

# STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCE ON DEVELOPMENT OF DEFENSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA\*

*Dejan Stojković and Blažo M. Radović*  
Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia,  
Defence Policy Sector, Strategic Planning Department

Strategic environment of the Republic of Serbia is determined by the operation of a large number of factors, which affect the defense system and its development in various ways. In the area of development planning of the defense system, the overriding purpose of analysis and assessment of the strategic environment is review and cogitation of phenomena and trends, and their influence on the development of the defense system. This paper analyzes the basic phenomena and trends in the field of strategic environmental factors and their individual, as well as hybrid, impact on the development of the defense system.

For the sake of predictable and successful implementation of the defense system purpose, defense planning holders pay special attention to the analysis and assessment of the strategic environmental factors such as security, political, economic, social, technological, informational, ecological, and others. Strategic environmental factors are interdependent and connected, and they make an inseparable whole – the reality that affects functioning and development of the defense system.

Knowledge and experience of defense analysts and planners is important for the quality assessment of the strategic environment impact and in the end it is crucial for proposing management decisions in order to ensure the effective functioning and development of the defense system. In the process, the application of scientific and field-proven methods, tools and techniques is inevitable.

Study of the strategic environment impact creates the conditions for continuous and preventive action for timely adjustment of the defense system to new circumstances, thus enabling the successful execution of the defense tasks and protection of the defense interests.

*Key Words: analysis, assessment, strategic environment, strategic context, planning, development, defense system*

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## Introduction

Regardless of the social system, the political structure or economic power, countries make great efforts to ensure the development of the defense system and its adaptation to current and estimated challenges, risks and threats (CRT) to security. The development of the defense system is necessary to ensure the protection of state interests, both in the state, whose security is threatened and those that aspire to maintain different forms and levels of power. The continuous improvement of capabilities and the overall condition of the defense system is an indication that the state takes care of the security and takes measures to create conditions to counter different forms of threats to the security of the society.

The development of the defense system represents *the totality of qualitative and quantitative changes which the system, adapting to changes in the environment and the available resources, translates from the existing state to the new, more effective and more efficient one*. In order to reach a qualitatively new state of the defense system, it is necessary to have opportune, system-oriented and resource-supported management decisions based on the argumentative, realistic and sustainable analyses and strategic environmental assessments, as well as the needs and possibilities.

The overall goal of any defense system, as well as the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, is to possess capabilities for a successful response to the challenges, risks and threats, and different forms of endangering the state and the society. As the range of threats to security in the modern world expanded, with a tendency for further expansion, defense systems are taking continuous measures to adapt to the changing environment. Therefore, the development of the defense system and its capability for a timely and adequate response to jeopardizing security covers different aspects of the capability development. It ranges from capabilities to defend against armed threats, terrorism, natural and technological disasters. It is desirable that reaching capabilities is a planned and controlled process of the transition of the defense system from the current conditions to the desired ones. In addition, the new defense system is characterized by adaptability to new circumstances, the strategic environment and the capability to perform successfully the tasks of the defense and protection of the defense interests.

This paper mainly deals with the analysis of the strategic environment and its impact on the development of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, as an integral part of development planning of the defense system.

## Strategic environment and strategic context of the Republic of Serbia

Among professionals and academics there is no single interpretation of the strategic environment concept, as well as its content. In the paper, the *strategic environment* means a *system of the (mutual) relations and connections of a large number of factors that have different influence on a certain subject*. Strategic environmental factors are: security, political, economic, social, technological, informational, ecological, and oth-

ers.<sup>1</sup> The subject in the paper means the state, the defense system of the state or other organized entity.

The strategic environment and the factors that shape it manifest individual, cumulative and hybrid impacts on a given subject. The *individual impacts* mean the isolated effects of certain factors. Although each impact in practice is relatively rare, there are circumstances when a particular factor exerts an operation that is separate from the operation of other factors. Their discussion requires specific knowledge of certain fields.

*The cumulative impacts* are the overall, combined effects of multiple factors. Such effects are common and distinctive due to synergy in the functioning of several strategic environmental factors. Therefore, consideration of the cumulative impact is extremely complex and requires the possession of fundamental and specific knowledge and information, and the use of special tools and techniques. It is necessary for the objective establishment of a large number of connections between the strategic environmental factors and recognition of their mutual influence.

