the sympathy

and influence of the Church among the two parties involved in the exercise of executive power, the legionnaires and General Ion Antonescu.

The involvement of ecclesiastical personnel in the legionary insurgency

Obviously, after the outbreak and suppression of the legionary insurgency from January 21-23, 1941, only a small part of the legionary priesthood and monastic staff remained in the graces of General Ion Antonescu, most of them being imprisoned or deported as punishments for their support or participation during the rebellion.

This state of affairs occurred from the extensive campaign coordinated by Ion Antonescu in order to identify, trace and punish all participants in the legionary insurgency, a context in which the general benefited from the fundamental support of the interwar intelligence and public order structures.

The successful achievement of the objectives of this campaign was possible as a result of the fact that, for the good management of the Christo-nationalism proposed by the legionnaires, the intelligence structures had acted in advance, in a concerted manner, to attract collaboration and then infiltrate in the radical nests some priests loyal to the rule of law, who acted from within to temper those who were too violent or too enthusiastic in action.

On this basis, through an undercover informant within the Romanian Orthodox Church (informative note no. 27 of January 28, 1941), the Secret Intelligence Service officers established that the legionary priests had been ordered to hide the weaponry possessed by the legionary insurgents even inside churches and building annexes, to be used "for the purpose of definitive victory". Such a situation would have materialized in the case of Ghergani Church, Dâmbovița county (or possibly Gorgani Church in Bucharest), as an informant of the police bodies signaled, in the preamble of the legionary insurgency, a series of suspicious shipments of baskets that might have contained ammunition[9].

---

[9] Alerted by the police, the army carried out a brief raid at Ghergani Church and the buildings and houses around it. Due to the lack of specific training, the soldiers were not able to discover the ammunition storage locations, thus they requested the support of the SSI for the continuation of the investigation and monitoring.

The location was of increased operative interest because, in the opinion of the intelligence and public order structures, the legionary nest that operated around it would have been one of the "hotbeds the rebellion started from" (SRI Archives, 710, leaf 57). After the involvement of SSI officers in the investigation, it was established that on February 1, 1941, a number of 15 large, 17 medium and 25-30 small baskets were taken out empty from inside the church, but it was not possible to prove that ammunition had been transported in them (SRI Archives, 710, leaf 57).

Also, through the undercover informants, it was established that in the cities this type of clandestine weaponry could also have been found in cemeteries, the hiding of the "armour" being done at night. A number of aspects of the legionary action management were also pencilled in, for the procurement of the largest possible number of ammunition, the insurgents urging their friends and relatives who were under arms to hand over to them the entire unit of fire (directly or through the priests who were part of or sympathized with the Legionary Movement), with the mention that in case they had been controlled, they would have declared that they had lost it, so that to be sanctioned only by drawing up imputation slips (SRI Archives, 7519, leaf 97).

It is true that among the 2,851 people arrested and convicted for participating in the legionary insurgency in Bucharest, 218 (about 7.64%) were Orthodox priests, and weapon caches belonging to the Legionary Movement were discovered in ten monasteries. This number does not include the other categories of Orthodox ecclesiastical or educational personnel (Catalan, 2003).

On the other hand, by means of secret human sources belonging to the SSI, it was also established that the legionary priests were also involved in the insurgency by spoiling the church service, in the sense of allocating some moments for eulogizing the legionary leaders. For example, priest Stelian Dumitriu from the village of Goeşti and Dumitriu Gheorghe from the village of Brăeşti, both in Iaşi county, former legionnaire commanders, "on the occasion of the Divine Service, they commemorated in the Church" persons such as Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Ion Moţa, Vasile Marin and "other legionnaires who fell in the line of duty" (SRI Archives, 7519, leaf 111).

The attitude of these priests, as established by the cadres of the Gendarmerie Service within the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie after the rebellion of January 1941, was criticized by the majority of the inhabitants of the rural territory of Romania, the peasants condemning "harshly the attitude of the priests who left the care of the altar and took up arms against the Government, associating themselves with gangs of thieves and criminals".

Moreover, many of the peasants intended to leave the Orthodox Christian religion and convert to different religious sects. Such concrete cases were reported in Vînțul de Jos, Alba County, where the villagers refused to enter the church until the ecclesiastical unit was to be sanctified again, and some of them chose to convert to baptism. Also, in the villages of Iași County, the inhabitants wanted to join even sects in the region which had not been officially acknowledged (SRI Archives, 7519, leaf 22).

After the suppression of the legionary rebellion, some of the priests who stayed away from the events sought to prove that their honour and image had not been tarnished (by agreeing to collaborate and support the legionaries), asking the local high prelates to provide them with copies of the aforementioned appointment documents.

In such a situation was, for example, priest Aurel Bazilescu from "Saint Archangels" Church in Craiova, former arch-pope in the period 1939-1940, who asked His Eminence (IPS) Metropolitan Nifon, Archbishop of Craiova and Metropolitan of Oltenia, Râmnic and Severin to support him in the specified sense (SRI Archives, 1395, leaf 2). At the same time, Vasile C. Gregorian, the parish priest of Pitarmasu Church in Bucharest, proceeded in a similar way.

The positive-participative reaction of the Metropolitan of Oltenia, Râmnic and Severin to these requests was influenced by a personal address received from the Ministry of Cults and Arts, Directorate of Religions (address registered at the Metropolitan Church with no. 2181 on February 11,1941) through which the ministerial authorities drew his attention to the observance of articles 4-7, 22 and 25 of the Decree – Law no. 236/1941, for the suppression of facts that endanger the existence and interests of the state, published in the *Official Gazette* no. 31 on February 6, 1941, a request that had to be brought to the attention of all

the clerical and administrative staff within that diocese, with all the "necessary clarifications".

The request of the Ministry of Cults and Arts was immediately put into practice, as on February 18, 1941, IPS Nifon sent in writing to the church staff that they risked punishments of 10-25 years of hard labour or losing their right to pension and the diplomas they had obtained in case they failed to comply exactly with the claims of the authorities (SRI Archives, 1395, 10-13). To strengthen this idea and the future line of action, the metropolitan asked all the priests and church officials to take note of his resolution under their holographic signatures.

Later, the high prelate was submitted another address (no. 9810) from the state bodies – the Legion of Gendarmes Dolj, requesting the express provision of a nominal situation with the priests and church singers who took part to the legionary rebellion.

Obviously, response of the church was a negative one, although there were complaints at the level of Dolj Prefecture according to which "some priests continue to do politics and challenge the communal authorities" (SRI Archives, 1395, 14-17). In fact, prior to the legionary rebellion, in the first days of January 1941, the police authorities had communicated the Prefecture of Dolj County that "priests are making propaganda for gathering ranks around the idea of the Church, basically for the Legionary Movement" (SRI Archives, 1395, leaf 24).

With the support of the intelligence and public order structures, 15 "pious" priests were initially identified among the people who, according to their information, were members or sympathizers of the Legionary Movement – examples in this sense are D. Cinciu, Bălașa, Mirescu, "Stoian from the Metropolitan Church", "deacon Sacerdoceanu from the Metropolitan Church", Marin Popa called Nemoiu – Obedeanu, "priest Begu from the Metropolitan Church" (members), Nicolae Stoenescu, Pretorian, Preoțescu and C. Zamfirescu from the Church of St. Nicolae Dorobănția (supporters) (SRI Archives, 1395, leaf 55).

Most of them were "morally acquitted" because "there was no action on the part of the rebellious legionnaires on the territory of Dolj County" (an obviously flawed statement), and the suspects signed witness statements and oaths in front of the church authorities.

However, priest Virgil Pârvănescu from Radovan commune, who took an active part in the preparatory activities of the attempted rebellion, was handed over to the authorities. Also, Archimandrite Ghenadie Caraza, abbot of Bistriţa Monastery and legionary activist, was proven to have contributed to the support of the legionary rebellion with various sums of money. They were joined by priest Alexandru Levinschi, who had kept secret the participation of another priest and his son in the legionary rebellion (the reason for which he was disciplinary moved to the parish in Măceşu de Jos), and priest Gheorghe Gologan from Bascov commune, who was sent to court for peddling fake news – later acquitted (SRI Archives, 1395, 140-141).

After the presented facts, on February 12, 1941, IPS Nifon sent an extensive speech to the clergy under his command, in which he expressly stated that "the horrors of January 21-23 tell us decisively that in the Church's field of the human soul there is still so much work to do". In this sense, the high prelate lamented on "the malice and hatred in the souls of some people", "the ferocious crimes against the soldiers of the country and the guardians of order or against some people guilty of having other opinions and principles of serving the State", an aspect that made him shiver because "such horrors" were also in "the world of our university youth (…) lured and led on wrong paths". IPS Nifon also recommended a "cure" for the above-mentioned facts, namely that the priests and bishops should live as true Christians, to be servants only of the Holy Altar, avoiding any activity that could spoil their prestige, an aspect valid only by not doing politics, "and if he had entered, let him get out of the whirlwind of political battles" (SRI Archives, 1395, 28-29).

Obviously, through this speech – no. 2451/February 12, 1941, IPS Nifon was trying to excuse and separate his own organization from the extremist actions of the legionnaires, as it became more and more likely that the priesthood and the ecclesiastical staff would be declared accomplices in the initiation and degeneration of the legionary insurgency. At the same time, through the content of this document, IPS Nifon adapted his speech to "such a beautiful call of the very worthy Leader of the State, made to the servants of the Romanian Shrines".

Three days later, IPS Nifon's "concerns" were confirmed by the decision of General Radu Rosetti, a military officer appointed by General

Ion Antonescu to head the Ministry of Instruction, Education, Cults and Arts, which expressly forbade the clergy to join, activate or participate in political actions of any nature.

Similar to Metropolitan Nifon, sensing the risks for the future status of the Romanian Orthodox Church and considering self-protective purposes, Patriarch Nicodim took the decision to publicly support the actions of the pro-Antonescian forces and the way they acted for suppressing the insurgents. Thus, in the telegram regarding the legionary rebellion addressed to Ion Antonescu, Patriarch Nicodim showed a praiseworthy and obedient position towards the leader of the Romanian state, emphasizing the justice of the "historic step" that General Ion Antonescu made for "saving the Fatherland" and declaring that the Church representatives "warmly ask God to give you strength, so that you can successfully carry out your work until the complete salvation of the Homeland and the Romanian Nation" (Enache, 2012, p. 290-300).

Moreover, in order to prove their devotion to the Antonesian authorities, the elders of the Orthodox clergy did not hesitate to apply, even in the context in which the investigations of the Military Justice were not completed, various measures against those priests who, through the address of the Ministry of Instruction, Education, Cults and Arts no. 13.515/1941, were still suspected of supporting in the past or at present the exponents of the legionary insurgency. The nature and extent of these measures differed from one case to another, usually summing up to the extension of investigations and the investigation of church bodies (examples: priests Emil and Virgil Berbescu from the parish in Rusăneştii de Jos), suspensions from service until the presentation of the certificate of acquittal from the Military Justice and "reproaches for attitude" from the Metropolitan of origin (examples: priest Mihail Delcea from the parish of Gostavăţ, Romanaţi, and priest Alexandru Popescu from the parish of Caracal), or disciplinary transfers to other parishes (example: priest Aurel Ionescu from Fleştenoaga parish, Romanaţi, transferred to Bucura parish, Mehedinţi). In some particular cases, as a result of not complying with the presentation of "clarifications", the punishments were supplemented with the measure of salary withholding, as

happened in the case of priest Ştefan Smărandescu from the parish of Dăbuleni (SRI Archives, 1395, leaf 84).

Sensing the opportune moment to secure the loyalty of most of the hierarchs, upon the advice of the intelligence structures and of General Ilie Şteflea, Ion Antonescu reacted, confidentially requesting the BOR leadership to draw up proposals for rewarding its own officials and private citizens (for example from among diocesan consistories or parish committees) who distinguished themselves or were wounded in the actions to suppress the rebellion. The proposals were centralized in separate tables for each section – officials or private citizens – and contained data on the ecclesiastical institutions to which they belonged, the positions held and the "worthy deeds" for which they were proposed for reward. For private citizens, the profession, age and domicile had to be mentioned as well.

In parallel, with the same purpose, Ion Antonescu ordered the drawing up of similar tables for ecclesiastical officials and citizens who "died in the line of duty in the battles to suppress the rebellion", with the mention that for each proposal the action they took part in had to be specified and the locality where it took place, residence, profession, marital status (married, number and age of children) and material status (SRI Archives, 1395). These were measures approved by the Church, especially since by applying them – through premiums or financial aids – the clergy could justify the expediency and justice of the official pro-Antonescian position among the communities of believers.

Later, aiming at positioning the Church among the organizations supporting the social-political objectives proposed by loyal interest circles, the Head of the State ordered Ivan Iorgu, the head of the Department of Cults within the Ministry of Instruction, Education, Cults and Arts, to maintain permanent communication with its representatives, especially in the perspective of maintaining equidistance from legionary propaganda actions (SRI Archives, 1395, leaf 280). This initiative of the general had been agreed with the leaders of the intelligence structures, the appropriateness of the measure being unanimously assumed. For example, based on it, through the confidential address with no. 17, 354 of September 3, 1941, Ivan Iorga asked IPS Nifon to take preventive action so that the priests refrain from any

manifesto that could be interpreted as "association with the actions to leave the national discipline of those who do not understand the meanings of the historical courses which we actually live today".

Obviously, despite General Antonescu's decisions, there was no general applicability in the doctrinal and actional optics of the clergy, as the pro-legionary attitude continued to be shared by some of the priests even after the suppression of the insurgency in January 1941, and they also got involved in the preparation of some attacks. As it follows from the address of March 26, 1941 of the Corps of Detectives, Group IV, to the Commander of the General Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie, the priest from Meliceşti village, Telega commune, Prahova county, had acted in this direction, as he was part of a terrorist group called "The Wall of Death" whose goal was to assassinate General Antonescu (SRI Archives, 1019, leaf 96).

At the same time, priest Andrei Mihăilescu, the parish of St. Ilie Gorgani Church in Bucharest, continued to be in the attention of the intelligence and police structures until the fall of 1942, as a result of his spiritual affinities with the Legionary Movement and the fact that "he paraded the piety for the cult, trying to prove this through a lot of religious services such as exhumations, reburials, memorial services, baptisms, etc., all with a specific legionary ritual" (SRI Archives, 779, 80-82). In reality, priest Andrei Mihăilescu was so closely connected to the Legionary Movement that he was regarded as the confessor of its members and his parish was the place of worship for the extremist organization. On this basis, the priest was continuously among the members of the Legion, had obtained the grace of its leaders and his position was known by everyone.

