New Model Armies: Rethinking Military Purpose in Post-Conflict Southeastern Europe

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Abstract: New and novel military structures have emerged across the region in the context of externally driven post-conflict defence reform. As the post-conflict narrative gives way to new domestic, regional and international challenges and opportunities, elements of the process remain unresolved. This paper will argue that in order to establish a sustainable and efficient military platform three emerging and interrelated lacunae need to be addressed: knowledge deficits in civilian-military relations; ownership cleavages as a result of adherence to Euro-Atlantic integration; and legitimacy of military function beyond the post-conflict context.

Keywords: security sector reform, civilian-military relations, ownership, legitimacy.

Introduction – Rethinking Military Purpose: Why?

There has been an extraordinary sequence of military transformation in the Southeastern Europe over the past 20 years: from the Cold War, through the conflicts of the 1990s, to recent post-conflict reform driven by an externally orchestrated 'conditional rights based' narrative of stabilisation, state-building and integration.[1] This legacy of Cold War, nationalist conflict and international intervention persists to add complexity to the challenges facing those who seek to orientate military purpose to meet contemporary domestic, regional and global security demands. Compounding this legacy is the fact acknowledged by Sumantra Bose, Richard Caplan and others, that so much of the international and domestic effort in post-conflict territories was experimental in nature.[2] This context has given rise to a variety of military models from those capable of achieving NATO membership to those which are of themselves novel solutions to internal security challenges.

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1   Post-conflict Southeastern Europe is understood here in the geographical sense to include Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, FYROM and Kosovo.

2   For commentaries on the experimental nature of international intervention, see: Bose 2002; Chandler 2000; Gow 2007; and Caplan 2005. For an explanation of 'learning by doing' in a security/ development context see Francois and Sud 2006, 141.

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As the post-conflict phase moves towards its conclusion and as the international presence across the region withdraws – leaving power and responsibility to domestic governments to plot their respective courses – this paper considers the conceptual arguments that frame discussion on military function before exploring answers to the following questions in a sample of four Southeastern European countries: Croatia, Bosnia Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Kosovo.[3] First, what are the emerging features of contemporary military and defence reform in Southeastern Europe and form the perspective of Security Sector Reform (SSR), why have these features emerged? Second, what are the implications for future defence reform?

Argument

Focusing on the post-conflict period up to the present and in seeking to complement a debate that has predominantly focused on SSR processes in the context of EU and NATO accession strategies, the following overlapping arguments are posed: First, there is an emerging consensus on the core roles of military forces in the region. Second, that there is divergence in local ownership of military reform due to overlapping processes of integration and SSR. Third, clear cleavages are emerging in civilian –military relations due to reform programmes that focus almost exclusively on militaries to the detriment of their civilian counterparts. Finally, that the combined effects of these issues have the potential to erode the legitimacy of function of military forces in the eyes of the state and the nation, presenting the challenge to military leaders of re-establishing military relevance and purpose in an economically depressed and increasingly sceptical environment.

Methodology

In considering the questions posed, and mindful of the potential for more comprehensive and detailed research, this paper specifically targets questions of understanding, ownership and legitimacy associated with defence reform in states transitioning away from a post-conflict context, which the author feels have yet to be fully explored by academic or policy research. It should therefore be understood as a conscious attempt to initiate debate on these issues rather than an exhaustive analysis.

The author takes that view that the concept of SSR offers an appropriate means to evaluate the nature and impact of defence reform in the region as the main characteristics of SSR can be clearly traced in the post-conflict response. The initial emphasis on Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration of combatants (DDR) and the subsequent broad focus on the interconnected elements of state security including policing, military, and judicial structures capture many if not all of the central components of post-conflict transition and transformation. From this context several identifiable features have emerged: the

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3   For the purposes of this paper the Kosovo Security Force was analysed on the same basis as militaries of other states.

emphasis on human rights and the rule of law offers a useful standpoint from which to consider the 'rights based' approach to integration applied by the EU and NATO.[4] SSR also allows for a focus on inclusive engagement between state and non-state actors as a means to developing security and justice powers alongside appropriate and effective governance, oversight and management.[5]

Research for this project was carried out over a six month period from spring to autumn 2013. Twenty three 'in-person' interviews were conducted with civil servants, military personnel, politicians and non-governmental personnel from each of the countries analysed including eight interviews with staff of international organisations, namely EU, NATO and OSCE. Qualitative information garnered from this process was considered alongside available quantitative information accessible through international organisations, national governments, international and domestic think tanks.

