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DACIN OCTAVIAN

USE AND ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL
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WARFARE

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Scientific coordinator:

STANCU Marian, doctor of military sciences, university professor

The doctoral Commission for public defense of the doctoral thesis:

Chairman – MEREUȚĂ Gheorghe, PhD in Military Sciences, University Professor, "Alexandru cel Bun" Armed Forces Military Academy

Scientific Supervisor Secretary – STANCU Marian, PhD in Military Sciences, University Professor, "Carol I" National Defense University, Bucharest, Romania

Commission Member – CÎRCIUMARU Florian, PhD in Military Sciences, University Lecturer, (Director of the Center for Strategic Defense and Security Studies) at the "Carol I" National Defense University, Bucharest, Romania

Official Reviewer – BÎRSAN Constantin-Marian, PhD in Military Sciences, Commander of the 51st Special Operations Battalion, Military Unit 01010, Romania

Official Reviewer – LEHACI Nicolae-Tudorel, PhD in Military Sciences and Intelligence, University Professor, (Dean of the Faculty of Command and General Staff) at the "Carol I" National Defense University, Bucharest, Romania

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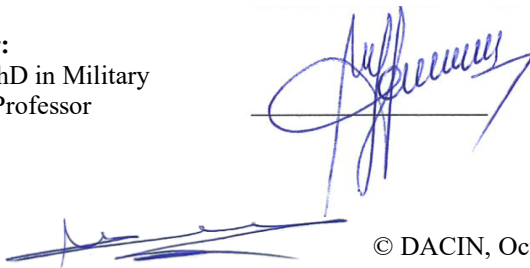
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Scientific Supervisor:

STANCU Marian, PhD in Military Sciences, University Professor

Autor:

DACIN Octavian

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The relevance of the topic and importance of the research.

The relevance and timeliness of the chosen topic highlight the fact that continuous progress in science and technology has led to fundamental transformations in the nature of contemporary armed conflicts. Modern warfare is characterized by significant changes compared to past conflicts, as technological and theoretical advancements have reshaped the way military operations are conceived and conducted. The concepts, strategies, and doctrines of warfare have undergone substantial modifications, with increasing emphasis on the use of special and unconventional forces. Armed conflicts now often intersect with non-military phenomena [13].

Recent events, such as the crisis in Ukraine and terrorist threats, have reignited debates over a new paradigm of warfare and underscored the radical changes in the global security strategy. In this context, Special Operations Forces (SOF) have gained increased importance, playing an essential role in managing a wide range of threats and integrating military operations with diplomatic, economic, and humanitarian initiatives [28].

Advanced technology has enabled SOF to operate efficiently in complex and challenging environments, using state-of-the-art equipment to achieve essential objectives. Furthermore, SOF operators are increasingly becoming multidimensional actors, integrated into stabilization and reconstruction efforts in conflict-affected regions. These changes underscore the relevance of the research topic, offering a clear understanding of how special operations adapt and evolve in response to the challenges posed by an increasingly dynamic and complex global security environment [32].

Research Aim.

The aim of this research is to analyze and propose effective ways to organize, establish, and employ Special Operations Forces (SOF) within the National Army of the Republic of Moldova in the context of hybrid warfare.

Research Objectives.

The objectives of the research outline the key areas of investigation necessary for developing an efficient model for

organizing and employing SOF in the context of hybrid warfare, tailored to the needs of the National Army of the Republic of Moldova. These objectives include:

1. Conceptual analysis of hybrid warfare, by identifying its main characteristics and the interaction between conventional and unconventional means, with emphasis on the informational, cyber, and psychological dimensions of asymmetric threats.
2. Evaluation of the structure and functioning of the Special Operations Forces of the Republic of Moldova, by examining the regulatory framework, institutional organization, and operational capabilities in relation to national security requirements and international standards.
3. Comparative analysis of international models for organizing Special Operations Forces, through the study of functional and operational structures in relevant states and case studies on their use in countering hybrid threats.
4. Investigation of the strategies and tactics specific to special operations employed in hybrid warfare, including clandestine operations, sabotage actions, cyberattacks, and other methods adapted to contemporary security challenges.
5. Development of an optimized model for organizing and employing Special Operations Forces, tailored to the national context of the Republic of Moldova and integrated into the regional and international security architecture, aimed at enhancing operational capabilities and increasing efficiency in countering hybrid threats.

By achieving these objectives, the research will contribute to improving the operational capabilities of the National Army and strengthening national security, while also providing solutions for the integration of the Republic of Moldova into regional and international security initiatives.

Research Hypothesis.

The development and implementation of an optimized model for organizing and employing Special Operations Forces (SOF), tailored to the national context of the Republic of Moldova and based on international best practices, will contribute to increasing the

operational effectiveness of these forces, enhancing their capacity to respond to hybrid threats, and strengthening national security.

Research Methodology.

The study combines empirical methods, induction and deduction, as well as structural analysis to establish a viable strategic approach. By correlating theoretical aspects with case studies, the research offers applicable solutions for the modernization of SOF and their integration into the security strategy of the Republic of Moldova.

Scientific Novelty of the Results.

This thesis proposes an innovative framework for the organization and use of SOF, adapted to the challenges of hybrid warfare. The theoretical and practical contributions support both national military reforms and international cooperation in the field of security.

Theoretical Significance of the Research.

The theoretical significance of this study lies in the development and consolidation of a modern conceptual and methodological framework required for the scientific investigation of the organizational and operational dynamics of military structures in the context of contemporary doctrinal evolution. The author's contribution is materialized through the adaptation of theoretical approaches to current security environment requirements and to the paradigmatic transformations of military science, thereby providing a solid foundation for the analysis and reform of the national defense system.