On the other hand, priest Ionescu from the parish in Obârsia de Câmp, Mehedinţi, had been so caught up in the legionary ideology and manifestations that the parishioners no longer accepted him in the community, the general dissatisfaction resulting in the writing of the "complaint" with non. 7712 submitted to the Prosecutor's Office in Mehedinţi and signed by eight of them (Ştefan Tudor, D. Vlad, B. Zaragiu, F. Mladin, Ion C. Gavril, C. Ghilea, Ion M. Vlaicu and Ştefan Bălănescu). Through its content, the villagers accused the priest of a wide range of facts: legionary clandestine propaganda ("although he swore on the Holy

Cross that he had withdrawn, on September 6, 1940 he was the first to start organizing this movement", "after the rebellion in Bucharest he declared in the town hall that he was a revolutionary, and after the revolution they would come out stronger", "during and after the rebellion, in the holy church, he continued to salute with *Long live the Legion and the Captain!*)", insults and beatings to the opponents of the extremist organization (a villager was saved from a heavy beating by the village priest), paramilitary training and participation through an intermediary in the legionary insurgency, or illicit business and food speculation in favour of the Legionary Movement ("he distributed rice or cotton to the faithful on condition that they would become legionaries", "it is not known what he did with the fund collected from a legionary celebration on December 25, 1940 or with other aids from the village"). To achieve the legionary objectives was a priority to priest Ionescu's vocational responsibilities, so he concertedly neglected the traditional religious practices, such as the religious service, which made the parishioners look for a priest in another commune (SRI Archives, 1395).

Conclusions

In order to put into practice their reformist doctrine, of spiritual preparation and purification of the post-war Romanian society, the legionary commands adopted a fanatical doctrine from the very beginning, the religious factor being one of the pillars of individualization and exaltation of the social masses for propagandistic purposes. In their ideological scheme, customs, traditions and Christian religion were pure forms of continuity of the autochthonous spiritual treasure, background in which the Romanian Orthodox Church had to assume the role of fundamental institution of the nation and participate, together with the legionnaires, in the realization and preaching of the "revolution".

Most of the time, this collaboration between clerics and legionnaires was tainted by fundamentalist political interests, thus subjugating and directing the church hierarchies in the sense of remodelling and fanaticizing the Christian religion according to the legionary religious paradigm. On this basis, the legionary commands were able to create a source of radicalized recruits, well indoctrinated,

ready at any moment to act against the "enemies" and to sacrifice themselves for the accomplishment of the legionary ideals.

At the same time, the new legionary order also required an authoritarian reform within the Church, an action aimed at the subordination of religious institutions at a normative and human level, by placing in decision-making positions "trustworthy" people from among the followers and sympathizers of the Iron Guard.

The priesthood and ecclesiastical staff reacted differently to these challenges, depending on the level of their position in the church hierarchy, the evolution of the internal and international political situation, or the contextual interests of image, self-protection or ascension on the clerical hierarchy. The legionary ideology was generally accepted and assimilated by ordinary priests and hierarchs, who had influence on the local and zonal communities among those who showed a critical attitude towards the old regimes. Instead, the Orthodox Patriarchate and important church hierarchs adopted a more reserved, politically balanced official attitude.

In the same spirit of the need to carefully manage the legionary revolutionary project, we can argue the preference of the BOR hierarchs for Ion Antonescu compared to the radical elites of the Legionary Movement, especially during the moments of social-political tension, such as the legionary insurgency of January 1941.

On the other hand, I conclude that legionary religious fanaticism was a dominant phenomenon in the interwar socio-political reality in Romania, presupposing the adaptation of Christian-Orthodox dogma to the percept and ideology of the Legionary Movement. Since behaviours and actions of extreme violence were based and developed on such a foundation (attacks against those who contested the legionaries, the Jewish pogrom), I consider the legionary religious fanaticism constituted the most powerful threat to the optimal environment of public order and safety for the Romanian citizens during the mentioned period.

References:

1. Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI) Archives, stock (D), files no. 650, 710, 779, 835, 920, 1019, 1160, 1395, 7519, and criminal fund (P), file no. 48.340, volume 409.

2. Mitropolitul Nicolae Bălan şi legionarii, (2010). Retrieved from https://basilica.ro/?attachment_id=28973

3. Bănică, M. (2007). *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, stat şi societate în anii '30*. Bucureşti: Editura Polirom.

4. Bejan, C. A. (2023). *Intelectualii si fascismul in Romania interbelica: Asociatia Criterion*. Bucureşti: Editura Litera.

5. Biliuţă, I. F. (2013). *The Archangel's Consecrated Servants: An Inquiry in the Relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Iron Guard (1930–1941)*. PhD dissertation. Budapest: Central European University.

6. Biliuţă, I. F. (2016). "Sowing the Seeds of Hate. The Antisemitism of the Orthodox Church in the Interwar Period." *S.I.M.O.N.-Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation, 3*. Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 20-34.

7. Biliuţă, I. F. (2016). "Arianizarea studiilor biblice în perioada interbelică. O polemică în studiile biblice româneşti", 9-31. in Ioniţă, A. (2016) *Interpretarea Biblică între Biserică şi Universitate: perspective interconfesionale*. Sibiu: Andreiana.

8. Catalan, G. (2003). Rebeliunea Legionară, Pogromul Antievreiesc, Clerul Ortodox, Holocaustul, Statul Român şi Securitatea. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/75953602/REBELIUNEA_LEGIONARĂ_POGROMUL_ANTIEVREIESC_CLERUL_ORTODOX_HOLOCAUSTUL_STATUL_ROMÂN_ŞI_SECURITATEA

9. Cârstocea, R. (2014). "The Path to the Holocaust. Fascism and Antisemitism in Interwar Romania". *S.I.M.O.N.-Shoah: Intervention. Methods, Documentation, 1.* Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies, 43-53.

10. Clej, P. (2020). AUR şi Mişcarea Legionară – o comparaţie – ce spun doi istorici? Retrieved from https://www.rfi.ro/politica-128758-aur-si-miscarea-legionara-o-comparatie-ce-spun-doi-istorici

11. Crainic, N. (1935). "Rasă şi religiune". *Gândirea, XIV (2)*, *59-66.*

12. Cuza, A. C. (1915). *Naţionalitatea în artă*. Bucureşti.

13. Cuza, A. C. (1925). *Învăţătura lui Isus. Judaismul şi Teologia creştină*. Iaşi: Editura Ligii Apărării Naţionale Creştine.

14. Deletant, D. (2006). *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-1944*. Springer.

15. Enache, G. (2005). *Ortodoxie şi putere politică în România contemporană*. Bucureşti: Editura Nemira.

16. Enache, G. (2012). "Biserică-societate-naţiune, stat în România interbelică. Biserica ortodoxă română şi 'ispita totalitară' de dreapta". *Revista Teologică*, *2*, 276-300.

17. Grădinaru, M. (2022). *Rolul BOR şi al unor intelectuali în ascensiunea AUR şi asemănările cu Mişcarea Legionară: şi în anii 1930, mulţi politicieni au subestimat Mişcarea Legionară – Interviu cu Oliver Jens Schmitt*. Retrieved from https://spotmedia.ro/stiri/politica/rolul-bor-si-al-unor-intelectuali-in-ascensiunea-aur-si-asemanarile-cu-miscarea-legionara-interviu-cu-oliver-jens-schmitt

18. Grigore, G. (2020)*. Biserică şi putere politică în România. Cronica unor relaţii controversate reflectate în presa religioasă (1936-1949)*. Târgovişte: Editura Cetatea de Scaun.

19. Haynes, R. (2008). "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the 'New Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement"*. The Historical Journal*, *51*, 943-967.

20. Heinen, A. (2006). *Legiunea 'Arhanghelul Mihail', mişcare socială şi organizaţie politică: o contribuţie la problema fascismului mondial*. Bucureşti: Editura Humanitas.

21. Ioanid, R. (1992). "Nicolae Iorga and Fascism". *Journal of Contemporany History, 27* (3), 467-492.

22. Ioanid, R. (2004). "The sacralised politics of the Romanian Iron Guard". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 5 (3)*, 419-453.

23. Iordachi, C. (2004). "Charisma, Religion, and Ideology: Romania's Interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael". Chapter 1 (19-53) in Campe, J., Mazower, M. (2004). *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*. Budapesta: Central European University Press.

24. Iordachi, C. (2014). *Fascismul european 1918-1945. Ideologie, experimente totalitare şi religii politice*. Cluj Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităţilor Naţionale.

25. Meale, J. (2016). "The Romanian Iron Guard: Fascist Sacralized Politics or Fascist Politicized Religion?" *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, *36,* 61-74.

26. Oldson, W.O. (2002). **"**Alibi for prejudice: Eastern orthodoxy, the Holocaust, and Romanian nationalism"**.** *East European Quarterly, 36 (3),* 301-311.

27. Oldson, W.O. (1991). *A Providential anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania*. Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society.

28. Ornea, Z. (2015). *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească*. Bucureşti: Cartea Românească.

29. Paulescu, N. (1913). *Fiziologia filozofică. Talmudul, Cahalul, Franc-masoneria*. Bucureşti.

30. Paulescu, N. (1928). *Degenerarea rasei jidăneşti*. Bucureşti: Tipografia Bucovina.

31. Petreu, M. (2016). *Generaţia '27 între Holocaust şi Gulag. Mircea Eliade şi Klaus Mann despre generaţia tânără*. Bucureşti: Editura Polirom.

32. Roşca, P.E. (2019). "Patriarhul Nicodim Munteanu şi regele Carol al II-lea", *Tabor, 9*, 77-87.

33. Rusu, M. S. (2016). "The sacralization of martyric death in Romanian legionary movement: Self-sacrificial patriotism, vicarious atonement, and thanatic nationalism". *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, *17* (2-3), 249-273.

34. Rusu, M. S. (2021). "Staging Death: Christofascist Necropolitics during the National Legionary State in Romania, 1940–1941". *Nationalities Papers*, *49*, 576–589.

35. Sandulescu, V. (2004). "Fascism and its Quest for the 'New Man': The Case of the Romanian Legionary Movement". *Studia Hebraica*, *4*, 349-361.

36. Săndulescu, V. (2007). "Sacralised politics in action: the February 1937 burial of the Romanian Legionary leaders Ion Moţa and Vasile Marin". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 8 (2),* 259-269.

37. Solonari, V. (2015). *Purificarea naţiunii. Dislocări forţate de populaţie şi epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu*. Iaşi: Editura Polirom.

38. Stoian, V. (2013). *XIXth Century Romanian Intellectual Anti-Semitism in a Comparative Perspective*. Retrieved from https://revistasferapoliticii.ro/sfera/176/art09-Stoian.php

39. Turda, M. (2005). "New perspectives on Romanian fascism: themes and options". *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, *6* (1), 143-150.

40. Troncotă, C. (2008). *Romania şi frontul secret*. Bucureşti: Editura Elion.

41. Ţiu, I. (2012). *Legionarii, între pistol şi Dumnezeu*. Retrieved from https://adevarul.ro/stil-de-viata/cultura/legionarii-intre-pistol-si-dumnezeu-1261855.htm

42. Voicu, A. (2023). *Relaţia controversată a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române cu Mişcarea Legionară.* Retrieved from htpps://historia.ro/sectiune/general/relatia-controversata-a-bisericii-ortodoxe-romane-581339.html

43. Webster, A. F. (1986). "The Romanian legionary movement: an Orthodox Christian assessment of anti-Semitism". *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 502*, 80.

44. Zelea Codreanu, C. (2012). *Cărticica şefului de cuib*. Retrieved from https://miscarea-legionara.net/doc_carte_carticica.html

INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS AND THE CIA – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. THE DOINGS, THE CRITICS, AND THE UNEXPECTED DISSOLUTION OF ORE – OFFICE OF REPORTS AND ESTIMATES (1947-1950)

Dan ROMAN*

Abstract:

Intelligence analysis is inextricably linked to the CIA, where it was established and developed as a specific professional activity. Based on a short-lived experience, accumulated during World War II, the CIA's first analytical structure, the Office of Reports and Estimates (ORE), faced the difficulty of producing intelligence products on the new security environment of the early Cold War period, with the focus on the threat posed by the USSR.

Keywords: *CIA, Cold War, Communism, intelligence analysis, Soviet Russia.*

Introduction

The analytical dimension has had a fundamental role in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) since its inception. This professional activity, expressed by the phrase intelligence analysis, quickly evolved in the Agency, where it soon acquired the characteristics of a discipline, in accordance with the (still debatable) judgements of its founder, Sherman Kent. Beyond this, intelligence analysis has been consistently reflected within the CIA as a dynamic tool, aimed at making the Agency's work as accurate and effective as possible in achieving its goals of ensuring the national security of the USA.

This material aims to explore, from a historical perspective taking the Cold War as a reference point, the main coordinates that defined the

---

* PhD Candidate, Romanian Academy "George Barițiu" History Institute, Cluj-Napoca, email: danroman2012@yahoo.com

development of intelligence analysis in the CIA. This was the time when the functions and limits of intelligence analysis were defined, in which its techniques were crystallized, systematized and refined, and the main exponents of this field manifested themselves. Through these consistent and, above all, unprecedented accumulation for other intelligence services at the time, a formidable analytical apparatus was developed in the CIA, which proved capable of coping with the difficult tasks that lay before it. Which is not to say that the Agency was infallible in its assessments. On the contrary, the failures recorded were neither few nor insignificant. Finally, the intelligence analysis component revealed the complexity of this field of activity.

The study will focus on the following aspects on the intelligence analysis in the CIA: the institutional framework, and the transformations that occurred during the reference period, the analytical products written by the CIA, and how they were received within the intelligence community and, obviously, at the political decision-making level.

In order to achieve this endeavour, the present paper will be developed in four different parts, considering as the main criterion the significant reorganizations that had been recorded by the intelligence analysis in the CIA from its beginnings until today.

In accordance with this organization, the first part of the study defines the object of study and, then, approaches the first intelligence analysis service in the CIA, the Office of Reports and Estimates (ORE). The second part presents the activities of its successor, the Office of National Estimates (ONE), with a portrait of Sherman Kent, the head of this service, a person commonly considered "the founder father of intelligence analysis". The third part presents the Office of Intelligence Estimates (ONI), which took over from ONE in the mid-1970s. Finally, the fourth part of the study is devoted to the post-Cold War period.

The sources used in the preparation of this study are drawn, to a significant extent, from declassified CIA documents available on the CIA website (cia/reading-room.gov). Some of this material is of a documentary nature and was produced by the CIA's Historical Office. Other material constitutes operational documents of the CIA and capture various aspects of interest related to intelligence analysis in the Agency. An important documentary resource was also the National Security Archive (nsarchive.

gwu.edu). Last but not least, several studies that appeared in the CIA, professional journal *Studies in Intelligence* were used.

This scientific approach to presenting the intelligence analysis carried out in the CIA, as a professional activity and *wannabe discipline* takes place in a special circumstance, worthy of mention: the 75th anniversary of the CIA, which it recently marked (1947-2022).

It is certainly a good opportunity to highlight this essential component of the CIA, which quickly established itself as "the intelligence device supreme", as characterized by Sherman Kent. This way, the evolution, the results and the limits of the intelligence analysis during its three-quarters of a century in the CIA, with important successes and noisy failures, can be known as such and thus appreciated in a fair light.

CIA: its purpose and its means

Created at the dawn of the Cold War in order to respond to the threat posed by the USSR (as a totalitarian state actively engaged in subverting democratic values to the benefit of the so-called *world communist revolution),* the CIA had as its primary and fundamental mission the preparation of integrated intelligence products from various sources, intended for the American decision-makers.