Understanding Defence Reform In the Southeastern Europe

Much of the scholarship on the place of 'the military' in society has focused on the theoretical problem of 'how to maintain a military that sustains and protects democratic values'.[6] For example, James Burk's analysis of theoretical approaches to civil-military relations establishes the underlying importance of Huntington's liberal theory of democracy, with its emphasis on the protection of 'the rights and liberties of individual citizens', and Janowitz's civic republican theory, which focuses on the engagement of citizens in public life and the importance of the 'citizen soldier'. In identifying their respective shortcomings in explaining the vast 'empirical domain of civil-military relations', Burk's call for a 'unifying theory' that 'pays equal attention to the need for protecting and sustaining democratic values both within and beyond the nation state' has thus far failed to materialise.[7] Somewhat eschewing this debate, the literature on contemporary military purpose has predominantly focused on either functional assessments of the roles and capabilities of military forces *vis a vis* perceived threats and/or the socio-political factors that shape the development of those roles. Timothy Edmunds' argument that European armed forces are undergoing a profound series of shifts in their core roles is equally evident in Southeastern Europe, with the added complications of a series of pre and post-conflict legacies.[8]

The concept and practice of SSR appears capable of bridging the theoretical gap as its holistic focus accommodates both a Hobbesian emphasis on state security, on one hand,

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4   For example the EU's Copenhagen Criteria or NATO's North Atlantic Treaty (Treaty of Washington 1949).

5   Report of the Secretary General. A/62/659-S/2008/39. United Nations 2008.

6   Burk 2002, 7.

7   *Ibid.*

8   Edmunds 2006, 1059–1075.

while simultaneously emphasising the importance of engaging citizens in public life, on the other.[9] For example, the emphasis on the cultivation of citizen interest and responsibility in Janowitz's civil republican theory, shares common ground with the concept of local ownership as articulated in SSR.

SSR emerged in the 1990s as an inclusive approach to peacebuilding based on a balance between the traditional realist approach to state security and a more idealist approach to 'human security' that acknowledges the 'interrelating building blocks of human and national security'.[10] The characteristics of SSR are generally accepted: the prioritisation of local ownership; effectiveness and accountability; and the delivery of programmes through approaches that are sensitive to political realities, holistic in vision, and technically proficient.[11] Foremost for states transitioning from conflict, the emphasis on 'local ownership', where the reform of security policies is 'designed, managed and implemented by local actors rather than external actors', is seen as critical for the establishment of sustainable structures.[12] It is also representative of a conscious attempt on the part of external actors, particularly international organisations such as the UN, NATO and EU, to move away from overtly prescriptive approaches to security reform that risk isolating indigenous actors and undermining peacebuilding efforts more generally.

New Model Armies: Emerging features of Defence Reform

Defence policy and function: A Common purpose?

Table 1: *Comparison of military roles*

	Defence of National Territory	International Security	Internal Security	Aide to the Civil Authority	Nation Building
Serbia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Croatia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
BiH	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Kosovo	No	No	No	Yes	Yes

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9   SSR also comes closest to addressing a shift away from the control of the military in domestic politics and towards the wider problem of the democratic management and implementation of defence and security policy. See Cottey *et al.* 2002.

10   DCAF 2012.

11   See United Nations 2008; OECD 2007, and DCAF 2012.

12   Nathan 2007.

Table 2: *Defence Expenditure as a percentage of GDP 2000–2013[13]*

	2000	2005	2010	2013	Variation
Croatia	3.1	1.8	1.7	1.6	-1.5
Serbia	5.5	2.5	2.4	2.1	-3.4
BiH	3.9*	1.5	1.2	0.9	-3
Kosovo**	N/A		0.9	0.7	-0.2

* 2002 Earliest available figure SIPRI.

**Kosovo figures calculated on the basis of Ministry of Security Annual Report 2013 and LawNo.04//L-079 on budget for Republic of Kosovo 2012; figures shown are proportional to the annual budget not GDP.

Table 3: *Current defence strengths[14]*

	Land Forces	Air Force	Naval Force	Other	Total
Croatia	11,250	1,850	1,600	4,850*	16, 550
Serbia	13,250	5,100	N/A	9,800**	28,150
BiH	9,700	800***	N/A		10,500
Kosovo	2,500†	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,500

*Joint and paramilitary elements.

** Training Command 3,000; Guards 1,600; Other MOD 5,200.

***Air Force and Air defence Brigade

†Non-military organisation with responsibility for crisis management, civil protection and EOD.

