

## MILITARY ETHICS, GENDER, AND WARFARE

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**Abstract:** *This paper explores the intersection of gender, military ethics, and hybrid warfare, emphasizing the erosion of women's rights in modern global conflict settings. It critically examines shifts in U.S. and Russian leadership approaches to gender equality, particularly within military institutions. Drawing on international legal frameworks such as jus ad bellum, jus in bello, and jus post bellum, it highlights the ethical obligations in wartime conduct. Through case studies, including the war in Ukraine and historical perspectives from World War II, it reveals the persistent use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and the underrepresentation of women in military leadership and peacebuilding efforts. The author advocates for a redefinition of military ethics to reflect current geopolitical realities and promote gender-inclusive conflict resolution policies.*

**Keywords:** *military; ethics; gender; hybrid*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000. This is the first resolution approved by the Security Council that directly addresses the impact of war on women and the role of women in conflict resolution and the establishment of sustainable peace. More than 100 member states have adopted national action plans for the implementation of this Resolution, with some already reaching their 5th NAP. Over 30% of these have expired since 2022 (Peace Women) or even earlier.

The events of recent years have shown that not only have we failed to make progress toward achieving gender equality and equity, but we have regressed. The erosion of women's rights around the world is alarming. I believe that the new U.S. administration has taken drastic measures to change the way democracy is understood.

The decision to pardon those who attacked the Capitol—at his influence—along with the declaration of a state of emergency at the Mexican border, the deployment of troops, and the intention to build a wall there, the revocation of visas including green cards for various individuals without judicial rulings, the renaming of the Gulf of Mexico, the symbolic annexation of Canada as a U.S. state, and the stated desire to annex Greenland—these are just a few examples. Let's

not forget the so-called peace consultations with Russia. And this is far from the end.

He also withdrew the U.S. from the Paris Agreement<sup>1</sup>, reaffirmed national energy interests, and appointed individuals loyal to his administration to key positions. According to Forbes estimates, Trump's second Cabinet collectively holds \$464 billion (Albu & Gyenge, 2025) in assets.

The Department for Government Efficiency—a consultative institution led by Elon Musk (neither elected nor confirmed by Congress)—is making decisions to lay off thousands of employees without clear criteria, and is canceling funding programs on which the health of thousands of people depends. What particularly caught my attention was an aggressive move to eliminate diversity and equity parameters from all state-funded policies and programs. One of the most notorious early decisions, taken on the very first day of the new term, was the dismissal of the U.S. Coast Guard Commander, Admiral Linda Fagan, without any official explanation—only speculation from anonymous State Department representatives.

Another consequence of the "denouncement" of diversity is the rejection of the principles of

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<sup>1</sup> An international treaty adopted in 2015 at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21), with the main objective of combating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

diversity, equity, and inclusion within the military, which has led to the suspension of training courses aimed at preventing sexual harassment across various branches of the armed forces (Queally & Sharp, 2025).

The efforts made by women in the U.S. military have been a revelation and marked a turning point in the field. Many of the actions taken by veterans' associations have been at the forefront compared to what we were familiar with in Romanian society, particularly in the military sector. What stood out to me was the active involvement of veterans in supporting active-duty personnel. One example that I find especially meaningful is a uniform lending system created by a female veteran. This system allows pregnant servicewomen to borrow uniforms adapted to different stages of pregnancy, ensuring they have the necessary equipment without added financial or logistical burden.

It was a great disappointment for me when I read about the opinion of the new Secretary of Defense regarding the presence of women in combat positions (The Economist, 2025)—the very same person who has been accused of rape and reportedly paid a settlement to the individual who made the accusation (Mayer, 2024).

The beginning of Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's term was marked by a focus on "meritocracy" rather than on diversity, equality, or equity. One of the consequences of this shift was the removal (Copp *et al.*, 2025) of photographs from U.S. Army social media pages and websites that celebrated the achievements of women and minorities in the military.

Additionally, the appointment of Phil Hegseth's younger brother as liaison officer (Copp, 2025) from the Department of Homeland Security to the Department of Defense raised eyebrows. It was an unusual—and arguably controversial—decision, viewed by many as a clear conflict of interest.

