

IZZIV ZA OBRAMBNE REFORME V SREDNJI/VZHODNI EVROPI: PRIMER SLOVENIJE

THE CHALLENGE TO DEFENSE REFORM IN CENTRAL/EASTERN EUROPE, WITH REFERENCE TO SLOVENIA

Povzetek Povsem običajna domneva zahodnih in številnih srednje- in vzhodnoevropskih funkcionarjev je, da so obrambne ustanove nekdanjih komunističnih držav bolj ali manj uspešno prilagodile zahodne koncepte upravljanja obrambnega resorja. Po skrbnem pregledu podatkov ugotavljamo, da so te organizacije še vedno zelo odvisne od obrambnih konceptov nekdanjih komunističnih ureditev, kar jih ovira pri zagotavljanju rezultatov na obrambnem področju. Vprašanje je torej, ali so te oborožene sile zmožne učinkovito prispevati k skupni obrambi zavezništva. Čeprav so po regionalnih standardih precej reformirane, v članku ugotavljamo, da je v slovenskem obrambnem ustroju še vedno nekaj ostankov starih praks (na primer centraliziran sistem odločanja) in pomanjkljivosti (na primer obrambno načrtovanje), na katere morajo biti slovenski politični in obrambni funkcionarji še posebej pozorni.

Ključne besede *Srednja/Vzhodna Evropa, Slovenija, obrambna reforma, konceptualne razlike, postkomunizem.*

Abstract An altogether common assumption amongst Western and many Central/Eastern officials is that the post-Communist defense institutions have, more or less, been successful in adopting Western concepts of defense governance. A careful review of the data strongly suggests that these organizations remain largely bound by Communist-legacy defense concepts which inhibit them from producing defense outcomes. As such, it is unclear whether these armed forces are capable of contributing effectively to the Alliance's common defense. Despite being 'relatively' reformed by regional standards, the paper argues that the Slovenian defense institution harbors some legacy practices (e.g. centralization of decision-making) and weaknesses (e.g. defense planning) that urgently need to be addressed by Slovenian political and defense officials.

Key words *Central/Eastern Europe, Slovenia, Defense Reform, Conceptual Divide, Post-Communism.*

Introduction

A superficial review of the state of development of defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe shows some remarkable achievements. The Polish and Romanian Air Forces either possess, or are in the process of procuring F-16 multi-role fighters, and both the Czech and Hungarian Air Forces are equipped with Swedish JAS 39 Gripens. Most of these countries have deployed forces to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and have developed, *inter alia*, enviable Special Operations Forces. Arguably the most 'reformed' armed forces have achieved this status due to the fact that they have undertaken extensive and prolonged deployments of forces to wars, e.g. Poland, Slovenia, and Romania. Yet, a deeper examination of these institutions reveals troubling evidence of a dysfunctionality that ranges from worrisome to simply profound. One would think that Western and NATO defense and diplomatic officials would be expressing concern over the lack of progress of reform in these countries, particularly in the light of Russia's aggressive policies oriented towards Europe. Yet when concern is expressed, it is normally in the form of endless complaints about how few allies are meeting the Alliance's defense spending target of 2% of GDP. Thus, almost by default, there is little attention given as to how truly unreformed they are, when compared to Western defense governance concepts.

This lack of appreciation of the numerous challenges faced by these defense institutions is troubling on three levels. Firstly, the decline in military capabilities in post-Communist legacy armed forces has occurred at a more accelerated rate than in those of long-standing, Western countries. Modernization efforts in Western European forces may be modest, but these nations still possess world-class lethal and sustainable capabilities. This is mostly not the case with the armed forces of the new NATO members, which are heavily burdened with time-expiring Communist-designed equipment, and plagued with the continued use of legacy war-fighting concepts that do not conform to democratic governance concepts (e.g. highly centralized command, training to time as opposed to standards, understaffed tactical headquarters, 'push' logistics, etc.) Arguably, unreformed they cannot contribute significantly in crisis or war, and doing so while requiring support from Western countries takes resources that could be better used elsewhere. Secondly, it should be of concern that this decline in military capabilities, managed by ineffectual legacy defense institutions, is occurring in close geographical proximity to Russia. Moscow continues to act as a spoiler in European affairs at the best of times, and is increasingly ignoring agreed post-Cold War norms. One can ponder the wisdom of bringing these Cold War security 'orphans' (Gasteyger, 1991, p. 111) into the Western alliance, but allowing their armed forces simply to atrophy has unwittingly created an 'unfunded' security liability for NATO. Indeed, as the Ukrainian crisis has demonstrated, countries which have not reformed put themselves at serious risk of Russian-inspired mischief. Thirdly, and importantly for U.S. interests, most, if not all, of nations in Central and Eastern Europe have been very supportive of Western European, and particularly U.S., campaigns both within and outside of Europe and have supported them strongly with troop deployments. That some are reforming too slowly and others are disarming by default should cause alarm

bells to be set ringing in Washington. From all angles, therefore, the immediacy of gaining a better understanding of the state of these legacy defense institutions is clear.

The fact that these defense institutions have faced challenges to reform at best, and have atrophied in the worst cases, must be tempered by the fact that there has been no lack of effort to reform their defense institutions and armed forces by adopting liberal democratically-derived defense governance concepts. From the Baltic States which had to establish defense institutions *ab ovo*, to Poland (Michta, 1997, pp. 23-25) and Romania (Barany, 2003, pp. 167-168) with their long traditions of highly professional and, by regional standards, effective *national* defense institutions, great efforts have been made to reform existing or create new operationally-effective, and (in time) financially-efficient, institutions. However, by any dispassionate review of objective data, the ability of post-Communist legacy defense institutions to transform themselves in accordance with Western democratic governance concepts has been modest at best. A review of befuddled concepts, unbalanced structures, and meager defense outcomes paints a picture of troubling widespread ineffectiveness. To wit, the principle of geographically-*fixed* territorial defense remains the *de facto* if not *de jure* predominant operational (and mental) concept for a number of key legacy defense institutions, arguably unintentionally undermining the principle of collective defense and the cornerstone of the North Atlantic Alliance, i.e. Article 5.

