

## DEMOMILITARY FACTOR IN CURRENT CONDITIONS – A MAJOR VULNERABILITY FOR ROMANIA

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***Abstract:*** Romania's population has decreased dramatically since 1990, and last year (2024) the decline became even more pronounced, as a result of the decrease in birth rates and the increase in mortality, aspects only partially compensated by immigrants coming to work in Romania, according to information published by the National Institute of Statistics (INS), Friday, 29.08.2025 .

According to the INS Report, on January 1, 2025, the resident population was 19.03 million people, down by 31,500 people compared to January 1, 2024.

From the existing data from 1990 to 2025, there is a total disinterest of the local political class and state institutions in issues related to demography, on the contrary, economic and other measures are taken against those who want children.

In my material (within the limited space allocated) I will try to present the profoundly negative effects of the depopulation phenomenon on the social life, economy, and defense of the country.

***Keywords:*** demomilitary factor, sharp depopulation, defense of the country.

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

**Let's start from the realities published in the INS Report:**

- **the main cause** is the negative natural increase (the difference between the number of live births and deaths – 101.8 thousand people;

- **the positive balance of international migration:** + 58.8 thousand people, but insufficient to compensate for the natural loss;

- **on January 1, 2025**, the resident population in the urban area was 9,768,000 people, down 1.3% compared to January 1, 2024. The female population on January 1, 2025 was 9,777,000 people, down 0.2% compared to the same period of the previous year;

- **the demographic aging process** has deepened, the share of the elderly population (65 years and over), continuing its growth trend, compared to January 1, 2024, by 0.3 percentage points (from 20% in 2024, to 20.3% on January 1, 2025);

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- **the share of the population aged 0-14** in the total population decreased from 15.9% on January 1, 2024, to 15.6% on January 1, 2025. The demographic aging index increased from 125.8 (on January 1, 2024) to 130 elderly people per 100 young people (on January 1, 2025). The demographic dependency ratio stagnated at 56.1 young and elderly people per 100 adult people.

Unfortunately, the serious demographic situation of Romania is also compounded by the emigration of the most active and prepared part of the population, the figures circulated are between 4 million and 6 million Romanian citizens, without the Romanian authorities knowing the real situation. Many of the Romanians who left to work abroad (young people between 20 and 45 years old) are fit for military service, if needed, but it will be almost impossible to be recruited. According to some sources, about 30% meet this condition.

## **2. Russia's aggressive behavior in Europe and beyond**

**In the current conditions** marked by uncertainties at a global level and in many regions of the world, especially in Europe and Asia, aggressive state and political actors devoid of any morality and scruples have begun to use without limits, military, economic, financial, cybernetic force and demographic potential, in order to conquer and subjugate countries in the immediate and more distant neighborhood, as is the case with Russia, a totalitarian and aggressive state, which, from 2000 to today, under Putin, has had no qualms about brutally intervening in Chechnya, Georgia, annexing Crimea (2014) and invading Ukraine starting with 24.02.2022. The savage war launched by the Russian Federation against Ukraine is almost four years old, despite political and diplomatic actions by the US and some European leaders.

**As is known**, these days (October-November 2025), attempts are being made to stop the war, the process being ongoing, under the influence of US President Donald Trump. Many international observers and analysts from the United States, Europe and Asia are skeptical that Russia will want peace, President Putin and his siloviki-oligarchic camarilla are determinedly pursuing their maximum goals, the occupation of as much territory as possible in Ukraine and ultimately the abolition of its statehood<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Ionescu, *Ideologul lui Putin spune că „Ucraina va fi în întregime a Rusiei”. Planul enunțat de Dughin pentru poporul ucrainean, teritoriile invadate și „noua structură administrativă”*, available at <https://hotnews.ro/ideologul-lui-putin-spune-ca-ucraina-va-fi-in-intregime-a-rusiei-planul-enuntat-de-dughin-pentru-poporul-ucrainean-teritoriile-invadate-si-noua-structura-administrativa-2116244>, accessed on 29.11.2025.

**In this context**, I think it is useful to study the **analysis** of political commentator Ioan Stanomir<sup>2</sup>.

**The issue** of the possible peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine is present on many Romanian and foreign news sites, with quite different positions. I think those interested in the subject could read them!

