IN – HOUSE CHALLENGES OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY POLICY IN POST-COMMUNIST BULGARIA

Vladimir Milenski

If men were angels,
no government would be necessary.
If angels were to govern men,
neither external nor internal controls
on government would be necessary.

James Madison, Federalist № 51
Independent Journal, 6 February 1788

Abstract

The article offers an analysis of major current in-house challenges to an effective defence and security policy-making and implementation, based on the author's extensive experience in a post-communist environment. With clear understanding and belief that without dealing with – or at least mitigating – these inner challenges first, any expectations for a long-term, effective, efficient, and sustainable defence and security policy are not only illusory but also dangerous for the nation, the article aims at inspiring and providing food for broader discussion and at encouraging applied and academic analyses, as well as at supporting immediate practical steps to successfully manage these challenges.

Why In-house Challenges First?

Defence and Security policy attracts Bulgarian public attention predominantly in two cases: more often, when an expensive armaments acquisition project is competing for resources in the parliament, and occasionally, when a populist action[1] or event comes on public stage. Usually both these are gravely misinterpreted or partially presented, thus with a twisted result and a very short-lived defence and security effect. There is virtually no significant public discussion and awareness about the national security and the role of defence policy today, and there is no more natural place to search for reasons than where this policy is housed.

Almost every sectorial policy of the Bulgarian Governments during the transition-to-democracy period was – and some still are – subject of external criticism, and Defence and Security policy makes no exception. With the effective NATO and EU membership this materialized in harder tangible impacts, both from peer partners and allies, but even more so by these organisations' collective or supranational governing bodies.

Although understanding that in the real world of public policy ideal arrangements are impossible, external reactions, but also Bulgaria's own analyses (few of them explicitly and more between lines[2]) indicate that there are quite a few 'cracks' in the functioning of the public policy for defence and security. Each attempt at closing those 'cracks' is worth the effort; for every experience of mankind shows that the slightest flaw in the system of defining and implementing

[1] Like military parades or war commemorations.
[2] e.g. the Annual and Quarterly Reports on the Status of Defence and the Armed Forces, published regularly on the MoD website www.mod.bg.

a public policy is immediately exploited, by action or inaction, and always to the detriment of the public interest – a matter most easily associated with *corruption*.

The in-house defence and security policy challenges – unlike the abundant works regarding those standing 'before' it – should have attracted the interest of practitioners for at least three reasons. Firstly and most obviously, because of the critical importance, significance and impact potential of the product expected from this particular public policy. Secondly, because of the enormous public financial resources and allocated infrastructure assets, and even more so – the human capital devoted to it. And third and least obvious, but probably most important, is that every built-in weakness or disability of this particular policy 'invites' threats directly against it, i.e. the external perils are surely 'following' the inner systemic defence and security policy vulnerabilities to exploit them best, for this would be the perfect blow strait in the heart of any defence system.

Whereas what is at stake if defence and security policy fails hardly needs elaboration; and similarly, whether a defence and security policy resources have been harnessed to the best benefit of nation's interest is a matter of vast interpretations, the latter seems to be the one, over which the Government has the fullest, most direct and least costly control, here and now. And if this sounds a tad too dialectical, one should always remember that no other governmental ministry is having power over public resources of such a magnitude. The Ministry of Defence, as the custodian of defence and security policy is charged with the greatest responsibility, but also the full authority to manage, operate and utilise all those in delivering its product, i.e., unlimited violence in the pursuit of State Objectives.

As an illustration we can outline that for the Government's defence policy, the Ministry of Defence manages an annual budget at about 2 % [3] of the Gross Domestic Product, operates huge infrastructure assets and extensive real estate holdings, as well it controls significant material resources, some directly under its purview and others indirectly, by providing 'national security and defence' justification for Government control over enormous for the Bulgarian economy "war-time reserves", much of which is with dubious motives today. Most important of all, the Ministry of Defence keeps permanently busy about 37,000 people, or more than 1 % of the economically active [4] part of the nation. If additionally we consider the armed forces' male-female ratio, we can see that approximately 1.7 % of the active male population is "bestowed" to supporting defence policy. And finally, the Ministry of Defence manages the most critical resource monopoly of the State – the monopoly over the armed force.

That inner problems (or "challenges" as we euphemistically call them lately) exist, there is hardly any doubt. But any chance of dealing with them depends first and foremost on open and honest acceptance of their existence, followed by a firm commitment to solving these problems, continuous communication between the administration and politicians, between the Ministry of Defence and the wider public, as well as on critically needed skilled leadership to guide the system and to steer the continuous and never ending process of change.

