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DEFENSE CONCEPTS AND STRUCTURE REFORMS IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Introduction

Eleven months ago I was invited in Sofia to introduce the English and Bulgarian versions of the handbook on the parliamentary control over the security sector edited and published jointly by the Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Since then this small booklet has been made available in many other languages, to include Mongolian, Chinese, Tagalog, Albanian, Arab to quote a few. Specific versions are under study, especially in Africa, in order to reflect the specificity of some regions.

- And that is the first idea that I would like to introduce and develop here: the *specificity* and the *diversity* of the countries, of the regions, of the political structures, of the social, ethnic, economic, cultural, linguistic and historic background, make it impossible to have one model for all.
- The second idea which is not foreign to the first one, is that democracy brings about a certain number of prerequisites and of *principles* that ought to be respected by any nations claiming to be “democratic” in the true sense of the word. Democratic criteria are universal and well known. They are monitored by specialized institutions, namely the regional defence and security organizations but also and mainly, on a global scale, by the United Nations.
- The third idea is more “*technical*” in kind: the use of force is now widespread to tackle defence as well as security problems; most often these forces have to switch from a task to another. In

previous times, as reflected by the white papers, national security strategies and defence estimates of the early nineties, a stiff separation used to exist between the tasks of the police and the missions of the military. In theory it is still true; however, the day to day reality is different. In operations other than war, such as peace operations, peace making, peace keeping, peace restoration etc... the police and gendarmerie forces, generally very few to be deployed, are assisted, supported and protected by the military which has therefore to retain two abilities: - one to make war with traditional, but hi-tech assets, tanks, aircraft, weapons, communications etc... - and one to carry out peace and security missions. This double capability does not only require a new brand of soldiers but also a new type of structures, a new mode of recruiting and of training, a new concept of judicial support, new modes of logistical support, increased budgets and an improved civil military relationship.

- Another initial idea to be developed is of a *political* nature. Defence is not only –and no longer- a purely national business. It is inscribed in a regional and even a global context -except for rogue countries which still pursue a personal agenda or for “Continent like nations” which are so powerful that they think they can do it alone. Regionally, the states should comply with the regional security and defence organizations they are part of; of course not blindly, but at least on the principles and on the goals which are set collectively, in general according to the rule of unanimity. And globally, the unique and overall reference is and should remain the United Nations, an organization to reinforce and not to curb to our own interests.

Of course, this is does not exclude bilateral relations, either within a region or globally, as bilateralism often translates in cooperation and efficiency; but it should not degenerate in a new coalition aloof of the other existing organizations: integration is the key word under the current international circumstances; not disintegration.

Preliminary Observations and Quotes

Having stated these few ideas in my capacity of a non dedicated specialist of South-East Europe, but of a man knowledgeable of the different brands of problems that have popped up through the Centuries and until now in this very fractured part of Europe, I would like to address them in more detail.

My experience in the field of defence reform goes back to the mid-nineties. Then a member of the MOD staff, I was personally involved not only in the drafting of the French white paper on defence, but mainly in its implementation, up to the planning of the three programme laws stretching from 1997 to 2015, the second of which is being currently enforced. I shall not even try to compare the experiences made in your countries and mine, but I shall state and bear some personal judgements on your own endeavours and on ours. There are no recipes, no universal guidelines, no models, no patterns, and no templates but there are many pitfalls and many examples of failed efforts.

In an effort to convince my students, and later, members of the national military staffs, parliaments and governments in charge of conceptualizing defence doctrine and structure reforms in countries, I used to refer to certain formulas, in no way magic, just inspired by common sense⁴.

For instance, I used to recall that Marshall Foch, the Supreme Allied Commander of the Western Alliance in 1918 used to welcome his subordinates and most of his visitors with a single question, always the same, calling for a precise, intelligent, timely and responsible answer: *“What is your problem?”* The answer had to be prepared, thought about and contain part of the resolution of the problem. The visitors had to figure out and to make a quick choice between what was relevant and what was not.

⁴ Alain FAUPIN, Chapter 4 : “Defense reform , the French Case Study” in “ Post Cold War defense Reform (Editors Gyarmati and Winkler)- Brassey’s Inc. Washington D.C.- 2002

I also used to recall that in most cases, whatever the efforts made to adapt to the new era and to answer the new threats, one condition of the success remained, beyond any doubt, in the change of habits and of mindset. I used to translate that in an old and colloquial American saying: *“Sacred cows make the best hamburgers”*.

Another quote, from Frederick the Great of Prussia, a true expert in strategic and military matters, comes also to my mind and relates closely to our topic: *“He, who attempts to defend too much, defends nothing”*.