We must be fully aware that the main threat to world peace and, first of all, to Europe, comes from Russia, a state that has been intensively preparing militarily and not only, to attack its neighbors. The list of direct aggressions and hostile acts in the category of **hybrid warfare** is very long.

Let us just mention the acts of sabotage in Germany, Poland, France, Belgium (which continue even now), as well as the daily incursions with drones in Poland, Romania, the Republic of Moldova and in the area of some airports and military bases in Great Britain, Belgium, Poland, Romania, Germany, etc.

### **3. The importance of the demomilitary factor in the war**

Numerous political-military analysts, political leaders and Romanian and foreign diplomats have written, published and presented on various media channels studies, articles and commentaries regarding the almost four years of war, triggered by Russia against Ukraine.

The numerous available materials demonstrate, with arguments to be taken into account, the way of thinking and action of the aggressive team from Moscow, the serious miscalculations of the Kremlin leader, as well as the cynicism and cruelty, without moral limits, of him and his troops.

Although the Russians are facing heavy losses of lives and equipment, they have not given any credible sign so far (26.11.2025) that they would like peace, the recent statements of some Russian leaders confirming that they want all of Ukraine and more.

It should be noted that from the existing contradictory data it would follow that Russia lost by November 14, 2025 – 1,156,400 people (dead and wounded), and Ukraine five times less, that is, 231,300 (dead and wounded). Neither side officially recognizes these figures<sup>3</sup>.

From these incomplete and not yet certified data from independent sources, it clearly results, the importance of human resources for a long-term war, although some analysts, including Romanians, support the theory

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<sup>2</sup> Ioan Stanomir, *Planul SUA-Rusia pentru Kiev: Ucraina nu poate deveni Vietnamul de Sud. Prăbușirea ei ar antrena un efect de domino în întreaga regiune*, available at <https://hotnews.ro/planul-sua-rusia-pentru-kiev-ucraina-nu-poate-deveni-vietnamul-de-sud-prabusirea-ei-ar-antrena-un-efect-de-domino-in-intreaga-regiune-2115130>, accessed on 29.11.2025.

<sup>3</sup> *Putin a pierdut câte 1000 de soldați în fiecare zi de război, anunță Statul Major al Armatei Ucrainene*, available at <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ue/putin-a-pierdut-cate-1000-de-soldati-in-fiecare-zi-de-razboi-anunta-statul-major-al-armatei-ucrainene-3502553>, accessed on 30.11.2025.

of small armies, but adequately equipped with military equipment, some of them forgetting that the weapons systems are operated by the military, and they are hit on the battlefield, being killed and wounded, without moral and humanitarian limits.

I tend to believe that there must be a carefully calculated balance, taking into account the risks and threats in the European space and in the direct vicinity of the Romanian territory with the war zone.

If we take into account the peacetime military strength of the Romanian Army, of approximately 70,000 soldiers, and only the losses of Ukraine, it results that this country has lost 3.3 times the number of our army. It is a big question mark for some Romanian political and military leaders who consider that the 70,000 soldiers are a bit too many (!!?) and have too high salaries!

The issue of population aging is a serious issue for all of Europe, with deeply negative effects on the economy, social life and defense.

A report by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), published by Sebastian Jucan, Tuesday, November 25, 2025, on the HotNews website, demonstrates that "population aging is a time bomb and says that measures to encourage birth rates are not working anywhere in Europe"<sup>4</sup>.

From the data consulted, it follows that in Romania almost no political decision-maker seemed interested in the issue of the country's depopulation, including through the dramatic reduction in births, to which is added, of course, the massive departure from the country of many Romanian citizens.

**Analyzing in more depth the importance of the demomilitary factor** in war (many sources of information are available regarding the direct link between the size and structure of a country's population and the capacity to size the armed forces in peace, in crisis situations and in war), some conclusions and lessons to be taken into account in 2025 and in the following years result.

**Studying this topic and looking at the realities of the First and Second World Wars, some conclusions can be drawn:**

- **in the two devastating wars**, with many millions of victims, armies were formed from large masses of people, in which the main belligerents relied on 5-10% of the population of their country;

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<sup>4</sup> Sebastian Jucan, *Îmbătrânirea populației e o bombă cu ceas și spune că măsurile de încurajare a natalității nu funcționează nicăieri în Europa, avertizează BERD*, available at <https://hotnews.ro/berd-avertizeaza-ca-imbatranirea-populatie-e-o-bomba-cu-ceas-si-spune-ca-masurile-de-incurajare-a-natalitatii-nu-functioneaza-nicaieri-in-europa-2115678>, accessed on 02.12.2025.