Before going in details, two points yet demand clarity from the title of this paper: firstly, why 'post-communist' instead of 'democratic' Bulgaria; and secondly what exactly is that 'security', which goes so firmly hand in hand with defence. Both issues are often misinterpreted, thus serving wrong, if not malicious cause.

„Post-Communist" vs. "Democratic"

Putting aside conspiracy theories, we might be tempted to think that this belated interest to our subject is an innate defect of perhaps all nascent democracies. Our point is the opposite – its

[3] The approximate amount, including the pensions and fluctuating as the economic outlook suggests every year.
[4] The economically active part of the Bulgarian population is currently around 3.3 million people (Bulgarian National Statistical Institute, www.nsi.bg).

cause has effectively little to do with the nascence of democracy. Where it really stems from is the still lurking remnants of the authoritarian past.

Indeed many facts keep disturbing our confidence when calling our society "democratic" today. At least to appease partially the readers' resentment, we should clarify that under this definition we mean the possession of these structural characteristics and functional parameters descriptive of the organisation and functioning of those societies, whose unions Bulgaria recently joined – the European Union and NATO.

In a free interpretation, these characteristics and indicators are the whole network of values and principles on which these organisations are based, and that their members are supposedly sharing and upholding, and indeed are bound to follow and implement. It is however clear, that a mere declaration of sharing, supporting and following these values and principles, even with a formal existence of key government structures, is hardly enough to ensure their effective implementation.

Alternatively one can follow the systemic approach of expanding democracy into its "semi-independent constituent categories: the bureaucratic structure, the maturity of civil and political society, the rule of law, and the accountability and responsiveness of government"[5]. This will expose the great many numbers of difficulties, misinterpretations and false implementations, as well as many sheer failures in building this construction, especially when the departure status is a half-a-century-old communist society with its well-established brain-washed public mentality and deeply entrenched and hardened economic and power networks. While from such a starting position the society is eager to change, it is still very volatile by being only partially aware, thus not clear what this transition actually involves.

With all its vicissitudes, this transition to democracy can be considered completed "when sufficient agreement has been reached about political procedures to produce an elected government, when a government comes to power that is the direct result of a free and popular vote, when this government *de facto* has the authority to generate new policies, and when the executive, legislative and judicial power, generated by the new democracy does not have to share power with other bodies *de jure"*[6]. And even after completing that transition, a yet more arduous and protracted process follows, one of „many tasks that need to be accomplished, conditions that must be established, and attitudes and habits that must be cultivated before democracy could be considered consolidated"[7].

Without going any deeper we can confidently summarise that Bulgarian transition to democracy has not been completed yet, let alone consolidated. In this environment any consideration of our subject as part of the democracy will be virtually shifting the blame onto a wrong "culprit" along with vindicating or rather disguising the real one. Because if on the road to any destination, problems occur, it is not the destination that can be blamed, it is at the departure position and the traveler to look for an explanation.

Therefore, it seems reasonable not to rush in applying the term democracy here, firstly because although the society is moving towards it, there is still a long way to go. And secondly because any precipitously unsubstantiated use of this term loads it wrongly with grave misconceptions in the post-communist society, which by any rate is still poorly familiarised with the characteristics and functioning of a modern western-type democracy. Such a premature usage only brings more grist to the mill of all those overt or disguised antagonists of democracy and offers them a 'golden' opportunity, by substituting values and terms, to manipulate public

[5] Brady, Kyle (2012-07-17). The Facade of Russian Democracy: Examining the Quality and Truth of Democracy in the Russian Federation (p. 3). Kyle R. Brady. Kindle Edition.

[6] Stepan, Alfred; Linz, Juan J. (1996-08-08). Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe (Kindle Location 331). Johns Hopkins University Press. Kindle Edition.

[7] Ibid. 365-366.

opinion and motivation at any of the numerous difficulties that society faces in this long and complicated journey.

Why "Defence and Security", and what "Security"?

There is only one security for which a nation-state creates its military instrument – the National Security. Broadly said, the National Security is ***the*** core external mission for every government, and it comprises all those areas, where the access over a resource that is critical for the nation is beyond this government's control. All these areas fall naturally within the heart function of the nation's foreign policy, which makes its best to maximise this control, using its diplomatic powers. In instances where the latter appears insufficient, the military instrument is kept handy and ready. This logic of the "foreign–security–defence" policy relation is obvious in the construct of NATO and even more explicit in the European Union today. Both organisations' most current strategic documents – "The Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation"[8] and the EU Security Strategy[9] – are clear from the beginning to the end about this cause-effect relationship and its priorities.

