

# THE THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES, RISKS AND THREATS IN MODERN THEORY OF NATIONAL SECURITY\*

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Достављен: 14. 02. 2022.

Језик рада: Енглески

Кориговано: 28. 02. и 24. 03. 2022.

Тип рада: Прегледни рад

Прихваћен: 30. 03. 2022.

DOI број: 10.5937/vojdela2202001B

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In modern conditions, there is increasing uncertainty and unpredictability, which results in difficulties in security management. In security studies, the concept of danger is a central concept. Security dangers are manifested in the form of challenges, risks and threats. Although these are three different "states of danger", the phrase "security challenges, risks and threats" (SCRT) is most often used in public discourse, neglecting the fact that each of these concepts has its meaning, specifics and certain place in gradation, classification, and also prioritization of security dangers. The subject of this paper is the analysis of security challenges, risks and threats within national security strategy, which are essential for the fulfilment of the highest state security interests. On the basis of content analysis and comparative method, the interrelationship of these concepts, i.e. the essence, character and causes of threatening national security, has been considered.

The paper presents the problem of making a distinction between categorical concepts of national security. In this regard, the theory of sectoral approach to security has been proposed, as an analytical framework, in order to improve the scope of security dynamics of challenges, risks and threats, and also their essential distinction in an adequate way. Moreover, the research indicates that changes in security content, expanding and improving fields, have led to changes in management technology that includes risk management, but that there has been no real change in the overall concept.

*Key words: modern conflicts, national security, challenge, risk, threat, danger and damage*

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\* The paper is a part of the scientific research project "Physiognomy of Modern Armed Conflicts", which is conducted on the basis of the Plan of Scientific Research Activities in the Ministry of Defence and the Serbian Armed Forces for 2021, No. 2-2.

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## Introduction

The modern world is in the general search for new contents and forms of its security, and thus in the search for the establishment of the most efficient defence systems of states, alliances and regions. There is a general tendency for the improvement and development of all human activities, and thus the progress of the field of defence and security. Progress steps are not made evenly across all continents, regions and countries. Their strength and speed are conditioned by numerous political, economic, socio-historical and security factors. At the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, people, countries and regions are interested and concerned about their destiny and security.

The fact is that there are numerous factors and sources of unrest, threats and endangering of many countries around the world, and that very often even great and powerful countries are not immune to them. The question is often posed whether states themselves do everything in their power to develop such defence systems that will protect them from various types of SCRT that they may encounter in the future. At the core of these events there are several key moments that have significantly increased the role of political, economic, technological and IT development factors.

Defence implies an organized response in terms of thwarting, preventing and reducing the effects of attacks that represent social action to undermine state.<sup>1</sup> All countries, throughout their history, have striven to avoid the position of victim, and therefore have developed and organized defence functions in accordance with the character of their socio-political systems.<sup>2</sup> Defence and security have always been important functions of politics and political system, and their development is an integral factor in the development of political system. A conceptualization of defence is one of the most important. The tasks of state bodies in developing national security policy are primarily aimed at establishing a single state interest which, having in mind the defined interests in the field of foreign policy and security, have to be incorporated into security concept and model. Security strategies, which have to serve to define the defence system, as one of the most important functions in the field of security of each country, result from the concept and model of security. Essentially, this issue boils down to modeling preventive, curative and post-curative action at SCRT.<sup>3</sup>

In order that the state defence fulfills its main social function, the primary condition is to be organized and to function as a system. This fact requires a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> Blagojević Srđan, Zogović Mihajlo, Pajović Milivoje, (2015), Politika odnosa sa javnošću u sistemu odbrane, Vojno delo 5/2015.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The curative type of action of the security subsystem is the form that eliminates the causes of endangerment and their holders in a legal manner. Post-curative action is, as a rule, directed in several directions: firstly, to reduce, eliminate and compensate (substitute) damage that has been done and, secondly, in the direction of undertaking activities that will prevent or at least reduce the possibility of endangerment and great damage.

See more in: Gordić Miodrag, Termiz Dževad, Tančić Dragan, (2015), Metodološki osnovi istraživanja bezbednosti odbrane i terorizma, Markos, Banja Luka, pp. 432-433, ISBN 978-99955-99-02-7

systematic strengthening of the entire national security system of the Republic of Serbia.<sup>4</sup> Instead of the concept of “state strategy”, in the theory and practice of strategic thinking, the concept of “national security strategy” (hereinafter: NSS) is often used, which is of a lower level of generality.<sup>5</sup> In order that state is optimally prepared to face various security challenges, risks and threats, decision-makers need an integrated, coherent and systematic approach, which will enable them to classify and compare different factors of security threats, set priorities and make an adequate and effective decision in strengthening the appropriate preparation and capacity building. At the same time, without a clear understanding of the semantic content of the main categories of national security theory, i.e. SCRT, it is impossible to establish an efficient system for providing state national security, whose absence makes impossible to create conditions for sustainable economic growth and development of state.

