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The Total Defence 21st century.COM – building a resilient society: Introduction

When we started working on the issue entitled “The Total Defence 21st century.COM – building a resilient society”, we did not know then how topical this issue would become. We were aware of its importance, especially since 2014, which was the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. However, we did not think that the need to build an effective concept of total/comprehensive defence, and then its implementation, would become so pressing in February 2022.

Two of the three general regularities in the history of international relations have also become extremely topical. We are talking about the clash between imperial and polyarchic tendencies, and nations’ desire to express their independence and identity, and as a result, to have their own state. It can be assumed that in order to achieve this goal, as well as for small and medium-sized states to be able to defend themselves against the forces of empires and effectively deter them, they must use the concept of total/comprehensive defence, in its improved, 21st century version.

Security and defence guarantees based on international law are not sufficient, as international practice proves once again.

Totality/comprehensiveness assumes an entire state's and society's, both military and civilian institutions', participation in defence. Therefore, the content of this issue also needed to adopt this view. Hence, the articles presented here come from joint efforts of civilian and military scientific institutions and the type of armed forces which are particularly responsible for building universal defence readiness throughout a state's territory. Only such an approach allows a comprehensive description of the subject discussed in the issue.

The Russian annexation of Crimea and the eastern part of Ukraine in February 2014 initiated discussion not only on the readiness and capabilities of the armed forces but also on society's resilience and civilian preparedness to withstand a conventional military conflict. The last two areas quickly became crucial for European nations. The last thirty years have significantly weakened their armed forces, limiting their size and operational capabilities. They have become unable to provide the necessary security level to their societies. Contrary to the classical Clausewitz's approach, society members have become major targets of military operations, and their need to be resilient and survive the adversary's attacks have turned out to be of crucial importance.

The joint declaration after the Warsaw NATO Summit in July 2016 brought much greater attention to these capabilities. The declaration on the so-called NATO Baseline for National Resilience clearly showed that only tightly coordinated efforts between civilians and the military ensure effective resilience.

The approach to national defence and strengthening national resilience presented by Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden, Finland, and even Singapore was named a total/comprehensive defence concept. Immediately, total/comprehensive defence became a buzzword during experts' discussions and a universal solution to current security challenges. Naturally, the concept is not ground-breaking in military studies. It has been present in military books for many years. However, it has been forgotten due to the peace dividend period.

In 2020, the NATO Special Operations Headquarters published the *Comprehensive Defence Handbook*, the effect of an exceptionally thorough and time-consuming analytical approach to total/comprehensive defence. Subsequently, the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept, the primary document of NATO's Allied Command Transformation for the upcoming years, identified resilience as a Warfare Development Imperative for the NATO Alliance. Furthermore, resilience analyses were aligned with the newly established NATO Resilience Committee. That makes resilience one of the major security challenge for NATO.

In order to approach the problem appropriately, the editors invited outstanding experts from all over the world to contribute to this publication. They represent

the entire spectrum of the security environment: military members (active and retired), civilians, and academics, both theorists and practitioners. They carefully studied and analysed the total/comprehensive defence concept from many different perspectives to ensure complete understanding of the phenomenon. The editors strongly believe that “The Total Defence 21st century.COM – building a resilient society” will significantly broaden the knowledge of total/comprehensive defence and make it more understandable for members of society.

