

## **2. Civil-Military Relations in Bulgaria: Aspects, Factors, Problems**

### **I Introduction**

In spite of the progress made in the last ten years, the development of effective management of democratically legitimated relations between the society and Armed Forces continue to be one of the top priorities in the Bulgarian political agenda. After years of difficult and frequently painful decisions, the country's general political transition to democracy was successfully completed. Along with basic issues, such as the introduction of democratic political and market economy rules, considerable efforts were dedicated to implement the principle of democratic civil control over the military.

The Bulgarian Armed Forces<sup>1</sup> already operate under new judicial and procedural regulations leading to strict political and public control. Nevertheless, they still remain an important factor in the domestic democratic process. It is so not because they represent any kind of threat to society, but because they consume a significant part of the limited state budget and have indisputable social role. The reorganisation of the Armed Forces, from the typical totalitarian status of "a state within the state" to the size, structure and functions, acceptable from internal and international point of view, is a process of extremely high political and strategic importance. The defence reform in Bulgaria is a factor for strengthening the civil society, ensuring sustainable socio-economic development and effective integration into the European Union (EU) and NATO. It needs special public (including international) attention, monitoring by the mass media, and political-military co-operation for the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Armed Forces comprise the General Staff, Land Forces, Air Force, Navy formations and centrally subordinated units which functionally are divided into Rapid Reaction Forces, Defence Forces, Territorial Defence Troops and Reserves. See: MILITARY DOCTRINE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA, APPROVED BY THE XXXVIII NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA ON 8 APRIL 1999. Available on-line at <http://www.md.government.bg>

successful development of effective standards, norms and procedures, which would guarantee both the capability of the Armed Forces and the rigorous democratic control.

## **II Internal Political Aspect of the Civil-Military Relations and the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces**

Eleven years after the beginning of the democratic reforms the civil-military relations in Bulgaria are associated with reliable, manageable and evolving civilian and democratic control over the armed forces. Without overestimating the achievements in the field, one can say that a definite introduction and a practical record of this major principle in any modern functioning democracy continues to be high on the political agenda of the country.

Even the slightest residual temptation, at the start of the democratisation of the armed forces, in domestic politics has been thoroughly overcome. It has become both a legal and an ethical norm that the military is the apolitical servant of the democratically elected institutions, according to the Constitution and the laws, and yet remaining the symbol of national pride.

The establishment of the democratic oversight faces a few major problems. While it is a basic element of the official policy of the Bulgarian Government, the civilian democratic control of the armed forces has not yet gained an effective social support. Furthermore, the principle has not yet attracted irreversibly its potential staunchest guardian – society itself. While the social instincts are definitely on the side of the democratic principle, the public is not capable of organising, channelling and expressing these instincts within the potential of the democratic control of the armed forces and, ultimately, to defend themselves from the guards they have appointed.

This intricate incapability is not insurmountable, but requires the overcoming of particular deficiencies in the areas of domestic politics, defence policy and foreign policy.

Traditionally, the Bulgarian military have perceived themselves as one of the fundamental national pillars. They have a lot of arguments to self-portrait themselves like that. They bear stability and impartiality in their behaviour and logically have had a normalising impact on the social and political processes. Intellectually, however, the hypothetical conversion of the military into a threat to society has never been considered. Ways of preventing such a negative development were never sought or practically formulated before the beginning of the democratic transition in post-totalitarian Bulgaria.

Becoming the apolitical servant of the democratically elected institutions was not a job the Bulgarian military and their civilian masters did easily overnight. It took at least 4-5 years to overcome residual temptations to involve the armed forces in domestic politics on the opposing sides of the competing political forces. Bulgarian history of the last ten years will keep the names of certain generals and many officers, dreaming of personal careers through a “right” political affiliation. But the ultimate objective of the pluralistic Bulgarian political parties and organisations has never been to utilise the power of the armed forces for the direct imposition of their political will and gaining the upper hand in the domestic political struggle. Rather it has been the indirect impact on society by the leading political forces to have members of the armed forces, a highly respected institution by the Bulgarians, on their side.

This vicious practice was both discarded and intellectually outlived by the end of 1997. The Bulgarian politicians assimilated the restrained and responsible behaviour of the large majority of the Bulgarian officers not to be dragged into the political combinations and schemes of various parties and to remain true to their professional credit as patriots and guardians of their people. In post-Communist Bulgaria, the acceptance of the transition to democracy by the military took place earlier than the agreement of the leading political forces to structure the civil-military relations in accordance with the rules of the democratic society. By the way, getting rid of various residual temptations to exert power on the quite vulnerable society, not necessarily using the resources of the armed forces, the police or the secret services, but using other levers of economic or administrative nature, which a ruling party or a coalition

have a dominant ‘say’, remains a difficult problem for post-Communist Bulgaria. People do not fear the monopolistic might of the armed forces, but the monopolistic taxes imposed by the state energy company.

From 1989 to 1991 the Bulgarian armed forces were attacked by the democratic opposition (at that point) as an instrument of the power of the Socialist Party, the heir of the Communist Party. After the adoption of the new democratic Constitution this reproach easily withered away. Any residual ties or loyalty to a political party or an ideology on the side of the military in the years that followed were in an environment that definitely and clearly required just the opposite – subordination to the objectives of the National Security Concept, loyalty to the democratically elected Parliament, Government and President independent on their political affiliation.

One of the notable achievements of the Bulgarian democratic transition after decades of socialist totalitarianism, including deviations towards a more aggressive nationalism in the period 1984-1989, was the mature and wise discarding of this option for the country’s political relations. Neither of the major political parties, including the former Communists reformed into Socialists, utilised the nationalism for domestic or foreign political purposes. The Armed Forces - a traditional symbol of patriotism - were purposefully not dragged into such a dangerous political game. The military themselves chose to be pragmatic and effectively useful for their people rather than to become the “glorious heroes” at the turn of the Twentieth century.