The subject of this paper is national security strategy, i.e. security challenges, risks and threats that are essential for the fulfilment of the highest state security interests. An addition to the analysis of the main categories of national security theory has been presented: “challenge”, “risk” and “threat”. On the basis of the definition and comparative analysis of the definitions of these categories, mentioned in different sources, the author reveals their content and essence and concludes that despite the semantic similarity of the categories “challenge”, “risk” and “threat”, each defines a different degree of risk from endangering, i.e. the occurrence of harmful consequences. It is essential to separate SCRT in order to improve the methodology for identifying and then assessing military and non-military CRT when developing the National Security Strategy and other strategic and doctrinal documents. Accordingly, in reality, dynamics from several security sectors (political, military, economic, social, ecological and informational) is intertwined in most security problems. This analytical framework of the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School can be successfully implemented in the analysis of manifest forms of threats to national security. Since risk is a measurable value, by implementing risk-based concept, it becomes possible to develop methodology for an objective assessment of SCRT for state security. This approach is important not only in terms of defining national security policy and defence policy, but also has the greatest impact on the development plans of the defence system as a whole, particularly the development of the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces.

## The analysis of the use of the concepts of security threats

The sources of danger are in nature and society, and its forms of expression are destruction or damage to some extent. In social practice, we encounter natural and social danger, and living beings strive instinctively, intuitively and rationally to protect

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<sup>4</sup> On the importance of state strategy, see more in: Kovač Mitar, Marček Jan, (2013), *Konzept und methodische Aspekte dbr Formulierung und Umsetzung der staatlichen Strategie*, Österreichische militärische zeitschrift, 1/2013, pp. 34-47.

<sup>5</sup> Kovač Mitar, Marček Jan, (2001), *Teorijske osnove strategije države*, Zbornik radova sa simpozijuma o vojnoj nauci, Naučna izgrađenost i činioci vojne strategije, Institut ratne veštine, Beograd, p. 40.

themselves. The main form of manifestation of danger is threatening the existence of something or someone in a given state. Threatening can be accomplished only by the action of some natural or social force that has a destructive effect on a phenomenon, unintentionally or intentionally, purposefully – so, with the intention to produce some consequences for nature or society, that is, a man. The answer to two questions – who and what to protect society from and how to direct the security system - is the basis for all other actions in the field of security because they define, classify and explain the occurrence, duration and action of socially harmful and dangerous phenomena in security terms. In *criminal terms*, threatening means danger. The meaning of danger, in this sense, implies a lesser or greater possibility of destroying or damaging some good or value, endangering life or health, and it can be concrete or abstract. The phenomena of endangering security in *social sense* are related to social conflicts. For Ejodus (Filip Ejodus), the main concepts of security grammar are: *danger* (what threatens), *object reference of security* (what is endangered), *subject of security* (one that protects) and *means*, i.e. *security measures* (way of protecting). He believes that danger can manifest itself as a challenge, risk or threat (CRT).<sup>6</sup>

The theoretical aspect of the topic of this paper deals more directly with the issues of security threats and the relationship with SCRT. When we talk about security threats, the theory has firstly classified them into the so-called security phenomena, named as sources, forms and holders of threats.<sup>7</sup> In the same context, Professor Mijalković (Saša Mijalković) emphasizes the SCRT phrase in terms of attitude towards security threats, and articulates the following relations: (1) security challenges correspond to security sources, (2) security risks are a metamorphosis of security threats and (3) security threats are, in essence, forms of threatening security.<sup>8</sup>

Starting from different scientific, theoretical, methodological and practical points of view, various sources and forms of anti-social action can be defined, classified and explained. In theory, there are three types of sources of threatening and endangerment, such as: social sources, natural sources and technical and technological sources. According to *security sectors*, it is possible to make a distinction between military, political, social, economic and ecological CRT. According to *the origin of danger*, those dangers that have originated within the political community - internal CRT, differ from those that arose out of it - external CRT. Theoretically, the police are primarily in charge of suppressing internal CRT, while the armed forces are responsible for preventing external threats. However, according to the theory of globalists, who question the once inviolable distinction between internal and foreign policy, there are less CRT that can be defined in this way. The number of traditional, that is, military CRT is getting smaller. On the other hand, non-military forms of

<sup>6</sup> Ejodus Filip, (2012), *Međunarodna bezbednost, teorije, sektori i nivoi*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2012, p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> See more: Stajčić Ljubomir, (2013), *Osnovi sistema bezbednosti*, Pravni fakultet, Novi Sad.

