



ISSN 1812-1098, e-ISSN 1812-2973

CONNECTIONS

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Vol. 16, no. 3, Summer 2017



Contents

Vol. 16, no. 3, Summer 2017

Research Articles

- Image of Security Sector Agencies as a Strategic
Communication Tool 5
Iryna Lysychkina
- Guerrilla Operations in Western Sahara: The Polisario versus
Morocco and Mauritania 23
János Besenyő
- The South Caucasus: A Playground between NATO and Russia? 47
Elman Nasirov, Khayal Iskandarov, and Sadi Sadiyev
- Arms Control Arrangements under the Aegis of the OSCE: Is
There a Better Way to Handle Compliance? 57
Pál Dunay
- British Positions towards the Common Security and Defence
Policy of the European Union 73
Irina Tsertsvadze



The Image of Security Sector Agencies as a Strategic Communication Tool

Iryna Lysychkina

National Academy, National Guard of Ukraine, Kharkiv, Ukraine

Abstract: This article highlights the corporate image as a strategic communication tool for security sector agencies. The prospects of image for a security sector agency are outlined with regard to image formation and reparation. Image formation is based on the principles of objectivity, openness, credibility and trust whilst avoiding deception and manipulation. Best practices and failures in image formation are listed from the U.S. and Ukrainian security sector agencies' experience. The suggested guidance on image formation for security sector agencies encompasses the author's recommendations on effective image formative discourse and the corresponding institutional policy development.

Keywords: discourse, image formation, image reparation, security sector agency, strategic communication, strategy.

Introduction

The hybrid character of modern warfare features a drastic shift when force employment strategies become appendices to information and communication strategies.¹ Taking into account the parallel developments in warfare and communication, the "strategic communication community can learn a great deal

¹ Anaïs Reding, Kristin Weed, and Jeremy J. Ghez, *NATO's Strategic Communications Concept and its Relevance for France*, Prepared for the Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation, France (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 4.

from Clausewitz and from current attempts in military theory to make sense from what is currently happening in strategic communication.”²

The image of security sector agencies is a powerful tool of hybrid wars in the information and communication domain. Within a global war scenario, image is regarded as a weapon for shooting the agency’s discourse with the desirable precision, accuracy, rate and volume. The image of security sector agencies is effectively used to target the audience’s mind and way of thinking in wartime, as well as in peacetime.

This article aims at determining the corporate image frame as a strategic communication tool for security sector agencies and outlining best practices for the image formation of security sector agencies. From the multifaceted perspective of strategic communication in general, it addresses the communicative aspects of image that influence the capability of security sector agencies.

The underlying study is multidisciplinary and is at the intersection of several social and human sciences: philosophy, imageology, communicative linguistics, cognitive science, media linguistics, discourse studies and sociolinguistics. This synergistic nature results in the need to address different types of sources for a comprehensive literature review on the subject, the outline of best practices in the military and law-enforcement image formation and the construction of an image frame in the strategic communication of a security sector agency.

Strategic Communication in the Security Sector

Essence of Strategic Communication

Strategic communication gained special popularity in business, political and military domains in the second decade of the XXI century, and as a relatively new term, it still gives rise to discussions on its essence, scope and functions.

For the purpose of this research, the definition by Holtzhausen and Zerfass was chosen for the reason that it emphasizes the public sphere: “Strategic communication is the practice of deliberate and purposive communication that a communication agent enacts in the public sphere on behalf of a communicative entity to reach set goals.”³

The NATO Strategic Communications concept is designed to ensure that audiences receive clear, fair and opportune information regarding actions and that the interpretation of the Alliance’s messages is not left solely to NATO’s adversaries or other audiences.⁴

² Simon M. Torp, “The Strategic Turn in Communication Science: On the History and Role of Strategy in Communication Science from Ancient Greece,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, ed. Derina Holtzhausen and Ansgar Zerfass, (New York, London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2015), 24.

³ Derina Holtzhausen and Ansgar Zerfass, “Strategic Communication: Opportunities and Challenges of the Research Area,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, 74.

⁴ PO(2009)0141, cited via Reding and Weed, “NATO’s Strategic Communications,” 4.

It is necessary to mention, that in September 2009 NATO developed its Policy on Strategic Communication to respond to “today’s information environment” that “directly affects how NATO actions are perceived by key audiences,” owing to the fact “that perception is always relevant to, and can have a direct effect on the success of NATO operations and policies.”⁵ Thus, an audience’s impression of NATO, in other words its image, was the major concern for this policy development. This point of view concurs with the business vision of strategic communication, since “the aim of strategic communication is to maintain a healthy reputation for the communicative entity in the public sphere.”⁶

In this respect, it is essential to underline that strategic communication is rather about influence strategies with the perception of the organization as the outcome, not merely media and information as the channel and content, when “one or a combination of variables (i.e., message source, message itself, message channel, and message recipient) can lead to cognitive and behavioral changes.”⁷

Strategic communication is vitally important nowadays for any security sector agency in any country. StratCom departments and/or other structures responsible for strategic communication have been established in practically every agency. In 2013 NATO launched its Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence in Riga, Latvia. The “Defence Strategic Communications” journal aims to bring together military, academic, business and governmental knowledge. It is a norm of our information age for security sector agencies to maintain their websites, have their own media and profiles on social networks.

Recognizing the lack of doctrinal guidance, the U.S. Joint Forces Command composed and later updated its pre-doctrinal “Commander’s Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy” in order “to help joint force commanders and their staffs understand alternative perspectives, techniques, procedures, ‘best practices,’ and organizational options.”⁸ This Commander’s Handbook contains a comprehensive analysis of military capabilities related to information and communication (Figure 1).

There are several basic principles of strategic communication for the communicator:

- Building healthy professional relations with the media
- Recognizing the diversity of the media and choice factors for the media as the communication channels

⁵ NATO Policy on Strategic Communications, SG(2009)0794, 1.

⁶ Holtzhausen and Zerfass, “Strategic Communication,” 5.

⁷ Kenneth E. Kim, “Framing as a Strategic Persuasive Message Tactic,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, 285.

⁸ *Commander’s Handbook for Strategic Communication and Communication Strategy*, Version 3 (Suffolk, VA: US Joint Forces Command, Joint Warfighting Center, 2010).

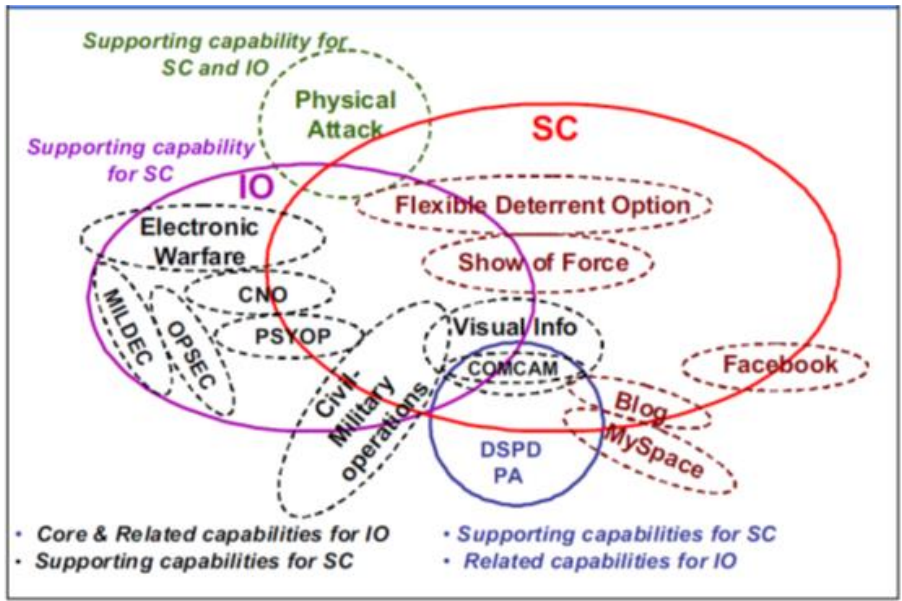


Figure 1: Strategic Communication Relationships.⁹

- Composing a message in congruity with the agency's discourse
- Addressing the message to the target audience with regard to collateral and/or "eavesdropping" audiences
- Using factual information without lying, deception or speculation.

Strategic communication includes strategic narratives that are "intended to help people make sense of events related to the use of military force in ways that are likely to give rise to a particular feeling or opinion."¹⁰ The narrative is understood as "a story explaining an actor's actions in order to justify them to his/her audience. The aim of a narrative is to guide decisions so as to ensure their coherence. It acts as an institution's brand."¹¹ In the empirical research findings, it is stated that "to be effective, narratives must both resonate with the intended audience's core values and advocate a persuasive cause-effect description that ties events together in an explanatory framework."¹²

⁹ *Commander's Handbook*.

¹⁰ Andreas Antoniadis, Ben O'Loughlin, and Alister Miskimmon, "Great Power Politics and Strategic Narratives," Working Paper No. 7 (2010), The Centre for Global Political Economy, University of Sussex, accessed August 3, 2016. doi: 10.4324/9781315770734.

¹¹ Reding, Weed, and Ghez, "NATO's Strategic Communications," X.

¹² Antoniadis, O'Loughlin, and Miskimmon, "Great Power Politics," 5.

Strong strategic narratives are characterized by four basic elements¹³:

- They articulate a clear and compelling mission purpose
- They hold the promise of wartime success
- They must be coherent and consistent
- They are characterized by having few and/or weak competitors.

Strategic Communication, Propaganda and Counter-Propaganda

Nowadays, strategic communication is differentiated from propaganda and counter-propaganda by the means and methods perspective. Strategic communication is based on the classic definition of ‘propaganda’—using factual, and accurate information—though “the word ‘propaganda’ itself, however, has taken on too much baggage over the last century to be useful in today’s context.”¹⁴ In WWII, propaganda became a powerful weapon in the Nazi arsenal and was developed into the ‘Big Lie’ technique. Subsequently, the term itself was compromised and became a synonym for lies and deception.

With its ultimate aim to influence the target audience and encourage it into action by providing the truthful ‘why’ information, strategic communication does not, or rather should not, use the propaganda tools of disinformation and manipulation, as it might have the opposite effect – loss of credibility and trust. For instance, NATO Strategic Communication is meant to coordinate all information and communication capabilities and this could not be done if the concept referred to deception: deception is only allowed in certain military capabilities, and not by all in every country.¹⁵

Strategic communication does not include counter-propaganda since the latter tends to use the same means as propaganda. For example, counter-propaganda in Ukraine is regarded as energy- and cost-ineffective when it comes to modern information wars: “The biggest mistake that we could make, the biggest mistake that Ukraine could make, is to spend all of your time and all of your energy trying to counter the lies /... /.”¹⁶ Ambassador Pyatt believes that Ukraine’s initiative to control the information flow and ‘mirroring’ current propaganda fails:

¹³ Jens Ringsmose and Berit K. Børgesen, “Shaping public attitudes towards the deployment of military power: NATO, Afghanistan and the use of strategic narratives,” *European Security* 20, no. 4 (2011): 505-528, accessed August 3, 2016. doi:10.1080/09662839.2011.617368, 513-514.

¹⁴ Richard Halloran, “Strategic Communication,” *Parameters* 37 (Autumn 2007): 4-14, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/07autumn/halloran.pdf>, 6.

¹⁵ Reding and Weed, “NATO’s Strategic Communications”, 12.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Pyatt, Remarks by Ambassador Pyatt at the “Countering Information War in Ukraine,” Conference, January 29, 2016. In: Speeches and Interviews by Ambassador Geoffrey R. Pyatt – Embassy of the USA in Ukraine, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://ukraine.usembassy.gov/speeches/pyatt-01292016.html>.

It's a huge mistake for the Ukrainian government, for the Ukrainian people, to create a troll factory like St. Petersburg, churning out counter-propaganda in social media. It's a huge mistake to create a 'Ministry of Truth' [Ministry of Information of Ukraine] that tries to generate alternative stories because Ukraine doesn't need more propaganda machine, it needs more objective information.¹⁷

Strategic communication in itself is not a universal remedy to ensure a security sector agency's success and positive attitudes in the society. "Positive and credible narratives build population's resilience against hostilities. Holding that credibility requires that the deeds match the words."¹⁸

Prospects of Image for a Security Sector Agency

Essence of Image

The image of a security sector agency is the audience's impression of this organization that is rooted in the mass and/or individual consciousness.¹⁹ Image forms and develops as a result of processing the external information of this agency and its activity through the net of current stereotypes. Image is socially biased. Image is linked to reputation, the latter being based on the agency's previous activity, and image being a social perception of the agency, based on attitudes, stereotypes and information obtained from outside. Thus, image is a social construct grounded on the audience's interpretation and attitudes.

Image corresponds to the audience's stereotypical and prototypical ideas on the agency as it should be, and it is able to substitute the agency or/and represent the agency in the audience's perception.

Image is a valuable tool in raising the respect of the agency that leads to sustainability and social development. Public support is crucial for security sector reform and depends not only on the reforms themselves, but on the public perception, grounded on the agency's discourse and mass-media coverage of this process and security sector activity in general.

Image is the agency's communication tool which influences the audience's perception of the agency's discourse. At the same time, image is shaped by this discourse among the others.

Image Formation Process

The image of a security sector agency is shaped by direct experience with the agency and by the vicarious experience from what others (individuals, mass-

¹⁷ Pyatt, Remarks by Ambassador Pyatt.

¹⁸ Antti Sillanpää, "Strategic communications and need for societal narratives" (paper presented at *The Riga Conference 2015*, Riga, November 13, 2015), accessed August 3, 2016, <https://www.rigaconference.lv/rc-views/22/strategic-communications-and-need-for-societal-narratives>.

¹⁹ Alexey Olianich, *Presentational Theory of Discourse [Prezentacionnaya teoria diskursa]* (Moscow: Gnosis, 2007), 107.

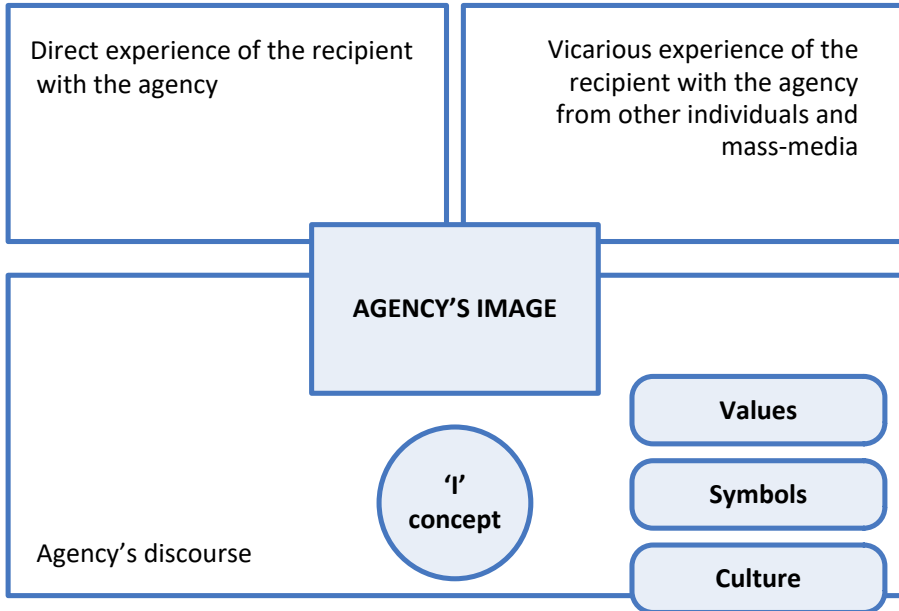


Figure 2: Communication Domains of Security Sector Agency's Image Formation.

media and other communication means) say regarding the agency. Taking into account that incomplete knowledge and/or corrupt messages can damage the image; the agency must fill the communication space with its discourse. Thus, there are three main domains in which the image of a security sector agency is being formed (Figure 2):

- direct experience of the recipient with the agency
- vicarious experience of the recipient with the agency from other individuals and mass-media
- the agency's discourse (web sites, media, press-conferences etc.).

Image is formed explicitly and implicitly. Every media message on the military or law-enforcement contains an image formative aspect. Thus, positive image formation should be based on the strategy as a plan of communicative influence on the recipient.

To influence the image formative process, the agency must model the image core element – its 'I' concept, which is a compromise between 'real ME' and 'ideal ME.' The desirable image for a security sector agency is the reduction of the discrepancy between the 'I' concept and the audience's attitude to this agency. The agency's leadership is responsible for outlining the 'I' concept. Then, appropriate image formative symbols and concepts are chosen to verbalize the desirable image, and this model is placed into real contexts in the

form of the agency's discourse. This is done by communicators – departments or individuals responsible for the agency's strategic communication.