Other examples of conceptual and definitional confusion in defense governance can be found throughout the region, even in, for example, something as fundamental as what constitutes viable operational formations and professional standards. The Serbian Army has a total number of 13,250 personnel, but is structured around 35 regular battalions. The Lithuanian Army of 3,200 soldiers is organized into 8 battalions. The Moldovan Army of 3,250 is organized into 5 brigades and 4 battalions. Conversely, the Belgian Army has 11,950 personnel organized into approximately 12 battalion-equivalents. The Bosnian defense budget in 2012 was approximately US \$228 million, but the armed forces are assessed by the International Institute for Strategic Studies as possessing little capability of mounting combat operations. This dismal state of affairs exists despite a \$100 million train and equip program launched after the Dayton Peace Accords to enable the new Federation to defend itself, underwritten by the United States and carried out by a private firm employing approximately 200 retired U.S. military personnel (McInnis and Lucas, 2005, pp. 38-39). Bulgarian Air Force pilots can expect to fly only 30 to 40 hours per annum at best, and before the conflict with Russia their Ukrainian counterparts were averaging around 40 hours; however, NATO considers 180 hours per annum constitutes the floor in order to maintain operational proficiency (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2015, *passim*). These disparate but representative data paint a picture of not only under-funded and hollow units, but also an inability on the part of defense institutions to bring themselves to make 'defense' *fit* within their existing budgets, so as to produce

measurable defense ‘outcomes’. As such, there is an incomplete appreciation in these countries of the need to achieve *capability coherence*. Clearly, emotive and atavistic thinking continues to dominate defense policy and planning: *res ipsa loquitur*.

This article’s aim is to present key arguments and facts from a book drafted by the current writer¹ which endeavors to provide a better understanding of the challenges faced by Western and Eastern officials when contemplating the reform of Communist-legacy defense institutions. The data publically available support this article’s hypotheses and thereby obviate the need for a formal framework of analysis. Clearly, both officials and analysts need such a resource to provide a deeper understanding of the problem and its causes. For instance, Dicke, Hendrickson, and Kutz argue that the lack of implementation of the 2010 Bulgarian Defense White Paper was due to corruption (Bulgaria, Ministry of Defense, 2014, *passim*). While not ignoring the issue of corruption, it is not clear whether it occurred to these knowledgeable analysts that the lack of implementation of this document could simply be due to bureaucratic inertia and incompetence (Dicke, Hendrickson, Kutz, 2014, *passim*). In so doing, the work addresses five issues, taking the form of hypotheses, which leads to the major argument of the work that there is desperate need for the adoption of new approaches to address the shortcomings identified here. In addition to reviewing the main points raised in the book, the author will address how these questions apply specifically to the Slovenian defense institution, as a means to identifying key areas where reforms still need to be made.

1 ASSESSING THE STATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN DEFENSE INSTITUTIONS

There should be little doubt that Western and Eastern political, defense, and military officials have misjudged the severity of the challenges to achieving defense governance within the context of democratic governance concepts. Relying on the wealth of data and analysis that is available in the open-source literature, there can be little argument that overall most of these institutions are, to varying degrees to be sure, in serious need of effective and deep change. Space does not allow for an in-depth presentation of this data, but representative examples are presented throughout this paper. That government institutions are challenged when attempting to bring about systemic change is hardly newsworthy. Yet, it should be acknowledged that it is troubling to see that there appears to be complacency, if not actual ignorance, of this dismal state of affairs, both in the old NATO nations and even in Eastern/Central European capitals. The events in Ukraine since the winter of 2014 have obviously turned a bright light on the potential inadequacies of Communist-legacy defense institutions, but it is not yet clear that this new level of awareness extends to an examination in Western capitals of policies and approaches that have been used to

¹ *Anatomy of European post-Communist Defense Institutions: Mirage of Modernity*. London: Bloomsbury Publishers, 2017.

support reform in the region. Moreover, it is equally unclear whether officials in the new NATO allies feel an urgency to address their own national policies and priorities in a highly critical and probing effort. Yet, what these data do demonstrate is that just as Western policy has been inadequate to the task of helping these young democracies reform their defense institutions to Western standards, officials in the region are equally unaware of how best to confront the challenge. It follows that the policies of long-standing allied nations which provide advice and assistance to legacy defense institutions must re-examine how they *define* the problem of how to better support reform. For without a much more concerted effort to press for deep reforms of basic defense and military concepts, the legacy rot will continue to work its destructive pathologies.