<sup>8</sup> Mijalković, Saša, *Nacionalna bezbednost*, p. 110 in Forca B., (2016), *Teorijski i praktični aspekti savremenih izazova, rizika i pretnji bezbednosti*, Zbornik radova, "Srbija i strategijska raskršća ISIKS 2016", pp. 563-579.

endangerment, such as organized crime, terrorism, pandemics, energy and migrant crises, climate change, have acquired a transnational character. All of this leads to overlapping security functions of different parts of the security sector.

According to the realist theory, security is primarily accomplished by military means. Their behaviour is motivated by the desire to accumulate as much power as possible in order to achieve sufficient security,<sup>9</sup> i.e. to reduce threats and ensure its survival and sovereignty as a precondition to accomplish any goal that state considers valuable to achieve, accomplish and preserve. Liberalists believe that international institutions are the main holders of international security, emphasize the importance of institutions and their cooperation, and point to the growing role of non-state actors and entities. Within this, they articulate that an individual (citizen) is increasingly becoming a subject of international security. Socioconstructivists believe that, due to the anarchic state of international relations, states are still the key object references of security because the existing international relations, as well as the mutual activities of their subjects, directly define the behaviour of states. According to them, reality has shown that certain phenomena are perceived as threats regardless of their actual situation, which represents the subjective perception of CRT in public. Characteristically, this school of thought recognizes threats as the main content of the security concept.<sup>10</sup>

In the background of the discussed expansion, improvement and sectoralization of the security concept, this paper presents an overview of three objective security threats and subjective security concerns, which have been established in theory and practice (the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia) as the phrase: security challenges, risks and threats (SCRT)<sup>11</sup>. In accordance with the mentioned, in the military and non-military security sector, all the complexity of identifying the current security challenges, risks and threats and the need to make a distinction between them is emphasized. In addition, there is an emphasis on the problem identified in the EU Working Group's commentary on the criteria and methodology used to identify, rank and classify the SCRT of the Republic of Serbia in the draft National Security Strategy adopted in 2019, for Chapters 30 and 31 in the process of the accession negotiations between the Republic of Serbia and the EU.<sup>12</sup> The National Security Strategy is a system of complementary norms in the field of state strategies that are directly related to the security system and the execution of specific defence state functions in political, economic, legal, technological,

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<sup>9</sup> Terry Teriff, Stuart Croft, Lucy James, Patric M. Morgan, (1999), *Security Studies Today*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Mitrović M., Assessments and foreign policy implications of the national security of the Republic of Serbia, *Security and Defence Quarterly*, № 2/ 2021, Vol. 34, pp. 4. DOI: 10.35467/sdq/135592

<sup>11</sup> See more in: Ilić Predrag, (2010), *Bezbednosni izazovi, rizici i pretnje, ili činioci ugrožavanja bezbednosti*, Pravne teme, Beograd; i Forca Božidar, (2016), *Teorijski i praktični aspekti savremenih izazova, rizika i pretnji bezbednosti*, Zbornik radova, "Srbija i strategijska raskršća ISIKS 2016" p. 564.

<sup>12</sup> National convention on the EU working group for Chapters 30 and 31, (2018), *Comments on Draft National Security Strategy*, <https://www.isac-fund.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Comments-on-Draft-National-Security-and-Defense-Strategies-National-convention-on-the-EU.pdf>

educational, informational, military, religious and other main state functions. It is the basis for the integrated operation of defence forces in the function of achieving a favourable state of state security through the manifestation of state power in the function of protecting vital national interests.<sup>13</sup>

## Towards defining the terms challenge, risk and threat

The starting point for the successful definition and classification of modern SCRT in security studies is the definition of object references - what is protected. There are two important object references: state (and sovereignty) and an individual (society) and its identity. The meaning of the terms "danger(s)", "challenge(s)", "risk(s)" and "threat(s)" in dictionaries, encyclopedias and textbooks is neither clearly and substantially defined in terms of security nor clearly mutually distinguished. What we would like to articulate in this paper is that "the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia"<sup>14</sup> does not make a distinction between security challenges, risks and threats, but speaks of them as a single phrase and category. The second chapter of this Strategy, "Security Challenges, Risks and Threats", firstly states that they have "a complex character, so with similar content, scope and intensity can be manifested at a global, regional and national level" and that "the starting criterion in considering and citing CRT is the severity of the consequences for the security of the Republic of Serbia that could occur in the event of their manifestation". This indicates the importance of defining the security CRT as precisely as possible because imprecise assessment could lead to the impossibility of an adequate response when some of SCRT is manifested on security object references.

