

SUPPLEMENTING THE ARMED FORCES WITH RESERVISTS: MILITARY SECURITY DIMENSIONS FOR THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstrac:Ensuring the staffing of the Armed Forces with human resources represents one of the fundamental concerns of the state, playing a decisive role in guaranteeing national security. The effectiveness of fulfilling the Armed Forces' constitutional defense missions ultimately depends on the availability and optimal use of human resources, namely the presence of appropriately qualified personnel assigned to suitable structures at the appropriate time. This requirement is applicable both under normal conditions, in peacetime, and in exceptional situations such as the declaration of a state of emergency, a state of siege, or a state of war, when the initiation of military mobilization becomes necessary.

In the context of military mobilization, reservists are called upon to ensure the operative completion of military units, to integrate rapidly and efficiently into their organizational structures, and to contribute to maintaining and strengthening the operational capability required for the execution of specific missions. Consequently, the system for supplementing the Armed Forces with reservist personnel constitutes an essential component of the state's military security architecture, directly influencing the level of preparedness, responsiveness, and resilience of the military institution in the face of risks and threats to national security.

Keywords: *Armed Forces, operative reserve, reservist, voluntary reservist, military service in reserve, military concentrations, special concentrations, mobilization, mobilization reserves*

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Introduction

The system for staffing the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova represents a complex and multidimensional process which involves, on the one hand, the recruitment, selection, and training of military personnel, and on the other hand, the maintenance of an adequate volume of reserve forces necessary to guarantee national security and defense. The functionality of this system is determined by the co-existence and interaction of three main forms of military service organization: reserve military service, contract-based military service, and compulsory military service for citizens. Through the articulation of these forms of military service, the state ensures the existence of armed forces capable of achieving an appropriate level of preparedness, flexibility, and responsiveness required to address a wide range of security challenges at both national and international levels.

At present, the international and regional security environment is characterized by the proliferation of complex risks and threats, including military ones, manifested through armed conflicts, hotspots of instability, and crisis situations with direct or indirect impact on regional security. These developments significantly affect the security of the Republic of Moldova, which, despite its constitutional status of permanent neutrality, is not immune to the dynamics of continuously evolving threats. In this context, adapting the system for staffing the armed forces becomes an essential condition for maintaining the state's defense capacity (*Hotărârea Guvernului nr.961 din 03.10.2018*).

Thus, the Armed Forces must possess the necessary capacity to fulfill the missions established by the normative and strategic framework, under conditions of limited financial resources determined by the economic capabilities of the state. Identifying a functional balance between the operational requirements of the army and its financial sustainability represents a complex but indispensable task, which must reflect and support the security interests of the Republic of Moldova. In this regard, the Ministry of Defense is called upon to ensure a coherent correlation between the missions of the Armed Forces and their structure, between the modalities of personnel staffing from the reserve, through contract-based service or compulsory military service, the level of equipment and comprehensive support, as well as the establishment and observance of operational, training, and action standards.

Military Reservists of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova

The trained reserve constitutes an essential pillar in maintaining and enhancing the combat capability of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova. It provides an additional level of operational force that can be rapidly mobilized in crisis situations or in the context of emerging threats, thereby contributing to the flexibility and resilience of the military institution. Reservists, as an integral part of reserve military service, represent a strategic element that enables the state to respond efficiently and promptly

to operational requirements without compromising the economic and logistical sustainability of the army in peacetime (Cebotari, 2022: 48-56). Moreover, the integration of reservists into the operational structures of the Armed Forces ensures continuity in military training, the transfer of expertise, and the maintenance of action standards in line with national and international security requirements. Thus, the role of reservists goes beyond mere numerical supplementation of military personnel, representing a decisive factor in ensuring the strategic and operational capabilities of the army and contributing directly to the strengthening of state security and responsiveness to complex risks and threats.

Accordingly, by capitalizing on the potential of reservists, their experience and dedication, as well as through initiatives aimed at their continuous development, a significant contribution is made to increasing the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the Armed Forces. In concrete terms, the army must ensure the attraction of these individuals, secure their service, develop their competencies and skills, motivate them to achieve high levels of performance, and maintain their attachment to the institution. From this perspective, the analysis and redesign of mechanisms for promoting reserve military service remain as relevant as those for active military service and should be considered a priority within the successive stages of human resources reform. Otherwise, there is a major risk that personnel, both quantitatively and qualitatively, will fail to meet the requirements necessary to ensure the army's operational capabilities.

This approach has historical foundations. The Geto-Dacian armies of the pre-Roman period were distinguished by high military capabilities, by their ability to increase troop numbers through the mobilization of social categories beyond core soldiers, by possessing a well-structured system of fortifications, and by benefiting from favorable terrain that conferred reduced vulnerability. During the Roman period, political and military dimensions were closely interdependent, with centralization achieved through the formation of a unified military and organizational body, materialized through the reform initiated by Emperor Marcus Aurelius (Grec, 2010:16). Provincial defense was ensured by military forces, including legions and auxiliary troops, into which local populations were incorporated starting from the 3rd century. At the same time, defense relied on a complex defensive system consisting of fortifications erected along the frontiers and inland, according to the Roman model, adapted primarily to local geographical configurations.

