# COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE DEFENCE SECTOR AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY OF BULGARIA AS A WAY TO BUILD CAPACITY FOR COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

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**Abstract**: The choice of the topic for this article has been provoked by the growing significance of the hybrid threats. To understand the impact of hybrid threats, one should analyse a number of normative and state documents and publications, as well as various aspects of the relations between the state and the civil society at both national and international levels. In this article, the author focuses on the processes of management of information and communication between the defence sector and the civil society in Bulgaria in view of the White Book on Defence and Armed Forces and the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria and their contribution to the national capacity to counter hybrid threats.

**Keywords**: defence sector, civil society, hybrid threats.

## Introduction: The Significance of the Problem

The significance of the problem of strategic communications management in the Security and Defence Sector in the context of Bulgarian legislation and the dialogue between the Defence Sector and the civil society are continuously growing. Under the current conditions of global economic crisis, the situation with respect to security is characterized by its growing importance and complexity. This is predetermined by the fact that strategic communications and information management have an increasing role in the modern national state. This is a peculiar catalyst of all relations within the state itself and from the state towards its foreign partners. The effectively built and efficiently managed strategic communications and information contribute to the endorsement of the positive aspects in all fields of development of the state, including the field of security and defence. At the same time, the state has undertaken a commitment through its membership in the European Union, namely to achieve full harmonization in its legislation in compliance with the legislation of the Community and

to introduce the European policies and directives in this specific field to Bulgaria as well.

The main thesis of the present article is that strategic communications and information are dynamically changing factors in the maintenance of relations between the defence sector and the civil society in the context of global space. In order to ensure the security and defence at both national and international levels, it is of great importance to have them effectively and efficiently managed through a dialogue between the state and the civil society. The significance of the management becomes even more important in the context of European realities and the commitments undertaken by the Bulgarian state with respect to the European Union.

## The Relation 'Society – Nation State' in the Context of Integrating Community

We need to be fully aware of the unprecedented change of the world's global map – the borders of states keep becoming more permeable both to external influences and to the transfer of influence from the national state to the external world; as a result, there is constant encroachment of cultural, economic, political, religious and other influence. The phenomenon has already had its impact on the policy and state management of each country. The change occurred at the end of the XX century, as it keeps spreading powerfully in the XXI century giving its reflection on the security and defence management. Today, the national state, which until recently was capable of existing by itself, faces a serious challenge – weakening of state and state system, globalization of threats, global economic crisis, etc. In view of the internal situation, it turns out that state power has lost its leading position. State power becomes more dependent both on private and on vastly growing civil sectors. Thus, the interests of private subjects to participate in the state logically grow – private and state – civil partnerships upon the management of various issues.

At the same time, national market, national culture, national policy and security undergo a process of globalization, as a result of which they become more often directed by unfavourable influences upon security. Thus, the contemporary state and political power in most countries turn out to be bound to political networks of internal and external subjects arising not only from the political, but also from the private and civil sectors.

In view of the above mentioned, the main focus is referred to by the question of the relation between the strategic communications and information management at the level of the European Union (EU) and at the level of a member state. It is important to determine the level, at which a dialogue is to be kept between the EU management and the civil society of the Community, on the one hand, and the state management

and the civil society of the individual member state, on the other. These relations are shown in the mutual dependency preconditioned by the existence of the organizations within the EU and by the fact that they are subject to regulation by their normative documents. The European Union is based on democratic principles established as criteria for membership. These principles are also applicable with respect to the communication practices under the specific cultural conditions of the individual member states. The membership of the Republic of Bulgaria in the EU makes the EU regulations a central factor upon the strategic communications and information regulation and management within the country at national level, which is not always a positive thing in the defence of the state interests.

In the course of time, European institutions have undertaken a series of measures with the purpose of making their activity more transparent and coming closer to the EU citizens. That desire of European institutions is also set in the Inter-institutional Declaration on Democracy, Transparency and Subsidiarity of October 1993. In June 2001 the European Commission endorsed a new frame document for cooperation on the issues of information and communication activity of the EU. The Community institutions, as well as the member states, united their efforts towards implementation of the initiatives proposed in the document. In March 2002 the European Parliament approved a declaration with the insistence on the improvement of the EU information policy. In July 2002 the European Commission approved a new communication strategy. The new Barroso Commission established a new Commissioner position – for communication strategy, and Margot Wallström became the first Communication Strategy Commissioner. In July 2005 Margot Wallström presented her first work plan for the modernization of the communication activity of institutions. In October Margot Wallström launched Plan "D" for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, and on 1st February 2006 she announced the project "White Paper on a European Communication Policy" entitled "Let's discuss Europe together with the people." The main idea of the project is to collect opinions of the European citizens regarding their vision of the EU, and based on this the European Commission is to prepare the final text of the "White Paper." The introduction of the White Book shows the stated attitude of the European Commission towards communication: "communication has a vital role for a healthy democracy." And indeed, it is communication and public discussion that seeks for and proposes new ideas.