Such a situation in the scientific-professional, theoretical and practical sense creates quite a confusion including the possibility that these are synonyms, which they are certainly not. While the term "danger" mainly means and implies the current and possible general threat to security of some (one) or all (someone's) vital values or interests, primarily of state, such "precision" cannot be stated for seemingly simple terms such as CRT, which have become syntagmatic.

*Danger* is the objectively existing possibility of a negative impact, which can lead to the potential deterioration of the state of object. Thus, for example, the traditional signs of external national danger are: the emergence of hotspots of military and political confrontation; the presence of regional and international crises and armed conflicts; the establishment and energetic actions of blocs, coalitions; waging a psychological war; strengthening the military presence on the proposed battlefields; an intensification of intelligence activities, etc. Danger is defined by the presence of objective and subjective factors that have harmful properties. The constitutive characteristic of danger is its potentiality, that is, relation to the future.

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<sup>13</sup> Kovač Mitar, (2007), Teorijski i metodološki aspekti izrade i primene strategije nacionalne bezbednosti, Vojno delo, 3/2007, (UDK: 355.02.001.5/8 351.86.001.5), p. 37.

<sup>14</sup> Strategija nacionalne bezbednosti Republike Srbije "Službeni glasnik RS", broj 94/2019.

*Challenge* is a set of circumstances, not necessarily particularly threatening, but, of course, it requires an answer to them. In other words, challenges are phenomena and processes that do not currently jeopardize security, but if concrete measures are not taken, security will be difficult to achieve or even impossible in the future. In fact, challenge is defined by the existence of indirect negative factors that in their development can lead to a conflict situation, significantly change the military and political situation and pose a direct threat to country. This circumstance turns challenge into the primary category of the “danger – security” system. According to Ejodus, “*challenge* is a situation that puts someone or something to test”.<sup>15</sup> According to Orlić (Dejan Orlić), challenges are “potential forms of endangering stability and sovereignty of state and identity of an individual and society”, that is, “the source of risks and threats”. According to Mijalković, these are harmful phenomena, that is, “natural phenomena, social relations and technical-technological processes whose existence is (in itself) destructive”. From the above, it can be concluded that the subphrase “security challenge” can have both negative and positive meaning when used alone, and that within the phrase “security challenges, risks and threats” it has only a negative meaning.

*Risk* is, in its most general form, the possibility of harmful and undesirable consequences of the activities of the subject itself. At the same time, it represents certain limitations in the execution of planned actions, due to the fact that it is not always possible to predict exactly in advance how certain phenomena will affect the state security. According to Ejodus: “The second type of danger is *risk*, which can be defined as the possibility of loss, injury, embarrassment or destruction”.<sup>16</sup> Orlić believes that risks are closer, more visible and more clearly measurable forms of endangering the sovereignty and identity of states and society. They are the sources of security threats, and the breadth of their impact is clearer.<sup>17</sup>

*Threat* is the most concrete and immediate form of national danger, created by the purposeful action of enemy forces. Danger and threat are different levels of the situation that violate the security of society. As the analysis of the scientific literature on national security issues shows, the term “threat” is sometimes used without revealing its essence, as a concept known to all a priori, or as a set of factors described by a simple list.<sup>18</sup> Threat is a stage of extreme aggravation of contradictions, an immediate pre-conflict state, when there is the readiness of one of subjects to use force against some object in order to achieve its political and other goals. Most theorists have cited their definition of the term “threat” from dictionaries, lexicons, encyclopedias and textbooks of international relations. In such literature, “threats” are defined as someone’s conscious intention, possibility or capability to

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<sup>15</sup> Ejodus Filip, (2012), *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Orlić Dejan, (2004), *Pojmovno određivanje izazova, rizika i pretnji u procesu preoblikovanja međunarodne bezbednosti*, Vojno delo 3/2004, pp. 76-93.

<sup>18</sup> Feonichev A.B., Meleshin K.Yu. (2021), Theoretical and Methodological Features of the Analysis of the Basic Concepts of the Modern Theory of National Security. Administrative Consulting;(1):32-42. <https://doi.org/10.22394/1726-1139-2021-1-32-42>

inflict harm or some other evil on someone. By uncritical adoption of such definitions, they have started from them in their definition of the term "security threat". As it is known, it often depends on some natural and technical-technological phenomena, conditions, processes and events, which cannot be called subjects, i.e. conscious factors, and can also threaten the safety of people.

