

THE ROLE OF THE RAKOVSKI NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE IN INCREASING THE RESILIENCE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM

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Abstract: *The paper discusses an approach to implement an effective contribution of the Rakovski National Defence College (RNDC). The aim of the study is to contribute to the overall efforts to increase the resilience of the national security system of the Republic of Bulgaria. The strategic documents that form the framework of this publication and define the definitions related to the topic of resilience of the national security system are examined. Presented are the main requirements for national resilience contributing to NATO's collective capability in this area.*

Keywords: *Resilience of the national security system, Basic requirements for national resilience.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The protection of life and health of citizens, ensuring the stability and security of public life are among the main tasks of the modern state. These tasks are clearly outlined in the main strategic documents forming the national security system [1].

Crises directly or indirectly threaten the national security which determines the relevance of the issues of counteracting the sources of threats and minimizing the negative consequences when one of them occurs. Moreover, a proactive approach is needed at the state level, i.e. ensuring high resilience of the national security system. The issue of resilience is not only a national issue, but is part of the new NATO 2022 Strategic Concept adopted in 2022 to further strengthen the Alliance's defence capabilities [2].

The strategic documents that specify the framework of this publication, form the understanding and define the definitions related to the topic of the national security system resilience and are NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area and NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept [3].

2. PURPOSE

The main purpose of this publication is to propose an approach for effective contribution of the RNDC in the overall efforts to enhance the resilience of the National Security System of the Republic of Bulgaria.

3. ACTUALITY

The establishment and development of a functioning national security system and its resilience is a problem not only for the Republic of Bulgaria, but also for the other member states of the Alliance. The adopted principle of resilience is enshrined in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. NATO's main goal is to guarantee the freedom and security of its member states through political and military means. In order to realize this goal, each member state must develop capabilities that ensure its resilience to events of different nature, such as natural disasters, disruption of critical infrastructure, or attack of a hybrid or armed nature [4]. Alliance's resilience is the individual and collective capability of each country to be prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover quickly and adequately from the shocks of a crisis. The readiness of the civilian component is a central pillar of this resilience and a critical factor in the Alliance's collective defence. Civilian component readiness has three main functions: consistency of management, uninterrupted essential services to the population and civilian support to military operations. These critical characteristics have been translated into seven baseline national resilience requirements against which allies can measure their readiness levels.

To accomplish their missions, armed forces, especially in times of crisis and/or conflict, depend significantly on the private sector for transport, communications, energy supply and logistical support. The resilience of the civilian component ensures its readiness to sustain impacts and shocks in order to be able to continue to support the armed forces at all times.

NATO's collective capacity to resist any form of armed attack is ensured through the following national resilience requirements [NATO - Topic: Resilience, civil preparedness and Article 3]:

- Assured government continuity and critical government services: for example, the ability to make decisions and communicate with citizens during a crisis;
- resilient energy supplies: ensuring uninterrupted energy supplies and having back-up management plans;
- capability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people;
- resilient food and water resources: ensuring resilience and security of supply;
- the capability to manage health crises and events with significant casualties: ensuring that civilian health systems can manage and that there are sufficient reserves of medical supplies;
- resilient civilian communications systems: ensuring that communications and information networks can function and have sufficient spare capacity to operate in crisis conditions;
- resilient transport systems: ensuring that NATO forces can move quickly through Alliance territory and that civilian authorities can rely on secure transport networks.

The new NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, adopted in June 2022, is an expression of the Alliance's new direction. It reflects the challenges in the security environment facing the Alliance and defines its main tasks. The Concept condemns the actions of the Russian Federation violating the norms contributing to a stable and predictable European security order [5, 9]. The NATO Strategic Concept is supported by two military concepts that define the direction for NATO adaptation. These are NATO's Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area and the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept.

The concept of deterrence and defence is the result of the Alliance's consistent efforts to strengthen its deterrence and defence posture. It reflects Allied agreement on a new force model to strengthen and modernize NATO's force structure, and is one of the driving forces behind the creation of the new generation of NATO military plans [6].

NATO's Concept of War offers a broader vision that supports the further development of NATO capabilities to provide decisive military advantage in the face of modern strategic competition and the adaptation of the military instrument of power looking forward to 2040. The Concept supports the Alliance's capabilities to anticipate and counter strategic shocks and surprises, to manage the consequences, and to withstand and ultimately prevail over adversaries. This requires a multi-layered approach involving mutually reinforcing "layers" of military and civilian resilience as an expression of NATO's overarching resilience agenda. This highlights the importance of continuity of command, military structures and processes, reserve forces, and ensuring a balance between capabilities and capacities.

4. ANALYSIS OF THE CONDITION

The management of modern crises requires a change in the attitude of institutions towards security. This requires the involvement of all institutions, including those of the military-educational system and business, in the creation of strategic tools and mechanisms for adapting management approaches related to the preparation of the state for action in the face of permanent crises of various nature.

Analyses of the national security system of the Republic of Bulgaria show a critical level of capability deficits caused by objective and subjective characteristics of the economic, public, food, social and administrative-managerial systems of the state, which are different in nature and intensity [7]. These deficits have a strong negative impact on the state's capability and capacity to deal successfully with emerging crisis situations. Without a doubt, the new conditions and environment require a redefinition of security as a concept, and hence the definition of new approaches to solving problems. All this is linked to resolving a number of issues, including the issue of increasing the experience and professionalism of the management staff. It is therefore necessary to take a number of measures to improve the state of all public spheres of the state. This includes improving the national security system (including the military and non-military components), including raising the quality of education and training of personnel for state management. The implementation of these tasks is done by taking a number of measures to update the normative base and optimize the curricula [8].