The thesis serves a dual function: on the one hand, it acts as a valuable analytical tool supporting military decision-making processes; on the other hand, it offers a reference framework for strategic initiatives aimed at reforming the National Army, particularly in terms of establishing and developing Special Operations Forces (SOF). Due to its applied nature and thematic relevance, the study transcends national boundaries, becoming part of the multinational discourse on interoperability, allied cooperation, and the adaptation of defense capabilities to new types of hybrid threats.

In this regard, the research contributes to the theoretical foundation of the modernization process of military structures, offering essential conceptual reference points for formulating strategies of institutional transformation, with particular emphasis on

the development, organization, and integration of SOF within the state's security architecture.

Volume and Structure of the Thesis.

The thesis is developed in accordance with academic standards specific to doctoral research and is structured in a logical and coherent architecture, reflecting the complexity of the addressed topic. The paper includes the following essential components: abstracts in Romanian, English, and Russian; a list of used abbreviations; an introduction outlining the objectives, hypothesis, and methodology; three main chapters organized into thirteen subchapters reflecting the argumentative and analytical progression of the topic; general conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings; a bibliography listing the utilized sources; relevant annexes supporting the analytical content; a statement of responsibility; and the author's curriculum vitae.

The thesis is focused on a comprehensive investigation of issues related to the organization and employment of Special Operations Forces in the context of hybrid warfare, grounded in a set of **key concepts**: National Army, threats and vulnerabilities, conflict, armed confrontation, special forces, special operations forces, special operations, hybrid warfare, and theater of operations.

CONTENT OF THE THESIS

1. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO THE ORGANIZATION AND UTILIZATION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN HYBRID WARFARE

This chapter addresses, from a theoretical and scientific perspective, the conceptual and methodological foundations necessary for understanding and analyzing the role of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the context of hybrid warfare. Initially, it examines the origins, evolution, and contemporary interpretations of the concept of "hybrid conflict," with emphasis on its historiographical dimension and the conceptual distinctions that differentiate it from conventional forms of armed confrontation. The study reveals that hybrid warfare is characterized by a fusion of conventional, unconventional, and asymmetric methods, requiring adaptability, deception, and actions

conducted below the threshold of open conflict, involving both state and non-state actors [9, p. 3].

The notion of hybrid warfare emerged in the specialized literature in the early 2000s, gaining prominence after the 2014 security crisis in southern and eastern Ukraine. The concept of "hybridity" was developed by Western military experts such as Frank Hoffman and James Norman Mattis, who highlighted the necessity for military structures to adapt to a wide spectrum of threats [33, p. 19].

Colonel John Jack McCuen (U.S. Army) describes hybrid warfare as "the ultimate expression of asymmetric warfare," conducted simultaneously on three critical fronts: the population within the conflict zone, the domestic population, and the international community [38, pp. 107–113].

Lieutenant Colonel Will Nemeth of the U.S. Marine Corps characterizes hybrid warfare as a contemporary form of guerrilla warfare that employs modern technology and advanced methods of mobilization [40, p. 14].

Sean McWilliams proposes a dual approach in which the physical dimension of hybrid warfare refers to direct military confrontation, while the conceptual dimension focuses on controlling the local population, maintaining domestic support, and influencing the international community [39, p. 10].

All these definitions highlight the complexity and multidimensionality of hybrid warfare, demonstrating the need for flexible and integrated defense strategies.

The concept of hybrid warfare has been officially adopted into the military doctrines of several countries, each developing its own interpretation based on its strategic and geopolitical specificities. For instance, the British doctrine defines hybrid conflict through the combination of violence and insurgency with terrorism, organized crime, and the use of economic, financial, legal, and diplomatic means to gain a strategic advantage. The British Army considers that "hybridity represents a fundamental shift in adversaries' ways of thinking, exploiting social vulnerabilities through sophisticated asymmetric techniques" [44, p. 11].

In the Eastern sphere, the Russian Federation integrates the concept of hybrid warfare within an informational and geopolitical logic. According to Russian expert Pavel Tsygankov, one of the defining features of this type of conflict is the use of informational technologies for manipulation, historical falsification, and the dissemination of disinformation [29, pp. 32–42].

Mikhail Delyagin emphasizes the geopolitical dimension of the phenomenon, viewing hybrid warfare as a mechanism of global competition that includes propaganda, disinformation, corruption, subversive political activities, and, when necessary, the use of force [26].

A balanced academic perspective is provided by Oleg Belikov, who argues that hybrid warfare is not a clearly defined operational concept but rather an analytical paradigm applicable to contemporary conflicts. He stresses that military planning must include a wide range of scenarios, from color revolutions to conventional conflicts [24, p. 139].

In the case of the Republic of Moldova, the phenomenon of hybrid warfare reflects complex national security challenges, influenced by factors such as the Transnistrian conflict—which remains a sensitive point that can be exploited for destabilization—economic and social vulnerabilities that facilitate external interference and propaganda, as well as corruption and illegal trafficking, which affect the functionality of state institutions. Hybrid threats exert constant pressure on state security, contributing to regional and global instability through disinformation, cyberattacks, foreign political influence, and the use of proxy forces to destabilize internal order [6]. In this context, the analysis and research of the phenomenon in the Republic of Moldova are supported by academic activities, conferences, symposiums, and specialized publications, as well as by international cooperation initiatives aimed at strengthening resilience capacities. These efforts contribute to the development of effective defense strategies, enhancing the national capacity to respond to hybrid challenges [7].

Based on these premises, the study identifies the theoretical and methodological benchmarks essential for analyzing the modalities of organizing and employing SOF in the specific context of hybrid warfare. It

highlights the importance of structural flexibility, interoperability, and the SOF's capacity to operate in complex operational environments in an integrated and synchronized manner with the other instruments of state power—political, informational, and economic [41, pp. 64–70]. From a theoretical standpoint, the use of SOF in hybrid warfare implies the conduct of operations in so-called "grey zones," often below the threshold of open conflict, where the presence of conventional forces is neither appropriate nor effective [37, p. 25]. SOF operations take place in ambiguous and fluid environments, and their missions may include special reconnaissance, direct action, influence operations, support to local forces, or operational partnerships all conducted with a high degree of discretion and adaptability. In this regard, Special Operations Forces become an indispensable strategic tool in the response to hybrid threats due to their ability to generate disproportionate effects relative to their small size [30, p. II-2].