In the post-Roman period and throughout the following millennium, until the formation of medieval Romanian state entities, Romanian military art, according to the observations of C. Negrea, developed as a continuation of the military traditions of the ancient populations inhabiting the territory of Dacia, particularly the Dacians and Romans, with minor influences from peoples with whom the locals came into contact-Byzantines, Slavs, and Mongol-Tatars (Negrea, 2013). The impact of these external influences was limited due to the absence of a consolidated state structure, although certain borrowings were inevitable. In the context of the formation and consolidation of medieval Romanian states, military potential was intensified through the

development of a solid defensive system, expressed by the construction of border and interior fortresses administered by governors and by the organization of an army structured into three components: the small army, the great army, and mercenaries (Manolache, 2015: 163-172). The small army had a permanent character, fulfilling administrative and border-guarding functions in peacetime, while the great army was generally assembled only in wartime (Manolache, Trofimov, 2013:14).

In the modern history of the Republic of Moldova, reservists actively participated in military actions to defend the territorial integrity and independence of the state. Subsequently, as part of the Peacekeeping Forces in the Security Zone, they contributed to the establishment of peace along the banks of the Nistru River, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Principles of the Peaceful Settlement of the Armed Conflict in the Transnistrian Region, signed on July 21, 1992 (*Соглашение о принципах...*). Beginning in 1994, reservists were replaced by conscripts, and since then, the Republic of Moldova has not resorted to calling up reservists for the execution of operational missions. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defense continues to possess experience in calling reservists for training and participation in military assemblies.

The issue of the military reserve remains highly topical and of interest for all modern armies. A trend is emerging whereby a "new generation of reservists" is expected to significantly replace both professional non-commissioned officers and active-duty personnel. This new generation benefits from natural support determined by social and individual dynamics; however, its foundations have already been laid through conceptual changes regarding armed forces, military service, mobilization, reservist training, regeneration of military structures, and, not least, through the development of new concepts concerning the use of the reserve and its missions (Stoica, 2015: 34-40).

Research on reserve military service in the Republic of Moldova remains insufficiently explored, despite its major relevance in the current national and regional security context. From this perspective, it should be emphasized that issues related to improving the mobilization system, including the military reserve, are addressed in strategic and national policy documents. The National Defense Strategy (Hotărârea Parlamentului nr. 319 din 26.12.2024.), for example, provides for the creation and functioning of an efficient mechanism for mobilization and accounting of defense resources as a central objective of state defense policy. Such an optimized and functional mechanism must ensure adequate preparation of the national economy and the Armed Forces to respond effectively to crisis situations and to ensure state security in the medium and long term.

Particular attention is given to the development and maintenance of mobilization capacity through a continuous process of training the population, public institutions, and reserve military personnel, as well as through the preparation of the territory for defensive purposes. The necessary conditions are also ensured for the integration of planned human resources, from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. In this context, strategic-, operational-, and tactical-level exercises are planned and conducted, aimed at assessing national decision-making capacity, clarifying institutional roles

and responsibilities, strengthening inter-institutional cooperation, testing reaction procedures of forces designated for national defense, and verifying the level of preparedness of reservists and the capacity for force generation and mobilization.

Furthermore, the opportunity to establish reserve military service will be analyzed, including through the clear definition of the legal framework and the status of the voluntary reservist. In parallel, measures will be adopted to strengthen the operational capacity of the Armed Forces reserve, state reserves, and mobilization reserves. At the same time, attention will be given to revitalizing territorial defense mechanisms and strengthening the civil protection system. In this context, the Military Strategy (*Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 653 din 08.10.2025.*) is also noteworthy, as it provides for the achievement of the general objective of strengthening the capacities necessary to fulfill defense missions, as well as for the sustainable development of the mobilization system. Emphasis is placed on creating and maintaining a functional framework that enables the Armed Forces to adapt effectively to the dynamic requirements of the security environment. Maintaining and developing the mobilization system of the Armed Forces constitutes a strategic priority throughout the implementation of the Strategy, with particular emphasis on digitalizing processes, introducing rapid mobilization mechanisms and technologies, and strengthening logistical support infrastructure. The Armed Forces reserve will retain its role as a central element in the process of modernizing and strengthening the defense capacity of the Republic of Moldova.