In a noteworthy study on the beginnings of the CIA (*Why was the CIA created in 1947*), the American professor Rhodri Jeffrey-Jones, researcher of the contemporary history of Western intelligence services, notes that the documents declassified by the Agency in the early 90's confirm the importance of Sovietophobia as a motivating factor in the creation of the CIA (Jeffrey-Jones, 1997, p. 23). This was openly stated only in the 90's, when not a few questioned including the role and relevance of the Agency in the new post-Cold War world.

For example, Thomas F. Troy, chief historian at the CIA, does not mention in his opus, declassified in 1975, in which he presents the beginnings of the Agency, the Soviet danger as a cause that would have determined its foundation.

The CIA was established by President Harry Truman on the basis of the National Security Act of 1947. The new agency is, in fact, the successor of the Central Intelligence Group (CIG), the first civilian

intelligence agency of the United States in the early post-World War II years. This came into existence under the name Office of the Coordinator of Information (OCI), and a good part of its staff consisted of academics grouped within the Research & Analysis Branch.

Truman saw the new created Agency mainly as an integrator of national intelligence. According to his memoirs, the American president reserved the Agency rather the role of a *press service* for the benefit of the White House, as argued in a study written by the former chief historian at the CIA, already mentioned (Troy, 1976). Truman also expressed a clear attitude on this matter in the article *Limit CIA Role to Intelligence*, he published in *The Washington Post* (Sunday, Dec, 22, 1963). He explains his decision to create a central intelligence agency through the need for information "in its 'raw natural' state and in as comprehensive a volume as was practical" *(The Washington Post*, Sunday, Dec, 22, 1963). However, the most important thing, as he mentions, was "to protect himself from the chance that information would be used to influence or lead the president into unwise decisions (…)" *(The Washington Post*, Sunday, Dec, 22, 1963).

The American authorities, including the White House, accepted less, at least openly, the operational component of the CIA, represented by espionage and covert actions. Describing the atmosphere, CIA legislative liaison W. Phorzheimer claimed that the congressional committees "didn't want the word 'espionage' or 'spy' or something on that order to appear in the law. They wanted us to do it quietly." (Snider, 2008, p. 140)

Organizationally, these activities were under the responsibility of the Office of Special Operations (OSO), which "was intended to become the new clandestine foreign intelligence service" (Warner, Ruffner, 2020). Created in June 1946, it continued the former Strategic Services (SSU), which had operated during the Second World War within the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). After its dissolution had been taken over by the War Department, where it was put, for the most part, on a standby mode.

In parallel, the CIA had, in its early years, another structure that carried out clandestine activities: Office of Policy Coordination (OPC). According to declassified CIA documents, it was authorized to carry out

the full spectrum of covert actions: "secret political, psychological, and economic warfare together with preventive direct actions (paramilitary activities) – all within the policy direction of the Department of State and Defence." (Snider, 2008)

OPC was created in June 1946, under the name Office of Special Project. Formally established with the new name in September 1948, operated independently until October 1950 under the rule of the Assistant Director of CIA for Policy Coordination. At that moment, the Director Walter Bedell Smith, took control of the Office. Finally, OPC ceased to exist in August 1952, when it merged with OSO into a combined directorate: the CIA Clandestine Service.

What is intelligence analysis?

Having its origins in World War II, when it began to be practiced institutionally mainly by a number of American academics grouped in the Research and Analysis Branch of the Office of Strategic Service (OSS), intelligence analysis came to fruition a few years later with the creation of the CIA. In parallel with this activity at the Agency, there was a constant preoccupation with defining and conceptualizing it.

CIA practitioners have been trying since early on to establish the idea that intelligence analysis is more than just a profession, namely a genuine discipline. In a landmark article in this direction, which appeared in the first issue of the CIA's internal journal, *Studies in Intelligence*, entitled "The Need for an Intelligence Literature", the author, Sherman Kent, who had held the position of Chief of the Analytical Bureau for several years within the Agency, states the following:

> "Intelligence today is not merely a profession, but like most professions it has taken on the aspects of a discipline: it has developed a recognized methodology; it has developed a vocabulary; it has developed a body of theory and doctrine; it has elaborated and refined techniques" (Studies in Intelligence, no.1, 1955).

Six years before making these specific assessments, Kent extensively analysed the intelligence in his iconic book *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, published in 1949. The author

substantiates three essential characteristics of it: knowledge, organization and activity. However, without insisting on a definition, he specifies in the preface of the book: "Intelligence, as I am writing of it, is the knowledge which our highly placed civilians and military men must have to safeguard the national welfare" (Kent, 1949, p. VII).

In the three quarters of a century since Kent's landmark book and the comprehensive perspective he formulated on the notion of intelligence, there is still a lack of unanimously accepted definition of intelligence in both the academic and professional communities.

This situation is highlighted in a conclusive study, *Wanted: A definition of intelligence*, that Michael Warner, a former CIA historian, published in the Agency's professional journal *Studies in Intelligence* (vol. 1, no. 46, 2002). The author analysis several definitions of intelligence, and mentions that analysis is one of the facets of intelligence activities (alongside, for example, collection or covert actions).

Jack Davis, a disciple of Kent, directly involved in intelligence analysis in the CIA, presents the role and specifics of this activity as follows:

> "The mission of intelligence analysts is to apply in-depth substantive expertise, all-source information, and tough-minded tradecraft to produce assessments that provide distinctive value-added to policy clients' efforts to protect and advance U.S. security interests." (Davis, 2005, p. 1007).

The main characteristic of the intelligence analysis is briefly emphasized by James B. Bruce and Roger Z. George (2008) as: "the thinking part of the intelligence process." Last but not least, it is worth noting the definition given by the RAND Corporation:

> "Intelligence analysis is the process by which the information collected about an enemy is used to answer tactical questions about current operations or to predict future behaviour." (www.rand.org)

As part of intelligence work, intelligence analysis is thus characterised by the fact that it creates added value from the perspective of substantiating and supporting national security issues. It correlates information and draws conclusions in support of policy-making. Its

history is organically linked to the CIA, where this professional activity developed, where it was theorized and practiced.

Organization and functioning of ORE

The CIA took over and operated for a short period on the organizational structure of its predecessor, the CIG. Analytical activities in the Agency thus continued to be under the responsibility of the Office of Reports and Estimates (ORE).

The CIG came into existence in January 1946 as the first American civilian intelligence agency, with the primary objective of capturing and producing intelligence about the Soviet threat. By creating this agency, it was hoped that a possible new Pearl Harbour could be avoided. In fact, this was perhaps the strongest argument the White House presented in order to support its plans for the making of a centralized intelligence system. The objective was materialized in January 1946, with the creation of the CIG.

Initially, the analytical area was represented by the Central Reports Staff, whose name was changed, in July 1946, to the Office of Research and Evaluation and after a very short time, in October 1946, to the Office of Reports and Estimates.

The history of the first analytical entity of the CIA – in fact, a relatively short one, but nevertheless quite problematic, transpires from a series of declassified documents of the CIA, as well as from several memoir works written by former employees of the Agency.

The activity and the role of ORE in the early years of the American intelligence community have also been presented in a scientific perspective, in studies or works by a number of historians. Among these, particularly noteworthy is the contribution of Woodrow Kuhns, who gave an eloquent presentation of the ORE in the preface of the collection of documents *Assessing the Soviet Threat: The Early Cold War Years*, a book he edited in 1997 (separately, the material was republished with the title "The Beginning of Intelligence Analysis in CIA: The Office of Reports and Estimates: CIA's First Centre for Analysis", in *Studies in Intelligence*, vol. 66, no. 33, September 2022).

In a wider context, related to the establishment of the CIA and the activities the Agency carried out in its first years, the topic of ORE is also

comprehensively treated by European scholars. An emblematic example is the work *La Naissance de la CIA. L'aigle et le vautour (1945 – 1961*), by French historian Francois David, published in 2007.

From a documentary-historical perspective, the first references regarding the activity of ORE are included in several CIA documents developed by the Historical Staff, a service created within the Agency with the principal task of preserving its institutional memory. In an extensive document of this kind, *Organizational History of Central Intelligence, 1950-1953,* the following characteristics of the ORE are revealed:

1) it was a centralized service;
2) it had the responsibility of producing different national intelligence papers;
3) it did not have access to operational information or political, appreciating that these types of information were, however, pertinent;
4) it was dependent, almost entirely, on estimates received from agencies within the American intelligence community.

The last one also represented the main limit in the effective performance of ORE, given that both the Pentagon and the State Department showed reservations in transmitting the data they possessed to the CIA, preferring to develop their own intelligence products.

At a first level, useful due to its informational value (although it is obviously limited, burdened by an inherent subjectivity), the activities carried out by the ORE, together with some tasty accounts of the way of working at that time, including the names of representative members of this service, are mentioned in several memoirs written by former employees.

One of the first public presentations of the realities within ORE was made by Ray S. Cline, who faced them directly as an analyst, a capacity in which he was assigned to the CIA in 1949, immediately after obtaining his doctorate at Harvard University. In the book *Secrets, spies, and scholars: blueprint of the essential CIA*, which he published in 1976 (three years after he retired from the CIA, where he worked as the head of the Directorate of Intelligence), the analytical structure of Agency,

Cline explains some things about what ORE meant and about the way this service functioned.

ORE started operating with a modest staff of almost 80 analysts. But things changed in a short time. By mid-1946, following CIG expansion measures taken by the new director, Hoyt Vandenberg, ORE reached 200 analysts. At that time, the CIG had 1,800 employees, of whom 1,000 were part of the Office of Special Operation (600 were on missions outside the country, and another 400 were active in Washington). At the same time, no less than 600 employees had administrative and support duties (Cline, 1976, p. 92).

An important aspect that the author dwells on concerns the relationship of the ORE with the other American intelligence agencies, which often shows that it was not the best. On the contrary, and the situation did not seem to be able to be changed, as proved by the director of ORE, Theodor Babbit, "an amiable official who tried desperately to placate State, Army, Navy, and Air Force and rarely won a bureaucratic battle" (Cline, 1976, p. 105).

Under these conditions, ORE allocated its analytical efforts to carry out, mainly, current intelligence activities consisting in the preparation of the Daily Summary, intended for the president. Truman seemed satisfied with the ORE materials, although he was receiving, in parallel, a similar document prepared by the State Department.

Jack Smith, another veteran of the early years of intelligence analysis in the CIA, also left testimony from inside the ORE, which he presented in *The Unknown CIA*, published in 1986. Regarding the activities of the ORE, in which he had been active since the summer of 1947, he also notes that they mainly consisted in the elaboration of the Daily and Weekly Summaries bulletins, intended for President Truman. The compilation of these was for the ORE a demanding activity, "a high-speed operation with an inflexible time", which was carried out "in the midst of an organized chaos" (Smith, 1986, p 31). In fact, it always ended up in contradictory discussions between the editor of the materials and the senior officers in charge of the regional branches on topics that might or might not be relevant to the USA President. Discussions ended with one side's point of view being imposed, without it being possible to say

who was really right on the issue. When that didn't work either, a novel solution was reached:

> "The comic backdrop to this daily turmoil was that in actuality nobody knew what President Truman wanted to see or not see. And of course there was an added kicker in that I, fresh from the Finger Lakes village of Aurora and the maidenly quiet of English Lit. 20, should be presuming to decide." (Smith, 1986, p. 34)

The faithful image of the activities carried out by ORE and the changes it has experienced are contained, of course, in the internal documents of this service. Those materials present a series of specific aspects, on the basis of which the overall picture of the ORE can be properly outlined, respectively highlights some concerns expressed within it.

The declassified CIA documents capture both aspects of the functions and mission of ORE, as well as various organizational formulas and developments. For example, its role and relevance within the CIA are highlighted, in a document from July 15, 1948, which states that ORE "is responsible for the production and presentation of national intelligence required for the formulation and administration of policy and operational decisions affecting national security".

Specifically, the document mentions the following activities carried out by ORE:

> "1. Prepares current and staff intelligence reports and estimates on a regional, functional, and global basis, on its own initiative, or in response to specific requests.Such reports and estimates will present and interpret the significance of foreign conditions and developments which affect U.S. national security, analyse trends, forecast, and interpret probable future developments, and their consequences.
>
> 2. Coordinates and administers an interdepartmental program for the production, maintenance, publication and dissemination of basic intelligence designed to meet the common requirements of CIA and the IAC agencies.
>
> 3. Formulates the National Intelligence Objectives in collaboration with the IAC agencies and under guidance of the the NSC Staff.

4. Evaluates avaible intelligence information and intelligence; assesses its adequacy, accuracy, and timeliness, and prepares reports of such assessments for the guidance of collection, source expliotation and producing agencies to assure that all fields of intelligence bearing on the national securityare adequately covered.

5. Formulates requirements for the collectionand exploitationof intelligence data in order to insure a steady flow of material in fulfillment of production requirements.

6. Advises the Director of Central Intelligence on plans, programs, policiesand procedures for the production of national intelligence." *(CIA declassified document,* July 15, 1948*)*

The organization of the ORE, based on the model that operated in the State Department, is revealed in several documents. These also outline the changes that have taken place at ORE, reflecting the concern to optimize the framework within which the activities were carried out and to supplement it with new services. For example, such mentions are contained in the document *Principles of Organization of ORE*, dated May 28, 1947, according to which it was organized *primarily on a regional basis.* Detailing this aspect, the document states that "each region comprising a group of countries related by geographical, political, and economic and other considerations is formed into a Branch", respectively that "the Branch is responsible for all the functional intelligence, except Scientific, related to its area." *(Principles of Organization of ORE*, May 28, 1947*)*

Another CIA document from the same period, named *ORE Instruction no. 35-47*, presents the organization within ORE of a structure that was called *Consultants Panel*. This was made up of several groups, as follows: Global Survey Group (with duties in monitoring and studying international events likely to affect the national security of the USA); Economics Group which "produces intelligence on economic matters beyond the scope of regional treatment"; Armed Force Group with "duties are similar to those of the Economics Group, but relating to Armed Force matters"*;* Transportation Group responsible for aspects related to international transport; International Organization Group with "duties are similar to those of the Transportation Group but in the

field of International Organizations" *(ORE Instruction no. 35-47).* The same document also mentions a new functionality: The Map Intelligence Branch. Another document that presents the organization and functions of the CIA in 1949 reveals the following components of the ORE: Global Survey Group, Functional Consultants Groups, Intelligence Production Board, Basic Intelligence Group, Current Intelligence Group, Staff Intelligence Group, Regional Branches, and Map Branch. An Administrative Staff, respectively a Plans and Policy Staff also functioned within the ORE (*Analysis of ORE Production*, July 19, 1949).

ORE carried out a relatively varied set of activities in carrying out its tasks, which consisted of the development of integrated analytical products for American policy-makers, with the aim of supporting the foreign policy directions of the United States. Initially, ORE's activities were circumscribed only to the current intelligence component, through the elaboration by this structure of the publications that had the US President as its main beneficiary. These realities are made explicit in an internal CIA document on the organizational development of the ORE, which highlights the following: "Whatever the Office of Research and Evaluation might become capable of at a later date, it did not claim, in February 1947, to be able to do much more that furnish the President with summaries of current intelligence." (*Analysis of ORE Production*, July 19, 1949)

In fact, the strategic intelligence component of ORE is linked to the creation of a new *Production Program*, in February 1947. It included, for the most part, only a resumption of what ORE was already doing, but it also added, apparently, a new element, namely the drafting of Situation Reports. These were presented as analyses of the strategic and national policy aspects of the situation in each significant country or other appropriate geographical area or with respect to significant functional subjects of continuing interest.