All states have sought to balance the realist imperatives of retaining armed forces as a means of defending the state from armed aggression with prevailing functional and socio-political imperatives: the possibilities for participation in international security (including the development of an expeditionary capability); internal security priorities; support for civil agencies; and nation building imperatives.[15] A comparison of defence policy and data reveals not only an emerging consensus on the roles and functions of military forces, (Table 1), but also that states have moved beyond the initial post-conflict frameworks associated with DDR to a point where by defence budgets and strengths are broadly in line with the objectives outlined in post-conflict defence policy, (Tables 2 and 3).[16]

The defence of national territory from external aggression receives upmost prominence even if the conventional capacity to provide such defence varies greatly and is solely

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13   www.sipri.org

14   The Military Balance. 2014.

15   *Ibid.*

16   Documents analysed include White Papers, Defence Reviews and strategy papers.

aspirational in Kosovo's case.[17] Only Croatia, by virtue of its NATO membership, has the associated capacity to effect genuine conventional defence. There is a universally shared desire to contribute to international security through organisations such as the UN, NATO, EU and OSCE. Again with the exception of Kosovo, all of the states analysed have contributed to missions with one or all of these organisations.[18]

The internal security role for military forces remains complicated by many factors. Persistent ethnic threats and tensions may be gradually receding but organised crime; border security and human trafficking remain as issues to the fore across the region. While all states have allowed for a military 'aide to the civil authority' role in response to natural disasters, the question of providing support to police is either barely acknowledged or not at all.[19] As a result the 'duel'/civilian utility of military capabilities remain to be fully exploited.

The importance attached to the military as 'a symbolic representation of national sovereignty and values' is apparent in both policy and rhetoric; 'the KSF will represent and protect all the people of Kosovo'; while the 'protection of the national identity of its citizens' is identified as a priority in the Serbian White Paper.[20] These policy statements can be viewed as necessary steps in the post-conflict nation or re-nation building process; linking the SSR principle of 'local ownership' to the core function of military existence. As such, military participation in international security roles 'in the cause of peace' can be understood as both projecting national values and representing national interests so long as the 'nation' can identify with the roles that a military performs. However, formally linking military purpose to national identity in such a way is problematic in that it potentially exposes the military as a normative instrument of uncertain origin. This tension is evident in political responses to defence reform in the context of Euro-Atlantic integration.

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17   Edmunds, 2006 and Kosovan, Ministry for Security announcement on creation of a Kosovan Army, March 2014.

18   The Military Balance, 2014

19   For example the BiH White Paper makes no reference to military-police cooperation while in a recent submission by the Government of Croatia to the OSCE they somewhat cautiously refer to their military as being available to 'assist institutions of civil authorities and population in case of natural, technical, technological and environmental disasters.'

20   Mission Statement for the Kosovo Security Force, http://www.mksf-ks.org/?page=2,7. White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade 2010.

Defence Policy Divergence: Integration And/Or Ownership?

For Croatia, the conceptual function of military reform is easily placed within the Euro-Atlantic integrationist framework of EU accession plans, NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) and/or Membership Actions Plans (MAPs). For example, buoyed by a cross section of political and public support[21], the Croatian government has invested heavily in defence reform in pursuit of its integrationist agenda proactively availing of opportunities to contribute to EU battle groups and to EU and NATO operations well in advance of its eventual accession. While economic difficulties have impacted on reform, by virtue of its acceptance into NATO, Croatia can be adjudged to have achieved a level of military effectiveness and accountability in line with the membership of that organisation. Furthermore that Croatia is consciously forging a new regional identity and function by seeking to establish a role as 'key facilitator' for the other countries of the region to progress their NATO and EU membership ambitions, suggests that ownership of defence reform and the role of the military as an instrument of foreign policy has evolved to a post- integrationist position.[22]

Though Serbia's recent agreement with Kosovo has opened the gate to European integration, effective defence reform was already well underway. Joining PfP in 2006 marked an important step towards addressing conflict legacies relating to NATO and military downsizing and professionalization processes have and are being successfully implemented resulting in a significant reduction in inefficient defence spending (Table 2 and 3). Similar to Croatia, the deployment of troops in Peace Support Operations (PSO) to Lebanon and other UN missions marks an important step in articulating a Serbian identity on the international stage. Serbia's White Paper on Defence demonstrates a sensitivity to the issue of local ownership and the internal political debate concerning Euro-Atlantic and national liberation approaches to reform by subtly articulating a *Janus faced* 'vision of a defence system… as a European Union member country, integrated into collective security systems…'[23] including bilateral partnership with Russia. While Serbian officials referred to its 'appropriateness for the Serbian political context' the balance of its implementation suggests a political predilection towards 'the west' as the 'current level of Serbia-NATO cooperation remains significantly greater than the level of military cooperation with Moscow.'[24]

In BiH and Kosovo, while the integrationist narrative is still evident, military forces have been specifically designed to address domestic/internal security concerns with a particular emphasis on ethnic balance and symbolic function in the context of stabilisation and nation building. In the case of BIH, the transition to a unified military structure was underpinned by the role of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), international

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21   Sekora 2008, 135.