*The hybrid impacts* are specific impacts generated by combining or mixing several individual and / or cumulative impacts.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the cumulative impact, which is the joint action of several different impacts that retain their importance, the hybrid impacts are new entities formed by 'merging' several different impacts. The new ones have specific nature and characteristics, different from the nature and characteristics of the various impacts they arise from. Identifying and reviewing the hybrid impact requires a high level of interdisciplinary knowledge and experience, as well as the use of specific tools and techniques.

By their functioning, strategic environmental factors establish the so-called *strategic context*, which can be defined as a *set of manifest forms of individual, cumulative and / or hybrid operation of strategic environmental factors on the given subject, its functioning and development*.

Each entity whose condition, projection and development are considered from the perspective of the strategic environment has a specific and typical strategic context. There are not two entities with the same strategic context. The strategic context is the dynamic manifestation of the relationship between the observed entity, i.e. state or defense system and its strategic environment i.e. factors. Thus, a specific strategic context has been detected for the Republic of Serbia and its defense system that makes a series of phenomena resulting from the interaction of the Republic of Serbia and the strategic environmental factors (Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> The factors are all fruitful conditions, i.e. all objects (things, processes, properties) whose operation is involved in production of the appearance date (regardless of whether they are necessary or sufficient), translation into English. Михајло Марковић, Филозофске основе науке, САНУ, Београд, 1981, 639.

<sup>2</sup> The word 'hybrid' originates from the Latin word 'hibrida' which has several meanings. In the On-line Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hybrid>, visited on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017, word 'hybrid' is defined in the following way: 1. Something that is formed by combining two or more things; 2. Something that is of mixed origin or composition; 3. Something heterogeneous in origin or composition; 4. Something that has two different types of components performing essentially the same function.

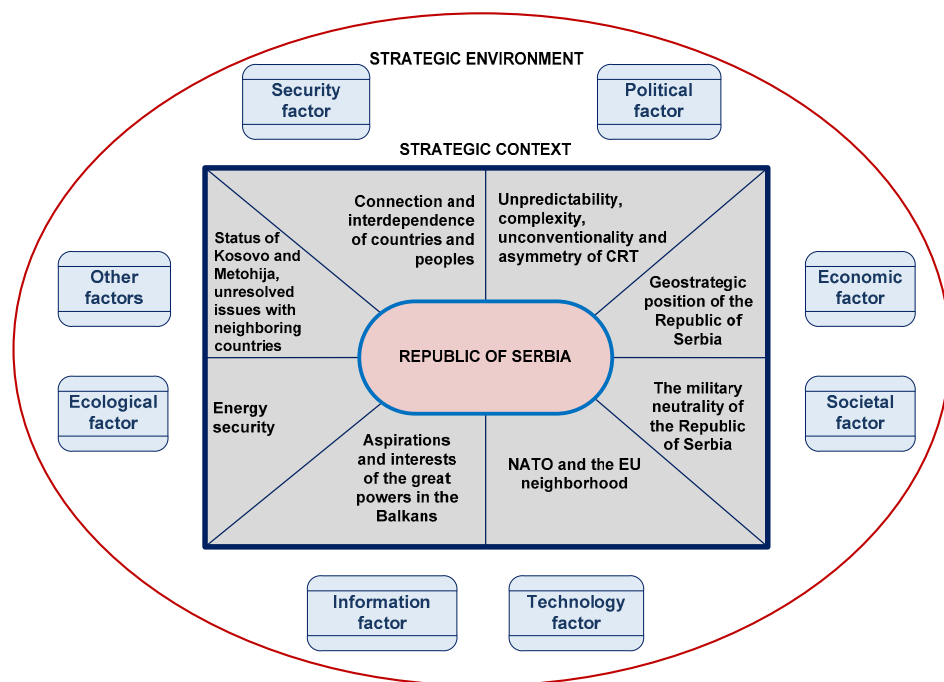


Figure 1 – Relationship between the defense system of the Republic of Serbia strategic environment and strategic context

The strategic context of the Republic of Serbia, which the defense system operates and develops in, is characterized by cohesion and interdependence of countries and peoples that arose as a result of the rapid penetration of the market-oriented economy and technological innovation. In addition, the existence of challenges, risks and threats that transcend national borders and whose main features are unpredictability, complexity, unconventionality and asymmetry are also the influential factors on the strategic context of the Republic of Serbia. An important manifestation of the strategic context is the geostrategic position of the Republic of Serbia in the middle-crossing of important routes, which causes its increased vulnerability to various forms of threats. Furthermore, the Republic of Serbia as a military neutral country in respect of military alliances is trying to build its own defense capabilities and capacities unlike the countries from the region that fulfill or strive to achieve their security within the framework of NATO.