2 IDENTIFYING THE IMPEDIMENTS TO EFFECTIVE REFORM

The reform of legacy defense institutions has been impeded by a dual misunderstanding of the challenge. First, Eastern officials have been slow, if not at times unwilling, to acknowledge that the operation of their respective defense institutions continues to be dominated by Communist-legacy concepts. More often than not, this has been due in no small part to the fact that officials have not known what the Western ‘right’ solution should look like in their *own* national context, burdened (to varying degrees to be sure) with their legacy of various conceptual inheritances. Or, even when being brutally honest with the challenges that they face, the Western solutions often being proposed are structural and procedural solutions which simply do not address the deeper conceptual (and often in turn, logical) divide that continues to plague their defense institutions. See, for example, the excellent report that addresses the Slovak defense institution’s problems with such solutions as increasing defense expenditure, a binding procurement plan, longer-term defense plans, etc. (Nad’, Majer, Šuplata, *ca.* 2015, p. 4). Secondly, Western officials, both civilian and military, simply have not understood the depth of the challenge of reforming institutions that have been subjected to the pernicious evils of Communism. False linguistic cognates, prevailing legacy concepts which are antithetical to their Western counterparts, and opaque planning and operating assumptions have simply gone unrecognized and unaddressed as being the reason for the inability of these countries to adopt liberal democratic defense governance concepts.

Warnings of this problem were published in the literature as early as 1996 (Szemerkenyi, 1996, *passim*), but this sage counsel was either ignored, or simply dismissed. To be sure, the early willingness of these countries to participate in peacekeeping and later combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan gave these defense institutions a political ‘pass’ from Western nations and NATO. Perhaps the most problematic decision was to allow those states with profoundly unreformed defense institutions into the Alliance. As von Riekhoff observed, “...new NATO members may undertake reforms without genuine conviction, in a rather superficial or purely cosmetic way, in order to satisfy NATO demands,”(von Riekhoff, 2004,

p. 13). In short, NATO and its member nations misread the political incentives and the content of their assistance from the beginning of Partnership for Peace (PfP), and again later with the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process, and have failed to spend the time and resources to ascertain how these institutions can more quickly adopt liberal democratic defense governance norms (e.g. critically, the primacy of policy, financial execution being tied tightly to policy priorities, the decentralization of decision-making, the division of command and management, personal accountability, as opposed to the continued use of opaque collectivism, in bureaucratic decision-making settings.)

In light of the persistence of these Communist-legacy concepts, with minor exceptions, the key impediments to achieving reform are two-fold. First, there remains a lack of institutional recognition of the need for these defense institutions to embrace the concept of policy frameworks, to which all activities within an institution must conform. Instead of policy frameworks, on close examination what one widely finds is *policy incoherence*, which has led to *institutional incoherence*. Developing policy coherence is no small task and realistically might well take generations to achieve. That said, what is troubling is that Western officials (and frankly many analysts) have failed to argue strongly the need for the adoption of such a fundamentally important concept. Like so many other interactions with these defense institutions, many Western officials and analysts simply assume the existence of such concepts; and if there is a perception of a problem, it is seen by outsiders as being a weakness in a functioning bureaucracy, as opposed to evidence of an absence of basic enabling concepts. It needs repeating that Communism operated on the basic principle of absolute, unpredictable, and unaccountable power exercised by the Party. The liberal democratic concept of ‘policy’, in general terms, should be seen as being founded on the principles of an individual official’s authority, balanced by responsibility and accountability. None of these concepts were either organic to, or firmly rooted in, these defense institutions when the Cold War ended. In a legacy environment, the adoption of these concepts remains elusive to understanding and implementation. Thus, NATO and its members’ praise for the development of model policy documents (e.g., *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*) have actually been counterproductive, since it has conveyed a false message that nicely written *strategy* documents are what please Western officials, as opposed to producing coherent military capabilities.

Secondly, directly related to the first point is the fact that Western officials and analysts have been remiss not to see that rarely have purported policy and planning documents ever been linked to *money*. To one brought up in a legacy environment, money is simply not perceived as constituting the organization’s most important management tool. Rather, money exists to pay, as a priority, salaries, benefits, and pensions. Any money leftover is then distributed opaquely to support operations and modernization in the more advanced countries; or in the least reformed, to underwrite social welfare programs, pensions, and (a favorite) expanding the military health care system. When challenged to explain such an alignment of

spending priorities, the standard explanation one hears from officials is that there is insufficient money to enable the armed forces to modernize. Alas, it is the rare Eastern or Western official that questions this illogic. As a general, if unstated, rule, a defense budget needs to be largely balanced more or less in thirds: personnel, operations and maintenance, and acquisition and infrastructure. Once a defense budget breaks this balance, inevitably, capabilities suffer. In the case of Bulgaria, the ratio of expenditures is dire: 73% to personnel, 21% to operations and maintenance, and a mere 6% to modernization (Bulgaria, Council of Ministers, 2015, p. 32). What almost defies explanation is that countries with such huge imbalances as these have seen their capabilities predictably degrade with time, and yet have gone unsanctioned politically by NATO's leading nations.

It is of little wonder, therefore, that in the absence of a policy framework (and the establishment of costed priorities linked to producing defense outcomes) and an institutional recognition that money is *the* key managerial enabler of policy, officials in weak defense institutions have responded by further centralizing decision-making. As such, one sees throughout the region management systems that preclude defense officials from making informed decisions. Thus, in these defense institutions, little information systematically flows upwards, officials and officers are not expected to make recommendations, staff work is turgid and voluminous, and briefing senior decision-makers with options is all but unknown. As a result, policy stasis reigns and capabilities suffer.

In the final analysis, the solution to these difficult challenges will require strong political courage on the part of governments and ministers, since almost by definition, addressing these longstanding imbalances implies reductions in personnel and shifts in where money is currently being spent. One would think that without creating and empowering strong policy frameworks, and conceptualizing money as the institution's key policy implementation tool, it would be difficult to see how the adoption of liberal democratic defense governance concepts could take place. Longstanding members of the Alliance need to see that helping to 'crack' this problem constitutes one of the most important challenges to assisting new NATO members to become greater providers of security, and not just solely consumers. Equally, one would think that legacy defense institutions, alone or collectively, should see this as constituting a high priority and initiate projects with interdisciplinary inputs to ascertain how these challenges can be overcome.