This particular component of the newly constructed civil-military relations – how to stay patriotic without resorting to nationalistic or chauvinistic attitudes, was crucial not only to the definition of the contents of these relations but also to the civilian democratic control of the armed forces in Bulgaria. This crucial aspect of the transition from Communism to democracy served as a role model in the midst of similar transitions and on-going post-Yugoslav conflicts in South-East Europe in general. The Bulgarian civil-military relations of the post-Communist transformation period turned into a specific generator of stability in the warring Balkans. The central position of Bulgaria vis-à-vis almost all major conflicts influenced the regional developments by showing it is

able to overcome a traditional burden of the Balkan past – the aggressive nationalistic attitudes of the military from all Balkan countries. Indeed, Bulgaria's success in neutralising the poison of the traditional Balkan destructive nationalism, adopting new roles for its military in terms of domestic politics, and generating trust, stability and confidence in the defence establishments of the neighbouring countries, are among the most positive features of the Bulgarian transition to new civil-military relations.

### **III The Democratic-Civilian Control Over the Armed Forces: the Defence-Political Aspect**

The answer to the question 'who has the control over the defence policy' is a major criterion and an indicator of the level of maturity of the democratic-civilian control over the military. Both, who devises the defence strategy and forces' structure, and who masters spending and procurement –are issues that the Bulgarian defence establishment had to cope with during its adaptation to the functioning of the principle of the democratic oversight of the armed forces. It had to turn all these questions into an immanent part of the contents of that principle.

The Bulgarian military, the country's political leadership and society in general accepted the meaning and the consequences of the principle of civilian democratic control over the armed forces. The period from 1989 to 1991 marked an initial legislative and institutional approximation of the requirements of the democratic principle. The new democratic Constitution of 1991, followed by the new laws on defence, armed forces, internal security and intelligence services defined the functions and responsibilities of the Parliament, the President, the Government and the General Staff according to the requirements of the democratic civilian control.

*The National Assembly (Parliament)* is the main institution for political direction and control over the armed forces and the rest of the security structures. It carries out these functions through its legislative activity, resource allocation through the budget, adoption of decisions

and other acts and parliamentary control. In the security sphere, its National Security Committee assists the Parliament.

The legislative acts, adopted by the National Assembly that concern the national security include: the National Security Concept, the Military Doctrine (as political-military document on strategic level), the Defence and Armed Forces Act, other basic laws, such as the Special Intelligence Means Act and the Consultative Council for National Security Act .

The National Assembly decides on the declaration of war and concludes peace, approves the deployment and the use of Bulgarian Armed Forces (BAF) outside the country, and the deployment, crossing and use of foreign troops on Bulgarian territory. On a motion from the President or the Council of Ministers it introduces martial law or a state of emergency on the whole or on part of the country's territory; ratifies or rejects through law all international agreements, which have a political and military nature or envisage corrections to the national borders. The National Assembly ratifies international treaties, both bilateral (e.g., for international co-operation) and multilateral (e.g. the Treaty on the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), the "Open Sky" Treaty, etc.), conventions, as well as laws regulating particular issues of defence, internal order, security, the defence-industrial complex. Example is the "Law of Control over Foreign Trade Activities with Armaments, Goods and Technologies with Dual Purpose Application.

The *Defence and Armed Forces Act of the Republic of Bulgaria* (DAFA), enacted in 1995, added the following powers to the National Assembly: to adopt by decision the National Security Concept (as a "Grand strategy" document) and the Military Doctrine on proposal by the Council of Ministers; to adopt long-term programmes for the development of the armed forces; to determine the size of the armed forces; to ensure the necessary legislative norms for the establishment of units for civil protection and for carrying out humanitarian tasks in the case of natural and industrial disasters; to establish, restructure and close military educational institutions.

The National Assembly carries out parliamentary control over the activities of all security related institutions: the Ministry of Defence,

Bulgarian AF, Military Intelligence, Military Counter-Intelligence; Ministry of Internal Affairs, Border Troops, Gendarmerie, National Security Service (the counterintelligence), National Intelligence Service and National Guard Service. The National Security Committee and the Foreign and Integration Policy Committee of the Parliament assist its activities and carry out parliamentary control on its behalf.

*The President of the Republic* is Supreme Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. He appoints and dismisses the higher command of the Armed Forces and bestows all higher military ranks, acting on a motion from the Council of Ministers. The President presides over the Consultative Council for National Security, the status of which is regulated by law. The National Intelligence Service and the National Guard Service are under presidential authority. On a motion by the Government, he declares general or partial mobilisation for war. Whenever the National Assembly is not in session and cannot be convened, he proclaims *a state of war* in case of armed attack against Bulgaria or whenever urgent action is required by virtue of an international commitment. He proclaims martial law or any other state of emergency. The National Assembly is convened forthwith to endorse the President's decision.

The Defence and Armed Forces Act specifies that the President, acting on a proposal by the Council of Ministers, approves the strategic plans for activities of the Armed Forces and alerts the Armed Forces or part thereof to an advanced alert; during a military conflict or war he co-ordinates the foreign policy efforts for participation in international organisations and security structures with the aim of terminating the military conflict or war. Furthermore, the President is in charge of the Supreme Command, issues acts for preparing the country and Armed Forces for war; implements wartime plans; introduces a restrictive regime for the dissemination of information concerning the defence of the country; introduces to the National Assembly proposals for making peace.

With the introduction of martial law, the declaring of war or with the actual start of military activities, the President forms the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, e.g. the Supreme Headquarters (SHQ). The

SHQ assists the Supreme Commander in leading the defence and Armed Forces and includes the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Regional Development and Public Works, the Minister of Transportation and Communications, the Chief of the General Staff and other individuals, designated by the Supreme Commander.

The structure of *The Council of Ministers (The Government)* dealing with national security issues comprises the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, the Civil Protection Agency, the Inter-Agency Committee on Issues of the defence-industrial complex and the mobilisation readiness of the Country, the Directorate of Confessional Issues, the General Directorate “State Reserves and Wartime Supplies”, the National Council for Struggle Against Narcotics Abuse and Narcotics Traffic, the National Bureau for Territorial Asylum and Refugees, etc.