Based on these considerations, actions will be undertaken aimed at reorganizing reserve military service and effectively integrating reservists in order to optimally capitalize on their experience and professional competencies in fulfilling the missions and tasks specific to the Armed Forces. The objective is to establish a well-trained, flexible reserve capable of prompt mobilization when necessary. The continuous development of reservists' competencies will be ensured through systematic training programs and preparation exercises conducted in accordance with the existing legal framework and correlated with current operational requirements, in order to maintain high standards of professionalism and operational efficiency.

The legislative and regulatory framework adopted in the Republic of Moldova has established the foundations for mobilization preparedness and effective mobilization, regulating the mobilization management system, the duties and responsibilities of public administration authorities, public institutions, and economic agents in this field. The normative framework also provides for the principles of constitution and structure of the Armed Forces reserve, forms of reservist training, reserve management in emergency, siege, or wartime situations, as well as the rights and guarantees of citizens belonging to the military reserve.

A retrospective analysis of national legislation highlights the need to improve the system for managing mobilization resources and reservists, particularly during the declaration of a state of emergency. It is imperative to update the Law on the Regime of the State of Emergency, Siege, and War by clearly detailing the actions and competencies of state authorities in managing mobilization resources under a state of emergency (*Legea nr. 212 din 24.06.2004*). A state of emergency entails a set of

political, economic, social, and public order measures temporarily instituted in certain localities or across the entire national territory in situations of imminent or actual exceptional natural, technological, or biological-social events. These measures aim to prevent, mitigate, and eliminate their consequences or to respond to threats to national security or constitutional order, requiring the protection of the rule of law and the maintenance or restoration of legality.

Currently, the modality for force generation, including through the call-up of reservists, is regulated only in a summary manner. Reservists may be called to special assemblies to participate in the mitigation of natural disasters, accidents, and catastrophes, with their number, duration of assemblies, and special entitlements established by Government decision (*Legea nr. 1244 din 18.07.2002*). However, situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic are not provided for among the tasks that reservists may address within special assemblies. Furthermore, legislation does not provide for the call-up of reservists upon the declaration of a state of emergency in situations involving threats to national security or constitutional order, which necessitates supplementing the normative framework to ensure the protection of the rule of law and the restoration of legality.

A similar situation was recorded in Romanian legislation and was remedied through the adoption of Law no. 164/2019 amending and supplementing Government Emergency Ordinance no. 1/1999 on the regime of the state of siege and the state of emergency. The new normative act introduces substantial amendments, clarifying institutional competencies during a state of emergency. Thus, it provides that institutions with responsibilities in the fields of defense, public order, and national security may call up reservists for training and for the fulfillment of specific missions or may summon able-bodied individuals to perform services in the public interest.

At the same time, the legislation provides, during a state of emergency, for the intensification of production activities and the functioning of economic operators that contribute to ensuring the resources necessary in the field of defense and population protection. These provisions aim to guarantee the continuity of essential activities and to enable the efficient mobilization of human and material resources, thereby strengthening the state's capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to crisis or emergency situations.

By the nature of their field of activity, certain institutions and economic operators have responsibilities related to the production of goods for military purposes, the repair of specific categories of military equipment, and the provision of services necessary for the forces designated for defense, in accordance with the National Economy Mobilization Plan for Defense, the existing legal framework, and the System of Priorities and Allocation of Resources for Defense. The legislation also provides for the possibility of requisitioning goods in accordance with the legal framework, as well as for the adoption of concrete measures for organizing and prioritizing transport, communications, products, resources, and infrastructure in support of the forces designated for defense.

The new normative act stipulates that all "heads of public authorities and administrators of economic operators providing public utility services in the fields of energy,

healthcare, agriculture and food supply, water supply, communications, and transport are obliged to ensure the continuity of essential services for the population and for the forces designated for defense.” In parallel, depending on the operational situation in the administrative-territorial units where a state of siege or a state of emergency has been declared, the Supreme Council of National Defense may order that military units of the forces designated for defense be raised to higher levels of combat readiness, in accordance with established plans, including through their completion with human and material resources, in line with the organizational structure applicable in wartime.

The formation, training, and management of the Armed Forces reserve represent a topic of major contemporary relevance in the field of national security. Upon discharge from military service or upon full completion of training at the military department, citizens enter the category of reservists and are registered in the military records at the military centers corresponding to their place of residence, subsequently being assigned to reinforce the Armed Forces in mobilization situations. Within the process of registering citizens as reservists, the decision regarding their inclusion in one of the reserve structures is taken based on their level of military training and age index. It is important to emphasize that citizens’ responsibilities for the defense of the homeland continue even after the completion of military service (*A fost modificata ordonanța*).

With regard to the structure of the Armed Forces reserve, it is divided into two components: the active reserve, consisting of reservists assigned to military positions in large units, units, and institutions of the Armed Forces in accordance with the manning plan; and the passive reserve (available resources), composed of reservists who do not hold positions and who may, if necessary, reinforce the active reserve.