All these actions remind me of how the discourse, legislation, and the studied appearance of Putin changed once he became the president of the Russian Federation. I refer to his images with a bare chest, swimming in freezing waters, wearing a black karate belt, riding horses, through which he promoted a virile and combative image. For martial arts practitioners, it is well known that the secret of the sport lies precisely in practicing it calmly and lucidly. I connect these references with how Putin decriminalized (in 2017) domestic violence, where offenders risk only 15 days in prison. Additionally, they can escape with a fine or

community service if the act (the beating) does not leave visible marks, does not require medical attention, and happens no more than once a year. What is surprising is how this permissive legislation is supported not only by women's rights activists but also by ultra-conservatives, given that every 40 minutes, a woman dies due to domestic violence.

In my opinion, all these appearances were actions from a large plan to prepare for the invasion of Ukraine and to pave the way for the brutalization of men to be capable of the atrocities committed against the civilian population. Thus, the Trump II administration aims to make the U.S. military more efficient through aggression, with the first measures being the elimination of "disruptive factors" in combat and actions promoting equity and equality. I believe the effects will also be seen in civil society through increased aggression towards women, migrants, and LGBTQ groups. However, I don't think this will be a problem for them, considering Elon Musk's opinion (Wolf, 2025) on empathy as the "suicide of Western civilization." We are thus witnessing an attempt to deeply change the ethics in international relations.

## 2. WARS AND ETHICS

**2.1 Defining key concepts.** According to the DEX (Romanian Dictionary), ethics is a feminine noun that means: (1) The theoretical study of the fundamental principles and concepts in any field of intellectual considerations (thought) and practical application or action and (2) A set of norms by which a human group regulates its behavior to distinguish what is legitimate and acceptable in achieving its goals (synonym: morality).

Military ethics has two components: in peacetime and during armed conflict. Thus, in peacetime, Military ethics regulates conduct in the service relationship within military structures. For this article, we will refer to ethics in the context of armed conflicts.

When referring to hybrid warfare, it combines elements of traditional warfare with non-traditional forms, such as cyberattacks, informational warfare, and economic sanctions, where combatants can be both civilians and military personnel, and the front is most often dispersed across the physical, digital, and cognitive spaces.

**2.2 Integrating gender perspectives in the military ethics.** Given the intersection of the civil and military spheres in the context of hybrid

warfare, the introduction of a gender perspective in the military is very important. Gender dynamics are a critical element, yet often overlooked in military ethics, especially in the context of hybrid warfare. The gender perspective is not just about women in the military; it's about how gendered power influences decision-making processes, leadership, and military actions.

It is important to consider how traditional roles of men and women in the military have changed, as well as the recent shifts in these roles (including the integration of women in various positions and functions).

Gender norms shape military culture, which has historically been male-dominated, influencing decision-making from an ethical perspective, military training, and the use and perception of new technologies. The increasing participation of women in the military, both in combat and in positions of power, has changed traditional gender norms at both the civil society and military levels. The growing involvement of women has brought new perspectives on military ethics and can influence the way ethical dilemmas in hybrid warfare are addressed.

Analyzing military ethics through a gender lens is essential for understanding the complexities of modern warfare. Gender influences not only the experiences of those engaged in combat but also the ethics of how conflicts are conducted, how decisions are made, and how military policies are shaped in hybrid warfare.

**2.3 The Laws of War.** As we learned in the course of this paper, every military conflict is morally assessed based on a theoretical framework consisting of three major sets of principles: *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum*. It is important to keep in mind that, even in the case of armed conflicts, we must not confuse the legal domain with the ethical domain. There is a possibility that what military ethics considers immoral may also be illegal under international law.

The principles of *jus ad bellum* govern the decision to go to war. The theory asserts that any decision to initiate war must support a just cause, but this is defined very strictly, whether it concerns a civilian population in danger of genocide or a blatant violation of international law. In addition to this restriction, the decision to go to war must also meet several other important conditions: (1) The war must be proportional, meaning its effects must not be worse than the harm it seeks to prevent; (2) The War must be the last resort. All means of

dialogue must be exhausted before the decision to go to war is made; (3) The War must be declared by a politically legitimate authority; (4) The War must be waged with correct intentions; any other motives, whether political or economic, that lead to this decision outside the declared cause, make the war unjust.

The principles of *jus in bello* govern how the war is conducted and aim to limit, as much as possible, the losses of war, whether human, animal, or material. In the ideal battle, civilians are not affected at all, hostilities end quickly with minimal casualties, even among combatants, and those who surrender have all their rights and freedoms respected. In short, it involves three fundamental principles: discrimination, proportionality, and minimal force.