3 BEST AND LEAST EFFECTIVE WESTERN DEFENSE REFORM PRACTICES

Western armed forces have long maintained training and educational institutions which foreign military personnel can attend as students, and through which expertise can be exported in the form of traveling training teams. Western officials have largely seen their existing Profession Military Education (PME) and training organizations as constituting the primary method of providing advice and

assistance to reforming defense institutions. This is not to necessarily imply that there was a concerted effort to define the challenges of reform based on solely employing existing assistance institutions and programs. But what is clear is that, by default, the general Western response to providing reform advice and assistance has been determined to be within the expertise of Western armed forces. Apparently missing from policy consideration has been an acknowledgement of the necessity of directing long-term and concerted efforts to help new allies and key PfP countries develop *functional* Ministries of Defense where they did not exist, or fundamentally overhaul those that existed in name only. What was evidently underestimated is that the armed forces of these countries already *existed*, whereas a requisite civilian brain to provide democratic governance did *not*. Thus, where these programs and projects assisted these fledgling Ministries of Defense, often times it was in the form of military-focused programs, using military personnel. Note that this is not necessarily a condemnation, given that Western Ministries of Defense not infrequently have military personnel posted to them. However, what has been missing is a persistent commitment by Western capitals specifically to address the needs of a new or reforming Ministry of Defense and the inherent need to create innovative means quickly to educate civilian defense officials. The result of this approach has been either situations where legacy armed forces ignore and undermine civilian defense officials (e.g. in many countries where Chiefs of Defense (CHODs) are appointed by, and answer to, heads of state, as opposed to heads of government), or where civilian officials manage defense through a highly centralized decision-making process and *via* exercising negative control over the armed forces.

It is with no small degree of modesty that the author is reluctant to suggest that ‘best practices’ even exist in the complex and contextualized environment presented by legacy defense institutions. This observation is in line with the literature in the field of economic development (de Gramont, 2014, pp.14-16). Whilst admittedly based on world-class Western standards, the application of modern practices could have a deleterious effect, as they tend to lead to pre-designed and over-specific plans that preclude experimental joint problem-solving, thereby missing the achievement of a ‘best fit’ (Van Brabant, n.d., pp. 11-12). The ‘positive deviance’ school of thought makes a strong argument that knowledge alone is not enough to effect change. It is only practice that can change *behavior*, and to get to this point, external experts offering advice and assistance need to re-think how they conceptualize effecting change (Pascale, Sternin, Sternin, 2010, *passim*). Arguably, what field experience demonstrates is that changing the conceptual bases of an institution is not linear, nor is it predictable. The explanation for this heretical thought is that the starting point of reforming these institutions must be the recognition that institutional reform is, first and foremost, a domestic *political* challenge. As argued by Michael Oakeshott, reform cannot be addressed by technical means alone, let alone merely using rational, predictive planning. Oakeshott’s distinction between technical and practical knowledge is instructive. The former is the type of knowledge that is formulaic; what can be put in a checklist (e.g. Hari Bucur-Marcu, 2010, *passim*).

The latter relates to what an expert actually knows: "...the habits, skills, intuitions and traditions of the craft. Practical knowledge exists only in use; it can be imparted, but not taught."(Oakeshott, 1991, p. 15).

It is within this political context that one can best understand the challenge of enabling a defense institution to change its fundamental concepts, particularly when prevailing practices are antithetical to the liberal democratic principles of defense governance. As a possible feeble nod to the idea of best practice, the most important reform practice is arguably the need for Western donors to understand the pernicious nature of Communist-legacy defense and military concepts. It is only with such an understanding that advice and assistance can be proffered with the objective of avoiding the unintended creation of 'conceptual spaghetti' (i.e. the layering of new concepts on top of existing legacy concepts). Yet such practical knowledge is only going to be successfully applied within an environment with continuous and close political oversight, and when necessary, pressure. At the same time, longstanding NATO nations' assistance efforts need to be informed by better education and training of their own experts in prevailing cultural norms, concepts, incentives, and motivations. A greater formal understanding of the Communist-legacy defense institution, as well as those characteristics particular to a focus country, if properly managed and executed, would greatly improve the delivery of advice and assistance programs.

Conversely, there are existing assumptions, models, and programs that need to be reviewed with a very critical eye. As a new first principle, policy needs to recognize that reforming any public institution is, by definition, *political* and not merely technical. As such, donors' policies need clearly to recognize this fact and ensure that their advice and assistance programs are guided by this principle, in order to ensure that programs and projects are designed, managed, and executed within a political (and not in technical) framework. Importantly, Western foreign ministries and the NATO International Staff must re-think their previous efforts and reset the tone of their messages to governments in Central and Eastern Europe regarding defense reform. Sharp and consistent messaging to political leadership, linked closely to advice and assistance projects, is long overdue.

With regard to specific practices, policy needs to review exporting national models. This is not to be confused with concepts, but adopting whole-scale actual national models has rarely worked, if for no other reason than because to adopt such models, a recipient country, as noted by Ralston, must essentially change their prevailing cultural norms. "The reformers were to learn, often to their dismay, that the introduction of European forms and methods into their military establishments would sooner or later oblige their societies to undergo internal adjustments which were by no means trivial"(Ralston, 1990, p. 173). Nor does this practice pass the positive deviance test, nor Oakeshott's distinction between technical and practical knowledge. Thus, as related to policy, the common practice of advocating the adoption of Western-style policy documents should be simply

stopped. Western officials need to recognize that there are precious few examples (and this may be generous) where the publication of such documents has had any noticeable effect where it matters most: rearranging the priorities of a defense budget in a rationale that produces defense outcomes. From experience and appearance, policy documents and defense budgets in legacy defense institutions live in parallel universes that rarely, if ever connect; when they occasionally do, one might speculate that this was more by coincidence than intention.