In the legislation of other states, reserve military service constitutes a distinct form of fulfilling military service, which may be performed by voluntary reservists or by reservists from the general reserve. In the context of national legislation, it is necessary to develop a distinct chapter dedicated to reserve military service, since at present it is limited to the formula of “military service as concentrated or mobilized reservists,” functioning effectively only after the receipt of a call-up order (*Legea nr. 446 din 30.11.2006*). International experience in organizing reserve military service provides for a complex set of activities and responsibilities of reservists, including during peacetime, particularly for voluntary reservists. Moreover, legislative clarification of the notion of “concentration” is required, as it is currently limited to the training process, explicitly prohibiting other forms of activity (*Legea nr. 1245 din 18.07. 2002*). Thus, for voluntary reservists, “concentration” should be understood as their call-up both for training and for the fulfillment of missions, while for reservists from the general reserve, concentration means training and the reinforcement of military units during a state of siege.

At the same time, legislation must provide for and describe the situations in which voluntary reservists may be concentrated or mobilized, including the possibility of performing missions in peacetime and, as appropriate, during a state of emergency (*Legea nr. 1244 din 18.07. 2002*). This regulation is essential for the optimal use of

human resources in the reserve and for maintaining a flexible, well-trained reserve capable of responding promptly to the state's security requirements.

The Military Reserve -Experience of Other States

The manner in which citizens are placed in the reserve is regulated by Law No. 1244 of 18 July 2002 on the Reserve of the Armed Forces. A significant part of this normative act is dedicated to aspects related to the training of reservists, particularly through their call-up for military service within training camps. The law explicitly provides that the training of reservists is conducted in accordance with the annual reserve training plan, developed by the General Staff of the Armed Forces and approved by the Government.

A vulnerable element of this process consists in limiting the commander's right to organize training sessions with reservists serving under contract. Although the idea of establishing a contract-based active reserve proved to be an innovative solution, its implementation encountered difficulties, as the commander lacked the authority to work directly with this category of personnel to ensure training and combat readiness at unit level. In our view, legislation should be amended so that individuals under contract in the active reserve are called up for training sessions in camps according to the plan approved for each unit by the Ministry of Defense, provided that the duration of such call-ups does not exceed two days per month and one concentration of up to 14 days per year. The experience of states such as the United States of America (National Guard), Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia demonstrates the effectiveness of this model.

In *Romania*, any person aged between 18 and 55 who meets the selection criteria may conclude an individual contract with the Ministry of Defense for an initial period of at least four years, subsequently extendable in three-year increments, committing to be part of the armed forces in case of necessity. Unlike other forms of recruitment, becoming a voluntary reservist does not require prior completion of military service. The year 2017 marked the first official recruitment of voluntary reservists (*Lansarea unei noi campanii*).

A major advantage of voluntary reservist status is that, during periods when they do not participate in training or missions, reservists receive a taxable monthly remuneration equivalent to 10% of the salary of the position to which they are assigned. In peacetime, they are required to participate in training for 15 days per year, and as they accumulate seniority, they may be promoted in rank. Each year, the Ministry of Defense determines through competition the number of positions available for voluntary reservists. For example, in 2024, 4,936 positions were planned for voluntary reservists (officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, corporals, and soldiers) in military units throughout the national territory. The recruitment and selection process is carried out in accordance with Law No. 270/2015 on the Status of Voluntary Reservists and Order of the Minister of Defense No. M.25/2017 approving the methodological norms for the application of Law No. 270/2015, as subsequently amended and supplemented.

Starting in 2024, a series of measures entered into force aimed at increasing the attractiveness of military service as a voluntary reservist. The most important include: increasing the remuneration granted to voluntary reservists during periods when they do not participate in training or missions from 10% to 30% of the position salary, to which the rank salary is added; increasing the amount of the installation allowance by including, in addition to the position salary, the seniority increments and command pay; eliminating the obligation to reimburse recruitment and selection expenses in cases where the contract is not signed or not completed; removing restrictions on voluntary reservists' travel abroad; and enabling the direct assignment to positions, without selection tests, of reservists coming from active military personnel or professional soldiers/corporals within the first year after transfer to the reserve (*MApN, o nouă campanie de recrutare*).

Ukraine's experience in this field is of particular interest. Reservists of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are citizens who voluntarily enlist in the military reserve on the basis of a contract. At the same time, soldiers called up for mobilization who have participated in combat operations, as well as conscripts upon discharge from military service, are included in the active reserve, with the corresponding contract being concluded for them. In the current context of ongoing military operations in eastern Ukraine, concluding a contract for the active reserve is mandatory, although it is envisaged that, subsequently, voluntary reservist status will be based on voluntary consent.