The agency's discourse is the domain that the communicator can control and where he/she can verbalize the 'I' concept and ingrain the agency's values, symbols and culture. If this domain is properly maintained, it influences the other two and builds a filter in the consciousness of the target audience for perceiving the external information regarding the agency. This filter might be strong enough to block any negative information of the agency's 'wrong-doing.' In fact, this filter corresponds to Lakoff's frame theory, "frames being mental structures shaping the way we see the world."²⁰ According to Lakoff:

Framing is critical because a frame, once established in the mind of the reader (or listener, viewer, etc.), leads that person almost inevitably to the conclusion desired by the framer, and it blocks consideration of other possible facts and interpretations.²¹

Based on cognitive and pragmatic analysis of research material, the author suggests an image formative communicative strategies taxonomy (Table 1) built on:

- the content of the desirable image of a security sector agency,
- object-space features of this image
- the sender's intention that conditions the strategy and tactics choice
- linguistic means for these tactics realizations.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Image Strategies.

Stage	Goal	Essence	Strategy options
Image formation	Affirmation	Initiating an image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal to common values • Self-introduction
Image enhancement/enforcement	Reaffirmation	Revitalizing an image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal to common values • Presentation of the activities
Image reparation	Purification	Correcting an image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimation of actions • Mitigation • Face-work
Image damage	Subversion	Undermining an image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discredit • Discrimination • Defamation

²⁰ George Lakoff, *The ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014), xv.

²¹ Lakoff, *The ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant!*, 8.

The image strategies are flexible and can be realized by a number of communicative tactics. Appeal to common values includes the values of any security sector agency (*Service*), nation (*Integrity, Patriotism*), and society (*Excellence, the Truth*).

Image Reparation Strategies

The latest news and analytical publications in mass-media (July 2016: Police shooting in the USA, French police failure to prevent the terroristic act in Nice) prove a wide need to repair the image of these agencies in order to restore the trust of society and to enhance cooperation. W.L. Benoit states that “a damaged reputation can hurt our persuasiveness because credibility generally and trustworthiness in particular are important to persuasion.”²² Negative image contains two main components: responsibility and offensiveness.

Within image repair theory, it is believed that threats to an image are inevitable for at least four reasons²³:

- Our world has limited resources
- Events are out of control and sometimes keep us from meeting our obligations
- Sometimes we commit misdeeds, make honest errors, or allow our behavior to be guided too much by our self-interests
- The fact that we are individuals with different priorities can create conflict arising from our competing goals.

The agency must decide on the threats and whether to address them or not. Trivial accusations do not need to be addressed while “it is a mistake to ignore an important accusation.”²⁴ The attacks are significant to the agency when they are believed to damage the agency’s reputation “in the eyes of the group or the audience who is salient to the source.”²⁵

As communication has a potential to repair the damaged image, image reparation is intended to improve it and to reshape the audience’s attitudes. There are two key assumptions here: communication is a goal-oriented activity, and maintaining a positive reputation is one of the central goals of communication.²⁶ The main communicative strategies for image reparation are summarized in Table 2. It is necessary to note, that image reparation discourse is included in a wider crisis communication along with other images with respect to other kinds of crises.

²² William L. Benoit, “Image Repair Theory in the Context of Strategic Communication,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, 304.

²³ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 303.

²⁴ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 305.

²⁵ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 307.

²⁶ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 305.

Table 2: Image Reparation Strategies.

Strategy	Addressed Component	Goal	Strategy options
Challenging blame or offensiveness	Responsibility	Rejecting blame, mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denying responsibility • Shifting blame to others • Reducing responsibility • Good intentions
	Offensiveness	Reducing perceived offensiveness of the action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolstering • Minimization • Differentiation • Transcendence • Attack Accuser • Compensation
Admitting wrong-doing			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking for forgiveness • Promising to fix the problem
Denial			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple denial • Shift the blame

The recipient of an image reparation message is defined based on the image damaging agent and the target audience of the image damaging message or attack that the agency is concerned about. The agency might need to repair its reputation with the image damaging agent, or with the image damaging agent and a wider target audience, or with the audience neglecting the image damaging agent.

Image of Security Sector Agencies: Best Practices and Failures

Nowadays, Ukraine's Armed Forces and National Guard struggle to form a positive image in order to win the support of society. Different channels are used, including national mass media, official websites and social media. Mass media and social media monitoring shows that some of the steps undertaken in this direction are effective, others lead to misunderstanding and bring more harm to the general perception of these agencies. It is crucial to know what to tell and how to tell it, how to promote corporate values, how to present infor-

mation on the reform process, etc. “Actual policy counts at least as much as how something is framed.”²⁷ All this belongs to strategic communication.

For the purpose of this research, several best practices and obvious failures are examined:

Public Opinion Polling, Surveying and Focus Groups

Feedback is what any agency’s communicator needs to evaluate and validate his/her image formative strategy in order to improve or to change it. In 2003, the Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) in Geneva built a wide picture of the public image of security, defense and the military in Europe²⁸ based on public opinion polls and surveys. This publication, of course, does not reflect the current situation since many things have changed in the last 13 years; it rather highlights the necessity and usefulness of comprehensive opinion polls. Whilst such polls (as well as focus groups and discussions) are expensive, they can be substituted by Internet surveys that can give at least an idea of the agency’s image.

Embedded Reporters

One of the practices to communicate a positive image of the military to a wider audience is to use the so called “embedded reporters” – media representatives getting their “boots on the ground” experience with the troops in order to share it with their audience. Earlier in Iraq and later in Ukraine, the audience got a first-hand perspective of military life with the deployed U.S. troops and Ukraine’s Armed Forces. The U.S. experience showed that “even if the stories do not gain strong nationwide coverage, they do gain good regional coverage and, in many cases, this regional coverage is more appropriate.”²⁹ The efficiency of “embedded reporters” depends on the reporters’ credibility and the trustworthiness of the message.

Police as Newsmakers

The image of security sector agencies in the USA is rather positive; the military are treated with respect by the public. At the same time, the 2014 clashes in Ferguson animated a debate regarding law enforcement’s relationship with African Americans, and the use of force by the police. Mass-media played a great role in presenting the facts and forming the attitudes of the audience to the unrest and to the police in general.

In recent police shootings in the USA, police officers did not take responsibility for the shooting of two men and these shootings appear to have angered the African American population of the country. Understanding both responsi-

²⁷ Frank Luntz, *Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear* (New York: Hyperion, 2007), 3.

²⁸ Marie Vlachová, ed., *Public Image of Security, Defence and the Military in Europe* (Belgrade/Geneva: Goragraf and DCAF, 2003).

²⁹ *Commander's Handbook*, IV-30.

bility and offensiveness for the accusation, the Chief of Baton Rouge Police Department produced a press conference statement³⁰ – a classical image reparation message containing the following key elements:

- acknowledgement of responsibility, including a personal demand for an investigation
- a reaction to the police officers involved: suspension, leave
- mitigation of the blame: 911 call reaction
- call for a transparent, independent investigation
- appeal to the authorities: calling in the U.S. Attorney, and the FBI
- an invitation for collaboration to guarantee a just investigation, and a plea for understanding.

This press conference was an attempt to break the rhythm of the negative story development. But it failed, as well as several others on the police department Facebook page. Unfortunately, the previously formed negative image had not been repaired. Consequently, the U.S. police were still connected to indiscriminate violence and the shooting of African Americans which became a fertile soil for implementing the conceptual opposition “WE vs. THEY” in the form of “POLICE vs. AFRICAN AMERICANS.” This conflict acquired additional impetus with the #BlackLivesMatter movement organized in 2013, and multiple democratic protests. The “POLICE vs. AFRICAN AMERICANS” opposition grew into a racial issue and led to actions against the police when eight police officers were killed in ten days.

It is probable that the situation was aggravated and went out of control owing to the negative image of the U.S. police which negated the agency’s discourse being perceived by the audience as a means of resolving the conflict.

Correct Wording

The success of a security sector agency’s image formation, as well as the efficacy of the agency’s strategic communication, depends on the choice of the main concepts for the discourse and their specific verbalization in different contexts for different audiences. For instance, in 1993, Luntz advised Rudy Giuliani to avoid the words ‘*crime*’ and ‘*criminals*.’ He maintained that “the public placed a higher priority on “*personal and public safety*” than on “*fighting crime*” (rather procedural) or even “*getting tough on criminals*” (rather punitive), while ‘*safety*,’ although somewhat abstract, is definitely personal, and most of all aspirational – the ultimate value and the desired result of an effort to fight crime.³¹ Giuliani’s success in New York City influenced the American

³⁰ Baton Rouge Police Press Conference on Alton Sterling 7/6/16, accessed August 3, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llOCTp_x5Tg.

³¹ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 178.

way of thinking in this respect, shifting from an emphasis on ‘crime’ to “safe, civil society.”

Rebranding

Rebranding is a marketing tool and is initiated with serious reasons in mind. Rebranding in the security sector is done when the agency’s image cannot be repaired or when restoration is required on a constant basis. For instance, Ukraine, as well as several other countries in the area, inherited “interior troops” from the former USSR. Having such a formation within the country gave rise to many questions, like “Fighting against whom within the country? Against people?” The reputation and image of this military formation was spoiled completely after the clashes between Maidan protesters and these law-enforcement agencies in winter 2013-2014. The subsequent rebranding campaign was meant to be a reconciliation between the National Guard and the general public using the motto “new and improved.” However, given the strict time constraints and limited funds, the National Guard of Ukraine did not have a comprehensive strategy for rebranding based on mission, vision and values. Consequently, the process of re-establishing the National Guard of Ukraine turned out to be long, unstructured and chaotic with internal cultural conflicts, and the need for significant image reparation along the way.

Joint Effort

In order to be successful, the image formative process needs to be coordinated and intensive. This statement can be illustrated by the image campaign aligned with the creation of a rapid reaction brigade of the National Guard of Ukraine in 2015-2016. The image campaign used all the instruments of strategic communication available:

- numerous messages with a positive connotation in the media, along with boastful messages on the agency’s official site and media
- informative speeches by the Commander of the National Guard of Ukraine
- topical press-conferences and interviews with leaders of different levels
- positive evaluation notes from the President of Ukraine
- appraisal quotes from world military authorities, e.g. General Hodges.

As a result of this image campaign, the rapid reaction brigade now has a positive image within society, it attracts special attention and is a symbol of effective reform in the security sector of Ukraine.

Guidance on Image Formation for Security Sector Agencies

For the purpose of this study, one can follow two main directions for guidance on image formation for security sector agencies: effective image formative discourse and policy development.

Effective Image Formative Discourse

This section of the guidance is rather tactical, and has been composed for the communicators who are exercising strategic communication.

Recipient's Factor

From a pragmatic perspective, the recipient's factor is the most significant for strategic communication since "it is not what you say, it is what people hear."³² Correspondingly, image formation depends on the recipient, too. Moreover, the recipient owns all the images shaped in his/her consciousness. Thus, all strategic communication messages should be composed with regard to the target audience's variables: age, gender, occupation, life experience, education and assumptions. Even rhetorical skills nowadays are not only about speech, they are about recognizing social circumstances and grasping what the audience expects.³³ An ideal message must bring some personal meaning and values to the recipient. For example, women generally respond better to stories, anecdotes and metaphors, while men are more fact-oriented and statistical.³⁴ Taking into account that young people read less, image messages should be short with a catchy beginning and end.

Values

Values constitute the basis for a security sector agency's image formation. The agency's values shouldn't contradict the values of a nation or a society. Any discrepancy in value systems can lead to a potential conflict. The choice of the value concepts depends on the agency's mission and vision. Usually, the agency's values are scrupulously formulated as a sound set of concepts. For instance, the Seven Core U.S. Army Values are *Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity and Personal Courage*.³⁵ The values of the National Guard of Ukraine are *Honor, Courage and, Law*.³⁶

Image of the Leader

To a certain extent, the image discourse of a security sector agency is determined by the leader's personality. It is not only that the leader formulates the agency's vision, it is that the leader personifies the agency. The audience tends

³² Luntz, *Words That Work*.

³³ Ronald R. Krebs, *Narrative and the Making of US National Security* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 32.

³⁴ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 43.

³⁵ "The Army Values," accessed August 3, 2016, <https://www.army.mil/values>.

³⁶ "National Guard of Ukraine," accessed August 3, 2016, <http://ngu.gov.ua/ua>.

to form attitudes based on the leader's attributes, thus the requirement for the leader is to have a strong communication personality. At the same time, "messengers who are their own best message are always true to themselves."³⁷ There are examples when leaders are exaggeratedly public, preferring to communicate intensively to the audience via social media. It is an art for a leader to find a necessary balance, but openness usually contributes to an agency's positive image. It presupposes that the leader will participate in press-conferences, interviews, image events, etc.

Message

Content, structure and function are of special importance for a good message. As with any strategic communication, an image formative message is persuasive in its nature. The results of earlier surveys show that persuading and informing are the two primary functions of a strategic communication message out of the six identified by Hazleton: facilitate, inform, persuade, coerce, bargain, and solve problems. Persuasive strategies produced the highest level of involvement among the general public.³⁸ For example, a "persuasive framing of the use of military power can thus, to some extent, immunise or shield public opinion against the conventional effects of a rising number of casualties."³⁹

For a message to be persuasive, special attention should be given to the structure. Framing a message to provide context and relevance, depends on a number of factors such as the recipient, the channel, the time and the topic. What has proven to be effective is to "give context 'why' before 'so that' and 'how,' because the order in which you present information determines context, and it can be as important as the substance of the information itself."⁴⁰ For instance, messages with information on an agency's 'wrong-doing' should have a sandwich structure such as: a positive fact regarding the agency or a general security environment—the negative information which is the core of this message—another positive fact regarding the agency or further steps to be taken. These findings correspond to an essential language rule that contradicts the logic: "A+B+C does not necessarily equal C+B+A."⁴¹

Message persuasiveness is not reached solely by rational arguments and facts. The emotional component can be dominant for many audiences. The personalization and humanization of a message can help to trigger an emotional remembrance.⁴²

³⁷ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 92.

³⁸ Kelly P. Werder, "A Theoretical Framework for Strategic Messaging," in *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication*, 278.

³⁹ Ringsmose and Børjesen, "Shaping public attitudes," 506.

⁴⁰ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 26.

⁴¹ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 41.

⁴² Luntz, *Words That Work*, 18.

Proceeding from the statement that if “you want to reach the people, you must first speak their language,”⁴³ “the Ten Rules of effective language”⁴⁴ are applicable for image formative messages: Simplicity, Brevity, Credibility, Consistency, Novelty, Sound, Aspiration, Visualization, Questioning, and Context.

The image formative message content is conveyed by language and visual means. The visual means are gradually acquiring more significance owing to the younger generation’s kaleidoscopic picture of the world which is the result of the shift in our thinking towards the ‘clip’ style of presentation. Visuals are widely used to support security sector agencies discourse. A short motto ‘Aim High’ on the official site of the U.S. Air Force Recruiting⁴⁵ is endorsed by an exciting video aimed at the emotional sphere of the recipient.

Image formative messages can be rolled into mottoes and slogans. The quality dimension for a message prevails the quantitative one. The main requirement is that successful, effective messages stick in our brains and never leave, and they also move people to action.⁴⁶

Consistency and Coherency of Image Formative Discourse

Consistency and coherency are related to the recipient factor as they are linked to the audience diversity. Coherency is not a linear feature. Messages need to be different for different audiences. Instead of the same ‘universal’ message distribution via different channels, the image formative messages, as well as the agency’s discourse in general, represent a wide range of diverse messages on the same topic for different contexts and different audiences. The point here is that these messages should be consistent, coordinated, coherent and mutually reinforcing.

Policy Development on Security Sector Agency’s Image Formation and Reparation

Strategic communication is regarded as an integral function, rather than an adjunct to the planning and conduct of all military operations and activities. It is also a command and a control process to ensure operational success and alliance cohesion.⁴⁷ The research “Mapping of StratCom practices in NATO countries” shows that:

StratCom is still a long way from being a supported—rather than supporting—capability, since for communications to sit at the heart of strat-

⁴³ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 3.

⁴⁴ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 12-28.

⁴⁵ “U.S. Air Force Recruiting,” accessed August 3, 2016, <https://www.airforce.com>.

⁴⁶ Luntz, *Words That Work*, 126.