The specificity of the strategic context of the Republic of Serbia provokes aspirations and interests of the great powers in the Western Balkans, which can make a significant impact. A special aspect of the strategic context makes energy security, and the fact that the availability of energy will impact on the development of the whole society. Finally, the Republic of Serbia can be affected by a number of unresolved issues that it has with neighboring countries, ranging from border and the international law issues to the humanitarian and social ones. However, it is possible to add a number of other phenomena to the abovementioned key events that shape the strategic context of the Republic of Serbia.

The practice shows that it is useful, for analytical purposes, to distinguish between the strategic environment and the strategic context having in mind that the strategic environment determines the strategic context. For the objective review of the strategic context in which the Republic of Serbia and its defense functions, as a prerequisite for development planning of the defense system, it is necessary to examine thoroughly and systematically the impact of strategic environmental factors.

## The influence of strategic environmental factors on the development of defense system

The main purpose of an analysis of the strategic environmental factors is comprehension and deliberation of events and trends in a complex environment, and their impact on the functioning and development of the monitoring entity. When it comes to the Serbian defense system, its operation and development is determined by the nature and character of operation of the strategic environmental factors of the Republic of Serbia.

Knowledge and experience of analysts and planners is important for the quality assessment of the strategic environmental impact and in the end, it is crucial for proposing management decisions in order to ensure effective functioning and development of the defense system. Moreover, the application of scientific and field-proven methods, tools and techniques contributes greatly to the quality of the analysis and grounded argumentation that supports the decision-making process.

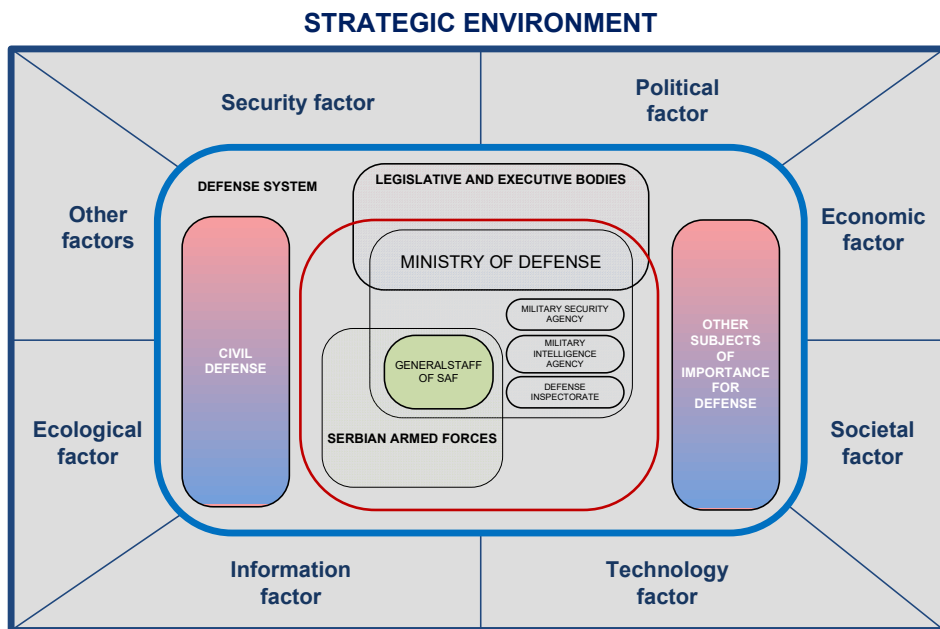


Figure 2 – The relationship of strategic environment (factors) and the defense system of the Republic of Serbia

Strategic environmental factors, i.e. security, political, economic, social, technological, informational, environmental, etc. make individual, cumulative and hybrid impacts on the development of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia. These impacts may manifest themselves in the defense system as a whole or to individual elements of the defense system (Figure 2).

A special aspect of the strategic environmental impact factors is their influence on the specific functions and/or processes of the defense system. The following will be considered as characteristic phenomena and trends within specific factors abilities with regard to the possible impact on the development of the defense system.

### *Security factor*

Regardless of the reached development of the society, the emerging large number of conflicts and tensions of different shape and character are still in place. The outbreak of a global armed conflict and a conflict in the Balkans in the coming period is unlikely, but we can expect the continuation of tensions in the regions where the interests of major and regional powers are in conflict. The Republic of Serbia is, due to its geostrategic position, particularly exposed to this trend, which is necessary to build friendly relations with countries and peoples, but also the respectable armed forces that will be a powerful deterrent element.

