

# THE CONTEMPORARY NATURE AND FUTURE OF TERRITORIAL DEFENCE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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***Abstract:** Throughout human history, the aspect of territorial defence has changed. With the current conflict, in which one country invades another, it is possible to see certain factors in territorial defence that play a key role in carrying out effective defence actions. Due to the changes that conflicts bring, it is also possible to deduce which factors will play a central role in territorial defence in the future. The aim of this paper is to analyse and identify both contemporary and future possibilities for the development of territorial defence. The main research problem of the paper is: What elements will play a key role during territorial defence? For the realization of such an aim and providing answers to research problems, methods of analysis of the current conflict in Ukraine were applied, especially the means used by the Ukrainian side.*

***Keywords:** Territorial defence, Future of territorial defence , national/international security*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In every major conflict in the history of mankind, territorial defence has taken on a different form. In the past, even before the invention of firearms, sieges of cities could take years and territorial defence was based primarily on direct confrontations, such as at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BC, when an effective defence by the Greeks secured their victory over a Persian army twice their size. Today, territorial defence has taken a completely different form, as the current conflict in Ukraine shows. However, every major conflict leaves behind some changes and new lessons. For example, during the First World War, the need to introduce helmets into the individual equipment of every soldier was understood, because of how lethal were wounds to the head sustained often not from bullets but from shrapnel or other debris. Thus, after the war in Ukraine, some changes may appear, not only in terms of conducting attacks, but also in the doctrine of defending key places, such as cities, or effectively destroying enemy vehicle columns. To fully understand the contemporary nature of territorial defence it is not enough to look at the doctrines or current equipment of the potential parties to the conflict, but the best picture is provided by the current conflict in Ukraine, which has provided new conclusions on how to conduct effective defensive actions even if the opponent has a large advantage in equipment and people.

### 1.1 Russian doctrine of offensive operations

On 24th February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, starting a war that had already lasted over 2 months, a war that everyone feared. It seemed that the war would be short and that Russia would quickly occupy key cities, including Kiev. However, with the help of other countries such as Poland, the USA and the UK, Ukraine has been able to successfully defend itself against Russian aggression. To fully understand the nature of the battlefield and the

successes of the Ukrainian soldiers, it is necessary to understand the combat doctrines of both sides of the conflict. Russian. First and foremost, the Russian doctrine of offensive action by ground troops is based on two types of troops: artillery (both barrel and rocket) and mechanized troops. In addition, in order to weaken and create chaos on the enemy's territory the airborne troops "Воздушно-десантные войска России" (Airborne Forces of the Russian Federation) commonly referred to as VDW are used by dropping them deep into the enemy's territory. This strategy was applied in the first days of Russian aggression. The war started with an artillery barrage at around 4 a.m., which was preceded by an attack of the ground forces. There was also a landing of airborne troops at Hostomel airfield, which was supposed to make the capture of Kiev much easier. However, due to a lack of support for the Russian soldiers who occupied the airfield, Ukrainian troops quickly retook the occupied area, resulting in Russia losing its well-trained soldiers. The first days of the war in Ukraine show the validity of the strategy written in "БОЕВОЙ УСТАВ ПО ПОДГОТОВКЕ И ВЕДЕНИЮ ОБЩЕВОЙСКОВОГО БОЯ" (Combat Regulations for the Preparation and Conduct of General Combat), whose assumptions are clearly outdated and result in incommensurate effects in relation to the incurred losses. This is evidenced by the statistics of Russian losses, both in equipment and personnel, provided by the Ukrainian army (of course, one should take into account the potential exaggeration of the losses suffered by the Russian army in order, for example, to boost morale) for the days from 24 February to 3 May, which shows that during the 67 days of the conflict Russia lost around 24,000 men, over 1,000 tanks, and over 1,800 vehicles and tanks. (*Data taken from the official website of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine from the census of Russian losses from February 24 to May 3*)