The amendments to the Defence and Armed Forces Act in 1995, 1997 and 2000 added to the authority of the Council of Ministers to:

- politically control the Armed Forces and general leadership
- to co-ordinate the overall defence planning;
- to formulate and perform the state defence and military policy;
- to maintain combat and mobilisation readiness of the Armed Forces;
- to approve mobilisation plans, a Regulation for the Military Service, the General Wartime Plan of the state and the wartime draft budget;
- to regulate the production of and trade with defence items;
- to determine the standards and the order for accumulation, preservation and use of raw and wartime materials;
- to command and control the mobilisation of the Armed Forces and the transition of the country from peace to war;
- to open, transform and close military facilities, branches, institutes and colleges;
- to approve requirements to the transportation, energy, communications systems, storage systems & settlements, production and economic sites in compliance with the needs of the defence;



- to make proposals to the President of the Republic for assigning and discharging the higher command of the Armed Forces and for bestowing all higher military ranks etc.

Additionally to these, based on the experience of the crises management in Bosnia and of the expanded co-operation with NATO, the 1997 amendments added to the authority of the Council of Ministers to approve the deployment and use of Bulgarian military units outside the country for execution of humanitarian, ecological, educational, sports and other tasks of a non-military nature; to approve the deployment and use of individual unarmed military personnel outside the country's borders for the execution of official or representative tasks by virtue of international commitments; to approve the deployment and use of military equipment outside the country's borders; to approve the deployment of foreign troops in Bulgaria or their crossing of Bulgarian territory for the execution of tasks of a peaceful nature.

*The Minister of Defence* is responsible for the conduct of the state's policy in the Ministry of Defence. The ministers in all governments since 1991 were civilian (though in one case a retired Flag Officer).

The Minister of Defence implements political and civil control over the Bulgarian Armed Forces by participating in the development and updating of the National Security Concept; compiling the draft of the State's budget in the part concerning the Ministry of Defence; allocating the budget and managing financial resources and procurement for the Bulgarian AF; formulating and managing personnel policy including recruitment of Bulgarian AF personnel and officer training; organising cultural, educational and patriotic activities; implementing general oversight on the military educational system, military scientific and research institutes; implementing international co-operation in the field of defence; issuing regulations, ordinances, instructions and orders and other legal acts at the level of the Ministry of Defence; organising activities for the support and care for citizens, injured in the defence of the country; being responsible for the management and maintenance of the state military property, sports activities and development of sports infrastructure; organising the inspection activities of the Ministry of Defence; submitting to the Council of Ministers a proposal for

appointment of a high ranking general to the post of Chief of the General Staff; approving the staff of the central administration of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff; directing the information, publication and public relations activities of the Ministry of Defence, the Military Police and Military Counter-Intelligence and others.

The Minister of Defence submits to the Council of Ministers a draft of the Military Doctrine of the country (a political-military document); a proposal of the number and organisation of BAF; a draft for a General state wartime plan; a proposal for the assigning and discharging of the higher command staff and for awarding higher military ranks; a proposal for announcing a general or partial mobilisation. Acting on a proposal by the Chief of the General Staff, the Minister of Defence commissions officers for regular service; promotes to a higher rank, demotes to a lower rank and discharges from military service officers of the Bulgarian AF. Furthermore, he or she appoints and recalls the Bulgarian defence and military attaches abroad and the representatives of the Ministry of Defence to international organisations.

In respect to civil control, two important amendments were introduced with the changes in the DAFA in the year 2000. First, the Minister of Defence was tasked with leading the defence planning in the Ministry and the Bulgarian AF. Secondly, he became responsible for activities providing information for the purposes of defence and national security. The latter means that the Military Information Agency (the military intelligence) was directly subordinated to the civilian minister.

Deputy Ministers and the Chief of the Political Cabinet who are civilians assist the Minister of Defence. In the performance of his controlling functions an Inspectorate in which civilian and military staff are included supports the Minister of Defence. The Inspectorate controls the effective implementation of the budget and procurement policy; observation of the human rights; personnel and recruitment policy; social policy and environment protection; information for corruption, squandering and misuse of material and financial resources, military discipline; management of military property; observation of international agreements etc.

The problems arising while meeting the formal requirements for civilian democratic control concern most of all its effectiveness. Although not a unique Bulgarian problem, it has certain features that are and will continue to be treated for further improvement. First of all, there is still a lack of realism and coherence between budgets and defence plans. To be more precise, once plans are endorsed they are regularly found to be unaffordable within the allocated budgets. The result is that MoD has to adopt a significantly different force posture from that agreed by Parliament in order to meet affordability constraints.<sup>2</sup>

There was an unrealistic belief in many of the Bulgarian political and military leaders that once the formal requirements of the civilian democratic control are met the control itself will be guaranteed. The reason of this wrong perception is the lack of understanding that effective civilian control is attainable only if there is clarity about the relation among the resources, forces and goals of the defence policy.”<sup>3</sup>

The establishment and effective functioning of a rigorous defence planning system was one of the accents in MoD activity since the autumn of 1998. It was an effort to overcome this issue. At that time the existing system had four major deficiencies:

- a) lack of certain functions (broken links between national security objectives and existing force structures; missing organisations to which important components of the defence planning were designated);
- b) no holistic but rather a piecemeal approach to defence planning (the

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<sup>2</sup> See in greater detail: PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT AND DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE BULGARIAN ARMED FORCES AND MOD, FINAL REPORT, STUDY No 3/98, DIRECTORATE OF CONSULTANCY AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES, UK MOD, 5 OCTOBER 1998. Available on-line at <http://www.md.government.bg>

<sup>3</sup> Todor Tagarev and Velizar Shalamanov carried out an extensive study on this particular issue within the ISIS research program in 1998. See: VELIZAR M. SHALAMANOV, TODOR D. TAGAREV, REENGINEERING THE DEFENCE PLANNING IN BULGARIA, INSTITUTE FOR SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (ISIS), SOFIA, DECEMBER 1998, RESEARCH REPORTS 9. Available at the website of the Institute: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isis>

- ‘down-up’ planning was not backed by a rational mechanism for adaptation of resource requirements to force structure. Lowering combat potential and degrading morale were logical consequences);
- c) Short-term thinking. The short-term planning horizon had economic, financial and cognitive justification. The planning process had to be changed towards a more prospective thinking and synchronising the goals with realistic resource estimates;
  - d) Cultural, perceptual and educational deficiency. The traditional understanding of planning among the Bulgarian military was an ‘operational planning’ – a highly classified activity carried out by few, highly expert military officers of the General Staff of the country’s armed forces. So, there is still some way to go before integrating long-term strategic planning through programming and operational planning in a comprehensive system. Failure to carry out this task will inevitably mean hampering the interaction between the civilian and military leadership.