The armed conflict in which the Republic of Serbia could participate would probably be dissymmetric or asymmetric in its character. To counter potentially more powerful opponent, the defense of the Republic of Serbia should be based on the strategic concept of the total defense. The defense system should have a wide range of capabilities that will enable it to perform different operations in peace, a state of emergency and war. For a successful response to the threat of a dissymmetric armed conflict, the Republic of Serbia needs fast, efficient, elastic and flexible forces capable of inflicting unacceptable losses on the enemy. Threats to the security of the Republic of Serbia in an asymmetric armed conflict are likely to be of a hybrid character, which requires the capabilities of the conflict prevention, as well as a comprehensive response. Early warning capability should be developed for both types of a potential conflict.

One of the characteristics of a contemporary armed conflict is that it is more conducted in urban areas, which requires further development of capacity of the defense system for urban warfare. This would include not only general doctrinal adjustment with a focus on the development of the doctrine of warfare in populated areas, but also the development of specific tactical actions and procedures, as well as combat platforms. Particular attention should be paid to developing a system of civil protection and training of the population for the defense. Proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their components could represent the particular threat to the Republic of Serbia. This requires the capabilities of the defense system for the nuclear, chemical and biological protection of the defense forces and the population.

The migration trend from countries affected by an armed conflict, instability, poverty and natural disasters through the so-called Balkan route and the Republic of Serbia is likely to continue in the future. This could increase the risk of the transmission of the infectious diseases, as well as the possibility of a pandemic. In line with this, the defense system has to develop specific defense capabilities to protect the defense forces and the population.

### *Political factor*

Political factor has a key effect on the development of the defense system. The continuous political struggle of the great powers for supremacy in the Balkans and the emergence of new regional powers could create the potential to destabilize the region. In order to prevent any attempts to compromise its own security, the defense system of the Republic of Serbia should possess deterrent and preventive capabilities. The conflicting interests of great powers in the Balkans can have a positive impact on the defense system, so it would open the possibility of diversified development in accordance with the interests, needs and possibilities of the Republic of Serbia. However, it could also increase political pressure on the Republic of Serbia, especially in the part related to the choice of modern weapons and military equipment, which would require the conduct of fundamental defense analysis with the clear risks and benefits assessment for the Republic of Serbia and its security.

The integration of the Republic of Serbia into the European Union would have a positive impact on the development of the defense system in the form of acceptance of common standards, cheapening certain projects of importance for the defense, technology transfer, development of specific defense capabilities, etc. Furthermore, it is expected that the development of capabilities and interoperability of the defense forces for participation in peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the United Nations and the leadership of the European Union makes a positive impact on raising the total capacity of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia.

The enhancement of cooperation with neighboring countries can positively influence the development of the defense system in the form of carrying out joint projects in order to build defense capabilities. The obstacle to the cooperation is constant fluctuations in the neighborhood policy of the Western Balkan countries and the European Union and its member states policy conditionality for admission of the Republic of Serbia.

The instability in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and sensitive political and security situation in the municipalities of Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja require the increased engagement of the defense forces and spending limited resources, which in the long run, may adversely affect the development of the defense system. The conflicting views of the Republic of Serbia with the United States, a large number of the European Union countries and the Republic of Albania regarding the status of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija weaken the European Union neighborhood policy and contribute to the instability of the political situation in the region. Political stability in the country and further development of democracy can exercise a positive influence on the development of the defense system in the sense of stable priorities and attitudes towards the defense as a function of the state.

### *Economic factor*

Macroeconomic consequences of the global financial and economic crisis, and global financial instability will be expressed and difficult to predict, and will have a strong impact on the economy of the Republic of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia with its economic reforms seeks to increase the inflow of foreign capital, achieve economic growth and reduce high public debt, high unemployment and poverty of the population, and ensure the competitiveness of the national economy on the world market.

Strengthening the economy of the Republic of Serbia will make twofold impact on the development of the defence system. On the one hand, it is expected that the improvement of the economic situation will positively affect the financing of the defense system and facilitate its development in accordance with the priorities, needs and possibilities. On the other hand, better economic situation will complicate the recruiting process for the defense system with appropriate staff, particularly the specific specialties that are required on the labor market and which are better paid. In this environment, a special challenge will represent the recruitment of the professional soldiers for the Serbian Armed Forces, which would require the provision of appropriate conditions that will constitute the motive for employment and work in the Serbian Armed Forces .