**Discrimination** refers to the absolute obligation of any army to avoid any innocent casualties. The fundamental distinction here is between combatants and non-combatants, statuses that are gained or lost depending on the role individuals play in the conflict. It is legal and morally permissible to use force against armed civilians, but not against unarmed soldiers. Also, a journalist with a weapon in hand is considered a combatant and can be a legitimate target.

Proportionality in this case does not consider the effects of the war in general, but rather the effects of each strike. These must constitute a proportional response to the enemy threat.

Minimal force requires all those involved in a military conflict to use the weakest destructive capabilities possible in achieving their objectives, and it is a logical consequence of the first two principles mentioned.

**2.4 Modern Laws of War.** The modern laws of war, established through international treaties such as the Geneva Convention (1949) (Ştiri de Cluj, 2022) and its additional protocols, stipulate that in an armed conflict, unnecessary destruction is prohibited; attacks must be limited to military objectives; indiscriminate attacks (targeting civilians and soldiers alike) are forbidden; wars should be limited to achieving the political objectives that triggered the conflict, and medical personnel, ambulances, and hospitals must not be attacked.

Additionally, the Protocol establishes: (1) The principle of proportionality prohibits attacks where civilian losses would be excessive about the military objective; (2) The principle of precaution governs the precautionary measures that must be taken before attacking a military target; (3) The

principle of humanity prohibits causing any suffering, harm, or destruction that is not necessary to achieve the legitimate goal of a conflict.

The *jus post bellum* principles as a concept appeared more recently in the ethics of war, particularly after the failure of the United States and its allies in administering the occupied territories of Afghanistan and Iraq. These principles regulate actions after the fighting has stopped, such as the types of policies that can be imposed on the defeated or the obligation to build a post-war order in such a way as to prevent future conflicts.

The sets of principles presented are conceptually independent from each other. Thus, in theory, just wars can be fought using unjust means, just as unjust wars can be conducted impeccably. Each aspect of a war can be analyzed separately. For example, no matter how justified a military action may be, if civilian targets are bombed on a large scale, these actions are considered war crimes, meant to terrorize the civilian population. Such military actions from World War II could not be judged in a court of law (not even in the case of Axis powers), as there was no international legal framework at the time. The deadly effectiveness—but also the tactical uselessness—of aerial warfare against civilians was already recognized during the war itself.

These rules are universal, meaning all states or military formations must abide by them. Their role is not to stop war, but to minimize human suffering. If the rules of war are not respected, states or individuals can be accused of war crimes. These rules also apply to militias and volunteer corps that cumulatively meet the following conditions<sup>2</sup>: are led by a person responsible for their subordinates; have a fixed and easily recognizable distinguishing sign from a distance; carry arms openly; and comply in their operations with the laws and customs of war.

The first documented international conviction for rape occurred in 1474, when Peter von Hagenbach, who had served the Duke of Burgundy, was executed. The knight and his troops had terrorized the civilian population for years, including through acts of rape. A court composed of 28 judges, convened by the Archduke of Austria, sentenced von Hagenbach to death, although he defended himself by claiming he was only following orders. The case is significant as it represents the first documented trial of an officer

held accountable for the actions of the troops under his command, and the first case where a military leader was convicted for gender-based violence committed by his troops (Oksanen, 2024:32–33). During the American Civil War, lawyer Franz Lieber modernized the state's legislation regarding the rights and duties of the Union army. The “Lieber Code”, as it was known, came into force in 1863. It required the army to treat civilians humanely, prohibited torture as a means of warfare, and explicitly banned the rape of civilians—an offense punishable by death (Oksanen, 2024:33). Even more than 500 years later, there is still a notable lack of progress in this area, despite efforts to adopt international regulations protecting civilians in armed conflicts.

The lack of political will to implement international treaties, shown by the lenient treatment of these acts, the covering up of offenses, and victim-blaming, is highly prevalent in today's conflicts. In addition to the war initiated by the Russian Federation in Ukraine, we can mention the Gaza conflict, conflicts across the African continent, and the Balkan conflict. Even more disturbing are the reports of extreme sexual violence, including in front of children, with women being burned, shot, or stabbed in the genital area with bayonets (as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). There have even been documented cases of rape against children at increasingly younger ages.

