SOCIETAL RESILIENCE. BETWEEN RESILIENCE THROUGH EDUCATION AND RESILIENCE THROUGH WAR

Adrian LESENCIUC*, Daniela NAGY*, Simona LESENCIUC**

*Department of Fundamental Sciences, 'Henri Coandă' Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania,
** Kindergarten no.23, Braşov, Romania

Abstract: On the one side, societal resilience is the central concept of the current National Defense Strategy. Originating in studies on appropriate disaster response, this concept has become crucial in relation to hybrid threats. Societal resilience underlies another concept, that of state resilience, which has become a reference concept in recent years in the NATO. Societal resilience is vital for the community to withstand violent and high-impact events and to quickly return to normality and functionality. On the other side, Ukraine proves to be, under the conditions of the Russian invasion, a resilient state that has cultivated its societal resilience for the last eight years. This resilience has developed in response to the violent military challenges of recent years and has led to the implementation of guidelines for optimal response to the challenges (Korostelina, 2020). However, Ukraine is not an example of good practice in strengthening societal resilience. Through this article, we aimed to analyze the two possible forms of strengthening resilience: through education and through war. The latter case can be illustrated by the example of Ukraine or Israel. In the former case, the adequate projection of the Romanian security documents could illustrate the phenomenon, as long as the public education policies meant to consolidate the societal resilience would result from our national defense strategy. This article is based on another article presented at a previous edition of the conference Redefining Community in Intercultural Context (Lesenciuc et al., 2018), in which we approached, starting from the discrepancy between strategies and public policies, the need to strengthen the other effective response to hybrid threats: culture of security.

Keywords: state resilience; societal resilience; military resilience; Ukraine; education

1. THE CONCEPT OF RESILIENCE

The concept of societal resilience is not directly connected, in its origins, with that of hybrid warfare. It has emerged as a form of societal or community resilience in relation to the ability to respond adequately to natural disasters and continues to be associated primarily with these disasters. For example, in Julie L. Drolet's recent study (2021:365-377), the concept of resilience is the perception directly correlated with social adaptation to climate changes. Therefore, the semantic area of the concept of *community resilience* most often overlaps with the particular form of resilience, *community resilience to disasters*, the difference in overlapping involving the consideration of other forms of nonviolent crisis that require adaptation from society. In recent years, societal resilience has focused on socio-economic, ecological and environmental issues rather than on other possible causes, projecting this particular direction of understanding the concept despite previous generalist considerations considered in the past. For example, T. Fitzpatrick (2016: 57-85) explicitly restricts the semantic area starting from a broader framework of definition, even if, the concept was still defined in relation to the response to disasters (Arbon *et al.*, 2012:17), whereas starting from a working tool of the Torrens Resilience Institute (2012):

> The term *community resilience* is used to describe the interconnected network of systems that directly impact human society at a grassroots community level, including the socioeconomic, ecological, and built environments. A community is resilient when:
> „...members of the population are connected to one another and work together, so that they are able to function and sustain critical systems, even under stress; adapt to changes in the physical, social or economic environment; be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off; and learn from experience to improve itself over time" (Arbon *et al.*, 2012, *apud* Fitzpatrick, 2016:57-58).

Nevertheless, issues related to the preparedness of local communities attract not only the appropriate community response to disasters, but also issues related to other security issues (including response to military or hybrid threats), which leads to the judicious design of a "culture of responsibility", within some cultural areas (Napolitano, 2009).

2. SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN ROMANIAN SECURITY DOCUMENTS

2.1. National defense strategy (NDS/ SNAp) (2020-2024). The concept of state resilience. *The National Defense Strategy for 2020-2024* (2020) uses the concept of "resilience" in relation to a number of descriptors and in different analytical frameworks. Resilience is one of the indicators of the appropriate and effective response in terms of national security to the manifestation of potentially negative aspects of the internal environment (vulnerabilities) and external ones (threats), along with continuity, adaptability, flexibility and predictability (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 5), defining the state as a robust actor that has survived, in relation to the many facets of globalization, primarily from a political and cultural point of view, but also from an economic perspective and the various forms of weakening it, specific to the postmodern period. (Holton, 2011:13). The perspective of state resilience - in the sense of the resilience of a national community and an administrative strengthening - is one that concerns the state in the process of recovery or adaptation to the environment. State resilience was initially the subject of a study in the case of states whose principles and values have been severely shaken by wars or forms of conflict or protracted crisis: Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, a.o., on issues mainly related to military intervention / contribution to achieving the required level of resilience, see, for example, the article "A Military Contribution to State-Resilience: Afghanistan and Lebanon" (Pounds *et al.*, 2017:199-232), but, subsequently, the concept developed in the scientific field through its normative foundations established at the level of the North Atlantic Alliance. In line with the NATO perspective, the reference is the recent Allied Resilience Commitment, the *Strengthened Resilience Commitment* of 14 June 2021, a engagement signed at the level of Heads of State and Government at the Warsaw Summit, which projects the broader concepts of "national and collective resilience", complementing the need for resilience at the level of small communities (in the sense of "civil preparedness") for the challenges of the security environment of increasing complexity. If in terms of the engagement "collective resilience" is based on the provisions of Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, "national resilience" remains undefined, being accepted as a national obligation or responsibility. From this perspective, "national resilience" is seen as a mandatory condition and warranty of implementing the resilient projection at the alliance level, an approach that provides an applicable framework to reduce vulnerabilities and to apply a unique set of measures able to provide a resilient NATO response:

> Under NATO 2030, we have agreed today to enhance our resilience. Noting that resilience remains a national responsibility, we will adopt a more integrated and better coordinated approach, consistent with our collective commitment under Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty, to reduce vulnerabilities and ensure our militaries can effectively operate in peace, crisis and conflict. Allies will develop a proposal to establish, assess, review and monitor resilience objectives to guide nationally-developed resilience goals and implementation plans. It will be up to each individual Ally to determine how to establish and meet national resilience goals and implementation plans, allowing them to do so in a manner that is compatible with respective national competences, structures, processes and obligations, and where applicable those of the EU. (*Strengthened Resilience Commitment*, 2021).

Building resilience is therefore NATO's major goal from which a number of national responsibilities arise. The National Defense Strategy (2020) anticipated the projection of the Warsaw summit and engaged, at the level of Romanian society, a form of state resilience asserted by the very title of the first chapter of the document prepared by the Presidential Administration, namely: "Romania, an active member of the NATO and EU, a resilient state and pole of regional stability" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020:7). At this level of ambition, the perspective of state resilience concerns the global perspective: "a resilient state, able to relate efficiently, proactively and adequately to the unpredictability of developments in the global security environment" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 8), but also in relation with the economic, cybernetic, healthcare dimensions or others. State resilience is perceived as a potentiating factor either in terms of the various areas mentioned, or in terms of contagion with the resilience of small companies, or in terms of providing action models and patterns to increase the resilience of the Republic of Moldova.

2.2. National Defense Strategy (NDS/ SNAp) (2020-2024). The concept of societal resilience. State resilience concerns the stability, adaptability, capacity for anticipation of the state, but it is based on the very established concept, of societal resilience, defined within the contents of the national defense strategy and identified within the limits of its applicability

> The concept of Romania's resilience is addressed from a double perspective: the inherent capacity of entities –

individuals, communities, regions, state – to resist and adapt articulately to violent, stress-causing events, shocks, disasters, pandemics or conflicts, on one hand, and the ability of these entities to return, as soon as possible, to a functional, normal state, on the other hand.

Strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerabilities require a flexible multi-dimensional strategy as well as a broad perspective on all systems, in order to limit the risks related to a crisis, but also to improve the capacity to quickly manage the adjustment mechanisms at local, national and regional levels. Resilience covers all stages of a crisis situation, from prevention (where possible) to adjustment and limitation of effects (when necessary), and includes positive transformations that strengthen the ability of current and future generations to provide for what they need. (NDS/ SNAp, 2020:11).

