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CONCEPTUALISING DEFENCE DOCTRINE AND STRUCTURE REFORMS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE – THE QUEST FOR STANDARDS AND ORIENTATION

Speaking about transformation of the national armed forces in the South East Europe we have to bear in mind this region is comprised by different nations and societies with different traditional and cultural heritage, more or less different legal framework, institutional structure and different mix of influences and legacies of the past. In these circumstances it is only fair to expect all these differences will lead to unavoidable differences in pursuing the Security and Defence Reform processes. Neither we, members of these societies, nor outside observers or decision makers should expect the same approach in pursuing the reforms. As there are no two same states or societies so definitely there will be no two same Security and Defence Reforms. This has been emphasized by many of the speakers in almost all the panels we had during our workshop.

In pursuing our Security and Defence Reforms we have to make it clear to ourselves, to our nations, institutions, general public and individual citizens, but also to our friends outside of our national borders, what we exactly want to achieve through the reform process. Even the best executed reform process will eventually fall short of expectations and result in a failure if there is no clear objective what is the end goal. Otherwise we will be jumping from one issue to another, changing focus of the reform, use our scarce resources (money, time, credibility, personal effort, commitment and knowledge) in vain repeatedly. During our workshop I think we all agreed it was not necessary to make too many explanations why these nations simply could not afford it.

In order to avoid wasting of our resources in South East Europe we need to establish such an approach to our Security and Defence Reforms that will ensure integration of efforts within our societies. All state institutions, scientific institutes, NGOs, media, etc. can find their place in pursuing this task. There is enough room for everybody to participate. This is the result of necessity stemming from the sheer long-lasting importance of the reform processes. This also leads us to the need for all the Security and Defence governmental institutions to work in unison, to unite efforts, to forget their partisan affiliations and interests, to let aside bureaucratic, personal and group interests.

Our reforms present the social and the military challenge at the same time. Whoever – politicians, individual citizens or media - tries to approach and treat our reforms as strictly military issue and military effort will no doubt contribute to the possible failure of the reform process. However, there is also no justification for the professionals – soldiers, policemen, intelligence officials, civilians within the Security and Defence structures – to wait for somebody else to resolve most important issues in our reforms. Both sides have to do their part of the job, they have to communicate with each other, and what is probably most important they have to invest a lot of effort not to think first how to put their own demands on the table, but to pay more attention to listen carefully what other side can say, offer or do in order to contribute to the accomplishment of their mutual task.

All that has been said by now is mostly connected with internal elements deciding the outcome of our reforms. We should not forget also international scope and importance of our reforms. Failure or suboptimal outcome of the reform in one country sends bad waves and vibrations all around. It has been proven many times before; countries in our region are definitely not isolated islands. They all suffer or benefit from other nations' undertakings. Notwithstanding how we see our own country's position we are one way or another part of the wider region and often share the same borders, or at least similar problems. With that we also share advantages or disadvantages of our belonging to the region or problems coming from our historical inheritance. So in pursuing our tasks we should shape our Security and Defence reforms to suit our

national as well as international needs and we should not refrain neither from sharing our problems and achievements alike with each other nor from letting others to participate in sharing the benefits of our deeds. Workshops are definitely necessary and helpful but not enough to accomplish such an objective. Most of the speakers recognised that and spoke more or less in unison towards the necessity for more institutional, structural cooperation from the countries in the region. In doing so we should not hesitate to offer our experience where and when we have some, and even more we should not hesitate to admit we are not the keepers of eternal wisdom and knowledge and to learn from somebody else's experience. It is hard not to agree there is the ground for even more *bona fide* cooperation between our nations.

For quite some time all of our countries are well under way towards the reform. Some are leading, some are lagging behind, but all are more or less clearly committed to it. Our speakers clearly confirmed this throughout the Workshop. The reform processes last long enough to make it possible to draw some conclusions. There was an ungrounded expectation the Security and Defence Reform is something that could be achieved in a short time. Hand in hand there was an expectation the reform would save money for some other purposes. Even professionals, supposedly keepers of the expertise, believed it was possible to concentrate on some reform issues and leave others for better times without tangling with the complexity and variety of the demands, problems and issues inherited from the past. Without trying to prioritise its elements the Security and Defence Reform can not succeed without finding a way to address, more or less at the same time, following issues:

- downsizing,
- personnel management,
- conceptual changes,
- doctrinal and operational changes,
- equipment modernisation, and
- restructuring military budgets.

Downsizing can not be substitution for the Security and Defence Reform as a whole. There were too many politicians (and even some

professionals) in the past believing reform will come as a result of downsizing. It is just one, probably the first step towards making the reform processes possible and viable. It has to be followed immediately with the attempts to improve education and training of the remaining personnel, improving their quality of life inside and outside of the military barracks, and setting the clear criteria what is expected from the new generations of soldiers. Clear vision about forthcoming conceptual, strategic, doctrinal and operational changes has to be taken into account immediately as the element that will decide who will stay in the armies, who will have to go and what criteria have to be fulfilled by those entering militaries for the first time. On the sideline, as an example of the wrong approach I can not forget the statement made by one of the top military commanders in the region saying: "First we will downsize the Armed Forces and then we will build our strategy and doctrine around those who stayed!" Our equipment is everything but even close to the state of the art. Percentages showing the operational readiness of our equipment tell all that is necessary to know about this issue. Finally, structure of our military budgets has to be addressed. Spending 60-70% of the military budgets on the personnel salaries makes it impossible even to think about any reasonable Defence Reform. Getting to the acceptable structure of the military budgets and how to spend leftover money as a result of that process have to be one of the key elements in pursuing those five above mentioned elements. Those first five elements will be influenced by the broader vision of the restructuring budgets, but their implementation will also definitely influence achievement of this goal. They are mutually connected and depend on each other. Their implementation will at the end decide the outcome of our reforms. If there is something like "the end" in the Security and Defence Reform. And all of the above mentioned elements taken together are the only safeguard that our Security and Defence Reform process as a way of management of the strategic change within our structures will not become obsolete before they even begin in earnest.

Without any intention to overemphasize importance of some elements on the expense of the others it has to be said however there are unfortunately some issues, mostly politically rooted, that are likely to decide the outcome of the reform before and against all the other

elements. It has been mentioned by some speakers that long term financing of the Security and Defence structures is unknown quantity. Without the firm commitment of the political institutions, first and foremost the Parliaments, to secure necessary amount of the financing it will be almost impossible to execute successful reforms. Without that it might become impossible for the Armed Forces to fulfil the expectations of their nations. Having in mind grave needs of our Armed Forces, rooted in the long years when they were sadly neglected, it seems overly optimistic we could achieve our reform goals with military budgets around or even below 2% of the GDP. Something will have to be done in order to change decreasing trend of the security and military expenditures. But it is not likely it might happen before all of our economies start to grow at steady rates. So it seems that we have made a full circle and economical growth has become national security and defence issue number one.

As a conclusion we have to repeat and bear in mind that all our Security and Defence Reforms started with the general objective to have smaller forces under the general notion: the smaller is the better. Just think of how many ministers of defence told to their public their goal is to have smaller forces, and then sometimes in the next sentence they tried to explain the smaller forces would be better. But it has been said over and over again: smaller is just what it says – smaller. Nothing more, nothing less. Our intention to have smaller forces does not necessarily guarantee we will end up with the better forces. So it seems we should change our operational objective in pursuing reform processes. Instead the attempt to have smaller forces we have to switch our efforts to build better, more capable forces. Such an operational goal will most likely at the end lead us to the point when we will get what we wanted – better, more capable forces, and as a bonus we will also get smaller forces.

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