The newly established reports opened the way for the development of the strategic evaluation at ORE, as a constant and programmatic activity. At the same time, the production of documents of this nature substantiated the development of support activities, consisting of basic intelligence, a function which, according to the CIA document above-mentioned, "had not been contemplated for the office

and for which no preparation had been made" *(ORE Instruction no. 35-47).*

The brief history of the ORE, revealed by declassified CIA documents, shows that this office went through various attempts to organise its work and set its own objectives. New activities and responsibilities were added in order to best meet its mission. Through these, the basis for organising intelligence analysis work in the CIA was laid.

ORE's products: a look inside

The topics in the ORE materials cover a wide range of subjects, generally dealing with the communist threat posed by Soviet Russia. A comprehensive and useful overview of these materials is provided by Woodrow Kuhn, in the afore-mentioned collection of CIG and CIA documents *Assessing the Soviet Threat. The Early Cold War Years (1946 – 1950),* which brings together no less than 208 declassified products of ORE (mainly *Daily* and *Weekly Summaries*).

A significant part of this refers to the situation in Eastern Europe, including Romania, where the Communists had embarked on a full conquest of power under Moscow's control and coordination. For example, according to the Weekly Summary Excerpt of November 8, 1946, entitled Communist Pre-Electoral Tactics in Romania, the Romanian communists were preparing to use in the elections of November 17, 1946 (the first after the Second World War), the *Communist electoral pattern, so successfully delineated in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.* Petru Groza's government was not affected by polls showing that the conservative opposition enjoyed a 75% voting intention, being determined to win the election with 85% of the vote. To make sure of this, he started *a campaign of violence and terrorism,* the ORE document assesing "that will make it impossible for the Opposition to register its full strenght at the polls" (Kuhn, 1997, p. 88). The consequences of these actions were crystal clear: "The Romanian election, therefore, will probably reflect the will of the people even less truthfully that did the elections in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, where opposition to Communism was neither as well organized nor as determined" (Kuhn, 1997, p. 88).

In support of these claims, the ORE document gives a brief and enlightening account of the actions taken by the Romanian communist

government against the opposition in order to ensure its perpetuation in power and the complete communisation of the country. Thus, it blocked a large number of potential opposition voters from taking part in the elections, who were asked to present no fewer than 16 documents for registration at the polling stations, some of which they were unable to obtain. It has also established effective control over the media and radio, preventing the opposition from campaigning, while its leaders were kept under house arrest for alleged subversive acts, without being formally charged.

Last but not least, according to the ORE document, the Groza Government divided the opposition and secured consistent support from some national minorities, especially the Jewish one, which promised "their 200,000 votes to the Governmental Bloc in return for substantial concessions." (Kuhn, 1997)

Considering all these, ORE is not at all optimistic about the results of the elections: "Election day will be probably quiet. Oppositiin leaders addmit their impotence to combat a reign of terror which on that day will be backed on Army, the secret police, the militia, and an estimated 10,000 armed Communist reservists specially called up for the occasion" (CIA documents *Assessing the Soviet Threat).*

Soviet intentions regarding the satellite countries are revealed in the Daily Summary of February 13, 1948. Entitled *Possible Soviet Plans for Poland*, the document presents the opinion of the American ambassador to Moscow, General Walter Bedell Smith, the future director of the CIA, according to which the Soviet-Polish economic agreement by which Moscow committed to invest various capital equipment in Poland and in the Polish part of Germany, reflected Soviet Russia's decision to "never to let go of eastern Germany and to develop Poland as the first Satellite to be incorporated into the USSR" (Daily Summary of February 13, 1948). In the comment accompanying the information presented, the Agency notes that it shares the ambassador's assessment of Moscow's concern regarding East Germany and, "eventually to incorporate the Satellites into the USSR". However, the CIA believes that this should not be expected to happen in a short period of time:

> "However, because absortion of Poland would increase the anti-
> Communist oposition and add to the security problem of the

USRR, the Kremlin will probably not order such a step until all latent oposition to such a plan has been eliminated" (Daily Summary of February 13, 1948, p. 170).

A distinct category of materials prepared by the ORE were of an evaluative type, highlighting the analytical function of the structure. During its five years of operation, ORE has produced more than 300 such materials, in which it has also tried to forecast developments on various topics. According to the American military historian William M. Leary, although they provided substantial added value to the raw or semi-finished information that was delivered to the CIA by other American agencies, these materials also reflect the limitations of the ORE in this sphere of professional activity, ultimately highlighting the difficulty of analytical demerits of an evaluative nature (Leary, 1984, p. 21-26).

ORE completed its first strategic synthesis on July 23, 1946. The 11 pages material is called *ORE no. 1 – Soviet Foreign and Military Policy* and was compiled at the level of the Global Survey Group. The ORE document begins with a summary, and the actual content consists of two parts: *Enclosure "A" – Soviet Foreign Policy* and *Enclosure "A" – Soviet Military Policy*. The most space is allocated to Soviet foreign policy, which is judged to be governed by "the fundamental thesis that the peaceful coexistence of Communism and capitalist states is in the long run impossible" (*ORE no. 1 – Soviet Foreign and Military Policy)*.

Elaborating on the claim, the document states that:

"The basis of Soviet foreign policy is consecvently a synthesis between anticipation of and preparation for an ultimate inevitable conflict on the one hand and need for the indefinite postponement of such a conflict on the other. In any mateer conceived to be essential to the present security of the Soviet Union, including the Soviet veot power in international councils, Soviet policy will prove adamant. In other matters Soviet policy will prove grasping, but opprtunistic and flexible in proportion to the degree and nature of the resistance encountered, it being conceived more important to avoid provoking a hostile combination of major powers than to score an imediate, but limited gain" (ORE no. 1 – Soviet Foreign and Military Policy, p. 59).

Next, the document briefly presents the Soviet foreign policy, revealing its characteristics in Eastern Europe, Austria and Germany, Western Europe, the Middle East and the Far East. Regarding the first area mentioned above, it is stated that communist Russia perceives the control over the states of Eastern Europe, over the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic Sea as essential for its security, so it will not tolerate any influence. In the document, Romania is mentioned alongside Poland and Hungary in the category of states to which Moscow faces "stubborn and widespread opposition". The *friendly* governments installed in these countries are "notoriously unrepresentative", but Moscow intends to maintain them because "no truly representative government could be considered reliable from the Soviet point of view" *(ORE no. 1 – Soviet Foreign and Military Policy)*. Moreover, Soviet military policy issues are presented in a brief (one and a half page) framework, revealing Moscow's constant concerns and actions to develop and expand its capabilities.

A more eloquent document about Soviet military intentions and capabilities is *Intelligence Memorandum* no. 301 of June 30, 1950. Prepared immediately after the start of the Korean Civil War (June 25, 1950), the CIA estimate was intended to present to the White House, mainly, the perspectives of the USSR, respectively the military activities associated with them. The CIA document lists three *lines of action* available to the Kremlin, so that it avoids the start of a new global war, a situation it would not have wanted:

> "1) the encouragement of guerilla activities and creation of local disturbances; 2) the incitement of rebellions, local uprising which could lead to autonomous movements splitting off parts of presently non-Communist areas; 3) the use of a Soviet-controlled regime to attack and capture control of an adjacent nation or area."
> (Intelligence Memorandum no. 301 of June 30, 1950, p. 396)

Knowledge of developments in China has also been a topic of interest in informing American foreign policy decisions. In this direction, too, ORE produced several evaluative materials, one of them being ORE 45-48, *The Current Situation in China*, completed on July 22, 1948. The document mainly presents the developments recorded in the civil war in this country, emphasizing the difficult situation of the nationalist government, which was on the verge of falling at any time. General

Chiang Kai-shek is considered unlikely to remain in power, including through continued American support, and the Communist influence is expected to increase. The CIA estimate is not at all optimistic about the expected developments expected in China. The consolidation of communism is seen as the most likely scenario: "The prospect for the foreseeable China is at best an indefinite and inconclusive prolongation of the civil war, with the authority of the National Government limited to dwindling area in Central and South China, and with political and economic disorder spreading throughout the country except possibly in Communist-held areas." (ORE 45-48, *The Current Situation in China*, completed on July 22, 1948, p. 234)

Evaluations and the end of ORE

To what extent did the CIA's first analytical structure fulfil its professional duties? In other words, did the OREprove to be an entity fit for the purposes for which it was created? The answer, for the most part, is a negative one. This emerges both from the conclusions of some official control reports of the CIA's activity, compiled in the first years of the agency's operation, as well as from the assessments made by people who worked in the ORE.

The first critical assessment of the CIA can be found in the 1948 in the *Eberstadt Report*, developed in a larger context regarding the functioning of the US executive branch. The effort was carried out by a commission led by former President Herbert Hoover, established for this purpose a year earlier by the Republican Congress. The Hoover Commission set up a task force headed by Ferdinand Eberstadt – a friend of the Secretary of Defence, James Forrestal and former chairman of the Army Munitions Board and Vice Chairman of the War Production Board –, to outline how the American national security system, including its intelligence component, worked.

The *Eberstadt Report* acknowledges the crucial importance of the CIA's work in the new security climate in which nuclear force was to be a significant game-changer. From this perspective, it concludes that "intelligence is the first line of defence in the atomic age". (*Eberstadt Report*, vol. I). The descriptive part gives a brief overview of the organization and functioning of the CIA and its relations with other

agencies in the US intelligence system. The report's assessments are mentioned in the evaluation part, which outlines the CIA's progress and limitations in its early years of operation:

> "Intended as the major source of coordinated and evaluated intelligence, on which broad national policy could be soundly based, the Central Intelligence Agency has as yet fallen short of the objective. While it has made progress in organizing and equipping ttself, its product, however valid, does not presently enjoy the full confidence of the National Security Organization or of the other agencies it serves and has not yet – with certain encouraging exeptions – played an important role in the determination of the National Security Council." (*Eberstadt Report*, p. 13-14)

The general assessment of the CIA's work, according to which the Agency was not fulfilling the objectives for which it had been set up to the best of its ability, is accompanied by specific elements. One such reference, which directly concerns the CIA's area of intelligence analysis, relates to the production of scientific intelligence. In this connection, it is stated that "the Committee was particularly concerned over the Nation's inadequacies in the field of scientific, including medical intelligence" (*Eberstadt Report*, vol. I).

This type of intelligence is considered to be one of *vital importance*, which requires from the Agency "far greater efforts than appear to have been devoted to this need in the past" (*Eberstadt Report*, vol. I). Although it highlights a number of problematic aspects that it was able to identify in the CIA (the team members had only limited access to the Agency's documents and personnel), the *Eberstadt Report* does not support the need for organizational changes in the recently established American intelligence community. In this perspective, the following proposal is advanced: "CIA and other Government intelligence agencies should be permitted a period of internal developement free from disruption of continual examination and as free as possible from publicity." *(Eberstadt Report*, p. 48)

In parallel with the work of the Eberstadt Commission, the NSC decided to review the intelligence system in order to understand how to properly exercise oversight over the CIA. The people tasked with drafting

this report were three *intelligence veterans*, Allan Dulles, William Jackson and Matthias Correa. Under the direction of the first of Dulles, who would later become the first civilian director in CIA history and record the Agency's so-called *golden years,* a comprehensive document was produced, this time based on extensive research. The three formed an Intelligence Survey Group in the first part of 1948, tasked with drafting a report on the CIA, which it handed over to the NSC, on January 1, 1949. Known mostly as the *Dulles Report*, after the name of the head of this task force, the assessment dealt strictly with the CIA. In essence, it points out that the CIA failed to assume the role of coordinator of the US intelligence system, acting rather as a competitor to other agencies:

> "The Central Intelligence Agency should not be merely another intelligence agency duplicating and rivalling [sic] the existing agencies of State, Army, Navy, and Air Force. It should not be a competitor of these agencies, but a contributor to them and should help to coordinate their intelligence activities. It must make maximum use of the resources of existing agencies; it must not duplicate their work but help to put an end to existing duplication by seeing to it that the best qualified agency in each phase of the intelligence field should assume and carry out its particular responsibility." (*Dulles Report*, 1949, p. 26-27).

In this context, ORE was often totally inadequate, preparing materials in areas for which it did not have the necessary skills. Also, it shows that the CIA structure has inadvertently fostered rivalries with other agencies, treating them as outsiders rather than collaborators. Expressing the belief that he will not receive them.

The *Dulles Report* presents in a critical note the main documents drawn up by the ORE, highlighting their incompleteness and one-sided character, which does not agree, first of all, with the characteristic of the CIA mission. For example, the Daily Summary, the main and most frequent intelligence document that reached the US President's desk, was composed 90% of the data provided by the State Department. The document also contained a series of comments on the facts related, regarding which it is noted that "these, for the most part, appear gratuitous and led little weight to the material itself" *(Dulles Report*, 1949).

In the terms of the report, the result of such an approach is "a fragmentary publication that deals with operations as well as intelligence, without necessarily being based on the most significant materials in either category." Moreover, "in a summary of this type, circulated to the President and the highest officials of the Government, there is an inherent danger that it will be misleading to its consumers. This is because it is based largely on abstract of State Department materials, not in historical perspective, lacking a full knowledge of the background or policy involved and with little previous consultation between the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department. Moreover, it is incomplete because it is not based on all the importnat materials." (*Dulles Report*, 1949, p. 84).

Nor are the estimation studies developed by ORE on various subjects presented in a favourable light. The *Dulles Report* mentions that this type of documents "are circulated throughout the various agencies for the purpose obtaining concurrence or dissent". Beyond this, "in no way means that they are properly coordinated estimates which represent the best thinking on the subject under review" (*Dulles Report*, 1949, p. 84). The various memoranda drawn up by ORE, less formal materials, produced on their own initiative or in response to specific consumer requests benefit from similar considerations. A common element of these is the lack of coordination with other agencies. The main flaw, however, is the lack of relevance and practical utility: "Much of this production is academic, tends to duplicate work in others departments, has little relation to national intelligence, and ins not produced as a recognized service of common concern" (*Dulles Report*, 1949, p. 87).

In general terms, the dysfunctions and difficulties faced by the first analytical structure of the CIA were also highlighted in the memoirs, already mentioned, and written by former employees of the Agency. Evoking the first years of the CIA's operation, Ray Cline outlines a compartmentalized image of the American intelligence system, in contradiction to what it was supposed to represent. Moreover, the impotence of the CIA to live up to its mission is highlighted. Although it should have acted from the position of intelligence coordinator and integrator, it turned out to be just another agency, competing to ensure its primacy over the others agencies in the American intelligence system:

"It cannot honestly be said that it coordinated either intelligence activities or intelligence judgments; these were guarded closely by Army, Navy, Air Force, State, and the FBI. When attempts were made to prepare agreed national estimates on the basis of intelligence available to all, the coordination process was interminable, dissents were the rule rather than the exception, and every policymaking official took his own agency's intelligence appreciations along to the White House to argue his case." (Cline, 1976, p. 91)

Similar judgments regarding the suitability of ORE to his duties were also made by Jack Smith. The former editor of the Daily Summary notes that the analytical structure he was a part of failed to meet its goals. In his view, this was largely due to resistance to change in the fledgling American intelligence community:

"We were not fulfilling our primary task of combining Pentagon, State Department, and CIA judgments into national intelligence estimates (...) To say it succinctly, CIA lacked clout. The military and diplomatic people ignored our statutory authority in these matters, and the CIA leadership lacked the power to compel compliance." (Smith, 1989, p. 42)

Back to the two reports that analysed the CIA's activity, they recorded different reactions. The *Eberstadt Report*, completed on November 15, 1948, was delivered by former President Hoover to the new Democratic Congress in January 1949. It did not receive much attention in the US legislature and in the US intelligence community in general. In any case, as two former CIA historians note in a work on the reforms in the American intelligence community since its establishment, this report was "overshadowed by a long, detailed and critical survey of the CIA and related intelligence activities prepared for the National Security Council (NSC)" (Warner, McDonald, 2005, p. 8).