⁴⁷ Rita LePage, *Mapping of StratCom practices in NATO countries* (Riga, Latvia: NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2015), accessed August 3, 2016, <http://www.stratcomcoe.org/mapping-stratcom-practices-nato-countries-0>.

egy, there is a strong demand for clear ‘top down’ direction at the military and political level.⁴⁸

Image potential to increase the organization or agencies capability is not explicitly recognized in the existing strategic communication policies. For instance, image is not included in the NATO Policy on Strategic Communications, but among the six key principles “soliciting public views” is mentioned⁴⁹ which indirectly refers to image.

Proceeding from the role of image for a security sector agency’s strategic communication and the necessity of ‘top-down’ initiative, the following points might be considered with regard to the National Guard of Ukraine:

- The need to develop a strategic communication policy or doctrine. This initiative may result in a separate doctrine or a plan that states the key elements of the desired image to be communicated to different audiences:
 - The agency’s vision, mission and values developed on the basis of the agency’s mandate
 - The communicator’s role, structure, rights and responsibilities.
- A requirement to conduct a SWOT analysis (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) of the agency’s image on a regular basis in order to monitor the situation and enforce the image consistency with the ‘I’ concept.
- Preparing contingency plans to anticipate potential threats to the image and “prepare responses without stress and time pressure.”⁵⁰ Based on the contingency plans, to generate standard messages as responses to the anticipated threats. “In a crisis, these plans should be adapted to the specific situation and implemented thoughtfully, not followed blindly. Furthermore, crisis response plans should be reviewed periodically and revised or updated as appropriate.”⁵¹

Conclusion

Strategic communication is an umbrella term for a wide scope of a security sector agency’s communications, including discourse and actions. Within a security sector, strategic communication applies to all existing information and communication capabilities, and it is not limited to media activities. As strategic

⁴⁸ LePage, “*Mapping of StratCom practices.*”

⁴⁹ SG(2009)0794, 3.

⁵⁰ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 309.

⁵¹ Benoit, “Image Repair Theory,” 309.

communication is directed towards “winning hearts and minds,”⁵² the image of a security sector agency becomes a crucial tool in this endeavor as it contributes to the recipient’s attitudes to this agency, his/her behavior and support actions.

The image of a security sector agency is a social construct grounded on the audience’s perception, interpretation and attitudes. Shaped in strategic communication, it functions as a filter in the recipient’s consciousness for receiving external information concerning the agency.

For a security sector agency, image formation is a comprehensive process, supported by a corresponding policy or doctrine that states the agency’s ‘I’ concept with the values indicated. The communicator in charge of the image formation process develops the agency’s discourse in conformity with the policy, monitors the image realization in real contexts and introduces modifications to enforce or repair the image when necessary.

As a tool of strategic communication, image formation is based on the same principles of objectivity, openness, credibility and trust, avoiding deception and manipulation. Though, there is always a possibility that the security sector agency’s image may be misused by the agency and the media. Further research into the problem may be able to identify the mechanism of bilateral shaping between image formation and strategic communication in the security sector and its opportunities and threats.

About the Author

Dr. **Iryna Lysyckina** is Associate Professor, Chair of the Department of Philology, Translation and Lingual Communication at the National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine, Kharkiv, Ukraine.

⁵² David Kilcullen, “If we lose hearts and minds, we will lose the war,” *The Spectator*, May 20, 2009, accessed August 3, 2016, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2009/05/if-we-lose-hearts-and-minds-we-will-lose-the-war/>.



János Besenyő, *Connections QJ* 16, no. 3 (2017): 23-45
<https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.16.3.02>

Research Article

Guerrilla Operations in Western Sahara: The Polisario versus Morocco and Mauritania

János Besenyő

Doctrine Concept Development Department, Hungarian Defense Forces

Abstract: This essay examines the guerrilla war fought between the Polisario Front, representing the Western Saharan natives, and the Kingdom of Morocco, as well as Mauritania. Even today, the aforementioned guerrilla war provides many lessons regarding desert counter-insurgency (COIN) operations. Besides reviewing the necessary activities for conducting a successful guerrilla war, this paper will delineate the most efficient methods for defending against one. This is the first COIN operation for the Moroccan government in which it has taken an unusual approach in standing up against the guerrillas. It has achieved long-standing results by the restructuring of its tactics and the units stationed in the Western Saharan region as well as by the construction of a system of fortifications.

Keywords: Western Sahara, Morocco, Mauritania, Polisario, Sahrawi, guerrilla.

The Beginnings; Sahrawi Nationalism

From the beginning of the 1970s, there were numerous views about the fate of the Western Saharan territories which had been occupied by Spain since the end of the 19th century.¹ The Spanish wanted to keep the territory as an “overseas

¹ Janos Besenyő, “Western-Sahara under the Spanish Empire,” *Academic and Applied Research in Public Management Science (AARMS)* 9, no. 2 (2010): 195-215.

territory.”² However, Morocco and Mauritania also had claims on the region, while the natives wanted to found their own, independent state. The Sahrawis, consisting of more than a hundred tribes, were represented by the Sahrawi National Union Party (PUNS) which had been created by and was entirely subservient to the Spanish, and the Frente Polisario, formed by the natives, who in the end joined forces to fight against the Moroccans and Mauritians occupying the country after the withdrawal of the Spanish. The Polisario, founded in 1973, mounted an armed resistance, initially, against the Spanish. Their first attack was conducted on 20 May 1973 against a Spanish military checkpoint in El-Khanga. Soon the Polisario executed more attacks against other smaller military outposts as well as making repeated assaults against the phosphate mines of Bou Craa. They also damaged the phosphate transport systems linking the mines with the port. Then, the Spanish mobilized their military divisions in order to deal with them. In March 1974, Operation “Barrido” was launched, in which, besides the units of the Policia Territorial and the Tropas Nomadas, military helicopters were also used against the militiamen of the Polisario. At that time, the neighboring countries of Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria officially supported the self-determination of the region. Later though, Morocco and Mauritania demanded the territory for themselves. The Algerian president Bumedien protested about this, and began to support the Polisario from the summer of 1975, and subsequently recognized the Polisario as a liberation movement.

Fight for the Spanish Sahara

On 13 December 1974, the United Nations passed Resolution No. 3292 (XXIX) about the postponement of the referendum, the sending of a commission of inquiry to Western Sahara and the request for the opinion of the International Court of Justice in Hague. The UN commission visited the Western Sahara, Madrid and the capitals of the neighboring countries between 8 May and 9 June 1975.³ The report of the commission made it clear that the natives supported the increasingly dominant Polisario and demanded an independent country.⁴ The Spanish, fearing that they would lose even their remaining influence in the region, started secret negotiations in Algiers with the leaders of the Polisario about the peaceful transfer of power. During the negotiations, the Polisario ceased its attacks against the Spanish.⁵ In the course of the negotiations, the Sahrawis offered the Spanish the use of the phosphate mines free of charge for another 20 years. The Spanish would also be allowed to keep most of their fish-

² Geoffrey Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 9.

³ John Mercer, *Spanish Sahara* (London: George Allen and Unwin Publishers, 1976), 242-243.

⁴ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 13.

⁵ Pablo San Martín, *Western Sahara: The Refugee Nation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 98.

ing rights in the area. In response, the Spanish recognized the organization in a semi-official capacity. As they knew that Morocco were intent on the invasion of Western Sahara, the Frente Polisario attempted to try to win over Mauritania which was afraid of the Moroccan territorial demands.⁶ They offered Mokhtar Ould Daddah, the then Mauritanian president, the creation of a federal state under his leadership by uniting the two territories.⁷ However, the Mauritanian president was sure that the Moroccans could not be stopped and that the International Court of Justice would also support the Moroccan claims, so, he chose to cooperate with Morocco. The Spanish were unable to maintain their influence in Western Sahara, and in addition, Prime Minister Arias Navarro and his supporters were afraid that the Polisario, as a radical nationalist movement, might provide a base for the anti-Spanish Canary Islands Independence Movement (CIIM), that operated from Algiers at that time.⁸ Therefore, they eventually gave up the territory and on 14 November 1975, they concluded the Madrid Agreement with Morocco and Mauritania, who divided Western Sahara between themselves according to the treaty.⁹

On 15 November, El-Vali, the leader of the Polisario announced that they regarded the Madrid Agreement as null and void. Nevertheless, the Moroccan ruler Hassan II announced on 25 November that he viewed the Western Saharan issue as concluded and appointed Ahmed Bensouda as the governor of the region. The king reckoned that the Polisario leaders would not be able to rally the 60,000 Sahrawis and that they would only be able to utilize a few mercenaries for their operations, who, unlike the Moroccan military, would be unsuited to desert warfare. He thus concluded that the existence of the Polisario did not present a threat to the Moroccan state. He made this statement knowing about the reports that the 2,500 strong local military and police force, formerly employed by the Spanish, had almost entirely joined the Polisario.¹⁰ Many voiced their doubts about the military capabilities of the natives, for instance the U.S. ambassador wrote in his report that

Polisario, even though [the] guerillas' needs [are] probably few, would not seem capable of standing up for long against relative Moroccan military

⁶ Robert E. Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1990), 22-23, 27-28.

⁷ Toby Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara: What Future for Africa's Last Colony?* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2004), 43.

⁸ John Damis, *Conflict in Northwest Africa: The Western Sahara Dispute* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 65.

⁹ Hammad Zouitni, *The Moroccan Sahara Issue from the Independence of Morocco to the Present Day* (Centre Marocain Interdisciplinaire des Études Stratégiques et Internationales, 2013), 239.

¹⁰ Janos Besenyő, "The Occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco and Mauritania," *Tradecraft Review* 6, no. 1 (Special Issue, 2010): 76-94, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/127198909/The-Occupation-of-Western-Sahara-by-Morocco-and-Mauritania>.

might and in a highly inhospitable environment where spotting from [the] air [is] relatively easy.

The position of the International Institute for Strategic Studies was also similar:

[G]uerilla operations are difficult in the open desert of Spanish Sahara, where it is relatively easy for a defender to control movement.¹¹

The critics of the capabilities of the natives did not take into account that the Sahrawis had lived in the area for centuries and were acclimatized to its peculiarities. Knowing all the caravan routes, passable paths and water sources, they could use all the opportunities provided by the desert against the Moroccan troops. According to some analysts, the Moroccan military was much better prepared than the Sahrawis, since they had not only conducted a liberation war against the French for years, but Moroccan soldiers had also served with UN Forces in the Congo (1960-61). In addition, they had participated in a short border conflict against Algeria in 1963 as well as fighting in Syria during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. The Moroccan military equipment was considered to be some of the most advanced in the region at that time, thus it is understandable that everyone expected them to be victorious. However, the Moroccans had not taken into consideration the experience of the former Spanish colonials, who had conducted a quite effective counter-insurgency operation, with the participation of paratroopers and other special forces, against units of the Moroccan Liberation Army during the Ifni War.¹²

The Occupation of Western Sahara

In the middle of November 1975, the Moroccan military began its advance into Western Sahara. At the same time, the Spanish announced that within a few months they would be dismantling the civilian administration and starting to pull out their forces, whose places would be taken over by Moroccan and Mauritanian soldiers.¹³

The goal of the troops advancing along the coast was the occupation of El-Aaiun and the phosphate mines of Bou Craa. According to the first official military reports, the Royal Forces moved 100 kilometers deep into Western Saharan territory, and on 28 November they captured the second largest settlement,

¹¹ Stephen Zunes and Jacob Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution* (NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), 6-7.

¹² The Moroccan military leadership paid dearly for its forgetfulness, both in manpower and in material losses, since there were many Sahrawis in the units of the Frente Polisario, who had fought side by side with the Spanish as soldiers of the Spanish Legion or the Nomadic Troops (Tropas Nomadas) in order to expel the Moroccan troops infiltrating Spanish Sahara.

¹³ David J. Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1986), 33.

Smara.¹⁴ In less than a month, a 25,000 strong force, about the third of the Moroccan army, was positioned in the Western Saharan region. Of these, 15,000 were stationed in the garrisons of Saguia El-Hamra, 5,000 in El-Aaiun, while another 5,000 were based near the southern borders of the late Spanish Sahara. The advances of the Moroccan troops were followed by a mass migration of the populace. An associate of the U.S. embassy in Rabat, who was present in the area, wrote about the events as follows: “the civilian population of the cities has almost entirely disappeared,” while the ambassador himself described the Moroccan-occupied cities of El-Aaiun and Smara as “virtual armed camps.”¹⁵ On 11 December, the Moroccans captured El-Aaiun, while the Mauriticians, also on the offensive, occupied La Guerra and Tichla. The Spanish had retreated from the region by the end of December, with the last Spanish soldier leaving the territory of the former Spanish Sahara on 12 January 1976. Afterwards, only 150 Spanish officials were left behind to execute and observe the seamless transition between Spanish and Moroccan administration of the territory.¹⁶ Soldiers of local origin, relieved from Spanish military duty, joined the Polisario—formerly regarded as an enemy by most of them—and organized the Saharan People’s Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Popular Saharai; ELPs) in order to fight the Moroccans.¹⁷ The Sahrawis utilized Algerian and Vietnamese models for the establishment of their armed forces. The leaders of the resistance, morally more committed than the Moroccan and Mauritanian soldiers, showed an unexpected tactical ability during the guerrilla operations that followed.¹⁸ The Sahrawis also received armaments from the withdrawing Spanish troops and, in certain cases, even some fortifications were handed over by the Spanish.¹⁹ Initially, the poorly armed Sahrawis conducted mainly defensive operations, and helped to evacuate the civilian population in flight because of the brutality of the Moroccan troops.

However, the Sahrawis were soon on the offensive. One of their smaller groups had attacked the Mauritanian city of Zuerat already on 29 December. The city, which operates as a mining center, is located in the middle of the desert, about 400 kilometers from the capital. During the attack, the Sahrawis managed to inflict minor damage to the mining equipment, but they were unable to capture the city. At that time, the Mauritanian army consisted of less than 3,000 trained troops, 2,000 military policemen and a few aging fighter planes, thus it was an easier target for the Sahrawis, who used guerrilla tactics to continuously

¹⁴ Richard Lawless and Laila Monahan, *War and Refugees: The Western Sahara Conflict* (London and New York: Pinter Publishers, 1987), 99.

¹⁵ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 113.

¹⁶ Tony Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill Books, 1983), 229-230.

¹⁷ Damis, *Conflict in Northwest Africa*, 70-71; Virginia M. Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Western Saharans: Background to Conflict* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1980), 252.

¹⁸ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 31-34.

¹⁹ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 9.

harass the Mauritians.²⁰ Ain Ben Tili, the famous former fortress of the French Foreign Legion was defended by Mauritanian soldiers when the fortress was surrounded by Sahrawi units. The Mauritanian President Ould Daddah asked for the assistance of the Moroccan air force to relieve the defenders who were in a tight situation. However, even the Moroccan air force was incapable of relieving the fort. Moreover, one of the Northrop F-5 fighters was shot down by the guerrillas. The fort was finally captured by Polisario troops on 21 January. In the following days, the guerrillas attacked the cities of Bir Moghrein and Inal, but, while they succeeded in causing major damage, they could not capture the cities due to the coordinated counterattack of the Mauritanian army. The Mauritians managed to reorganize their troops, with French assistance, and went on the counter-offensive on the Western Saharan border in the third week of December. After a short but bloody battle, they captured the city of La Guerra and began to drive out the Polisario soldiers and sympathetic civilians from the area. On 11 January, the Mauritians managed to occupy the small city of Argoub (near Villa Cisneros) only after two weeks of fighting. The 200 civilians and soldiers defending the city fought until the last bullet and the Mauritians were only able to capture a few seriously wounded soldiers, as the majority of the defenders had died during the battle. Afterwards, the Sahrawis were left with only one choice: flight.²¹ The refugees first aimed for the northern territories of Mauritania bordering Western Sahara. Then they were evacuated to Algeria with the help of the Algerian army.²² Besides transportation of the refugees, the Algerians also assisted the Sahrawi troops with food, water and medicine.²³ The first signs of a split in the Morocco-Mauritania alliance were already visible at this time. The Moroccans, fearing that the Mauritanian troops would be unable to capture Villa Cisneros by the designated deadline, marched into the city under the leadership of Colonel Dlimi. In spite of the fact that the Madrid Accords placed the city under Mauritanian supervision, Morocco deployed a garrison there. Thus, while Mauritania created an administrative center in the city, the actual military power was represented by Morocco.²⁴

On 27 January 1976, the units of the Moroccan army attacked an Algerian convoy conducting “humanitarian activities” near Amgala,²⁵ and after several

²⁰ The Sahrawi possessed very accurate information about the Mauritanian situation, as several Sahrawi leaders—like Ibrahim Hakim or Ahmed Baba Miske, the latter having served earlier as a Mauritanian diplomat—originated from Mauritania, and they could also count on the assistance of the Sahrawis living in the country.