The modern weaponry and military equipment are more expensive, which reduces their availability for the growing number of countries. Such trend suggests that countries should pool their resources and capacities to achieve the necessary capabilities, and even to provide the joint purchase and use of resources, e.g. protection of the airspace safety. In the case of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, the subject of reflection could be areas of common interest with our neighbors, which would reduce the total cost of procurement, maintenance, development, production and the like.

The trend of establishing public-private partnerships in the field of development and production of weapons and military equipment at aglobal level can have a positive impact on the improvement of production capacities of the Serbian Defense Industry. This could be important especially in terms of taking market risks, the introduction of new technologies and the penetration of new markets. Indirectly, this would allow equipping the defense system of the Republic of Serbia with modern weapons and military equipment of national production and reducing dependence on imports.

However, if economic flows have a negative trend in the financing of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, it can become even more restrictive and will require significant reductions in defense potentials. Such trend could limit or stop completely the development of the defense system, having a negative impact on equipping with the armament , the standard of living of the defense system members, as well as the overall preparation of the defense forces for the defense of the Republic of Serbia.

### *Societal factor*

The demographics of the Republic of Serbia is characterized by the trend of negative population growth rate and the comparatively unfavorable age structure of the population. Also, there is more intense migration of population from rural to urban areas, and an increase in the uneven population density, especially in the border regions. These trends in the broadest sense could affect the quantity and quality of human resources for the defense of the Republic of Serbia, and could have the negative impact on the age structure of the defense forces in particular.

The Republic of Serbia is characterized by the diversity of national and religious structure of the population, and therefore its value orientation, which can complicate preparation of the society for the defense. In this sense, it would be necessary to develop mechanisms to motivate the population to participate in the defence system and the defense preparation of the country.



The departure of highly-educated population abroad or 'braindrain' has a negative impact on the recruitment quality of the defense system. Therefore, it is necessary to take appropriate measures for the retention of highly qualified personnel in the defense system. Another aspect is the development of the military education system, which should provide the defense system with appropriate personnel profile, which will be motivated to remain in the defense and develop professionally.

Urbanization, as a decades-long trend, along with the uneven population density can complicate defense planning, mobilization, and strategic and operational development of the defense forces. In addition, this could lead to the increased exposure of the defense forces during operations, reducing the capacity of the territory, as well as the difficulty of disposal and supply of the defense forces and the population in a state of war.

Besides the urbanization, changing lifestyle and habits also negatively affect the overall ability of the population, and therefore the overall ability of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia. This requires taking appropriate measures to halt the negative trend and create conditions for the improvement of psychophysical health of the population and the defense system. In this regard, the promotion of sport and physical culture is of special importance.

Changing the system of social values may adversely affect the defense of the country and the overall ability of the defense system. In the long term, the defense system can face not only with low interest for the employment and commitment in the defense system, but also for the defense of the country as a whole. In this regard, the defense system should promote civilization values that 'could survive the court of time', but the specific values based on the historical experience that the Serbian society inherited, where the relationship to their own state and defense has a special place .

### *Technology factor*

The development, a significant breakthrough and achievements in technology are the trends that could affect the gap in the coming period and increase the technological backwardness of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia in correlation to the defense systems of the most developed countries of the world being the carriers of the technological development. This will require the Republic of Serbia to take special measures to ensure monitoring of the key trends in the development of the defense technologies, weapons and military equipment. A special aspect could represent the availability of new technologies conditioned by other factors, e.g. foreign political decisions. This could be the case even with the Republic of Serbia if it has financial possibilities for the purchase.

All current trends of rapid and innovative development of arms and military equipment, as well as its relatively rapid introduction into the armed forces and the implementation in the operations requires the defense system of the Republic of Serbia not only to monitor the development of arms and military equipment continuously, but also to timely develop the defense system readiness capabilities for an appropriate response.

The development of the defense industry is of special importance. Raising the technological level and capacities of the Serbian Defense Industry would have a positive impact on the defense potential of the country and reduce dependence on arms and military equipment imports. In this regard, cooperation with other countries and international institutions in the implementation of joint projects could reduce costs and achieve synergy of knowledge and experience.

Possibilities of misuse of scientific and technological achievements by extremist and terrorist organizations should be given special attention because they can pose a serious risk to the security of the Republic of Serbia. It is therefore necessary that the defense system develops specific skills for monitoring, preventing and combating terrorism and other forms of threats to security.