22   Author Interview, Croatian civil servant, Belgrade, September 2013.

23   White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade 2010.

24   http://www.cepolicy.org/publications/serbias-relations-nato-other-quieter-game-town

donors and membership of PfP in 2006. From this context and in the face of significant political resistance, a series of sustained and innovative SSR programmes were delivered that institutionalised ethnic balance, civilian and democratic oversight alongside modest capability development. While this process has received widespread and deserving praise all personnel interviewed were of the view that progress had stalled. BiH military officers highlighted the adverse human resource and training pressures caused by their commitment to securing post-war munitions sites on a daily basis: 'a huge portion of our force , almost 850, are basically beyond our reach. It's bad for moral, as we can't train them as we would like and there is a feeling that we are providing the service on the cheap'.[25] The view was expressed that the operational relationship between the ethnically integrated HQ and ethnically segregated battalions had yet to be truly tested with 'serious doubts as to how it would cope with being tasked to respond to a crisis situation such as mass civil unrest or a paramilitary type threat'.[26] To varying degrees all those interviewed referred to 'disconnects' between the armed forces and the population and more particularly with significant sections of the political elite which suggests that the balance of ownership of defence reform remains artificially suspended between international donors, domestic actors and parallel systems of governance.

Like BiH, military reform in Kosovo has taken place firmly under the hand of international administration. While it can be argued that the SSR process did not begin in Kosovo until after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 2008, elements of that process were long established across the spectrum of SSR areas from judicial to police reform. Understandably democratic, civilian-oversight, and governance structures are still consolidating their place alongside KPS and KSF reform.[27] While the ethnic balance of the KSF still needs to be addressed particular regarding the contribution of Kosovo Serbs, it has nonetheless progressed to achieve Full Operational Capability (FOC).[28] The debate concerning the future of the KSF rests between its current purpose as a civil actor, as internationally established, and the clearly stated ambition of the 'majority of political and institutional actors in Kosovo […] for transforming the KSF into a military force…'[29] The declaration by Minster for Security Agim Çeku of the government's intent to establish a Ministry of Defence and an Armed Forces of Kosovo with a strength of 5000, by 2019, and NATO's muted reaction, would suggest that the Kosovo government is to some extent wresting ownership of defence reform from the international actors, particular NATO, that have overseen it to date.[30]

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25   Author Interview, officer BiH armed forces, Sarajevo, July 2013.

26   Author Interview, international organisation staff based in Sarajevo, July 2013.

27   Qehaja and Vrajollin 2012.

28   FOC confirmed by NATO in July 2013.

29   Qehaja and Vrajollin 2012.

30   Blease and Qehaja 2013.

While the government intent is clear and buoyed by popular support, serious questions exist as to the feasibility and particularly the financial sustainability of the governments plan.[31] For now though the KSF remains as unique construct 'a civilian structure with a humanitarian mandate designed to fulfil security functions that are not appropriate for police or other law enforcement institutions' but whose members though armed 'do not have the power to exercise force'.[32] However given its current *sui generis* character, the question remains as to whether the government of Kosovo has missed an opportunity to forge a unique identity for itself in international security whereby members of the KSF could have contributed to peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions from a platform neutrality and as a model of the scope for innovative solutions in post-conflict territories.

Caparini has argued that much of this reform was 'not so much the consensual product of a rational process of self-evaluation by national political elites as it was an instrument to serve the interests of external actors and agendas'.[33] Undoubtedly, NATO, EU and OSCE remain intrinsically embedded in the internal policy framework in BiH and Kosovo; instrumental in guiding the legislative process and introduction of related instruments of oversight and programme implementation. In some respects though, Caparini's view that the reform responded to external needs above the domestic is open to question. Croatia's experience was more akin to that of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with generally broad support for the accession processes towards membership of both NATO and the EU. Serbia, primarily due to the standoff concerning Kosovo, stands apart with comparatively less interaction with NATO and the EU on defence issues. Even so Serbia's White Paper and associated defence documents are evidence that they arrived at largely similar conclusions on the roles and function of military forces – to those 'imposed' on Croatia, BiH and Kosovo – they are also demonstrative of a degree of policy independence that seeks to accommodate the integrationist and nationalist aspirations of the population.