In contemporary Bulgaria however, loose talk and vague communication often prevails even the official national security narrative. Over the last 23 years overlapping areas of competence and unclear responsibilities ended up in having neither competent enough nor clearly responsible authority, and even less resources for when-and-where the national security is indeed at stake. Even a simple list of state structures, bodies and governmental policies pretentiously bearing '(national) security' in their titles or mission statements, makes the public confused rather than convinced and experts – lost in next to endless arguments with little effect. Suffice to mention that it took Bulgaria 22 years to just recently mature for its first try at creating a National Security Strategy[10]. And notwithstanding the fact that this was a clear achievement toward political and economic modernity, even a quick comparative reading of this supreme national document with NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept and the EU's 2003 Security Strategy will yet again provide a plethora of evidence for how widely the National Security Strategy diverges from these documents' concept, vision and approach; despite the usual litany of assurances and admonishments of being developed "after a profound analysis" of and "in full coherence" with them. A careful reading reveals instead, a mish-mash of excerpts from NATO Strategic Concept and EU Security Strategy and a mass of internally generated state problems, couched under a Western-type 'national security' narrative. The document is heavily misbalanced towards being concerned more with the 'State Security' in its *'KGB'* sense rather than with National Security. It presents many factual or reasonably anticipated failures of internal governmental policies (predominantly Justice and Home Affairs, Energy and Economy, Social policies, Demography, Education etc.) as threats to the National Security – it might sound ridiculous, but the logic of this "strategy" dictates that apparently the biggest threat to the nation is its own ill performing government. Neither the volume nor the aim of this analysis suggests commenting further that matter - we should stop simply by saying that real National Security Strategy is desperately needed. Yet not tomorrow, now!

What cries to be explained and entrenched, exactly because it slipped the attention and went off mainstream from this National Security Strategy, is that no nations' defence policy can be taken seriously if it doesn't go together with the national security policy and yet further again,

[8] http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120214_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.
[9] http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf.
[10] Adopted in February 2011 - http://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/strategicheski/20110319_strategia_za_nacionalna_sigurnost.pdf.

as a building block of nation's foreign policy. And these three make the core and substance of National Security. Anything else would be fragmentation and dilution, inefficiency and mock.

Another point for the case of this paper: The short historical distance has traditionally been considered a challenge to all attempts for such papers and is often a preferred exoneration for avoiding awkward issues of the day. Our immediate response would be that, unfortunately, we cannot stop the course of life to make 'repairs' – what is at stake, as we saw earlier, is of such a great magnitude that it is necessary to reform as we go along. So, in practical terms, this little historical distance is rather an advantage because it provides immediately verifiable evidence and circumstances to interpret and understand facts, but mostly it offers an opportunity to undertake prompt corrective steps, provided of course that the society generates sufficient political wisdom and supports the bold statesmanship needed for such moves. But even without enough of the latter, putting in the limelight and publicly discussing these long-concealed facts or manipulatively presented half-truths is an indispensible practical step, which in tandem with both theoretical and applied science would only assist and support a successful solution for these apparently persistent challenges.

Defence and Security Policy some 23 years since the beginning of the journey: short term priorities – long term problems

Of all the armed forces in Europe today most are armed, but only a few are actually 'forces', as per what they are politically declared to be capable of. In short, most are unable of producing defence 'outcomes' and this situation is only going to grow worse as their respective stocks of legacy weapon platforms and systems literally rust away, and precious little has been planned in a disciplined way to replace them with real-demand capabilities. The reason for that can be found at one and only one place - poorly formulated, presented and implemented defence and security policy.

Operating in tandem and in support of foreign policy, defence and security appears to be a major challenge to both political and administrative levels, respectively responsible for policy-making and implementation. Yet it is even harder of a challenge for the general public, which today often appears puzzled to comprehend it clearly and justifiably. Both sides continue to wander between the nostalgia for yesterday's comfortable certainties and the variable realities of today, requiring pro-active and pre-emptive policy making, especially in view of the ambiguous dynamics of the future.