²¹ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 231.

²² Janos Besenyő, “Saharawi Refugees in Algeria,” *Academic and Applied Research in Public Management Science (AARMS)* 9, no. 1 (2010): 67-78.

²³ Norrie MacQueen, *United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa Since 1960* (London: Longman, 2002), 237.

²⁴ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 230-231.

²⁵ The Algerians conducted mainly the transportation of the Sahrawi refugees, but also provided logistical support for the militants of the Polisario.

days of fighting, the Algerian troops had to retreat having suffered a serious defeat.²⁶ The enraged Algerian military leadership demanded immediate retaliation, and the onset of a war was just about avoided. From then on, while the Algerian leadership increased its material support for the Sahrawi militants, it kept its troops away from any further clashes.²⁷ Retribution arrived soon, as in the second battle of Amgala between 13 and 15 February, units of the Polisario defeated the Moroccan troops.

At this time, being equipped with French weapons and coordinated by French military trainers and in spite of the low military capabilities of the Mauritanian troops, the Moroccan-Mauritanian alliance was in a better position than the guerrillas.²⁸ The guerrillas could muster only several thousands of volunteers equipped with small arms, mortars and a few anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles that they received from the Libyan and Algerian militaries.²⁹ During the clashes, the Moroccans did not just deploy infantry units, but on multiple occasions they also bombarded the settlements and the refugee camps of the Sahrawis.³⁰ This led to an increased migration of the civilian population from the occupied territories. At first, only 9,000 refugees lived in the camps built in the desert but, by the end of 1975, there were reports of around 70,000 people,³¹ and by the end of February 1976, about 100,000 women, children and the elderly were housed in the refugee camps in Algeria.³² Most of the men had gone to war. The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic was proclaimed on 27 February 1976 and war was declared against Morocco and Mauritania.³³ Still, the Moroccan army continued its offensive and occupied more and more territory.

On 14 April 1976, the allies officially signed a treaty about the division of the region. In the treaty, Morocco received the two largest cities (El-Aaiun and Smara) and the phosphate mines, thus increasing its existing territories by ap-

²⁶ Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, 26-27.

²⁷ Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 35-36.

²⁸ Thompson and Adloff, *The Western Saharans*, 270.

²⁹ Anthony H. Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms: Military and Security Developments in the Maghreb* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 59.

³⁰ The Moroccans deployed not only conventional bombs, but also napalm and white phosphorus against the Sahrawis. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 16; and Erik Jensen: *Western Sahara: Anatomy of a Stalemate* (CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 29.

³¹ San Martín, *Western Sahara: The Refugee Nation*, 109.

³² According to some researchers, the separation between different tribes has practically vanished in the refugee camps, thus it could be observed that the formation of a Sahrawi nation was helped by them being refugees. For that matter, according to a lot of researchers and the Moroccan official stance, there is no Sahrawi nation, the concept was created artificially in the 20th century. This is partially true as the Polisario has strived actively and very successfully to dissolve the bonds of the former tribal system, as it would weaken the unity of the Sahrawi people in their opinion. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 16, 24-26, 29-30.

³³ Damis, *Conflict in Northwest Africa*, 40-44.

proximately 35 percent.³⁴ Meanwhile Mauritania, while it received Villa Cisneros and a long shoreline with good fishing capabilities, had nothing else but desert sand on the territory it received.³⁵

Guerrilla War against the Occupying States

The Polisario continued the fight after the division of the region. A series of attacks known as the “20 May offensive” peaked on 11 May when a coordinated offensive was launched against El-Aaiun, Smara, Bou Craa, Bir Moghrein and Chinguetti, as well as on the conveyor belt system transporting phosphate.³⁶ The guerrillas, roused by the successes of these smaller ambushes, attacked even Nouakchott, the Mauritanian capital, in the early hours of 8 June 1976.³⁷ The military unit, consisting of about 600 troops, managed to cover 1,000 kilometers undetected in enemy territory, which was evidence of an excellent understanding of the local geography and the support of the local populace. The attack lasted for almost an hour, the targets were showered with mortar and machinegun fire. Some of the Mauritanian troops fled, but the Sahrawis could not exploit their victory as their leader, El-Wali Mustafa Sayed, was killed during the battle.³⁸ At the same time, the Polisario launched attacks in the northern territories against Tan-Tan, Jdiria and Guelta Zemmour. The Sahrawis had changed their tactics by then. Realizing that they could not effectively defend the settlements they still controlled against the motorized and modernized Moroccan units, they shifted to well-known and more successful guerrilla tactics.³⁹ In almost every attack, they could rely on the support of a large part of the local population, since there were tribes related to the Sahrawis in both the South Moroccan and the Mauritanian territories. Thus, numbering several hundred troops, the Polisario units could move easily in both the occupied territories and those of the hostile countries. Hence, while the Moroccans held the cities and the fortifications handed over by the Spanish, their supply lines were constantly under attack⁴⁰ by the militants who were aided by their extensive knowledge of the diverse terrain of the region.⁴¹

³⁴ Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 60.

³⁵ Yahia H. Zoubir, “The Western Sahara Conflict: Regional and International Dimensions,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 28, no. 2 (June 1990), 226.

³⁶ Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 42.

³⁷ Damis, *Conflict in Northwest Africa*, 84.

³⁸ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 11; Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study*, 30.

³⁹ David L. Price, *The Western Sahara* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979), 33.

⁴⁰ Jim Paul, *et al.*, “With the Polisario Front of Sahara,” *MERIP Reports* 53 (December 1976): 16.

⁴¹ Generally, the desert is less suited for guerrilla warfare, but the majority of Western Saharan territories are covered by low mountains and decorated with seasonal river valleys and gullies where a large number of caves provides plenty of opportunities for hiding. Moreover, unlike the occupying forces—who have to get all their supplies from

The Role of Mauritania in the Conflict

Mauritania was, militarily, the weaker of the two countries and was also troubled by internal economic and ethnic issues. Therefore, the Polisario focused its limited resources on the fight against Mauritanian troops. The Sahrawis, in the spirit of the Saharan Arab traditions and lacking training and adequate heavy weaponry, organized guerrilla attacks (ghazzi). Their units (kata'ib), equipped with small arms and Land Rovers, appeared, after travelling hundreds of kilometers, and then disappeared after quickly executed attacks.⁴² Since the Mauritanian desert is almost twice the size of France, the military and police forces at the disposal of local authorities were insufficient to control the territory.

As the Sahrawis realized that they are not capable of defeating the Mauritians solely by military means, they also applied political and economic pressure on the country. They systematically harassed economic targets in order to turn the civilian populace against the government. The continuous attacks launched by the militants damaged the railways connecting the Mauritanian iron mines with the ports causing severe problems for the country, whose main source of income was the sale of iron ore.⁴³

While the Mauritanian political leadership was astonished by the attacks, it thought that quick changes in the military leadership could resolve the situation. Lieutenant-Colonel Ahmed Ould Bouceif, who had formerly led the second military district in the country, was appointed as the new chief of staff. At the same time, the Mauritanian leadership voiced its first criticisms of the actions of the Moroccan military, as they expected the Moroccans to launch a counter-offensive against the Polisario units. However, it was the militants of the Polisario who launched an attack from the Moroccan-occupied zone against the Mauritanian settlements of Nema and Tisitt.

Due to the intensifying attacks, the Mauritanian army increased its numbers to 17,000 and bought more modern weapons.⁴⁴ In the city of Atar, the training of freshly recruited soldiers was accelerated in the military training center, which was created with French support, but even this could not achieve significant re-

outside—the Sahrawis have been living in the area for centuries and know every water spring. The armies occupying the region could not effectively recon the guerrillas, even by aerial reconnaissance: the Sahrawis had learned during their fight against the French and Spanish that they could defend against aircraft by moving at night and hiding at day. The Moroccans thought that by equipping their aircraft with infrared detection systems, they could spot and destroy Polisario forces effectively. While they procured a Westinghouse radar system with U.S. support, it did not live up to the expectations, partly due to the huge territory, partly due to the low number of radars and the insufficient training of the Moroccan operating personnel. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 18-19.

⁴² Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 42; Thompson and Adloff, *The Western Saharans*, 253.

⁴³ Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study*, 5.

⁴⁴ Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, 43-44.

sults.⁴⁵ On 9 May 1977, the insurgents again raided the Mauritanian city of Zouerat and so severely damaged the power plant, the fuel tanks and the mining equipment, that production had to be halted temporarily. At this time, Mauritania could only remedy its problems in the Western Sahara with the military aid provided by agreement with Morocco, and with the financial support from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Côte d'Ivoire⁴⁶ and the United Arab Emirates.⁴⁷ In spite of the presence of the freshly arrived Moroccan troops, units of the Polisario attacked Nouakchott again in July, retreating with minimal casualties after a successful attack.⁴⁸

The French, as allies of the Mauriticians, sent in a 200-strong military unit to secure the Mauritanian capital, and from the end of November, Jaguar fighter aircraft were directed from the Dakar airbase to reinforce the defense of larger Mauritanian settlements in an offensive known as "Operation Lamantine." The situation in Mauritania worried the French greatly as the country was in their military and economic sphere of interest. In spite of Mauritanian statements emphasizing their independence from France, the country was still linked to its former colonizer. During "Operation Lamantine," part of the supersonic fighter aircraft at the Oukkam airbase in Senegal were placed on alert because they could reach the area of Nouakchott in less than 50 minutes. The 1,300 French soldiers deployed at the base were reinforced by another 300⁴⁹ and, on the night of 1 November, a unit of rapid deployment forces under the leadership of General Michael Forget arrived at the base in Senegal. Within days, the General redeployed with 60 specially trained soldiers to the city of Atar in Mauritanian territory. The command of the Ouakkam base was taken over by Colonel Huret, who was also responsible for the logistical support of "Operation Lamantine." Soon after his arrival, Forget began to establish communication lines between Ouakkam and the Mauritanian bases. In the meantime, the Breguet-Atlantic aircraft provided by the French Navy conducted surveillance patrols above Mauritania.⁵⁰ The aim of the surveys was to observe the movement of Polisario troops and

⁴⁵ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 246.

⁴⁶ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 39.

⁴⁷ Damis, *Conflict in Northwest Africa*, 85.

⁴⁸ By the end of April 1977, Polisario militants had destroyed 18 fighter planes and helicopters, two transport planes and 600 of various military vehicles and trucks. Of the allies, the Moroccan casualties were 4,200 dead, 2,800 wounded and 96 captured, while the Mauritanian casualties were 1,600 dead, 900 wounded and 16 captured. Certain sources explained the low number of captives with the initial unwillingness of the Sahrawi to take prisoners. Despite inflicting heavy casualties, the Polisario could not achieve substantial successes against the occupying forces. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 36.

⁴⁹ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 12.

⁵⁰ While these aircraft were initially designed to detect submarines, they proved to be an important part of the operation with their trained crew. The French used also Mirage-4 long-range surveillance aircraft to map the less known areas and take photographs.

then inform the French fighter planes and the Mauritanian military and police units who were ready to counterattack. The French advisors also created maps for the units of the Mauritanian army, as they were not familiar with the territories occupied by them. The French secret service also recruited experienced mercenaries to support the Mauritanian soldiers. At the request of the Mauritanian government, the Moroccans also sent troops to support the operations.⁵¹

It seemed that the soldiers of Polisario could not withstand such a force, and so Mauritania restarted rail traffic on the Nouadhibou-Zuerat railway, which had been out of commission for a month. However, the Sahrawis attacked the first shipment, capturing the French train engineer and the Mauritanian soldiers escorting the shipment. On 25 November, the irate French deployed another four Jaguar military aircraft from the Toul airbase to Mauritania, to involve them in the retaliatory strikes against the Polisario.⁵² The Jaguars were deployed first on 2 December against guerrillas attacking the railway near the settlement of Boulanour and then on 12 December near Zouerat. While "Operation Lamantine" caused a lot of damage to the guerrillas, it did not stop them. On the contrary, the Sahrawis learned from these experiences and, after splitting into smaller groups, they led further raids against Mauritanian targets.⁵³ Between 1977 and 1978, their attacks halted the rail traffic between Nouadhibou and Zuerat almost completely, paralyzing the iron mining operations that constituted a major part of Mauritanian revenue.

Despite a sharp decline in governmental income, Mauritanian military expenditure was increased by almost 50 percent in 1976 and by another 26 percent in 1977, amounting to about 30 percent of the total government expenditure. Mauritania could only manage to maintain order by calling in more Moroccan troops, but the guerrillas were not to be stopped by this, and the trust of the military leadership was shaken by the government's reliance on a Mauritanian-Moroccan alliance.⁵⁴ Several Mauritanian officers of Arab origin felt that their national pride was dishonored by leadership of the war being taken over by the Moroccans, forcing Mauritania into a secondary role.⁵⁵ On 10 July 1978, the dis-

⁵¹ The Moroccans had sent additional 600 soldiers to the territories occupied by Mauritania, where soon 1,200 Moroccan troops were deployed, and even more arrived from Morocco. In January 1978, already 2,400 soldiers were stationed in the area of Zouerat-Nouadhibou, 600 at the iron mines of Akjouj, and other 2,800 near Tiris el-Gharbia. The Moroccan air force has also deployed three F-5 fighter aircraft to the Nouadhibou airport, so that they could participate in the joint operation.

⁵² Price, *The Western Sahara*, 62.

⁵³ Tony Hodges, "The Western Sahara File," *Third World Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (January 1984): 74-116, 101-102.

⁵⁴ Lawless and Monahan, *War and Refugees*, 101.

⁵⁵ In Mauritania and Tiris el-Gharbia, 8,000 Moroccan soldiers were serving in February 1978, but their numbers soon rose above 9,000, raising French concerns, too. The Polisario accused the Mauritanian leadership of attempting to hand over the country to the Moroccans. The resulting panic is well shown by the fact that the Mauritanian

contented officers overthrew Mokhtar Ould Daddah and initiated talks with the Sahrawis about the possibility of a peace treaty.⁵⁶ In response, the Polisario announced a unilateral truce with Mauritania with effect from 12 July. As more than 8,000 Moroccan troops were stationed in Mauritania,⁵⁷ the government had very tight margins and could not, simultaneously, fulfill the demands of Morocco, Algeria and the Polisario. Once again, France was asked to mediate. However, it soon became apparent that Mauritania could not make a unilateral decision about a peace treaty with the Polisario. So, recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and the immediate and unconditional withdrawal from the Mauritanian-occupied territories was out of the question.

As the ceasefire did not extend to the Moroccans, on 4 January Sahrawi troops crossed the Draa river, which served as a historical and physical border, and attacked the Moroccan city of Assa. After this successful border raid, the Sahrawi launched the “Bumedien Offensive,” named after the former Algerian president.⁵⁸ The first attack was launched on 16 January 1979 near the settlement of Lemseid, less than ten kilometers from Laayoune. During the two days of this battle, two major Moroccan battle columns were destroyed. This was the first case of a motorized Moroccan unit, accompanied by armored vehicles, suffering a defeat against Western Saharan soldiers. The Polisario reported 600 dead, 250 wounded and 51 captured Moroccan soldiers and officers. They managed to capture four armored fighting vehicles and 60 off-road vehicles and to destroy seven tanks, 96 jeeps, a F-5 fighter aircraft and four helicopters. The Algerian president, Bendjedid Chadli, roused by the successes of the Sahrawis, asked Ould Salek to initiate peace talks as soon as possible. The Polisario entered Moroccan territory again on 28 January with a 1,200-strong unit equipped with modern weapons and 200 jeeps. The attackers managed, for a few hours, to capture the city of Tan-Tan in the center of South Morocco, which was a logistical center and a base of the Moroccan air force. After this successful raid, the attackers retreated into the desert with some captured Moroccan soldiers. The fact that they managed to cover 500 kilometers undetected in a territory controlled by the Moroccan military caught the attention of the global media and so, while the Moroccans denied the raid having taken place, the world became aware of the attack.⁵⁹

In the meantime, there was another coup in Mauritania and the new leadership was willing to sign a peace treaty with the Sahrawis. On 5 August 1979 in Algiers, Mauritania and the Polisario signed the peace treaty, according to which Mauritania recognized the Polisario and revoked all of its territorial claims in

political leadership has asked again for the assistance of the French air force against the guerrillas attacking the capital in May 1978.