From a methodological perspective, researching these modalities requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines strategic analysis with tools from geopolitics, military sociology, and security studies. This approach enables not only the description but also the evaluation of the effectiveness of SOF employment models based on the variables of the security environment. For the Republic of Moldova, developing a credible and functional SOF capability becomes a priority, especially in the context of instability in the extended Black Sea region and the protracted conflict in Ukraine. The internal vulnerabilities of the national defense system, combined with the pressures of hybrid threats, including disinformation, subversive actions, and the influence of non-state actors, necessitate the formation of agile military structures capable of effectively responding to unconventional challenges [7].

In the process of defining the operational and organizational structure of SOF, it is imperative that these modalities be designed in accordance with available resources as well as the strategic and operational requirements of the security environment. Every decision regarding their organization, equipment, and employment must reflect the need for interoperability and synergy with international partners, given that SOF missions are often multinational in nature and require collaboration with various external entities [16, pp. 205–210].

Moreover, these forces must serve a fundamental objective: the protection of national sovereignty and the strengthening of Moldova's strategic resilience in the face of a wide range of challenges, including hybrid threats, asymmetric conflicts, and frozen conflicts. In this context, SOF become not only a rapid response tool during crises but also an essential component of the national defense and deterrence architecture, prepared to act effectively in response to complex and diverse threats [12].

The theoretical contribution of this study aims at a systematic and integrated approach, seeking to develop methodological directions applicable to the institutionalization of Special Operations Forces within the National Army. These directions are based on an in-depth analysis of current doctrinal trends and the requirements imposed by the contemporary security environment.

In conclusion, Chapter 1 underscores the importance of integrating SOF into a flexible structure capable of responding quickly and effectively to the challenges generated by the dynamic and unpredictable nature of hybrid warfare. Therefore, developing national models for SOF organization that combine international best practices with each country's geopolitical and strategic specificities—including those of the Republic of Moldova—is an essential element in strengthening national security and defending sovereignty against hybrid threats.

2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND SCENARIOS FOR THE USE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN MODERN CONFLICTS

This chapter proposes an integrated and comparative analysis of the way in which Special Operations Forces (SOF) are organized and employed in modern conflicts, particularly in the context of the emergence of hybrid warfare. This form of conflict, characterized by the combination of conventional and unconventional, symmetric and asymmetric methods, involves hostilities across a broad spectrum, including the physical, informational, psychological, and cyber dimensions [17, pp. 197-204]. In this complex operational environment, Special Operations Forces have become an essential tool for projecting

power, capable of addressing unconventional challenges and acting with strategic efficiency in a volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous setting.

Recent conflicts across diverse geographic areas—such as Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, or the unstable African regions of the Sahel—have demonstrated the capacity of SOF to operate under adverse conditions through special reconnaissance missions, direct action, psychological operations, support for local resistance forces, and surgical interventions aimed at the strategic decapitation of hostile structures [14, pp. 220-228]. SOF have been deployed not only to strike the enemy but also to influence the operational environment, the local population, and political decision-makers through operations characterized by high precision, mobility, and autonomy.

States with a strong tradition in special operations—such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, France, Israel, and Ukraine—have developed different doctrinal models, yet they converge in the strategic relevance attributed to these forces.

In the case of the US and the UK [10], SOF are organically integrated into the national defense architecture, benefiting from advanced logistical, technological, and informational support, as well as increased interoperability with other components of the armed forces.

In contrast, in Russia's case [31], SOF have often been employed for disinformation, destabilization, and manipulation of local actors, using plausible deniability and covert actions, as witnessed in Crimea and Donbas.

France and Germany [34] have deployed SOF in African theaters of operation for counter-terrorism and stabilization missions, while Israel [36] has employed these forces in a preventive defense logic, responding immediately to threats and focusing on the rapid elimination of emerging dangers.

These experiences highlight that the success of SOF operations depends not only on technical capabilities or tactical training but also on the clarity of strategic objectives, the quality of intelligence, political support, and the ability to adapt to local realities [41, pp. 64–70].

The evolution of combat methods in the 21st century reflects a rapid adaptation to new forms of military confrontation, in which Special Operations Forces are playing an increasingly complex and decisive role. Due to their flexible, mobile, and autonomous nature, SOF have proven capable of effectively responding to the demands imposed by hybrid warfare, asymmetric conflicts, and influence campaigns conducted in multidimensional operational environments. The comparative study of recent cases reveals doctrinal convergences as well as geopolitical particularities that have shaped the use of these forces in various theaters of operation:

Libya (2011) – During Operation "Unified Protector," SOF from several NATO countries, especially the United Kingdom, France, and the US, were involved in supporting rebel groups against the Gaddafi regime. Their main role consisted in coordinating airstrikes, ensuring tactical communications, directing precision attacks, and rapidly training local forces. Thus, SOF acted as a force multiplier in a conflict characterized by the absence of a traditional frontline and the fluidity of combatant factions [25, p. 16].

Pakistan (2011) – The elimination of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden during Operation Neptune Spear marked a milestone in the history of SOF use for strategic decapitation missions. The operation, conducted by SEAL Team Six, demonstrated the capability of special forces to autonomously plan and execute high-precision surgical strikes in hostile sovereign territories, with minimal exposure and exceptional response speed. This action solidified the role of SOF as an instrument of foreign policy beyond the conventional paradigm of warfare [42, p. 28].