Therefore, the strategy adapts the concept of state resilience, building on the NATO projective frame, yet anticipating development, and basing the concept measurable by the functionality of the administrative apparatus, on a natural concept (from a theoretical perspective), although more difficult to build, educate and even measure. In the absence of the concept of societal resilience, the concept of state resilience would have been emptied of content, whereas without the tools needed to educate and strengthen the state of affairs called "societal resilience", which is not formed *ex nihilo*, the concept of state resilience becomes inapplicable. The strategy proposes a number of tools to be developed to strengthen societal resilience and critical infrastructure, but also in the case of resilience and critical infrastructure protection, it is necessary to first prepare the "mental software", i.e., it is necessary to project through the "cultural lens" (Ciupercă & Vevera, 2019:75-80). The strategy aims to improve the level of awareness of hostile actions carried out through traditional and new media, to size the tools through which to make the sources of misinformation transparent, to increase the importance of educational institutions with regard to identifying and combating misinformation, to create functional literacy, to develop healthcare programs, education for emergency situations and digital skills development, etc., but these directions, although correctly worded and in line with real skills development requirements, have so far not found the legislative means and the set of executive measures for implementation. The Romanian national defense strategy, useful and adapted to the current requirements (even anticipating the transformations of the regional and global security environment, perfectly anchored in the realities of these days) does not have the possibility to impose itself by

transforming these intentions, projections, directions and objectives into viable security policies, required both by the national defense system, public order and intelligence, and by other institutions that hold a role in the state security. If these projections of the strategy also involved a measurement of the level of adoption of the document issued by the Presidential Administration and the end of the period in which it is applied, progress could be seen in the indicators taken into account. Regarding the National Defense Strategy (2020), an analysis of the initial state of societal resilience and the end state would be mandatory. Transforming "effective tools for strengthening societal resilience" (NDS/ SNAp, 2020: 23-24) into measurable indicators and measuring their level would mean the minimum required level of regulatory resilience in terms of security culture.

2.3. Romania's military strategy (RMS/ SMR) (2021). The concept of national resilience. Romania's military strategy (2021) is built on the same pillars and is based on the concept of resilience, which from the perspective of the national defense system, must become robust and strengthened (RMS/ SMR, 2021:3; 12). Moreover, the Romanian Armed Forces assume the role of consolidating national resilience and become "responsible for national resilience" (RMS/ SMR, 2021:3), despite the fact that it does not have the necessary means, as it results from the projection of the National Defense Strategy. Although thus broadly designed, in relation to the analysis of the general framework and the debate on military risks and threats to Romania's security, once the missions of the Romanian Armed Forces and national military objectives are taken into account, resilience becomes a goal at the military system level, with a role in ensuring societal and state resilience: "developing the resilience of the military system and contributing to ensuring national resilience" (RMS/ SMR, 2021:13; 26). Romania's military strategy (2021) is also a clear projective tool, which correctly projects the direction of consolidating societal resilience, through the educational resilience of the military education system:

> Increasing the resilience of the military education system is based on modernizing the educational infrastructure and related endowment, in conjunction with the present and future needs of the force structure and the challenges of action environments, in order to ensure participation in a quality, modern and inclusive educational process. Adaptation / updating / modernization of existing education programs for the development of transversal competencies in accordance with the principles of the Romania

President's project, Educated Romania, including notions of innovative and creative learning, as well as competencies oriented towards structural and digital transition. The education system will seek to train future military leaders by promoting competence, competition and multidisciplinary in the training process. (RMS/ SMR, 2021: 18).