After signing the contract, reservists are assigned to positions in the same military units in which they previously served. This measure allows for the retention of trained and experienced personnel, ensuring unit cohesion and the ability to achieve combat readiness within a short period of time. In Ukraine, only those persons who have voluntarily opted for reserve military service, have signed the relevant contract, and follow the planned training program are considered reservists. Other persons registered in military records are subject only to the general obligation of military service. It should be noted that for reservists, the time allowed to report to the military unit from the moment of notification is 24 hours, whereas for other categories of persons it ranges from 2 to 29 days (*Указ Президента Украины от 29 октября 2012 года*).

The measures undertaken enabled Ukraine to face the Russian Federation's invasion of 24 February with a mobilization system capable of defending the state. The system was activated on 3 March through the approval by the Verkhovna Rada of the decree of the President of Ukraine on declaring general mobilization (*Decretul Președintelui Ucrainei cu privire la declararea mobilizării generale*). Ukraine's mobilization reserve is estimated at approximately 900,000 persons, of whom nearly 450,000 have participated in missions in the combat operations zone since 2014 in the Donbass region (*Режим боевой готовности*).

The Armed Forces of Ukraine entered the armed confrontation well motivated, prepared, and trained, in their peacetime structure, without formal mobilization. In the initial phases of the conflict, they organized route blockages, bridge destruction, and ambushes, using innovative combat tactics such as anti-tank missiles, drones, and man-portable air-defense systems.

The primary purpose of these actions was to gain the time necessary for mobilization, the preparation of armed defense, and the implementation of territorial defense, including in urban areas. Although Ukraine uses a mixed system of force generation, conscripts are not involved in combat actions, and within the context of general mobilization, conscription for compulsory military service is not carried out. All vacant positions within the Armed Forces and other military formations are filled exclusively by mobilized reservists.

In this context, Ukrainian authorities planned mobilization in four successive stages. First, all men aged between 18 and 60 were required to report to military centers and be registered in military records. However, mobilization was not applied to all, but only to the number of persons required for the Armed Forces, carried out successively and in stages (Военный призыв на срочную военную службу). *The first stage* targeted former military personnel under the age of 40 with combat experience who had previously served under contract or participated in earlier mobilization stages. *The second stage* was intended for military personnel who had completed military service prior to 2014, either through compulsory service or under contract. *The third stage* targeted the mobilization reserve and included citizens registered in military records who had graduated from military departments at universities and were qualified as reserve officers. The fourth stage constituted the public reserve, including all citizens without age or physical restrictions that would prevent recruitment for military service.

Reservists with prior military experience were sent directly to military units without additional combat training. By contrast, citizens without military experience were initially mobilized for training programs and special exercises at Armed Forces centers, lasting between 7 and 20 days from the moment of recruitment, depending on the subsequent specialization of each individual (Mobilization in Ukraine). In addition, Ukrainian authorities strengthened the liability regime for persons evading military registration or mobilization, consolidating the legislative and practical framework for enforcing military obligations and the efficiency of the mobilization process (*Закон Президента Украины об некоторых изменениях законодательства*).

In *Estonia*, military service is compulsory, and all soldiers who complete active service are automatically included in the Defense Forces reserve until the age of 60 (National Defence Act, 2015). Throughout the period spent in the reserve, they participate in planned military concentrations, for which the reservist is notified at least 120 days in advance. These concentrations aim primarily at maintaining and improving military skills and ensuring the necessary level of readiness for mobilization. Additionally, supplementary concentrations are periodically organized to verify preparedness levels and assess reservists' mobilization capacity.

For example, during the "OKAS 2019" military exercises, over 2,200 reservists were called up. The reporting deadline for these concentrations is short and strictly regulated. Since 2016, reservists have been called to special concentrations within 24 hours. Failure to comply with the reporting deadline may result in administrative sanctions, including fines of up to 1,200 euros. Notification of reservists is carried out electronically, via email or telephone, including for those located outside Estonia. During

military concentrations, reservists benefit from a corresponding social package: soldiers receive 37 euros per day, junior officers 40 euros, and senior officers 50 euros per day (*Для обязательного участия*). This approach highlights the importance of a well-organized and financially motivated active reserve system that allows for the constant maintenance of operational capability and readiness for national defense.

Equally noteworthy is the situation regarding reserve military service in *Georgia*. Reserve service is regulated by the Law on the Reserve of the Defense Forces and Reserve Military Service (*Закон Грузии о резерве Военных Сил*), adopted in response to the lessons learned from the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. During the conflict, the mobilization system functioned according to the Soviet model, which proved completely ineffective and discredited. Currently, individuals joining the active reserve conclude a contract, from which moment they are officially considered to be in military service.

Active reservists are required to undergo special training and participate in military concentrations not exceeding 45 days per calendar year, and upon call-up must report to the military unit within the established timeframe, in compliance with contractual obligations and legal provisions. The number of persons who may be included in the active reserve is established by the Government upon the proposal of the Ministry of Defense. The call-up of reservists is not managed by military centers, but by the subunit to which the reservist is assigned, using technical communication means. The forms and methods of call-up are regulated by order of the Minister of Defense.