⁵⁶ Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study*, 121-122.

⁵⁷ Leo Kamil, *Fueling the Fire: U.S. Policy and the Western Sahara* (Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1987), 36.

⁵⁸ Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 44.

⁵⁹ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 285.

Western Sahara.⁶⁰ In a secret clause of this Algiers Peace Treaty, the Mauritians would have to hand over the Mauritanian-occupied territories to the militants of the Polisario within seven months of the signing of the treaty.⁶¹ However, this never happened. On 8 August, Hassan II ordered all his Moroccan troops stationed in Mauritania to return to Morocco, except for the 1000-strong unit in Bir Moghreïn and the 2400-strong unit in Tiris el-Gharbia. The next day M'hammed Boucetta, the Moroccan minister for foreign affairs, announced that his country would reject the Algiers Treaty because Tiris el-Gharbia belonged, both historically and legally, to Morocco, and that this was supported by a decision of the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Afterwards, five Hercules C-130 transport planes arrived in Dakhla with several hundred Moroccan soldiers on board. They, along with the soldiers already stationed there, proceeded to occupy the city. In a few days, they took control of the whole of the former Mauritanian-occupied territory which they swiftly annexed to Morocco under the name Oued Eddahab.⁶² Thus, 95 percent of the Western Sahara came under Moroccan control.⁶³ Later, Morocco took part in an unsuccessful coup against the Mauritanian President Haidalla in order to involve Mauritania again in the fight against the Polisario, but the country has consistently stayed away from the conflict since then.⁶⁴

The War between Morocco and the Polisario

The guerrillas now turned their attention towards the Moroccan troops, whose situation had deteriorated following the withdrawal of the Mauritians. Despite this, the Sahrawis could only achieve limited success against the better equipped regular forces.⁶⁵ They returned again to guerrilla tactics against the Moroccans, who had founded several garrisons in the occupied territories. These, they had great difficulty in defending, as they failed to adapt well to the desert conditions. The militants of the Polisario created small outposts in the valley of the Saguia el-Hamra and the Zemmour mountains, most of them hidden underground, from where they launched their night raids and to where they could retreat from their pursuers. In order to evade aerial surveillance, they moved at night or, if they had to travel at day, they used jeeps from which all glass had been removed so that the reflection could not give away their posi-

⁶⁰ Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 42; Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study*, 33-34.

⁶¹ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 275.

⁶² Janos Besenyő, *A nyugat-szaharai válság egy magyar békefenntartó szemével, [The Western Saharan crisis through the eyes of a peacekeeper]* (Pécs: Publikon Publishers, 2012), 139; Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 17.

⁶³ Zouitni, *The Moroccan Sahara Issue from the Independence of Morocco to the Present Day*, 242.

⁶⁴ Handloff, *Mauritania: A Country Study*, 35.

⁶⁵ Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 61.

tion.⁶⁶ The favored targets for their attacks were Laayoun, Tarfaya and the bridge linking the cities of Tan-Tan and Tarfaya over the river Oued Chebeika.⁶⁷ They also targeted the phosphate mines at Bou Craa, where, in the same manner as the attacks in Mauritania, they made the exploitation and transportation of phosphate almost impossible.⁶⁸ Their main target was the 100 kilometer-long conveyor belt that transported the phosphate from the mines to the port area of El-Aaiun. The attackers were able to damage the conveyor belt at a number of points, and while the Moroccans worked to repair the damage and defend the area with patrols, they could not press their attack against the rebels. Due to the Polisario raids, phosphate mining was halted almost completely in the Western Saharan region, and its exploitation could continue only after the establishment of the Berm, a defensive wall system conceived by General Dlimi. But, as Morocco also has its own phosphate mines, mining and export was not completely halted by the Polisario raids.⁶⁹

What was most unsettling for the Moroccan leadership was that the Polisario units had already begun to attack economic and military targets in the southern territories of Morocco. One target of the guerrillas was the settlement of Sidi Amara in the valley of the river Draa, where, on 27 August 1979, they managed to ambush a unit of the Moroccan army and destroy it almost completely. And on 30 September, the border post of Guelb Ben Rzuok near the Algerian border was captured.⁷⁰ The Polisario warned the Moroccan ruler that if his troops did not leave the territories of Western Sahara, the raids would continue and the Sahrawi militants would even attack the cities of Rabat, Agadir or Tangier. However, these were actually hollow threats, as the Sahrawis were only active in the Quarkziz and Bani mountains, the valley of the river Draa and certain areas of the Atlas mountains, and they never reached the aforementioned cities.⁷¹

Unlike the other opposing forces, the Moroccans received substantial financial and military support from the United States,⁷² France and South Africa. The arsenal of armaments used by them was quite extensive, they possessed F-5 and

⁶⁶ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 283, 337.

⁶⁷ Lawless and Monahan, *War and Refugees*, 103.

⁶⁸ Shelley, *Endgame in the Western Sahara*, 191.

⁶⁹ Thompson and Adloff, *The Western Saharans*, 291.

⁷⁰ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 285.

⁷¹ Neil Clough, *Western Saharan Conflict: Prolonged Conflict and Prospects for the Future* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air Command and Staff College, Air University, 2008), 8.

⁷² Morocco is the oldest ally of the United States in the Arab world (since 1786!), and it plays an important role in U.S. strategic planning. The commitment of the U.S. is shown by the fact that during the Western Saharan conflict, the U.S. not only provided financial support and armaments, but also intelligence and military advisors for the Moroccans. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 1-2, 45-46; Zoubir, "The Western Sahara Conflict," 233-234. For additional information on the Moroccan-U.S. relations see: Mohamed Sellak, *United States – Moroccan Relations* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air Command and Staff College, Air University, 1991).

C-130 military aircraft, "Gazelle" helicopters, Ratel, Eland and AML-90MM armored personnel carriers, South African MK-6 armored reconnaissance vehicles, diverse anti-aircraft batteries, radar equipment and a large number of small arms. These countries did not only send arms, but also trainers and advisors for the Moroccans. Moreover, France provided considerable surveillance and training support for the Moroccan military.⁷³ Of course, other countries also supplied the Moroccans with weapons, which was largely financed by Saudi Arabia.⁷⁴ These included Egypt, Iran (before the 1979 revolution), Belgium, Italy, Jordan, Libya,⁷⁵ Iraq, Brazil and Spain.⁷⁶ According to certain researchers, Egypt, Iran and Jordan did not support Morocco with their own weapons, but with those that they had received from the U.S.⁷⁷ At the same time, the Moroccans also bought arms from the Soviet Union and Romania.⁷⁸ They continuously increased their defense budget, and proportionately the numbers of those serving in the army and the military police.

The Sahrawis possessed mainly Soviet-produced arms that they received from Algeria, Cuba, Libya and sometimes from North Korea.^{79,80} They included SA-6 and SA-7 anti-aircraft missiles, the ZSU-23 self-propelled anti-aircraft gun, various anti-tank weapons, guns, the BMP-1 armored vehicles and a few T-54 and T-55 tanks. This arsenal was expanded by the French and U.S. weapons captured from the Moroccans.⁸¹ During the conflict, the Polisario received advisors for the training of its units mostly from Cuba, and to a lesser extent from North

⁷³ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 17.

⁷⁴ Besides various subsidies and aid, Saudi Arabia magnanimously cancelled all the Moroccan debt in 1991, as Morocco participated with a 2,000-strong military unit in the First Gulf War, that raged between the U.S. and its allies, and Iraq.

⁷⁵ Libya formerly supported the guerrillas of the Polisario, providing them with arms, training and logistical support. However, in 1984, Kadhafi signed the Oujda Treaty with Hassan II, in which he recognized Morocco's claim to Western Sahara and agreed to uphold the freshly instituted embargo against the Sahrawis. Later, the relationship between Libya and Morocco worsened and Libya started to support the Polisario again, but more moderately.

⁷⁶ The Spanish—besides the arms sales—organized a military and police training for the Moroccan armed forces which underwent a swift increase in its numbers.

⁷⁷ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 87.

⁷⁸ Raphael Mergui, "Sahara: La Grande Riposte," *Jeune Afrique*, November 21, 1979, 23-30.

⁷⁹ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 17, 35.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, the Soviet Union and the Socialist countries (with the exception of Cuba and Yugoslavia) did not recognize the country proclaimed by the Sahrawis and did not provide direct military support for the Polisario. See: Zoubir, "The Western Sahara Conflict," 234; Hodges, "The Western Sahara File," 112.

⁸¹ Paul, *et al.*, *With the Polisario Front of Sahara*, 21.

Korea and the German Democratic Republic,⁸² who were only active in Tindouf, not in the main area of operations.⁸³

While Moroccan superiority was indisputable, the guerrillas still managed to capture the well-fortified garrison of Lebuirat on 24 August 1979.⁸⁴ The city and the barracks were defended by 1,000 soldiers of the 3rd Armored Infantry Regiment of the Royal Moroccan Army. The attackers had already launched two unsuccessful assaults against the city, and while they could not capture it, they managed to weaken the garrison significantly. The fighting morale of the Moroccan troops was already low due to four years of continuous service without leave. The commander of the unit, Lieutenant-Colonel Mohammed Azelmat, requested immediate assistance from his superiors, but they did not take his warning seriously. In addition, heavy sandstorms caused serious problems for the Moroccan air force; the planes could not take off, thus the surrounded garrison did not receive any air support. Moreover, a unit sent to relieve the garrison was ambushed by Polisario units near Zag and forced to retreat.

In the attack of 24 August, the invading Western Saharans eliminated all opposition in less than 40 minutes and occupied the garrison for more than 24 hours. According to reports, the Moroccan losses were serious; there were 562 dead, several tanks and armored vehicles were destroyed and the attackers captured 111 soldiers, along with 37 T-54 tanks and several hundred small arms.

Inspired by their success, the units of the insurgents launched further attacks. For example, on 5 October, they laid down fire on the South Moroccan city of Zag as a diversion, so that on 6 October they were able to capture the second largest Western Saharan city, Smara.⁸⁵ The city was well fortified by the Moroccans, and Mirage planes were also stationed at its airport. During the fight, the Royal Moroccan Army deployed about 5,400 well-equipped soldiers and Mirage F-1 fighter planes against the insurgents.⁸⁶ In spite of this, the attackers triumphed. In the battle, the Moroccans lost 121 soldiers, including the commander of the Moroccan troops, Colonel Driss Harti. Moreover, the 700 Sahrawis living in the city were evacuated to Algeria by the Polisario.⁸⁷

The next battle ensued at the city of Mahbas, 60 kilometers from the Algerian border. The civilian populace had already fled from the city in 1975, thus the Moroccan soldiers were using it as a forward outpost in order to prevent the infiltration of Polisario troops. This outpost was defended by 780 soldiers against a 1,200-strong attacking force. In the 24-hour-long battle, the numerically superior attackers won, and also managed to defeat extra troops arriving from Zag to

⁸² Gareth M. Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 143.

⁸³ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 50.

⁸⁴ Besenyő, *A nyugat-szaharai válság egy magyar békefenntartó szemével*, 146-147.

⁸⁵ Thompson and Adloff, *The Western Saharans*, 253.

⁸⁶ Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 44.

⁸⁷ Hodges, "The Western Sahara File," 104.

relieve the outpost. According to the report of the Moroccan military leadership, more than 20 percent of the garrison's manpower were killed and even more were wounded.⁸⁸ The targets of the next attacks were the city of Tata and the oasis M'hamid, where Mohammed V had first announced his country's claims on the Western Saharan territories.

William H. Lewis, a known military analyst, later wrote about the failure of the Moroccan military saying that: "The Moroccans had ignored the famous dictum of Frederick the Great: 'He who attempts to defend too much defends nothing'."⁸⁹ He argued that the Moroccan units were dispersed over a too large an area, their firepower was dispersed and their logistical lines were overstretched, which allowed them to be weakened by the raids of the insurgents. Thus, they were unable to fight effectively against the Sahrawis. The Moroccan soldiers had great difficulty in adapting to the Western Saharan conditions and climate, they were unmotivated and underpaid, and their officers were unable to develop efficient COIN tactics and apply them against the insurgents. Moreover, they lacked effective military and leadership skills.

The Moroccan military units were also hampered by some serious communication issues. After two unsuccessful attempts on his life, Hassan II did not trust the leading officers of the military. So, only the Royal Court could authorize any troop movements or other military activities. Lacking authorization, none of the commanders of Moroccan units dared to act or coordinate their activities as this might have been considered by the supervising Royal Gendarmerie as a conspiracy. Consequently, by the time permission arrived, the guerrillas had already vanished.⁹⁰

The Change in Moroccan Strategy

The increasing attacks shocked the Moroccan military and the political leadership, who realized that the tactics they had been using so far had not been able to defeat the Polisario. Furthermore, they were increasingly afraid that Morocco would have to retreat from Western Sahara which could have resulted in unforeseeable consequences for the Royal family and the political-military leadership of the country. One man did not share these feelings of desperation, General Amed Dlimi, the main confidant of the king, who asked for and received absolute power for the control of the Saharan operations.

He first dismantled the military bases in the desert that he deemed undefendable, then he concentrated all the Moroccan troops in the districts of Boukra, El-Aaiun and Smara. Following this reorganization and concentrated training of the troops, a number of operations were launched against the guerrillas on 5 November 1979. 7,000 soldiers and several Mirage and F-5 fighter aircraft were deployed in the operation. Learning from the failures of previous op-

⁸⁸ Hodges, *Western Sahara: Roots of a Desert War*, 287.

⁸⁹ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 15-16.

⁹⁰ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 47.

erations, the General employed Sahrawis who knew the desert well during the clashes,⁹¹ and removed the civilian population living in the area of operation, so that they would not be able to provide support for the militants of the Polisario.⁹² Building upon the experiences of their failures, the Moroccans replaced the slow-moving military convoys with well-armed, fast-moving squads with jeeps.⁹³ The Green Berets of the U.S. military provided assistance in the training of Moroccan troops and, in many cases, they accompanied them in Moroccan uniforms to the area of operations.⁹⁴

During one operation, a convoy of 1,500 armored vehicles and 6,000 soldiers moved from the city of Tan-Tan to Dakhla, eliminating several armed groups on the way.⁹⁵ The operation lasted more than three weeks, but the Moroccans did not encounter serious resistance as the guerrillas evaded open conflict. Therefore, the operation could only be regarded as a display of power, because the Moroccans were unable to achieve any lasting results. Two journalists of the *Jeune Afrique*, Raphael Mergui and Pascal Maitre, were allowed to join the Moroccan troops and provided first-hand reports to their readers about the operation.⁹⁶ In the next operation (Operation Zelleka) the Moroccans attacked insurgent camps in the Quarkaziz mountains and then relieved the besieged city of Zag. The Moroccans then stabilized the positions of their troops in the areas between the Zini mountains and the city of Smara, moving close to the Algerian border and establishing strong defensive positions. However, no consequent military actions were performed near the Algerian border.

The Polisario did not give up the fight though and, in early 1980, its forces attacked Tarfaya, the city of Boujdaor, and then the Moroccan troops stationed in the Ouarkziz Valley and the Tizert Highlands.⁹⁷ The city of Akka was attacked again in the following September, and successful raids were also organized against European fishing vessels and those of other nationalities along the West-

⁹¹ While most of the Sahrawis supported the Polisario, several thousand of them served in the Moroccan Royal Army, where they were organized into distinct units. The most famous of their units were the 8th Infantry Regiment and the Makhzen (partisan hunter) units. Most of them were recruited from the South Moroccan region, where the soldierly Sahrawi tribes with military experience and traditions lived. The tribe that provided the most troops for the Moroccans was the Ait Oussa tribe belonging to the Tekna tribal confederation, who maintained a traditionally hostile relationship with the Reguibat tribe. Some Sahrawis, who formerly served in the Polisario units but were captured, were recruited in the freshly established units and undertook service in the Moroccan military in exchange for the freedom of their families and themselves.

⁹² Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 44.

⁹³ Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 63.

⁹⁴ Kamil, *Fueling the Fire*, 69-70.

⁹⁵ Anthony G. Pazzanita and Tony Hodges, *Historical Dictionary of Western Sahara*, 2nd edition (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1994), 312-313.

⁹⁶ Mergui, *Sahara: La Grande Riposte*, 23-30.