- **after the end of the Cold War**, military specialists and political decision-makers from the relevant powers argued for the need to demassify their armies, mainly based on the development of modern technologies and weapons, which can compensate for the sometimes dramatic decrease in peacetime personnel, but also in mobilization reserves. Thus, now NATO countries have between 0.3 and 0.8% of the population in their armies at peacetime. In the case of non-NATO states, the percentage at peacetime is higher, being between 1.1 and 1.5%;

- **there are increasingly clear signals**, including in Romania, that the war in Ukraine will bring significant corrections in terms of the size of the peacetime armies and the increase in the mobilization reserve.

**Considering the above, let's analyze the current situation (November 2025) in Russia and Ukraine:**

**Russia**<sup>5</sup> has an area of 17,074,400 km<sup>2</sup> (rank 1 in the world) and it seems that it is not enough, it has a coastline on the oceans and seas of 37,000 km, and the population is currently estimated at 142 million inhabitants (down from 143.3 million before the war in Ukraine, due to losses and immigration). Before the invasion of Ukraine, the military forces had a personnel of 2,100,000, of which 1,136,000 soldiers (0.8%), being able to mobilize at most 5% of the population for war, meaning approximately 7,225,000 soldiers (an impressive figure but very difficult to achieve due to the economic, social and political difficulties that would arise).

Without any certified data from independent sources, it seems that in November 2025, following successive mobilizations, it reached 2,000,000 military personnel.

**Ukraine** has an area of 603,700 km<sup>2</sup> (ranked 44th in the world), has a landlocked area of 2,782 km, taking into account the internationally recognized borders, although it has de facto lost Crimea and 20% of the eastern regions of the country (November 2025). The population of Ukraine was 44,000,000 inhabitants in 2021 (ranked 26th), and now the country's population is estimated at 40,000,000 inhabitants (war losses and emigration). **The armed forces**, structured into three categories, were 159,000 military personnel before the invasion, representing 0.36% of the population. After the invasion, the forces increased to 340,000 soldiers, and currently (November 2025) there are 900,000 soldiers in the combat forces, a significant increase due to the mobilization reserve. The losses suffered by the neighboring state and the massive migration create serious problems in sizing the army in war conditions, to face the Russian aggressor.

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<sup>5</sup> Constantin Mincu, Posibile lecții de învățat din războiul declanșat de Federația Rusă împotriva Ucrainei, „Revista de Științe Militare”, no. 2/2022.

**Romania** has a serious demographic problem, the decline being -2% per year, so now (01.01.2025) according to an INS Report, the resident population would be 19.03 million inhabitants, serenely losing 1.2 million, compared to the 2011 census. Specialists in the field state that in 2040 Romania will have, in the optimistic version, only 16 million people compared to 22,800,000 in 1989. Of the mentioned figure, more than 5 million have gone abroad to work or study, some permanently and others non-permanently (without the Romanian authorities having any precise records).

**This situation** creates major defense problems and affects the country's ability to mobilize, if necessary, the necessary forces.

**Studying the population structure** by age, we find a sharp aging and a significant decrease in the number of young people between the ages of 18 and 35, a segment through which the military personnel needed by the Army and other structures in the National Defense System can be recruited, in peacetime, in crisis situations and in war.

**A major problem** is also that of school and professional training, the 2022 census demonstrating an increase in the number of school dropouts and those with only secondary school education. Given the current and future complexity of weapons systems, it is difficult for them to be operated successfully in combat by the human resources available in the short and medium term.

I believe that at this point we should dwell more carefully on the evolution of Romania's population from 1989 to today (26.11.2025) and, implicitly, on the human resources available, if necessary, for the defense of the country, in the global and regional geopolitical context:

- **Population of Romania:**

- 1989 = 22,800,000;
- 2015 = 21,462,000;
- 2025 = 19,030,000.

- **Citizens capable of military effort:**

- 1989 = 6,840,000;
- 2015 = 6,438,000;
- 2025 = 4,800,000.