### **1.2 Ukrainian defence operations**

Ukraine expected an attack and prepared for such a possibility. This is evidenced by the sheer extent of Russia's difficulties in occupying key zones despite being outnumbered [1]. The use of Russian strategies against them by Ukrainian troops plays a large role here. When the Russian armoured-mechanised troops reached a village or small town they met no resistance, as a result of which they pressed further into enemy territory. However, when support vehicles passed through the same town, which were crucial for the continuation of the offensive, such as fuel supplies, they were destroyed. This had the effect of both entrenching the advancing Russian troops and causing frequent abandonment of vehicles that had run out of fuel. This made it easy to break up enemy attacks and weaken the morale of the enemy, who could expect an attack from any direction. The psychological effect was so strong that the Russian support vehicles even began to use wooden elements as a kind of additional protection against missiles.

Another very important element used in the territorial defence of Ukraine is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) [5], such as the Polish FlyEyes drones, which are even used by Ukrainian special forces, or the now famous Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, which sank two Raptor ships on 2 May; however, this type of weapon has not been used exclusively to eliminate enemy vehicles or ships. Drones play an important role in quickly determining the enemy's position, which allows the Ukrainian artillery to launch accurate and precise attacks.

Another key element during territorial defence against the enemy who bases his offensive actions on mechanised troops is the use of hand-held anti-tank missiles, such as FGM-148 Javelin or Polish RPG-76 Komar grenade launcher, and anti-aircraft missiles such as FIM-92 Stinger. Due to the portability of these projectiles (especially in the case of the RPG-76 grenade launcher) it is easy to attack the enemy from many positions and most importantly even from buildings in the city which means that potentially from every window a deadly projectile can fly out which in the right hands will be able to destroy almost any vehicle

## 2. THE FUTURE OF TERRITORIAL DEFENCE

It is possible to deduce from the war in Ukraine what the current conduct of territorial defence operations looks like:

- Its main element is light infantry equipped with both anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles which, combined with the protection and potential offered by urban combat, allow the paralysis of enemy columns and weaken enemy morale.
- Attacking and cutting off support vehicles can have a far greater effect than a direct attack on an advancing enemy
- UAVs are becoming a decisive element in providing precision artillery fire and an advantage in terms of information on the enemy's exact positions and movements.

Having already approximated the nature of the contemporary dimension of territorial defence, one can determine the potential directions of development or evolution of territorial defence. Currently, in countries such as Poland, which best understand the threat from Russia, there is a continuous development of troops, including those for territorial defence. An important element for Poland in the development of defence is passed on 11 March 2022, the Act on defence of the homeland, which is to increase the size of the Polish Army to 300 thousand people. However, apart from the aspects of the Act, we should also look at the factors that may be key elements for conducting effective territorial defence in the future.

### 2.1 Increased importance of light infantry

Since the Second World War, mankind has been developing the concept of launchers or missiles with which any soldier with such a weapon could destroy an enemy vehicle. With time, anti-aircraft guided missiles were developed, which made even a single soldier with enough missiles and good training able to repel an attack from the air and destroy enemy vehicles. Such weapons equipped for light infantry give the possibility to use two extremely important factors: the mobility of light infantry and the firepower of such missiles as the previously mentioned Javelin, the effects of which are currently visible in Ukraine. Additionally, properly used light infantry is able (especially in urban conditions) to perform effective ambushes, which definitely weakens both enemy operational capabilities and its morale. It can therefore be concluded that troops equipped with such firepower and high mobility may in future be the main force in defending cities or creating ambushes.

### 2.2 The role of unmanned aerial vehicles and their combat

Information has now become a key aspect of warfare. Precise knowledge of the enemy's equipment, location or direction of movement gives the possibility of setting up an ambush or adequately strong defence against a potential attack. One of the ways of obtaining key information of this type on an ongoing basis is the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, such as the FlyEye drones mentioned earlier. Territorial defence forces and artillery forces with information that can be provided by UAVs are able to fight much more effectively due to the precision of determining the enemy's position or direction of movement provided by drones. Seeing the potential that drones have and the benefits of their use, we can say without a doubt that UAVs will be a key element not only of territorial defence, but of any warfare.