Romania's military strategy operates with the concept of national resilience, which, as a rule, should have been linked to the projection of the National Defense Strategy of the country and aimed at both levels: state and societal resilience, but this concept is limited to the latter, based on the definition framework designed in accordance with the NDS (see the assumed definitions taken over, RMS/ SMR, 2021:25-26, from NDS/ SNAp, 2020:11, but associated with a different concept, that of "national resilience"). The use of two different terms in the two strategies, national resilience and societal resilience, is likely to disrupt application possibilities. However, Romania's military strategy defines a fundamental concept, that of military resilience:

Military resilience is the ability of forces to absorb kinetic and non-kinetic shocks associated with actions specific to military, conventional and hybrid conflict, including fighting in the degraded CBRN, electromagnetic and cybernetic environment. In essence, military resilience is the ability of the military instrument to build credible forces and successfully conduct the defense operation, even if the opponent is able to create strategic, operational or tactical surprise. In this sense, the Romanian Armed Forces ensures the development of robust, flexible, balanced military capabilities, organized according to the specifics of the missions, able to execute the entire spectrum of missions and operations, in all operational environments of the modern combat space. At the same time, the Romanian Armed Forces trains and equips the force structure, ensures the prepositioning of stocks and essential services in the targeted areas and maintains the capacity to generate reserves of any kind. (RMS/ SMR, 2021:26).

3. PUBLIC POLICIES OF SOCIETAL RESILIENCE?

Unfortunately, neither the provisions of the national defense strategy of the country, nor those of the military strategy find their answer in public policies to strengthen societal resilience through education. There is no alternative to strengthening resilience in this way, and the most convenient argument comes from the National Defense Strategy itself (2020), which explicitly defines the tools to strengthen resilience as educational tools. This is all the more serious as UNICEF has proposed a framework for aligning education policies on increasing the resilience of education systems in Europe and Central Asia in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNICEF, 2020), based on the need to improve adaptability of education systems to reduce the impact on children and not to leave traces on them throughout life due to the inability to implement an inclusive education. Obviously, the text of the UNICEF document is primarily about student resilience, with an emphasis on inclusive education, but the projection is based on the need to improve "the resilience and efficiency of education systems by planning and delivering inclusive, quality and innovative education" (UNICEF, 2020:42). In addition, the issue of resilience, fundamental not only on the NATO agenda, but also on the European one, even if sometimes taken up in projective documents in education – for example, in the draft to *Strategy on the digitization of education in Romania* – does not produce effects, except for taking formulas from European documents as justification for some digitization priorities (such as connectivity, SmartEDU (2020:10). Within the operational plan of measures of the strategy, there is also a set of activities under the umbrella of the direction "Ensuring the core of key competencies, "competencies of success", competencies of resilience and creativity" (SmartEDU, 2020:35-36), but operational objectives/ subordinate measures and actions do not explicitly concern resilience. If we take into account, in addition to the set of extra-systemic directives, the models of good practices, with an emphasis on system resilience, not on the resilience of students (which is less affected by the education system, but, to a greater extent, by partners in the education activity: student - teacher - parents), the directions projected by the national defense strategy regarding the educational system (with a role in collective security) are not found in the implemented education policies.

We took into account all these aspects from the desire to re-debate a topic that we analyzed in 2018, when another national defense strategy was enforced (NDS/ SNAp, 2015) and when we highlighted the lack of coherence between the strategic projection of the culture of security and the way of reflection in the preschool, primary and secondary education in Romania (Lesenciuc *et al.*, 2018: 93-101). In the light of the time frame of the previous analysis, we had stated that there were no effects of the national defense strategy on the curriculum. The education policy document "Milestones for the design, updating and evaluation of the National Curriculum. National Curriculum Framework" approved by the Order of

the Minister of Education and Research no. 5765 of October 15, 2020 does not change the perspective on the necessary level of culture of security and resilience of the education system (even if it was developed more than half a year after the COVID-19 pandemic sudden occurrence), maintaining the projection of civic competence (necessary but insufficient in terms of culture and education of security, respectively societal resilience at the minimum level accepted for systemic functionality) and does not even offer the possibility of including a vision based on resilience through the management of curricular alteration process.

