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IVONA LADJEVAC , TONI MILESKI
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CONTENTS:

Ivona LADJEVAC
Toni MILESKI
CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE: A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA.....9

Mitko ARNAUDOV
A CONTEMPORARY SECURITY THREAT TO NORTH MACEDONIA: SECURITIZATION OF EMIGRATION AND THE CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.....25

Nikola MANEV
Elenior NIKOLOV
THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL AND EU'S ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE WAKE OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE.....37

Ankica TOMIC
FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SECURITY.....47

Biljana KAROVSKA ANDONOVSKA
HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY ARMED CONFLICTS.....59

Igor GJORESKI
ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIC PROVISIONS OF THE EU STRATEGIC COMPASS FOR SECURITY AND DEFENCE.....69

Nena NENOVSKA GJORGJIEVSKA
THE INFLUENCE OF THE ARMED CONFLICTS ON THE REFUGEE CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST COUNTRIES.....89

Mario AMPOV
Drage PETRESKI
UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES USED FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS AND THEIR APPLICATION IN THE REGION.....103

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CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE: A CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Ivona LADJEVAC[1]
Toni MILESKI[2]

Abstract: *The paper aims to analyse the preconditions for constructing a comprehensive critical infrastructure protection system in North Macedonia. Also, in the Republic of North Macedonia, in the last five years, significant progress has been made in moving the national engagement and approach to implement the critical infrastructure protection concept. The Republic of North Macedonia, perhaps the last in the Western Balkans region, has an urgent need for normative regulation of all aspects of the critical infrastructure sphere. The dynamic processes on the international stage rightly give signals in the direction of the essential need for critical infrastructure protection. Changing geopolitical and security landscapes, war, natural disasters, hybrid threats, health crises, energy crises, climate change, and many other adverse processes allude to the conclusion that the disruption of critical infrastructure is increasingly not a matter of escalation but a matter of time.*

Keywords: *Critical infrastructure, North Macedonia, Geopolitics, Protection, Hybrid war, Hybrid threats, Climate change.*

Introduction

There is a growing trend of building resilient societies and resilient critical infrastructure (systems) in NATO and the EU. The European Commission on 16 December 2020 proposed a revision of the existing directives from 2008. These preconditions and processes should be considered when building a Macedonian system to protect critical infrastructure. (European Commission, 2020). In this case, we refer to the review and analysis of relevant literature that shows resilience has no single definition, especially when viewed as an attribute-specific system. A previous study offered a number and different definitions of this concept. At the same time, many studies may find differences in the definition of resilience, as in the case of infrastructure systems.

In particular, when it comes to protecting critical infrastructure, it should be clear that optimal levels cannot be achieved for at least two reasons. The first is the financial nature, while other

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things are constantly evolving and transforming. However, specific processes, systems or individuals may cause incidents and accidents inadvertently, as well as intentional obstruction and attacks. Such knowledge alludes to the training of all entities involved in providing critical infrastructure protection. Although protection and "resilience" are critical infrastructure complementary concepts, different explanations should be elaborated on and accepted. In short, protection is a relation between the ability to prevent or reduce the effect of unpleasant and sudden effects. At the same time, resilience is manifested through the ability to reduce the magnitude, stiffness and duration of stagnation, and relationships rapidly access all components and processes, from physical components and the quality of human resources. Crucially, this paper would like to point out elasticity as the intention to develop and maintain a system and its ability to quickly prevent, absorb, adjust and recover from any possible attack. In security, resilience refers to various factors that indirectly contribute to and strengthen security. In the areas of critical infrastructure protection, "resilience" should be understood in terms of increased security, identification and application of measures that may be required at critical infrastructure levels, but especially at the organisation and process levels that provide access or use outputs. Such assumptions alert and require an urgent reaction from the called-upon national institutions to take concrete steps. This means defining and strengthening social resilience, protecting critical infrastructure through the construction of a system and the eventual implementation of the critical infrastructure resilience concept. In this paper, the authors will pay special attention to the analysis of contemporary challenges for the Republic of North Macedonia in terms of geopolitics, threats of terrorism, hacker attacks and other hybrid threats, new technologies, and climate change and security.

Changing the nature of the global geopolitical and security landscape

We can start with the statement that the World is experiencing a turning point in the second decade of the 21st century, marked by a geopolitical and economic shift of power from the West to the Eurasian powers. The current period brings various geopolitical and geostrategic challenges, which are certainly more specific to deal with than those in the 20th century. These challenges include political confrontation, internal and international political conflict, and conflict over natural resources in war-torn civil countries across sub-Saharian Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and the newly explored strategic regions, such as the Arctic. The rapidly expanding progressive population of the World is facing cyclical fluctuations in food prices due to climate change, economic conflicts, the rise of religious fundamentalism, and the fragmentation of the World's political map.

We are rightly faced with the dilemma of whether the 21st century will be defined by rivalries between national (super) powers and not by the supremacy of collective systems or overlapping sovereignty, replacing sovereign states as New Medieval theorists and conspirators expect. Which will be the dominant force in the multipolar World - the rapidly weakening United States, on the one hand, or the even more secure China, which is seeking to restore its status as the most robust economy in the World? (Riegl and Landovský, 2013).

These global trends create the World's geopolitical landscape. The World is redefining its geopolitical patterns and principles in the second decade of the 21st

century. The euphoria with the end of the Cold War, enshrined in Francis Fukuyama's concept of the end of history, was premature. The clash of 21st-century civilisations would not define the geopolitics of the 21st century. It is Europe that, unfortunately, reflects the geopolitical violations on the political map. The map of Europe defines the 21st century. From the fields of Flanders (World War I) to Omaha Beach (World War II) to the Berlin Wall to the burned villages on the territory of the former SFRY, from the lengthy European war of 1914 to 1989, to the current bloody war aftershocks in Ukraine, Europe is the centre of world geopolitics and history. (Riegl, 2013).

The geopolitical transition of power from the Euro-Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific region (especially from the United States to China) is continuing. It has been confirmed by geopolitical analysts such as Nye, Brzezinski, and Kaplan.

Joseph Nye identifies five significant global challenges (including possible reactions) in response to the most pessimistic projections of US decline and the inevitable rise of China's economic and geopolitical dominance.

He discusses the challenges in promoting the American strategy for smart power in his book "Future of Power". Describing the strengths and limitations of American power, Nye explains that the smart power strategy seeks to bridge the old gap between liberal and realistic needs, leaving room for a new synthesis called liberal realism. In the context of smart power it is not the creation of an empire or hegemony. The United States can influence, but cannot control, all parts of the World. Power depends on the specific context and the context of transnational relations (climate change, drug trafficking, pandemics and terrorism), and it is diffuse and chaotically distributed. Military power plays a small role in resolving and responding to emerging threats. Responding to these threats requires more cooperation with governmental and international institutions. Nay also emphasises that the liberal realist strategy emphasises the importance of developing an integrated "big" strategy that combines hard and soft power into smart power. In the fight against terrorism, the United States should use strong force against hardline terrorists, but no victory can be expected until it is won in the hearts and minds of Muslims. Furthermore, the liberal realist strategy aims to provide security for the United States and its allies, maintain a strong domestic and international economy, avoid environmental catastrophes, and strengthen liberal democracy and human rights at home and abroad.