Given the prevalence of these means, it is logical that weapons or other devices aimed at knocking down drones will also be developed. Means are now slowly being developed. An example of such technology is the American LLD system, which, according to the official website of the US Navy, on 13 April this year, during tests, knocked down a designated target in the form of a drone [2]. This shows, however, that this type of technology has some potential and in the future may become the primary means of fighting enemy UAVs.

### 2.3 The role of education and promotion of values in society

Leaving aside the means that can be used during territorial defence, it is necessary to consider one often overlooked but very important aspect during defence operations, which is

the attitude of society towards war. We are talking here both about people who actively defend their homeland and about those who may not be able to participate in the fight but, thanks to their attitude, can help to maintain peace and limit the panic of society. If a country attacking another country encounters continuous resistance from its population, especially in the form of guerrilla warfare, this makes it much more difficult to gain complete control of the occupied territory. The power of guerrilla warfare has already been demonstrated by American soldiers fighting in Vietnam and Soviet soldiers fighting in Afghanistan. Both of these conflicts show how great the influence of forces can be, which, if in a direct confrontation they would not stand a chance, using the knowledge and characteristics of the terrain in which they are located, can, for example, paralyse the logistical facilities of the army, which in modern times is essential. The doctrine of the adaptation of society to guerrilla warfare has been applied, for example, in Sweden in the defence plan for 2016-2020, which, among other things, assumed the use of a strategy based on deterring a potential enemy by preparing in advance for guerrilla warfare or resistance movements. This would have the effect of making it unprofitable to invade Sweden [3]. The aspect of deterring the enemy is, however, a universal one, which every state is more or less able to apply on its territory. In order to do so, however, it is necessary to prepare society by promoting patriotic and pro-defence ideas. Such actions are undertaken, for example, by the Polish Ministry of Defence, which establishes cooperation with pro-defence circles or shooting associations. Another aspect that may be needed in a future territorial defence force is to educate the public about public safety in order to maintain stability and fight panic. Thus, a state that uses this type of preparation in the future will have a great advantage over a state that decides to invade it.

#### **2.4 International relations**

Another of the main aspects that will play a greater role in the future of territorial defence is international relations. This is not about the world of diplomacy and sanctions, but more about support on a similar basis to that currently provided by many countries to Ukraine. It is not difficult to imagine how the war would have turned out if the Ukrainian army had not received, for example, Javelin missiles or NLAW launchers. Good relations with other states, especially those that have more equipment and are not in a situation where it can be used overnight, can be crucial to the territorial defence of a country through the support they can provide. Taking into account the development of the system of alliances and international organisations it can be concluded that cooperation between nations in the future will be key in many aspects also in the aspect of territorial defence.

#### **2.5 Effective use and management of site knowledge**

The final factor, which is an essential element for the future and which is already being used, for example, in Poland, is the skilful use that soldiers of territorial defence can make of their knowledge of the terrain. As Poland is a country that understands the need for emphasis on defence, it has a very well organised army, whose objective is primarily territorial defence. We are talking here about the Territorial Defence Forces, which have at least one brigade in each voivodship and consist in the vast majority of people coming from particular voivodships. [4] These soldiers not only know the specifics of the terrain in which they operate, but also have an understanding of it, which will be necessary when conducting guerrilla warfare, for which they are also trained. Additionally, particular brigades in each voivodship are trained in a slightly different way in order to best conduct operations in the characteristic conditions of each voivodship. (The data comes from an interview with a colonel of the Territorial Defence Forces)

### 3. SUMMARY

In conclusion, many new factors, both in terms of equipment and in terms of society itself, will in future be key aspects that may determine the effectiveness of a country's defence operations. However, these factors, which can be expected to gain in importance at some point in the future, should not overshadow other factors, which may only gain in importance a few years after their emergence.

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