4. SOCIETAL RESILIENCE IN UKRAINE. THE NEED FOR RECOVERY AND ADAPTATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT FOLLOWING THE ONSET OF THE CRISIS

The issue of societal resilience in Ukraine has arisen - in the current formula or in variants that have undergone various previous stages of development - since 2014, the year of the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the hybrid war in Donbas. These issues have been reflected in various public documents or scientific studies dedicated to the societal resilience project applied in Ukraine or dedicated to studying in a bloc of states subject to the same threat. For example, Boulègue *et al.* (2018) included in the same study Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova, with the difference that, if, in Ukraine, the process of awareness, resilience and mobilization entitled *Revolution of Dignity* began in 2014:

> Ukraine can be viewed as a political 'laboratory' in which Russia has tested a variety of measures to exert influence, and at the same time as an example of resilience. Since 2014, many of the levers of Russian influence have weakened as a consequence of civil society mobilization associated with Ukraine's 'Revolution of Dignity' and subsequent reforms. (Boulègue *et al.*, 2018:2).

Moldova, and especially Belarus, were left with extremely limited resources to strengthen resilience, the so-called *cognitive resilience* in the former case, and through *soft Belarusinization* in the latter. The Ukrainian model of weakening Russian influence, a public warning to raise awareness of the Russian danger, doubled in action by anti-corruption reforms in the fossil fuel sector, has become a success, despite maintaining the intensity of the military actions of the separatists supported by the Russian Federation in Eastern Ukraine at a certain level. The high

percentage of national pride - amid destabilizing actions by the Russian Federation in the south and east, and the existence of a high percentage of ethnic Russians, 17.3% of the entire population of the country at the last census, in 2011, in just two years from the reference date, 2014, the level of pride displayed by being a citizen of Ukraine (according to Boulègue et al., 2018: 8) reached 68%. The increase of resilience to misinformation played an important role in this process, by controlling the narratives in the public media, by enacting the Law on Media Transparency in 2015, by organizing crisis communication centers, such as Ukraine Crisis Media Center or through #stopFake actions, by increasing information security measures and by counter-misinformation. The official Ukrainian response to the influence actions of Russia is relevant in this regard and, in particular, so is the response of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Boulègue *et al.*, 2018:18). National resilience has become the key element in security, and the demonstration of this projection is the result of numerous studies, among which we highlight the one conducted by Bondarenko *et al.* (2021), which proposed an integrated security model based on the principles of regional resilience, taking into account the creation of a multilevel risk assessment system, the development of crisis management tools and the development of resilience in local and regional communities.

Practically, since the invasion of Crimea by Russia, Ukraine entered a state of permanent conflict and was forced to develop a series of policies to adapt to the uncertain security environment and to recover from the violent military actions in the east of the country. Russia did not weigh the form of compensation of the Ukrainian state through societal resilience before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, reducing it to the measurable values of military power in the first place, or economic power (and even political power, influenced by political means). Perceived as a society that has counteracted fragility from the perspective of various indicators with resilience that is not limited to adaptation, but which, in the conditions of transition from crisis to war, turns into a willingness to fight and support the war effort and it becomes a symbolic center of gravity of the conflict - as it actually happened in the case of the ongoing invasion of Russia - the Ukrainian state has been continuously preparing during the eight years of war, not only from a military point of view, but also from the perspective of societal resilience. Actually, some studies focused on the case of Ukraine, published before the conflict began, have taken into account community resilience as a form of power (Korostelina, 2020), in line with our previous view