As it can be seen, the interpretation of these phenomena in relation to the concept of "risk" presumes more additional questions than it gives answers. However, as already mentioned, challenge and threat pose different degrees of danger. In this case, it is possible to establish the following order: challenge, risk, threat. In this relation, challenge is not an immediate danger, which is not fully structured and not fully conducted, but which still needs to be addressed. Risk itself is a well-defined danger, which, however, is not so urgent as to provoke immediate defensive strategies. Threat is the most urgent danger that requires urgent and energetic action in order to neutralize it.

Obviously, even at first glance, "risk" and "danger" are different terms, although they are closely related to each other. The simple idea of risk and the semantic meaning of this word testify to this relation. Thus, in many modern dictionaries of Serbian and foreign languages, "risk" is interpreted as "the possibility of danger, failure". In modern colloquial speech and journalism, the word "risk" also often replaces the word "danger". The reason for this lies, first of all, in the fact that risk is often interpreted quite broadly and unilaterally, exclusively as the possibility of losses, without specifying other important features that characterize this phenomenon. Moreover, this is reflected in the concepts that characterize the antithesis of national security.

Thus, the following correlative order is currently established in the theory and practice of providing national security: "challenge" – "risk" – "threat". Generally speaking, it aims to reflect the process of growing national tension, depending on the character of the orientation and role of the subjective factor. The semantic difficulty of each of them has great practical significance because they reflect the degree of damage that can be inflicted on the subject and object of national security. The methodological role of this order is that the concepts of the antithesis to security, arranged in a logical sequence, firstly, show the multilayered and multiple character of those situations that cause concern and anxiety of people, which encourages them to take an action to protect their values; secondly, they emphasize the specifics of the content and characterize different degrees of the intensity of the manifestation of unfavourable factors. In support of this, it is interesting to note that Professor Mijalković, the author of the textbook "National Security" (2009), is reluctant to use the phrase SCRT, considering it one of the possible classifications of security threats. He also cites the following consideration: "Otherwise, threats are graded according to the criteria of the intensity of destructiveness and certainty of occurrence." For Paul Viotti, this ever-changing concept of what constitutes national security is due in part to different perceptions, preferences and exchanges of views among decision-makers.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Da Cruz José de Arimatéia, (2021), National Security Is Still an Ambiguous Concept, Journal of Advanced Military Studies, Volume 12, Number 1, p. 211, Marine Corps University Press <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/797090>



Their differences in views are reflected in terms of: a) the degree of reality of the occurrence of damage as a cause of “transition” of possibilities into reality; b) the influence of subjective and objective factors; c) specific targeting of the impact on the object. The content of these terms does not cause special objections because each of them reflects the essential features of the phenomena they define. At the same time, there is the reason to clarify the “accommodation” of the concept of “risk” in this hierarchy. According to the author, it seems that the meaning contained in the term “risk” requires a different view of its relationship with the terms “challenge”, “threat”.

There are many definitions of risk in literature in which it is not “related” only to the activity of the subject. This would mean that risk is manifested not only as a result of the actions of the subject itself, but also in the negative development of the situation or the occurrence of accidental adverse events. The argument here is based on the fact that risk is always associated with damage to the subject, and that is danger. At the same time, it is not so important whether it arises as a result of the activities of the subject, other subjects or under the influence of environmental factors. Therefore, when we talk about risk, we usually mean the hypothetical possibility that there will be damage, i.e. the execution of danger. From these views, risk is a stage in the development of danger. In this context, risk acts as a kind of manifestation of danger, due to the purposeful activity of the subject.

The analysis and assessment of CRT are an integral part of national security activities. At the same time, it is worth paying attention to the fact that if challenges (to a lesser extent) and special threats are usually clearly identified in various official documents, then risks are practically not reflected in them. And this is not accidental. This is largely due to the fact that the subject, when anticipating or already “facing” challenges and threats, begins to reconsider its capabilities and risks in the current situation in a new way. Undoubtedly, risks have greater “mobility” and delay because the subject of providing national security, making and implementing certain decisions, can increase the initial uncertainty.