Ukraine (2014) – The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation was a prominent example of SOF use within a hybrid warfare context. The so-called "little green men" — Russian special forces without national insignia — rapidly seized strategic objectives, paralyzing Ukrainian resistance through surprise, intimidation, and information superiority. Combined with disinformation campaigns, psychological warfare, and cyberattacks, SOF actions managed to create a *fait accompli* without engaging in traditional military confrontation [27].

Syria (since 2015) – Russia’s military intervention in support of the Assad regime included a significant special operations component integrated into broader geopolitical strategies. Russian SOF were involved in guiding airstrikes, assisting Syrian and Iranian forces, and eliminating opposition leaders. By combining conventional elements with irregular warfare tactics, Moscow projected regional influence, using SOF as vectors of indirect control over the operational theater and as advanced trainers in urban warfare and infiltration missions [28].

These examples outline a metamorphosis of the traditional paradigm of conflict, in which Special Operations Forces (SOF) are no longer reserved solely for elite-type missions, but rather constitute priority elements in the strategic architecture of modern warfare. Their ability to operate in conditions of legal ambiguity, to influence the local population, to achieve informational superiority, and to support indigenous forces becomes an essential force multiplier, especially in the early phases of conflict, below the threshold of conventional war [11].

The comparative analysis reveals a number of dominant trends: the professionalization and expansion of SOF capabilities, the increasing emphasis on actions in grey zones and below the threshold of conventional warfare, the integration of cyber and informational resources, and the growing role of these forces in deterrence, prevention, and rapid response operations. In an increasingly fragmented and unpredictable security environment, SOF are becoming an essential actor for ensuring strategic resilience and enhancing a state's response capacity to hybrid threats [29, pp.32–42].

Thus, Special Operations Forces today represent not merely an elite military tool, but also a critical vector of political, psychological, and strategic influence, capable of intervening where traditional coercive methods fail or prove ineffective. Their role is continuously expanding, and the future of the operational environment will largely depend on how these forces are organized, trained, and employed in line with the new paradigms of contemporary warfare.

To illustrate the applicability of the theoretical and practical conclusions derived from the comparative analysis, a hypothetical

scenario for the employment of the Republic of Moldova's Special Operations Forces is proposed, adapted to the regional geopolitical context and the operational realities of the extended Black Sea area [7].

Operational context:

In the near future, the Republic of Moldova faces an escalation of hybrid tensions in the southeastern region, near the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia. There is a noticeable intensification of subversive actions, disinformation campaigns, and the mobilization of paramilitary groups supported logistically and informationally by an external state actor. These groups aim to destabilize the central government, create an enclave zone, and possibly proclaim an autonomous entity similar to the precedent set in Crimea.

Strategic objective [2]:

Ensuring territorial integrity and restoring state authority in the affected region through discreet, rapid, and effective actions, below the threshold of conventional confrontation, while avoiding open military escalation or international intervention.

Main missions of the Moldovan SOF:

Special Reconnaissance (SR) [19]:

- Deployment of infiltrated teams in the affected area to gather intelligence on the positioning of hostile groups, logistical flows, support points, and local influence networks.
- Use of ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance) technologies and HUMINT networks for continuous monitoring of actors involved.

Psychological and Cyber Influence Operations (MISO/Cyber) [20]:

- Implementation of coordinated information campaigns to counter hostile narratives through social media and local mass media outlets.
- Targeted cyber strikes on communication channels used by separatist groups for mobilization and propaganda.

Direct Action (DA) [18]:

- Targeted neutralization of separatist group leaders based on verified intelligence, using precision strikes by special units trained in CQB (Close Quarters Battle) techniques.

- Interdiction of arms and equipment shipments through Transnistrian routes or areas not controlled by constitutional authorities.

Support for loyal state forces (Foreign Internal Defense – FID) [20]:

- Training and advising Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Army forces deployed near the crisis zone to enhance their capacity to conduct control and order-restoration operations.

Operational Phases [2]:

Phase I – Preparation and planning: Intelligence gathering, simulation of operations, testing the rapid response capability of SOF teams.

Phase II – Penetration and covert action: Infiltration of forces into the area, initiation of psychological and cyber operations, assessment of adversary responses.

Phase III – Execution of direct actions: Execution of precision strikes, disruption of logistics channels, support of state forces in regaining control.

Phase IV – post-operational stabilization: Monitoring of the situation, support for civilian authorities, and counteraction of any resurgence of threats.

Doctrinal considerations:

This scenario validates the need for a national doctrine adapted to the hybrid context, in which SOF are not merely a reactive force but a proactive strategic actor capable of anticipating, influencing, and countering emerging threats. The scenario highlights the importance of:

- Inter-institutional interoperability (cooperation among Ma, MAI, SIS, and other structures);
- Continuous training in areas such as local languages, urban tactics, cyber environments, and strategic communication;
- Structural and decision-making flexibility within SOF to allow rapid adaptation to field dynamics.

The comparative analysis of the organization and use of Special Operations Forces in modern conflicts reveals their profound transformation into a strategic instrument indispensable in responding

to hybrid threats. The diversity of international experiences demonstrates that the success of SOF missions depends not only on tactical capabilities but also on integration into a coherent operational architecture supported by informational, cyber, and psychological resources [13].

The hypothetical scenario developed for the Republic of Moldova reflects the pressing need to adapt the national doctrine and SOF structure to the realities of a volatile and unpredictable security environment. In such a context, SOF must become a vector of anticipation and strategic projection, capable of acting decisively below the threshold of conventional conflict, in support of the state's sovereignty and stability [12].

In conclusion, Chapter 2 underscores the fundamental role of Special Operations Forces in modern conflicts, particularly in addressing the challenges posed by hybrid warfare and the unique characteristics of each theater of operations. The flexibility, rapid adaptability, and technological integration of SOF are essential for their success in contemporary conflict scenarios, while the development of well-grounded operational scenarios and effective international cooperation are key elements in maximizing their impact.