Five major challenges provoke Nye's new strategy. The first challenge is to tackle terrorism with nuclear materials. This will require policies to counter-terrorism, create stability in the Middle East, give due attention to failed states, and so on. The second challenge is political Islam. According to Nye, the current struggle against radical Islam is not a "clash of civilisations", but a civil war within Islam. More open trade, economic growth, education, development of civil society institutions and gradual increase in political participation. The third challenge is the rise of hostile hegemony as Asia gradually regains its share of world economy. This challenge requires a policy that welcomes China as a responsible and vital entity, but protects against possible

hostility by maintaining close relations with Japan, India, and other Asian countries that welcome the US presence. The fourth challenge is economic depression. The strategic response to this challenge will require policies that will gradually reduce US oil dependence, especially in the Persian Gulf, where 2/3 of the World's oil reserves are located. The fifth challenge is environmental crises, such as pandemics or adverse climate change. This challenge requires prudent energy policies, leadership in the field of climate change and greater cooperation within international institutions. (Nye, J.S., 2011: 231-233).

In his book "Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power", Zbigniew Brzezinski tries to answer four significant dilemmas.

1) What are the implications of the changing distribution of global power from West to East,

2) Why is America's global appeal weakening, what are the symptoms of America's domestic and international decline, and what geopolitical reorientation is necessary to revitalise America's global role?

3) What would be the likely geopolitical consequences if America relinquished its globally prominent position, what would be the almost immediate geopolitical victims of such a decline, what effects would it have on the global problems in the 21st century, and could China take on America's central role in world affairs by 2025?

4) Looking after 2025, how should a resurrected America define its long-term geopolitical goals, and how can America, with its traditional European allies, try to engage Turkey and Russia to build an even bigger and more energetic West?

Brzezinski offered a strategic vision for the so-called Greater West, which stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok, and the cooperating east. The Greater West will include rapidly developing Turkey and Russia. The two countries will be integrated into the Euro-Atlantic institutional design, stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok in the Far East.

The ultimate goal of the more prominent and vital West in working closely with Europe must be accompanied by a strategy of a stable and cooperative East. The success of this strategy lies in the successful moderation of the Chinese geopolitical concerns, which are the following:

1) To reduce the dangers inherent in China's potential geographical environment due to: US security links with Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, vulnerability to China's naval access to the Indian Ocean via the Malacca Strait and beyond to the Middle East, Africa, Europe,

2) To establish for itself a favoured position in the emerging neo-linguistic community and also in the already existing ASEAN,

3) To consolidate Pakistan as a counterweight to India,

4) To gain a significant advantage over Russia in economic influence in Central Asia and Mongolia, thus partially meeting China's natural resource needs, also in areas

closer to China than Africa or Latin America, to resolve China's remaining unresolved legacy of the Taiwan Civil War,

5) To establish a favoured economic and indirect political presence in several countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. (Brzezinski, 2012).

However, the geopolitical battle for power will be fought in a political and geographical area different from the last century. Europe has ceased to focus on geopolitical and geostrategic considerations of key actors. Robert Kaplan predicts that the battle will shift from the European coast to the east.

According to Kaplan, the Great Indian Ocean, which stretches east from the Horn of Africa along the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian highlands and the Indian subcontinent to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, could be an iconic map for a new century like Europe to the last. We can locate the tense dialogue between Western and Islamic civilisations, the ganglia of global energy routes, and the quiet, seemingly unstoppable domination of India and China over land and sea. (Kaplan, 2010).

In such previously described world geopolitical constellation position of the Western Balkans and from the perspective of North Macedonia, one gets the impression that the region and the country have been turned into a geopolitical laboratory. In that laboratory, geopolitical experiments find applications in creating the geopolitical landscape in the Western Balkans region. Let us look only at the policies of the EU enlargement. The recent events allude to the fact that North Macedonia must accept everything, primarily to its detriment, to step on the European path. Something that is not provided in the basic guidelines and preconditions for EU membership. Hence, we will point out several possible scenarios to bring sound conclusions and forecasts for what awaits North Macedonia on its path of the enlargement process.

Scenario 1. The European Union is moving from the principle of unanimity to a qualified majority in decision-making on enlargement. In this way, if North Macedonia starts to reform with significant results, it will be a good argument for EU member states for the country's capacity to meet the requirements set out in the new enlargement methodology. The EU process for North Macedonia will be open with a qualified majority.

Scenario 2. For economic gain, membership in the European Economic Community (EEA), but without political unity. A long pause in the enlargement process until 2030, and in the meantime, the strengthening of the European Neighborhood Policy, which does not include accession, has offered privileged partnerships.

Scenario 3. Without serious EU efforts to integrate the Western Balkans, the region is moving towards Chinese hegemony and possibly Russian destabilisation. The pandemic and the crisis of American democracy have shown us that the West is not recovering democratically. Further analysis shows the possible transition to at least binary US-Chinese hegemony and Chinese hegemony in the long run.

Scenario 4. Stagnation of the enlargement process and putting the Balkan countries in uncertainty, with the option of a "mini-Schengen" zone.

Scenario 5. Return of US diplomacy to the Balkans, assisted by German diplomacy or return of so-called "bulldozer diplomacy" to close open disputes in the Balkans, but with possible adverse effects, in the long run, after the EU project. (Mileski and Klimoska, 2021).

Hybrid threats and hybrid warfare

In the 21st century, hybrid threats are becoming a dominant security challenge for Western nations and their critical infrastructures. Their appearance reflects a significant change in international relations. Due to the complexity and ambiguous nature of hybrid threats, such a change tends to increase feelings of insecurity and, historically, to increase dissent in societies. In such a situation, some people look for answers in the past, while others forget the past. Some trends advocate adaptation to emerging conditions and change, and some try to defend the so-called status quo. All these perceptions indicate that the image of the security environment is not just black or white. It is complex, multilayered and multidimensional. Hence, a proper analysis of what has changed, how it is changing and what it means for democracies is at the core of understanding the nature of the current security environment in Europe and the World.

Regarding Treverton, six significant changes bring hybrid threats to the forefront. The first is the changing nature of the world order. Modern developments indicate that relational power - the power to change other people's beliefs, attitudes, preferences, opinions, expectations, emotions and/or predispositions to action - is more critical today than material power. This change is used by the great and middle powers to increase their international status and gain certain benefits.