**2.5 The rape as Weapon of War.** The modern laws of war, established through international treaties such as the Geneva Convention (1949) (*Știri de Cluj*, 2022) and its additional protocols, stipulate that in an armed conflict, unnecessary destruction is prohibited; attacks must be limited to military objectives; indiscriminate attacks (targeting civilians and soldiers alike) are forbidden; wars should be limited to achieving the political objectives that triggered the conflict, and medical personnel, ambulances, and hospitals must not be attacked. The first modern convictions for rape as a war crime were handed down in 1998 by the International Criminal Tribunal for crimes committed in Rwanda (United Nations, 2025). The development of international legal instruments and a better understanding of the consequences of sexual violence were also shaped by the genocide trials related to the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and Darfur (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2025).

However, the low number of convictions reflects not only a lack of political will but also the

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<sup>2</sup> Regulations concerning the laws and customs of war on land, Hague, 18 October 1907, art.1

distorted way in which sexual violence is treated. Given the small number of women in politics and the armed forces, sexual violence is not considered as serious a war crime as others, nor one that reliably leads to conviction. Trials are expensive and lengthy, and proving rape in court is complicated. As a result, only cases with clear chances of conviction are pursued. This reflects a matter of choice and allows many perpetrators to escape justice entirely.

Unlike other genocidal acts, proving sexual violence requires the collection of evidence very shortly after the act is committed—something that often must happen during wartime, not after hostilities cease, as is common with other war crimes.

In the case of the war in Ukraine, it is for the first time that trials against rapists are occurring concurrently with the armed conflict. Criminal patterns have evolved, and investigators now use updated frameworks to categorize war crimes. Ukrainian citizens have been trained and informed about which types of evidence are admissible in court. At the civil society level, volunteer organizations have emerged to offer support, such as counseling for survivors, forensic evidence kits, and more (Oksanen, 2024:35). In general, civil society has been better prepared to support survivors of sexual violence and bring perpetrators to justice. One example is the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, created in 2016, with headquarters in The Hague and offices in the Central African Republic, Ukraine, and Burundi.

Lessons learned from the Russian Federation's war in Ukraine highlight the need for the presence of women in professions such as medicine, journalism, and the judicial system. Their presence is essential in the processes of treating, investigating, and prosecuting sexual crimes (Oksanen, 2024:36). Female victims are more likely to open up to other women; women are more attuned to the signs of sexual assault and tend to take them seriously. Moreover, female prosecutors and judges are often better equipped to ask the right questions in such cases.

It is true, however, that in Romania, there have been cases where female judges have downplayed the seriousness of rape by invoking supposed consent when the victim was a minor and the perpetrator an adult. In such cases, this isn't about misunderstanding—it's about favoring the aggressor, for one reason or another.

Holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable is a vital step toward justice for victims. Civil society pressure and the engagement

of democratic states play a critical role in this. One example is the case of Japan's wartime sexual slavery (Kageyama, 2019): the involvement of the state was documented, and although only a few survivors remained, they—and their descendants—received some form of compensation.

This raises a pressing question: can we sympathize with conscripted soldiers during wartime? Most of the time, the nature of the war reflects on them as individuals. Jeff McMahan, professor of moral philosophy at Oxford University (Itskova, 2023), who studies the ethics of war, argues that soldiers can sometimes be excused—they should not automatically be viewed as evil criminals unless they commit atrocities, such as those seen in Ukraine.

According to McMahan, Russian soldiers were misled by their government about the war's legitimacy (e.g., that Ukraine posed a threat to Russia or persecuted ethnic Russians). As in many other cases, this shows a dangerous absence of critical thinking. It's important to analyze facts rather than blindly accept political narratives. It's a harsh but necessary perspective.

This mislead is not unique to Russian soldiers—it applies to all wars. Soldiers are often deceived, pressured, manipulated, and coerced. In many ways, they too are victims. However, the same cannot be said for political leaders who start wars, orchestrate the killing of innocent people, and persist in lying while claiming moral high ground—they are the real war criminals.

While I agree with McMahan regarding the manipulation of soldiers and the pressure they face, their actions against civilians—rapes, torture, child abductions, and robbery—are inexcusable. What is even more incomprehensible in our technological age is how some soldiers called home to ask their wives for permission to commit rape. This reveals that they were fully aware of the horror of their actions and feared the judgment they would face later. They sought validation and accomplices.

During World War II, the subject of "military rape against civilians" was also documented, particularly during the Soviet occupation of Berlin. Random rapes, home invasions, and raiding—alongside the humiliation of civilians—became unbearable. The atrocities committed by the Red Army came within extreme famine. After the initial euphoria of victory, rape reached another level: high-ranking officers sought out "comfort women" who would engage in sexual relations exclusively with them in exchange for food and protection.