In addition, active reservists receive a monthly salary equivalent to 20% of the salary corresponding to their military rank, which is paid in full during military concentrations, resulting in an average annual income of approximately USD 1,500 per active reservist (*Грузия получила резерв*).

In *Israel*, reserve military service enjoys high appreciation and respect among citizens. According to Israeli military doctrine, reservists constitute the main combat force of the Israel Defense Forces. The state cannot afford to maintain a large permanent army capable of sustaining a high level of combat readiness; instead, it maintains a relatively small but well-equipped and well-trained army capable of stopping aggression until reservists arrive. After reservist mobilization, the army typically conducts counteroffensive operations. All major conflicts involving Israel have been successfully resolved due to the essential contribution of reservists, highlighting their strategic importance in ensuring national security.

Under Israeli legislation, reservist soldiers may be called to participate in combat actions for a period not exceeding 25 days over three years. In peacetime, they may be called to military concentrations for a total of 54 days over the same three-year period. Soldiers in command positions may be mobilized for up to 70 days, and officers for up to 84 days. Regarding age limits, soldiers remain in the reserve until the age of 40, officers until 42, and reservists with specialties such as doctors, technical personnel, or heavy vehicle drivers until 49.

As a rule, all male Israeli citizens, in addition to three years of compulsory military service, spend an additional 2-3 years in reserve service through participation in mil-

itary concentrations. The social system associated with reserve service guarantees job retention and full salary payment during call-ups. Even in cases where a reservist does not have a job, they receive a monthly income exceeding USD 2,500. In addition, reservists benefit from facilities for the repayment of bank loans or other financial obligations (*Резервисты -главная мощь израильских вооруженных сил*).

This model ensures Israel a permanently trained reserve capable of responding rapidly to security risks. A relevant example is the response to the attack launched by Hamas on 7 October 2023, which resulted in approximately 1,400 casualties, most of them civilians. During Operation "Sword of Iron" in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli army mobilized a record number of 360,000 reservists (*Ce se va întâmpla cu Fîșia Gaza*).

With regard to *Switzerland*, the Armed Forces are manned through a mixed contractual-voluntary and compulsory system, in accordance with the militia principle. Historically, Switzerland is a nation under arms, and all Swiss men are obliged to perform military service. The initial training period lasts three months, sufficient to develop discipline and responsibility. Upon completion of training, young men receive a weapon and military uniform, which they keep at home. Periodically, men are recalled for training to maintain their military knowledge and skills.

In *Switzerland*, the organization of reserve military service involves a structured and phased recall program. Up to the age of 32, a Swiss man is recalled seven times, each participation lasting three weeks. Over the next ten years, he is recalled three additional times for two weeks, and a decade later, once more for an additional two weeks. Upon reaching the age of 51, the citizen is officially released from military service and must return the weapon and uniform previously issued (*Elveția este cel mai militarizat stat din lume*).

Switzerland's mobilization potential includes approximately 1.5 million persons aged between 16 and 49. The permanent armed forces include approximately 20,000 soldiers; however, in mobilization situations, the army can be rapidly expanded to up to 220,000 personnel (*Вооруженные силы Швейцарии*). Swiss experience highlights the efficiency of the reservist notification system: during the COVID-19 pandemic, 8,000 soldiers were mobilized within 24 hours, having been notified via SMS messages (*Самая масштабная мобилизация в Швейцарии*).

This practice highlights the necessity of modernizing and adapting reservist registration and call-up systems to contemporary conditions, particularly through the integration of information technologies. Currently, in the Republic of Moldova, the call-up of reservists for military concentrations or mobilization is carried out through military centers using paper-based call-up orders, which limits the promptness and efficiency of the process. Modernization of this system could enable rapid and effective response, thereby increasing the capacity to address national security risks (*Legea nr.1245 din 18.07.2002*).

The Role and Place of the Military Reserve in the Organization of Territorial Defense

Military reserves play an essential role in strengthening the capacities of local and central authorities in the field of territorial defense. In particular, territorial defense forces, reinforced with reservists, represent a strategic instrument for increasing flexibility and efficiency in the use of armed resources. It is important to emphasize that these forces do not substitute the National Army, but are designed to take over non-specific military tasks during states of emergency, siege, or war, as well as to support the conduct of combat actions.

International experience demonstrates various models for organizing territorial defense forces. In the Baltic states, for example, these forces represent voluntary, militarized components integrated into the national security system, with clearly defined responsibilities for supporting local authorities and armed structures.

In *Estonia*, the Defence League represents such a voluntary formation, designed to complement the actions of the Armed Forces when required and to support territorial authorities in various crisis scenarios. The Defence League has representatives throughout the national territory and comprises approximately 10,000 members. The organization is structured into 15 districts, covering virtually every county and the capital Tallinn. Subordinate to the Defence League are auxiliary organizations providing specific logistical and medical support functions, such as "Women in Home Defense," youth organizations "Eagles," the Scout Movement, and "Daughters of the Fatherland." In addition to logistical and medical support, these auxiliary structures are responsible for the continuous implementation of patriotic education among youth, thus contributing to the development of an integrated civic-military culture (*Вооруженные силы Эстонии*).