3. DOCTRINAL AND OPERATIONAL OPTIMIZATION OF THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN THE NATIONAL ARMY

Chapter Three constitutes the central applied component of the research, focusing on the analysis and formulation of directions for doctrinal and operational optimization of the Special Operations Forces (SOF) within the National Army of the Republic of Moldova, in the context of current trends in hybrid warfare and the regional security environment. At this stage, the scientific approach goes beyond previous conceptual frameworks, advancing toward the proposal of an integrated modernization framework for SOF structures, with a particular emphasis on adaptability, efficiency, and strategic compatibility [12].

The theoretical contribution of this study aims to formulate a systematic and integrated approach, with the goal of developing methodological directions applicable to the institutionalization process

of Special Operations Forces within the National Army. These directions are based on an in-depth analysis of current doctrinal trends and the requirements imposed by the contemporary security environment, taking into account the complexity of the regional and international context [4].

Thus, the institutionalization process of SOF must reflect the evolution of international defense doctrines while also considering the geostrategic specificity of the Republic of Moldova, located at the intersection between Eastern and Western Europe, in a context marked by a unique combination of external and internal threats [3]. In this respect, the study proposes several fundamental methodological directions essential for the development of a viable and efficient operational structure:

1. Adoption of a flexible and adaptable doctrinal framework: It is essential to develop a doctrine that allows for the rapid integration of new techniques and tactics, as well as the continuous updating of operational procedures, in order to respond promptly to emerging challenges. This doctrine should be inspired by successful international models but tailored to the specificities of hybrid and asymmetric operations that define contemporary conflicts [4].
2. Integration of SOF into a combined operational framework: Operational efficiency requires ongoing, coordinated collaboration between SOF, conventional forces, and national security structures. This integration is crucial to ensuring a rapid and effective response to a broad spectrum of threats and to generating true operational synergy.
3. Establishment of a continuous selection and training system: This system must meet both the internal needs of the National Army and the external requirements imposed by international partnerships. The selection and training process should be grounded in rigorous assessments and operational scenarios that reflect the nature of hybrid warfare, while also aligning with NATO models for special operations training.
4. Development of a robust and efficient logistics system: The modernization of SOF requires logistical support capable of

ensuring operational mobility, including in isolated theaters of operation. This system must support tactical autonomy and mission continuity while minimizing dependence on vulnerable or external infrastructure [4].

5. Support for technological innovation: SOF must constantly adapt to new technological realities. The adoption of cutting-edge equipment, encrypted communication technologies, satellite surveillance, and artificial intelligence for rapid information analysis and tactical decision-making is essential to enhance efficiency and precision in mission execution.
6. Definition of a coherent human resource policy: A solid framework for the continuous professional development of SOF operators is necessary, aimed at consistently improving their skills and performance. To this end, a rigorous performance evaluation system must be implemented to ensure the retention of elite personnel capable of responding to the complex and unpredictable challenges of hybrid warfare.

These methodological directions form the foundation for the modernization process of SOF structures in the Republic of Moldova, adapted both to the country's internal needs and to international trends and emerging global security challenges.

To substantiate these methodological directions, an analysis of internationally established organizational models is required, in order to identify best practices applicable to the Moldovan context.

In the dynamic evolution of contemporary defense systems, the organizational models of Special Operations Forces (SOF) directly reflect the strategic priorities of states, taking into account the particularities of each nation's security environment [12]. In this light, the institutional architectures of recognized military powers offer relevant examples of SOF organization, highlighting distinct orientations determined by mission projection and national defense strategy:

- The American model is characterized by an orientation toward rapid external deployment, considering the United States' global commitments and the need to respond to emerging threats in various regions of the world. It emphasizes the integration of SOF in global

theaters of operations and the development of sustainable strategic partnerships with allied states, with the goal of promoting global stability and strengthening international security networks. As such, U.S. SOF are structured to support rapid interventions anywhere in the world, having access to advanced technology and logistics resources that allow mobility and efficiency across a broad range of missions [30].

- The British model, on the other hand, focuses primarily on national territory protection and counterterrorism missions, emphasizing rapid and efficient response within domestic defense operations. In this context, British SOF are structured to intervene in narrower security scenarios, playing a key role in preventing and combating terrorist threats. These forces are integrated into internal defense structures, with the main objective of protecting critical infrastructure and managing national security crises, particularly in response to asymmetric attacks or terrorist group actions [44].

These two models highlight the fundamental differences in the approach to Special Operations Forces (SOF), shaped by the geostrategic context and the national defense priorities of each state. While the American model is oriented toward global projection of military power and integration within international alliances [30], the British model emphasizes territorial defense and response to specific internal threats, thereby reflecting the diversity in the organization and employment of SOF at the global level [44]. This structural and doctrinal variation underscores the complexity of the contemporary security environment and the need to adapt defense models to the specificities of each region and state.

The distinctions between SOF organizational models provide the Republic of Moldova with relevant benchmarks for developing its own doctrinal and operational framework, aiming to establish a special operations force capable of responding to security challenges in a hybridized environment [13].

Given the geopolitical particularities of the Republic of Moldova—a state located in a zone of strategic interference and exposed to hybrid risks—it becomes imperative to conceive a tailored

organizational model that ensures a balance between operational flexibility and integrated strategic coordination [7].

The proposed model foresees the establishment, at the strategic level, of a National Special Operations Component (CNOS), responsible for coordinating doctrinal planning, managing resources, and developing capabilities aligned with the state's security objectives. This centralized entity would ensure interoperability with other defense structures and provide a unified command framework for all specialized units [12].