In view of the above, we must mention the Treaty of Lisbon in force as of 1st December 2009 on the enforcement of democracy in the EU by setting new frames for the functioning of the EU. European citizens are citizens of one community, and in order to create and reinforce the feeling of affiliation, the idea of "Europe of the Citizens" was created in the EU. It is fundamental to take out the standards of communications and information management, which would contribute to the better inte-

gration of Bulgaria in the Community by taking into consideration the national specifics, which must not be ignored under any circumstances. It is also important to establish whether or not the normative requirements of the EU with respect to the citizens' right to acquire information are applied in practice.

It is reasonable to imagine that a good model of security management is a system of activities on the part of the state, private and civil institutions aimed at the mutual formulation and consecutive fulfilment of the public interest in security. In view of the above, Arnaud Danjean, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence, delivered an interesting address to the EU citizens, stating:

> Since it was first set up in 1999, the Common Security and Defence policy (CSDP) has enabled the European union to show that it can act effectively and usefully in the world. ... But for a European policy to be fully legitimate, that is to say, understood, accepted and, indeed, called for by the citizens of the member States, the European parliament must be associated with its decisions. .... to ensure that security and defence issues do not remain the exclusive preserve of experts, but also respond to the concerns expressed by the citizens of Europe.[1]

It is oriented towards the understanding that defence does not require only military and civil expertise, but also a good level of communication between the state and the civil society, including civil activity.

## The Defence Organization in National Documents and the Transparency Leitmotif

The requirement for following the principles of transparent management seems to automatically guarantee good management of the state. Transparency, however, is a complicated matter in itself, as well as a multi-aspect matter. Regarding transparency, there is an interesting statement by the popular Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev in an interview for "Süddeutsche Zeitung."[2] The political scientist is convinced that the level of transparency cannot be achieved anyway, as is believed by individual citizens. Transparency, according to Krastev, is an extremely important political instrument of trustworthy management, as at the same time it must become the main purpose of democratic policy. In view of the above, Krastev speaks about selective transparency, as a return to real policy would mean the complete revision of the public treaty. Here the focus is not on the state – civil society relation, but more on the relation between different generations.

In view of the above and in compliance with the requirements of the Community and its commitments as a member of NATO, as well as in reply to the requirements of modern global security environment, the Republic of Bulgaria harmonizes its legisla-

tion and has undertaken a number of initiatives in the spirit of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union. In the context of Bulgarian legislation there has been a number of steps undertaken in the spirit of the best European traditions for intensification of the dialogue between the state and the civil society on the matters of security and defence. The two state documents, which are of significant importance for the security and defence and which are our focus in the present Report, are as follows:

- The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- The White Book on Defence and Armed Forces;
- NATO Strategy to defeat enemy forces in the hybrid war; and
- EU strengthened response to hybrid threats.

The documents above may be recognized as part of the system for strategic communications management of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria states that the policy of the Republic of Bulgaria in the field of security is built upon the values of democracy, national culture, human and citizen rights, equal opportunities for personal development, as well as the Constitution of the country and the fundamental acts to ensure international security. The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria is a fundamental document concerning uniform formation, planning, implementation, coordination and control of the national security policy carried out by the state institutions in collaboration with the citizens and their organizations. The fulfilment of the National Security Strategy ensures the rights, freedoms, security and prosperity of the citizens and the society, the preservation of sovereignty, the territorial integrity of the country and the unity of the nation, the constitutionally established order and the democratic values, and protects the population and critical infrastructure in case of crises, calamities, accidents, and other risks and threats. The national security system is built for the purpose of achieving modern manageability of the efforts of the state institutions, local authority, economic subjects, citizens and their organizations for the purpose of ensuring the principles of democracy, the stable economic development, and the prosperity of the country.

The strategy was especially important to announce publicly to the society and the allies in NATO the values, purposes, principles and mechanisms of the national security policy. The document has become the base of the development of the Military Doctrine of the Republic of Bulgaria, as well as of other strategic and normative documents. Since the joining of the Republic of Bulgaria to NATO and to the European Union (EU), the Security Strategy has not been limited to the national framework, but has been part of the common efforts. All risks and threats to the security of the Re-

public of Bulgaria and its citizens coincide to a great extent with or are similar to those that endanger other member states of both alliances – the European Union and NATO.

The White Book on Defence and Armed Forces contributes to the dialogue between the state and the civil society by implementing a transparency and reporting policy, removal of corruption and inefficient management conditions, successful functioning of the Ministry of Defence as a modern institution of the democratic state, and the improvement of the armed forces structure in conformity with the new realities and available resources. The globalization processes accelerate and reinforce their impact on the security environment to determine the role and place of the military factor within the system of international, regional and national security. The determining factors of global security environment are the transatlantic cooperation of NATO and the European Union, and the increased commitment of both alliances to reinforce the partnership with other countries in the interest of the stabilization and normalization of the situation in regions of crisis and risk. An important factor in the establishment of a more predictable international security environment is the development of strategic dialogues and partnerships. In the context of globalization and modern security environment, there is visible transfer of negative effects, such as prompt distribution of negative impacts on the world policy and economy. It has a destabilizing effect on the development of states, including their security and defence. The latter makes imperative the development of capabilities to react to unexpected crisis situations of various nature. In the context, in December 2015, NATO adopted the "NATO Strategy to Defeat Enemy Forces in the Hybrid War" and in April 2016 the European Union adopted the document „EU strengthens response to hybrid threats."