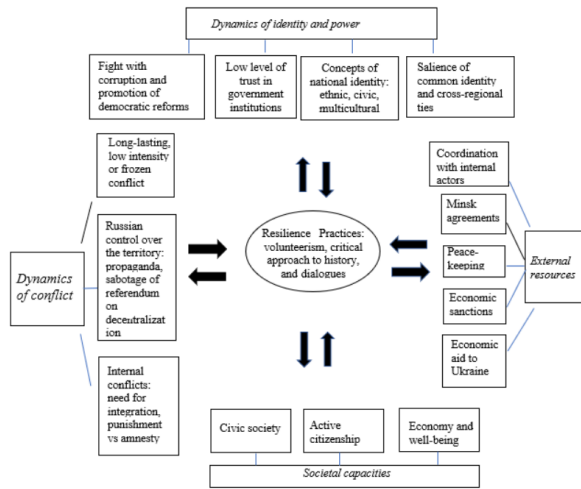that the culture of security is a form of manifestation of symbolic power (Lesenciuc *et al.*, 2018).

Fig.1 Ukraine's national resilience model (*apud* Korostelina, 2020:20)

Korostelina's perspective is supported by many previous analytical frameworks that partially fix the relationship between the ability to rebuild or adapt the community and symbolic power, but the study by George Mason University researcher is unequivocal: community resilience is a form of manifestation of power, more precisely, of symbolic power. In this interpretive line, once the effects of the Minsk Peace Agreements of 2014 and 2015 had no effect on the Eastern Front, Ukraine was forced to produce and impose a resilience plan that led to the formation of a strong civic voice and of a consistent civic activism, as decisive expressions, from the perspective of societal capacities, to which elements of identity and power dynamics were added (Fig.1): the mentioned anti-corruption campaign, doubling the effort to promote a national (multicultural) identity, a series of external resources and elements of conflict dynamics (Korostelina, 2020:20).

Ukraine's societal resilience model is not one of good practice. Societal resilience in this country has been the result of adapting the nation to the set of challenges it has faced. The result of Korostelina's study is one that proves this adaptation to external resources and the dynamics of the whole conflict, in order to respond through an extensive process of identity reconfiguration and through the development of a series of societal capacities. Societal resilience in Ukraine is the result of the common learning of the Ukrainian community to respond to a threat that has not ceased to be evident for eight years, until the invasion. Under these conditions, Ukraine's resilience is driven by the crisis and conflict in the post-Maidan period. The same is the case in which, for example,

the Israeli community has strengthened its level of resilience as a result of similar challenges (the reference in this regard is the study by Reuven Gal, 2013). But the real issue of societal resilience is not (only) that of responding appropriately to threats and environmental (security) challenges, but (also) that of preparing in the absence of environmental challenges that require the development and training of resilience.

5. CONCLUSIONS or ADVOCACY FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF RESILIENCE

Ukraine is a state with a very high level of societal resilience. That was probably the key element that Putin did not know when he ordered the invasion of Ukraine. Numerous statements and assumptions lead to this perspective. However, despite this high level of resilience, Ukraine cannot be considered a model of good practice. Societal resilience has been strengthened by triggering a response to a challenge. Similarly, we could have treated the case of the state of Israel. These two cases are the result of training in real conditions. When conditions of crisis or war are not manifest, societal resilience depends on other factors. Among them, the preparation of the level of societal resilience in peacetime is vital. This implies the inclusion of the issue of social resilience in the projective documents in the field of national security, the use of an operationalized and unequivocal conceptual apparatus and the transformation of the projective framework into actual training of the population to respond to threats of various kinds. This article is not the result of a simple scientific analysis of a projective security framework, compared to a case study of a conflicting neighboring state, but also a plea for firm action to implement the tools and directions identified through the National Defense Strategy policies (2020), through a series of public education policies, concerning both the formal framework and informal and non-formal education. To this end, an additional requirement in forming and strengthening the level of societal resilience is the formation and maintenance of a minimum accepted level of the culture of security. Ukraine's lesson is not the one of a model of societal resilience, but of the fact that societal resilience has truly turned into a power capable of stopping the obsolete war machine of the Russian Federation, which, under the false impression of hybrid power (including an information perspective), stumbles in front of its own vulnerability.

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