That the formulation and implementation of defence and security policy in Bulgaria is such a challenge becomes clear even by the sheer tracking of official documents, which are supposed to present and justify policies before the public, and even more so those required by law to regularly report to the taxpaying electorate 'What are the results (i.e., performance)?' of this policy. Their comparison with publications on the same or similar occasions in the official EU or NATO websites and in specialized media, mainly outside Bulgaria, imposes a feeling of parallel worlds: the world of defence and security policy statements and declaration, and on the other hand, the world of reality. Obviously, defence and security policy is characterised by a good dose of ambivalence, proven by more than a decade long continuum of 'grandiose' long term plans, updated plans, strategic defence reviews and revised reviews, prescribing adaptations, restructurings, reforms, reorganisations, transformations, improvements and perfections, each one claiming deepest statesmanship thinking and wisdom applied, and each soon failing. Often in Bulgaria, information regarding worrying trends and developments affecting defence and security either radiates calm satisfaction of a job-well-done and a sense of comfort in an environment of acceptably growing collective defence, or dismisses the gravity of how this

affects Bulgaria's interests, and – if more openly mentioned – it's interpreted away of any proactive defence and security policy toward lip service of slogans.

This ambivalence feeling further solidifies in the light of those – already mentioned at the beginning – external impacts, coming from NATO and EU. Without falling into legalism and details concerning the legal powers or binding consequences of these impacts, it is sufficient to recall that like the well-known regular European Commission's reports on Bulgaria's progress under the EU's Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification, a similar process of regular "verification for compliance" exists in NATO – indeed focused on the national defence and security system as part of the collective one within the Alliance. Moreover, this process applies not only to Bulgaria, but to all Member States maintaining its positive catalyst effect. [11] Understandably, major parts of these reports are classified, and thus cannot be published. Nevertheless, they are fully accessible to the ministry and armed forces staff responsible for these matters. They are also at full disposal to the leadership of the armed forces and to the political leadership of the ministry, as per their functions' requirements, but also to the respective members of the state's executive and legislative branches. This is especially important for our analysis because it should pre-empt arguments like 'being unaware' (for the command and staff) or 'has been misled' (for the political leadership), when eventually searching for possible causes of problems.

Collective (ir)responsibility or the 'Hot Potato' Syndrome

Defence and security policy goes hand in hand and is called upon to support a nation's foreign policy. If genuinely accepted and applied, this should clearly be visible in a permanent relation, aligning the strategic aims of the former with the grand objectives of the latter. Trying to draw from its foreign policy though, Bulgaria's historical record suggests that it "has traditionally been perceived as tending to follow already established agendas rather than contributing to the design and formulation of new ones." [12] "A foreign 'policy-taker', historically the country's foreign policy choices have been made in the capitals of the neighbouring empires."[13], and "the pattern of foreign policy-making based on such historical and geopolitical premises can be characterised, therefore, as re-active rather than pro-active". Going further, "even in cases where long term political vision is displayed… it is careful not to deviate too much from the "mainstream", or it is *suiviste*, in the words of the late French President François Mitterrand"[14].

Whether in this context it is legitimate to assume that same applies to defence and security policy is not as important as the fact that the law seems to have taken special care to harden this state of affairs. It is interesting for example that, as a step prior to its implementation, the very formulation of policy is assigned to nobody by the national legal framework. The law has taken care to specify in detail 'how' and 'who' 'applies', 'conducts', 'implements' or 'executes' the policy, but there is no clarity at all as to when and where its genesis occurs and even less - who is the author that is also responsible and accountable for this task. The actions of shaping, designing, creating and making policy seem as if they are deliberately avoided in the law. As a result, the 'author' of defence and security policy appears non-identifiable or at best, veiled behind collective bodies or political party groups which are impossible to be held

[11] Barany, Zoltan (2012-09-16). The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas (Kindle Locations 4992-4994). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.
[12] Krassimir Y. Nikolov, Black Sea Regional Cooperation and Bulgaria: Context, Concepts and Actors, http://www.harvard-bssp.org/static/files/353/bs_bulgaria.pdf, p. 47
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

responsible in case of a policy failure. Indeed, there is a possibility of holding Ministers politically responsible, and sometimes morally, for the top brass. As recent history suggests, for all the years of transition, with all the recognised wrong policy and management decisions, not a single liability has been imposed, with the exception of the resignation of one general officer, although never made publicly clear if he was the right one or not, following the 2008 explosion of a major ammunition depot some five kilometres from Sofia; and indeed, by extension, the regular negative electoral results of incumbent governments following the end of their mandates.

Nevertheless, that way of solving defects in policy performance must be the absolute last resort, having too great a social and political cost, it is unacceptable to rely directly and solely on this lever. So the clearly present defence and security policy appears to be like an orphan child with unknown parents - many are willing to take care of it with the apparent amount of child benefits (defence budget and other resources), but no one recognizes the child as own when it comes to carrying out the "messy tasks."