And, last but not least, a complementary remark from General Gordon Sullivan, a former Chief of Staff of the US Army, currently President of the Association of the US Army in Washington, D.C.: he had to conduct the difficult endeavour to draw down the US Forces right after the fall of the wall and the first Gulf war. *“Smaller is not better, better is better”*: what he meant was that reduction of forces, base closures and restructuring was not enough in themselves; the goal was clearly to have a tool altogether:

- responding to the real needs and to the capabilities of the country,
- coherent with the national, regional and global security and stability requirements, and
- Comprised of the latest technological developments in the field of equipment.

Furthermore, experience shows that even in developed, stable and wealthy democracies, it takes at least one full year to produce a sound white paper and not less than 18 month to plan its implementation and have a decision made as to the selected options. *Time* is a strategic factor with which every reformer has to comply.

Experience allows avoiding mistakes and the study of lessons learned by others saves time and money while sparing efforts.

Money is another issue and it would be totally wrong to think that reducing forces and restructuring the defence and the security sectors would save money. It will cost money, at least during the first stages of the implementation of the plan. Members of parliament, ministers and executives of the Administration, of the Forces (armed forces, police, gendarmerie, border guard, etc) and of the civil society have to plan as far ahead as possible and be ready to stick to their plan and to defend it against the legitimate appetite of others ministries, namely, equipment, social and health, education, treasury to quote just a few ones.

Diverging and/or Converging Elements

Therefore I consider it fairly difficult, if not irrelevant, to speak in bulk of the reform of the security and defence sector in South East Europe. There are as many reforms as states involved and, once again it would be wrong to compare Bulgaria and Romania, Macedonia and Albania, Slovenia and Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. Every one of these countries has a different perception of the threats to its national and regional security. Every one of these countries has a different status and level of commitment regarding the main institutions of defence and Security (EU, NATO, OSCE, and UN).

There are however some common points which can be highlighted, namely the will to be integrated in the EU and in NATO, lagging economies (in comparison to the West), important social requirements, which result in very limited *defence budgets*. One temptation was, for some states, to trade weapon orders against the promise of integration: costly tools that do not correspond to the true needs of the nation but please the ego of some heads of state or of ministers of defence: this is not defence planning but almost bribery. This kind of behaviour is a strategic nonsense and its effect will be felt in the long term without clear benefits for the country, neither in the operational field, nor in the political one. I do not think that any country in the Balkans and in the SEE escaped this vicious endeavour perpetrated by large defence industry groups with the support of their host countries. We are speaking here of expensive fighters, frigates, patrol boats, helicopters, missiles, communications systems etc...

Following this line, the criteria for admission into the NATO and the E.U are roughly the same, except for the figures and some specific problems related to minorities, geography and environment. The same prerequisites apply to all the candidates in the field of human rights and for the surrendering of war criminals currently at large.

There are also these fallacious incentives which might mislead the governments and the militaries of many states. Take, for instance the “global war against terrorism”⁵. It is now some kind of dogma to which every state is invited to comply otherwise it would be considered as a rogue, rebel and suspect state; this declaration of intention should become , in the eyes of the Superpower, hit for the first time in her history on her soil, the number one priority of every state in the world.

But I would personally consider that the first responsibility for a democratic state is **to exist** as such. And, for that purpose **institutions** are needed: that is the first priority. The second step is to have these institutions, including the defence and security ones to function properly and democratically. Nothing can be imposed from the outside until then, except the need for democratic institutions and certainly not incentives to participate to external operations in the name of “Global war against terrorism”. Defence Institution Building needs to be the main, and I would say the unique, objective of the coming decade for most of the countries of the region.

The framework is clearly the European Union, with the backing of the UN, the monitoring of the OSCE and the technical assistance, support and advice of NATO.

I am certainly not in a position to point out and to criticize such or such country which would have made the choice to send forces abroad to fight “global” terrorism whereas domestic terrorism is taking its share of lives and of the economy back home. Most of these countries have not yet defined their defence and security concept; do not know yet what format, structures, assets, budgets their forces and their defence

⁵ GWOT in the US jargon

institution will have, and they are already wasting their scarce resources in costly and minuscule participations far away from homeland where security is lagging behind the requested level for joining EU or NATO. One could say: “that is the best way to be recognized as a full member of the International Community”, or: “we need experience and only this kind of operations will provide us with the opportunity to get it, or, most often: “that is none of your business”.

I do not want to shock you, but I personally think that with the same amount of resources, the impact on homeland and regional security would be far greater than that of a very often ignored participation far away in the anonymous middle of a huge coalition. There is so much left to do locally and I cannot help thinking of three examples: Bosnia, Cyprus and Kosovo.

“Conflict resolution must always be considered as a purely political process, focused on the search of compromises between the different parties”⁶. And, in that sense, it is possible to say that the Bosnian problems have finally been provisionally solved (late, by lack of an initial agreement between the Western powers, namely US vs. Europe), whereas it has been and still is a failure for Cyprus and Kosovo. For Cyprus, the compromise was not reached because the Turkish side has been favoured and the Greek side found it detrimental to its interests. Another round of political- and not military- initiatives will be necessary. As far as Kosovo is concerned, the failure has been total. The problem is pending. Ethnic cleansing has not been checked. The military solution has only brought about the inversion of the roles: from a threatened Albanian minority in Serbia, we have switched to a persecuted Serbian minority: the April 2004 events, has shown the extent of the problem when the Albanian mobs managed to destroy totally or partially 22 of the 32 guarded Serbian cultural and religious sites. Isn’t terrorism on our doorstep?