5. EXPERIENCE OF THE RNDC IN ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM

Rakovsky National Defence College is a well-established educational and research institution that supports the building and development of the crisis management and disaster response capabilities. The RNDC has significant experience in building personnel in the field of national security and specifically in strengthening civilian resilience. A central pillar in the training of specialists is the Master's degree in Protection of Population and Critical Infrastructure. It is intended for specialists with a university degree and a Bachelor's or Master's degree in a specialization outside the field of higher education in security and defence.

Rakovsky National Defence College also conducts a two-week specialized course "Crisis Management". Trainees may be civilian employees holding or appointed to hold managerial and expert positions in ministries and departments, bodies and organizations of the central and territorial administration. The aim of the course is to acquire knowledge and skills on the theoretical and applied basics and on analyzing and using the crisis management tools in the new security environment.

The course contributes to the development of new capacities for anticipation, planning and management of crises and crisis situations. It provides a professional qualification in the skills of leadership of large complex social organizations and crisis and emergency management.

The topic of resilience is also included in the curricula of other courses, such as Strategic Defence Management, Staff Course for Officers of All Troops, Public Relations, Protection of Population and Infrastructure in Emergencies, etc.

A key precondition for achieving the institutional resilience of the National Security System is the effective implementation of the lessons learned process. In this regard, the RNDC offers the Lessons from Practice course. The aim is to enhance and systematize learners' knowledge and skills to adequately address change factors by proposing appropriate solutions based on experience. It also builds and maintains expertise to enable methodological and scientific accompaniment of the Lessons from Practice process, the latter in the form of specific analyses.

RNDC is part of the Consortium of the National Scientific Programme "Security and Defence", where it is a leading scientific organization with a strong scientific contribution on the subject of the resilience of the National Security System.

The RNDC also has traditions in organizing and conducting scientific forums on the described topic. Examples of this are the hosting of the scientific conference with international participation held on 30 and 31 October 2023 on "Shared Resilience in Southeast Europe", as well as the panel discussion held on 08.04.2025 on "Enhancing National Resilience: Progress, Challenges and the Way Forward".

6. VISION FOR CHANGE

The contributions of the RNDC to the improvement of the resilience of the national security system is related to the unification of theory and practical experience in the assessment of the security environment, the leadership of the defence and armed forces, the management of security resources and the use of science in the development of future leaders in the country. The uniqueness of the RNDC is that it manages to combine knowledge in the military and civilian domains or military and non-military projection of state power through the undergraduate, masters and doctoral programmes in the scientific area of Security and Defence. This uniqueness implies a search for new approaches to improve the contribution of the RNDC to increase resilience in the national security system.

Rakovsky National Defence College can provide a broad and interdisciplinary training centered around the concept of understanding security as a system of bodies and organizations for the protection of national security, civil security of the population and infrastructure in emergency situations, the defense of the country, including the established civil protection system. The various courses offered by the academy focus on providing knowledge in such important areas of modern society as infrastructure protection, disaster and emergency response, economics, management, protection from terrorism, etc., which broadens the scope of conceptual views and understandings of the application of population and infrastructure protection in national security.

The RNDC's contribution to enhancing the resilience of the national security system can be expressed specifically in the following:

- Participation of experts from RNDC in working teams on the problems of increasing resilience in the national security system;
- Organization and participation in events such as: workshops, round tables, situation games, seminars and scientific conferences.

This idea can be implemented by involving prominent personalities and experts from relevant ministries and departments, the armed forces, academia and the non-governmental sector, relevant to the issues related to enhancing resilience in the national security system;

- Training in bachelor, master and doctoral programmers. The RNDC, as a national educational institution with a long tradition in higher education, should train and prepare officers and students in this subject area in various doctoral, master's and bachelor's degree programmes, as well as expand and deepen cooperation with educational and research institutions from the country and NATO member states;

- Training in specialized courses. The RNDC should expand the implementation of its activities to a greater extent by preparing and improving the qualification of personnel from and for the public administration. This can be done by broadening the subject area, enriching the topics of the courses and orienting them towards practical applicability, as well as promoting them among stakeholders.

- Research projects. The RNDC, and in particular the Institute for Defence Advanced Research Institute (DARI) which is part of it, should establish itself as a research centre for security and defence studies, military art, strategic leadership and military history. It should expand its capacity to carry out research projects in the field of national and international security and to organize scientific and professional forums with themes responding to complex defence and security challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

The critical level of the capabilities of the National Security System of the Republic of Bulgaria in terms of resilience reveals the need to redefine security as a concept adequate to the new conditions and security environment. A similar thesis requires the choice of an approach to overcome these deficits, the basis of which should be the establishment of a link between the education system and the national security system through sustainable mechanisms for training personnel and innovative approaches aimed at risk management. The approach must meet the basic requirements for national resilience, be sufficiently generic and respond to the specific needs of public organizations and business.

In this regard, the vision of the military education system to enhance the resilience of national security should focus on: 1) The formation of human capital with competencies, critical thinking and adaptability that are vital for the management of contemporary threats; 2) The provision of interdisciplinary training with a holistic approach to challenges; 3) Civic-patriotic education to form values critical for social stability such as national identity and responsibility; 4) Training focused on adaptation to global challenges that integrates knowledge of cyber security, counter-terrorism and hybrid threats, as well as other risks relevant to the security environment; 5) Training implementing international standards to enhance interoperability with NATO and EU partners.

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