One egregious example is exporting the concept of professional non-commissioned officers. This is a logical extension of the decision to professionalize the force that has largely become the norm. To be sure, the transition to a professional NCO corps makes excellent sense for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is lowering personnel costs. However, like many models applied without their proper context, this has proven to be a slow process; some of the former Yugoslav National Army (JNA) successors and the Baltic States' armed forces being but rare exceptions. Critically, these Western-sponsored advisory programs and projects have almost exclusively been initiated without changing the officer corps, i.e. shrinking and re-educating those remaining in the force to learn how to *use* professional NCOs. A common complaint heard throughout the region is that officers do not know how to use NCOs at best, and at worst, they see them as a threat. In other words, the institution and its officer corps have not fully empowered them to become leaders. By not addressing, at the policy level, the necessity of changing the officer corps in preparation for the creation of an NCO corps, these efforts have not had their envisaged effect. Thus, experience of exporting the concept of professional NCOs in the region is an excellent example of a good idea, improperly implemented. This has been due in large part by Western officials exporting their own model whilst not having undertaken the necessary analysis to determine all of the systematic *policy* and cultural challenges associated with such a major alteration to any defense institution.

Finally, *à propos* the issue of exporting the U.S. method of budgetary programming, a cursory reading of the literature more than suggests that the relevance and applicability of the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) methodology is suspect at best.² To be blunt, the current author has yet to see where it has worked. The persistent proclivity to centralize financial decision-making has made the adoption of this methodology all but impossible, but even if there were de-centralization, the method remains too complex and labor-intensive to argue

² *What is mind-numbingly surprising is that NATO nations' officials and even the International Staff have blindly encouraged the adoption of this methodology by reforming countries, without any understanding or even knowledge of how harshly the literature has treated the method. One of the most influential writers on strategic planning, Henry Mintzberg, writes that the development and institution of PPBS constitutes one of the greatest efforts and failures of all time in the area of public finance (Mintzberg, 1994, p. 19). A leading expert on public finance at the time of the development of PPBS for the U.S. Department of Defense, Aaron Wildavsky, writes that "PPBS has failed everywhere and at all times". He continues, "Nowhere has PPBS (1) been established (2) influenced government decisions (3) according to its own principles. The program structures do not make sense to anyone. They are not, in fact, used to make decisions of any importance." (Wildavsky, 1984, p. 121).*

against its utility; it enables defense officials to solve problems they will never have. Additional evidence for this observation is that every defense institution in the region, including advanced ones, continues to struggle to produce financially-viable defense plans connected to budgets. Surely, a less complicated and more transparent budgeting method, at least to start with, is required.

4 ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF WESTERN POLICY AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The *de facto*, if not *de jure*, decision to define the reform of these defense institutions as a military problem has, by extension, determined that it has been the Western military's responsibility to fix. Contextualizing this question from a different perspective: how well has Western policy and its implementation of organizational *management* practices performed in assisting these allies and partners to adopt liberal democratic defense and military norms? If one asks this question in the light of unsuccessful Western support to reform these defense institutions to replace legacy concepts, then clearly Western governments perforce should re-examine the basis of their current policies and approaches to providing advice and assistance to these nations. The new policy direction must acknowledge that the previous policy pillars, based on the ineffectual principle of the '3 Ts' (i.e. defining the challenge as requiring a Technical approach, using Training as the key assistance delivery vehicle, largely at the Tactical level) can remain intact, in principle. To remain effective, the 3 Ts need to be completely subsumed into, and made responsive to, a wider policy that acknowledges that the ultimate reform of these institutions is inherently *political*, and that they will only begin to adopt liberal democratic governance concepts through continuous national-level political dialogue and debate, all supported with expert advice. This advice must be based on principles of cultural awareness and the employment of the principles of change management, informed by each unique typology of Communist defense institution and refocused to each individual country's requirements and realities.

In sum, what has largely been missing in the West's approach in encouraging the adoption of liberal democratic defense governance concepts is an institutional appreciation of the need for all managers to oversee the design of assistance programs, as well as all instructors or experts to be 'educated' in understanding legacy concepts and the cultural conditions of the defense institutions which they have the objective of changing. There is a critical need for a better appreciation of the continued democratic-legacy conceptual divide and an understanding of the current structure of incentives and disincentives in legacy systems. Moreover, as the challenges facing these defense institutions are deeply rooted in, and based on, an organization's most basic institutional assumptions and conceptual character, there are going to be very few occasions when solutions will be a simple one-time ('fire and forget') project. Thus, policy needs to change from enabling episodic engagements to adopting long-term commitments with the appropriate content and intellectual appreciation of the conditions of these organizations.