Two books written by women stood out to me in this regard. The first, *War's Unwomanly Face* by

Svetlana Alexievich, and the second, *A Woman in Berlin*—an anonymous diary later attributed to Marta Hillers.

These two books should be read for what they are: collections of personal stories, recounted by female protagonists. In the first book, their voices were curated by a journalist; in the second, the material was shaped by the very woman who experienced it. The main difference lies in the time between the events and the retelling—Alexievich's work was published decades later, in 1985, and memory may have softened or altered details. Marta Hillers' account was recorded in real time. These two books show us the face of war from a woman's perspective that differs from a man's point of view.

Svetlana Alexievich, a journalist with Belarusian roots on her father's side and Ukrainian on her mother's, experienced the war through her family's history. She interviewed dozens of Soviet women veterans of WWII, aiming to uncover how they felt during the war, not just what they did. Her work took ten years to complete. Some parts were self-censored, others cut by state censors. A revised edition later restored the full content. Though Alexievich won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015, the book is emotionally intense. I could empathize deeply with these women, victims of both Soviet propaganda and rigid family and social customs. They went to war unprepared, in missions where human life was expendable.

Alexievich understood that war was even harder for women due to gender roles. Men are raised from childhood to fight, while women are not psychologically prepared for violence. Women don't want to die, let alone kill—because women give life (Galaicu-Păun, 2016). As the author herself stated, the book is not about war, but about the human being in war, not the history of war, but the history of emotions (Alexievich, 2023:15).

Many of the interviewed women had served as instructors, medics, snipers, gunners, anti-aircraft commanders, and engineers. After the war, they became accountants, lab technicians, teachers—but the roles never overlapped, they said. In one interview, a former aviator refused to recall her wartime experience, saying:

I can't... I don't want to remember. I was in the war for three years... and for three years I didn't feel like a woman. My body was like a corpse. I didn't menstruate, and I had no feminine desires. And I had been beautiful... (Alexievich, 2023:12–13)

Alexievich's interviews reveal that women remember war differently—it has a smell, a color, it's filled with everyday details. Many developed an aversion to the color red, to butcher shops, to red fabrics. Some made skirts from old rucksacks.

At the enlistment office, I walked in wearing a dress; I walked out wearing trousers and a shirt. They cut off my braid and left just one lock on my forehead.

The Germans shot up the whole village and left. When we got there, the ground was yellow sand... and on it, a child's little shoe.

Her project faced resistance from male writers and even the relatives of the women she interviewed. Husbands would instruct wives:

Tell it the right way! No tears, no womanly nonsense like wanting to be pretty or crying when they cut your braid.

The book also explores people's inner conflict about learning the truth about their leaders. Many believed in Stalin, loved him, even as they lived under intense indoctrination and fear. One interviewee said:

We marched like fools, lied to, believing in no one... Where are our planes, our tanks? Everything that flies and rolls and roars—it's all German.

The war changed people. A woman still considered beautiful recalls killing four German prisoners in a moment of crisis. Elsewhere, a man briefly mentions the existence of "campaign wives" in the Red Army—women who fulfilled other roles and paid the ultimate price.

Women returned from the front were often shamed and ostracized, blamed for their wartime service. Families rejected them, men no longer wanted to marry them. Other testimonies include accounts of gang rape, cannibalism, infanticide (Alexievich, 2023:34–35). Stalin even issued an order forbidding Soviet soldiers from surrendering—those who did were labeled traitors (Alexievich, 2023:31–32). After the war, women faced further hardship—no jobs, no money, no food rations. They faced sexism and discrimination. Many never spoke about what they experienced, never wore their medals, which were smaller than the men's anyway (Alexievich, 2023:138–142).

The author did not intend to write a critical analysis of the USSR. She didn't aim to correct the effects of propaganda, nor would she have

succeeded. Her work preserves a raw, poetic oral history of women's youth. Few things have changed since. Alexievich recorded those memories honestly. Still, one might ask: are these stories genuine, or shaped by decades of propaganda and self-justification? (Ioniță, 2019)

"A Woman in Berlin", later revealed to be by Marta Hillers, is a book that hits you viscerally. Like Alexievich's, it took me days to finish. I needed to cleanse my body, soul, and mind. The book focuses on two months in Berlin after the Red Army's arrival. The main character is an educated, nonconformist woman who had worked in publishing and knew some Russian. She had been posted to Russia for a time.