At the operational level, the proposal includes the creation of regional special operations battalions (North and South), organized modularly and with multifunctional capabilities. Each battalion would include sub-units specialized in reconnaissance and surveillance, aerial insertion and air assault, as well as logistic and medical support. This configuration would allow for rapid and adaptable responses in various tactical scenarios. The regional disposition would optimize response times and ensure an active presence in areas of major operational interest.

A key component for training and innovation would be the National Special Operations Training Center, equipped with advanced simulation facilities, enabling the design of realistic scenarios tailored to the specifics of hybrid warfare, counterinsurgency operations, and interventions in hostile urban environments. The training process would include continuous evaluations, advanced psychophysical testing, and the integration of cutting-edge tactical technologies.

The implementation of this model would bring multiple benefits: increased operational efficiency through the creation of units capable of managing a wide range of threats (including cyber threats), alignment with NATO standards—facilitating participation in multinational missions and exercises—and strengthening the state's crisis response capacity.

In the long term, such a model would decisively contribute to the professionalization of the special forces, the enhancement of the Republic of Moldova's defense capability, and the increase of its strategic credibility within the regional security architecture. In a context marked by instability and asymmetric threats, the development

of a modernized SOF structure represents a strategic investment essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and security [3].

From the perspective of strengthening the National Army's strategic response capacity, the elaboration of a dedicated doctrine for SOF becomes a priority, aimed at regulating the use of these structures in relation to the demands of the current operational environment. This doctrinal foundation must begin with a clear definition of the specific nature of special operations, characterized by high complexity, execution in politically sensitive or hostile theaters, and the use of advanced tactical capabilities and specialized personnel [18].

SOF missions target the countering of asymmetric threats, conduct of reconnaissance operations, support for allied structures, and personnel recovery from high-risk zones. These missions give SOF a strategic role in maintaining regional stability, especially in the broader Black Sea area [8].

The SOF command structure must reflect a balance between centralized coordination and tactical autonomy. In this sense, the establishment of a National Special Operations Command (CNOS) would provide the strategic direction of these forces, while operational units should benefit from the necessary freedom to effectively adapt to field realities. This flexible decision-making architecture strengthens responsiveness in unpredictable situations and supports operational effectiveness in unstable environments [12].

Interoperability, a key pillar of the doctrine, implies the integration of SOF within a coherent framework of collaboration both nationally and internationally. Domestically, cooperation with security structures (police, intelligence services, conventional forces) is essential for integrated defense. Internationally, participation in joint missions and exercises with NATO and other international partners facilitates the standardization of procedures and technological compatibility, thereby reinforcing the role of the Republic of Moldova in the regional security system [41, pp. 64–70].

Logistical support is a sine qua non condition for the success of SOF missions. The logistics infrastructure must be designed to support operational mobility, team autonomy, and uninterrupted communication with command structures. Modern equipment, rapid deployment capabilities, the provision of medical support, and the availability of

flexible resupply resources are fundamental elements for maintaining efficiency in isolated or hostile areas [32].

At the same time, the continuous training and professional development of personnel constitutes a defining element of SOF organizational culture. Training must include advanced tactical exercises, realistic simulations, and specialized courses in clandestine techniques, infiltration, and urban combat [1]. For this purpose, the establishment of a National Special Operations Training Center would represent a strategic investment in human capital, capable of ensuring the permanent adaptation of operators to the dynamics of the security environment.

The adoption and implementation of a national doctrine for the Special Operations Forces of the Republic of Moldova would have a significant impact on enhancing operational effectiveness, strengthening defensive capabilities, and developing international partnerships. Such a doctrine would position SOF as a critical tool for strategic projection and deterrence, prepared to respond to hybrid challenges and unconventional threats with professionalism, flexibility, and efficiency.

In the context of structural and functional optimization of the Special Operations Forces, a coherent, rigorous, and sustainable model for personnel selection and training plays a fundamental role [22, p. 45]. Candidate selection must be based on a set of multidimensional criteria addressing not only physical fitness and technical-tactical skills, but also psychological robustness, cognitive adaptability, resilience under operational stress, and loyalty to institutional and national values.

An effective selection model does not rely solely on testing current abilities; instead, it involves a comprehensive assessment of the individual's potential for integration and development within an elite operational environment. In this regard, it is essential to establish specialized evaluation and selection centers, capable of applying advanced psych-behavioral testing methodologies tailored to the specific profile of SOF operators [12].

Subsequent training should be structured progressively, in phases that combine individual instruction, tactical team training, and

exercises conducted in realistic, hybrid-specific scenarios. The emphasis shifts from traditional training toward the development of autonomous tactical thinking, rapid decision-making skills, and the capacity to operate in complex environments marked by uncertainty and strategic ambiguity [1].

A fundamental component of training is interagency and international cooperation, which allows for both the standardization of procedures and the accumulation of relevant practical experience. Interoperability with similar partner state structures is a key objective in increasing the capacity to respond and participate actively in international missions and joint operations [3].

Additionally, the implementation of a continuous training system is imperative, based on periodic upgrading, operational retraining, and advanced specialization. This system should be supported by clear mechanisms for performance evaluation and merit-based promotion, to ensure the maintenance of high standards within SOF units.

In conclusion, the doctrinal and operational optimization of the Special Operations Forces of the National Army represents a strategic necessity in the face of modern geopolitical and security challenges. By integrating a flexible doctrine, developing a sustainable logistics system, fostering technological innovation, and continuously advancing human resources, SOF can become an efficient tool in responding to hybrid and asymmetric threats, significantly contributing to national security and regional stability.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This doctoral thesis, entitled „**Methods of Organizing and Employing Special Operations Forces in Hybrid Warfare**“, addresses a current strategic issue by applying an interdisciplinary methodology and by articulating a theoretical and practical framework adapted to the complex context of contemporary security. The research aimed to analyze the doctrinal, organizational, and operational dimensions of Special Operations Forces (SOF), in correlation with major transformations in the global and regional security environment caused by the proliferation of hybrid conflicts.