This was, of course, the *Dulles Report* case too. Classified top secret, it also included some recommendations to make the activities of the CIA more efficient. Although the *Dulles Report* determined a series of changes at the level of the Agency, including from the perspective of the organization and operation of the ORE, in reality it was rather acted to preserve the status quo. In fact, even in the organizational history of the

Agency, elaborated by the CIA Historical Staff, it is mentioned that the respective changes, produced in 1949, represented a so-called *reorganization.* In support of this claim, it is pointed out that the schematic representation of the CIA in mid-1950 is essentially the same as that of January 1949, prior to the completion of the *Dulles Report*. According to the CIA document, the only important exception regarding the *reorganization* also occurred in the area of intelligence analysis, through the establishment of a new service:

> "The only significant change, in fact, is represented in the additton of an Estimates Production Board (vice an Intelligence Production Boasrd which had appeard on the January 1949 chart) which represented a partial answer to the Dulles Report's sugestion to a 'small estimative group', in that a Board of Division Chiefs was to reviewall estimates produces in the Office." (Dulles Report, 1949)

However, the time for major changes in the CIA was much closer than thought. These occurred unexpectedly after the demise of the Agency reorganization talks prompted by the Dulles Report, and were initiated and organized by the new CIA director, General Walter Bedell Smith.

Considered the founding father of the CIA, Bedell Smith (*Beetle* to friends) was appointed to head the Agency in July 1950. General opinion links his appointment to the failure of the CIA, in particular of its analytical structure, to anticipate the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950. In fact, the White House had already decided in May 1950 to replace Hillenkoetter as director of the CIA. This decision was caused by Hillenkoetter's inability to find a suitable *modus vivendi* with the other American Intelligence Agencies. In this regard, Ludwell Lee Montague, another CIG/CIA intelligence veteran, notes in his book on Bedell Smith that the departure of his predecessor, Hillenkoetter, was not due to the disgrace he would have fallen into due to a possible failure of the Agency to anticipate the outbreak of the Korean War. According to the former CIA employee, Hillenkoetter's departure was more due to his three years he failed to impose himself as the head of American Central Intelligence (Montague, 1999).

The reforms imposed by DCI Walter Bedell Smith on the American intelligence community visibly strengthened the position of the CIA in this institutional ensemble, dominated, at that time, by rivalries. The

changes provided the Agency with a new and necessary framework for carrying out its activities efficiently. The new director had a total support from William Jackson, one of the co-authors of the *Dulles Report*, whom he appointed to the position of Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence (DDCI), created specifically to manage the intended reform process. It began with the internal reorganization of the CIA, where the analytical and operational activities were much more clearly outlined and delimited as such into two consistent directorates. ORE was divided into five internal services, placed *au coeur de la CIA*:

- Office of National Estimates (ONE), which took over the creation of integrated assessment products,
- Office of Current Intelligence (OCI), which continued its activity for a very short time,
- Office of Operation (OO), which dealt with actions from open sources such as press articles, academic knowledge,
- Office of Collection and Dissemination (OCD), which disseminated reports in the administrative area and archived the unused intelligence materials in the Agency,
- Office of Scientific Intelligence (OSI). (David, 2016, p. 139)

These formed the Directorate of Intelligence, the other major component in the CIA being the Directorate of Plans (Directorate of Operations, from 1973), which dealt with espionage and covert actions.

Conclusions

The beginnings of intelligence analysis in the CIA were largely marked by the rivalries between the agencies that formed the new American intelligence community, established under the National Security Act of 1947. This situation caused the maintenance of the departmental perspective on national intelligence subjects. Along with a sequential and incomplete approach, they usually contained different (or even contradictory assessments), which had a negative impact on the substantiation of a decision by the policymakers.

In terms of action, the first intelligence analysis office in the CIA mainly prepared current intelligence products, in the form of Daily and Weekly summaries, for the US President. Estimate products have been

less prominent in ORE activities. Both categories of products faced critical reactions as to their usefulness and relevance. While in the case of the first category (which the US President referred to as 'my newspaper'), the State Department criticized the fact that they were mostly made up of raw material provided by the State Department (more than 80%) and did not include data unknown to the State Department, the estimation products were criticized in the US intelligence community mainly because they were limited to the CIA perspective.

References:

Documents:
1. *The Dulles Report*, available on www.nsarchive.gwu.edu.
2. *Eberstadt Committee Report pertaining to CIA*, available on www.archive.org.
3. Internal CIG/CIA documents on ORE (Principles of Organization of ORE; ORE Instruction no. 35-47, Organization of the ORE, August 15, 1947; Analysis of ORE Production with Conclusions – First Report Ad Hoc Production Review Subcommittee, July 19, 1949; Proposed Revision of ORE Current Intelligence, March 23, 1949; Organization History of Central Intelligence Agency, 1950 – 1953), available at www.cia.gov/readingroom

Books and studies:
1. Barnes, Trevor. (1984). "The Secret Cold War: the CIA and Amercian Foreign Policy in Europe, 1946 – 1956", in *Historical Journal*, vol. 24.
2. Cline, Ray S. (1986). *Secrets, Spies and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA*, Washington DC, Special Learning Group.
3. David, Francois. (2016). *La Naissance de la CIA. Laigle et le vautour (1945 - 1961*, Nouveau Monde Editions, Paris.
4. Davis, Jack. (December 2006). "Intelligence Analysts and Policymakers: Benefits and Dangers of Tensions in the Relationship," in *Intelligence and National Security 21*, no. 6.
5. Hersh, Burton. (1992). *The Old Boys: the American Elite and the origins of the CIA*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.
6. Jeffrey-Jones, Rhodri. (1997). "Why was CIA created in 1947?", in *Intelligence and National Security,* vol. 12, no. 1.

7. Kent, Sherman. (1949). *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Princeton University Press.

8. Kuhns, Woodrow J. (1997). *Assessing the Soviet Threat: The Early Cold War Years*, Centre for Studies of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.

9. Leary, William M. (1984). *The Central Intelligence Agency: History and Documents*, University of Alabama Press.

10. Montague, Ludwell Lee. (1999). *General Walter Bedell Smith as Director of Central Intelligence, October 1950 – February 1953*, Pennsylvania University Press.

11. Moseman, Scott A. (2020). "Truman and the Formation of the Central Intelligence Agency", in *Journal of Intelligence History*, vol. 19, Issue 2.

12. Ranelagh, John. (1986). *The Agency: the Rise and Decline of the CIA*, New York, Simon & Shuster.

13. Troy, Thomas F. (1976). "Truman on CIA (Examining President Truman's Role in the Establishment of the Agency)", in *Studies in Intelligence*, CIA, Spring.

14. Smith, Russel Jack. (1989). *The Unknown CIA: my three decades with the Agency*, Berkley Books, New York.

15. Smith, Bradley. (1997). "The American Road to Central Intelligence", in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 12, nr. 1.

16. Warner, Michael, McDonald, Kenneth (eds.). (1994). *CIA Cold War Records. The CIA under Harry Truman*, Central Intelligence Agency.

17. Warner, Michael, Ruffner, Kevin C. (2000). "The Founding of the Office of Special Operations (U)", in *Studies in Intelligence*, CIA, vol. 44, no. 2.

PRACTITIONERS' BROAD VIEW

PROSEC TEST FOR THRIVE PROTECTIVE SECURITY RULES AGAINST THREATS, RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

Florin BUŞTIUC*

Abstract:

Protecting assets critical to organization's functionality is everyone responsibility – information leakage, unauthorized access, destruction can cost an organization dearly in lost productivity, decreased morale and public confidence. Security should be integrated into the organisation's practices and plans (as physical security, information security, personnel security etc.). There are two sides to security risks – threats and vulnerabilities. This article is about the human factor in the equation vulnerabilities-threats. The PROSEC test is a set of questions (and requirements) designed to determine an individual to become aware of security rules. By introducing the PROSEC test in security education program, you reduce the chances that your personnel will become a victim of today's data security threats. Because it's about self-education.

Keywords *security rules, security responsibilities, information security, security education.*

Introduction

In order to understand the importance of security, it is necessary to know which factors influence the functionality of organization – strategic policy, objectives, laws and regulations, organizational culture, financial, economic climate, and the categories of assets because it will allow you to achieve your security goals – primary assets (information and processes) and secondary assets (information systems and communications networks, software and operating systems, service, maintenance, personnel, locations, services and utilities, subcontractors, suppliers, customers). The effectiveness of an individual in meeting security responsibilities is proportional to the degree to which the

---

* PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: florinnn11@yahoo.com

individual understands them. There are two sides to security risks – threats and vulnerabilities. This article is about the human factor in the equation vulnerabilities-threats.

The Protective security[1] is an organized system of policies, procedures and standards whose objective is to preserve the integrity of an organization's assets against adverse acts/influences, in areas such as physical security, personnel security, document security, IT and communications security (*The Protective Security Policy Framework*). The aim of this paper is to address the protective security critical for any organization. The assets that are necessary for the efficient and competitive functioning of an organization are classified (BS ISO/IEC 27005:2008, p. 30) into primary assets (processes and information) and support assets (the elements that ensure the functionality of the primary values).

Regarding the processes, we have:
a) processes whose degradation generates consequences on the functionality/existence of the organization;
b) processes that, if modified/disclosed, affect the achievement of the organization's objectives;
c) processes that are necessary for the organization, regarding to compliance with legal and contractual provisions.

As for information, protective security rules ensure its confidentiality, integrity and availability. Confidentiality refers to the ability to protect data against people who do not have the authorization (Andress and Leary, 2017, p. 4) to know them, access to information being granted to those who, in order to fulfil their job duties, have to work with a certain type of information. Integrity refers to the property of data and processes not to be modified or destroyed without authorization, intentionally or accidentally (*Glosar de termeni pentru domeniul securității cibernetice*), and availability indicates that information can be accessed by an authorized person at any time when needed (*Cybersecurity-glossary*).

---

[1] Some aspects have been taken from the author's doctoral thesis, *Pregătirea contrainformativă a persoanelor cu acces la informații clasificate/nepublice*, defended in 2021, at the "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy.

The supporting assets are represented by:
a) IT and communication systems, networks (with internal / external use; fixed and mobile equipment);
b) software and operating systems (the programs that ensure the performance of certain operations);
c) service, maintenance and administration of the programs (with methods of selecting the companies that provide such services and contractual clauses regarding confidentiality);
d) peripherals (equipment connected to computer systems);
e) electronic media (for data storage);
f) personnel (human resources);
g) internal areas/locations (spaces within which activities are carried out);
h) services and utilities;
i) subcontractors/suppliers/ partners/ customers (BS ISO/IEC 27005:2008, pp. 31-34).

In this context, physical security refers to three categories of values, namely personnel, equipment and data (Andress, 2011, p. 97), delimiting areas/spaces, access control, photo-video surveillance, anti-burglary and anti-fire systems etc.

The physical security rules are embodied in:
a) monitoring and control of persons entering the premises of the organization (current employees, former employees, service staff, courier staff etc.);
b) verification of the identity of the persons and the purpose of the visit;
c) storage (and inventory) of keys, access cards, uniforms, badges, etc. (Speed, 2011, p. 218).

Document security refers to:
a) the modalities to identify the people who accessed them;
b) access based on the need-to-know principle;
c) authorizing specific people to make the copies (and the procedure of approving the copying);

d) records of the number of copies and the persons to whom they were distributed;
e) modality of transport;
f) the procedures for destroying documents;
g) marking modality;
h) prohibition of multiplication or transmission to a third party, without the consent of the issuer (Mendell, 2007, pp. 75-76).

IT and communications security refer to equipment, access rules, software implementation etc., referring to the reporting of the following cases:

a) trying to obtain information about computer systems – configuration, access rules, installed software, technical equipment used, problems / malfunctions etc.;
b) the attempt / to obtain unauthorized access to the computer system or to the data from the system;
c) unauthorized hardware/software changes;
d) receiving suspicious emails, which have attached unsolicited files and/or requests for personal or organization information (BS ISO/IEC 27002:2005, p. 37).

In the field of personnel security, the following are established:
a) selection, vetting and employment rules;
b) elements of incompatibility in relation to access to sensitive/classified information;
c) security training and education programs, etc. (Reid, 2005, p. 249).

Threats are represented by external factors that affect the operation and existence of the organization:
a) physical causes – fire, flood, explosions, earthquake, climatic phenomena;
b) suppliers of equipment and programs – spyware, data transmission devices;
c) the human factor – terrorist attacks, espionage etc.

Vulnerabilities represent the lack of standards or poor application of procedures in the following areas:

a) physical security: lack or poor application of access procedures, inadequate equipment for photo-video surveillance, lack of protection of doors, windows and cards;
b) security of documents: the absence of a policy for the multiplication, destruction and transport of documents, keeping them in inappropriate premises;
c) IT and communications security: poor maintenance, erroneous installation of programs, lack of audit in terms of access, allocation and access rights, not protecting/not changing passwords periodically, lack of monitoring the use of programs, unprotected communication equipment;
d) staff security: inadequate recruitment and selection procedures, the existence of personal vulnerabilities (financial problems etc.), insufficient training and preparation, incorrect use of computer and communication equipment and programs, the absence of external staff verification (BS ISO/IEC 27005:2008, p. 43).

Risk is the intersection of threats and vulnerabilities and is reflected in:

a) unauthorized access to premises, to information and processes;
b) compromising some information and processes;
c) loss of programs, equipment;
d) impairment of functionality;
e) damage to image and credibility (BS ISO/IEC 27005:2008, p. 44).

In order to protect assets (locations, information, personnel), it is necessary that individuals to be aware of the threats, since they are the first target of adverse intelligence activities. Circumscribed to the awareness by each employee that the lack of knowledge and involvement has real consequences on data compromise, operation and survival of the organization (Friedman et. al. 1997, p. 233) the most common security rules that apply, in general, to all categories of non-public data (classified

information, personal data, contracts, research, negotiations – for the rules about classified/secret information etc.) have been synthesized in the form of PROSEC test.

*

In this context, we appreciate that it is relevant for a person to have the possibility to address through a questionnaire/test this issue appropriately. There are 30 sentences-statements regarding security rules and we have to determine which is true or false.

