Abstract

This was the third seminar to introduce one of the specific aspects of the basics of Security Sector Reform (SSR). This time it was the concept of accountability as related to responsibility and personal integrity within the defence system and beyond. During two working days, 21 participants from 7 countries, including one participant from the Austrian Verification Centre and the Institute for Democracy and Mediation from Tirana were engaged in active discussions and exchange of experiences. These were triggered by presentations and speeches given by presenters from the European Defence Agency (EDA), Canada-based Security Governance Group (SGG), Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP), Institute for International Relations (IMO), Zagreb, Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Primorska University, Koper, and Croatian Ministry of Defence. They outlined the importance, principles and mechanisms of accountability as one of the fundamental cornerstones of Security Sector Reform, especially in the environment of long-term financial crisis.
Activity Background

The purpose of the seminar was to present the role of national defence systems within the European Union Common Security and Defence Policy (EU CSDP) in the light of the on-going budget cuts and within the general context of financial constraints EU members and potential members are facing. Secondly, the seminar aimed to address possible ways of bridging this situation without interfering with the overall effectiveness of defence system. Accountability, both at individual and organizational level, proves to be an indispensable concept as austerity measures set in. If implemented duly throughout the ranks of armed forces, accountability presents a cost-saving measure, as it reduces the risk of political and economic corruption and ensures that the best “value”, in terms of “service” delivered for the money (budget funds and resources) invested (allocated), is provided to the citizens as final recipients. The bottom line should be the necessity (or relevance) of adjusting, restructuring (“rightsizing”) national defence systems, within the given framework of the CSDP, but by focusing primarily on improving, if not building, the system of accountability within the defence system. The universally relevant SSR concept, along with one of its most challenging as well as rewarding aspects of the operational system of integrity-responsibility-accountability, is not a disposable, one-off matter. On the contrary, its implementation is the driving force for optimal outputs and outcomes of national efforts in the field of defence and beyond. It also provides countries’ overall effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. Therefore, this seminar was intended to cover fundamental aspects of the concept and present the related cases of applied or non-applied mechanisms of accountability.

Activity Facilitators

The seminar was planned, organised and executed by RACVIAC, with the kind support from the Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports.

Activity Venue, Duration and Participation

The seminar was conducted in RACVIAC. The event started with a welcome dinner on 19th February 2013. It continued for the following two working days and was officially closed on 21st February 2013. The Seminar participants included representatives of parliaments, ministries of defence, ministries of foreign affairs, civil society, from Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia1, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as from the mentioned Tirana-based institute.

1 Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
Activity Description and Content

The seminar was comprised of presentations addressing the core of the integrity-responsibility-accountability concept backed up by specific case examples. On the first day, there was a welcome gathering and dinner hosted by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandic, Director of RACVIAC, and Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, Deputy Director of RACVIAC.

The working part of the seminar started with the opening remarks given by H.E. Ambassador Branimir Mandic, Director of RACVIAC, Mr Boris Blazekovic, MP, Head of the Croatian Parliamentary Delegation to the NATO PA, Mr Philippe Rutz, EDA, and Mr David Law, SGG.

Subsequently, the participants were given a short presentation on the definitions and delimitation of the terms accountability and responsibility (as correlated with personal integrity) given by Ms Anita Boljevac, RACVIAC language specialist. This proved to be a success because of the fact that non-existing equivalent terms in local languages (as well as in German or French) were brought to light and given due attention. Subsequent presentations were delivered by Mr Philippe Rutz, who elaborated on the newly adopted EDA Code of Conduct as a potentially useful accountability mechanism in approaching defence matters, and Mr David Law, who outlined the structure of vertical and horizontal accountability.

Mr Philippe Rutz, EDA, Mr David Law, SGG

Mr Boris Blazekovic, MP, Head of the Croatian Parliamentary Delegation to the NATO PA, and RACVIAC management
The second working day was opened by an outline of regional cases related to accountability issues in the chain of command, which was given by Mr Marko Savkovic, M.Phil. This presentation was followed by a presentation on public officials and the public with a focus on professional integrity, which was delivered by Ms Anita Trnavcevic, Ph.D.

The third presentation dealt with the public approach to defence budget and it was delivered by Mr Gordan Bosanac.

The fourth presentation in this challenging series, as well as the last seminar session, was given by Lt Col Stjepan Domjancic, Ph.D., Head of Defence Planning, Croatian MoD, who elaborated on the defence budget policy and effects of budget cuts. This presentation was, according to several participants, the crown in this session and proved to be a bright example of reasoning on accountability in the sphere of transitional defence system.

Conclusions and recommendations

The main purpose of the seminar - to present the role of national defence systems within the EU CSDP with a special focus on the context of budget cuts, was fully achieved.

The main objectives of the seminar were also achieved, starting from the clear definition of the terms responsibility and
accountability to stressing the importance of collaboration with other, internal and external actors in different segments of defence systems.

The seminar provided an excellent opportunity for exchanging ideas and experiences on daily accountability mechanisms, not only within defence organisations, but also in the public sector as a whole.

We can particularly take pride and satisfaction in the highly professional and academic approach to executing the seminar.

Finally, it was highlighted that it is worth continuing the events such as this one, since they serve as a platform for raising awareness of the concepts of accountability and responsibility in the public sector in the circumstances of the financial and economic crisis.

Compiled by SSR Pillar
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