Defence Reform: New Military Identities

If the policy framework struggles to accommodate the narratives of nation building and Euro-Atlantic integration, the transformations attained by militaries across the region whether through externally or internally stimulated defence reform programmes have been generally impressive, demonstrating a clear progression to smaller more professional armed forces, 're-skilling' to face 'new' security challenges from cyber security to counter-piracy.[34]

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31   Muja 2013.

32   *Ibid.*

33   Caparini 2006.

34   Caparini 2006; Edmunds 2006.

While political views differ on NATO membership, it is evident that military reform is almost universally executed within or mirrored on NATO standards and best practices.[35] In part this reflects the common needs and challenges being experienced by militaries across the region and is also the basis upon which 'new military identities' have been forged – with a potential for regional synergies that is developing over time. Despite evidence of clear frustrations, the respective militaries have demonstrated admirable commitment to reform in this context. For example the continued functioning of the PSOTC in BiH[36] after the withdrawal of international donor support is representative of a broader commitment to professionalization and a sustainable transformation.

Contributions to international peace and security operations have also had positive impacts on militaries view of themselves both reinforcing professional competence and forging a new identity as 'instruments of foreign policy'. Though 'the public's' perception of international commitments is in many ways dependent on the foreign policy logic guiding military deployments there was universal support for these efforts across those interviewed.[37] For the military the resultant focus on niche, particularly technical capabilities such as demining, Counter Improvised Explosive Devices (C-IED) and medical training, is understandable and laudable insofar as it allows for 'meaningful' contributions to multinational platforms. While concerns were expressed in BiH that the emphasis on demining capabilities, was denying resources to other areas of reform, if one views collectively the contributions of Serbia, Croatia and BiH to peacebuilding missions it is clear that their focus on such areas was and is a practical response to both decreasing defence expenditure (Table 2) and the new security challenges and objectives as outlined by NATO and EU.[38]

If military identity can be closely associated with adoption of NATO standards and legitimised in part by contributions to PSO it is also affected by the presence of domestic competition in terms of legitimate recourse to the use of force. In BiH alone there are 12 different agencies at state and entity level authorised to use force.[39] By contrast, in Kosovo the 'only local security institution authorised to use force is the police.[40] While the merits of having such a broad base access to means of force is open to debate, it has the potential to devalue the traditional sense of purpose attached by the military to

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35   Serbia's engagement in NATO/PfP's, Planning and Review Process (PARP) has seen the Serbian military move to align itself with NATO standards.

36   The Peace Support Operations Training Centre (PSOTC) in Sarajevo is a joint project of more than a dozen states, with the primary purpose of providing training for BiH officers as well as officers from other states, in order to facilitate more effective participation in multinational peace support and humanitarian operations.

37   The Military Balance 2014.

38   Author Interview, Officer of BiH Armed Forces, July 2013. See also NATO Strategic Concept 2010. EU European Security Strategy Review 2008.

39   Kolpfer *et al.* 2012.

40   Qehaja and Vrajolli 2012.

being the legitimate guarantors of use the fore within a state. Where these structures exist they are also representative of a power/ownership asymmetry whereby the function of military forces is increasingly questioned; 'highly politicised police services are far more useful to politicians than military units training for an overseas mission…'[41] It is somewhat surprising that given the policy emphasis on establishing military legitimacy and trust with the 'peoples' of the state, that emerging military structures were not afforded a more prominent 'aide to the civil power' role through visible and relevant contributions to 'civil/ policing' needs.

In explaining the existence of this asymmetry it should be noted that domestic ownership of the military reform process was constrained by the international organisations involved. However the absence of a normative transfer to the domestic authorities can also be attributed to the fact that most states prioritised membership of either or both EU and NATO to the extent that as a strategic statement, it became an end of national policy rather that a means to further national interests; 'we just did what we had to do'.[42] On another level it has been argued that '…a lack of transparency impedes national ownership of the security sector…' and overall security governance across the region is still weak.[43]

Civilian-Military Imbalance

Though structures and capabilities have undoubtedly improved in all cases, in spite of significant capacity deficits in terms of human resources and financial means (often exacerbated by the withdrawal of international donor support) a number of interconnected features have emerged to give both external and internal stakeholders food for thought:

First, there is sufficient evidence to argue that the SSR processes applied to security organisations[44] across the region were flawed in their ability to marry civilian and military structures due to an unbalanced focus on military over civilian issues. For example in Croatia, the rapid transformation of armed forces capability was not matched on the civilian side where 'skill deficits in the ministry have been difficult to fill and there was a significant restructuring challenge involved in bringing the General Staff into the MOD while depoliticising them at the same time'.[45] Furthermore there emerged significant 'confusion in institutional relationships symptomatic of broader civilian military relations issues.[46] At the other end of the spectrum, though often held forth as a success story there are real concerns surrounding the cohesiveness of the BiH military structures

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41   Author Interview, Officer BiH armed forces, Sarajevo, July 2013.