1. Computer programs with classified data can be installed on one's own initiative, if they are purchased personally and have a license.
□True □False

2. Non-public documents are not left unattended, when leaving the office, and must be apply "the clean-desk policy" to avoid viewing by unauthorized persons.
□True □False

3. It must not be accessed the links received by e-mails that request the updating of personal information. Legitimate entities do not request to provide or verify sensitive information through an insecure medium such as email.
□True □False

4. If it is an emergency, classified information can be transmitted by telephone, fax, e-mail or by means of other non-accredited means of communication.
□True □False

5. The contents of non-public documents are not discussed in the presence of unknown persons or persons who would not be authorized to know their contents.
□True □False

6. At the end of the work schedule, it must be done a check to establish that non-public documents have not been mixed with personal ones, so as not to leave with them.
□True □False

7. For passwords must be used a combination of letters (uppercase and lowercase), symbols and numbers, and must be changed at regular intervals.
□True □False

8. It must be not used or connected your own equipment/ accessories within the organization without the consent of the IT department.
□True □False

9. In the case of problems regarding the use of the institution's computer / network, these must be reported to the IT department.
□True □False

10. If a telephone conversation involving classified information is absolutely necessary, only specially designed telephones should be used.
□True □False

11. If the mobile phone, tablet, work laptop is lost and found, it is recommended to be checked by a specialist of the institution, because programs can be installed to transmit the data from these devices.
□True □False

12. If it is a necessity and emergency to access personal mail to send or download a document, the computer on which classified information is being processed can be connected to the Internet.
□True □False

13. Unannounced visitors are never accepted in the work office, respectively: a) it is sent a messagae that no staff is available to

accompany and an appointment is made, or b) the meeting is held in a room used for relations with the public.
          □True □False

14. At various events (conferences, workshops etc.) only the aspects for which approval has been received are presented.
          □True □False

15. Classified documents can be duplicated at public photocopying centres outside the organization, if at least two employees are carrying the documents and are present in that location.
          □True □False

16. The persons who have accessed non-public materials have the obligation to maintain the confidentiality of their content including after leaving the position, for the periods and under the conditions provided by law.
          □True □False

17. The first rule on the Internet is to remain as anonymous as possible, so it is not recommended to publish personal information – full name, address, telephone number, CNP/ID number, passwords, names of family members, credit card numbers.
          □True □False

18. If there are emergencies to finish something job related, classified materials can be taken and studied at home.
          □True □False

19. Personal data and pictures posted in the virtual environment may be used against you, so it is recommended to be as discreet as possible regarding your profile on online social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
          □True □False

20. Classified documents are received / handed over by signature, verifying their integrity (registration number, number of files, level of secrecy).
□True □False

21. Classified materials are not transported personally between the offices of different institutions / between offices of the same institution.
□True □False

22. Only classified documents for which approval has been received are sent / taken at a meeting, respectively the meeting takes place in authorized locations.
□True □False

23. If the special/designated space is occupied, aspects of classified materials can be discussed in public places, but without strangers nearby.
□True □False

24. Classified documents are multiplied and destroyed based on approval / minutes. The individuals must participate at the destruction process of documents, they do not sign the minutes just because someone says that the documents were destroyed.
□True □False

25. The level of secrecy on the documents is not removed / modified on its personal initiative.
□True □False

26. Personal storage devices are not used for copying / transferring classified materials.
□True □False

27. Access passwords are not disclosed to unauthorized persons.
□True □False

28. Visiting the organization involves submitting a list of persons, whose identity is verified. A change to the list or substitution of a visitor is not accepted, if there is not enough time to verify his identity and general biography, and the visitors will be accompanied to the organization's premises (and if necessary they will have a distinctive pass).
□True □False

29. In order to create a classified material that requires a complex analysis, it is allowed to consult any specialists in that specific field.
□True □False

30. It must not be opened attachments related to e-mails from unknown senders.
□True □False

ANSWERS

The scores are calculated upon the relevance for the security rules and the sum is 30 points (where false is not in the following table, the score is 0).

1- F-0,5p	7- T-0,5p	13- T-1,5p	19- T-1p	25- T-1p
2- T-0,5p	8- T-0,5p	14- T-1p	20- T-1p	26- T-1p
3- T-0,5p	9- T-0,5p	15- T-1p	21- T-1p	27- T-0,5p
4- F-0,5p	10- T-0,5p	16- T-1p	22- T-1p	28- T-1,5p
5- T-0,5p	11- T-1,5p	17- T-1,5p	23- F-0,5p	29- F-1p
6- T-1,5p	12- F-1p	18- F-0,5p	24- T-1,5p	30- T-1p

How to interpret scores (the sum of the matching answers points-**p**):

1-10p – You are aware that in your professional activity is important to protect information, but you tend to ignore the security rules, perhaps because you think they are excessive or that you are smart enough and you will manage any problems based on your personal skills in order not to compromise information. So, you are selective, relying on your personal evaluation of the severity of the situations if the rules must be applied. The recommendation is that, as soon as possible, you must

(re)study the security procedures of the organization and participate in presentations / trainings in the field of information security. It is also useful to study some material that explains in detail why information protection is vital to an organization and which are the rules that must be applied, regardless of personal abilities or evaluation.

11-20p – You perceive security rules as bureaucratic, but you have the professional experience and/or mind-set to recognize the importance of rules. It seems that you are generally familiar with security rules and the principle that failure to apply them in all situations, regardless of personal opinions, can result in compromising of data. However, you approach some situations superficially, relying on your personal intuition that there is no need to apply rules, because the possibility of information compromise is at minimum. The recommendation is to participate in presentations / trainings where new topics in the field of information security and case studies are addressed.

21-30p – For you, responsibility and compliance with commitments are essential benchmarks for a professional activity. You are a person who realizes that the protection of information is very important for the functionality, survival and development of an organization, and the application of security rules is a necessity. You are defined by a professional principle and/or a realistic thinking that each situation must be evaluated from the perspective of protection of organization assets – information, people etc., and consequences. Even if you will face new situations, these mind-sets will allow you to identify optimal solutions to protect organization assets. It is recommended to be involved in presentation and training activities in the field of information security.

Conclusions

Consequently, in the professional activity that involves working with non-public data, there are security rules that protect this data, as well as the personnel who manage it, against risks, vulnerabilities and threats. Protecting information is a strategic factor for the functionality, survival and development of an organization. The application of security

rules is a responsibility of all employees, and the PROSEC test represents a self-assessment of their knowledge, but also a quick (re)familiarization, with positive effects in carrying out the professional activity in accordance with the security procedures provided for in laws and internal regulations.

References:

1. Andress, Jason. (2011*). The basics of information security: understanding the fundamentals of InfoSec in theory and practice*, Elsevier.
2. Andress, Jason, Leary, Mark. (2017). *Building a Practical Information Security Program*, Elsevier.
3. BS ISO/IEC 27002:2005. *Information technology - Security techniques - Code of practice for information security management.*
4. BS ISO/IEC 27005:2008. *Information technology – Security techniques – Information security risk management.*
5. Cybersecurity-glossary, accessible at https://niccs.us-cert.gov/ about-niccs/cybersecurity-glossary#A
6. Friedman, George, Friedman, Meredith, Chapman, Colin, Baker, John S. (1997). *The Intelligence Edge. How to Profit in the Information Age*, Crown Publishers, New York.
7. *Glosar de termeni pentru domeniul securității cibernetice*, accessible at https://www.sri.ro/cyberint
8. Mendell, Ronald L. (2007). *Document security. Protecting Physical and Electronic Content*, Charles C. Thomas Publisher.
9. Reid. Robert N. (2005). *Facility manager's guide to security: protecting your assets*, The Fairmont Press.
10. Speed, Tyler Justin. (2011). *Asset Protection through Security Awareness*, CRC Press-Taylor & Francis Group.
11. *The Protective Security Policy Framework*, accessible at https:// www.protectivesecurity.gov.au/

GAMES, EXERCISES AND SIMULATIONS

COOPERATION, PROBLEM SOLVING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE BLACK SEA REGION EXERCISE

Valentin STOIAN-IORDACHE[*]
Cristina IVAN[*]
Ruxandra BULUC[*]
Cătălina-Oana FRAȚILA[*]
Cristian CONDRUȚ[*]
Mădălina LUPU[*]

Introduction

The *Security in the Black Sea Region. Shared Challenges, sustainable future. Europe and its neighbourhood* program was created with the aim to foster academic and policy applied dialogue on topics relevant to the contemporary security challenges in the Black Sea Region.

The 2023 edition of the program took place under the aegis of the *European Security and Defence College* in May 2023 in Bucharest, and included participants from both EU member states and Eastern Partnership countries, who, together, discussed the present and future of the Black Sea Region.

The exercise[1] below aimed to familiarize students in the program with the security developments in the Black Sea Region over the previous

---

[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: stoian.valentin@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: ivan.cristina@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: buluc.ruxandra@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: fratila.catalina@animv.eu
[*] PhD Candidate "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: condrut.cristian@animv.eu
[*] PhD "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, email: lupu.madalina@animv.eu
[1] The current exercise is an updated and expanded version of the previous work "Exercițiu de simulare pentru programul *Security in the Black Sea Region: Shared*

seven years and to place them in the role of policy makers. Thus, through a series of debates and group activities, they could evaluate the main trends in the region, conceive of potential game changers and adopt policy solutions at both the national and supra-national level with the aim of realizing a vision of a secure and developed region. At the end of the exercise, students presented their own vision of the future and argued for the best policy responses which they would implement in order to achieve that vision.

Overall Goal:
The exercise is designed as a framework in which public consultation, participatory management and leadership skills will be exercised by program attendants in order to understand the main challenges that the European Union and its members and partners face in the Black Sea Region. The final goal is to propose flexible policy solutions adapted to the problems at hand and which can transform the region into an area of stability and prosperity.

Participants will be encouraged to use the knowledge acquired during the program and their own skills as policy makers and strategists, to better formulate policy problems and to adopt relevant solutions that can be implemented by EU institutions, Member States and governments from countries belonging to the Eastern Partnership.

Setting & vision:
The setting is the real region of the Black Sea, which participants already know and understand through the multiple perspectives of their professions and national backgrounds. In this real-life context, what participants are encouraged to do is to exercise their knowledge of already extant EU and national policies in the region, as well as their imagination and expertise in order to create a vision of regional peace,

---

Challenges, Sustainable Future (2015) – Security Game Changers and Regional Competitiveness by 2030", by Cristina Ivan, Karin Megheşan, Mihaela Teodor, Valentin Stoian, registered in the "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy central library FD 772. The current version expands on the previous by adapting the scenario to contemporary security challenges, specific to 2023, and expanding the references to the possible actions of the European Union as a strategic actor, in line with the SBSR 2023 course development.

sustainability, resilience and stability, which can be reached through the synergic application of multiple policy instruments, implemented by different levels of government (supra-national, national, sub-national)

Objectives:

Given this overall vision, the tasks in the exercise will be to identify, through a process based on individual participation in group discussions, the sources of instability, decline and ineffectiveness in the Black Sea Region and, especially, the possible game-changers which might radically affect the strategic situation and require a different policy approach from the European Union institutions, the EU Member States and the countries of the Eastern Partnership. Game-changers will reflect not only possible events in the region, but also potential changes which could impact policy-making at the national and supra-national level.

Description:

The exercise is designed in **several stages. In the first three days, the exercise will focus on stages 1-3 below, while the fourth day will be dedicated to the fourth stage in the table. Each stage from 1-3 will consist of 7 steps to be followed according to the scenario** detailed below:

Stage 1	• diagnose the current state of the art in terms of regional security • make an X-ray of the hard, soft and smart power instruments that supra-national and national actors use within the Black Sea Region
Stage 2	• identify possible and/or likely game-changers
Stage 3	• identify potential strategic responses at both the supra-national and the national level that can leverage trends and game changers for an increased regional stability and sustainability
Stage 4	• build a vision that can inspire national and collective regional strategic decisions for the overall good by 2030 (to be presented in front of the group)

To provide consistency and structure to participants' collaborative analysis and decision making process, during each stage, facilitators will hand to each of the three groups an identical set of cards containing major indicators of most impactful events and trends that correspond to the relevant milestones that have shaped the current security environment over the past 7 years (in stage 1), game-changers likely or potentially occurring to change the current state of the art (in stage 2) and goals to describe a look into the desired future (in stage 3). Cards will be debated, selected and completed with participants' own vision recorded on distinct cards, named *jokers*.
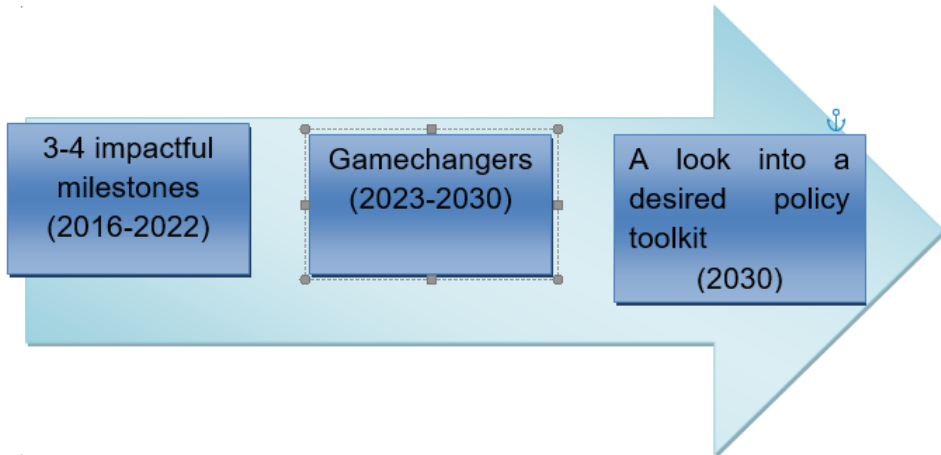

Figure 1: The structure of the exercise (authors' idea)

Stage 1: Diagnose the current state of the art in the region

Participants will make an X-ray of the current state of the art and most impactful milestones over the past 7 years. Choices will be based on own knowledge and suggested indicators provided by the exercise facilitators (cards & jokers).

Sample card 1 (authors' idea)

Gas prices increase throughout Europe

Given the reduction of gas supply, energy prices increase consistently throughout Europe, sparking a drive to reduce consumption. However, actors begin to accuse each other of not reducing their consumption enough.

Stage 2: Identify game-changers likely to shape the hard and soft power methods used at regional level in the near future

Potential game-changers will be discussed in terms of relevance, magnitude and impact, with the aim to prioritize their importance and also the possible reaction on the part of policymakers.

Sample card 2 (authors' idea)

Russia deploys tactical nuclear weapons to Eastern Ukraine and launches several short-range missiles against Kiev and other major Ukrainian cities.

Russia goes nuclear

Stage 3: Build 'a policy toolkit' that can inspire strategic decisions for the regional good by 2030

Based on a careful analysis of hard/soft/smart power instruments, participants will identify potential strategic responses that can turn game changers into well addressed challenges and therefore increase regional stability and sustainability.

Sample card 3 (authors' idea)

Support common investment in Research and Development

In order to avoid wasteful technological competition, establish a common framework to fund regional Research and Development, in both hard and social sciences.

Modus operandi *(to be gradually explained and monitored by exercise moderators)*

As mentioned, each stage in the exercise shall follow an action scenario divided in 7 distinct steps:

Step 1

Participants are divided in three teams (A, B and C/ X, Y and Z) that will progressively solve assigned tasks.