The improvement of the regulations stipulating the defence and activity of the armed forces is part of the political efforts towards and will for realization of the results shown in the review of the structure of forces, the strengthening of the dialogue between the state and the civil society, and a way to achieve a higher level of management transparency. One of the leading priorities of the defence policy is the further development of an efficient management integrated system of defence upon constant civil control, with a potential for flexibility, planning and efficient reaction. Today, with a particular stress on importance we have another priority in this area, inter-institutional and international cooperation in building integrated capabilities to counter hybrid threats – diplomatic, political, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence, legal, etc. Respectively, four main areas can be outlined: civil-military cooperation, situational awareness, strategic communication and cyber defence. These priorities involve the development of a National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria to counteract hybrid threats. The above requires the application of modern defence management based on the principles of good management and planning, on

the basis of the operative capabilities of forces and the probable scenarios to use them. In the context of all this, it must be stressed that active civil-military cooperation and adequate to modern realities legislation are a key to successfully tackling new challenges to security and defence, including the occurrence of hybrid threats to Bulgaria as a as a member state of NATO and the European Union.

The civil and military collaboration as a complex of interaction and coordination events and activities headed by the military with organizations that are external to the military structures and the local authority is also determining its success. The introduction of new management practices, which lead to a higher level of management transparency, are of great significance in the dialogue between the state and the civil society.

The information policy of the Ministry of Defence is directed towards an increase in the society awareness of and support to the policy of the department, and is closely connected with the government policy in the field of defence. Efforts are directed towards the adequate to the quickly changing global information environment and the introduction of new technologies. In order to achieve successful application of the information policy, it is necessary to have communication tools and modernized approach.

Defence policy is presented to the attention of the society on a regular basis via print and electronic media, information products and digital messages to target groups, as well as via direct communication, discussions and events, establishment of long-term relations and networks with audiences that are internal and external to the institution.

## Conclusion

A practice aimed at achieving strategic communications and information management in Bulgaria, and a dialogue between the state and the civil society in the field of security and defence is a constant subject of attention in view of the high criteria and requirements of the EU and NATO. Periodical assessment of their condition considering the tendencies in their development is to be executed in view of the EU perspectives.

Bulgaria will keep building its own security by applying the mechanisms of the collective defence of NATO and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union. As a member of NATO and of the European Union, our country has its adequate share in the efforts towards the establishment of a secure environment that is favourable to the realization of our national interests, of peace, stability, justice, and economic prosperity. At the same time, due to the judicious management of the strategic communications and the information in the field of defence and the policy of transparency, our society gets a clear idea of the result of the efforts of all

men and women in uniform. Today, their efforts are aimed at building adequate contemporary global conditions integrated capabilities to timely counteract potential and real hybrid threats.

## Notes

1  Arnaud Danjean, Chairman, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, "Welcoming Words," in *Providing Parliamentary Accountability over EU's Common Security and Defence Policy*, *7th legislative period (2009-2014)* (European Parliament, Subcommittee on Security and Defence, 2012), quote on p. 3.
2  As presented in the *Dnevnik* daily: Ivan Krastev, "Politics is not an Exact Science," *Dnevnik*, October 25, 2015 (in Bulgarian), accessed April 4, 2018, https://www.dnevnik.bg/analizi/2012/10/25/1932799_politikata_ne_e_tochna_nauka/.

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3.  Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, issued by the Council of Europe, 2007.
4.  Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated, State Gazette, Issue No. 56 of 13th July 1991, in force as of 13th July 1991.
5.  Defence and Armed Forces Act of the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated, State Gazette, Issue No. 35 of 12th May 2009, amended, State Gazette, Issue No. 38 of 18th May 2012.
6.  Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, Sofia, 2011.
7.  European Convention on Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, issued by the Council of Europe, Secretariat of the European Court of Human Rights, 2010.
8.  European Security Strategy, European communities, 2009.
9.  EU strengthens response to hybrid threats, Brussels, European Commission, 6 April 2016.
10. National Defence Strategy, Sofia, 2011.

11. National Security Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, approved by Decision dated 8th March 2011 of the National Assembly, promulgated, State Gazette, Issue No. 19 of 8th March 2011.

12 NATO Strategy to defeat enemy forces in the hybrid war, December 2015, http://www.natolibguides.info/hybridwarfare/articles/archives.

13. Civil Service Act, in force as of 27th August 1999, promulgated in State Gazette, issue No. 67 of 27th July 1999.

14. Treaty of Lisbon (Sofia: Minerva, 2008).

15. White Paper on a European Communication Policy, Council of Europe, 2007.

16. White Book on Defence and Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2010.

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