

CHALLENGES, RISKS AND THREATS TO THE SECURITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Nenad Kovacevic¹, Antonio Mak², Branko Teodorovic³

¹ University of Defence in Belgrade, National Defense School, Veljka Lukica-Kurjaka Street
No. 33, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, inz.84kula@gmail.com

² University of Defence in Belgrade, Military Academy, Veljka Lukica-Kurjaka Street
No. 33, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, antoniomak3@gmail.com

³ University of Defence in Belgrade, National Defense School, Veljka Lukica-Kurjaka Street
No. 33, Belgrade, Republic of Serbia teodorovic.b@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Security is a function of the development of society, and observed from the aspect of modern international relations, it is one of the most important, because every day the conditions for preserving human existence become more complex, and thus the fear of uncertainty and uninterrupted functioning of the constituents of society increases. Depending on the severity of the consequences for the values of the society, certain dangers to the security of the constituents of the society can be determined as a challenge, risk or threat. The paper presents a conceptual and categorical distinction between security challenges, risks and threats. The aim of this paper is to determine the list of challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia, as well as to define the most dominant ones. The list has been made based on the results of the research. Due to the length of the paper, only a brief overview of the methodology and results of the research is given.*

Key words: *challenges, risks, threats, national security*

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering security in the context of the determinants of the modern environment is a complex and demanding task. The basis of the solution to this problem lies in the understanding of the concepts such as: the state, functions of the state and security system, but also in the concepts that correlate with those listed, and which are often mistakenly used as synonyms.

The focus of the paper is on the etymology of the concept of security, because the proper understanding of this concept can be considered the core (nucleus) of the understanding of the concepts of challenge, risk and threat to the security of the state. The paper presents the results of the research conducted with the aim of obtaining the answer to the research question: "Defining the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia." The aforementioned research was conducted in order to confirm/refute

the views regarding the challenges, risks and threats presented in the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia.

The paper consists of three parts that form the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia. The first part of the paper is dedicated to the etymology of the concept security; the second part of the paper presents the conceptual definition of challenges, risks and security threats, while the research protocol and results are presented in the third part of the paper.

2. ETYMOLOGY OF THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY

Throughout history, the concept of "security" has changed its meaning depending on the context in which this concept has been used. Security represents an extremely complex social phenomenon. Etymologically, the word security comes from the Latin word *securitas*, which means certainty, absence of danger, protection, fearlessness and the like. The above-mentioned served as a foundation for use in other languages, that is, countries. However, in modern literature, the primacy is given to the English language, in which two terms are used: *security*, which is used in the sense of "national security", which implies the achievement and safeguarding of the national interest of a state, and *safety*, which means the ability to act in order to prevent undesirable security situations or such occasions that may cause security implications. It is based on the assumption that the concept of security refers to a certain condition, organisation, function or system, or all of them together.

In order to be able to say that we are safe, the absence of someone or something that endangers us is not enough, but one must live in a society that abounds in justice, morality, and culture; in a society that constantly improves its values. Security, in this sense, should also be understood as a condition for survival and development (of a state, society, nation, people and the living world on the planet).

"Security is a property of a real social, natural or technical subject (being, creation or thing) manifested as an established, maintained and improved state and/or value, which is expressed through the fulfilment of the minimum of certain (security) standards specific to that subject, which allows it a realistic basis for survival, work, growth and development regardless of the bearers, forms, time and place of endangerment." (Stajic, 2013)

According to Ljubomir Stajic, security includes the entire protection of the state from all types of subversive (destructive, devastating) activities of external and internal enemies and other harmful activities and influences. In political sciences, especially in the science of international relations, security is one of the key concepts that occupies a central place in political discourse. Decision-makers in politics, wanting to highlight the existential importance of a particular problem and thus put it at the top of the agenda, say that it is of importance for national, regional or global security. Security as a protection mechanism has different models of organisational forms (social and state bodies and organisations) and different characteristics that are based and regulated by constitutional and other legal acts or decisions of political authorities. "Security in the broadest political and legal sense includes measures and activities to safeguard and protect against threats to the independence and integrity of a country and the internal constitutional and legal system." (Stajic, 2013)

Here, it is important to point out that it is often the case that in practice and theory concepts that correlate with the concept of security are mixed up: safety and protection. *Safety* is a narrower concept and primarily it refers to personal safety, which consists of political, legal, social and economic safety, while *security* is a concept that encompasses the widest range, that is, from personal to state and integral security. *Protection* is the narrowest term that refers only to the passive component of security. (Mak & Kovacevic, 2022).

3. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF CHALLENGES, RISKS AND THREATS TO THE SECURITY

The concept *challenge* includes phenomena whose harmfulness and certainty are the least likely, existence is destructive, but within the limits of tolerant acceptability, because it does not seriously threaten vital values. In the future, the challenge may cause a threat to security with more serious consequences. It represents the least harmful form of danger in terms of content and consequences, and in terms of time it is the farthest danger from the protected value. It is about the apparent phase of the danger which may or may not be realised and which is incorporated in the possible intention of its bearer. (Bajagic, 2007)

Risk is defined as a set of different processes, factors and relations that independently or in interaction may or may not lead to the consequences of endangering security. A risk contains a higher degree of danger compared to a challenge, a higher probability of causing some damage, its untimely detection very quickly turns into a clear threat. Security risk can be viewed as: "a specific form of danger since it is inherent to both the subject of security and the subject of danger. The two-sidedness of a security risk is that both subjects exist in an uncertain security environment and continuously make decisions about their own engagement, and each decision is accompanied by a certain risk." (Mijalkovski & Djordjevic, 2007)

A *threat* is a conscious intention to cause harm to a person, property or right in order to force the object of the threat to comply with the imposed behaviour. A security threat is a synonym for a form of jeopardizing security. A more concrete phenomenon is the one whose occurrence is the least uncertain, while the harmful effects are the greatest and indisputable. (Lazic, 2014)

In modern countries, at the beginning of the 21st century, the change in the global security environment led to an increase in threats such as: international terrorism and organised crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, mass immigration, money laundering, illicit trafficking in persons and goods which are liable to control, and the like. The mentioned threats also bring changes in the functioning of the national security system, which naturally complicates the mechanisms for their control. In such circumstances, security and intelligence systems should adapt to the new situation and improve their efficiency. On the other hand, it also creates potential threats to the balance between the effectiveness of the national security system and its democratic and civil control.

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia (hereinafter: the Strategy) contains the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia: armed aggression, separatist aspirations, illegally unilaterally declared independence of the territory administratively included in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, armed rebellion, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ethnic and religious extremism, intelligence activities, organised crime, drug addiction, mass illegal migrations, problems of economic development, problems of demographic development, epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases, energy security, the unfinished process of demarcation of the countries of the former SFRY, natural disasters and technical and technological accidents, climate change, and the rise of high-tech crime and threats to information and communication systems. (Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti, 2020)

Also, the Strategy recognises other challenges, risks and security threats, such as: "corruption, misuse of new technologies and scientific achievements, genetic engineering, medicine, meteorology and other scientific fields. They often do not exert an open influence on the security of the Republic of Serbia, so it is difficult to detect them and recognise the patterns of their activity." (Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti, 2020).

4. REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The research method used in the paper is a combination of several methods, namely the interview method and the statistical method, even though it was inevitable to implement the methods of expert evaluations, analysis and synthesis, and induction and deduction in the research process. The entire research process is intertwined with these five methods, and the basic question is the confirmation of the statement from the Strategy regarding the defining of the list of challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia. The goal of applying the interview method and the statistical method is to determine the dominant views on the subject of the research paper, as well as to summarise the existing information on the subject of the research, while at the same time avoiding discrepancies in the opinions of experts. The research approach applied in the paper includes three phases: (1) research planning, (2) research implementation and (3) analysis of research results. The following stages of the research process are elaborated on in the remainder of the paper.

4.1. Research planning

In order to implement research planning, a research protocol has been defined, and it contains the following elements: research aim; research question; formation of an expert group; defining the research tool – survey questionnaire; data extraction and the synthesis of the extracted data.

The aim of the research has been to perform, at the level of scientific description, an analysis of the opinions received by experts concerning the defining of the list of challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia. The realisation of the defined research aim is achieved by answering the research question:

RQ: *"Defining the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia?"*

The formation of the expert group was carried out through several stages: determination of the size of the expert group, selection and assessment of the competence of experts and definition of agreement of expert evaluations. Due to the extensiveness of the procedure for the formation of the expert group, only a brief overview of the implementation of the previously mentioned phases will be presented here. For the purposes of the research, the following experts were selected: retired and active members of the military and civilian security agencies, as well as the members of the academic community whose sphere of interest is organised crime. Since this is the population of unknown size, the size of the expert group was determined according to the previously published model (Kovacevic, 2021). According to the aforesaid model, the minimum size of the expert group is 16. The selection of experts was made using the "snow avalanche" method (Kovacevic, 2021). By applying this method, a potential group of 34 experts was determined. The assessment of experts' competence was carried out using the Dobrov's method and the Russian method. (Kovacevic, 2021) By applying the aforementioned methods, out of 34 potential experts, 18 people were selected as experts by competence assessment.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts, in the first part the experts entered their personal data, which were necessary for evaluating their competence (according to the combined method that includes the Russian method and the Dobrov's method); while in the second part the questions related to challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia were formulated.