The latter conclusion, however, would be true only if we were facing capable civilians and military that are both experts on defence issues. Still too many of the present civilian MoD staff are retired military officers at various ranks and age. The inflow of civilians in the MoD is still moderate, especially in terms of defence expertise, military, command of modern information technologies and their impact on defence and security. The ongoing reform of the military education system, defence and security issues is expected to lead to major improvements with time.

A fundamental problem remains – the inadequate parliamentary expertise on military, defence and security issues. It is so even for the National Security Committee. The inertia of the old thinking that “military issues are the domains of military experts” is characteristic for some Members of Parliament who have special responsibilities in implementing civilian democratic control over the armed forces and other security institutions.

## **IV The Foreign Political Aspect of the Democratic Control Over the Armed Forces**

Certainly one of the country's assets during the long and hard transition to democracy and functioning market economy is its foreign, especially regional policy in the Balkans. Unless all factors, having impact on the formation, formulation and implementation of Bulgaria's foreign policy, were positively affecting the decisions and their implementation, Bulgaria as well as South-East Europe would have faced difficult times. One of those positive factors affecting the country's foreign policy was the approach of the Bulgarian armed forces.

The analysis of the continental (European) and the regional (Balkan) security situation led the forward-minded Bulgarian security experts, as early as the very beginning of the 90's, to the conclusion that Bulgarian military diplomacy assumes a special role for the national security of the country, especially after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. An active Bulgarian military diplomacy succeeded in creating a positive regional atmosphere of greater mutual trust. The confidence-building measures (CBMs) that were negotiated with Greece, Turkey and Romania had lower ceilings, compared to similar CBMs within the CFE Treaty.

A curious dialectics evolved in the armed forces-foreign policy interrelationship. While on the civilian side of the civil-military relations some nationalistic political tendencies and parties required a less sophisticated and even assertive Bulgarian foreign policy, the Bulgarian military and armed forces suggested and insisted on a sober, peaceful and good-neighbourly regional policy. This largely coincided with the platforms of the leading political forces in the country – ruling and opposition, despite the struggle between them, often compared to an internal “civil Cold War”.

In such a generally harmonious environment, concerning the regional policy of Bulgaria, it was not difficult to reach an agreement on the issues of deployment and use of force. The following stages could be summarised:

1. Staying neutral in the initial phases of the post-Yugoslav wars;

2. Joining the SFOR peace-keepers with modest engineering units;
3. Joining NATO in the political-military efforts during the “Allied Force” operation against FRY, and later – the KFOR peace-keepers in the aftermath of the Kosovo crisis.

The decision for the deployment of Bulgarian peace-keepers in FRY, Cambodia, Angola and military observers in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia as part of OSCE or UN missions, was made by civilians that mastered the procedures and had the final say for the country’s involvement in military operations abroad.

So, yes, there has been an influence by the military on the country’s foreign policy. However, they influenced the expertise and efficiency by raising them and not the contents or the direction of the foreign-political decisions that were taken. One particular manifestation is the way the military influenced the country’s strategic orientation to NATO membership. From the beginning of Bulgaria’s participation in the NATO’s PfP Initiative, the Bulgarian military proved to be active and efficient. Meanwhile, the Government for the period from 1995 to 1997 was not working for the objective of becoming a NATO member. Notwithstanding, a pro-NATO momentum was gathering in the Bulgarian society thanks to the involvement of its armed forces in joint exercises with NATO partners.

When in February 1997 the new Bulgarian Government formally declared it is willing to join NATO, the country’s armed forces were again among the engines that pulled the process forward. Much of the intellectual work has been carried out within the MoD or through collaboration of the MoD and pro-NATO NGOs and think tanks to motivate both society and armed forces in general for the new goals and fundamental reform. This process was accelerated especially after the autumn of 1998 when new leaders headed the defence policy sector of the MoD. They are still doing their best in providing assistance and promoting joint projects with Bulgarian partner think tanks to bring the issue of Bulgaria’s integration in NATO to broader social circles in this country.

## **V Factors That Influence Civil-Military Relations**

The Civil-military relations and democratic control of the Armed Forces were rightly perceived by the Bulgarian politicians, analysts and military as a most significant, key element of the strategic change, aimed at successfully adapting the country to the security and defence realities in the existing international and domestic environment. The introduction of basic democratic principles and creation of a stable and productive *mode* of civil-military relations was done in complicated circumstances.

The historical tradition of the Armed Forces as a factor for the country's stability opened a space for effective close collaboration with experienced in democratic interactions partners which together made the positive atmosphere for significant changes in the national political and military strategic culture.

In the same time the combination of communist legacy with issues such as ineffective political leadership of the country's transformation process towards a functional democracy and market economy, the legal and institutional inconsistencies on the execution of the national chain of command of the Armed Forces together with the lack of professionalism and expertise of both civilian authorities and military leadership caused the delay of the implementation of effective civilian direction and democratic oversight of the defence system.

### **a) The international factor**

It was already mentioned that the international context was between the most influential factor in understanding and shaping the national pattern of civil-military relations. More precisely, it has been the combination of international factors that led to the specific state of Bulgaria's civil-military relations. The ten years old external conflicts on the country's Western border raised the issue of the roles of various national security and defence institutions in those particular circumstances. Generally, Bulgaria's attitude to the post-Yugoslav conflicts called for a comprehensive answer to the level of involvement

of the Bulgarian armed forces while meeting the challenges of these conflicts.

Logically rose the question what kind of adaptation, enforcement and reform of the armed forces would generate an efficient reaction to the on-going wars next door. There were two schools of thought in regard to these questions.

The first was that during an evolving crisis sane leaders do not reshuffle their armed forces, but prepare to counter an eventual direct threat with what is available and eventually reinforce it. The second was that the transitional policy of the country, based on reforming all sectors of national life, must not omit the defence one despite the wars that Serbia was waging on its former Federative republican brethren. Implementing all aspects of this reform meant a new definition and construction of the civil-military relations along the principles of a democratic society.