It seems that the concept of “risk” is more suitable not for the characterization of phenomena and processes that are contrary to the state of protection from national danger, but for the characterization of the situation of the choice of the security subject. According to the authors, in relation to the terms that characterize the antithesis of national security, the most acceptable approach is the one in which risk is derived from challenges and threats. From these views, the most adequate and purposeful one, from the point of view of the practice of organizing the process of providing national security, is “risk”. Other authors also believe that “threat” should be abandoned as a defining term in the development of security concepts and policies, and that the term “risk” should be used because it is the only one that can enable a “more radical reconfiguration of the security concept itself”.<sup>20</sup> This approach also removes the obvious contradiction between the logical and the real. Accordingly, the author concludes that the location of the concept of “risk” from the point of view of formal logic

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<sup>20</sup> Corry O., Securitisation and Riskification: Second-order security and the politics of climate change, (in) Mitrović M., Serbia’s National Security Strategy – from where, through what and where to go. *Eastern Studies (Wschodnioznawstwo)*, Vol. 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4467/20827695WSC.21.008.14715>

cannot be between the terms “challenge” and “threat”. In addition, it is worth paying attention to the noticed inverse relationship between risk and other phenomena of security antithesis. In the diagram, this relationship emphasizes that risk implies not only the possibility of damage, but also positive consequences, as well as the activity of the subject to minimize or prevent negative consequences.

The consideration of risk as a derivative of danger has arguments from the epistemological point of view, as well. The fact is that security risk analysis and assessment initially require the identification and understanding of dangers, but not vice versa: a risky decision. The one who makes a decision and the one who is affected by the decision each time mark different sides of the same difference and therefore are in a conflict because they dispose of their attention and the attention they demand from others in different ways.

Thus, the concept of “risk” is characterized not only by the possibility of negative consequences, but also some focus on success in the absence of absolute certainty to avoid losses in achieving national security goals. Of course, there is hope that new information (or new knowledge) will increase the possibility of moving from a risk situation to a greater security situation. However, this is not so simple. It often happens that the better we know military dangers and threats, and their causes, which is the most important, the deeper the awareness of risk becomes. The more rational and detailed the assessments are, the more uncertainty about the future, and thus risk, comes into our visual field, especially in the context of military confrontation, which is largely related to unforeseen situations and outcomes.

Undoubtedly, a political risk in providing national security is a problem that is often overpoliticized. The fact is that too high stakes in meeting the vital needs of national security impose a great burden of responsibility for risk in military and political decision-making. Thus, the acceptance of a political risk (or its rejection) usually provokes not only great intellectual and moral efforts, but is also accompanied by a conflict of interest groups. In this regard, every assessment of a political risk in providing national security has always been and remains contextually defined, which is most often expressed in the tendency of subjects to overestimate (underestimate) the political risk of a decision, as well as the degree of control over it.

After all, risk is always related to responsibility for decisions made, which means that it is more politically appropriate to interpret a problem as a danger rather than a risk. However, in the scientific community, among experts, the concept of “risk” is increasingly used when analysing the problems of providing national security. At the same time, it is obvious that the greater the uncertainties related to danger are, the number of risks that the subject of providing national security has to face is greater. In such a situation, it is necessary to pay more attention to the problems of risk management, and not to further refine the content of danger.

By the way, this aspect is reflected in the studies of the Western scientists. In particular, the British analyst Stephen Everts notes that after the Cold War, the research centres of the NATO members increasingly use the word “risk” in their studies of contemporary military and political realities, while previously the word “threat” was most often used. There are now thousands of shades of gray between white and black. The

perception of the risk of the current military and political reality is already reflected not only in the views of individual researchers, but also in official scientific publications.

Hammerstad and Boas argue that “the language of risk does not set causal patterns between threats and object references, but emphasizes, in Kant’s terminology, ‘conditions of possibility’, where risk can be translated into real damage”.<sup>21</sup> The view that this damage can have serious consequences for individuals, groups and society, directs security decision-makers to identify risks and create preventive patterns that should prevent their harmful effects. Thus, Dimitrijević defines danger as an increased risk, which he equates with the possibility of damage (value part). He emphasizes here the second part (cognitive), which refers to the probability that damage will occur.<sup>22</sup> There is a group of authors which believes that “threat” should be abandoned as a defining term in the development of security concepts and policies, and that the term “risk” should be used because it is the only one that can enable a “more radical reconfiguration of the security concept”.<sup>23</sup> Karen Lund Petersen also believes that the concept of risk is becoming increasingly important for security studies – preceding “security” and “threats” as the ruling concepts.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, risk does not set direct cause-and-effect manifesting patterns between threats and object references, but emphasizes the “conditions of possibility” in which risk could turn into real damage.<sup>25</sup> According to security practitioners, risk is a measurable value; by implementing the risk-based concept, it becomes possible to create a methodology for an objective assessment of SCRT for state security. When it comes to measurement in social sciences, it is “a procedure of systematic definition of the quantitative property of some phenomenon by defined and appropriate measures”.<sup>26</sup> Since 2007, the Dutch government has been implementing a multi-criteria method of developing national security strategies like other countries that have already developed such strategies, including Germany, Finland and Canada.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hammerstad Anne, Boas Ingrid, (2015), National security risks? Uncertainty, austerity and other logics of risk in the UK government’s National Security Strategy, *Cooperation and Conflict*, 50(4) 2015: p. 478.

