

**SECURITY SECTOR EXPERT FORMATION:
ACHIEVEMENTS AND NEEDS IN CROATIA**

1.4 Assessment of Security Sector Expert Formation

1.4.1 Introduction

Croatia, in comparison with other communist countries, has established more independence than the country experienced before. Prior to 1989, Croatia had been governed by the communist regime and had lacked any possibilities for independent development. Additionally, Croatia experienced gruesome years of war, which caused the country to lose even the smallest political, economic and social foundation for a new internal organisation. As a result, Croatia mainly focused on overall achievements and neglected democratic guidelines and procedures.²⁰

Croatia's history has led to a predominant military influence, which strengthened its internal structures during the time of communism and war. As a consequence, the military apparatus almost completely lost its sensitivity to issues of civilians and the civil society. Many military members, including a high percentage of officers, lacked adequate civil as well as military education, which hardens the reshaping of this sector today. Civil-military connections cannot just be re-established but need to be developed from a zero basis.²¹

However, being one of the aspirant transitional countries, Croatia needs to undertake technical as well as organisational steps slowly to achieve the standards set by Western societies. Currently, Croatia focuses its efforts on an attempt to join international organisations such as NATO and EU, which themselves set requirements for participation. Being already member of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

²⁰ Ozren Zunec.

²¹ Zvonimir Mahecic.

Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, Croatia continuously contributes to the work tasks and goals of those institutions.²²

1.4.2 How Are Different Experts Prepared for their Tasks and Assignments, and How Well?

(a) Parliament and Parliamentary Staffers

In 2002, Croatia officially became participant of the Membership Action Plan (MAP), which also serves as a first step to a possible later joining of NATO. The MAP sets clear demands on joining countries, which also affect parliamentary institutions. Nonetheless, most Croatian parliamentarians have not gained a chance to enhance their skills on democratic security sector reforms. Most Western influence has been directed to the military, and civilian structures have been predominately neglected. This imbalance negatively contributes to the security sector reform, because it prevents a successful exchange and compatibility between civilians and the military. Therefore, military as well as civilian personnel are required to gain new skills in the political, managerial and international areas. Specific fields include: 'knowledge of international organisations, service in multinational headquarters, interoperability, interagency stratagems, and the procedures of multinational civilian-military bureaucracies'.²³ Besides previously mentioned achievements, the civil sector and the military need to strengthen their ties of cooperation. Closer and quality enhanced working relations between civilians and the military contribute to better integration of the Armed Forces into democratic governmental functions.²⁴

However, at the beginning of the year 2002, the Croatian Parliament accepted two strategic documents – 'National Security Strategy of the Republic of Croatia' and 'Defence Strategy of the Republic of Croatia' – which presents national security and defence policy objectives in accordance with NATO's strategic concept. The first document contains

²² Dario Cziraky.

²³ Zvonimir Mahecic.

²⁴ Zvonimir Mahecic.

new regulations on changes within the Armed Forces. The restructuring includes aspects concerning the military-territorial division, the reduction of professional brigades and the downsizing of overall military personnel. Croatia further established a network of cooperation with NATO and members of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The cooperation is predominantly controlled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and consists of experts from the political, economic and security area.²⁵

Two years earlier, the Parliament created a specific commission for the Oversight of Internal Politics and National Security Committee. Three official experts were appointed as its members. The committee was authorised for surveillance of previously mentioned services to detect any possible legal rights violations of the institutions in their daily work. The commission indirectly served the rights of citizens and guaranteed the proper working conduct of Internal Politics and National Security Committee. The committee consists of six members, appointed by Parliament for a four-year term. Prerequisites for possible appointment are Croatian citizenship and university education.²⁶

(b) *Political Secretariats of the Ministries of Defence, the Interior and Justice*

Croatia's Ministry of Defence (MoD) currently consists of over 3000 members. This number is far too high and presents a clear overcapacity within this specific sector. The majority of members lack adequate education in the area of security sector reform and new educational programmes are unable to properly deal with such an immense number of people. Therefore, the main goal for a successful security sector reform requires the downsizing of the security and defence area community. This reform process not only affects military structures but also civil segments. Even if the total number was reduced by half, it would still be too large for the country's relevance in international security relations. Basically, the size of the Ministry retards the growth of the Ministry. However, the downsizing of the security sector would

²⁵ Dario Cziraky.