The second school of thought prevailed after bearing in mind that there was no direct and imminent threat from any of the neighbouring countries in short to mid-term. The conflicts in the neighbouring disrupting federation could not generate, politicise and legitimise a higher role for the military, but rather accelerated the adaptation, the conception and education of what democratic civilian control over the armed forces is and how this could be translated into a more efficient armed force that guards its nation.

Another international factor acted as a catalyst in adopting the above-mentioned approach: the diminishing political and military influence of Russia. The Soviet-type model of civil-military relations was no longer valid after the end of the Warsaw Pact Treaty Organisations. Russia's pulling out from its former allies freed the terrain for new models and policies. Obviously, in a period of change in the Bulgarian society the vacuum left by the dominant power in the former alliance meant a radical departure not only from the pattern of civil-military relations in the ex-totalitarian society of Russia, but also from the military establishment that Russia has developed in the last three centuries. Together with the ideological legacy by which Russia dominated over its



former allies, the latter parted also with much of the geopolitical, social and military influence of the great power. The exploitation by the Bulgarian armed forces of the Russia-dominated military equipment and armaments could no longer mean preservation of the social model of civil-military relations.

Hence, the influence of the West was very strong in this specific environment of mixed factors: social transition to democracy and market economy; active conflicts on the Western border, and pulling out of the Russian factor. The model of civil-military relations of the developed Western democracies was perceived as an inherent to a broader “security community” of nations in the terms and concepts of Karl Deutsch. Democratic control of the armed forces was not perceived as the simple result of some pressure from the West, but first of all as a priority national security task in a democratising society, need for urgent change of the defence establishment to counter a pending security threat while coping with two other fundamental problems: filling the great power vacuum left by Russia and winning the sympathy and entering into alliance with the countries from the EU and NATO.

This is why NATO’s PfP and EU’s Phare Programme and the individual country-to-country support for defence reform practically influenced the reshaping of the civil-military relations in Bulgaria. The greatest effect was educating how national security and democratic society’s needs can be matched and guaranteed. The learning process on the issue is far from over. Since 1997, however, it became clearer to both civilians and military that a major objective such as joining EU and NATO necessitates stable, undoubted and effective democratic control of civilians over the military.

It has been very much within the context of this learning process with Western support that two important psychological barriers with the military have been overcome – professional pride and professional assurance that the country’s national security will not be harmed. Only in theory, was it learnt that a developed civil-military relationship requires a higher professional culture for the civilian counterparts of the military, including the civilian political masters. This aspect of the Western support is still not very effective. Two studies about the reform

of the Bulgarian armed forces and the civil-military relations, carried out by an American Defence Department and a British MoD team, apart from the concrete practical results showed that the best way of implementing an efficient civilian democratic control over the military is by using civilians displaying expertise that is respected by the military because of its own merits and not just because it is the dictum of the democratic principle.

Apart from its relations with the USA and the UK, the Bulgarians have profited much from the experience on the issues of civil-military relations from Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, France, Spain and Switzerland. The maturity of the knowledge and its implementation in shaping the new civil-military relations has risen between 1998 and 2000. Both the international programs that help the country's adaptation to NATO membership requirements and the national education process are in better positions to shape the thinking of those, who are or will be actively engaged in civil-military interaction and in carrying out the civilian democratic control over the military.

## **b) Historical tradition and legacies**

Civil-military relations in Bulgaria today do not profit from models and experience from the Communist or the pre-Communist past of the country.<sup>4</sup>

Soon after the national liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 the armed forces of the young Third Kingdom turned into the most dynamic state institution, enjoying high respect and strong popular support. At that time, the unjust Berlin Treaty of 1878 sliced Bulgarian population and territory into pieces and the mission of the Bulgarian military was identified with the ideals of the national liberation fighters of the previous decades and centuries. The Bulgarian military were loved by the people: all hopes for uniting with the rest of the Bulgarians and

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<sup>4</sup> See also about this in: PLAMEN PANTEV, VALERI RATCHEV, TODOR TAGAREV, SPECIFIC PROBLEMS OF THE CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN BULGARIA DURING THE TRANSITIONAL POLITICAL PERIOD, ISIS, SOFIA, 1996, pp. 25-29.

territories, once defined formally by the Ottoman Empire as belonging to the Bulgarian Christians and their Orthodox Church were linked with the might and courage of the armed forces. So it was easy to socialise the military towards foreign political intervention and deployment of Bulgarian force. Society was also easily socialised towards accepting and supporting the missions of the army in defence of the national ideals for unification. However, Bulgaria and its army were perceived as “a war-mongering machine” in the centre of the Balkans.

After an initial success in 1885 and 1912 the military victories that followed could not be politically and diplomatically finalised with success. The unattainability of the national ideals turned into national frustration, demanding revenge. The fascist regimes that were established from the 20's till the end of the World War II naturally allied with the Nazi power of Germany and fascist Italy. Because of the anti-fascist resistance both army's socialisation to political intervention and society's socialisation to acceptance of such an intervention were either frustrated or diluted. The country and its armed forces were not any longer effective in achieving the previous national ideals, which generally remained unfulfilled and historically incomplete. In the period 1923-44 there could hardly be found traces of civilian democratic control over the military in a totalitarian society of a fascist type.

The legacy of the totalitarian Socialist regime after 1944 was a Soviet model of civil-military relations, especially on the issues of procurement, tactics and strategy. The total Soviet military control over the Warsaw Pact Treaty armed forces left blank space on the issues of defence policy and its civilian democratic control in post-Cold War Bulgaria. Though the military of Socialist Bulgaria were under the civilian political control of the Communist Party it was far from the standards of democracy. The dependence on Soviet defence policy further worsened the situation for the post-Communist leaders of democratic Bulgaria and its armed forces. The ‘motivation vacuum’ for change and activity was dialectically filled by the need to protect the country from the ex-Yugoslav conflicts. The historical instincts of the Bulgarian officers and soldiers to defend their fatherland led them to the acceptance of the model of civil-military relations of the democratic

nations of Europe and North America, whose societies turned into a targeted model of Bulgaria's national development.