Second, the World sees a new type of network-based action or the dark side of globalisation. The internal and external dimensions of security are more closely interlinked than in recent decades. The role of the nation-state is questioned, as is the role of alliances with several norms and rules that limit responses to asymmetric and antagonistic actions.

Third, rapidly evolving technologies, their literal revolution, are challenging new domains such as cyberspace, where national and international game rules have yet to be created. Space is no longer a border, but an operational empire, which is also a challenge to traditional security thinking. In general, new technology provides new tools for influence.

In particular, the changing domain of information space and media landscape is the fourth significant change affecting today's security environment. Digitalisation and social media, as new creators of thought, have changed the speed at which information travels, how information is produced, and how people connect across national borders. This change has fueled the need to understand different political and strategic cultures because information produced in one country can be interpreted differently elsewhere. Information custodians are also changing. The Internet has become a new battleground where rules are still being formulated. False news, content confusion and "facts" based

on certain opinions agitate the public. Trust, one of the basic pillars of functional societies, is increasingly eroding.

The fifth change is the changing nature of conflict and war. In today's wars, soldiers should not die, and civilian casualties should be avoided. This finding has led to a debate about the blurred lines between war and peace. The situation with the blurred lines between war and peace is highlighted and poses a challenge to conventional military forces and internal law enforcement. It also fosters hybrid threats, which try to stay under open conflict. They are more and more like competitions between societies, not armies.

Finally, the sixth change refers to the change of generations. This means we have left behind the Cold War and even the post-Cold War era. The Cold War had two very different characteristics which maintained the world order: the relations of the superpowers and their ideological struggle between communism and capitalism dominated. At the same time, the fear of nuclear war guided many security policy decisions. During the post-Cold War era, globalisation, emphasising the ideas of integration and interdependence, became a modern way of describing the World. Today's new generation is a digital generation informed by two contradictory trends - cosmopolitanism and neo-nationalism. Historical memory also changes with the generations, which leaves room for political manipulation of historical events. (Treverton et al., 2018).

On another side, Frank Hoffman defines hybrid warfare as a series of different forms of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal activity. (Hoffman, 2007: 14). Supposing the critiques of the definitions of hybrid wars were mainly based on the reliance on non-state actors. In that case, Hoffman puts his definition by saying that hybrid wars can be conducted by both warring states and by different non-state actors.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of hybrid warfare is offered by Najžer. Namely, he emphasises that hybrid warfare is a unique form of low-level conflict that encompasses many capabilities. It is a deliberate covert fusion of conventional and unconventional warfare conducted under a single central government and led by a state or non-state actor. Hybrid warfare aims to achieve political goals that would not be achievable or would be too costly through any other form of warfare. The mix of the conventional and the unconventional allows the actor to exploit the strategic or doctrinal weakness of the opponent while maintaining the denial of involvement in the conflict and the strategic surprise. (Najžer, 2020: 29).

Terrorism as a hybrid threat

The changing nature of terrorism as a hybrid threat can be understood if we accept the conclusion that the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century is a critical period in the history of security when there is a rapid transition

from an analogue to a digitalised globalised world. In such an environment, there comes the transformation of terrorism, or as Antinori puts it, the "media morphology of terrorism". This process is a transformation in which the media are not only sources of information that generate terror, as provided by traditional propaganda strategies. The media generate terror as an asymmetric threat to the globalised contemporary reality through violent nexus: action-presentation.

Terrorism is taking on new methods and applying new environments. Theorists become e-theorists and apply "cyber terrorism", emphasising technology's role in the attack, digital terror and (cyber) social terrorism using social networks. (Antinori, 2019: 24).

Terrorism is one of the greatest threats that must be highlighted in all hybrid threats. Terrorists operate simultaneously in many countries, using deadly methods against European Union and NATO member states. In addition, all terrorist attacks hinder global cooperation in carrying out civilian and military missions to stabilise the host country's situation. The absence of timely action leads to the destabilisation of the situation in many countries.

It must be borne in mind that terrorist organisations, which are also perceived as "hybrid actors", can achieve real operational success by controlling large-scale territorial expansions in Syria and Iraq. In addition, the active presence of terrorists on social networks for propaganda is also an essential element of the hybrid activity. (Olech, A. 2021).

The changing nature of terrorist activity is becoming increasingly relevant in the efforts to build resilient societies and the need to build effective systems to protect critical infrastructure.

Hacker attacks and technologies that undermine the security

With its development, we live in a world where the Internet contributes to the online business making significant progress. The rapid development of the Internet has led to tremendous benefits such as e-commerce, email and easy access to vast amounts of data. This means that more and more computers are connecting to the Internet, wireless devices and networks. For these reasons, due to the innovative benefits of the Internet, the administration, the private industry and regular computer clients are increasingly concerned. And the fear of possible criminal hacking of their information or private data.

Hacking is the unauthorised use of computer systems. Hackers are programmers who bypass security systems, hack into someone else's computer or collect information without authorisation. (Kumar and Agarwal, 2018).

Critical infrastructure is not immune to this type of attack. Despite security systems, numerous examples of unauthorised outages and damage to critical infrastructure. The main features of hacking can be: unauthorised access to the information system, forced hacking or access to the security system, high professionalism and knowledge to achieve the intrusion of the system; usually, the place of attack is far from the place of the

attacker, the scope of a hacker attack can also be spying, fraud, embezzlement, theft of services, sabotage, spreading viruses, hackers usually act in groups or individually. As a result of such actions, especially in critical infrastructure, various consequences are possible, such as disruption of the protection system, blocking or slowing down the normal functioning of systems, unauthorised access, damage, modification or destruction of data, theft, illegal distribution of malware or the spread of viruses.

Analogous to the previous findings, the technological advancement provided by the 5G network has unique possibilities for practical use. The term 5G denotes the 5th generation of mobile telecommunications, the main feature being the speed of data transfer and the contents of the massively connected devices. Every global technical-technological innovation, in addition to the additional ones, also hides opportunities for abuse and use of technology that undermine security.

Critical infrastructure, defence, and security are not immune to the potential threats of 5G technology. The West's controversies and general attitude regarding the withdrawal or ban of Huawei, the technology giant from China, are known. The potential dangers of this technology, where the Chinese Government, through its control of the wireless and telecommunications pillar in the World, will use 5G technology such as a Trojan horse for commercial and military purposes or espionage and hybrid warfare. (Evans, 2020)

In technologies that undermine security, we can classify the increasing use of drones. Interestingly, these innovative technologies are associated with the term "grey zone" and the strategic landscape that will increasingly portray challenges in the grey zone that are neither total war nor complete peace. RAND Corporation defines the grey area as a functional space between peace and war, which includes coercive actions to change the status quo below the threshold that, in most cases, would prompt a conventional military response, often by blurring the line between military and non-military action. In the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) publications, the grey area strategy is defined as an effort or series of deterrents and assurances outside the steady state that seeks to achieve its security goals without resorting to direct and effective use of force. By engaging in the grey zone strategy, the actor tries to avoid crossing the threshold that results in war.