Through this organization, the Estonian model demonstrates how military reserves and voluntary territorial forces can constitute a key element in national defense architecture, freeing the army for specific missions while ensuring the resilience and responsiveness of territorial authorities in crisis situations (*Вооруженные силы Эстонии*).

Territorial defense in Latvia is ensured through the voluntary militarized organization "Zemessardze - Territorial Guard," an integrated component of the Armed Forces. Its territorial structure comprises 18 battalions and includes both professional military personnel (592 persons) and volunteers (10,510 persons), who perform their duties outside their primary working hours. The main responsibilities of this organization include participation in disaster response and firefighting, management of emergency situations, organization of rescue operations, maintenance of public order, and support for the Armed Forces' actions in territorial defense. This structure highlights the dual role of the voluntary reserve-both in internal security and in strengthening the capacity to respond to external threats (*Латвийская добровольная вооружённая организация*).

In *Lithuania*, responsibility for territorial defense lies with volunteer forces, structurally organized into six districts or battalions, under unified command at the Land Forces headquarters level. Fundamental organizational principles include nationwide territorial coverage, unit manning based on territorial criteria, detailed knowledge of the local environment, protection of the volunteer's home and family, and the strengthening of cooperation and camaraderie among unit members (*Территориальная оборона Литвы*). Lithuanian volunteers are aged between 18 and 55 and sign four-year contracts. Their participation involves annual training sessions of 20-50 days and the possibility of being called for up to seven days to military concentrations without prior notice. Battalion commanders are responsible for defending the territory of their assigned district and maintain permanent links with local authorities, following a pre-defined action algorithm for various situations (*Hotărârea Guvernului nr. 1418 din 14.12.2006*).

The experiences of *Latvia and Lithuania* highlight the advantages of a voluntary, militarized territorial defense model that combines the professional expertise of active personnel with the availability of voluntary reservists. This model enables rapid and effective response to local and regional threats while ensuring close interaction between central and local authorities, as well as between communities and military structures.

In the *Republic of Moldova*, the foundational framework of territorial defense is regulated by the Regulation on Territorial Defense of the Republic of Moldova, which establishes the principles for organizing, manning, training, and employing territorial defense formations, as well as the responsibilities of central and local public administration authorities in the field of territorial security. Territorial defense represents a set of operational and logistical measures carried out during states of emergency, siege, or war, aimed at planning, coordinating, and implementing actions necessary for the protection of the territory and the population.

The main tasks of territorial defense formations include: participation in mitigating the consequences of natural, technological, or ecological emergencies; supporting territorial structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in maintaining constitutional order and public security during states of siege or war; protecting objects of national and local importance, including strategic infrastructure and critical facilities; and ensuring the needs of Armed Forces components involved in combat actions through logistical, personnel, and technical support.

The deployment and readiness of territorial defense formations are carried out in accordance with plans developed in peacetime by level II local public administration authorities, the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri), and the municipalities of Chișinău and Bălți. The standard timeframe for the deployment and readiness of these formations to fulfill missions is up to 24 hours, highlighting the rapid mobilization and operational flexibility of the territorial defense system. Thus, the territorial defense model of the Republic of Moldova fits within the modern concept of integrated defense, which combines the military capabilities of the Armed Forces with local resources and civilian structures, contributing to increased national resilience and supporting military and security operations across all crisis scenarios.

It is also noteworthy that territorial defense formations, in accordance with their legal competences and normative framework, have been deployed to support actions for managing the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to provide assistance in managing refugee flows generated by the conflict in Ukraine, and in other operations relevant to national security interests. These experiences highlight the topicality and relevance of territorial defense formations within national security policy and underscore the need for the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and level II local public authorities to conduct a systematic review of the implementation of the Regulation on Territorial Defense, including procedures for organizing and training territorial defense formations, and to develop a package of proposals for their modernization and improvement.

In the same idea, the efforts of modern states are directed toward the creation and maintenance of capable human reserves, through reservist training and the creation of attractive conditions for their participation in actions during states of emergency, siege, or war. From this perspective, a revision of the national system of social protection for reservists is recommended, through the establishment of compensatory payments, guarantees for the preservation of the primary workplace, and the implementation of other mechanisms designed to enhance attractiveness and participation.

Equally relevant is moral support and the promotion of the reservists' image in society, a practice encountered in several states. For example, Romania has established Military Reservists' Day on 31 May, Ukraine marks Ukraine Reservists' Day on 18 May, and in Israel the date is established annually according to the Jewish calendar. These initiatives reflect an integrated approach to security culture and patriotism that goes beyond the premilitary youth segment and addresses the entire spectrum of citizens, including reservists and potential reservists, contributing to social cohesion and the preparation of an operational and responsible reserve for national defense purposes.