So the Communist history, including the 'perestroika' phase, and the pre-Communist past were not suggesting anything workable in the new conditions of the post-Cold War world. Apart from a patriotic motivation it was the example of others and the hope for the future that turned Bulgaria and its armed forces into major factors of stability and democratic development in the Balkans.

### **c) Internal political, economic and social factors**

The Bulgarian state can hardly be qualified as 'strong' internally during the transition period to functioning democracy and market economy. However, it never assumed the features of a 'weak' one. The few temptations of military intervention in politics can be linked to a few generals who volunteered to be drawn into policy-making, but as individuals, without pulling the responsibility of the institution of the armed forces. Their ambition was their personal career in the times of change.

A negative domestic background was the intense, very often highly, though artificially polarised political relations. This political situation de-motivated many talented young officers from military service. The pending danger of in-proportionate civilian political intervention threatened to cause de-professionalisation of the armed forces.

Another specific feature of this complex factor, influencing civil-military relations is the freedom of the press and the media in general. There was virtually no significant problem in the military or the civil-military domain that was not illuminated and brought to the diverse reasoning and assessment of the public. Thus, the task of making more effective the civilian democratic control over the military was becoming easier.

The clarity and inevitability of social transition from totalitarian socialism to capitalism, constitutionally sanctioned in 1991, was further

strengthened by the collapse of the Soviet Union. The next two to three years finally clarified the need to join NATO – a need that stemmed from the new democratic and market oriented society and from the national security environment of Bulgaria.

Thus it was not the overcoming of the ‘penetrative’ Communist model of civil-military relations, but the social repercussions of the armed forces cuts that turned to be the central destabilising factor of the Bulgarian civil-military relations. The Bulgarian military, especially the officer corps, have historically entertained a relatively decent social status. Several efforts to launch armed forces cuts always took place in an immature economic environment. The poverty of the mismanaged state, the high foreign debt, the slow and inefficient economic reform were the main factors of the economic conditions that could hardly back-up a deep and consistent military reform.

The last, most ambitious and rather successfully targeting the NATO standards armed forces cuts did start in 1998-99 in not much different economic conditions. Many cases of dismissed colonels or lieutenant-colonels, working as security guards for privates, but presently businessmen, and until recently servicemen to these same officers in the military units they commanded illustrate the drama of the situation. It is only shadowed by the cases of officers and sergeants who commit suicides after receiving the orders to leave the armed forces with no personal alternatives or chances for their families.

The President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, the Ministry of Defence and NGOs are doing a lot to manage in a least painful way the process of armed forces cuts. The Government has negotiated the support of international financial institutions, of individual NATO and EU countries in implementing a comprehensive compensating and adaptation program for those who have to go – officers, sergeants, soldiers, civilians. The popularity of the adaptation courses, which provide new qualification, is high.

Some job opportunities have been provided for officers with economic and law education by the Ministry of Finance. The private

sector also reacted positively, though in modest proportions to the call of the President to employ former officers of the armed forces.

Financial compensation and an interim period before leaving the armed forces have also been provided to those who were separated.

The further creation of jobs with an active governmental support will be the best guarantee of preserving the effectiveness of the civilian democratic control. The pledges of the country's state leaders on this issue are solemn. The hopes for carrying out successfully "Plan 2004" are great. The MoD, the Minister and his Deputies, representatives of think-tanks and NGOs, the media are carefully explaining to the public the aims of the military reform.

The civilian public has received a very significant message, re-transmitted to the military who leave the armed forces: in relative terms the officers and people in uniform in general who have to leave the armed forces are given better chances by the Government to make a new start than most of the civilians in similar situations outside the military establishment. A comparison between the opportunities, provided by the state for the research staff of a closed institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and for the military and civilian researchers of closed institutes within the framework of the armed forces shows a much better starting point for those who worked in the military system. Providing the men and women who are separated from the MoD with offices, laboratories, buildings, initial capital, contracts for particular projects, etc. is compared to nothing for the civilian academicians.

Though the economic and social situation in Bulgaria during the period of military reform is hard, there are very promising chances of raising the respect to the principle of the civilian democratic control over the military.

An issue, which has been for years neglected and was contradicting the principles of democracy, was finally placed on the right track: Turks, Roma and all other smaller ethnic minorities are already 'welcome' to the officer corps of the armed forces. A greater part of the problem in the past – the inadequate political management of the issue, has been

overcome. The internal ethnic situation, the parliamentary balancing of the ethnic issue and the regional stability, the good-neighbourly relations provides a positive environment for normalising this issue in the armed forces too. In the last ten years, although a symbol of national pride and patriotism, the armed forces never became the institution of ethnic division and conflict. Another part of the problem – the proper education of the representatives of the ethnic minorities has also been re-confirmed as an equal opportunity for all.

#### **d) The changing nature of the strategic culture: the military doctrine and defence reform**

The new legal framework, adopted in the 90's, influenced in an important way the shaping of the new military culture. The principle of "legality", if not exactly the rule of law, has always had a significant role throughout the new history of Bulgaria – after 1878. This factor, in combination with the natural generation changes throughout the decade of the 90's, especially with the determination to implement fully "Plan 2004", expected to draw the armed forces to the standards of NATO, led to a major shift in the Bulgarian military culture in the direction of full acceptance of the civilian democratic control over the military.

There still remain certain impediments to the realisation of this new military culture:

First, the level of knowledge and political culture in the formulation and administration of national security, defence and military issues by the civilian leadership is not high, though, with much effort, the level of adequacy is reached in most cases. A continuing practice of the civilian leadership is the too high reliance on the technical advice of military officers.

Second, a modest national security and defence expert community that has proved throughout the 90's its adequacy to the evolving issues and national interests of Bulgaria is not involved enough and its expertise is not yet fully utilised. This diminishes the potential of the civilian leadership to formulate alternative solutions in the area of

national security and defence. Though this state of affairs is better in comparison to the similar activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more needs to be done to keep to the high level of requirements of the democratic policy-making and implementation process.

Third, the officers and the generals do not always perceive the specific repercussions of the principle of separation of powers on the military leadership adequately. However, with the improvements of the education process in the military system this obstacle is of a diminishing significance.