Figure 2: Modus operand **(authors' idea)**

Step 2

Each participant chooses a set of 3 most relevant cards and adds-up a joker (own vision). Then, he/she defends the choice in front of the team. The team debates and decides by vote on a set of 9 most important cards.

Step 3

The team chooses a spokesperson to defend a group vision. The spokesperson holds position at the table during the following steps of the exercise.

Step 4

In order to encourage interaction and provide participants with the opportunity to practice their communication, persuasion and leadership skills, as well as to contribute to a common vision, all team members, **with the exception of the spokesperson,** change tables according to the following algorithm:

Each team splits in half:
- A= A1+A2/X= X1+X2
- B= B1+B2/Y=Y1+Y2
- C= C1+C2/Z= Z1 + Z2

Then each half goes to form another team:
- A1+B2, B1+C2, C1+A2/X1+Y2, Y1+Z2, Z1+X2

Result: 3 new teams – listed on the chart set near each team table

Step 5
Newly formed teams filter ideas, **debate and choose by vote 5 out of the 9 initial cards presented by each table's spokesperson**. The team may also discuss and choose to add an additional joker.

Step 6
Then, team members switch tables again according to the following algorithm:
- B1+A2, A1+C2, B2+C1/ Y1+X2, X1+Z2, Y2+Z1

Result: 3 new teams – listed on the chart set near each team table

The elected spokesperson holds position to defend the team's choice in front of the newly formed team. **The team filters ideas again and chooses by vote 3 cards**. The team may also discuss and choose to add up a joker.

Step 7
Teams A, B and C/ X, Y and Z reunite to debate the three resulting sets of cards. Finally, the group ranks by vote the most relevant cards.

Once the first three stages of the exercise completed, in the fourth stage, the group (all three teams together, in plenary session) will have to elaborate and deliver in front of the audience a vision for a toolkit of policy instruments that can quickly and sustainably counter the negative trends already extant in the Black Sea Region.

Methods used:
During the exercise, there will be employed a series of analytical and project management methods, which include: *critical thinking,*

brainstorming, public consultation, debate, defending opinions, Delphi method, participative management etc.

Deliverables

Intermediate:
- oral briefs to be delivered in front of the team

Final:
- reunited groups draft a vision of the Black Sea Region in 2030, based on relevant events between now and then, which **can inspire strategic decisions for the regional good.**

REVIEWS AND NOTES

Bogdan Teodor, Jordan Baev, Matthew Crosston, Mihaela Teodor (eds.),
Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence
and Diplomacy in the Balkans,
Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, 2023, 326p,
presented by Mentor BEQA[*]

Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence and Diplomacy in the Balkans provides a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of the complex interplay of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans. The book, curated by Bogdan Teodor[1], Jordan Baev[2], Matthew Crosston[3] and Mihaela Teodor[4], showcases a variety of perspectives that enhance our understanding of this complex region from an intelligence history perspective. The authors probe into the historical, political, and cultural dynamics of the region, illuminating not only its past but also the often-underexplored facets of intelligence gathering and diplomatic operations within this context.

The authors hail from various academic institutions across nine European countries, and their ranks range from young researchers and

[*] Professor PhD of international politics at "Alexander Moisiu" University of Durres, Albania, email: mentorbeqa@hotmail.com

[1] Bogdan Teodor is an Associate Professor in Intelligence History and Security Studies at "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, Romania.

[2] Jordan Baev has a PhD in contemporary history from Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (1982) and since 2019 he is a visiting professor in Intelligence History at Sofia University.

[3] Matthew Crosston has a PhD from Brown University and an MA from the University of London and he is Director of Academic Transformation at Bowie State University.

[4] Mihaela Teodor is Senior Researcher in the Security Studies domain at the National Intelligence Institute, "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, Romania.

doctoral students to well-established scholars. This diversity of voices and career stages lends the book a unique and comprehensive perspective on its subject matter. The book's structure is logical and well-organized divided into two comprehensive parts. The first part encompasses six semi-biographical chapters that delve into a relatively unexplored area: the influence of culture on intelligence gathering and perceptions, while the second part, offers six additional chapters, primarily centered on the evolution of bilateral relations among Balkan states and their interactions and partnerships with other European nations.

The chapters are arranged in a way that allows the reader to follow the evolution of these fields over time, providing a comprehensive overview of the subject. The authors' meticulous research and balanced analysis are evident in each section, making the book a valuable resource for scholars, students, and anyone interested in the Intelligence history in the Balkans. The authors employ a case study approach in their respective chapters, delving into specific instances, events, or periods to shed light on the broader themes of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of each topic, providing readers with a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at play. The authors make extensive use of primary sources, including archival documents, personal accounts, and official records, to substantiate their arguments. This rigorous approach to research ensures that the analysis provided in each chapter is grounded in solid evidence.

For instance, in the chapter written by Maja Perić, she discusses the early modern diplomatic history of frontier societies in the border zone of coexistence and conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the Catholic Republic of Venetia from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. Perić reveals more thoroughly some not very well-known cross-cultural

regional diplomatic sources in the state archives of Zadar, Croatia, viewing the specific function of Dragomans not just in their formal role of translators but also as special messengers, negotiators, and de facto intelligence actors where they "were regularly involved in espionage practices and there are situations where some translators were not afraid to express loyalty to both camps" (Perić, p. 25).

Another noteworthy section of the book is the case study of Otto von Essen, a Russian officer who served as a spy in the Balkans during the 19th century (p.47). The author uses von Essen's experiences to explore the human side of intelligence gathering, highlighting the challenges and issues related to intercultural learning and adaptation in a foreign environment. Stahlberg's use of direct quotations from von Essen's accounts adds a layer of authenticity and immediacy to the narrative, offering unique insights into the cultural, social, and political dynamics of the Balkans during this period (Stahlberg, p. 45, 50-51).

In the chapter "Agents of the Hotel Lambert in the Balkans in the 1830s and 1840s" by Tomasz Jacek LIS, the author presents a detailed examination of the activities of the Hotel Lambert spy organization in the Balkan Peninsula during the 1830s and 1840s. LIS's work is based on extensive literature and archival documents, providing a comprehensive understanding of the operations of this organization, which was created by Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski, ex-minister of foreign affairs in Russia. The chapter offers a unique perspective on the diplomatic operations aimed at building an independent Polish Kingdom, with a particular focus on the spy ring in Constantinople from which spies were sent to the Balkans (LIS, p. 87-109).

One interesting chapter of the book is the detailed analysis of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Albania during the Second World War and aftermath (p. 201). The authors provide a comprehensive account of the operations, the challenges faced, and the impact of these

operations on the region. They also delve into the controversies and conspiracy theories that have surrounded the SOE's operations in Albania, providing a balanced and nuanced perspective.

Old and New Insights on the History of Intelligence and Diplomacy in the Balkans is a significant contribution to the genre of Intelligence history in the Balkan studies. The book unravels the intricate relationship between intelligence and diplomatic activities in the complex history of the Balkans, also constituting a study of the human side of intelligence gathering, the role of cultural intermediaries in intelligence gathering and diplomacy. It is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding the intricate dynamics of intelligence and diplomacy in the Balkans.

Mihai Dragnea, Joseph Fitsanakis, Darko Trifunovic, John M. Nomikos, Vasko Stamevski, Adriana Cupcea (eds.),
***Aspects of Islamic Radicalization in the Balkans after the Fall of Communism*, Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York, 2023, 282p., presented by Mihaela TEODOR**[*]

Peter Lang Publishing House, a famous academic publisher specialised in humanities and social sciences, launched at the beginning of 2023 the series *South-East European History* (https://www. peterlang. com/series/seeh), edited by Mihai Dragnea – the president of Balkan History Association from Romania.

The second volume of the series, *Aspects of Islamic Radicalization in the Balkans after the Fall of Communism*, was published in September 2023. The volume explores, as editors state in the volume presentation from the Peter Lang website, "the channels through which Islamic fundamentalism has spread among Muslims in the Balkans since the early 1990s" (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).

[*] Senior Researcher in Security Studies at National Intelligence Academy "Mihai Viteazul", email: teodor.mihaela@animv.eu

The volume was edited by Mihai Dragnea[1], Joseph Fitsanakis[2], Darko Trifunović[3], John M. Nomikos[4], Vasko Stamevski[5] and Adriana Cupcea[6], being the outcome of a research project of the Balkan History Association. *Isa Blumi,* Associate Professor of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies at *Stockholm University*, considered in the Preface of the volume that the case studies covered by the volume "reflect different sensibilities that warrant deeper investigation by way of exploring this history with rival institutional authority" (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454). Moreover, according to the first editor, the volume proposes new aspects of radicalization such as "digital space, hybrid proselytism, the role of NGOs and charity activism" (p. 15) and does not necessarily brings new findings and insights.

A comprehensive introductory chapter on the *Post-communist Encounters in Islamic Faith and Security in the Balkans* is signed by Mihai

[1] Mihai Dragnea, PhD, is an associate researcher at the University of South-Eastern Norway and president of the Balkan History Association (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).
[2] Joseph Fitsanakis, PhD, is Professor of Intelligence and Security Studies at Coastal Carolina University in the United States, where he also serves as Director of the University's Intelligence Operations Command Centre (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).
[3] Darko Trifunovic, PhD, is a founding member and Director of the Institute for National and International Security in Belgrade, Serbia, and a Senior Advisor at the Research Institute for European and American Studies in Athens (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).
[4] John Nomikos, PhD, is Director of the Research Institute for European and American Studies in Athens, Chairman at the European Intelligence Academy and Assistant Professor at Webster University (Athens Campus) (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).
[5] Vasko Stamevski, PhD, is full Professor at the Faculty of Law of the International Slavic University "Gavrilo Romanovich Derzhavin" in St. Nikole, North Macedonia, and Vice-Rector for International Cooperation (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).
[6] Adriana Cupcea, PhD, is a researcher in the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (https://www.peterlang.com/document/1307454).

Dragnea, the first editor of the volume. All the twelve chapters authored by experts and researchers from the Balkans, USA and Germany identify, as Mihai Dragnea himself highlight in the Introduction, "the threat of the militancy of political Islam by highlighting not only the volatility of Balkan Muslims' religious identities, but also their exposition to external threats" (p. 15). The contributors examine the spread of Islamic fundamentalist ideas among the Balkan Muslims after the Fall of Communism, with a particular focus on the reception of Salafism and its Saudi version, Wahhabism (p. 16).

The authors use different methodologies, sources and theoretical frameworks and brings various case studies of radicalization including explanations for the ideological climate that has generated volunteers for Islamic State (Daesh) in recent years. Thus, the content of the volume covers the risk of radicalization and Jihadi Extremism in Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya and Bulgaria: *Constructing a New Threat: The Securitization of Islam in Post-war Kosovo* (Joseph Coelho); *Islamic Radicalization in Kosovo: A Case in Multi-layered Identity* (Henrique Schneider); *Salafism in Albania between Deculturation and Post-socialist Legacy* (Gianfranco Bria); *Mainstream and Online Media, a Useful Tool on Fighting Violent Extremism in Albania* (Iris Luarasi); *Building a Community Resilient to the Islamic Radicalism: A Case Study of the Muslim Community in Montenegro* (Marko Savić and Almedina Vukić Martinović); *Risks for Islamic Fundamentalism and Radicalism after the Fall of Communism in Bulgaria* (Bogdana Todorova); *Missionary Islamic NGOs in Romania: Da'wah Materials Disseminated among Muslims in Romania* (Cornel Andrei Crişan); *Mujahideen in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 until 1995* (Mijo Beljo and Lucija Zadro); *Foreign Fighters and Global Jihad in the Balkans: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Michalis Marioras); *Factors That Moderate Islamic Radicalization in North Macedonia* (Zhidas Daskalovski); *"Islamic*

Terrorism" in the Serbian Sandžak under Salafi Influence (Darko Trifunović); *Beyond the Balkans: Islamist Terrorism in Europe with Balkan Connections* (Klemen Kocjančič).

The conclusive chapter signed by John Nomikos and Joseph Fitsanakis, highlights *The Trajectory of Islamist Militancy in the Balkans* concluding that "the governments and civil society groups in the Balkans must continue to amass political will and social support for comprehensive programs that favour integration, inclusion and – if need be – de-radicalization of vulnerable populations" (p. 265). Thus, the studies in the volume are "intended to help the reader understand the Balkan states' foreign policy as a response towards the Muslim world in the context of the global war against terrorism" (https://www.peterlang. com/document/1307454).

ACADEMIC FOCUS
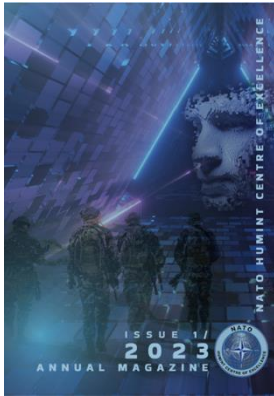
NATO HUMINT COE ANNUAL MAGAZINE,

Issue 1/ 2023,

ISSN/ ISSN-L: 2810-4226

Introduction: Since its inception in 2019, the NATO HUMINT COE ANNUAL MAGAZINE serves as both **a public information tool and a professional reference for the NATO HUMINT Community of Interest**, anchored in the overall efforts of the Centre as a standing promoter of the NATO's core values and principles. The magazine is published annually, in hardcopy and online, on the NATO HUMINT COE's webpage (www.natohcoe.org/nato_humint_coe_annual_magazine/), usually in one issue per year, but can be supplemented with additional editions, upon the case.

Relevance for the general public: The magazine aims to provide the general public with insights into the role, significance, and activities of the NATO HUMINT COE, offering a platform to communicate the importance of human intelligence in addressing security challenges and maintaining international peace and stability. Outlining the central position of the Centre as an expertise hub in NATO[1], the magazine includes provisions on the organization's activities in the capability transformational areas of standardization, concept development and experimentation, lessons learned management, and education and training, as well as articles on current trends, case studies, human capital

---

[1] An expertise hub in NATO from the perspective of its academic contribution to the Allied requests for support – the "Academics Overview" series of articles.

development, and the impact of human intelligence on NATO's operations.

Raising awareness and understanding of the NATO HUMINT COE's mission, activities, and contribution among relevant stakeholders: Apart from the general public, at an informed level of understanding, the magazine serves as a means to educate policymakers, military leaders, and the wider security community about the importance of human intelligence capability in the larger Intelligence spectrum. Under the aegis of NATO HUMINT Working Group and NATO HUMINT Technology Working Group, the journal outlines the vision and development potential facilitated by the NATO HUMINT COE and the HUMINT community in NATO.

The professional stance of the Magazine: Equally important, the magazine caters to the specific needs and a future outlook of the NATO HUMINT Community of Interest, including intelligence professionals and practitioners. The "HUMINT 360^0" label serves as a comprehensive scoping for sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches in the field of human intelligence. It features articles on HUMINT methodologies, training and education programs, sciences support to HUMINT, or legal & ethical considerations. "Technology development and HUMINT" is a dedicated space populated with articles dealing with analysis of the emerging technologies, and focused to outline opportunities and threats to the NATO HUMINT tradecraft. Further, "Practical skills for HUMINT professionals" engages subjects adapted from the area of common or specialized military skills, providing useful instructional tips for training vignettes. This approach is completed by learning from past events across the history ("HUMINT throughout history"), in a trial to capture valuable lessons learned and better understand the imprint of the societal and human thinking evolution and their impact on the HUMINT tactics, techniques, and procedures, in different spatial and temporal contexts.