The defense technologies are increasingly geared towards the development of a product with so-called 'dual-use'. The increased use of such products may favorably affect the reduction of costs and the duplication of capacity within the defense system without compromising the ability to respond to challenges, risks and threats to security.

Bearing in mind the 'vulnerability' and 'sensitivity' of modern technologies, the particular aspect of the development of the defense system should include the preservation and development of alternatives to modern technologies. In this way, it will increase the toughness and resilience of the defense system.

### *Information factor*

Sharp, fast and intensive development, but also the rapid obsolescence of equipment and resources, leads to the growth of the need for constant investment funds in order to monitor the needs and trends. Popularization and expansion of fields of use increase the availability and reduce the cost of equipment and resources. On the one hand, it allows wide application in the defense system of the Republic of Serbia, and on the other hand it requires an increased need for security protection.

The accelerated connection of computer networks, digitization and accessibility of data increases the ability of the defense system, but also increases its exposure to attacks from the cyber space, which requires the accelerated development of capabilities for the cyber defense. The widespread use of a variety of sensors makes engagement of the defense system more complex and requires the elaboration of specific techniques and operational procedures to reduce the potential detection by the enemy.

The widespread use of modern information and communication technology can increase the sensitivity and vulnerability of technologically superior opponents. In this sense, the development of the defense system should be directed to the development of capabilities for disabling information and communication systems of the enemy.

The increasing use of information technology in the entertainment industry, e.g. video games and telecommunications raises the possibility that it can be used in a simple and efficient way to improve the qualification of certain specialties in the defense system. Joint projects with national and foreign partners could help to share the costs of production, innovation and transfer of information technology for the defense purpose.

Due to the increasing dependence of the defense system on information factors, it is necessary to develop alternatives that involve the operation of the defense system of the Republic of Serbia in difficult conditions of restraint or deficiency of information and communication support.

### *Ecological factor*

Climatic changes have produced a number of impacts on the defense system. On the one hand, the defense system is increasingly engaged in combating natural disasters and accidents that occur as a result of climatic change and environmental degradation,

which requires the development of specific skills, capabilities and capacities. On the other hand, the defense forces are engaged in climatic changes and other conditions, which require their adaptation to changes in the physical environment.

Environmental pollution will negatively affect the supply of the defense forces with food and water. In this sense, it is necessary to develop specific measures and mechanisms to ensure timely and regular supply.

The engagement of the defense forces of the Republic of Serbia in extreme weather conditions, fight against natural disasters and technological accidents, as well as provision of assistance to the affected population, could increase the need for adapting the doctrine of use of the defense forces, armaments and military equipment, as well as the procurement of specific equipment for the protection of people and equipment.

Contemporary armed conflicts, regardless of their intensity and duration, lead to the environmental degradation, which is further fuelled by technical and technological accidents due to the ravages of a war. Such a potential state requires the defense system of the Republic of Serbia to build capacity for the elimination of consequences.

A special aspect of environmental issues is disposal, storage and destruction of obsolete weapons, military equipment and explosives. This makes the defense system of the Republic of Serbia take appropriate measures for the release of obsolete weapons, military equipment and explosives, as well as planning costs for their storage and dismounting.

## *Conclusion*

The strategic environment of the Republic of Serbia makes the system of mutual relations and connections of the security, political, economic, social, technological and other factors which affect the Republic of Serbia and development of its defense system in various ways. Strategic environment as a whole and its factors produce individual, cumulative and hybrid impacts on the development of the defense system.

The development of the defense system should ensure its continuous compliance with the state of the strategic environment. For adequate planning of the defense system it is necessary to perform analysis of the trends in the context of strategic environmental factors. The primary purpose of this analysis is structuring the complex environment in which the defense system works, and its reduction to clear and predictable indicators in order to create conditions for the fulfillment of the social role of the defense system.

Structuring the complex strategic environment is done primarily for analytical purposes. The continuous analysis of the situation and trends of individual factors of strategic environment can be identified by their specific effects on the development of the defense system. In reality, factors are mutually interdependent and connected, making an inseparable whole, the reality that affects functioning and development planning of the defense system.

In the analysis of strategic environment it is necessary to apply scientifically based and practically proven methods, tools and techniques. Objectivity and arguments are of crucial importance for the quality assessment of the impact of environmental factors on the strategic defense system and in the end, it is essential for the proposal, and then decision-making in order to ensure effective functioning and development of the defense system. Thus guided, the development of the defense system can trigger off social development and at the same time fulfill its purpose - the protection of the defense interests of the Republic of Serbia.

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