- **Active military personnel in peacetime:**

- 1989 = 340,000;
- 2015 = 73,000;
- 2025 = 70,000 (!?).

- **Percentage of population:**

- 1989 = 1.48%;
- 2015 = 0.34%;
- 2025 = 0.35%.

**We must note** that the above data differ quite a bit from those published semi-annually by the analysis group "GLOBAL FIREPOWER - 2025".

**Carefully analyzing** the figures mentioned above, it results that compared to 1989 we have a drastic reduction of 4.5 times of peacetime soldiers, through forced layoffs and 9.75 times of the available reserve.

**The height of cynicism is that some politicians and media communication vectors accuse those laid off of having gone home "happy".**

**I appreciate that current political and military decision-makers** should, however, understand that we are a border country of NATO and the EU, located due to historical misfortune, in an area with many risks and threats, and NATO devices are moving slowly and "timidly" especially to the East, especially in the Southern Flank and the Black Sea Basin, so as not to upset Russia. But Russia has been angry with the West for more than 300 years, which is also confirmed by **Vladimir Putin's speech (over two hours long) on 28.02.2024, a speech in which he threatens the West and Humanity with extinction, using the nuclear arsenal**<sup>6</sup>.

**I think that those interested in DEFENSE OF THE COUNTRY** (increasingly fewer and less vocal), from the political and military areas, know that in 1999-2000 it was estimated that the Romanian Army would have, in peacetime, 120,000 soldiers, and the number of mobilized people would be, in the first phase, 300,000 people. **It would have been an effort, but the defense of the state and statehood costs money all over the world, and the trend is dictated by the aggressive powers in the neighborhood, not by Romania.**

**As if by miracle, without any public debate and without any analysis of the risks and threats in our area, the decision-makers at the time estimated that 75,000 soldiers and 15,000 civilian employees were sufficient.**

Instead of these figures on paper, now (2025) we have only 67,000-70,000 soldiers.

**Added to these serious shortcomings** is the fact that over five million Romanians (out of 19.03 million) are abroad, on a long-term basis. At least one million of them are fit for military service in war, but there is

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<sup>6</sup> *Vladimir Putin, discurs în fața națiunii: De ce NATO nu înțelege că există pericolul unui conflict nuclear? / Armata noastră a câștigat o experiență de luptă colosală / Rușii trebuie să facă mai mult sport: Lăsați băutura, apucați-vă de ski!*, available at <https://hotnews.ro/video-vladimir-putin-discurs-n-fata-natiunii-de-ce-nato-nu-ntelege-ca-exista-pericolul-unui-conflict-nuclear-armata-noastra-a-cstigmat-o-experienta-de-lupta-colosala-rusii-t-14607>, accessed on 02.12.2025.

nowhere to get them and, as some publicly declare, they do not want to die for Romania (!!?).

**A ray of hope may come from the rapid and good-faith implementation of the new "Country Defense Strategy",** adopted today, November 26, 2023, in the Romanian Parliament (314 votes for, 43 against and 3 abstentions). The votes against and the abstentions could have come from the pro-Russian wing of the Parliament, disturbed by the nomination of the Russian Federation as a threat to Romania<sup>7</sup>.

**In the "Strategy..."** I believe that the internal risks and vulnerabilities mentioned by the president (the same 35 years ago) are correctly captured:

• **Corruption, large-scale tax evasion, the quality of education, critical thinking and school dropout, demographic decline and fragmentation of state policies in the area of technology are the main problems on the domestic level. In the chapter on external dangers, the president mentioned the hybrid war that "obviously" Russia is waging against Romania and many European states.**

**In conclusion: There is a lot of work and to be done, with determination and good faith, to eliminate the mistakes and hesitations of the past, in the complex issue of DEFENSE OF THE COUNTRY. The document must not remain like an ESSAY in a drawer, as happened in the past.**



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<sup>7</sup> Nicușor Dan a prezentat în Parlament Strategia Națională de Apărare a Țării: Rusia desfășoară un război hibrid împotriva României / Care sunt riscurile și vulnerabilitățile interne menționate de președinte, available at <https://hotnews.ro/nicusor-dan-prezinta-strategia-nationala-de-aparare-a-tarii-in-parlament-senatorii-si-deputatii-urmeaza-sa-voteze-2116320>, accessed on 02.12.2025.

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