Against this background it seems that the security and defence policy, like a 'hot potato' - appealing because of the benefits it bears (no one objects to apply, conduct, implement, carry it out etc.), but it seems to push officials away when it comes to taking the responsibilities needed attend it: there is a stubborn refusal to both assigning and responsibility-taking for policy shaping, designing or making. This, seemingly deliberate ambiguity, materializes further down in the regulations and actions, where the possibility of attributing responsibility is yet further minimised by applying the ubiquitous method of various 'advisory boards', 'consultative committees', and 'working groups'. The core of the problem here is that their composition is always (no exceptions are known) mixed so that experts are put on the same table with the political and senior management level. In this way, the expertise can be freely manipulated in the interests of parochial or unclear goals, and responsibility can be easily concealed behind the same, thereafter manipulated expertise.

The resulting divergence between declarations and reality grows and it is not without consequence. The system of defence and security is increasingly a subject of dual pressure: on the one hand, due to the open political system in terms of the EU and NATO membership, and on the other due to the effects of the 'global village'. The former results in serious and constant external pressure from partners for compliance with the union, and the latter, although with some time lag, in an internal pressure from both the administration itself and from voters/taxpayers, thanks to the availability of independent information and impartial comparative analyses.

Additionally, this state of anonymity in defence and security policy inevitably and effectively undermines any attempt of assertive leadership and stifles initiative not only for policy-making, but also in its routine implementation, and cements deeply rooted 'disciple mentality' at all levels of governance.

"Politics" vs. "Policy" or the politics against itself

A "modern ministry of defence has three main functions. First, as part of the state administrative structure, it creates and delivers the Government's defence and security policy within the budget given. Second, as an operative organisation it is organising and leading the use of force in times of crisis or as a political act. Thirdly, increasingly a modern defence ministry is now a national point of contact for international organisations and allies for delivering sophisticated defence and security cooperation, and in extreme cases to ensure an effective delivery of a multinational force. This spectrum of tasks and responsibilities creates a duality of requirement where on the one hand the MOD staff must be involved in policy-making, in detailed financial staffwork and long-term analyses, and on the other – it may be called upon in a crisis to deliver 'life or death' decision-making in very short timeframes. These tasks are at

opposite ends of the work activity spectrum, but their coexistence within same house explains the complexity of the organisation needed and the challenge that the MOD staff, management and political leadership is facing. [15]

The first, seemingly trivial but actually very serious challenge before the organisation is the debate – turning nearly 'theological' – regarding differences between politics (политика) and policies (политики)[16], in which the administration and political leaders face serious difficulties to reach a common understanding and even more so to demonstrate a shared approach in practice. The problem emerged immediately following the first contacts of defence and security policy with NATO, which urgently required reaching an effective level of political interoperability, when new vocabulary and activities at the political and management level were introduced, without these being clearly interpreted, uniformly defined or implemented. The obvious terminology complications of translating these highly nuanced concepts by a same word, differing only by singular or plural (политика - политики) continues to pose a major problem in practice and is regularly exploited as plausible excuse for holding the system back and strangling initiative.

If we agree that "*policy* is all decisions, actions, objectives and principles that affect the way people and organisations conduct their activities and spend their budget"[17], it is clear that the defence and security policy is complex and integrated expression of at least several major policies, which only in their harmonization, coherence and consistency can produce an effective and efficient defence and security policy within the allocated budget. From this we can also conclude that if there are doubts or facts, pointing to inefficiency or ineffectiveness of the policy as a whole – of which the reality is affluent – the reason is obviously inconsistency and incoherence among individual policies; in other words, in defective functional-structural organisation of the authority under whose roof they are reasoned, formed and implemented.

Functional-structural defects or the boomerang of 'good' intentions

Certainly every Governmental agency endeavours to improve its organisational arrangement and Ministry of Defence makes no exception – both as part of the collective effort of the Government to improve the state administration as a whole, and individually, by drafting proposals to the Parliament for changes in the Law on Defence and the Armed Forces[18]. It also, and even more importantly, forwards proposals to the Council of Ministers on the "Regulations of the System of the Ministry of Defence"[19] – i.e. the document providing terms of reference for the Ministry of Defence, describing its organisational structure and manpower, and assigning functions and relationships.