Finally, Western officials need to reinforce the message that all activities and expenditure conducted by their defense institution must be focused on producing policy-determined outcomes. Defining assistance as ‘technical assistance’, comprising discrete inputs, has defined performance as constituting the execution of a series of activities or events. As such, the managerial focus has been to look at assisting reform in terms of a series of inputs (McNerney, Marquis, Zimmerman, Klein, 2016, pp. 49-68). Regrettably, there has been far too little attention given to *what* outcome is envisaged from all of these inputs. Often times, even this is couched in amorphous managerial outcomes: improved efficiencies and effectiveness. But it should not be terribly difficult to begin, formally, to measure whether these efforts are having a positive macro-effect on producing objectively-determined military outcomes (*cf.*, Rand, Tankel, 2015, p. 22), particularly within the Alliance, where such assessment tools have long existed, if indeed they need to be more frequently employed (e.g. Tactical Evaluations (TACEVAL)). After all, if a defense reform effort is not conceived as enabling a defense force to deliver expected extreme violence in whichever defined environment, then frankly what could possibly be the point of it all? Moreover, this outcome should not be conflated with effecting interoperability (which, alas, one sees frequently claimed in the field), which is not the same result or output. Clear thinking of the envisaged outcome in military terms needs to be exercised at all phases of engagement planning.

5 IDENTIFYING NEW APPROACHES TO ADOPTING WESTERN GOVERNANCE

From the perspective of legacy defense institutions, what surely must constitute the most challenging reform required is the common practice of centralizing decision-making and budgets. At best, Western efforts to address this Communist legacy practice have been ineffectual; if it exists at all, and at worst, it has only reinforced centralizing proclivities (e.g. using PPBS). As long as decision-making is centralized in Ministers and CHODs, and financial decision-making is not delegated to the officials responsible for producing outcomes, then these defense institutions will continue to struggle to become producers of security. Arguably, at the heart of this pathology of centralization has been unwillingness on the part of senior officials, civilian and in uniform, to enable and empower officials, and particularly commanders, to produce defense outcomes. In consequence, the ability to produce predictable defense outcomes has been undermined. To be fair, it is difficult to hold commanders and directors responsible for producing outcomes if they are not entrusted with the necessary policy framework (e.g. a training policy that assigns responsibilities to commanders and not General Staffs) enabling them to make decisions, and are not given responsibility for managing financial and personnel inputs. Thus, centralization needs to be seen as a chronic and odious Communist legacy that is preventing these defense institutions from adopting more deeply liberal forms of democratic defense governance. What are necessary, therefore, are strong policy frameworks to push *downward* operational and financial decision-making to the level of commanders and directors who are responsible for producing

outcomes, e.g. chiefs of services, logistics, human resource management (HRM), medical services, etc. To the charge that such acts will only fuel corruption, the response should be that this issue has long been addressed effectively in the West by ensuring that officials understand that one's authority is balanced by the principles of responsibility and accountability. To be very blunt, any concept that impedes a commander or director from producing defense outcomes must be scrutinized, and alternatives developed and tested. That Ministries of Defense and their PPBS directorates continue the practice of centralizing financial decision-making will only continue the practice of enabling legacy defense institutions to remain unfocused on operations, administratively bloated, and bleeding money for non-defense specific purposes.

From Western nations' perspective, what is unlikely to produce different effects from current Western assumptions and programs is what Marshall cites as a need to "standardize capability- and capacity-building systems"(Marshall, 2011, pp. 71-72). If anything, contrary to Marshall's observation, Western nations have long offered standardized capability- and capacity-building programs and projects and its meager record of success in the region (not to speak of their performance in Iraq and Afghanistan) speaks for itself. Indeed, arguably, this has been one of their key flaws. What the record of advice and assistance in this region has demonstrated is the need for Western governments to change policy and finances to provide managers of these efforts with *greater* flexibility in enabling them to diagnose proper causation of the lack of ability to implement reform measures.

6 THE CASE OF SLOVENIA

Of all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe living in the shadow of post-Communist military legacies, Slovenia is clearly one of the most developed, due in no small part to its early break from Yugoslavia in 1991 during its Ten Day War of independence, and the role played by its Territorial Defense Force which provided a solid basis for the armed forces subsequent development (Niebuhr, 2006, pp. 489-513). The role of the armed forces was also clearly defined after independence, and placed under a very strict regime of civilian and parliamentary control (Malesic, 2006, p. 130).

Several other factors have contributed to this very high degree of civilian domination over the Slovenian military. These include the widespread rejection of the previous Yugoslav model of civil-military relations (which contained both militaristic and praetorian proclivities); the small size of the Slovenian Armed Forces; the paucity of Slovenian military traditions; the underdeveloped corporate identity of the Slovenian military officers; and the army leadership's extremely low political profile. The parliamentary system of government gave this domination its constitutional and legal foundation and form (Bebler, 2002, p. 167).

As a result of the U.N. arms embargo against all the republics of former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1995,³ Slovenia focused its resources on education and institutional development. These efforts, balanced by the continued positive influence provided by former JNA personnel (whose professional expertise has not always been appreciated by the bureaucratic and political leadership that emerged from independence), show in Slovenia's technical sophistication. To wit, it has been no small achievement that Slovenia has been able to raise and maintain two infantry battalions, MPs and a Special Operations company (Slovenia, n.d., p. 1-1), create an air-sovereignty radar system, and successfully procure the *Triglav II* corvette from the Russian Almaz Shipbuilding Company (an adapted export version of the Russian *Svetlyak*-class patrol boat) as an element of reparation payment to the former Yugoslavia.⁴ Contributing to the sophistication of the Slovenian Armed Forces has been the fact that many officers and soldiers have been on operations. One can draw a correlation, if not indeed clearly establish causation, that having a large number of personnel on missions abroad has the beneficial effect of enabling a deeper understanding and adoption of Western defense and military norms (Osterman, 2014, pp. 49-51). For example, Osterman cites that from 1997 until 2014, some 4,700 personnel served on deployments, some of which have been demanding, i.e. Iraq and Afghanistan. For perspective, the size of the Slovenian Armed Forces in October 2014 was 7,214. Yet, despite these singular achievements, on closer examination, the Slovenian defense institution exhibits a number of planning and managerial weaknesses which continue to inhibit it from implementing more deeply Western defense governance concepts. In short, the institution needs to address its policy *incoherence*.