The changing nature of warfare, the strategy of hybrid wars, hybrid threats, proxy and cyber warfare allow more frequent use of drones. Military drones are actively used for operational use in two missions: reconnaissance and targeted killings. In doing so, their unique unmanned functions are helpful in such missions. In addition, drones are considered less expensive in terms of international reputation. (Hwang, 2021).

This development further increases the vulnerability of critical infrastructure. Particular targets for drone strikes may include fuel or water storage plants, pipelines, power distribution plants, and food supply sites with minimal or no staff. (Pledger, 2021). This means that even in that domain, the resilience and protection of critical infrastructure must be constantly upgraded and improved.

Climate change

Today, the World lives in a dynamic time where the intensity and catastrophic consequences of changes in the field of the environment impose the need for serious observation of natural events. They are more and more often manifested and more and more seriously endanger the security of the states and individuals, but they also affect the protection of critical infrastructure.

In a changing international constellation of conditions, relations and processes, climate change is a phenomenon that ranks high in political and academic debates. However, what is the nature of climate change? How do they affect and threaten critical infrastructure, and how do they generally model relations between countries, regions and the entire international community?

Unlike traditional strategic security concepts related to military action, climate change highlights how human security is at stake and how actors can take advantage of or force environmental change to undermine opponents. It has been written since the time of Sun Tzu that creating vulnerability in the opponent is too expensive, except for taking advantage of environmental factors. It is evident that, in the twenty-first century, we also see opportunities for asymmetric action against adversaries by opening up to environmental vulnerabilities. (Briggs, 2020).

For instance, the answer to the modern challenges of climate change in the energy sphere should be in the synergy between improving the resilience of the energy-critical infrastructure to extreme climate events and the transition to energy with less carbon. Paying for and restoring climate damage could jeopardise the financing of the transition to renewable energy and other low-carbon measures. Financing the transition to clean energy in the face of growing climate change will require creative options from policymakers and businesses. Innovative public-private structures will need to be considered when finding options for climate adaptation of energy systems. (Ogden et al., 2019)

A Case Study: North Macedonia

Macedonian society is not exempt from global political, security and economic currents. Macedonian society is in a starting position regarding the protection of critical infrastructure. It requires, before establishing the strategic and national framework for ensuring effective steps towards building an efficient system for the protection and resilience of critical infrastructure, to choose the approach to the optimal model and start its implementation. The optimal model based on the best practices of the "voluntary" and "mandated" approach in protecting critical infrastructure should be built on other countries' good practices and experiences. Considering that the beginning of the construction of the critical infrastructure protection system is already late, the comparative and analytical approach is set as a top priority in order to start decisively creating the preconditions for fulfilling the concept of protection and resilience of critical infrastructure and with that, greater resistance of the Macedonian society.

At the beginning of creating social resilience, protection and resilience of critical infrastructure, we must know what to achieve. The EU model (Directive 2008/114/EC) is more protection oriented, although, since 2012, social resilience (resilience of communities) and resilience of critical infrastructure have been increasingly mentioned. It should be noted that there are other models, such as the Nordic model, where resistance to vital social functions is the main priority. In the organisational and technological domains, this Nordic approach is more visible in social resilience, where the key players are the national and local authorities. Regarding critical infrastructure operators, the concept of resilience is still quite abstract and has no concrete operationalisation. The open dilemma remains that the interaction between authorities and critical infrastructure operators, whether discussed in terms of regulation, state support, public-private partnership or corporate social responsibility, persists as a weak link in achieving critical infrastructure resilience in practice. The big question is whether it can be achieved at all. A review of the Nordic countries' conceptual approaches to critical infrastructure crises nevertheless gives the impression that these countries are pretty "progressive" and have always had a broader and more holistic philosophy than the one initially offered by the European Commission, based on the priority of critical infrastructure protection. (Pursiainen, C. 2018)

Analysing numerous literature (Mottahedi et al. 2021) and placing it in correlation with the changing strategic environment, hybrid threats and new technologies that undermine security, we can offer a unique model for building a comprehensive system for the protection of critical infrastructure in North Macedonia. This means constantly upgrading social resilience, establishing a CI protection system and upgrading the existing models with what we have called the concept of critical infrastructure system elasticity. In doing so, we mean reducing the recovery time of the CI systems or returning to the pre-disrupted state. Hence, social resilience and protection should be a function of the CI system resilience.

Possible model of CI protection and resilience

Strategic framework. It analyses the approaches and models for protecting critical infrastructure and the knowledge that critical infrastructure is a platform for maintaining the development of every society and state. The state government should be included in the system of protection of critical infrastructure as a proposer of laws and bylaws and has the task of authorising certain ministries to be coordinators of the whole system. The Government provides a strategic framework that is essential for the successful functioning of the system, cooperation, communication and coordination of all actors involved. The Government also designates (by separate decision) the sectors of certain critical infrastructures to provide a holistic approach to the protection and mitigation of negative impacts in the event of a threat to critical infrastructure.

After the Government, the next most important factor is the coordinator (a specific ministry) of the entire system to protect critical infrastructure. There are various

examples and practices regarding which body is appropriate for this role. In many European countries, the post is assigned to the Ministries of the Interior. Hence, different solutions and practices exist, but each country should recognise the most appropriate model. From the comprehensive analysis, it can be suggested that the Ministry of Defense or the Ministry of Interior be the coordinator of the entire critical infrastructure protection system. If the MoD/MoI is the coordinator of the system, it will communicate directly with all system and international actors and submit reports to the Government. An organisational approach to the implementation of critical infrastructure protection in the European Union and countries aspiring to full membership (such as the Republic of North Macedonia) is given in Directive 2008/114 / EC on the identification and designation of critical European infrastructure and the assessment of the need to improve their protection - a vital document of the European Union for critical infrastructure. In order to be able to take a decisive step towards the implementation of the above, a few initial recommendations are useful for policymakers:

First. Proposal for preparation of a Strategy for the protection of critical infrastructure as a separate strategic document. This strategy should be a synthesis of decisive and binding views that are closely related to the protection of critical infrastructure. The commitments should address current and future security challenges and threats at the national, regional and broader levels, independently and in cooperation with allies and partners within the Collective Security Systems - NATO. However, the strategic solution should be a framework that determines the development component and the role of all entities in strengthening the protection of critical infrastructure and its resilience. A separate strategic solution would be a longer-term and more comprehensive option than updating certain strategic documents that would shorten the time to start specific activities.

Second. Under the assumption that a need has been identified to review the existing or develop a new national security strategy, it is necessary to devote space to the critical infrastructure in the strategy. It is undisputed that the National Security Strategy should include a section on critical infrastructure. The factual situation indicates that the critical infrastructure is mentioned in the 2020 Defense Strategy.