The hitherto depicted challenges, though, pose insurmountable obstacles and render these efforts largely futile[20]. The practical inability to clearly entrust a structure with certain policy ***making*** – of course ***for the Minister*** who ultimately rejects or accepts and approves it, ends up in the ubiquitous use of the term "подпомага" (meaning 'help', 'give assistance') when assigning

[15] Grant (2010) "Running an Efficient and Effective MOD". Centre for Civil Military Relations training paper for MOD Bulgaria, Published 5 July 2010.
[16] In Bulgarian language the words policy and politics are translated in one and the same word; to differentiate their meanings 'politics' is kept in singular 'политика', while 'policy' is used in the plural 'политики'.
[17] Grant (2006) "Making Policy". Training presentation for MOD Estonia, Published 21 April 2006.
[18] http://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/zakoni/20120427_ZOVSRB.pdf.
[19] Regulations of the System of the Ministry of Defence, http://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/podzakonovi_aktove/20120316_MO_UP.pdf.
[20] The current Law on Defence and the Armed Forces, though promulgated in May 2009 already has accumulated 14 changes, and the Ministry of Defence sees new or amended Regulations of its System twice a year on average (more frequent is law-restricted).

missions and tasks to the major structural units, i.e. Directorates of the ministry. This term implicitly suggests re-active provision of *'lending helping hand',* rather than pro-actively *"making policy for"* the Minister. With thusly defined tasks for all major structures within the ministry[21], it looks as if the Minister must be a super-expert, and the administration is there to only complement his 'phenomenal' capability. What this in fact implies and inculcates is an *excessive centralisation*.

Such mission statements inherently stimulate sluggish administration by suggesting bottom-up passivity and wait-and-see behaviour unless the 'help' is requested and articulated well (help is given when needed and asked for, isn't it?). And when it's requested, or rather ordered, it triggers lots of hectic activity – in haste, with little time and information, reactive and to usually dubious effect, as adage puts it "jogging on the spot" – much energy, till enervation, for moving little or nowhere. Ironically – or rather expected – this same argument is often used top-down in hinting at staff not to be overzealous with their occasional sparks of initiative. In fact, this strengthens and consolidates the yet existing mentality of over-centralisation – inherited and deeply rooted in mind-sets of both politicians and the administration, not to mention the traditional military veneration of it.

This vertical over-centralisation with its inherently sluggish stove-piping, and imperviousness and resistance for any significant horizontal staffwork, has a strangling effect on the organisation. It kills not only the ability to anticipate and pre-empt – let alone to shape – the security environment, but often even to just keep track of its dynamics, which are ever more demanding in the complex multinational architecture of NATO and EU. The system is hardly capable, to put it mildly, of quickly making any larger complex decision informed. Lofty statements of exhortations – something recently tried – cannot compensate for what the letter and the spirit of the law is obviously not endorsing. In such *modus operandi* the highest administrative, and even worse – the political level is continuously overwhelmed with administrative paperwork while the system is agonising in a policy paralysis, and the vast administrative capacity below stays virtually idle and underused and enjoys its time and secure job in waiting for retirement. Hence the mass of policy decisions come as out-dated laggards, which render resources used in vain – thus always in shortage.

Such total vertical control impedes progress and breeds lacklustre performance and corruption by motivating the creativity of bureaucracy for 'offsetting' its responsibility. Clever veteran staff is skilful in making undeniable recommendations – based on same official mission statements and tasks of the organisation – for establishing ad hoc working groups or consultative committees. The two usual justifications for as to firstly "adequately consider all the necessary expertise", and secondly to "look at one and the same problem from independent angles" is what in practise is exactly flawed.

The expertise is firstly spoiled since its responsibility is diluted (committee members from many different expert bodies) and accountability is shifted from its reasonable custodian onto the highest possible political official or general officer, who often presides at the committee. In its turn, this highest level is tempted not to object, appreciating the opportunity to directly steer – of course with best intentions – the expert advice, guiding it to the highest political interests. This might seem fair and legitimate. The problem is that it deprives the expertise of its most valuable feature – to be independent and to ensure long-term policy sustainability and check against the natural inclination of the political level towards its short term political horizons, rarely exceeding the electoral term of office. This is completely valid also for the general officers who naturally – and by law – are the only politically appointed military officers (the Minister proposes, the President appoints) – so they too follow the political agenda of the

[21] With weird exception – or perhaps omission – made only for the "Finances" Directorate, assigned with *Developing* the Accountancy Policy within the Ministry of Defence.

day. As a result, the immediate effect is an imbalanced decision-making where short-term goals are prevailing and long-term strategic ones are ignored.