NATO and the EU have focused the attention of the states on the so-called “New Threats”. It is wise. However, one should not underestimate

⁶ Carl Bildt in « La politique de sécurité et de défense de l’UE, les cinq premières années »- Institut d’études de sécurité de l’UE- Paris summer 2004.

le remaining and more ancient problems still alive in surrounding regions.

I do not want to elaborate more on this issue which relates to our topic in that *the first responsibility of the states in the region is to be able to promote, achieve, support and guarantee regional stability.*

This goal can only be reached through national political consensus, through a democratic process, through national parliaments but also through a thorough review of the strategic and security environment.

The EU, once again, shouldered by the OSCE is the key player in that field. It has already defined the intermediary objectives and is providing a dedicated support, through different assistance funds and donor countries, to (the processes. But my personal feeling is that we have put the cart before the horse. It is not too late, but high time to revert the trend... and our contribution to the fight against global terror will be more efficient and more durable.

The Components of an updated Concept of Defence

Now it is important, in my eyes, to pose the right questions as to the changing contents of the defence concepts in the region. Once again, it is impossible to review piecemeal the different national defence concepts in existence -or in being- in South East Europe where large nations, middle size states and smaller ones strive to co-exist and to cooperate.

For that purpose, I highly recommend the reading of a recent study written by Mr Stein Henriksen⁷, and soon to be edited and published. It successively focuses on the following points

- The constitutional and the legal contexts

⁷ Mr Stein Henriksen is Senior Adviser, Norwegian Directorate of Civil Protection and Emergency Planning;. This draft, entitled “ The changing content of the Total defense Context in Norway” is part of a wider study: “European Experiences of Total Defense- Impact on Transatlantic Homeland Security” to be published by Dr. Dan Hamilton (a senior fellow at the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University)

- The strategic context
- The National Security Strategy (-range of risks, dangers and threats, -national interests and objectives, - integration in international security structures)
- The National Military Strategy
- The domestic political context and the public attitudes of the State regarding the current issues
- Homeland security tasks and mission areas (-intelligence and warning, - Border and transportation security, - domestic counter-terrorism, -critical infrastructure, protection of the key assets – Emergency preparedness and response, civil protection.)

There is neither the need nor the place, in my opinion, to develop here each one of these points. My feeling is that for small or middle size states, the experience of Norway and the way this NATO country has reviewed its security and defence problems and switched to a new system are interesting and worth consideration... even though it is not part of the European Union, ...yet.

Conclusion

South East Europe is still very far away from its objectives.

Considerable amounts of efforts and of wealth are still requested from the international community, especially from Europe, to stabilize the region and even to maintain peace and order.

At the same time, many other spots in the world are afire or in deep crisis and need urgent help and assistance from the donor countries: remember Africa's outcry, comparing the lack of support of the West with what was done with Bosnia (deployment of 50.000 soldiers, staffs, NGOs etc...) in a time when one million Rwanda's were being

slaughtered without a sigh from the West (with some exceptions however).

Europe is not yet, if it has ever been, an island of prosperity in the middle of a dangerous world. Wars and crises still mar the Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia) and other spots in the direct vicinity of this area. Not only do terrorist acts aim often at Europe, but they are also often concocted **in** Europe. The recent enlargement processes have brought the European borders closer than ever to the arc of crises (Caucasus, Middle East).

Moreover, it is obvious now that Europe is no longer the main strategic concern of the US which has considerably reduced their presence in Europe. Less than 7% of the American forces are now earmarked for NATO. And the transatlantic link is not at its best, probably for several years. Through intricate economies, Europe is intimately part of every single crisis in the world, willy nilly.

Under these conditions, it is high time for processes of reconciliation to take place between the different communities and it is essential that centuries long squabbles find their conclusion now. Nothing will ever be possible without this. The role of the SEE parliaments and political leaders is first and above all to reach a fair level of reconciliation within and with their close neighbours, through political settlements. EU and OSCE, in accordance with the UN principles of good governance will do the rest.

Compromises should be found by negotiation and enforced by the sub region itself. It is totally abnormal for any given European country to have to be militarily present, today, in the 21st century, in another European country, unless invited for an exercise or for technical assistance. Europe has better to do than to waste its youth, its budgets and its energy in sterile village squabbles of another age. Europe has to complete its construction and to take step in all the main areas of the international life. The sooner, the better.

Seemingly, all the necessary assets are in the hands of the local political leaders, and the support of the international organizations is still available, but perhaps not for long: the West European and international resolves have limits. The popular and political shall take over without further delay.

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