Namely, the Defence Strategy derives from the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, the permanent provisions of the National Concept for Security and Defence, the Law on Defence and the strategic commitment of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to integrate into the Euro-Atlantic structures. Critical infrastructure is mentioned as one of the greatest threats to national security.

Third. If a Cyber Security Strategy exists or is in the process of being developed, critical infrastructure may be mentioned. Such a strategy was prepared in 2018, and it has parts that are aimed at protecting the critical information infrastructure as part of the overall critical infrastructure. An Action Plan for protecting critical information infrastructure has also been adopted. (National Cyber Security Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018-2022). Protecting the critical infrastructure is

recognised and stated as a strategic goal within the National Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia for the fight against terrorism 2018-2022. (National Counter-Terrorism Strategy BPT, 2018).

Normative framework. Normatively, a law on the protection of critical infrastructure could be proposed. Until it passes all the envisaged stages for its adoption, the topic of critical infrastructure may be temporarily regulated by another law or bylaw. (it is assumed that the procedures for this are shorter, and the problem can be temporarily fixed faster).

When drafting the critical infrastructure regulations, the recommendation is to regulate the energy and transport areas primarily - the European Union requires these two segments from its member states and those who intend to join. If the other sectors of the critical infrastructure are involved, the experience of Croatia can be repeated at the very beginning to slow down and complicate the process. Therefore, it is recommended to start with the energy and transport sectors. The possibilities for regulating critical European infrastructure should be foreseen in the forthcoming normative solutions (law and bylaws).

It is especially important to state the security coordinator in the law or bylaws, who is a key figure in all bodies and organs which will be in charge of matters related to critical infrastructure. The Minister determines who will be the Security Coordinator for Critical Infrastructure in his/her ministry. In contrast, the Director General of the facility designated as Critical Infrastructure determines who will be the Security Coordinator. Experience shows that there are study programs that train staff for security coordinators. Such is the case in Romania, which allows individuals to be trained as security coordinators and seek employment in ministries or critical infrastructure facilities. If this example is followed, in addition to creating and accrediting such study programs, it is necessary to include a new work post of a security coordinator for critical infrastructure in the job classification in the country.

Furthermore, the place or role of public-private partnerships should be emphasised in the law or bylaws. This is extremely important as part of the critical infrastructure is operated by private companies. The 2020 Private Security Act does not contain any benchmarks related to critical infrastructure.

An essential segment in the law or bylaws should be the emphasis on schooling, education and training.

Organisational framework. The organisational aspects of implementing the measures and activities for protecting critical infrastructure should belong to the newly established Critical Infrastructure Protection Centre. For these reasons, the Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior may be an excellent choice to be the state coordinating body for this process. This is because the Centre should collect data and coordinate activities. It is also important to state in the law or bylaws that the work on protecting critical infrastructure will take place through the Critical Infrastructure Protection Centre.

It is very important to avoid blocking the process from the beginning. The secrecy marks at the beginning should be the lowest possible. In creating strategic and legal solutions, an inter-ministerial group should be formed, including a wider circle of experts, from universities, ministries, chambers, and the private sector. After adopting the law, it is further necessary to regulate the individual processes with bylaws.

Following the adoption of the strategy and the law, it is necessary to start constructing the critical infrastructure protection system. It is important to note that the system is built with the help of education, workshops and learning all the factors in that process. Optimally, we would point out the need to create a five-year action plan. (Mitrevska et al. 2019).

Conclusion

The previous findings conclude that Macedonian society is late in creating an efficient critical infrastructure protection system. The intensity of adverse events, natural or anthropogenic, empirically shows that even more developed societies face problems in establishing effective critical infrastructure protection systems. The personal experience of other countries indicates that analytically and comparatively, we can draw solid benefits and timely prevent any shortcomings in the construction of the protection system.

From the very beginning, the complexity of the wide range of sectors within the critical infrastructure indicates the realisation that the process of building the system is long and laborious. If this is followed by the complexity of the policies for critical infrastructure protection and the latest trends in applying the concept of resilience, we may conclude that the newly established dynamics of risks and threats require new responses from the security systems. This means establishing new institutions within the security system that, as their integral part, with an interdisciplinary approach, will analyse the latest trends in risks and threats according to different criteria. Traditional elements of security systems would not be very effective in dealing with modern risks and threats, especially cyber threats and the like. Hence, space must be allowed for scientific institutions, the private sector and several other entities that directly or indirectly contribute to critical infrastructure work.

The Macedonian critical infrastructure protection system must be based on the model in development and, at the same time, integrate the concepts of social resilience, protection and elasticity of critical infrastructure. It may be too ambitious initially, but it is better to keep in mind the latest trends in developing critical infrastructure protection systems from the outset. Only in this way is a modern, resilient society amenable to development through the efficient functioning of critical infrastructure. This includes networks for the uninterrupted provision of public services, improving the quality of life, and maintaining private profits and economic growth.

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A CONTEMPORARY SECURITY THREAT TO NORTH MACEDONIA: SECURITIZATION OF EMIGRATION AND THE CORRUPTION IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Mitko ARNAUDOV[1]

Abstract: *North Macedonia, as a permanent NATO member state, is facing contemporary security threats which do not bring into question its territorial integrity and political independence, but rather its long-term sustainability from an economic and political perspective. Although this state gained its independence in a period and in a region that was extremely unstable, from a security point of view, taking into account the armed clashes and the civil wars on the territories of former Yugoslav federation, its security threats, especially after 2001, have changed essentially. Although it attained its foreign policy goal for full-fledged NATO membership in 2020, North Macedonia was mainly a stable country from the perspective of foreign, so-called hard threats, but meanwhile it has become a vulnerable state as a consequence of its internal issues. The weak economic performances, unstable and corrupt public and political infrastructure, as well as the high rate of emigration of its citizens, as a consequence of internal instability, have brought the sustainability of North Macedonia into question. Analyzing the key contemporary security threats to North Macedonia represents the goal of this paper, as well as establishing how NATO membership contributes to overcoming these threats, and providing recommendations for the future authorities in resolving the afore-stated risks and threats.*

Key words: *North Macedonia, contemporary, internal threats, NATO membership, political and economic instability.*

Introduction

As Koser wrote in 2011, the securitization of migrants and migration itself is continuously utilized throughout the world. Germans were associated within the UK society during the WWII as the "5th columnists", while Kurdish and Algerian Diasporas were connected with terrorist attacks in Western Europe in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the perspective on migration as a threat to national security has definitely risen in the past few years, considering that security awareness has become more implemented and spread world-wide, across many aspects of society, mostly as a feedback to the rapid rise in the number of international migrants (214 million in 2010 according to the International Organization for Migration) and especially of 'irregular' or 'illegal' migrants (estimates vary from 30-50 million worldwide**)** (Koser, 2011). However, in this paper we will analyze the securitization of emigration, respectively, the way it contributes to the creation of economic problems in small countries, using the example of North Macedonia.