Another serious defect appears when an active policy is proving ineffective or inefficient. Then upper level is 'condescending' to the incompetent advice, while also staying well protected behind this same advice (conveniently overlooking its own role in rendering the advice biased).

From the second argument's context, when seeking better assessment of an issue by looking at the same problem from independent angles, the 'ad hoc committee' approach is weak for yet another simple reason: since there are no overlapping functionaries in the system, only a very small number of officials are suitable by expertise and level to take part. This unavoidably forces assigning one and the same people to sit in all of these committees, which is already enough to spoil the very objective of the committee's existence. In summary, the pursued 'committee' effect is actually triply jeopardised: the expertise is diluted and biased, the responsibility is shifted and twisted, and the "second opinion", being given by those who gave 'the first' – flawed and a sham.

While this approach is usually beneficial between different ministries, and even mandatory at multinational and alliance level, within a ministry it is clear nonsense, abuse of power and evasion of responsibility.

Nevertheless, the 'committee' approach is even enshrined in the law and applied to most crucial policies such as those for defence capabilities, programming and budgeting, armaments and acquisition programmes, and quite indicatively – the policy for anti-corruption – the only committee that is explicitly permanent by title[22]. If common sense dictates that permanent structures are needed for issues of permanent existence, this hardly is the best credential for the Ministry. What is positive though, is that the system acknowledges its most serious problem: corruption exposure and vulnerability. Regrettably, as a countermeasure, the same 'poison' is applied, while an 'antidote' should be sought against it. The vicious circle is closed and the system shows more and more symptoms of a 'self-licking-lollipop'[23].

Such politico-administrative 'symbiosis' proves itself very difficult to crack. In addition to the countless legislative attempts, overlooking and reiterating the old flaws, the system from time to time attempts another 'shortcut' to efficiency, i.e. assigning – as an exception in modern democracies and even less for those in transition – a former military officer to a political office. On top of being disturbingly reminiscent of not so distant times, we can only summarise that the effects of such 'shortcuts' are quick but short-lived. While this approach requires and relies on a really dedicated, thus very small team of disciples, resistance is severe – system wide – in both administration and the military. It renders the organisation non-sustainable and returning to previous status, as soon as the incumbent is replaced.

Another, even more pernicious functional pitfall is the inclusion of political officials – either elected or politically appointed – in the administrative chain of command. The essence of the civil service and administration, both enshrined in law, is precisely the separation of politically elected (and appointed) officials from the expert levels of state administration, where the objective is to provide the political level with an impartial, unbiased and honest expertise, unaltered by the momentary political situation, in order to ensure policy effectiveness, efficiency and continuous sustainability.

While the letter of the law seems complied with, its spirit often suffers. This is especially the case when directly subordinating certain structures of the establishment under the Minister's direct authority and outside the administrative chain of command of the organisation. This results in the inability of the Ministry to provide complete product and actually generates a significant risk for breeding quasi "feudal-vassal" relationships. That this approach exists

[22] "Standing Committee on Anti-Corruption".

[23] An organization or entity whose sole purpose is to promote its own splendour and existence.

elsewhere and not only in Bulgaria[24] doesn't make it virtuous: it's obviously undermining the Ministry of Defence's ability to function uninterruptedly and to deliver its holistic product for most tense crisis situations. Another incarnation of this same approach is, when a key Director's position is kept vacant, as long as pleased[25]. Holding a Directorate – what is supposed to be the main policy 'engine' – permanently 'decapitated' by not appointing a titular – can have only one reasonable explanation: the political level finds this 'empty-chair' situation acceptable, while one can hardly think it being functional and effective.

Since – as contemporaneity proves – meritocratic and open-minded procedures are not genuinely peculiar for the post-communist culture of the region, it is hardly perplexing that no competition have been announced for selecting most capable candidates, when these highest levels of state administration positions become vacant. Keeping such posts unoccupied provides for an opportunity to the political level – the Minister and his/her political cabinet – to justify their moving even closer to the expertise for applying immediate direct impact and influence over the policy reasoning. As yet another form of control – this time concealed – over key parts of the defence organisation, this in practice is an open door for *ad libitum* overriding the official chain of policy justification. If this recalls an image of a 'polysepalous' organisation, it could as well explain why its policy is often 'schizophrenic', with regard to its declarations vs. deeds.