To its credit, the Ministry of Defense has been able to create a policy framework, to which all the armed forces activities and funding must adhere. This is no small achievement given that one is hard pressed to find other countries in the region which have been able to create such a strong institutional tool to drive the operation of their defense institutions. Indeed, one can cite this policy framework for having created, arguably, a firm basis for the development of an embryonic strategic culture (Perry, Keridis, 2004, p. 2). Yet, the existing Slovenian policy framework is not without a number of important *lacunae*, e.g. the precise nature of the armed forces' responsibilities in support of civil authorities, the employment of the armed forces in support of domestic counter-terrorism operations, or using more systematically the experience of conducting combat operations abroad (Furlan, 2012, p. 440). It is equally curious that the small Slovenian defense institution can continue the practice of separating the Ministry of Defense and General Staff, as opposed to adopting an integrated organization. In what is increasingly becoming an atavistic

³ Resolution 713 (1991) Adopted by Security Council at its 3009th meeting, 25 September 1991 (Trifunovska, 1994, pp. 349-350). Note that the arms embargo was only lifted with the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, via UN Security Council Resolution 1021, 22 November 1995, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/368/59/PDF/N9536859.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴ The author had the benefit of a tour of the *Triglav II* in Luka Bar, Montenegro, in June 2011, shortly after its commissioning. Although hardly a blue-water warship, it was assessed by a retired RCN Captain as possessing modern sensors, light weapons, and superb (largely German) machinery, electrical systems, and a frankly professional crew – clearly the result of careful and insightful planning, program management, and leadership.

practice, the lack of organizational integration impedes greater coherence in policy formulation and execution, while encouraging instances of convoluting civilian and military responsibilities (Furlan, 2012, pp. 444-445). Indeed, on the issue of policy incoherence, one can identify a number of key aspects of defense that have yet to be made fully coherent.

In order of priority of needed reforms, arguably the first area of incoherence which requires urgent attention is defense planning. Whether the pre-independence Republic Territorial Defense Headquarters possessed a planning methodology like that used by the JNA, (i.e. its task-based, medium-term, resource-allocation defense planning methodology which remained in operation until the end of the Federation), it is difficult to discern. What is clear is that the Ministry of Defense has not been able to develop planning methods which produce viable defense plans, leading to planning incoherence. For instance, the ambitious 2025 Long-Term Development Plan was endorsed by the government, but shortly thereafter, due to the world financial crisis, was defunded, to wit: defense spending fell by 34.6% from 2007 to 2015 (Slovenia, n.d., p. 1-4). But instead of launching a round of difficult assessments to re-determine priorities in these new circumstances, planning stasis prevailed (Slovenia, 2010). A further weakness can be found in the Ministry of Defense's acknowledgement that it has not been able to consistently use the armed forces' operational planning analysis to inform national defense planning efforts (Slovenia, 2009, p. 42), and, moreover, its policy and strategy documents have yet to adopt the practice of placing threats in order of priority (Potocnik, 2015, p. 32). Kotnik's observation that the armed forces can produce only modest operational combat capabilities in relation to its size reinforces the argument that defense planning is weak (Kotnik, 2015, p. 15). An initiative to improve/adopt these two planning techniques would go a long way to informing Policy Branch how to determine which costed priorities should be funded in order to drive the planning process.

What deserves investigation is why this fundamentally important element of democratic defense governance has failed. While precise causation is difficult to identify, there appears to be a limited connection between priorities and costs. It is hardly encouraging that the 2025 defense plan proposed to reduce personnel costs to 50% of the defense budget, with 30% allocated to operations and maintenance, leaving 20% to procurement and infrastructure (Slovenia, 2010, p. 28). Note that the figure for personnel costs in 2013 stood at almost 70% (Slovenia, 2014, p. 83). Indeed, it is not clear whether costed priorities drive defense planning. Actually, Slovenia is hardly alone in its apparent inability to create a process that requires costed priorities to drive planning. No better example of this phenomenon can be observed in an assessment of how the three U.S. services headquarters conduct programming (which, amazingly, are quite different). Of the three, the Department of the Navy has consistently been *incapable* of producing viable guidance or plans, whilst the Departments of the Army and Air Force have been able to do so because of strong policy and planning oversight of programming (Young, 2016, *passim*). A careful review by Slovenian policy officials and planners of the differences in the

U.S. methods might produce lessons that are suitable and applicable to help solve some of these weaknesses, specifically, the important oversight role that needs to be played by Policy Branch throughout the planning process.

(HRM provides another instance whereby a strong policy framework remains to be developed. The 2009 SDR identified the need to restructure the armed forces' tactical formations, but literally within pages noted the continued challenges posed by HRM, thereby failing to make this important connection between it and the organization of tactical formations (Slovenia, 2009, pp. 11-15). To be frank, the objective of gradually reaching a rank structure based on 1:2:5 ratios (officers, NCOs, soldiers) can only be interpreted as an expression of a lack of policy commitment to develop an effective and *cost-effective* pyramidal rank structure more quickly (Slovenia, 2010, p. 24). As of 2013, these ratios stood at 1:1.8:2.8 (Slovenia, 2014, p. 89). To be sure, the Ministry of Defense has the unique HRM challenge in that it must engage in collective bargaining with *five* separate labor unions (Slovenia, 2010, p. 11). Yet, the fact remains that an armed force based on empty tactical units will never be able to create a healthy pyramidal personnel structure, thereby introducing needed discipline into the HRM system, as personnel requirements are created by the structure of formations. This unbalanced personnel structure simply underscores the critique that the army "lacks sufficient combat orientation as a military organization" as one can see expressed in its weak career structure (Kotnik, 2015, p. 13). Additional causation of this unbalanced personnel profile explains why, despite the professionalization of the force which began in 2003 (PROVOJ project), it has yet to address the important issue of individual specializations, and therefore by default remains premised on the concept of conscription (Kotnik, 2015, pp. 12, 15). Indeed conscription remains in the Military Duty Act, which obviously serves as a basis for the claim that the defense institution could raise, train, and equip 25,000 conscripts in one year, begging the obvious question of where the necessary infrastructure, trainers, and equipment will be found (Slovenia, n.d., p. 1-3) This is yet another instance of both policy and planning incoherence.