The diary begins on the first day of the Russian invasion—she is already hungry, and hunger becomes a constant theme (Anonima, 2018:12). The book details how Berliners prepared for the invasion and the tension between Nazi Party members and regular people. As Russian troops advanced, life moved into shelters, while homes were used only during daylight. People faced shortages of food, electricity, and water. Tragedy became routine—only high body counts made headlines.

With the arrival of the Russian soldiers, the pace changed. Random, mass rapes began—no woman or girl was spared. Some were hidden in false walls; others disguised themselves as the elderly. Women began to share experiences and help one another heal. Rape lost its initial horror and became a collective experience—which is terrifying in itself. The few men left in the community heard through the walls as women were raped next door.

Eventually, women sought protection from a single soldier in exchange for food—this was survival. Still, they faced judgment for "giving in" too soon. But in such circumstances, who has the right to judge? Certainly not men, many of whom had to tell their wives or daughters, under threat of gunfire: "Go with them." Nor women—unless they too have faced such a collective fate. It's easy to judge from safety. The protagonist reflects that all she suffered was a kind of retribution for the atrocities committed by the Germans in Russia. It is estimated that 110,000 women were raped in Berlin; about one in five became pregnant, many resorting to abortion.

There is evidence of mass rapes committed by other Allied forces—French and American soldiers included (Myers Feinstein, 2018). German politicians and scholars often avoided investigating these acts, not wanting to seem disloyal to the

occupying authorities. As a result, the women never received justice.

In Romania, women faced similar horrors. With most men conscripted or sent to forced labor, women were left alone and became victims of abuse by all troops passing through—Romanian, Hungarian, German, Soviet—regardless of ethnicity (Bucur & Miroiu, 2019, p.64). A significant number of looting and rape incidents by Soviet troops after August 23, 1944, were recorded in the archives of Hunedoara County—most of which remain unpunished (Guță, 2015).

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Although I did not intend to present the entire spectrum of hybrid warfare, I have tried to highlight how international treaties can prevent abuses against civilians. As we have seen, it is an old practice that, after World War II, led to the regulation of the international legal framework aimed at sanctioning these acts. As we have observed, in the contemporary world, the ethics of military personnel is an important concern for the organizations they are part of.

Many defense ministries (including Romania's Ministry of National Defense) have adopted codes of conduct based on universally known principles such as integrity, legality, objectivity, equal treatment, competence, transparency, loyalty, and the priority of public interest. Unfortunately, in today's world, especially in the context of armed conflicts, these principles are no longer respected. For example, the principle of legality is increasingly violated through the disregard for international humanitarian law (as seen in the wars in Ukraine and Gaza).

Recent events show that other principles, such as loyalty or the priority of public interest, are also violated. How else can we talk about loyalty and the priority of public interest when an active military, during parental leave, signs a contract with a private security company and engages in a form of mercenary activity?

Last but not least, the principle of integrity is compromised by military personnel who go on international missions (especially under the UN) and commit acts within the spectrum of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Even if investigations reveal that these acts are not criminal by nature, the ethical issue remains.

Unfortunately, both national bodies and relevant international organizations are only at the beginning in terms of preventing violations of military ethics and sanctioning such acts. A step in

this direction was made by the UN, which has taken the measure of banning military personnel involved in SEA acts from participating in future missions under its aegis.

However, although the UN Charter (Bulgac & Sîrbu, 2019:20) stipulates the obligation of states to "refrain, in their international relations, from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other way inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations," one of the permanent members of the UN Security Council is the Russian Federation, which has veto power within this organization. The organization's ability to adopt resolutions detrimental to the Russian Federation is virtually impossible.

This highlights the need to amend the UN Charter, reconsider the necessity of permanent members, and adopt a more ethical principle for the entire Security Council — even if this requires changing the current structure, which would necessitate the consensus of all permanent members. Although the timing may not be ideal given the current international environment, it is important to keep the discussions in this field ongoing.

I believe it is crucial for military institutions, both nationally and internationally, to adapt the legal framework governing military ethics to current realities, blending traditional methods of warfare with its evolving forms to remain both relevant and effective. I propose greater coordination among international organizations to ensure that military personnel involved in SEA-related actions are excluded from participating in any future missions under their auspices.

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