The National Security Concept defines the principles and landmarks, which are the basis of the *new Military Doctrine* adopted by the Parliament on 8 April 1999. The document closed the circle of regulated responsibilities for national security and defence. It complements the set of missions and functions of the Bulgarian Armed Forces, as defined in the Constitution, the National Security Concept and the Defence and the Armed Forces Act (1995, amended 1997, 2000). It emphasises their role for guaranteeing national security, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. With the Military Doctrine for the first time a Parliamentary decision determined the peacetime and wartime size of the Armed Forces as well as the directions and landmarks for their development.

The philosophy of the new Military Doctrine consists of putting the accent on the thesis that involvement of the country in a military conflict should be avoided by strengthening international security and stability. At the same time the sovereignty, security and independence of Bulgaria should be guaranteed through interaction and integration in European and Euro-Atlantic security structures and through a national defence policy that is adequate to the potential threats.

The Military Doctrine enlarges the spectrum of functions being carried out by the Armed Forces. The deterrence and defence functions are complemented by peacekeeping, humanitarian and rescue functions, by functions for assistance and by the acceleration of Bulgaria's integration in NATO, as well as by social functions for creating in the



citizens of a feeling of security, for the education of youth in the spirit of patriotism and strengthening the ethnic cohesion of the nation.

The main goals of the new Bulgarian military policy which determine the character of the Armed Forces' main roles are:

- To support the efforts of the international community for guaranteeing peace and security;
- To prevent the country's involvement in armed conflicts;
- To guarantee the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.

The Bulgarian AF possesses important potential for implementing its *social mission*. The Armed Forces perform it by contributing to the integration of the social and ethnic groups in society; educating youth in a "European" spirit; generating in citizens feelings of security and safety, of reliability in case of natural and other disasters; contributing to the development of education, science and higher technologies; clarifying the goals and strategy for the integration of Bulgaria in NATO and EU.

Discussions about the necessity of *defence reform*<sup>5</sup> began in Bulgaria during the first non-communist government in 1992 – the Government of the Union of Democratic Forces with Prime Minister Mr. Philip Dimitrov and Minister of Defence Mr. Dimitar Ludzhev). Since then all the efforts to transfer the Armed Forces into a new type and institution were symbolic, slowly achieved and limited in effect. For the first time the reengineering of the Armed Forces was placed among the major tasks and priorities in the program "*Bulgaria 2001*" of Mr. Ivan Kostov's Government. The declared goal is to structurally reform the defence establishment and to optimise the personnel in view of the efficient realisation of tasks defined by the National Security Concept and the Military Doctrine. The reorganisation is related to transforming the structure and personnel of the Army in compliance with the conditions of the military-strategic environment, financial-economic and

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<sup>5</sup> See in greater detail: Velizar Shalamanov, CHANGING THE STRATEGIC CULTURE: POLITICAL AND MILITARY ASPECTS OF DEFENCE REFORM IN POST COMMUNIST BULGARIA, University of Glasgow, 1999.

demographic capacities of the country and with the enhanced achievement of the high level of interoperability with NATO forces.

Certain difficulties have resulted from the inheritance from the Cold War characteristics of the Armed Forces - level of combat and mobilisation readiness, numerical and combat strength, the disposition which were not sustainable and, as far as the military and political situation is concerned, its maintenance was debatable and even groundless.

The reform of the Bulgarian Armed Forces is being determined by the changed military and political and strategic situation in Europe and particularly on the Balkans, as well as by the economic state of the country and related problems of a financial, material and technical character. Additionally, during the last few years, the demographic factor, which consists of the progressive decrease of human resources that are fit for service in the AF, is having a negative effect.

In previous years, because of the insufficient funding of the BAF, its combat training and provision of the troops with modern armaments and equipment were extremely limited. The field, flight and naval training of the commanders, staffs and troops have been decreased to a considerable extent.

*The defence reform plan* (known as *Plan 2004*<sup>6</sup>), the execution of which started in 2000, has four main goals: to make the Armed Forces adequate to the strategic environment and in condition to face the challenges of new types of conflicts and crises, to have a high level of interoperability with NATO no later than 2001-2002, to have potential for an effective contribution in crises response operations and to have a realistic size in accordance with the level of resources the country can provide for defence. To meet these goals, the designers of the plan followed several basic principles and approaches stemming from the

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<sup>6</sup> PLAN FOR THE ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE BY THE YEAR 2004, in: "Bulgaria's Way: A Book for the Partners", MoD, 1999, p. 40-47. Also available on-line at <http://www.md.government.bg>

new strategic culture: Ensuring that the Armed Forces have the resources to develop military strategic reasoning, the transition to this model should lead to a gradual and constant increase in the capabilities of the Armed Forces; the organisational structure should be based on units and formations interoperable with the respective formations of NATO forces; the command and control system in peacetime should be developed on three levels - strategic, operational and tactical; the Rapid Reaction Forces should be a priority when recruiting career soldiers and procuring armament and equipment, and will have priority in providing resources; the development of the reserve formations and units for peacetime implies forming a unit fully recruited with personnel, armament, and equipment and reduced to a minimum staff and support elements, the restructuring of the units and formations should be accompanied by a reduction of the number of garrisons and barracks and the development of the system for training of troops, the command staff and the HQs should be done via the resources for preparation of fully combat ready and trained units and formations.

The principles and approaches to achieve the new model of the BAF are realised by managing organs with a new profile under the comprehensive leadership of the General Staff. The latter was reformed and became adequate to the central administration of the Ministry of Defence and presently consists of six departments of NATO's type – personnel, intelligence, operations, logistics, force planning, and communications.

The new strategic culture also reflects the *organisational* formula of the perspective Armed Forces. The idea is that until 2004 the Armed Forces should be radically reorganised in structural and functional aspects.

Structurally, the Armed Forces are planned to have a defensive character, to be capable of defending the territory of the country without being directed against a specific adversary, and to achieve a high degree of interoperability with NATO forces as early as the preparation for accession. The Bulgarian Armed Forces comprise Army, Air Force, Navy and supporting elements. Functionally, the forces are organised in

Rapid Reaction Forces (RRF) with Immediate Reaction element, Defence Forces and Territorial Defence Troops.

