

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

COOPERATION OF MILITARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING REGIONAL SECURITY AND CONFIDENCE

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Abstract

The paper deals with issues related to security and defence as seen from the perspective of the role played by military education. The essence of the new security environment realm and new threats for security are described. The importance of military educational institutions is underlined. In this context, observations and reflections on education and training based on NDU Warsaw's experiences are offered. There are four leading issues mentioned. The first one is the approach to military education, the second one is the curricula, the third one is research and the lessons learned, and the fourth one is to share the experiences of an activity aimed at forging strategic trust. Finally, the author puts forward suggestions on how to strengthen educational cooperation in the Europe and Asia-Pacific region.

Key words: Security environment, defence, military education, strategic trust

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Introduction

The topic of the paper should be perceived in a broad context, especially from the perspective of the changed nature of the security environment. This environment has changed rapidly over the course of the last ten years. We are facing brand new challenges and it is not even possible to identify or to name them all. To properly assess the chances, challenges, risks and threats is of great importance. The symbolic documents in this regard are the “white books” issued by the countries, institutions or organizations. Poland is no exception. On 24 May 2013, in the presence of the President of the Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, the inauguration of the White Book on National Security of the Republic of Poland, which was published for the first time, took place. It contains a diagnosis of Poland’s security, a prognosis of its changes, as well as proposing answers for questions as to how to assure security in changing conditions. The President said that the inauguration of the White Book is a summary of the work created by a team of people, who decided to share their experience and knowledge on security issues. He also underlined that security involves a wide range of state and society functions, including military, non-military, economic and demographic security. The head of the National Security Bureau, Stanisław Koziej, said that the White Book is meant to popularise knowledge about security, both in the institutions responsible for security issues and among Polish society as a whole. The White Book on the National Security of the Republic Of Poland is the result of the recently completed National Security Strategic Review.

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to stress that the picture of the security environment is blurred, unclear and foggy. On the other hand, it is especially important to successfully cope with this realm within the education and training process. Training and developing new skills is required. Undoubtedly, military education is an essential element of the modern armed forces. Educated and skilled soldiers constitute the core of the military. Well-trained personnel are an important instrument, first of all, for peace.

The National Defence University is a unique institution of higher education in Poland. Despite the fact that it is the highest educational institution of the Polish Armed Forces focused on the command and staff education of senior and junior officers, the number of civilian students has been growing.

Hence, in order to meet all expectations, NDU is looking for and sharing innovative solutions, such as, for example, mobility within the Bologna Process. Therefore, there are military and civilian students to be taken into account as far as the various forms of learning and training are concerned. On one hand, there is a dedicated organisational structure (two faculties and three training centres) and on the other hand, the education and training process is supported by new technology and innovative solutions. We have been trying to switch the educational paradigm. The NDU Warsaw education and training process is supported by new technology and innovative systems. The Advanced Distributed Learning programme is dedicated to both civilian and military students.

New approach to military education

In this context, I would like to offer some observations on the education and training process based on the NDU Warsaw experiences. **There are four leading issues.** The first one is the **approach to military education.** During a time of economic crisis, spending money on education is the best investment. This rule also applies to military budgets. The point is how to convince the decision makers not to reduce the part of the military budget devoted to education and training, as there is a link between these two functions and we should understand the difference between them.

While describing this difference it is possible to make a comparison between hardware and software. Education is hardware when a person is constructed (a person is like a computer with a powerful processor and enough memory, hard disk, and other peripherals and interfaces). Later, during the training, the software is downloaded. This means that it should

be seen as follows: if a person is not well educated, the training is not effective. This is the external structure of a person's mind; it is formed in the process of education and we should keep this in the development of military education.

Over the years, the driving teaching principle in education has been changing: we started from the 'what to do?' phase and, now, we are still in the 'what to think?' phase, but we should go further, as we are partially in the phase 'how to think?'. This is a trend that has been observed over recent years. To develop and change the nature of education in defence academies is a process. Military academies should be heading towards a security profile. Military education institutions must evolve in this direction in order to teach students 'how to think', not 'what to think'.

The second issue is **the curricula** - what is being taught at military educational institutions. There must be some coherence between the curricula in military academies and institutions. This is sometimes referred to as knowledge-based reference curricula. It is something that will provide us with the interoperability of thinking. The term is also used due to the fact that we must have the same understanding of words, expressions, and terms. In an international community we usually do not use our mother tongue and, in the process of the translation into the national language, there is quite often a change in the meaning of a word.

National translation has a narrower meaning or wider meaning; however you must understand the meaning of the word, not the actual sound of the word.

The third area is the **research**. The education must be based on research and lessons learned from current operations. Military research plays an important role, especially while we are facing such fast technical or technological development. It leads to the improvement of our senses: night vision, thermal vision. Communications are everywhere, so it means that we can listen, and it means that the soldier in the field is provided with many gadgets. This also means that the improvement in the technological quality of the equipment does not bring a qualitative change in the operational use of this new technology.