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In the West, between the two world wars, due to the deep economic crisis and the Great Depression, the concept of national interest referred primarily to the social and economic well-being of the state (Ejdus, 2012, 159). Already in 1952, Arnold Wolfers recorded this transformation as follows: «The change in the understanding of the national interest from welfare to security is understandable. Today we live under the influence of the Cold War and the threat of external aggression rather than economic depression and social reforms» (Wolfers, 1952, 482, op. cit). Until the seventies of the last century, as Ejdus stated, economic problems, although implicitly present in all security considerations, were not explicitly linked to national security issues. In the Western Balkans, that trend lasted longer than three decades. States in this part of Europe, and respectively the political authorities, did not interpret economic problems as security challenges, and moreover, did not present economic problems as real problems in society. On the other hand, taking the example of the USA, the National Security Strategy of the USA from 1991 clearly and unequivocally states for the first time that «national security and economic strength are inseparable» (National Security Strategy of the United States, 1991, op.cit.). This perception was accompanied by institutional adjustment. Thus, for example, in 1993, it was decided to create a position in the US National Security Council for the Minister of Finance, as well as for the President's Assistant for Economic Affairs (Ejdus, 2012, 160). In addition, the National Economic Council was established in the USA, modeled after the National Security Council (De Souza, 2000).

If we return again to the region of the Western Balkans, we can very easily, only on the basis of media articles, determine that national representatives of economic and financial institutions are once in a while involved in the activities of national security councils, which are mainly composed of the highest state leadership, the top of the army, as well as the ministers of defense, interior affairs and justice. The composition of state security councils is a testimony of how marginalized economic challenges are in the context of creating and implementing national security strategies. From today's perspective, the marginalization of economic challenges in the security context opens up new problems for a country that affect its sustainability in the long term, taking into account that they create a so-called internal invisible enemy.

In this paper, using the example of North Macedonia, as a NATO member state, we will try to analyze how economic issues determine the security flows in this country from the one side, while, from the other side, how much corruption in the public system brings into question the stability of the state, regardless of whether it is secure from so-called hard threats, as political sovereignty and political integrity. It is a state in the Western Balkans which, since it declared its independence, in 1991, for more than thirty years, it is facing with the phenomenon of huge emigration flow as a consequence of unsustainable economic system, low investment inflows, political instability, as well as high rates of corruption within political and public infrastructure. If we analyze the results of the census in North Macedonia held in September 2021, we can find out that it had lost above two hundred thousand citizens from 2001 to 2021, because in 2011, opposite to European practice, the census was stopped. Despite the declining birth rate, migration is regarded as the number one cause for this situation. In fact, the 2002 census registered 2,022,547 inhabitants, while in 2021 there were 1,836,713 (Samardjiev, 2022). From a strategic point of view, taking into account the fact that it is a small country, losing almost ten percent of its citizens represents essential internal issue that problematizes the ongoing economic flows, but also the potential future economic growth, as well as the state investment strategies. The significant emigration of the citizens capable for employment and qualified population of North Macedonia is becoming a contemporary internal security problem in this country and is leading to the securitization of the issue of emigration. In fact, it is a modern security challenge

faced by developing countries. Why is population emigration in North Macedonia a security challenge? On the one hand, in the short term it contributes to the reduction of unemployment rate (governments in developing countries usually abuse such data) analyzed from a statistical point of view. This creates an unreal image that the number of unemployed is decreasing, also in a statistical sense. But, in the long term, such a trend affects the sustainability of the system in North Macedonia. First, from the perspective of the sustainability of the pension system, there will be a lack of labor in North Macedonia that will be able to create surplus value for the purpose of the pension system sustainability. Second, the lack of qualified labor will contribute to the emergence of deficit professions, such as the medical profession (a large number of the medically educated population decides to look for work in Western European countries). Third, North Macedonia will automatically lose its attractiveness for foreign investments due to the lack of labor force. And all this will contribute to the unsustainability of the public system of this country, which will give rise to new security challenges and consequently will open the question: How to make the country sustainable in the long term without a stable and sustainable labor market?

Emigration as an invisible ongoing security issue in North Macedonia

The question of migration as a problem has attracted the focus of the European and the world public for many years. It came into the spotlight of world's and European politics during the refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016 when large waves of population from Asia and then from North Africa started their movement to the developed countries in Europe causing administrative, financial, and political problems, both in the countries of transit, as well as in the countries of final destination (Lutovac, 2018, 9 op. cit.). In the case of North Macedonia, we have to point out that the security threats which this country faced at the beginning of the nineties, even during the conflict in its northwestern parts, were not the essential cause for increasing the rate of emigration among the population. In fact, the highest rate of migration of the Macedonian population was recorded in 2001, during the armed conflict in the north-western parts which we already mentioned, but in this case, it was primarily the internal migration of the population, on the territory of North Macedonia. According to official data, based on the dates provided by the Macedonian Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, during the eight months of conflict, there were over 140.000 displaced persons in North Macedonia (Popovski, Naumova, 17, op. cit.). But, the important thing in the context of armed conflict and migration, is that in the year after the conflict ended, 2002, approximately 90% of the population displaced during the conflict, gradually returned to their homes (Popovski, Naumova, 18 op. cit.).

On the other hand, the real problem of emigration of its population that North Macedonia is continuously facing during the last thirteen years is caused by the unwillingness of the national and public system to face with the modern security challenges that are not related to the so-called "traditional" or "hard" threats of sovereign states, such as threats to political sovereignty and territorial integrity. Low living standards, low income, lack of jobs for qualified labor, together with

political clientelism and corruption have greatly contributed to the encouragement of increasing emigration in Macedonian society. The Macedonian political elite has not found an appropriate strategy that, on the one hand, will attract foreign investors and thus dynamize the Macedonian economy, while, on the other hand, keep the young and qualified workforce in the country in order to have basic capacities and prerequisites for attracting foreign investments. In that context, as Gocevski and Gjurovski have stated, the theories of security and peace unequivocally indicate that one of the key factors for the promotion and preservation of world peace is precisely raising the level of economic development of countries (Gocevski, Gjurovski, 2017 pp.20. op.cit.). Today the Republic of North Macedonia, although it is NATO member state, is facing security threats such as economic underdevelopment, weak and dysfunctional institutions, as well as a health system that does not respond to the modern challenges in the field of public health. These challenges create intra-institutional security challenges, while the institutional infrastructure of North Macedonia causes contemporary security threats which directly threaten the security of citizens in the context of creating conditions for normal life. Based on it, numerous young citizens of North Macedonia are deciding to emigrate because they are not satisfied with the living conditions that the public system in this country provides. Thus, the emigration process creates additional security challenge for North Macedonia, bearing in mind the fact that this state loses its working age population, so it brings into question its sustainability on long term basis.