⁹⁷ Lawless and Monahan, *War and Refugees*, 105.

ern Saharan coast.⁹⁸ One of the greatest victories of the insurgents was achieved on 31 October 1981, near Guelta Zemmour, where the Moroccans—besides a significant loss of manpower—also lost five of their aircraft.⁹⁹

In spite of this, the Polisario became more and more at a disadvantage compared to the Moroccan army. The main reasons behind their early victories, besides the superior motivation and the effective guerrilla tactics of the Sahrawis, were the armaments provided by the Algerian government, the refugees camps which they used as bases, the weakness of the Mauritanian army and the failures of the Moroccan leadership. Following the withdrawal of Mauritania from the conflict and the removal of the majority of the incompetent leaders in the Moroccan army, the guerrillas lost most of their advantage. General Dlimi contributed to this when in May 1980, recognizing the ineffectiveness of the Moroccan strategy so far, he developed the strategy of walls or “Berms” on the Algerian and Mauritanian border, in the framework of which the strategically important Boucra–El-Aaiun–Smara area (the “useful triangle”) was literally barred by the Moroccans.

The aim of this newly established fortification system was not to sever the supply lines of the insurgents, but to keep them away from the Saharan territories valuable to the Moroccans, and to legitimize and finalize the occupation of the territory. Morocco first constructed barbed wire barriers and trench systems, then started to build new walls made of sand and stones.¹⁰⁰ The Sahrawis launched attacks against the wall at the beginning of their construction, destroying lots of machinery, but they could not hinder the construction work completely.¹⁰¹ The construction of the first wall was started in 1981 and finished in 1982. It stretched from the city of Smara to the southern part of Boujdour, where it reached the ocean.¹⁰² Since then more walls have been built, thus the system of walls today reaches a length of 2,700 kilometers, incorporating 300 fortified positions and observation posts.¹⁰³ In a 5-kilometre-wide stretch in front of the wall, the Moroccans deployed a minefield, which is the largest continuous minefield in the world and still claims lives today.

Between 100,000 and 170,000 soldiers serve in this system of fortifications.¹⁰⁴ The Moroccans used this wall system, the biggest in the world, to enclose about 80 percent of Western Sahara, which they considered to be the “useful” part, while the undefendable wasteland was left to the Polisario. The Mo-

⁹⁸ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 16–17.; G. Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 22.

⁹⁹ Two pieces of F-1, an F-5, a C-130 and a troop carrier. See: Jacob Mundy, “The Morocco-Polisario War for Western Sahara,” in *Conflict and Insurgency in the Contemporary Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin (London: Routledge, 2009), 220.

¹⁰⁰ Macqueen, *United Nations Peacekeeping in Africa Since 1960*, 239.

¹⁰¹ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 20.

¹⁰² Dean, *The Air Force Role in Low-intensity Conflict*, 46.

¹⁰³ Cordesman, *A Tragedy of Arms*, 62.

¹⁰⁴ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 49.

roccans withdrew all their forces from that area.¹⁰⁵ The defense system was completed in 1987 and successfully prevented the Polisario from operating from bases in the occupied territories and significantly limited the military activities of the guerrillas, even though it could not stop them completely. After all, the Sahrawis were capable, in many cases, of launching coordinated attacks against parts of the Berm by removing the mines deployed in front of the wall by night, cutting the barbed wire and assaulting isolated guard posts. However, they had to withdraw swiftly after these successfully executed attacks, as the rapid deployment forces would be already *en route* to their position.¹⁰⁶ The insurgents often executed attacks by throwing the removed Moroccan mines over the walls among the soldiers stationed there.¹⁰⁷ During the construction of the Berm, the Polisario continuously attacked the Moroccans: for instance, the settlement of Lemseid was under fire by Soviet-made rocket launchers on the summer of 1983. Then five motorized infantry battalions and two armored battalions executed an attack against Smara in September.¹⁰⁸ A month later, the guerrillas shot down a Moroccan F-1 Mirage fighter aircraft with an SA-8 (GECKO) missile. In 1984, they launched the “Great Maghreb offensive” in the southern territories against Dakhla and Argoub, then the city of Zag was attacked again, and another Mirage fighter was shot down in early 1985. In 1987, 16 assaults were launched against the Moroccan units, in which they suffered severe casualties. The units of the Polisario launched a large-scale attack against the Moroccan units stationed in the area of Oum Dreyga in September 1988.¹⁰⁹ Other clashes were also reported near the settlements of Mahbas, Awsard, Guelta Zemmour, Farsiyah, Hausa and Jdyriya.

While it seemed that the Polisario had the initiative, in reality the Moroccans had forced the organization into the very tactics—offensive operations with larger forces—that the Polisario had knowingly avoided so far. After all, in these really costly attacks, the Sahrawis suffered considerable casualties in both manpower and technical equipment against the new defensive tactics of the Moroccans. The more effective Moroccan units, that had much improved leadership and reacted faster than before, managed to force the Sahrawis out of Western Saharan territory, thus the Sahrawis were unable to execute further military op-

¹⁰⁵ Hodges, “*The Western Sahara File*,” 105.

¹⁰⁶ One of the attacks executed by the Sahrawis at the end of February 1987 against two Moroccan outposts near El Farsi was so successful that the Moroccan king, Hassan II himself had to call to account the general responsible for the district. The report about the incident criticized Moroccan military intelligence and also pointed out that the units stationed on the walls were short of anti-armor weapons; the equipment of the rapid deployment forces also left much to be desired. These experiences were later used by the Moroccans to improve the efficiency of their units. See: Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Quote from the author’s interview in 2004 with Salek ben Mohamed, who served in Camp Mehaires.

¹⁰⁸ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 50-51.

¹⁰⁹ Zoubir, “The Western Sahara Conflict,” 228-229.

erations. From now on, while the Sahrawi insurgency could not be completely eliminated, the Moroccans controlled the conflict, which has slowly died down. The disadvantage of the Sahrawis was further increased by a Moroccan leadership that strived to win over the loyalty of the Sahrawi populace in the occupied territory by providing them with certain possibilities and benefits, with tangible results.¹¹⁰

The Way to Agreement, the End of the War

While the Sahrawis achieved some diplomatic success, they were put more and more at a disadvantage as, due to the considerable fall in global oil prices, the Algerian government significantly reduced their financial and military support during 1986. This contributed to the fact that the Sahrawis were only able to execute small-scale attacks against the Moroccan units. By then, the Sahrawis also knew that they would not be able to win by military means. The Moroccans also recognized the hopelessness of the continuation of the conflict since, while they “secluded” from Western Sahara the natives who fought them, they could only have won eventually by attacking the Polisario in Algeria and risking an unwinnable war with Algeria. Consequently, while they were still fighting each other, a slow rapprochement between the two sides began.

On 22 November 1988, the United Nations called on the two sides to begin talks as soon as possible. Subsequently, the Moroccan ruler agreed to meet the leaders of the Polisario in Marrakesh between 4 and 5 January 1989. The meeting was not successful and the talks did not continue due to differences between the opposing parties. The Polisario then threatened the representatives of the United Nations with continuation of the war with Morocco and, calling off the ceasefire that was announced less than a month before, launched multiple attacks against the Berm, where the defending Moroccan soldiers suffered heavy casualties.¹¹¹

In the summer of 1991, the relationship between Morocco and the Polisario deteriorated further, as the Sahrawis were not willing to withdraw their forces to Tindouf and, moreover, they established new bases in areas east of the Moroccan fortifications. The units of the Moroccan military launched “Operation Rattle” against the insurgents¹¹² in the areas of Bir Lahlou and Tifariti between 4 and 29 August, provoking them into a counterattack, thus the almost two-year-long ceasefire was interrupted again by open conflict.¹¹³ While Morocco achieved major successes, it did not pursue the retreating Sahrawis into the Al-

¹¹⁰ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 10.

¹¹¹ Zunes and Mundy, *Western Sahara: War, Nationalism and Conflict Irresolution*, 183.

¹¹² Also known as the “Tifariti Offensive.”

¹¹³ “1991 Tifariti offensive,” accessed June 4, 2017, <https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=1991%20Tifariti%20offensive>.

gerian refugee camps and thus could not eliminate all of their military strength, being afraid of a conflict with Algeria.¹¹⁴

To avoid a further escalation of the situation, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Pérez de Cuéllar, initiated talks with Morocco, and announced a ceasefire effective from 6 September, without informing the Polisario. Since the Moroccans had achieved their goal, they retreated behind the Berm and the Polisario did not have the strength to execute a counterattack. At this time, the UN Secretary-General approved the immediate deployment of 100 peacekeepers, their numbers were afterwards increased to 228. Along with the military contingent, civilian officials also arrived from other UN missions. Thus, the Secretary-General, without the consent of either of the opposing forces, had separated the ceasefire from other parts of the UN plan and, at the same time, the roadmap approved by the Security Council became meaningless. In this situation, the Polisario had no other choice but to accept the truce, otherwise it would have been shown to be the one that had undermined the fragile peace. The peacekeepers who arrived in the area on 5 September set up their headquarters in Laayoune and, on 15 September, they established three regional headquarters with ten camps in the Northern, Central and Southern sectors. At the same time, a Liaison Office was also established in Tindouf.

The presence of UN troops effectively contributed to the lessening of the conflict, even though the opposing forces had continuously broken the rules of the ceasefire.¹¹⁵ For instance, the Polisario complained that Moroccan fighter aircraft continuously violated the Polisario-controlled airspace, while Morocco accused the Sahrawis of entering the occupied territories at weakly controlled points of the Berm. In spite of these infringements, this was the end of this period of the conflict, and the opposing sides now fought only at the negotiating table. The situation now seems to be completely frozen. The presence of UN troops will be required in the future in order to keep the conflict at this level because a mutually acceptable, permanent solution does not seem to be imminent.

Conclusion

This article has explained how a local conflict began and how it expanded into a regional level exceptionally quickly and in which the opposing forces used tactics specific to COIN operations. In the first part of the conflict, the guerrilla tactics of the Sahrawi insurgents clearly succeeded against Mauritania. However, these tactics were only partly effective against the politically, economically and militarily stronger Morocco. The Moroccan leadership learned from its own, and the Mauritanian, failures and managed to gain military superiority by the combina-

¹¹⁴ Jensen, *War and Insurgency in the Western Sahara*, 17.

¹¹⁵ "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara," UN Document S/23299, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://repository.un.org/handle/11176/56600>.

tion of different combat techniques and then barring the militants of the Frente Polisario from the Moroccan-occupied territories by the strategy of constructing walls. Besides military steps, the Moroccans also gained both diplomatic and economic advantage. Thus, they could first degrade the conflict to low intensity, then totally marginalize it after the ceasefire. In fact, they have managed to achieve victory over the guerrillas, whose chance for another successful war is minimal.

About the Author

János Besenyő is a Colonel of the Hungarian Defense Forces (HDF), and commissioned head of the Department of Doctrine Concept Development of the HDF's Training and Doctrine Centre. The author holds a PhD in Military Science. He is an expert on peacekeeping operations in Africa and focuses on the Western Saharan conflict.



Nasirov, Iskandarov, and Sadiyev,

Connections QJ 16, no. 3 (2017): 47-56

<https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.16.3.03>

Research Article

The South Caucasus: A Playground Between NATO and Russia?

Elman Nasirov,^a Khayal Iskandarov^b and Sadi Sadiyev^b

a Institute of Political Studies of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Azerbaijan

b War College of Armed Forces, Republic of Azerbaijan

Abstract: In this article, the challenges and prospects of cooperation between the South Caucasus countries and NATO have been analyzed. The geo-economic, geopolitical and geostrategic importance of the region for both NATO and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (Russia particularly) and reciprocal expectations of further cooperation with the Alliance have been considered. The regional state of affairs in the South Caucasus has been analyzed and the possible impacts of Russian influence on forging closer relations with NATO have been examined. The security environment after the Russo-Georgian war and its repercussions for the South Caucasus-NATO cooperation have been illustrated. NATO's vested interest in the region to contribute to a European security system for the foreseeable future was brought to the fore. The reasons for the Alliance's reluctance to actively engage in the region are examined. The recommendations are intended to counterbalance the Russian military presence in the region, without antagonizing the incumbent government in Moscow, and to eradicate the so-called "frozen conflicts" in order to maintain security and prosperity for the South Caucasus region as a whole.

Keywords: NATO, security, contribution, cooperation, frozen conflict, membership, counterbalance.

Introduction

In terms of its geopolitical and strategic importance, the South Caucasus has always been at the forefront of the foreign policy of global powers. While the region was once considered to be on the periphery of the international agenda, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent formation of newly independent states, it became much more important both to its neighbors and to influential non-regional actors.¹ Today the South Caucasus is a diverse geopolitical region, which occupies a strategic position in the transportation of Caspian oil and gas. However, the region is challenged with unresolved conflicts and socio-political and economic problems brought about by the collapse of the Soviet Union.² The protracted conflicts in the region have long been a source of tension for both Georgia and Azerbaijan. Though NATO does not take a direct part in the resolution of conflicts on the territory of a country outside the Alliance, the crises in the South Caucasus are largely influenced by the relationship between NATO and Russia.

The South Caucasus – A Venue for Contradicting Interests

After Bulgaria and Romania joined NATO in 2004 and then the European Union in 2007, the South Caucasus began to be considered a new frontier for NATO and the whole structure of European security.³ Apart from this, for NATO and its members, the role of the South Caucasus is extremely important in terms of Eurasian security as well. Many European political scientists see the South Caucasus as a center of economic interest and an important transportation corridor.⁴ Other factors have also fueled interest in the region. Foremost among these are its natural resources (the Caspian basin) and the proximity of three major and ambitious Eurasian states: Russia, Turkey and Iran. The region plays a crucial role as a transport and energy corridor. Today Europe relies heavily on Russian oil and natural gas. However, the EU is aiming to prevent Russia from wielding energy as a coercive tool and the Caspian basin has the utmost importance in this policy.⁵ Thus, the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey corridor is a critical strategic link between Europe and Central Asia for challenging Russia's current stranglehold

¹ Sergey Markedonov, "NATO Looks to the Caucasus," *The National Interest*, May 17, 2012, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/nato-looks-the-caucasus-6933>.

² Joshua Bartlett and Nino Samvelidze, "Turkey and the South Caucasus: Prospects and Challenges for Cooperation," <http://oval.az/turkey-and-the-south-caucasus-prospects-and-challenges-for-cooperation/>.

³ Markedonov, "NATO Looks to the Caucasus."

⁴ Tamaz Papuashvili, "Georgia–NATO: Cooperation Prospects," <http://gcssi.org/wp2/?p=5139>.

⁵ Eric S. Thompson, "Turkish Influence in the South Caucasus and Levant: The Consequences for NATO and the EU," (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, September 2013), 37. http://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/37733/13Sep_Thompson_Eric.pdf.

on energy resources. This corridor includes the production and transportation of hydrocarbons.

The paths of the three South Caucasus republics have been different in terms of their geo-political orientations, with Armenia being a CSTO member, Azerbaijan pursuing an independent policy regarding global powers, and Georgia, apparently, demonstrating a pro-NATO position. The lack of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia's increased assertiveness in the region and the absence of a NATO presence are central elements in understanding the current situation in the region. What we can gather from this situation is that the South Caucasus is a complex playground between Russia and NATO.

Though NATO has a limited role, Russia is very much engaged in the region, as recent and on-going conflicts illustrate, and has been exercising substantial leverage and influence for a considerable time. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has been intent on dominating the post-soviet countries and declared this strategy as a priority for its foreign policy. Russia's presence in the region is extensive, including its military participation in Armenia and Georgia's breakaway entities. Nevertheless, the way common interests might be translated into joint opportunities depends not only on Russia's policy towards the South Caucasus, but also on how Russia-NATO relations evolve. That is why the national security interests and foreign policy goals of these states must be part of the bargaining process, despite their position regarding Russia and NATO.⁶

The crucial point in formulating NATO's future engagement in the region is that membership of NATO is not an issue. NATO's broad variety of programs serve to transform the regional security picture overall – with or without membership. The Partnership for Peace (PfP) program is an invaluable tool in building political and military bridges between NATO members and partner nations.⁷ It increases security in the region and contributes to its political, social and economic development. Through its activities, PfP has proved to be a very successful mechanism in promoting and developing defense cooperation and military interoperability between NATO and the South Caucasus countries. But the extent and depth of cooperation with Azerbaijan and Georgia is of a different order than that with Armenia. From 2003, when Mikheil Saakashvilli came to power, Georgia consistently declared that it was pursuing NATO membership until August 2008, when the Russian army invaded its territory. As a corollary to that invasion Georgia has become more prudent in its relations with Russia. A long period of time has elapsed since that invasion, and Georgia is no longer as close to NATO

⁶ Maria Raquel Freire, "Security in the South Caucasus: the EU, NATO and Russia," NOREF Policy Brief (Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, February 2013), accessed June 4, 2017, <https://noref.no/Publications/Themes/Emerging-powers/Security-in-the-South-Caucasus-the-EU-NATO-and-Russia>.