The redesign of the *defence planning process* in Bulgaria was a priority task from both civilian control and effective management point of view. As in any reengineering effort, it has to overcome organisational inertia, perception roadblocks and, in some cases, overt or covert resistance. The Defence Planning Directorate was established in MoD as a new instrument of the civilian political leadership for strategic planning and guidance of defence activities. Led by a civilian expert the Directorate is designed in a way to allow the performance of the following main functions of the civilian Minister of Defence:

- Formulation of defence policy, the policy on development of strategies, concepts, and doctrines and oversight of the process of their implementation into field manuals and other regulative documents of the Bulgarian Armed Forces;
- Co-ordination of the force development activities;
- Formulation of the policy on the development of weapon systems, armaments and equipment, the defence information infrastructure and the system for command and control;
- Co-ordination and oversight of the execution of plans and programs for force development, technological development, development of the command and control systems to guarantee interoperability with NATO and compatibility with the national information infrastructure;
- Co-ordination of scientific studies, R&D in the interest of defence planning, defence and force development, and building integration potential.

The process of defence planning is supported by a new established *Institute for Advanced Defence Research* (IADR) that will unite practically all scientific, research and development activities conducted at the Ministry of Defence. The design of IADR is a straightforward consequence of reengineering and may be examined as an example of streamlining, consolidation of activities, and flattening of the organisation. It supports the concept of outsourcing scientific studies, R&D and the introduction of competition in meeting the needs of the defence establishment.

Plan 2004 is the first attempt for such a radical defence reform. The deep structural qualitative and quantitative changes in the defence system and especially in the Bulgarian Armed Forces were based for the first time on politically determined factors, expert models and adequate resource forecasts. Further development of the defence system, the MoD and Bulgarian armed forces and programmes of EU and NATO membership are the key tasks of country's defence policy. Bulgaria's consistent policy in this aspect is in full agreement with its national interests.

## **VI Conclusion**

The democratic oversight on Armed Forces and the other national security structures may be applied only if all the elements of the separated powers function perfectly in the framework of their competence and if they co-operate efficiently on the basis of set principles.

It cannot be denied that certain problems exist in the functioning of the institutional system of the national security precisely in relation to democratic control over the Armed Forces and some of the security services. The provisions of the Constitution and the law do not sufficiently clarify the conditions necessary for constructing an efficient mechanism that would allow the state institutions to fully implement their constitutional obligations towards the Armed Forces. In this respect, some issues need to be further improved:

- How further to be clarified the power and responsibilities of the National Assembly, the President, the Council of Ministers, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of General Staff in order to improve the effectiveness of the defence policy formulation and implementation?
- What should be the model of the General Staff - of a "classical" or "joint" type?
- How much political control to exercise over the General Staff and in which way to improve and use professional military expertise, etc.?

There is, however, a list of measures that are still in the process of developing before a productive political civilian direction and democratic oversight to be effectively implemented:

- *“Civilising” the Ministry of Defence.* It is not possible for the Minister of Defence to execute civilian control when his staff consists mainly of military who prepare his decisions, like the experience prior to 1997. Civilians have been appointed on most of the key posts of the MoD directorates that were formerly occupied by militaries. This is a necessary prerequisite for strengthening civilian control and needs to continue in the future. In accordance with present policy, there is a trend the optimisation of the central administration structure to continue, including the reduction of personnel, reshuffling of sections based on functional homogeneity and economic efficiency of work in the conditions of market economy.
- *Adopting a managerial style of “guidance-management-feedback” of the Minister of Defence.* The authorisation of a person to carry out a determined activity and to bear responsibility for it is made by his/her appointment to the job, and not by re-signing his orders or collecting opinions on elementary questions. The control has to be exercised at certain stages and on the results, and not by constant feeling that something is “hanging over his/her head”.
- *Adopting a programming method of resources management* the base of which is unconditionally the Minister of Defence’s staff and not mainly General Staff offices. In this sphere of management, the professional military should be used exclusively as experts, and not as financial specialists and clerks.
- *Placing the Public Relations Office* among the priorities of the civilian minister’s activities. The time will come when the Minister of Defence will start a “fight” for the budget that will be doomed without support of the public.
- *Expanding the military education and training* of the civil employees, Members of Parliament, journalists who work in the defence field, as well as the military who work in joint civil-military teams.
- *Optimising the administration scheme* in the defence field. It is not admissible that the institution that elaborates the tasks is not able to manage the resources needed for their implementation.

- *Adapting the military to modern society:*
  - In the social aspect - maintaining the families of the military, regulating the civil-military relations at a local level, improving the veterans' status, expanding women's role in the Armed Forces (Women may serve in the Bulgarian AF both on civilian and military positions. The military positions that may be occupied by women will be determined by the Minister of Defence, acting on a proposal by the Chief of the General Staff);
  - From a moral point of view - psychological support of the personnel in the combat units, ethics in the management and administrating of the service processes;
  - From a legal point of view - improving the legislation concerning military service, adapting the internal norms, regulations and mechanisms to the new needs of international relations of the Armed Forces etc.

What still has to be done is to solve the problems at national level in accordance with the *basic democratic requirements*:

- Clear and unequivocal separation of the obligations and responsibilities of each institution that takes part in the democratic control of the Armed Forces in accordance with the fundamental objective needs of the command and management of security and defence in peace time, in conditions of military-political crisis and in armed conflict
- Possibilities for objective, profound and detailed parliamentary control over the Armed Forces and all services, related to security and defence
- Clear differentiation of the functions of the General Staff and military professionals
- Ensuring adequate roles and place of the Armed Forces and the resources allotted to them.

In relative terms Bulgaria has passed the longer part of its way to a working democratic control of the armed forces, reaching a level close to the requirements for NATO membership.

In absolute terms, however, a more detailed learning process and analytical framework should allow a more careful and precise assessment. The understanding of the authors is that – for one reason or

another – all democracies need to continue their efforts to keep and improve the state of their own national civil-military relations. In that respect, Bulgaria has the will and the experience to share with its partners. One recent confirmation is the invitation to be co-founder of the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control over the Armed Forces. Another is the joint Bulgarian-UK initiative within the Stability Pact Working Table III of “Transparency of Defence Budgeting” that contributes not only to the efficiency of democratic control within a single country, but also to dissemination of ‘good governance’ practices in the countries of South-East Europe, increased confidence among them and the stability in the region.

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