<sup>22</sup> Dimitrijević Vojin, (1973), *Pojam bezbednosti u međunarodnim odnosima*, Savez udruženja pravnika Jugoslavije, Beograd.

<sup>23</sup> Corry Olaf, (2012), Securitisation and Riskification: Second-order security and the politics of climate change, (in) Mitrović Miroslav, Serbia’s National Security Strategy – from where, through what and where to go. *Eastern Studies (Wschodnioznawstwo)*, Vol. 15, 2021.  
<https://doi.org/10.4467/20827695WSC.21.008.14715>

<sup>24</sup> Petersen Karen Lund, (2012), Risk: A field within security studies, *European Journal of International Relations* 18(4) 2012: 693–717.

<sup>25</sup> Hammerstad Anne, Boas Ingrid, gen.quote.

<sup>26</sup> Milosavljević Slavomir, Radosavljević Ivan, (2003), *Osnovi metodologije političkih nauka*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, p. 571.

<sup>27</sup> Mennen M.G. & van Tuyl M.C. Dealing with future risks in the Netherlands: the National Security Strategy and the National Risk Assessment, *Journal of Risk Research*, Vol. 18, No. 7, 2015 860–876, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2014.923028>

Accordingly, Božanić et al. have analysed two approaches to the identification of CRT in their work. The first is the security approach, which is “characterized by relating CRT to the degree of danger. According to this approach, challenge is related to a very small degree of danger to object reference. Risk is related to a greater degree of danger to object reference, but with the emphasis that the effect of such a danger is still uncertain, and that danger exists in some percentage. In the end, threat is almost a danger that requires an immediate response.”<sup>28</sup> This is graphically presented in the line danger diagram (Figure 1).

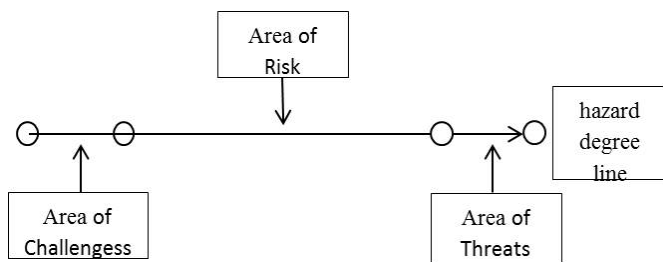


Figure 1 – The graphic presentation of challenges, risks and threats in relation to the degree of danger<sup>29</sup>

The other approach - risk management “has risk as a central concept, while threat is usually viewed as something that can increase the degree of risk. Thus, threat is presented as one, but not the only factor influencing risk assessment. In a similar way as in the previous figure, it is possible to define risk (Figure 2). In this case, the key element is defining the degree of risk acceptance.”<sup>30</sup>

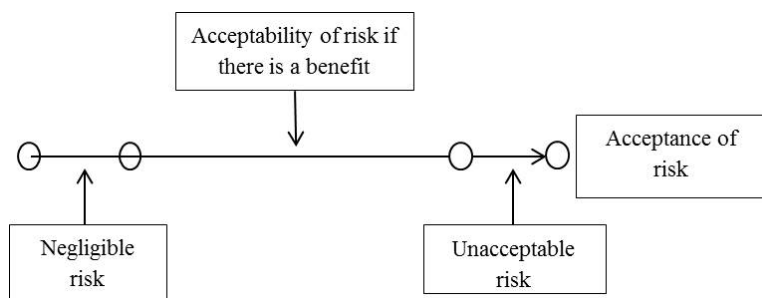


Figure 2 – The graphic presentation of risk in relation to the degree of acceptability<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Božanić Darko, Pamučar Dragan i Tešić Duško, (2017), Fuzzy logički sistem za rangiranje izazova, rizika i pretnji, III Međunarodna naučno-stručna konferencija Bezbednost i krizni menadžment – teorija i praksa bezbednost za budućnost, pp. 245-252.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

According to the line diagram in Figure 2, the “risk” category defines the probability of consequences for object reference, which may vary depending on specific conditions of situation, and if we compare it with Figure 1 “challenge” represents an acceptable risk, while “threat” is graded as an unacceptable risk. Based on the above, it is possible to form a multi-criteria model of the sectoral approach and to rank the phenomena of security threats by the degree of danger and to define SCRT. This definition can be done via an interval scale, within the intuitive measurement that is conveniently implemented in social sciences, and boils down to the assessment of endangerment (scope, composition, direction, intensity, probability of damage of a certain type and extent).<sup>32</sup>

The sectoral analytical framework facilitates the organization and conceptual differentiation of various security dynamics in order to make this complex social reality better and easier to understand.<sup>33</sup> The sectoral approach and the analysis of military, political, informational, economic, social and ecological aspects represents a unique security agenda of the modern approach to the analysis of national security and provides a framework for identifying factors of security threats, i.e. SCRT.