As one of the most actual examples, we can analyze the fight against Covid-19 pandemic in North Macedonia. Opposite the claims of political authorities in North Macedonia, NATO membership of North Macedonia did not enable better conditions for overcoming the contemporary security threats faced by North Macedonia's citizens. Although NATO allies, through the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), provided different and comprehensive types of assistance to North Macedonia in the fight during the Covid-19 pandemic, the internal institutional and systematic problems and issues in this country, including pervasive political corruption at all levels of governing, were a crucial reason for such negative trends during the pandemic. According to data from 1 September 2022, North Macedonia, from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, has registered 340.510 cases, from which 329.434 recovered patients and 9.490 deaths, which position this country in the group of European countries with the highest rate of mortality due to the pandemic (Worldometers, 2022). In fact, during Covid-19, North Macedonia pandemic applied more or less the same measures as its neihboring countries. Basically, all of them, within the Western Balkans region, applied „copy-paste" measures in the fight against Covid-19, but North Macedonia fared the worst, because it had the largest number of new Covid-19 cases and deaths in relation to the number of citizens. The difference between North Macedonia and the other neighboring states was only in the measures for entering and leaving the

country, where state quarantine was obligatory for Macedonian citizens, as well as for foreigners (Mirilović, 2022). During the Covid-19 pandemic, the citizens of North Macedonia were faced with numerous systemic inconsistencies, which led to a sudden increase of the number of infected people, but also to a high mortality rate due to the inconsistency and inefficiency of the national health system. Poverty is closely related to other threats to human security, such as disease and hunger. A large number of infectious diseases that have spread throughout the world in the last few decades, such as SARS, AIDS, hepatitis C, the H5N1 virus or Ebola, originated precisely in the poorest countries of the world (Ejdus, 2012, 169). In the case of North Macedonia, the Covid-19 virus did not appear on its territory, as it is example in many poor countries on the African continent, but the consequences in the fight against this pandemic were a real indicator of the vulnerability of this country in a systemic sense, and therefore an indicator of the vulnerability of its population as a result of the systemic inefficiency and dysfunction.

From the other side, political flows are also one of the key determinators which bring about high rates of emigration, at the same time making this process as one of the crucial internal security issues, namely, securitazation of the emigration process in North Macedonia. In fact, the Republic of North Macedonia has always been considered a highly intensive migration area, characterized by both exhaustive inner movements of its citizens, as well as continuous emigration processes towards other countries (Sotiroski, Hristoski, 2014, 33 op. cit.) Almost 2/3 of the emigration flows are directed towards some of the European countries (Germany, Switzerland, Italy and other), out of which 12.1% towards America and almost 10% towards Australia and Oceania (Apostolovska-Toshevska, Madjevikj, Ljakoska, Gorin, Radevski, Dimitrovska, 2018, 61 op. cit). Based on the Eurostat data (2014), in the European countries alone, the number of Macedonian citizens increased from 135,000 in 2000 to 240,000 in 2014. "The largest increase is noticed in the receiving countries of the European Union, especially in 2011, after the stagnation during the economic and financial crisis (2008–2010) (Apostolovska-Toshevska, Madjevikj, Ljakoska, Gorin, Radevski, Dimitrovska, 2018, 63 op. cit.). Apart from this trend of permanent emigration, many young people, mainly students, go to work abroad for a limited period of time through employment agencies or students' "work and travel" and "internship" programs. Most of them work in Germany, Italy, Austria, Sweden, the USA, Canada and Australia (Apostolovska-Toshevska, Madjevikj, Ljakoska, Gorin, Radevski, Dimitrovska, 2018, 62 op. cit.). The major political influence based on narrow political and political party interests in the creation of economic policies contributes to the unfavorable economic situation in North Macedonia that directly threatens the inhabitants of this country who reject the so-called clientelistic model of ensuring economic sustainability. The great indifference and inferiority of the youth population in North Macedonia, especially students, who should be the generators and critical mass of society, is evident. The latest

research detects an increasing mass exodus of young people, especially intellectuals from North Macedonia, who are most often looking for a „better tomorrow“ in the Western Europe countries. This trend of «brain drain» is becoming more and more worrying and is the topic of many formal and informal youth meetings (Fazlagić, 2013). In that context, the current President of the Republic of North Macedonia has said that „Young people in the region have the right to look for work around the world if politicians do not provide a proper perspective. They only have one life, we all have one life and no one is crazy to spend it while negotiations with the EU last for years, and the average salary in the country is 400 Euros. The chance to keep young people in the region is in the Western Balkans to start using their own resources“ (Samardjiev, 2022).

According to World Bank statistics, half a million Macedonians already live abroad. That is about a quarter of the total population. One of the Macedonians who already lives and works abroad says that a good job in North Macedonia requires political connections (Dojče Vele, 2020 op. cit.). In fact, such tendencies bring into question the sustainability of North Macedonia as a state because of three key reasons: first, this country is continuously losing its working-age population and qualified workforce, second, the decreasing number of working-age population makes the national pension system unsustainable, third, the country is becoming less and less attractive for new investments as a consequence of the deficit of qualified workers on the labor market. Intensive variations in the official statistics data for 2012 and 2013 between the OSCE and the State Bureau of Statistics of North Macedonia testify to the fact that North Macedonia does not lead a strategic policy when it comes to migration flows. Thus, according to the data of the State Statistics of North Macedonia, in 2012, 1,330 inhabitants emigrated from that country, while in 2013, only 945. On the other hand, according to OSCE official data, 17,530 inhabitants emigrated from North Macedonia in 2012, while in 2013, as many as 20,562 (Vračić, 2018). In the countries of the region, there are no exact statistical data on the number of young people who have permanently emigrated since the beginning of the new millennium, and all estimates are based on the OSCE database for the period from 2012 to 2016. During that period, an average of slightly more than 9,500, mostly young people left North Macedonia annually (Radio Slobodna Evropa/CDM, 2022 op. cit.). According to the World Bank data, in the last ten years, half a million citizens have emigrated from North Macedonia, most of whom are young.

The research conducted by the German foundation «Friedrich Ebert», on 1200 respondents, shows that only eight percent of young population want to stay in North Macedonia, while two thirds of young people want to emigrate (Večer, 2020). North Macedonia does not have its own statistics on migration flows in the last few decades. UN figures show that at the end of 2019 the number of migrants was approximately 650,000, or almost a third of the population (Samardjiev, 2022).

Given the discrepancy between the national and international source estimates, it is likely that official figures do not capture the actual level of emigration from Macedonia. Emigration is largely economically driven, owing to poor business and employment opportunities in Macedonia (Economist Intelligence, 2017). Poor living conditions of young people in North Macedonia is evidenced also by the fact that an increasing number of them want to continue their lives abroad. According to the latest research, 58 percent of young people say that they would move out of the country, and 64.8 percent are dissatisfied with their place in the country. According to the research of the Foundation for Democracy in Westminster, there is a high degree of youth dissatisfaction in North Macedonia related the fact how state authorities take care of this category of people and we there is a huge discrepancy between the opportunities and needs of young people at the local level and central level (Dojče Vele, 2022 op. cit.).