Other sections may be considered in future, in order to support the human capital development in HUMINT, with particular focus on the "HUMINTer"'s profile, selection activities, reskilling and up skilling, and cognitive development.

Promoting Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange: The magazine fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange among the NATO HUMINT community of interest, but also in relation with Academia and Industry. Besides formal cooperation arrangements and development opportunities presented in the "Academic partnership" section, the "Academic outreach" segment follows the principles of an Agora, where NATO HUMINT COE's subject matter experts summarize a variety of topics presented in external scientific conferences or projects (to include books or articles reviews), for future reference or echo in the HUMINT documentation and research efforts. This way, it seeks to provide a platform for professionals to share their expertise, insights, and research findings, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This section of the magazine may also include interviews, opinion pieces, and articles highlighting collaborative initiatives, joint exercises or other training opportunities, conferences, and partnerships within the NATO HUMINT community.

The magazine offers advertising opportunities that are aligned to the NATO HUMINT COI's interest, but does not support direct marketing activities.

The NATO HUMINT COE Annual Magazine serves as a comprehensive publication that combines public information and professional reference aspects. It aims to inform the general public about the NATO HUMINT COE's role while providing the NATO HUMINT Community of Interest with valuable insights, knowledge sharing, and a platform for professional development.

Empowering a Pan-European Network to Counter Hybrid Threats (EU-HYBNET) H2020 Grant agreement no: 883054
(May 2020 – April 2025)

EU-HYBNET is a 60-month project (2020-2025), financed through the Horizon 2020, which start in May 2020. The project is being developed and implemented by a consortium of 25 partners, coordinated by LAUREA University of Applied Sciences from Finland. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats and the Joint Research Centre are leading partners of the EU-HYBNET project.

EU-HYBNET bring together practitioners and stakeholders to identify and define their most urgent requirements for countering hybrid threats, by undertaking an in-depth analysis of gaps and needs and prioritizing those that are crucial to address through effective research and innovation initiatives, including arranging training and exercise events to test the most promising innovations (technical and social) which lead to the creation of a roadmap for success and solid recommendations for uptake, industrialization and standardization across the European Union.

The project aims to build an empowered, sustainable network, which:

- define common requirements that can fill knowledge gaps, deal with performance needs, and enhance capabilities of innovation endeavors;
- monitor significant developments in research and innovation;
- deliver recommendations for uptake and industrialization of the most promising innovations that address the needs of

practitioners, and determine associated priorities for standardization;

- establish conditions for enhanced interaction among its members;
- persistently strive to increase its membership and continually build network capacity through knowledge exchange.

EU-HYBNET address four core themes to ensure coherence in the project's results: 1) Future Trends of Hybrid Threats, 2) Cyber and Future Technologies, 3) Resilient Civilians, Local Level and National Administration and 4) Information and Strategic Communication.

Romania represents the consortium through "Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy (MVNIA). MVNIA incorporate the project's research findings and information into its MA & PhD research programs. As students come from diverse areas (security practitioners, legal, media, private business), the impact of exploitation of the information reach a wide audience, and the EU-HYBNET training documents will also be employed to enhance capabilities of experts and practitioners in the fight against hybrid threats.

EU-HYBNET is a Pan-European network of security practitioners, stakeholders, academia, industry players, and SME actors across EU, collaborating with each other to counter hybrid threats.

Jean Monnet Module EUSEGOV

A common understanding of EU Security Governance
Teaching and researching the EU security policies and institutions
for a better academic and professional approach in the security
and intelligence field
(October 21st, 2020 – October 20th, 2023)*

"Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy (MVNIA) implements a three-year Jean Monnet Module grant: **EUSEGOV** – *A common understanding of EU Security Governance. Teaching and researching the EU security policies and institutions for a better academic and professional approach in the security and intelligence field*. The EUSEGOV module focuses on EU Governance, a subfield of EU studies that has received less attention comparatively with the study of other EU related issues. The module aims at educating students and at equipping them with the knowledge and necessary skills to become EU citizens and better security providers. The academic value of the EUSEGOV module is to deliver courses on EU Security Governance for security and intelligence studies students. The courses tackle specific aspects of EU integration studies: *Introduction to EU Security Governance and Strategic communication in EU Security Governance.*

The **specific objectives** of the Module are:
- Providing a coordinated series of MA compulsory and PhD summer courses aiming to familiarize students with the main trends and approaches in the field of communication and security governance in the European Union.
- Updating the teaching contents on the topic by research activities.
- Making aware students who do not automatically come into contact with EU studies of the importance of security governance by training them in using both the specialized language and methodology specific to subjects that pertain to the area of international relations, political sciences, as well as security studies.

The module's objectives will be achieved through the **teaching, researching and promoting** activities. To this respect, the EUSEGOV module includes a **two completely new courses**, one compulsory for MA students and one optional for PhD students, covering a major gap in the curricula i.e. the developments in the idea of European Security Governance. By bringing together academics and experts from various fields of knowledge, from civil society organizations and institutions, the interdisciplinary teaching and research approach of this Module provides the students with an in-depth and systematic understanding of key EU Security Governance topic. The EUSEGOV includes also research activities on the **Strategic communication in EU Security Governance thematic**. The research report will contain an extensive analysis of three aspects: *Strategic communication in EU – practices and official documents*; *EU Security strategic communication institutions*; *EU Security Governance future: alternative scenarios*.

A general dissemination campaign will be implemented to create a broad understanding of the importance and the particularities of EU Security Governance: two conferences, opening and closing conferences; a MA and a PhD round-table debates The main output is represented by the training of a target group formed by master students and PhD candidates in security and intelligence studies that must better understand the direct and indirect implications of EU's security governance impact on the member states.

DOMINOES
Digital cOMpetences InformatiOn EcoSystem[2]
ID: 2021-1-RO01-KA220-HED-000031158

The DOMINOES project aims to reduce societal polarization through combating the rapid spread of online disinformation among young people. In order to do achieve this result, the project aims to increase the capabilities of partner organizations to develop new and interactive online educational content, which is adapted to the specificities of the current and future, digitally skilled, generations of students. The project begins from two inter-related premises: that the digital ecosystem is undergoing a significant transformation, due to the emergence of new communication platforms and that higher education institutions need to develop curricula that teach critical thinking and digital skills holistically rather than in a disparate fashion.

The project targets two groups: current teaching staff and students of partner institutions, who will be future professionals in the

field of security and intelligence. Selected participants from the two target groups will be helped, through several on-site classes, to acquire digital teaching skills, to produce innovative educational material and to use advanced digital skills for the detection and countering of online propaganda, fake news and information manipulation.

The project will elaborate a handbook on the topic of digital disinformation and fake news. This will include the most relevant and up-to-date information on the evolution of the phenomenon of fake news, the psychology of disinformation, the social factors supporting or arresting the dissemination of fake news, skills relevant to avoid online disinformation and policies and legal approaches employed to deter the phenomenon. Then, three on-site courses, each including 30 participants, will take place in the three participating countries. A mix of professors and students will be taught how to avoid online disinformation and how to teach others to do so, in an interactive and inclusive fashion. Finally, the information gathered for the handbook and validated through the face-to-face interactions will be used for the creation of an online course which will be accessible to a wide audience and will represent a sustainable product of the project. This course will include not only the theoretical material gathered for the elaboration of the handbook, but also a wide set of interactive exercises aimed at facilitating student engagement with the material.

The main outcome of the project will be an increase in the advanced digital skills and ability to spot fake news of the representatives of the target group. Participants in the on-site and online courses will improve their teaching abilities and their competences in addressing a young generation of digital natives.

At the end of the project, the partners will organize three simultaneous multiplier events, which will be addressed to persons from the wider target group, but who were not part of the initial on-site training activities. The main results of the project will be presented, with a particular focus on the online training course. This will allow participants to access the same information as those that were included in the on-site activities and further help achieve the project's objectives of reducing societal polarization and combating online disinformation.

Erasmus+ Mobility Projects at
"Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy

Erasmus+ KA103 mobility projects are implemented within „Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy (MVNIA). The projects are funded by the European Commission, through the National Agency.

The objectives pursued by MVNIA within the the two mobility projects were in line with the specific objectives of Key-Action 1. Therefore, the Academy sought to:

- Support students in order to improve their knowledge, skills and competences;
- Favour quality improvement, excellence in innovation and internationalization by intensifying transnational cooperation with other higher education institutions and training centers;
- Improve the international dimension of education and professional training by promoting mobility and cooperation between higher education institutions;
- Increase the capacity to offer study programmes that better meet the needs of the students.

The mobility of staff and students sets the premises for improving professional knowledge and experience, developing linguistic and intercultural skills, as well as strenghtening European identity through the promotion of common values. Collectively, the 2 projects encompassed a number of 8 beneficiaries, students and professors alike, who took part in different tyes mobilities, as follows:

- 4 training mobilities
- 2 traineeships
- 1 teaching mobility
- 1 study mobility

MVNIA embraces cooperation and recognizes the importance of belonging to university networks for the development of competitiveness and institutional modernization. For this reason, strenghtening existing partnerships and starting new projects are objectives of utmost importance in the process of institutional internationalization. Fortunately, the Erasmus programme has put at MVNIA's disposal all the mechanism needed to achieve this goal. As a result, throughout the implementaion period, the Academy has signed three new inter-institutional agreements with the following institutions: University of Malta, the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and Matej Bel University in Banska Bystryca.

Even though the two projects have been completed, the Academy will continue to disseminate and exploit their results in new projects, scientific publications, and by developing new study programmes.

INSET
CrItical Studies in INtelligence,
Technologies, and SEcuriTy Governance
(01.11.2022 – 31.01.2024)

INSET is an ERASMUS Mundus Design Measures project developed by a consortium of three universities: Mihai Viteazul National Intelligence Academy (Romania), University of Malta (Malta) and University Rey Juan Carlos (Spain) and financed by the European Commission (ERASMUS-EDU-2022-EMJM-DESIGN, code 101081354).

The aim of INSET is to develop a **joint master's program in Critical Studies in Intelligence, Technologies, and Security Governance**. The focus is on developing complex and interdisciplinary competences which are needed in understanding the dynamics of the 21st century world which is increasingly technology-based, hostile from a security perspective, and highly volatile.

INSET advances an inter- and multidisciplinary approach that combines critical studies in intelligence, security governance and technologies while bridging these areas of study and transfers specialized knowledge and competencies from specialists and practitioners in intelligence and security towards the civil society.

INSET joint MA programme's distinct novelty emerges from the following objectives:

1. it brings an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach, which intersects the several concentrations under security

science: critical studies in intelligence, security governance, technologies;

2. it applies a critical approach to address contemporary security challenges and build a resilient security culture;

3. it is structured in a way that can be understood and assimilated by a wide variety of students, with different backgrounds: media studies, law, technology, political sciences, sociology, intelligence and security studies;

4. it goes beyond addressing these study areas in a disparate and segmented fashion, transversally focusing on their intersection, on their convergence, and on the manner in which they can synergically solve real societal problems.

INSET joint MA programme addresses the following educational gaps:

1. the need for a common European academic framework to assess security risks through technologically-driven intelligence production;

2. the underrepresentation of interdisciplinary master programs linking intelligence studies, security governance and technologies;

3. the rapid and recent evolution of perspectives on intelligence and security from traditional to more critical, interdisciplinary and reflexive ones;

4. the need to link intelligence studies and technological developments to society at large and to develop civil societies' abilities to analyse data, understand the functionality of technology, develop their digital competences;

5. the missing tools in addressing disinformation campaigns, part of hybrid warfare, that are shaping and reshaping democratic systems and affecting good governance practices, with little understanding or control from civil society.

As a **joint transnational and inter- and multidisciplinary master's program, INSET** encourages the internationalization of education via critical approaches to security issues and increases the capacity of partners to deliver joint educational programs. By providing a common framework and support for networking, it fosters academic cooperation among partners and, accordingly, it enhances the partners' capabilities to modernize their curricula and teaching practices. In line with the recent developments of both theoretical approaches (e.g. critical intelligence studies) and also the unprecedented technological challenges, the program aims to develop cutting-edge and labour market attractive skills for BA graduates with different backgrounds (e.g. law, technology, social and political science, intelligence, media studies). By providing academic excellence, INSET designs and implements the mechanisms needed for the delivery and functioning of a joint master's program.

The consortium is currently developing the organizational documents and the curriculum for the **joint master's programme INSET** with a view to enrolling the first cohort of students in the autumn of 2025. More information is available on the project website.

CALL FOR PAPERS *ROMANIAN INTELLIGENCE STUDIES REVIEW*

"Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, via its National Institute for Intelligence Studies, publishes the *Romanian Intelligence Studies Review* (RISR), a high-quality peer reviewed and indexed research journal, edited in English and Romanian twice a year.

The aim of the journal is to create a framework for debate and to provide a platform accessible to researchers, academicians, professional, practitioners and PhD students to share knowledge in the form of high quality empirical and theoretical original research papers, case studies, conceptual framework, analytical and simulation models, literature reviews and book review within security and intelligence studies and convergent scientific areas.

Topics of interest include but are not limited to:
- Intelligence in the 21st century
- Intelligence Analysis
- Cyber Intelligence
- Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)
- History and memory in Intelligence
- Security paradigms in the 21st century
- International security environment
- Security strategies and policies
- Security Culture and public diplomacy

Review Process: RISR shall not accept or publish manuscripts without prior peer review. Material which has been previously copyrighted, published, or accepted for publication will not be considered for publication in the journal. There shall be a review process of manuscripts by one or more independent referees who are conversant in the pertinent subject area. Articles will be selected based on their

relevance to the journal's theme, originality and scientific correctness, as well as observance of the publication's norms. The editor evaluates the recommendation and notifies the author of the manuscript status.

The review process takes maximum three weeks, the acceptance or rejects notification being transmitted via email within five weeks from the date of manuscript submission.

Date of Publishing: RISR is inviting papers for No. 31 and 32 and which is scheduled to be published on June and December, 2024.

Submission deadlines: February 1st and July 1st

Author Guidelines: Author(s) should follow the latest edition of APA style in referencing. Please visit www.apastyle.org to learn more about APA style, and http://www.animv.ro for author guidelines. For more details please access the official website: **rrsi.ro**

Contact: Authors interested in publishing their paper in RISR are kindly invited to submit their **proposals electronically in .doc/.docx format at our e-mail address rrsi@sri.ro, with the subject title: article proposal.**

*A*ppearing twice a year, the review aims to place debates in intelligence in an institutional framework and thus facilitating a common understanding and approach of the intelligence field at national level.

*T*he target audience ranges from students to professionals, from the general public to those directly involved in intelligence research and practice.

"MIHAI VITEAZUL"
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ACADEMY

20, Odăi Str.
Bucharest 1 - ROMANIA
Tel: 00 4037 772 1140
Fax: 00 4037 772 1125
e-mail: rrsi@sri.ro

www.animv.ro