The scientific approach led to the conceptual clarification of the hybrid warfare phenomenon and validated SOF as an essential strategic instrument in the national defense system of the Republic of Moldova. The results obtained confirm not only the theoretical relevance of the topic but also the practical applicability of the proposed solutions to adapt military capabilities to new security challenges.

Conclusions:

1. Theoretical clarification of the concept of hybrid warfare and its implications for national security

The thesis provides a significant contribution to the conceptualization of hybrid warfare by coherently integrating its conventional, unconventional, informational, and cyber dimensions. This approach supports the development of defense policies adapted to the specific nature of emerging threats.

2. Reconceptualizing the role of Special Operations Forces in the defense architecture

SOF are defined as strategically valuable structures capable of generating decisive effects in the hybrid environment due to their flexibility, adaptability, and rapid response capabilities. They must be integrated as core elements of the national defense system.

3. The necessity of structural reform of the National Army

The research findings highlight the need to restructure the force composition by integrating modular, autonomous, and interoperable units centered around special capabilities. This reform is essential to increase the ability to respond to new types of confrontation.

4. Validation of the importance of specialized training, based on lessons learned from recent conflicts

The study demonstrates that the effectiveness of special operations is directly dependent on the level of professional training. A rigorous national model of selection and preparation is required, focused on professionalism, adaptability, and psychological resilience.

5. Outlining an integrated model for the development of SOF in the Republic of Moldova

The thesis proposes a multidimensional model for the doctrinal, organizational, technological, and operational development of SOF, aligned with NATO and EU standards but adapted to the national

context. The model aims at both institutional coherence and autonomous operational capability with international interoperability.

Recommendations:

Based on the outlined conclusions, a series of strategic directions for action are identified, aimed at strengthening national defense capabilities and adapting the institutional framework of military structures to the complexity and dynamics of threats specific to the hybrid security environment:

1. Conducting a systemic strategic assessment of the force structure

A comprehensive strategic audit of the response capability of national military structures is required, with a focus on the potential of SOF to operate effectively in hybrid environments. Operational analysis and simulation tools must form the foundation of this process.

2. Revision of the legislative framework regarding the organization of the armed forces

It is necessary to update the relevant legislation, including Government Decision No. 679/2001, to explicitly include SOF in the permanent structure of the National Army, thereby providing the legal basis for their development and employment.

3. Development of a national strategy for SOF advancement by 2030

It is recommended to adopt a multiannual strategy that sets clear objectives in the fields of training, equipment, interoperability, and international cooperation, with the goal of achieving full operational capability by 2030.

4. Institutionalization of a unified doctrinal and procedural framework for SOF

It is imperative to develop a coherent set of doctrinal and procedural documents regulating SOF activities, including operational doctrine, selection and training standards, engagement tactics in hybrid conflicts, and performance evaluation mechanisms.

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ADNOTARE

la teza de doctor în științe militare „Modalități de organizare și întrebuințare a Forțelor Pentru Operații Speciale în Războiul Hibrid”, autor Octavian DACIN. Specialitatea 581.01 – Artă militară. Chișinău, 2025.

Structura tezei: introducere, trei capitole, concluzii generale și recomandări, bibliografia din 253 titluri, 24 anexe, 140 pagini de text de bază. Rezultatele tezei au fost expuse în 20 articole publicate în culegeri și reviste de specialitate din Republica Moldova și străinătate.

Cuvintele-cheie: război hibrid, amenințări și vulnerabilități, conflicte netradiționale, forțe speciale, forțe pentru operații speciale, Forțele Armate, Armata Națională, forțe neregulate, actori non-statali, teatrul de operații, operații speciale.

Scopul lucrării: Lucrarea urmărește analiza utilizării tacticilor războiului hibrid și evidențierea necesității dezvoltării Forțelor pentru Operații Speciale (FOS) în actualul mediu de securitate. Studiul propune identificarea unor soluții teoretice și practice pentru optimizarea instruirii și utilizării FOS ale Armatei Naționale, în vederea eficientizării participării acestora la operații militare complexe, naționale și internaționale.

Obiectivele cercetării: Demersul investigativ al prezentei cercetări este orientat spre analiza aprofundată a modalităților optime de organizare, dotare și întrebuințare a Forțelor pentru Operații Speciale (FOS) în contextul războiului hibrid, evidențiind capacitatea acestora de a se adapta la noile paradigme ale conflictului contemporan. Studiul vizează o abordare integrată, cuprinzând dimensiuni doctrinare, tactice și operaționale, în vederea fundamentării unui model eficient de utilizare a FOS în scenariu de securitate marcate de complexitate și volatilitate strategică.

Noutatea și originalitatea științifică: Lucrarea propune o analiză comparativă a conceptului de război de generație nouă, evidențiind rolul inovator al Forțelor pentru Operații Speciale în noile forme de conflict. Originalitatea constă în formularea unui model adaptat pentru Republica Moldova, care include structură organizațională, doctrină specifică și un program coerent de selecție și instruire a operatorilor FOS, în raport cu evoluțiile mediului internațional de securitate.

Rezultatele obținute care contribuie la soluționarea unei probleme științifice importante: Cercetarea a oferit un cadru conceptual și operațional clar pentru utilizarea Forțelor pentru Operații Speciale în războiul hibrid, propunând un model optimizat de organizare și întrebuințare a acestora, adaptat contextului Republicii Moldova. Rezultatele contribuie la fundamentarea științifică a reformei FOS în fața noilor amenințări hibride și la consolidarea securității naționale.

Semnificația teoretică: Lucrarea dezvoltă cadrul conceptual al războiului hibrid și al rolului FOS, oferind fundamente teoretice pentru analiza noilor tipologii de conflict și a transformărilor doctrinare în domeniul securității și apărării.