Conclusions

Sound planning and organization of reserve military service at the theoretical, legislative, methodological, and practical levels represent today an essential precondition for the transition toward a predominantly contract-based military system. The recent experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have tested the resilience of military and reserve structures in multiple states, involving military personnel in non-combat missions such as ensuring population safety, managing refugee flows, and providing medical support. This involvement has highlighted the strategic role of reservists not only in wartime but also in exceptional civilian situations, thus conferring additional relevance to the development and maintenance of a well-trained reserve (Ioniță, 2023: 5-20).

Analysis of international experience shows that states such as the United States, Israel, Switzerland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Georgia have developed effective

reserve military service models based on voluntary contracts or planned obligations, with periodic training and adequate rewards. In all these states, reservists represent a rapidly mobilizable strategic resource capable of ensuring the continuity of essential military and civilian functions during crises.

For the Republic of Moldova, these lessons provide multiple directions for adaptation and development of reserve military service, including the adoption of a special law on the status of voluntary reservists, the creation of a digitalized mobilization system, the implementation of systematic training programs, the strengthening of territorial defense through reservist integration, and the development of a comprehensive social and professional incentive framework.

Thus, reserve military service constitutes a strategic element of national security, indispensable for the rapid regeneration of military force, maintaining response capacity to threats, and supporting the population in exceptional situations. For the Republic of Moldova, implementing a modern, flexible, and motivating reserve military service system, correlated with a mixed force generation model, represents the optimal solution for ensuring the functionality and effectiveness of the armed forces in the context of current regional and global challenges.

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S u m m a r y

The article examines the strategic role of military reservists in supplementing the Armed Forces of the Republic of Moldova, emphasizing their importance within the broader framework of national security and defense preparedness. It argues that the effective management and integration of reservists constitute a fundamental component of military security, particularly in the context of evolving regional and global threats. The study situates the Moldovan case within both historical and comparative perspectives, highlighting structural deficiencies and proposing directions for reform.

The authors begin by outlining the complexity of the personnel system of the Armed Forces, which combines compulsory service, contract-based service, and reserve military service. In this framework, reservists represent a critical force multiplier, ensuring operational continuity and rapid response capabilities during crises, including states of emergency, siege, or war. The availability of trained reserve personnel allows for the efficient scaling of military capacity without imposing excessive financial burdens during peacetime.

The article underscores that the current security environment—characterized by instability, armed conflicts, and hybrid threats—necessitates the modernization of Moldova's mobilization system. Despite its constitutional neutrality, Moldova faces indirect security pressures that require adaptable and resilient defense structures. In this regard, reservists contribute not only to numerical reinforcement but also to maintaining institutional knowledge, operational standards, and organizational flexibility.

A significant portion of the analysis is dedicated to the legislative and institutional framework governing the military reserve. While Moldova has established basic regulations for mobilization and reserve management, the authors identify several shortcomings, including insufficient legal clarity regarding the role of reservists during states of emergency and limited mechanisms for rapid mobilization. The reliance on outdated procedures, such as paper-based call-up systems, further constrains responsiveness. The study highlights the need for legal reform, digitalization, and clearer definitions of reservist categories, particularly voluntary reservists. Also, the article provides a comparative analysis of reserve systems in several countries, including Romania, Ukraine, Estonia, Israel, Switzerland, and Georgia. These examples illustrate diverse models ranging from voluntary contractual reserves to compulsory militia-based systems. Common features of successful systems include regular training, financial incentives, rapid mobilization mechanisms, and strong integration with active forces. Notably, the Ukrainian case demonstrates the effectiveness of a well-prepared reserve in responding to large-scale military aggression, while Israel exemplifies the strategic reliance on reservists as the backbone of national defense.

Furthermore, the study explores the role of reservists in territorial defense structures. In Moldova, territorial defense formations, supported by reservists, are tasked with crisis management, infrastructure protection, and support for military operations. Comparative examples from the Baltic states highlight the benefits of voluntary, com-

munity-based defense organizations that enhance both military readiness and societal resilience. In this context, the article argues that the development of a modern, flexible, and well-regulated reserve system is essential for strengthening Moldova's defense capabilities. Key recommendations include adopting a dedicated legal framework for voluntary reservists, enhancing training programs, implementing digital mobilization systems, and improving social incentives to increase attractiveness. Ultimately, reservists are portrayed as a strategic resource indispensable for ensuring national security, enabling rapid force regeneration, and supporting both military and civilian responses to crises.

Keywords: *Armed Forces, operative reserve, reservist, voluntary reservist, military service in reserve, military concentrations, special concentrations, mobilization, mobilization reserves.*

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