42   Author Interview, Croatian Civil Servant, Belgrade, September 2013.

43   Kolpfer *et al.* 2012.

44   Military Organisation is understood as incorporating the armed forces and Ministry for Defence.

45   Jazbec 2005.

46   *Ibid.*

both in terms of the operational durability of a force that is still ethnically segregated at battalion level and their ability to meet the targets established in the White Paper.[47] Bosnia & Herzegovina has acknowledged inadequacies concerning State-level command and control of the Armed Forces, ambiguities and inconsistencies regarding State and entity authorities in defence matters and non-compliance with international politico-military commitments.[48]

Second, clear knowledge deficits have emerged within state and popular understanding of military function. While there is growing acceptance of the importance of civilian structures and capability, where following sustained engagement with NATO and EU instruments state administrations are 'at least exposed to the standards expected of civilian components in defence organisations.'[49] This research has found that such findings do not necessarily correlate with an improvement in the level of knowledge and understanding of military purpose demonstrated by civilian actors. While programmes of domestic and international education and training activities for civil servants and others exist, they lack the volume and momentum seen on the military side.[50] Most interviewees in Serbia confirmed that 'efficient oversight by parliament and particularly the Defence and Security Committee is limited by a lack of initiative on the part of MPs, lack of clearly defined procedures […] and work plans that would set the priorities of the Committees' work; a situation compounded by […] continuing unresolved internal security issues.[51] Politicians in general highlighted a lack 'lack of expertise on security sector oversight' with one official citing an 'absence of awareness on military and defence issues beyond media generalisations'.[52] The implications of having civil servants and politicians assigned with responsibility for defence issues working from a flawed or insufficient knowledge of military function, capability and capacity can have a degenerative effect over time. Civil servants in particular spoke of a lack of connection with military staff with some going further to question a dynamic that appeared as if 'they [the military] were much happier to sit down with NATO than their own'[53] This is not to say that the structures are necessarily flawed. All states demonstrate forms of civilian oversight and accountability mechanisms and there are ample opportunities for civilian and military leaders to exchange views. For example BiH has a Parliamentary Military Commissioner and a joint Committee for Defence and Security but this has not correlated with improved civilian-military interaction. The risk is that this lacunae of understanding can develop in time to a cultural disconnect between the people and their army, distorting civil expectations of what purpose their military can and should fulfil.

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47   Defence White Paper of BiH, June 2005.

48   *Ibid.*

49   Author interview, civil servant BiH, Sarajevo, July, 2013.

50   The example of the PSOTC in BiH is a case in point.

51   Ejdus 2012 and Petrović, Odanović, Popović, Savković and Radoman in Kolpfer *et al.* 2012.

52   Author interview, staff member of an international organisation, BiH, Sarajevo, July, 2013.

53   *Ibid.*

Third, the pace of reform is quite uneven, adding pressure to reform processes particularly where the pace and depth of military reform has far outpaced that of defence ministries. In Croatia, it was argued that 'military professionalism had outstripped civilian capacity in the MOD' but that there was a growing synergy between defence and foreign policy – attributed to the process of joining NATO – that suggests a policy development process that is 'generally moving in the right direction but with key players being left behind'.[54] For a myriad of reasons the civilian-military divide is perhaps greatest in BiH, not least the fact that the reorganisation and professionalization of the Armed Forces has not been reciprocated in the civil service parallel structures with resulting knowledge gaps between military leaders and their civilian and political counterparts. As one interviewee noted:

> On one hand, we had Dodik calling for the army to be disbanded on the other hand senior officers were being heavily criticised for failures to provide sufficient support on various issues. It is just really difficult for the military to engage effectively with civilian structures. For many they [the Armed Forces] are just not a priority; just one of 12 different armed forces.[55]

To a point, this can be explained by domestic socio-political narratives; by the fact that 'Western Balkan societies do not have a long tradition of citizen participation in the oversight of security sector governance.';[56] and by the fact that military organisations are relatively new in establishment and are still 'finding their feet within states that are themselves finding their feet'.[57] In spite of NATO's commitment to a comprehensive approach, the key instruments of PfP and MAPs such as the Individual Partnership Programmes (IPP) and the Planning and Review Process (PARP) have failed to effectively address civilian components of defence reform particularly at the level of Ministries' of Defence:

> The focus is almost entirely on military capability development, sure they emphasize the importance of civilian oversight and so on but whereas the military take their partnership goals and turn them into training programmes there is no real follow through on the civilian side. We know that these capabilities are being developed but that's it…'[58]

Finally, while many of the features of the civilian-military imbalance can be attributed to domestic factors they are also representative of a lack of 'foresight' by international actors that is representative of similar lacunae in their own countries and the fact that most were 'learning on the job' in terms of delivering SSR policies in a post-conflict context.[59] By implication this deficiency has created 'uncertainties of ownership' where all groups involved in military/defence reform can with a degree of justification point at

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54   Author Interview, Croatian Civil Servant, Belgrade, September 2013.

55   Author Interview, BiH Civil Servant, Sarajevo, July 2013.

56   Kolpfer *et al.* 2012.

57   Author Interview, staff member, international organisation, Sarajevo, July 2013.

58   Author Interviews, BiH Civil Servant, Sarajevo, July 2013.

59   Author PhD research 2011–2013.

the other as an obstacle to progress. So while the structural elements have progressed significantly with the reorganisation and reequipping of armed forces in tandem with the establishment of civilian oversight and accountability; the admirable advances in military education and training have not been reciprocated effectively on the civilian side and is the primary source of the civilian – military lacunae identified in this research.

Moving Beyond the Post-Conflict Narrative: The Implications For Defence Reform

Legitimacy and Relevance

> There are significant challenges in terms of public understanding of the military and their duties…military leadership has no choice but to rethink how it is addressing these issues, if the chain of command is to reinvigorate the military covenant and the […] army is to remain fit for purpose.[60]

Difficulties associated with the relationship of a military to its government and people are not unique to the region. For some states the difficult stems from s lack of visibility of military function particularly where there is little or no commitment to an external role and the domestic environment is secure. For others the challenge is in explaining why militaries are utilised in pursuit of a state's strategic objectives. The specific conditions of the Southeastern Europe bring fourth additional factors in terms of forging identity and establishing ownership and legitimacy in a post-conflict environment.

Even in Serbia where the 'peoples' connection to the military is a well-established part of Serbian heritage, '…there were occasions when it seemed that this relationship could be broken and the military would become an independent system, an institution separate from the people'.[61] The dilemma between Euro-Atlantic and national liberation tracks[62] demonstrates the potential for the military to be caught between opposing state/political strategies which pose different questions as to its purpose. Primarily, would NATO membership significantly alter the military's relationship with a large part of the population, undermine its legitimacy in the long run and thereby expose it to cynical cuts and inertia?[63]

To an extent the various White Papers and other defence policies have attempted to address these issues by seeking to root military identity and purpose to a state and its people.[64]

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60   Forster 2006, 1043–1057.

61   SAF CHOD's interview to the International Radio Serbia.

62   Brozović 2010.

63   Brozović 2010, and Hadžić 2008, 18.

64   White Paper of Defence of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2010. A similar approach to engage the 'population' on defence issues is evident in the BiH White Paper.

There is a reciprocal importance to this in that militaries can and in most cases do serve as physical expressions of national identity with associated bonds of ownership felt by a people for its army. The degree to which this has happened in the Southeastern Europe has varied significantly from the 'natural progression' of Serbian and Croatian armed forces from the former JNA to the more challenging reestablishment of Armed Forces in BiH. The development ambition of the KSF is also a clear example of the importance attached to the military place in a national/state identity and is already evident through the conduct of its ceremonial function at state events.

However in attempting to establish a policy basis for the emergence of domestic ownership states, including international administrations, have also inflated public and political expectations as to what capabilities their military could deliver.[65] Managing this expectation effectively will become vital for military elites who for the most part have yet to find their voice in public discourse. While public empathy for armed forces across the region is generally quite strong with the possible exception of BiH.[66] The challenge for military leaders in the years ahead is to underline the relevance of its means rather than its symbolic association with one or other international organisations; to move public perception of the military beyond both the post-conflict and integrationist narratives.

A military leadership role?