Valoarea aplicativă a lucrării: Lucrarea oferă un model optimizat de structurare, doctrină operațională și program de selecție și instruire pentru Forțele pentru Operații Speciale ale Armatei Naționale, adaptat cerințelor actuale de securitate.

Implementarea rezultatelor științifice: Rezultatele cercetării au fost valorificate în cadrul a șapte conferințe internaționale și zece conferințe naționale, prin articole științifice publicate, prelegeri susținute și în activitatea didactică la Academia Militară a Forțelor Armate „Alexandru cel Bun”.

АННОТАЦИЯ

**к диссертации на соискание учёной степени доктора военных наук
«Методы организации и применения Сил специальных операций в
гибридной войне», автор Октавиан ДАЧИН. Специальность:**

581.01 – Военное искусство. Кишинёв, 2025

Структура диссертации: введение, три главы, общие выводы и рекомендации, библиография из 253 наименований, 24 приложения, 140 страниц основного текста. Результаты исследования представлены в 20 научных статьях, опубликованных в сборниках и специализированных изданиях в Республике Молдова и за рубежом.

Ключевые слова: гибридная война, угрозы и уязвимости, нетрадиционные конфликты, специальные силы, силы специальных операций, Вооружённые Силы, Национальная армия, нерегулярные формирования, негосударственные акторы, театр военных действий, специальные операции.

Цель исследования: Анализ применения тактик гибридной войны и обоснование необходимости развития ССО в современных условиях безопасности. Предлагаются теоретические и практические решения для повышения боеспособности ССО Национальной армии.

Задачи исследования: Настоящее исследование направлено на глубокий анализ оптимальных способов организации, оснащения и применения Сил специальных операций в контексте гибридной войны с акцентом на их способность адаптироваться к новым парадигмам современных конфликтов. В работе применяется интегрированный подход, охватывающий доктринальные, тактические и операционные аспекты, с целью обоснования эффективной модели применения ССО в условиях стратегически сложной и нестабильной обстановки.

Научная новизна и оригинальность: Проведён сравнительный анализ концепции войны нового поколения с акцентом на роль ССО. Разработана модель, адаптированная для Республики Молдова: структура, доктрина, программа отбора и подготовки.

Результаты, способствующие решению важной научной проблемы: В диссертации представлена оптимизированная модель структуры, оперативной доктрины и программы отбора и подготовки Сил специальных операций Национальной армии, соответствующая современным требованиям в сфере безопасности.

Теоретическая значимость: Работа расширяет концептуальные основы гибридной войны и роли ССО, предоставляя теоретические основы для анализа новых типов конфликтов и доктринальных трансформаций в области безопасности и обороны.

Практическая значимость работы: В диссертации представлена оптимизированная модель структуры, оперативной доктрины и программы отбора и подготовки Сил специальных операций Национальной армии, соответствующая современным требованиям в сфере безопасности.

Внедрение научных результатов: Результаты исследования были представлены на семи международных и десяти национальных конференциях, в научных публикациях, лекциях, а также в преподавательской деятельности автора в Академии Вооружённых Сил «Alexandru cel Bun».

ANOTATION

**to the doctor thesis in military science „Ways of organizing and using the Special Operations Forces in hybrid warfare”, author Octavian DACIN.
Specialty 581.01–Military art. Chisinau, 2025.**

Thesis structure: introduction, three chapters, general conclusions and recommendations, a bibliography of 253 sources, 24 appendices, and 140 pages of core text. The results of the thesis have been presented in 20 articles published in collections and specialized journals in the Republic of Moldova and abroad.

Keywords: hybrid warfare, threats and vulnerabilities, non-traditional conflicts, special forces, special operations forces, Armed Forces, National Army, irregular forces, non-state actors, theater of operations, special operations.

Purpose of the study: The paper aims to analyze the use of hybrid warfare tactics and highlight the need for the development of Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the current security environment. The study seeks to identify both theoretical and practical solutions for optimizing the training and employment of the National Army's SOF to enhance their effectiveness in complex military operations, both nationally and internationally.

Research objectives: This investigation focuses on the in-depth analysis of optimal methods for organizing, equipping, and employing Special Operations Forces in the context of hybrid warfare, emphasizing their adaptability to the evolving paradigms of contemporary conflict. The study employs an integrated approach, covering doctrinal, tactical, and operational dimensions, to substantiate an effective model for SOF employment in security scenarios characterized by complexity and strategic volatility.

Scientific novelty and originality: The thesis presents a comparative analysis of the new generation warfare concept, highlighting the innovative role of Special Operations Forces in emerging conflict forms. Its originality lies in proposing a tailored model for the Republic of Moldova, encompassing organizational structure, specific doctrine, and a coherent selection and training program for SOF operators, in line with developments in the international security environment.

Results contributing to solving a significant scientific problem: The research provides a clear conceptual and operational framework for the use of SOF in hybrid warfare, proposing an optimized model of organization and employment adapted to the Republic of Moldova's context. The results contribute to the scientific foundation of SOF reform in response to new hybrid threats and support the consolidation of national security.

Theoretical significance: The thesis advances the conceptual framework of hybrid warfare and the role of SOF, offering theoretical foundations for analyzing new conflict typologies and doctrinal transformations in the field of security and defense.

Practical value of the thesis: The work offers an optimized model of structure, operational doctrine, and a selection and training program for the National Army's Special Operations Forces, adapted to current security requirements.

Implementation of scientific results: The results have been disseminated at seven international conferences and ten national conferences, through scientific articles, academic lectures, and in teaching activities as a university lecturer at the Military Academy of the Armed Forces „Alexandru cel Bun”.

DACIN, OCTAVIAN

**USE AND ORGANIZATION OF SPECIAL
OPERATIONS FORCES IN HYBRID
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