Military research should make a difference. It means that we must have a new approach to modern technology and the military educational institutions and military research institutions should take the lead and change these linear relations between the user and the producer and turn it into a triangular pattern of: armed forces - producer - and military research. Only in such a situation can a new quality appear.

Point number four is about **sharing the experiences**. The example is the NDU Warsaw contribution to the Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP)². As a benchmark we can point to the 12th Annual Conference of the PfP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes in Warsaw in June 2010. It gave us great satisfaction to host a broad group of representatives from defence academies, security studies institutes, foreign affairs and defence ministries, as well as those from other institutions dealing with security matters. It gave us the chance to confirm just how important the work of building networks of educators, policy makers and practitioners is, in order to develop an effective defence education system. It was also an opportunity for the participants to understand and to share a similar perception of security. The conclusion of the conference was that this joint perception can only be achieved and guaranteed by education based on the same foundations. Warsaw was definitely the recommended place for such a discussion and NDU Warsaw was the recommended institution to be directly involved.

Poland has successfully managed to shift to democratic governance. We have observed for over 20 years a new post-war democracy in Poland. The main results of cooperation with external partners is membership in European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. This is the reason why Poland

² The Defence Education Enhancement Programme was initiated in 2006 to realise an alliance initiative to enhance defence institutions in selected partner countries, with regard to ensuring civil and democratic control over the armed forces. The main aim of the programme is to develop and reform education in the defence sphere. This includes such activities as: preparing programmes and the methodology of teaching or conducting researches. These efforts are coordinated by International Staff (IS) representatives and a country that has undertaken the leading role in a particular project, in cooperation with International Military Staff (IMS), ACT, NATO School Oberammergau, NATO Defense College in Rome, and the EUCOM. There is a common fund of NATO and the U.S. Department of Defense (Warsaw Initiative Fund) to finance the activities.

may be a good example to follow for other states which are at the beginning of their transformation.

Therefore, Poland highly values and appreciates all the efforts aimed at stimulating the defence education reform of partner nations. These tools assist partner nations, especially in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, in introducing certain universal standards in defence education³. Consequently, these activities contribute to ensuring and developing interoperability of thinking.

NDU Warsaw – sharing the experiences

There are two types of NDU Warsaw activities which could be perceived as examples to follow. The first one concerns the essence of the Bologna Process within the military-civilian realm and the second is the development of efficient ADL activities within a relatively short time period.

The issue of the implementation of the Bologna Process principles has required possession of the Erasmus University Charter⁴. With this document it was possible to activate the following activities: (1) mobility of students for a period of study at a partner university, (2) mobility of students in order to implement a practice at a partner company, organisation, training or research institution in another country participating in the Programme, (3) mobility of academic staff in order to lecture at a partner university, (4) mobility of academic staff to participate in training at a partner academy or non-academic institution in another country participating in the

³ The National Defence University experts participate in DEEP events (according to the respective matrix) focused on: Afghanistan (ADL activities), Armenia (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, sending lecturers dealing with professional military topics), Azerbaijan (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, hosting faculty members), Georgia (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, support for the backward planning activities and master degree programs), Moldova (ADL activities), Iraq (the Bologna Process), Ukraine (transformation of the military education system).

⁴ The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, EACEA in Brussels gave these rights to the University on 8 April 2009.

Programme, (5) support of students and staff exchange, (6) participation in projects such as an Intensive Programme (IP).

All these activities constitute the realm of the Lifelong Learning Programme. The internationalisation of the NDU, realised through participation in the Erasmus Programme, has allowed many employees and students of University to travel to partner universities up to the end of the academic year 2012/2013 . The NDU has signed more than 50 agreements with foreign institutions regarding various forms of bilateral cooperation, mobility programmes included. Erasmus activity is being constantly developed, so having funds in the amount of almost EUR 800 k, we are going to set up many more mobility activities for teachers, students and administrative staff during the academic year 2013/2014. As a result of the Erasmus Programme, the NDU enjoys 6th place among the 73 universities in Warsaw and 34th place among the 368 universities in Poland, as far as mobility volume is concerned. In addition, in order to increase the internationalisation of the NDU, the European Union projects/grants are being realised. Strengthening educational cooperation with military universities of neighbouring and V-4 countries, such as the University of Defence in the Czech Republic, the National Defence Academy in Slovakia, the Military Academy of Lithuania, the National Public Service University in Hungary and the German Armed Forces University in Hamburg, is of special importance. Apart from these military educational institutions, there are many more military and civilian ones, situated all over the Europe, and there's a possibility to undertake many activities, if needed.

While presenting the idea of the ADL programme from the NDU Warsaw perspective it is important to start with basic assumptions and to present the first steps in the direction of creating an efficient ADL system. We can identify the following steps: (1) gathering knowledge about e-learning/ADL, (2) implementation of the concept, (3) development of the technical capabilities, (4) development of educational and training capabilities, (5) human resources capabilities development.