⁷ Nika Chitadze, "NATO: One of the Main Guarantees of Peace and Security in South Caucasus," in *Perceptions of NATO and the New Strategic Concept*, ed. Luis Nuno Rodrigues and Volodymyr Dubovyk (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2011), 61-73.

membership as it was before the August war though it still has a strong presence in NATO operations and solid credentials in meeting the Alliance's military and political standards. In fact, Russia has demonstrated its continued presence in the region through its military actions in Georgia. This signal was immediately and accurately read by a careful Azerbaijan, which, thereafter, strengthened the multi-vector nature of its foreign policy amidst the region's geopolitical rivalries and joined the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 2011.⁸ By joining NAM Azerbaijan has declared that it is not seeking membership of either NATO or CSTO at the moment. However, the Republic of Azerbaijan with its growing international prestige attaches great importance to the development of relations with NATO. Today, international authorities highly appreciate the steps taken by Azerbaijan in ensuring regional and global security and safeguarding its interests on reciprocal bases.⁹ Though it has no direct intention to join NATO, Azerbaijan is deemed NATO's most reliable partner in the region. This was recognized by the Assistant Secretary General of NATO Sorin Ducaru speaking at the conference marking the 20th anniversary of program "Partnership for Peace" on April 11, 2014 when he said, "Azerbaijan is one of the most important, active and long-term partners of NATO. We are actively developing a political dialogue with Baku."¹⁰ As NATO's reliable partner, Azerbaijan's cooperation with the Alliance extends to many areas including the fight against terrorism, regional security, contribution to international security and, in particular, Azerbaijan's support for NATO operations. In this regard, Azerbaijan aspires to achieve NATO military standards and get closer to its military institutions. NATO's political priorities and security interests chime with Azerbaijan's national interests and further improvements in multilateral relations is the main guarantor of peace and security in the region.

The arguments in favor of continuing South Caucasus-NATO relations can be grouped as follows:

- It increases confidence in the security of the South Caucasus region
- It ensures the security of oil and gas production and transportation
- The most important problems in the region—the so called "frozen conflicts"—might be solved by peaceful means
- Armed Forces become interoperable with NATO Forces.

If the South Caucasus-NATO cooperation acts as a guarantor of the region's security, then the nature of all possible threats should be analyzed. So, what

⁸ Cavid Veliyev, "Can Trump Shake Up the South Caucasus?" *The National Interest*, December 18, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/can-trump-shake-the-south-caucasus-18774>.

⁹ Əhmədov T. "Azərbaycan-NATO əlaqələri genişlənilir," *Respublika* qəzeti, Bakı, fevral 26, 2012, № 046, s.1.

¹⁰ Khayal Iskandarov, "The Road of Integration of Azerbaijan into NATO (1994-2014)," *The Caucasus and the World* 19 (2015): 89.

threats are there in the region? In the current socio-political climate, the obvious threats are most probably from those countries with which NATO's economic and political interests contradict. Thus, in order to understand the nature of these threats, it is necessary to determine the areas of conflicting interests. The first and foremost of these is the Caspian oil and gas fields. In this domain NATO's interests clash seriously with Russian interests and the latter has been using the "frozen conflicts" for decades in order to keep the region and its oil and gas infrastructure of the country under threat. In fact, these conflicts, interspersed with numerous asymmetrical threats in the region, present a challenging environment on NATO's eastern front. Russia is playing a dual game in the South Caucasus at the same time both stabilizing and destabilizing the region. On the one hand, there is Russia the conflict-mediator, the one that brokers ceasefires and seeks to resolve the South Caucasian conflicts via its mandate as co-chair of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. On the other hand, there is Russia the provoker. Having already provoked its own war with Georgia in 2008, Russia recognized two of the Georgia's breakaway regions as independent states and is still militarily present in their territories.¹¹ Russia also supports Armenia, which has occupied 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory, both economically and militarily.

Today Russia accuses NATO of destabilizing the Caucasus region with joint exercises in Georgia, but itself has stationed permanent military bases in Armenia, as well as in the separatist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Emboldened by Russian support, Armenia still keeps Nagorno-Karabakh under its occupation. However, the West does not have an effective political or military tool to balance Russia's military presence in Armenia. The unbalanced and overwhelming Russian military presence in Armenia creates a serious and direct threat to Western oil and gas infrastructures and pipelines.¹² Yet, Russia has been using its role as a mediator for advancing its own interests rather than the actual conflict resolution. As long as the three South Caucasus states are divided, Russia can rule them. It is not a secret that South Caucasus conflicts serve Russia as political leverage over Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. In a nutshell, Russia has been applying a divide and rule policy through protracted conflicts. Indeed, the current status quo is clearly beneficial to Russia's interests, preserving an economic and military sphere of influence while preventing any of the South Caucasian states from looking towards NATO.

¹¹ Tatia Dolidze, "Russian and Western engagement in the South Caucasus conflicts: Building sustainable stability in the region?" December 2, 2015.

¹² Mahir Khalifazadeh, "The South Caucasus: Obama's Russia 'Reset' and Putin's Doctrine," *CESRAN International*, July 27, 2014, <http://cesran.org/the-south-caucasus-obamas-russia-reset-and-putins-doctrine.html>.

NATO's Raison d'être of Further Engagement in the Region

NATO attaches considerable importance to the Caucasus region and so it is concerned by the escalation of tensions in the area. All three countries are in Europe's Eastern Partnership and the security in its neighborhood is one of NATO's core interests. However, due to a number of reasons there has been less effort from NATO to actively contribute to security in the South Caucasus. Indeed, NATO lacks coherence in its policy towards South Caucasus. First and foremost, the Alliance is careful not to anger Russia. The Russian-Georgian war and the Ukraine crisis have made the West more reluctant to intervene and so expansion into the South Caucasus is not expected to be on NATO's agenda in the foreseeable future. However, we can assume that NATO can counterbalance Russia and facilitate the overall integration of the region into NATO institutions through its partnership programs. While talking about the prospects of cooperation between the South Caucasus countries and NATO, various regional factors have to be kept in mind. At the 2008 Bucharest summit, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that he regarded the existence of a powerful military alliance on its near borders as a direct threat to Russia's national security and national interests.¹³ In addition, he made the following remarks on Georgia and Ukraine:

It [the Georgian conflict] is an old, many-years, lasting for more than a hundred years ethnic conflict between Georgians, ... Abkhazians, ... Ossetians. ... To solve these problems they need not to enter NATO, they should have patience, establish dialog with small ethnic groups. And we have been trying to help them. ... But in Ukraine, one third are ethnic Russians. Out of forty-five million people, in line with the official census, seventeen million are Russians. There are regions, where only the Russian population lives, for instance, in the Crimea 90 % are Russians. ... Well, seventeen million Russians currently live in Ukraine. Who may state that we do not have any interests there?¹⁴

Consequently, though President Bush strongly supported Ukraine and Georgia becoming NATO MAP (Membership Action Plan) members, the United Kingdom, France and Germany opposed the idea. The British judgment is that, although they fully supported both Ukraine and Georgia, the question of when they joined should remain in the balance. Germany and France said they believed that since neither Ukraine nor Georgia was stable enough to enter the program then,

¹³ Nəzakət Məmmədova, "NATO: Şimali Atlantikadan Şərqi Avropaya doğru," *Xalq qəzeti* 81, aprel 18, 2008, s.5.

¹⁴ "Text of Putin's speech at NATO Summit," *UNIAN* (Bucharest, April 2, 2008), <http://www.unian.info/world/111033-text-of-putins-speech-at-nato-summit-bucharest-april-2-2008.html>.

a membership plan would be an unnecessary offense to Russia.¹⁵ Germany is still skeptical, fearing that Georgian accession will drag the Atlantic Alliance into a confrontation with Russia. Thus, even if it is temporary, Russia has managed, for the foreseeable future, to prevent any NATO expansion towards the 2008 post-soviet borders because Russian military intervention remains a credible threat to all post-soviet countries in its proximity.

NATO may be the *sine qua non* for security in the South Caucasus. But, it does not mean that the South Caucasus countries have to be full members. The most promising and perhaps single means of redressing the “security deficit” in the South Caucasus is through the gradual extension of NATO programs into the region. Regional states, including Armenia, are now gradually realizing that their relations with NATO are in fact concerned with how to select, develop, and incorporate NATO programs that will, increasingly over time, transform the overall regional security picture.¹⁶

Whilst new global risks emerge, the security domain enlarges towards unusual security issues, which require a fast adaptation of traditional institutions, enlarging their responsibilities, tasks and sometimes also the tools at their disposal. Energy security is the main concern among those issues. Nowadays energy has been more politicized, becoming an effective weapon for coercion and creating irreconcilable differences between energy owners and consumers. Since NATO admits that energy security is quickly becoming a growing concern for European security and will be one of the most important future challenges for Allies, the significance of the South Caucasus has increased considerably. As a result of the political friction in the energy relationship between the EU and Russia in spring 2006, and later between Russia and Ukraine in January 2009, member states have called for NATO involvement in energy security.¹⁷ But, the lack of a consensus among members has not allowed NATO to have a wider involvement in energy security. Other institutions, such as the EU, may have a key role to play and are more suited to resolving the major problems of investment and efficiency. But, NATO could still make a positive contribution to the energy security of its members and indeed more globally. Moreover, a lack of clarity about NATO’s role and the reasons behind it, particularly in terms of its geographical role, could complicate NATO’s relations with partner countries and other third parties (Russia in this case). The importance of ensuring energy security once again was underscored and endorsed by Allies in November 2010. The 13th paragraph of NATO Strategic Concept recognized the increased dependence of

¹⁵ Steven Erlanger and Steven Lee Myers, “NATO Allies Oppose Bush on Georgia and Ukraine,” *New York Times*, April 3, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/03/world/europe/03nato.html>.

¹⁶ Chitadze, “NATO: One of the Main Guarantees.”

¹⁷ Chitadze, “NATO: One of the Main Guarantees.”

states on “vital communication, transport and transit routes on which energy security, international trade and prosperity depends.”¹⁸

The main obstacles to a pivotal role for NATO in energy security within the Caspian region are¹⁹:

- A lack of means and tools at NATO’s disposal, which impedes attempts to implement the intentions expressed in NATO’s Strategic Concept
- Russia’s reluctance to engage in a joint effort with NATO. Any action that the Alliance would implement, especially involving the military, could give rise to a Russian reaction to counterbalance the Euro-Atlantic presence in such a vital region of its national interest
- Discord within NATO for a greater NATO commitment to energy security
- Weak cooperation on energy security with Caspian partners.

However, the ever-increasing need for the diversification of energy sources and cooperation in energy transit issues has, perhaps, made the West attach a great deal of importance to the South Caucasus region (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey corridor) as a reliable transit route avoiding Russian and Iranian territories. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum natural gas pipeline represent a step forward in this cooperation, especially combined with the upcoming TANAP and TAP projects.²⁰ The further development of the Caspian region will have a considerable impact on the strategic balance in the world providing the key to access Central Asian resources. South Caucasus’ role in ensuring the energy security of Europe is also welcomed by the U.S. The White House strongly supports the Azerbaijan-initiated Southern Gas Corridor project, which will carry the “Shah Deniz II” gas to European consumers. John Kerry said that “this project was a very important step with respect to Europe’s long-term strategic interests and frankly, to try to diversify the sourcing of energy, which is important.”²¹ As a result of this policy the existing tools and efforts for new initiatives towards the diversification of energy supply will improve Europe’s energy security and the security of the Alliance as a whole. NATO’s role here is to add value to EU energy security policy and to pave the way towards energy security.

¹⁸ Opening speech by H.E. Mr. Daniel Cristian Ciobanu, Ambassador of Romania to Azerbaijan, International workshop ensuring energy security in the Caspian basin and NATO’s role in protecting critical energy infrastructure, Baku, November 22, 2012.

¹⁹ Aurora Ganz, “Energy Security Issues: Is NATO Becoming a (Pivotal) Actor?” *Sciences-Po*, Centre de Recherches Internationales, September 2014, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/fr/content/dossiersduceri/energy-security-issues-nato-becoming-pivotal-actor>.

²⁰ Bartlett and Samvelidze, “Turkey and the South Caucasus.”

²¹ Aynur Karimova, “Kerry appraises Azerbaijan’s role in international security system,” *AZERNEWS*, March 31, 2016, accessed January 18, 2018, <http://www.azernews.az/nation/94480.html>.

Considering the strategic nature of the region, NATO should keep a close eye on developments in the South Caucasus, both politically and economically. In addition, Russia has shown that it uses the frozen conflicts and energy as tools in order to push NATO away from its borders and to weaken its cohesion. If we consider all non-NATO countries on the European periphery of Russia we would see that only Finland, Sweden and Belarus do not have any conflicts in their territories. The first two are neutral countries and the latter is a CSTO member. What we can deduce from this is that NATO membership for aspiring countries has become illusory, even wishful thinking for the foreseeable future. However, it does not mean that NATO should stay on the sidelines on the issue of the conflicts, because their continued existence is an important concern for overall European security.²²

Conclusion

Russia will pull out all the stops in order to exert its influence in its “near abroad” and reassert itself as a dominant power as it has in the post-soviet space. The South Caucasus, with its proximity to Russia, occupies the first place in this “near abroad.” The only way for South Caucasus countries (Georgia and Azerbaijan) to eradicate their problems regarding frozen conflicts is to strike the right balance between NATO and Russia, because the latter does not seem to want to give up its political ambitions in the region. But cooperation with NATO has the utmost importance for all three countries. That is why, since Armenia is a CSTO country, Georgia and Azerbaijan should follow the examples of Sweden and Finland to enhance further cooperation with NATO. The Alliance could increase Azerbaijani-Georgian military cooperation to encourage peace and stability in the South Caucasus through active partnership relations without actual membership of NATO. This is because every move that any South Caucasus country makes towards NATO membership might prompt a negative reaction from Russia. Subsequently, as it did during the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, NATO will be reluctant to respond to any Russian action. Thus, close practical, rather than political, cooperation with NATO will improve both Azerbaijan’s and Georgia’s defense capabilities in a similar way to Sweden and Finland. This kind of strategy could reduce any on-going tension between Russia and the West and may partially balance Russia’s military presence in Armenia and in Georgia’s breakaway regions.

Europe is vulnerable to energy coercion and the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey tandem offers it the best option to withstand this coercion. Maintaining security in the region is in the interest of energy-importing, transit and energy-exporting countries, which need to ensure the security of their industry and pipeline infrastructure. That is why the South Caucasus region has to be considered as a buffer zone between NATO and Russia until the “frozen conflicts” are settled and all

²² Xavier Follebouck, “The South Caucasus’s Still Frozen Conflicts,” *Atlantic Voices* 6, no. 7 (July 2016), <http://atahq.org/2016/07/atlantic-voices-south-caucasus/>.

energy projects are implemented. But choosing only one side can only exacerbate the existing crises for Georgia and Azerbaijan in their territories.

About the Authors

Prof. **Elman Nasirov** is Doctor in political sciences and Director of the Institute of Political Studies of the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Azerbaijan. He serves also as member of parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Khayal Iskandarov is Chief of the editorial section of the War College of the Armed Forces, Republic of Azerbaijan. He holds a Master degree in military sciences and is currently pursuing a PhD degree in military sciences and national security. *E-mail*: xayal1333@gmail.com.

Sadi Sadiyev, PhD in philology, is Associate professor in the War College of the Armed Forces, Republic of Azerbaijan. *E-mail*: sanansadiyev@yahoo.co.uk.



Research Article

Arms Control Arrangements under the Aegis of the OSCE: Is There a Better Way to Handle Compliance?

Pál Dunay

George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies,
<http://www.marshallcenter.org>

Abstract: The CSCE-OSCE has strong legacy in conventional arms control both as far as limitations and reductions and constraints on military activities. Although the last two decades since 1999 did not add much to the arms control *acquis* and there was a “retreat” in arms control with the suspension of the CFE Treaty. It is Germany that keeps European conventional arms control on the agenda as part of security dialogue since the Harmel Report of 1967 and takes symbolic initiatives as a demonstration. Although compliance is not full and some activities demonstrate the intention to cheat, their level is more important as part of the communication of the main parties rather than of direct strategic significance.

Keywords: Arms Control, CFE, compliance, CSBMs, European Security, military exercises, Open Skies Treaty, verification.