But that is not yet all: the official procedures and law requirements for occupying these key positions does not contain even the slightest idea of a fixed period of tenure – a feature desperately needed in a modern democracy, given the enormous resources managed, the respective responsibility and the extremely dynamic and heavy workload at these highest administrative levels. As a result, the opposite extreme also comes into play, the one of 'eternal' directors, significantly augmenting the risk and danger of excessive concentration of power, by building concealed political relations bypassing and surpassing the Minister of Defence. This is easily discernible, for example, with the multitude of situations during those 20 odd years, including recent ones, when highest level general officers ventured to openly oppose and resist the implementation of the official defence policy.

If excuse is sought in a supposedly inefficient human resource policy, then the absence of long-overdue radical reforms of that policy only confirms that *the system* – both administrative and military – is in favour of preserving the *status quo*, finding obviously nothing to gain and much to lose, if this is changed.

In short we can reiterate that without pro-active assignment of policy making and sufficient separation of functions and responsibilities, including the political ones from those of the experts, accompanied by transparent, competency-based and fixed-tenure appointment of key senior positions one cannot reasonably expect an effective, efficient, and sustainable defence and security policy. Without these prerequisites the organisation will continue wondering from one palliative 'solution' to another; will breed corrupt administration in quest of mainly pleasing the governing power and staying safe; and worst – it will always be highly exposed to the natural propensity of the political level favouring its short-term political objectives at the expense of long-term national interests and goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can rather confidently assume, that all visible or concealed narrower challenges and problems would largely find their solution if the major ones described above are

[24] Barany, Zoltan (2012-09-16). The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas (See Kindle Locations 4595 - 4639 and 4880 - 4882). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.

[25] Months and even years.

adequately addressed. Most of these flaws are not against the letter of the law, but this doesn't turn them into virtues, for clearly the law is what needs change, so that these are stopped. Yet it's the Minister, supported by his/her Cabinet and the Administration (both Military and Civilian one), that is allowed, but also obliged to propose the changes needed, once these flaws are known. Then, and only then, in contrast to the cosmetic approach of countering the effects of a dysfunctional organisation, the system will unlock its natural mechanisms and incentives for finding sustainable solutions in terms of its inner functioning methods, but most importantly – in delivering viable and effective defence and security policy as the nation requires.

Therefore we shouldn't consider it necessary to go into more details, let alone to offer isolated solutions to this most crucial public policy for every nation, which holds the key for life or death in times of peril. It appears, though, that the effects of these challenges reach far beyond state borders. On top of the limped development of its own defence and security system, every union or coalition of which such a state is a member, shall also suffer. Thus we believe that this analysis should attract attention well beyond the strict frontiers of the post-communist states, regardless of whether the readers acknowledge these challenges in their own states or not, because we are obliged to consider the current inability of any single state to individually manage the defence and security challenges of today and tomorrow. Moreover, Bulgaria cannot – and should not – be judged as being *sui generis*. All emerging democracies with legacy defence organisations suffer from similar pathologies; it is only in their intensity and specific organisation settings where they differ. In this context, those challenges are largely shared and common for the defence and security of the entire democratic community of states that seek effective and efficient realization in collective defence and security organisations.

One can hardly disagree that "no organization is more important for the survival of the state than its armed forces. For millennia, communities have relied on armies for protection, for conquest, and for less obvious functions, such as conveying their strength and commitment to defend and advance their interests."[26] In the political and economic modernity this is not as obvious, so often the modern defence and security policy suffers ignorant neglect and, even worse, grave abuse, the ultimate victim of which is the nation.

Yet even though lapsing back into the past is hardly possible, being sluggish or drifting away from the path to a smart, modern and efficient policy-guided defence system has proven very easy. And if "the public sphere is the most representative place in the world where the mess cooked-up by good intentions and stupidity, dedication and self-interest, ambition and mediocrity, conscience and vanity, diligence and negligence, responsibility and irresponsibility, social sensitivity and arrogance are on display regardless of their authors' content"[27] , we can only hope that, if not for the public interest, these policy 'authors' will show enough concern for their own good name and reputation.

However, since hope is not a course of action in any public policy, we strongly believe that the main incentive for such concerns of theirs is the well informed and assertive citizen of a modern democratic society, because "for the criticism to have force, it should emanate from within the society it criticizes. Moral argument may not always begin at home, but home is where it usually belongs."[28]

[26] Barany, Zoltan (2012-09-16). The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas (Kindle Locations 400-405). Princeton University Press. Kindle Edition.
[27] Prof. Svetoslav Stavrev, Post-communist tumult, Media pool, 01.11.2012, http://www.mediapool.bg/---i-news198994.html.
[28] Sacks, Jonathan, God's Politics, Foreign Affairs, November/December 2012, p. 125.