The NDU ADL model has been developed, and it is important to underline that this model is very similar to the International Security Network, the Allied Command Transformation or Joint Forces Command . Due to the

fact that LMS ILIAS is an open source, it was possible to save approx. 50k USD for the evaluation and comparison of activities. As a result of its dedicated endeavours, NDU Warsaw has developed many in-house courses for the Polish Armed Forces and for civilian students. The development of ADL activities within the National Defence University in Warsaw is widely recognised and very well received by foreign countries. The members of the ADL team participated in various international and domestic events: conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings, focused mainly on the exchange of experiences and best practices. They also concern technical and methodological issues and data exchange on the latest developments. A symbolic example is the PfP Consortium ADL Working Group⁵.

The key to success is the human factor – choosing the right team for implementing any project, taking into account different methodological aspects. Only adequately prepared teaching materials can engage students in the learning process, increase motivation and, consequently, broaden knowledge. From the Polish Armed Forces perspective, ADL activities are important. The allies and partners view positively the endeavours aimed at the support of defence education.

Conclusions

There are many tools for educational cooperation to be taken into account. The DEEP programme, is one of them. This is an important element in practical support in selected partner countries. Another advantage is that initiating any activities in this field does not require substantial costs, both from the partner and the supported ally. This results in considering the possibility of expanding the group of countries. Poland's role in this field is visible and appreciated by the experts who notice the importance of reforms in military education in the post-Soviet states, and are involved in related activities. Currently, there are individual programmes for: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova,

5 NDU Warsaw as the host of the ADL WG meeting in Warsaw in November 2013.

Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Iraq, Serbia, and Ukraine. Some of the activities were also organised for Jordan and Albania. For most of them, the leading country is the United States, except for Ukraine for which NDU Warsaw is the academic Co-Lead. The realisation of each programme in a partner country starts with a study visit by NATO experts, including Allied Command Transformation (ACT) experts, and allies interested in supporting reforms in defence education. Together they work on the aims, types of changes and an action plan, which is to be realised within the next three years. Every year, current activities are assessed with regard to their intensification and possible adjustments.

Poland's commitment is an essential element of support for partner countries. In this context, in the assessment of an institution, any further activities could be oriented at expanding DEEP to other countries. The PfP nations expect the Alliance to be able to provide the assistance and expertise; therefore, there is a requirement to continue to invest in time and resources and in partner nations in their efforts to streamline the education reform.

In September 2012, in NATO Headquarters, the 1st functional Clearing-House conference, summing up the current activities of donor countries involved in DEEP, took place. The 2nd functional Clearing House conference took place in Norfolk in June 2013. Such events are to be continued, giving this initiative a more organised and institutionalised form within NATO activities. The conferences showed that Poland was one of the most active allies in this field. It was officially reassured that the National Defence University is and will stay an important element of the network which enhances defence education and also a significant academic contributor in the field of security⁶.

It needs to be stressed that it takes dedication, passion and effort to achieve this, but it gives us satisfaction that the NDU Warsaw is being mentioned on various occasions as the perfect example to follow with regard to an innovative approach to education and training. In these times of shrinking military budgets, education is the best investment.

⁶ In November 2012, NATO received a formal request from the Ukrainian MOD asking for DEEP. An assessment visit took place in March 2013, and a tailored action had been developed.

Referring to the topic of the symposium, related to the major factors affecting Asia-Pacific security, it is of importance to stress that this issue shouldn't be seen in a vacuum or as a separate notion. Within the global geographic dimension, there's an opportunity to focus on such aspects as the geophysical dimension, socio-economic dimension and cultural dimension. Within the sphere of the new security environment, there are many definitions of the notions: geopolitical, geostrategic, and geo-economic. In this context, the frequently asked question is "why are things the way they are?", and the answer could be this: "because many things happen at the same time, simultaneously".

It is not possible to identify all of them, as far as, for example, the main factors affecting the Asia-Pacific region. When discussing this matter it is possible to be focused on the tip of the ice-berg. In this context, to find out more, a number of questions could be asked. The first one: "How about the new actors on the security scene?" Good examples are the media and non-governmental organisations. The second one: "How about new security threats?". The notion of the emerging security threats is adequate. The third one: "How about the new capabilities of the armed forces?". This concerns getting ready to conduct stability and reconstruction operations, on the one hand, and focusing on homeland defence tasks, on the other. The role of women in the armed forces is also to be determined. The fourth one: "How about cultural awareness?". Sometimes it is very difficult to communicate due to the many differences. To overcome these differences, a new approach is in demand. Regarding NDU Warsaw's experiences, it is possible to share many examples. The development of educational platforms is the crucial step in this direction. Vysehrad Grop (V 4) Educational Platform is the forum of the military command and staff academies from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The next educational platform is the forum for academies from France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom. So following these examples, why not establish a European-Asian-Pacific Educational Platform for better understanding of each other? Confidence building and trust building through better understanding will help us move towards strategic trust.

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