²⁶ Ozren Zunec.

have serious effects on the already high unemployment rate. Croatia has the highest unemployment rate among all other transitional countries, which comes close to 20 per cent. Furthermore, Croatia is concerned about laid off security experts leaving the country to seek employment in the local or international security labour market. Such a tendency could pose an additional threat to the level of national security in general.

Though government and MoD agree on downsizing the defence sector as part of the defence sector reform, no concrete plans exist among the significant documents of security, defence and military on how to implement those ideas.²⁷ Besides internal reorganisation problems, Croatia maintains successful bilateral and multilateral programmes and cooperation with NATO. Unfortunately, NATO almost exclusively focuses on technical and military cooperation and training, and therefore neglects organisational and command problem structures of the military and MoD.

(c) *Journalists*

The Croatian government has generally respected the protection of press and media by the Constitution. Further protected are speech, public expression and the establishment of institutions of public communication. At the beginning of 2001, the Law on State TV was adopted by the Parliament. From then on, public television has been controlled by an independent Council, which consists of representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and was confirmed by the Parliament. As a result, transparency on political control over state television was enhanced and more publicity on the identities of major media shareholders was gained.

Though the Croatian media is free, diverse media segments lack adequate experts. Generally, each media segment is assigned only one reporter. Furthermore, the media tends to pursue the path of a tabloid press and neglects serious and quality research, as well as reports. Information is predominantly disseminated into English rather than local

²⁷ Mladen Stanicic.

languages. The distribution of information is further limited, especially regarding the electronic press. The Croatian website has been under construction for over one year without any success. The flow of information is still limited and there are no experts to support the ongoing process.

(d) *Non-Governmental Experts Working in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)*

Croatia has never had a strong tradition of NGOs and civil society. 'Citizen's civil engagement for solving both individual and community problems has not been a common practice among the vast majority of citizens in Croatia.'²⁸ Croatian civil society was mainly established during the first half of the 1990s. Established NGOs were conceptually and financially supported by foreign institutions and mainly contributed to solving civil or humanitarian war related problems. However, this starting tendency soon found its turning point and declined during the second half of the 1990s. Active participants started to focus more and more on their personal problems and therefore neglected further activities in the sector of civil society and NGOs.

However, prevailing NGO structures were able to pay attention to activities of the intelligence and security structures. According to some Croat sources, several cases of abuse of political services in political interest have been documented.²⁹ Overall, the development of CSOs, also referred to as NGOs, is supported and driven by foreign programmes. Unfortunately, foreign experts often view Croatian problems in their own concepts, which prevent possible solutions from being successfully implemented. This lack of communication and understanding between foreign experts and members of Croatian NGOs reduces potential experts from being educated, and weakens the role of civil society in the larger Croatian society.

²⁸ Mladen Stanicic.

²⁹ Ozren Zunec.

Most NGOs were established after the political shift in the year 1990. It is assumed that Croatia currently maintains about 20,000 NGOs, of which 18,000 operate on a local level. Nonetheless, no statistics have been conducted on the number of active NGOs, but this number is estimated significantly lower. According to surveys, the work of NGOs only has a minimal effect on the public policy agenda. Normally, NGO representatives rarely get a chance to contribute actively to the generation and discussion of the legislation. NGOs lack major connections to the government and have minimal impact on new governmental policies. Often, they cooperate with public policy institutes (DCAF) abroad, which themselves maintain direct ties to the local government. This situation is more or less paradoxical, since Croatian NGOs have to get in touch with their government through public policy institutes abroad. In conclusion, NGOs are not successful in monitoring government regulations and policies. This is related to the fact that governmental representatives are unwilling to open their field of work to external organisations such as NGOs.