Data extraction was performed on the basis of the answers to the questions from the survey questionnaire, and *the synthesis of the extracted data* was performed using the statistical

method, more specifically positional average values, with a previous analysis of the agreement of expert evaluations (opinions).

4.2. Research implementation

After defining the expert group (size and competence) and creating the survey questionnaire, the survey was conducted. The survey was conducted electronically in such a way that the experts received the questionnaire via e-mail and returned it to the researcher. After receiving expert evaluations, their agreement was analysed using the chi-square test (χ^2). Here it is important to point out that the chi-square test does not measure the size of the correlation, but only the probability of the correlation of expert evaluations, that is, if the chi-square test is statistically significant, the correlation is statistically significant. Given that the calculated value of the chi-square is less than the threshold value, the null hypothesis is confirmed, that is, that there is no statistically significant deviation of the theoretical from the actual frequencies of the expert evaluations. (Petz, 1997: 369) Since it was established that there is a correlation of expert evaluations, there was no need to conduct interviews with individual experts, that is, there were no drastic deviations of experts' opinions (differences in expert evaluations) within the group. The above represents a quantitative processing of expert evaluations. After receiving the expert evaluations, their analysis was performed using the positional average value - mode, and then a conclusion was drawn, which is a qualitative analysis of the expert evaluations.

4.3. Analysis of the research results

After the quantitative, a qualitative analysis of the research results was performed. In the survey questionnaire itself, the experts were first offered nineteen challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia (taken from the Strategy), as well as the possibility of adding new ones, in the form of a question: *"Do you agree with the stated challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia?" (If you think that some of the challenges, risks and threats have been omitted, please add the answer.)* All the experts agreed with the offered answers, which shows a high level of agreement between the expert evaluations.

Then the experts were asked to evaluate the level of significance of the defined challenges, risks and threats. The processing of the received expert evaluations was carried out using the positional average value - mode, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of expert evaluations

Name of the challenge, risk and threat	Evaluation of the significance				
	5	4	3	2	1
Armed aggression	3	12	2	1	
Separatist aspirations		3	14	1	
Illegally unilaterally declared independence of the territory administratively included in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija		5	10	3	
Armed rebellion		3	9	4	2
Terrorism		6	10	2	
Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction		2	7	8	1
Ethnic and religious extremism	3	7	8		
Intelligence activities	1	9	8		
Organised crime	5	9	4		
Drug addiction			9	7	2
Mass illegal migrations	2	10	5	1	

Name of the challenge, risk and threat	Evaluation of the significance				
	5	4	3	2	1
Problems of economic development	7	8	3		
Problems of demographic development		7	9	1	1
Epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases	8	9	1		
Energy security	10	7	1		
The unfinished process of demarcation of the countries of the former SFRY			4	4	10
Natural disasters and technical and technological accidents	1	4	10	2	1
Climate change		5	7	3	3
The rise of high-tech crime and threats to information and communication systems	4	10	2	2	

Evaluations of the significance of the challenges, risks and threats are: insignificant (1), less significant (2), significant (3), more significant (4) and the most significant (5). The number in certain columns of "evaluation of the significance" represents the number of experts who have declared themselves in favour of a certain challenge, risk and threat. The significance of a certain challenge, risk and threat is determined by the largest number of experts who opted for a certain evaluation of the significance. To form the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats, those challenges, risks and threats that were evaluated 5 and 4 by the experts are considered.

5. CONCLUSION

Questions of the place and role of security have been raised since the oldest states as one of the central and most important questions for the survival and development of states. (Dragisic, 2020: 14-15) From the fact that the state has always been an important factor in organising security, it is clear that security is a constitutional institution, which is determined by the socio-political organisation of the state, and consequently by legislative solutions to security issues. The paper reviews the legislative determinants of the national security of the Republic of Serbia, i.e. the challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia.

The paper presents the results of research aimed at answering the research question: *"Defining the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia."* The research results are significant in two aspects. Firstly, they have confirmed the statements from the Strategy regarding the defining of security challenges, risks and threats. Secondly, they have formed the list of challenges, risks and threats according to the level of significance. According to the previously defined criterion for forming the list of the most significant challenges, risks and threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia, the list consists of: energy security, armed aggression, the increase in high-tech crime and threats to information and communication systems, mass illegal migrations, epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases, problems of economic development, organised crime and intelligence activity.

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