While it can be all too easy for military elites to point a finger of blame at their civilian masters – to highlight their perceived lack of understanding and support – it is equally apparent that there is a resistance on the part of the military elite to effectively engage their civilian employers; to enlighten, inform, counsel, advise, even object. The reason explaining this can vary from overtly conservative interpretations of the constitutional scope afforded to military leaders to make their voice heard, to the all too human concerns about civilian influence and control of military appointments at the highest levels – 'there are very few men who can afford to lose their livelihood on matters of principle' and even then it is a card that can only be played once, 'to speak out is to lose your career'.[67]

Accepting the omnipresent financial and human resource pressures, opportunities exist for militaries to proactively engage their civilian and political partners in order to improve knowledge of military purpose and establish a mutual understanding of their professional capabilities and limits. The benefits of indigenous military leadership in such an exchange of information are twofold: First, by prioritising the establishment of a shared understanding of the potential and limits of military purpose, defence organisations could improve their ability to effectively manage the necessary transition from dependence on

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65   Author interview, officer Serbian armed forces, Belgrade, September 2013.

66   http://www.transconflict.com/2013/04/when-the-war-is-over-the-gotovina-verdict-and-confronting-the-past-104/

67   Author Interview, officer BiH armed forces, Sarajevo, July 2013.

international donor support to one of self-reliance avoiding 'crude cuts to capabilities with little thought as to consequences or what to replace them with'.[68] Second, they could give legitimacy to many of the civilian – military governance structures that have already been established but that have not yet matched their intended purpose.

The potential also exists for such engagement to be lifted to a regional platform by capitalising on the common professional understanding that has clearly developed among militaries of the region through their socialisation, training and education in various NATO/PfP, EU and UN programmes.

> Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to its national structure, is well-placed to help bring the peoples in the region closer together. By actively helping to find solutions and to create regional programmes, Bosnia and Herzegovina will improve its role and significance in regional cooperation by.[69]

If the principles of SSR, particularly ownership and sustainability, are to be adhered to, then this relationship must evolve to allow the states of the region to reset their ambitions beyond basic adherence to Euro-Atlantic conditions and norms. Again, to a degree the potential for this approach has already been exhibited; for example Croatia's contributions to EU Battle groups prior to accession were an innovative way to demonstrate both capability and intent. The idea of a Southeastern Europe Battle group (not necessarily within the EU framework) certainly has merit and could serve as a useful means to gage regional possibilities in terms of the pooling and sharing of capabilities and resources.[70]

A comprehensive communications and engagement strategy complementing existing civilian-military platforms could help to stimulate and sustain such initiatives. Many of the elements of this structure are already in existence across the region from the PSOTC in Sarajevo to possibilities to expand the already established link between the Serbian military academy and the University of Belgrade; just two examples of the potential that exist to develop positive exchanges between the armed forces, their civil and political partners and the wider population.

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68   Savković 2013.

69   Defence White Paper of BiH, June 2005.

70   Ejdus, Savkovic, Dragojlovic 2010.

Conclusion

The policy trends observed in Western Europe regarding the roles assigned to military forces are largely mirrored in Southeastern Europe, with an additional emphasis on the role of the military in nation building. Kosovo, Croatia and Serbia have demonstrated in various ways an independent capacity for defence reform that suggests local ownership is consolidating however questions remain in BiH where military ownership of reform is not reciprocated by domestic politicians, some international stakeholders and the population in general. It is clear that the civilian elements of defence reform require significantly greater attention if the identified lacunae between professional military elites and their civilian and political counterparts are to be effectively addressed. For the international organisations involved, most notably the EU, NATO and OSCE this may require are more hands off approach (especially in BiH and Kosovo) but equally important will be for domestic stakeholders to reengage with the purpose and function of military force and to reconceive military purpose for a post-integrationist context.

While it may seem absurd only 20 years or so removed from conflict; military and civilian leaders will increasingly be questioned as to the necessity for retention of armed forces. As NATO seeks to redefine itself after Afghanistan and CSDP continues to prioritise its civilian apparatus, the militaries of the region could find themselves and their function exposed where foreign policy is solely focused on membership aspirations. While it is true that the military will be used to demonstrate commitment to either the UN, EU or NATO through participation in training or operations, it risks becoming the only identity of the military. Accordingly the military role as an instrument of foreign policy in particular needs to be carefully placed. While the positives of integration are generally accepted, particularly in economic terms, and the military benefits are already apparent in terms of training, socialisation, and collective security arrangements, if the principles of SSR underlining the process to date are to be seen through then the process of security reform in the region cannot be solely about fulfilling the Euro-Atlantic ambitions as a means to an end. In rethinking military purpose therefore the states of the region must look through and beyond the dominant narrative, that of Euro-Atlantic integration and balance the requirements of integration within a sustainable process that is tailored to national identity and interest.

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