Regarding the funding of NGOs several problems exist. Most Croatian CSOs depend on foreign financial support and lack any state donations. Therefore, only bigger organisations tend to receive foreign funding, whereas smaller ones are neglected. In the long run, CSOs will have to find financial institutions inside the country in order to remain active over time. Possible financial sources include: ‘donations, subventions and income generated from their own services’.³⁰

³⁰ Mladen Stanicic.

1.4.3 What Courses Would Be Needed?

(a) *Assessment of Needs for Additional Courses*

Regarding CSOs or NGOs, the space of active operation needs to be extended. The space in which NGOs need to operate to maximise their power is defined by the legislative, political and social-cultural framework. ‘Civil society in Croatia needs to engage itself more with public policy issues in an attempt to establish a position for itself in the policy-making process.’³¹

Concerning military and civil society, incongruencies between the media and military seem to be decreasing slowly, mainly through increased levels of cooperation. Improvements have been achieved through press conferences, the attendance of media representatives at seminars, public debates and open conversations organised by the MoD. The MoD has acknowledged the media as a means to emphasise problematic issues related to the security community and has agreed to cooperate more intensively to strive for overall satisfaction. However, despite all efforts made, the problem of professional treatment on both sides concerning sensitive issues of civil-military relations remains. The MoD still controls and interprets large amounts of classified and confidential information without any counter interpretation from the civil sector, such as the media. On the other hand, the media lacks knowledge and number of experts to consider such sensitive topics appropriately.

A lot of educational efforts should be done. This is the most fine-tuning problem – journalists who are very competent in analysing military issues are not competent enough to analyse very sensitive civil-military relations especially in the terms of democratic oversight of armed forces.³²

Furthermore, the MoD possesses all crucial information but seldom organises press conferences or individual meetings with journalists to increase the quality and quantity of the information being released.

³¹ Mladen Stanicic.

³² Ibid.

However, the press themselves do not always attend meetings offered by the MoD, which puts the blame for a lack of communication and cooperation on both sides. The few press releases tend not to include any information on civil-military relations or democratic oversight of armed forces.

Regarding Croatia's approach to international organisations such as NATO, both the military and civilian sector are required to improve their knowledge of 'international organisations, service in multinational headquarters, interoperability, interagency stratagems, and the procedures of multi-national civilian-military bureaucracies'.³³ As a consequence, military as well as civilian professionals need to replace current skills with abilities that meet today's standards and allow them to fulfil their tasks professionally and successfully. Therefore, the educational system of the security and defence environment needs to provide well educated and trained people with the ability to adapt appropriately to changes and challenges of today's security environment. 'Education, training and self-education are the first steps that should help to evaluate quality of the individuals and create a basis for further upgrade of their skills.'³⁴

According to some views, the four-year mandate of the recently established Parliament may be too short to deal with existing problems efficiently. An example would be the definition of fine distinctions in all segments of civil-military relations. Therefore, the Parliament should take advantage of so-called staffers who are specialised in dealing with certain problems. Their expertise would assist parliamentarians and prevent members to agree on too early decisions.

The Parliament still has not been able to claim authority over defence plans and their implementation. Senior MoD Officials do not report to the Parliamentary Committees often enough. As a result, inefficiencies and failures are not appropriately discussed/communicated between Parliamentary Staff and Committees on Internal Policy and National Security. This structure still prevails from past political systems, where

³³ Zvonimir Mahecic.