Further policy incoherence can be detected in the struggle for predominance in the orientation of the armed forces. The memory of the humiliating defeat of the JNA at the hands of the small but well-motivated Slovenian Territorial Defense Force, largely using Total National Defense operational concepts and tactics, remains a compelling argument for their continued use (Jansa, 1994, *passim*). One will find no argument within NATO councils of allies being able to defend themselves in accordance with Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Yet, in addition to the need to be able to meet Article 5 commitments of collective defense (which implies deployability and sustainment), the concept of territorial defense should not be conflated with a *fixed* geographic orientation for units. Surely, on the modern battlefield, any fixed units or assets are simply a target waiting to be destroyed. This conceptual bifurcation in what should constitute the orientation of the armed forces originally was the result of a divide between those officers and NCOs with JNA pedigrees, and those from Territorial Defense Forces (Jelusic, 2002, p. 128), albeit this causation is becoming

less pronounced with time. That said, that defense policy has yet to champion one school of military thought (and recognizing that they are *antithetical* and therefore cannot co-exist) speaks to a not insignificant civil-military relations challenge which needs to be addressed; and until it is resolved, there will continue to be policy incoherence.

The final issue of policy incoherence can be found in the highly centralized decision-making practice of the defense institution. By not assigning legal authority to the President of the Republic as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Slovenia has been mercifully spared the deep dysfunctionality in the strategic-level direction and command suffered by almost all other Communist legacy countries in the region (Barany, 2003, p. 110). As the Prime Minister has no explicit powers of national defense, by default the Minister of Defense is the key decision-maker, at least in peacetime, thereby critically aligning responsibility with authority (Bebler, 2002, p. 201). Yet, one needs to temper a too positive view of the Slovenian experience in adopting Western command concepts and authorities when examining the restricted powers of the CHOD:

...the CHOD has no power over the authorities which are inherently a part of and inseparable from the military. The CHOD has no authority to issue tactical and technical manuals and training programs. Critical to the professional development and the military career system is the fact that the defense legislation enables untrained personnel to reach command assignments or other positions in military staffs; this practice directly affects military effectiveness and calls into question the professionalism of the military (Furlan, 2012, p. 442).

While restrictions on the authorities of CHODs are normal in other Western defense institutions, if these are but a representative sample, then the ability of the Slovenian Chief of Defense, both to provide professional military advice and be effective in leading the armed forces, is seriously compromised. Specifically, recommendations for all officers' promotions are approved by the Minister of Defense, but these lists are then vetted by the Human Resource Management directorate, thereby diminishing the CHOD's professional authority based on his observation of officers' performance. His authority is arguably further diluted since his list of recommendations is first vetted by the Intelligence and Security Service before being forwarded to the board. On these issues Furlan writes, "These control mechanisms and an ignorance of military advice (when for example the Minister strengthens the defense administration by utilizing military human resources or decorate [sic] military personnel without the CHOD's knowledge and consent) undermines the CHOD's legal authority and reduces the credibility of the office" (Furlan, 2012, p. 441). The CHOD has limited control over his *own* budget, and the Mid-Term Defense Program is so restrictive as to limit the ability of battalion commanders to manage their units' finances to meet their assigned missions and tasks (Furlan, 2012, p. 442). The result of centralization of decision-making implies a widespread practice of negative control, thereby undermining the ability of the officer corps to grow professionally by denying them

the opportunity to operate in demanding command and staff postings requiring a full appreciation of all aspects of the operation of the armed forces, particularly their financial implications and realities.

Conclusion Despite the development of some sophisticated capabilities and formations, when compared with other post-Communist legacy defense institutions, Slovenia has yet to free itself completely of all of its legacy concepts. As argued *supra*, the result of these influences can be seen in the expression of policy incoherence, which in turn has produced capability incoherence in the armed forces. Arguably, an institutional managerial/command practice that simply must change is the continued practice of centralization of decision-making. Centralization is actually a legacy practice that acts as pathology within the institution, and which restricts the ability of the entire institution to function more effectively and efficiently. Indeed, the practice of centralizing financial decision-making, and not delegating it to those commanders with responsibilities for producing defense outcomes, ensures that they will never reach their full professional potential when they reach higher ranks. Of equal importance is the need to adopt the concept that defense planning must be *driven* by using costed priorities. Ergo, un-costed defense plans must be assessed by officials as constituting *aspirations* and not serious plans. This implies the need for the Planning Branch and the General Staff to become more disciplined in the development of plans that are fully costed.

In the end, it is acknowledged that efforts to delegate decision-making downward, and tying policy more closely to financial expenditure through reforming the planning process to produce plans consisting of cost priorities, might not result in increasing defense outcomes and effecting efficiencies. Yet, it is difficult to accept any argument that the continuation of current practices will ever produce defense outcomes which will enable the actual potential of the Slovenian armed forces.

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