## *Conclusion*

One of the characteristics of the theoretical and methodological study of problematic issues of national security theory is the lack of a unified approach to the use of main concepts and categories that form the basis of this theory. For security studies, the concept of danger is a central concept. Without the understanding of the concept, classification, construction and perception process of SCRT, a systematic understanding of any security dynamics is impossible. Thus, the presence of more or less harmonized views on the relationship between the terms “danger”, “challenge”, “risk” and “threat” can increase the effectiveness of the theoretical, methodological and practical foundations of the entire national security policy. The mentioned view of the interdependence of the considered terms can serve as some methodological assistance in this process.

On the basis of the definition and comparative analysis of the definitions of these categories, mentioned in different sources, it can be concluded that, despite the semantic similarity of the categories “challenge”, “risk” and “threat”, each of them defines a different degree of threat, that is, harmful consequences. The subject of this paper has been to separate SCRT in order to improve the methodology for identifying and assessing military and non-military challenges, risks and threats when developing the National Security Strategy and other strategic and doctrinal

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<sup>32</sup> On the implementation of measurement in social sciences, see more in: Arežina Đerić Vera, (2021), Metodologija istraživanja u političkim naukama, Srpska politička misao, No. 1, Yr. 28. Vol. 71, Institut za političke studije, Beograd, 2021, UDC 303: 32.01, pp. 273-292.

<sup>33</sup> Ejdus Filip, (2012), *ibid.*, p. 39.

documents. Accordingly, in reality, dynamics from several security sectors (political, military, economic, social, ecological and informational) is intertwined in most security problems. The analytical framework of the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School has been proposed for the analysis of manifest forms of threats to national security. The implementation of the analytical framework is possible within the multicriteria mathematical model. Since risk is a measurable value, the implementation of this concept increases the objectivity of the identification and assessment of SCRT for state security. This approach is important not only in terms of defining national security policy and defence policy, but also has the greatest impact on the development plans of the defence system as a whole, particularly the development of the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces.

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## *Summary*

Basically, every type of government organization defines the defence system with functions that provide deterrence from threats, as well as countering various types and forms of threats to main social values. The subject of this paper is the national security strategy, i.e. security challenges, risks and threats that are essential for the fulfilment of the highest state security interests.

The author has analysed the main categories of national security theory: “danger”, “challenge”, “risk” and “threat”. On the basis of the definition and comparative analysis of these categories, presented in different sources, he reveals their content and essence and comes to the conclusion that, despite the semantic similarity of the categories “challenge”, “risk and “threat”, each of them defines a different degree of threat, that is, damage. Accordingly, it has been noticed that the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia does not make a distinction between security challenges, risks and threats, but speaks of them as a single syntagm and category. Since this document is the basis for the integrated activities of the defence forces, in the function of protecting vital national interests, the considered issue indicates the importance of as precise definition of SCRT as possible because inaccurate definition could prevent an adequate response when some of security challenges, risks and threats manifest themselves on security object references.

On the basis of the definition and comparative analysis of the definitions of these categories, mentioned in different sources, it can be concluded that, despite the



semantic similarity of the categories “challenge”, “risk and “threat“, each of them defines a different degree of threat, that is, harmful consequences. The subject of this paper has been to make a distinction between SCRT in order to improve the methodology for identifying and assessing military and non-military challenges, risks and threats when developing the National Security Strategy and other strategic and doctrinal documents. Accordingly, in reality, dynamics from several security sectors (political, military, economic, social, ecological and informational) is intertwined in most security problems. The analytical framework of the sectoral approach of the Copenhagen School has been proposed for the analysis of manifest forms of threats to national security. The implementation of the analytical framework is possible within the multicriteria mathematical model. Since risk is a measurable value, the implementation of this concept increases the objectivity of the identification and assessment of SCRT for state security. This approach is important not only in terms of defining national security policy and defence policy, but also has the greatest impact on the development plans of the defence system as a whole, particularly the development of the capabilities of the Serbian Armed Forces.

*Key words: modern conflicts, national security, challenge, risk, threat, danger and damage*

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