³⁴ Zvonimir Mahecic.

the President had the authority and responsibility to discuss and decide upon defence issues.³⁵ Basically, the Parliamentary Internal Policy and National Security Committee missed the opportunity to adjust their duties according to the Republic of Croatia Security Services Act (ZoSS). The Council for Oversight of Security Services (VNSS) was not established and institutions for control and oversight still do not exist. Those negative aspects place Croatia in a situation that is uncommon in comparison to other multi-party democracies. The country lacks the implementation of the law, any guidelines, directions, control and oversight of the services, which prevents the system from functioning according to democratic principles.

The chaotic situation in the services as it existed before the passing of the ZoSS is getting worse and worse, the system is not coordinated, parallelism of activities and overlapping authorities still exist, leaving services unaccountable.³⁶

It can be concluded that the situation in Croatian security services at the beginning of the year 2002 has been catastrophic. Unfortunately, no efforts were undertaken throughout the remainder of the year to at least strengthen the fundamental level of this sector. The passing of the ZoSS seemed nothing more than an entertaining activity of top ranking officials that detected another chance to grab more power for themselves instead of working for their people and country.³⁷

1.4.4 What Possibilities for Expert Formation Do Exist?

(a) *Documentation of Programmes Offered by National and International Agents*

To enhance education and training among highest ranked officers, an interdisciplinary multidisciplinary national security study should be established. Courses and seminars should be open to everyone –

³⁵ Tatjana Cumpek.

³⁶ Ozren Zunec.

³⁷ Ibid.

including public workers, civil servants, journalists, politicians, military commentators etc. Special attention needs to be paid to the education of military personnel regarding duties, and international headquarters, including NATO and SHAPE. The future demand of such personnel will rise almost definitely, which requires solid investment in this specific segment of education. The system further faces the obligation to educate higher ranked officers at a different level than lower ranked personnel. Higher ranked officers have to be provided with advanced lectures in the field of operational and managerial skills. Overall, the current Croatian military profession presents itself as inadequate compared with Western standards and asks for major reforms in the years to come. Specific reforms should be directed towards the following areas:

Intensive education and training, increased level of requirements due to the new equipment and weapons, emerging of the activities whose aim will be a better understanding of relations between the civil society and Armed Forces, and the requirements imposed by the civil institutions to their members, including soldiers.³⁸

The management field should further establish a concept which allows recognition of gifted personnel and possible promotion to higher positions with an increased level of responsibility. The recruitment should consider all available sources in accordance with necessary criteria. Recruited personnel should feel obligated to reach a masters degree in specific military related sciences.

Further, young students with interest in later military careers should be provided with the opportunity to participate in activities of the Armed Forces during their time at regular civilian universities. This programme allows for more successful military careers, since future officers are exposed to this field at an earlier age and gain continuous experience until they actually start their career.

The military itself should focus on the aspect of hard security. In addition to its basic defence mission, the military should focus on the new aspects of security: peacekeeping operations, regional arms control

³⁸ Zvonimir Mahecic.

activities, demining, cooperation with neighbours and participation in PfP and MAP exercises.³⁹

Further programmes concerning foreign aspects include: the formation of civil-military teams with the purpose of attending educational programmes outside Croatia (GCSP, Marshall Centre, and Baltic Defence College); supporting the development of parliamentary staff capability including institutions such as the Parliamentary Assembly; enhancing the level of cooperation between the Western expert community and Croatian civil-military NGO groups.

Regarding internal needs, several programmes with differing criteria need to be considered. The defence media sector ought to develop and maintain a comprehensive, electronic, web-based information system in English and Croatian. Further, certain reporters need to gain knowledge on defence and security issues to be able to comment appropriately on issues related to this topic.

1.4.5 Conclusion

Croatia, like all other democracies, must undertake reforms despite the lack money and time. Programmes offered by the West have been helpful but often do not directly meet the needs of Croatia. The military has had more opportunities to profit from Western reform programmes than parliamentarians. The possibilities for parliamentarians to attend educational programmes have been more restrictive. Therefore, Croatia's restructuring process proceeds slowly and changes cannot be implemented efficiently.

³⁹ Zvonimir Mahecic.

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