When it comes concretely to the corruption in North Macedonia public sector, the European Commission Annual report from 2022 states that the most vulnerable sectors to corruption require targeted risk assessments and dedicated actions (European Commission/ North Macedonia 2022 Report, 2022). "Corruption remains prevalent in many areas and is an issue of concern", is stated in the European Commission Annual Report for North Macedonia in 2022 (European Commission/ North Macedonia 2022 Report, 2022). Bearing in mind the high rate of corruption in North Macedonia, the European Commission has suggested to the authorities in North Macedonia to continue the action to fight corruption by increasing support to the bodies responsible for implementing the national strategy for the prevention of corruption and conflict of interests and effectively enforce GRECO's recommendations, allocate sufficient resources to the Office of the Basic Public Prosecutor for Organized Crime and Corruption, including financial experts, in order to ensure effective accountability for high-level corruption cases, continue to increase the number of final convictions in high-level corruption cases, including the confiscation of criminal assets, value-based confiscation, extended confiscation and third-party confiscation (European Commission/ North Macedonia 2022 Report, 2022). The expectations related to the fight against corruption in North Macedonia from the European Commission perspective are very high, but the reality is quite different. The authorities in North Macedonia, as well as the political representatives from the political parties in the opposition, continue to lead the political, institutional and public flows in that state in a manner that does not contribute to efficient and effective fight against pervasive corruption which determines: weak economic system, vulnerable public sector, social instability and, as a consequence of all these – a huge rate of emigration.

Development of the corruption index in North Macedonia 2003 - 2021

Year	North Macedonia	Europe	Worldwide
2021	61	41.0	56.8
2020	65	41.2	56.7
2019	65	40.6	56.8
2018	63	40.3	56.9
2017	65	40.2	56.9
2016	63	40.8	57.1
2015	58	40.5	57.5
2014	55	41.6	56.8
2013	56	42.2	57.4
2012	57	42.4	56.8
2011	61	44.1	59.7
2010	59	44.0	59.9
2009	62	42.8	59.7
2008	64	42.3	59.8
2007	67	41.6	60.1
2006	73	41.4	59.1
2005	73	41.2	59.1
2004	73	41.6	58.3
2003	77	42.0	57.6

Source: The data is determined annually by Transparency International

In that context, as an explanation of the rate of corruption in North Macedonia, the causes of corruption lie in part in political and cultural reasons. Ineffective law enforcement may further promote it. It is striking that it is regularly lower in democratically governed countries (form of government in North Macedonia: Parliamentary republic). Similarly, higher corruption occurs predominantly in low-income countries. In North Macedonia, per capita income is 6,130 USD annually, which is relatively low by global standards. The comparatively low cost of living indicates low prosperity and socioeconomic problems (WorldData.info, 2021).

Therefore, the reasoning is that in these areas, the state (North Macedonia) should try to find solutions[2] that will attract young people to stay in their country. The

[2] Aiming to stop the negative migration trends in North Macedonia, the authorities have adopted the Government Program 2022-2024, which provides support for each employed person up to the age of 29 who will be employed for the first time, for all those who have not yet developed employment skills to

most common emigrants are highly educated staff from the field of medical professions and engineering that have gone to EU member states in recent years in Scandinavia, Germany, Britain (Dojče Vele, 2022 op. cit.). Better work conditions and economic perspective are not the only reasons for young people to leave North Macedonia. Although North Macedonia has a National Strategy for cooperation and preventing the brain-drain of young and high-quality personnel 2013-2020, it is not yet implemented, according to the analysis of the Brain Drain Prevention Network - composed of seven civil society organizations working in various areas related to development of young people, youth policies and rights and youth information (Večer, 2020 op. cit.). The emigration of the population of North Macedonia, especially young and educated population, is a pervasive problem of this country, which in the medium and long term affects not only the overcoming of existing systemic problems, but also the creation of new challenges that permanently block all potentials for the development of this country. Although Macedonia benefits from the remittances of its citizens abroad, during the vacation and summer period, the high level of emigration has negative implications on population growth, public finances and the country's economic growth potential (Economist Intelligence, 2017).

Conclusion

Unlike the states in Western Europe which are facing migrant issues as external security threats, bearing in mind the huge waves of migrants during the last ten years intending to reach western European countries, North Macedonia is facing with emigration on the internal level. While European countries are focusing on migrant flows as potential security threats, bearing in mind the different types of persons who intend to get the status of asylum seekers, including different radical, extremist and potential terrorist groups, North Macedonia is facing with emigration of its domestic citizens. It is securitization of migration on two levels. Western European countries are dealing with migration as an outside security issue, trying to secure the national system and infrastructure from certain migrants with radical potentials. From the other side, migration, more concretely emigration in North Macedonia has become a security issue as a consequence of internal institutional problems which this state is facing. Emigration in North Macedonia during the last twenty years represents a consequence of internal problems, such as institutional corruption, unsustainable economic system, unefficient public institutions. On the next level, emigration as a consequence in North Macedonia has become a security issue by itself. It has produced additional security issues, bearing in mind that the huge flows of emigration of young, qualified and working-age population brings into question the sustainability of the national system at all levels. The labor market is facing a deficit of working-age and qualified workers, the pension system is becoming too extensive, so it cannot be covered by the actual economic dynamic in the state and the economic system becomes unsustainable because it is unable to produce new values without a work force, as a precondition for any economic

do so through practice, a personal tax refund is provided for income of all newly employed young people under 30 years of age, support is foreseen in the opening of youth centers and local youth councils, with the aim of involving young people in decision-making processes and increasing the capacities of young people. op. cit.

operation. Such extensive emigration in North Macedonia, followed by a high rate of mortality brings into question the sustainability of the state in the long term. That is key *differentia specifica* between migration as a security issue in Western Europe, on the one side, and in North Macedonia, on the other side. For Western Europe, it is an external security issue which requires mechanisms for early detection and adjustment, while in the case of North Macedonia, it is an internal issue which requires comprehensive and profound systematic reform for dealing with it in the context of lowering the rates of emigration. Today, North Macedonia is facing an increasing employment rate, but at the same time with a high mortality rate, as well as a high rate of emigration of citizens capable for employment and of qualified population permanently leaving the country. Such a trend creates false statistical data and bypasses the factual situation that the increase in the employment rate is a consequence of the decline in the number of the population, instead of the significant creation of new job opportunities. Wrong and, at the same time, fake statistical data lead to wrong strategic policies, despite the existence of a government strategy on the policy for reducing the departure of the young and qualified population. In the long term, such trends, caused by the systemic dissatisfaction of young people, contribute to the unsustainability of North Macedonia, while the issue of emigration reaches the top of the agenda of security challenges for this country.

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