Preliminary Assumptions

- Arms control, including conventional arms control, does not constitute an end in itself and can be seen as the outward military/technical manifestation of the inward international political climate.¹
- If conventional arms control works best in an environment, which is neither characterized by animosity nor by full mutual trust, the current European situation is favorable to it. In the case of the former, arms control is

¹ Desmond Bowen, “Restoring Peace, Security, and Stability in Europe – What Role for Arms Control?” (London: October 2014, manuscript).

impossible; in the case of the latter, it is not necessary. However, as the European conventional arms control arrangements agreed between 1990 and 1994 have demonstrated, the relationships must be closer to mutual trust than to limited animosity if success is to be achieved. This requires a further qualification of the previous assumption.

- Success in conventional arms control is frequently identified with the conclusion of agreements. However, this is an arbitrarily narrow definition of the concept. Making established conventional arms control implementation fora work, transparency, compliance and, if necessary, enforcement of obligations form part and parcel of arms control. It is more of a process than a series of distinct points.
- Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) have been separated from and contrasted with each other by the participating states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). This is contrary to common sense and the observation of analysts who prefer to differentiate between structural and operational arms control.²
- Since the fundamental rearrangement of the geopolitical landscape and power relations in Europe, associated with the end of the Cold War and the subsequent winding up of the Warsaw Treaty and the enlargement of NATO, no adaptation has taken place in European (Euro-Atlantic) arms control that is in force.

Characteristic Features of the Current Situation

The security perception of European states and their citizens, particularly the overwhelming majority that confined its interests regionally, has improved during the quarter of a century since the end of the Cold War and the middle of the current decade. Not even the wars in the former Yugoslavia, the protracted conflicts in the former Soviet Union, the secession of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the annexation of Crimea could reverse this perception. However, these protracted conflicts have undermined the achievement of new accords, be they documents approved by OSCE Ministerial Councils, the Astana Summit, or a more extensive modernization of the CSBM package.

Whereas for some participating states a significant deterioration of the security situation started in 2008, for many others the sea change occurred in 2014. Again, for some other participating states the deterioration of relations began with the so-called Kosovo war of 1999 and was followed by the Iraq war of 2003 (both without approval by the UN Security Council). However, it would be difficult to argue for them to be seen as turning points because relations re-

² Richard E. Darilek, "The Future of Conventional Arms Control in Europe, a Tale of Two Cities," in *SIPRI Yearbook 1987: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 339-354.

turned to cooperation later. It is certain that relations between Russia and the West have, with significant variations, reached a new low since 2014. This means that the external conditions for agreeing upon measures based on cooperation are not favorable. At least one of the current conflicts, in Ukraine, carries the danger of qualifying as 'protracted' and thus further increases the prospect of more such conflicts. Political establishments in different capitals have interpreted this conflict in different ways. Hence, it may still be possible to have working relations irrespective of some violations at the top level in the hierarchy of international law.

Some participating states are of the view that a rule based international order cannot exist when there are *prima facie* violations of its foundations such as the territorial integrity or the political independence of states. Whereas a change of territorial integrity can be easily attributed to external players, others emphasize the undermining of the political independence of countries by externally induced or actively supported measures, like the so-called color revolutions. Those universal, peremptory norms cannot be disregarded with reference to claims be they founded on history, ethnic composition or the right to self-determination. This is independent of whether any OSCE document reaffirms the norm or not. If this approach is interpreted strictly, no business can be made between states that violate either of those norms. As it is highly unlikely that some change could be reversed this would lastingly freeze relations. Even if this view starts out from the integrity of the international legal order and thus has internal logic, it is not realistic to assume that this would be, generally, in the long-term interest of the participating states. Other participating states tacitly recognize the potentially detrimental consequences of such an approach and emphasize the importance of maintaining relations, including security matters, among the OSCE. This view can be further differentiated according to the emphasis made in overcoming the stalemate and covering the gaps. They can be grouped as follows:

- *Top down approach.* Cooperation is impossible as long as a violation of basic international legal principles continues;
- *Bottom up approach.* Cooperation in select areas must be possible irrespective of violations on other levels;
- *Opening a new chapter.* Create distance between the eventual non-compliance with the arms control arrangements and the gross violation of the European peace order, and the stalemate in discussing/negotiating/agreeing upon new measures and hence make the coexistence of the current situation and the opening of a new chapter possible.

The various positions go back to the assumption of how the current tension can be overcome – (re)creating a cooperative environment in which the perpetrator could react constructively. The “top down approach” has been identified

with particular emphasis upon deterrence. However, the term deterrence does not bring us close to an accurate assessment of the purposeful line to be taken. It is much more of a roll-back policy that requires the state that annexed and seized territory to give up and return to the *status quo ante*. Irrespective of how desirable this might be, it is hardly realistic to count on or expect such a development. This results in a certain kind of ‘doubletalk’³ as the participating states actually know there will be no such return. However, they use it as part of their strategic communication and will only be ready to sacrifice it for some compensation. This leads to a gradual increase in the number of protracted conflicts, lasting stalemates and a crisis of classical diplomacy where every constructive step is a concession.

The bottom up approach addresses ‘technical’ arms control matters irrespective of problems on levels closer to high politics. This could make technical discussions possible on areas such as compliance and could fill the agenda of fora established to address implementation.

The most constructive (or apparently constructive) approach is the one that separates the implementation of commitments from constructive arms control dialogue among the participating states irrespective of their current compliance record. Here, the smaller technical violations of living up to detailed commitments under arms control arrangements are not the problem; it is the larger violations that evaporate trust and confidence. This third option seems more preferable as arms control can be regarded as “a means to build trust where it has been lost” under the assumption that irrespective of how “deep the rifts, we must try to build bridges.”⁴ This was followed by that the incoming OSCE Troika took the commitment “to launching a structured dialogue on security and arms control” – apparently an achievement of the outgoing German chairmanship.⁵ The structural dialogue has started and certainly contributed to professional exchanges of experts in spite of the fundamental disagreements on major European security issues that were impossible to overcome.

Those who belong to the first group regard this as the indication of a policy of appeasement without offering the alternative of moving the situation out of the stalemate. Some other authorities are of the view that such an initiative undermines the efforts of NATO members to improve transparency and guarantee compliance.⁶

³ Gerard C. Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of the First Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980).

⁴ Frank-Walter Steinmeier, “Reviving Arms Control in Europe,” *Project Syndicate*, August 26, 2016, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/reviving-arms-control-in-europe-by-frank-walter-steinmeier-2016-08>.

⁵ OSCE Twenty-Third Meeting of the Ministerial Council 8 and 9 December 2016, *Hamburg Declaration of the Incoming OSCE Troika: A Strong OSCE for a Secure Europe*, MC.GAL/11/16, December 9, 2016, www.osce.org/chairmanship/307311.

⁶ Justyna Gotkowska, “The German Initiative for Arms Control: Time for Dialogue with Russia,” *Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich*, September 9, 2016, www.osw.waw.pl/print/24646.

It is clear that the difference between the various groups is gradual. In fact, no state wants to arrive at a situation that contributes to antagonistic opposition. It is more a question of which areas could be exempted in order to continue to foster cooperation. It might be confined to those areas in which the declared adversary has something indispensable to offer, like nuclear weapons, countering terrorism, or in certain local conflicts. The fact that European arms control does not fit into this category limits the freedom of cooperation among the participating states. However, not attributing more importance to conventional arms control partly fits with the agenda of some participating states. They seem to prefer some rebalancing between various dimensions of the OSCE, thereby attributing more importance to the politico-military dimension on the agenda of the OSCE and relegating arms control to one of its important topics. However, such a 'rebalancing' between different dimensions has already taken place due to increased attention being paid to some conflicts, predominantly on the territory of Ukraine. Indeed, no state going through large-scale modernization of its armed forces (that is not confined to the replacement of armaments and equipment by a new generation of weapons), but also entails the need to carrying out significantly more military exercises, would likely be monitored closely. Consequently, in this phase it is, understandably, not interested in more transparency.

The idea to develop so-called 'status neutral' arms control has been discussed for some time. It appeared, and gained some popularity, in the context of post-2008 Georgia.⁷ This was because the challenge to the territorial integrity of the South Caucasian state and the Russian recognition of the statehood of its two separatist entities required a highly innovative approach to avoid a full arms control blockade. However, despite the frantic efforts of diplomats and scholars, the concept did not get very far. Difficulties arise whenever contested states are obliged to provide information about their armaments and military activities. When they carry out on-site inspections or host outside observers, it is impossible to overcome the problem of which country has the sovereign right to order or give permission for these inspections. It is for this reason that status neutral arms control rapidly clashes with status related matters and can only work alongside political solutions for the status of contested territories. Consequently, as status neutral arms control did not achieve much in the recent past, it is unlikely that it will in the foreseeable future either.

In light of the changed security landscape, analysts started to take a fresh look and were critical of those many actors "in Berlin apply a Cold War ap-

⁷ Sergi Kapanadze, Ulrich Kühn, Wolfgang Richter, and Wolfgang Zellner, "Status-Neutral Security, Confidence-Building and Arms Control Measures in the Georgian Context," *Working Paper 28* (Hamburg: The Centre for OSCE Research (CORE), January 2017), https://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/Working_Papers/CORE_WP28_en_.pdf.

proach to arms control that no longer suits” the new security environment.⁸ Innovative approaches of analysts, opening avenues in arms control that have been attempted a number of times, like addressing technological innovations and quality of forces, pop up again. However, some major powers neither intend to discuss arms control formally based on the old agenda, nor want they to change it for an unexplored one.

The Compliance Record

OSCE-related arms control, be it structural or operational, has occasionally attempted to be enriched by elements other than the “Holy Trinity” of The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces (CFE), Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) and The Open Skies Treaty. However, in terms of visibility it has remained unsuccessful because the political leadership of the participating states has continued to identify European arms control with those three sets of documents. Consequently, the compliance record is based primarily on their implementation.

The sparse literature and official documents give testimony to the fact that the number and significance of violations do not give reason for large-scale strategic concerns. Although they indicate that some parties do not intend to comply fully with their commitments, concerns related to non-compliance can be interpreted as more worrisome in the light of broader international concerns that stem from the systematic violations of the basic principles of international law. They occur in areas that are associated with the use of force by OSCE participating states. A deteriorating atmosphere and the consequent loss of trust is the result. Where non-compliance with the letter of legally or politically binding agreements cannot be substantiated, states move to the violation of their spirit. When they cannot prove the former, states create a revolving door and they challenge their partners on the latter. As every major party plays this not at all innocent game, each mix fairly strong claims with rather weak ones (substantiated *stricto sensu* violation by the other party mixed with behavior that may not fit entirely with the spirit although cannot be challenged on the letter of the accord).

As far as the CFE Treaty and its adaptation agreement are concerned, the situation is clear. The operation of the original treaty, signed in November 1990 and brought into force in 1992, was suspended in 2007 by Russia and, after a long period of hesitation, members of the Atlantic Alliance also stopped sharing information. Delegates, according to their instruction, will not have to agree about the legality of the suspension. However, in concord with the letter of the treaty based on the Roman law dictum “*argumentum a maiori ad minus*” (Who has the right to the more, has the right to the less) the legality of this action can

⁸ Claudia Major and Christian Mölling, “How Germany Should Change Its Approach to Arms Control,” Carnegie Europe, accessed September 7, 2017, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/73031>.

hardly be denied. The adaptation agreement has not entered into force and thus the obligations of the parties have never exceeded those under a signed but not ratified treaty. (Confined to: “Not to violate the object and purpose of the treaty.”) The sustained position of the suspending party was demonstrated by its interpretative statement made at the Hamburg meeting of OSCE foreign ministers and extensive comments of the Russian foreign minister on the topic. There, Sergey Lavrov called the attention to the fundamental change of circumstances in the strategic landscape (non-ratification of the CFE adaptation agreement by NATO members for ten years, the enlargement of NATO and the extension of alliance infrastructure to the vicinity of the Russian Federation). Indirectly Russia has excluded to return to discussing conventional arms limitations.⁹ Regrettable though this may be politically, and detrimental strategically, there is no reason to involve the CFE with the compliance record as there is no legal commitment against which it could be examined. In light of this, the compliance record should be measured on the basis of the Vienna Document (VD) and the Open Skies Treaty.

It is noticeable though that non-compliance cases cannot be confined to the state party that suspended the CFE Treaty but also should include some states, that are engaged in sub-regional military rivalry in the South Caucasus. However, this attracts less attention as the CFE regime does not function.

Different participating States are, to some extent, transparent about compliance with conventional arms control, including the VD and the Open Skies Treaty. Furthermore, when going public, they understandably provide more information about other countries that are not their allies or close friends. Consequently, it is difficult to develop a comprehensive and reliable picture about compliance and eventual violations. However, cases of non-compliance can be divided into three groups:

1. Non-compliance during conflict and due to the change of the territorial status quo
2. Non-compliance associated with protracted conflicts
3. Insufficient transparency and other violations.

Compliance with the Vienna Document

Since the Stockholm breakthrough of 1986, Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBM) have developed significantly. However, there are still many measures that address the security concerns that dominated the Cold War agenda, like rapid mobilization, concentration of forces for surprise attack, practicing offensive actions at exercises, which may need to be applied in the

⁹ Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s statement and answers to media questions at a news conference following the 23rd OSCE Ministerial Council meeting, Hamburg, December 9, 2016, http://www.mid.ru/en/press_service/minister_speeches/-/asset_publisher/7OvQR5KJWVmR/content/id/2556212.

future or, in the case of large-scale ones, could immediately evolve into them. The end of the Cold War modernization of the CSBM packages addressed strategic ambiguity by introducing risk reduction, including the procedures in case of so-called unusual military activity. It also recognized the growing importance of mobility when it introduced visits to air bases. The 1999 package was the most important in that it recognized that the security needs of different parts of the OSCE area may vary and hence different measures may be relevant, agreed and applicable.

The most important weaknesses of the Vienna Document, in all its variations, are as follows:

- Crisis related weaknesses, such as the fair-weather character of the document that results in ineffectiveness (though not inapplicability) during conflicts
- Contextual weaknesses in terms of the inability to avoid the artificial linkages with other political divergences, like protracted conflicts
- Early warning/prevention weaknesses related to too high and/or obsolete thresholds.¹⁰

Even though the first and second points may be closely linked, the three points above provide a focused overview of the VD's main shortcomings and weaknesses. Some measures tend to regain their relevance and cause concerns under current conditions again. The level of force concentration, once addressed by CSBMs, has declined and no participating state, nowadays, carries out many exercises on a scale that would make mandatory long-term advance announcement necessary and require the invitation of observers. Moreover, participating states with the largest armed forces (the United States, the Russian Federation and Turkey) among the 57, have the possibility to conduct exercises on their own territory, which is outside of the area of application of the Vienna Document.

The exercise program of states in the area of application are also used for public diplomacy, propaganda and have been made part of blaming games. It is sufficient to mention the Russian-Belarus exercise, Zapad-2017 and the attempts to create various impressions around it. The western image focused on the strategic significance of the exercise, contextualizing it around the neighborhood of Ukraine and the size of the exercise in the vicinity of NATO member-states, adjacent to Belarus. Even experts tended to speak about the largest ever exercise since the end of the Cold War, a statement that would have been difficult to substantiate by facts. The Russian Federation, on its side, was not tempted to contribute to transparency and supplied data on the number of troops and vehicles involved in the exercise that seemed to have been deliber-

¹⁰ Iztok Prezelj and Daniel Harangozo, "Effectiveness of the Vienna Document CSBM Regime: Assessment of Experts' Perceptions," *OSCE Network* (Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences, Defence Research Centre, 2014).

ately reduced to less than 13'000 soldiers, the level that would have required the implementation of the mechanism for observation of exercises provided for in the Vienna CSBM Document. This meant that the politicization of the matter resulted in its contribution to political discourses and thus deprived it of its core military professional content.¹¹

When the status of a territory changes between two states without their mutual agreement, it often entails the employment of military force in one form or the other. Bearing in mind the nature of such an operation and the unconditional prohibition of the use of force under international law, no state would use military force openly. During the high intensity phase of such a conflict, the threshold of notifiable and observable activities may be violated. Later, various methods might be applied to reduce the availability of accurate information.

As far as rules of the Vienna Document are concerned, the following methods are applied in such situations:

- Resubordination of personnel, armaments and equipment so that their activities would not be subject to notification and observation. This method has a long-standing history in arms control and the violations that have occurred on a larger scale in the past.
- In this context, sometimes troops and forces have been mobilized that are subordinated to different commands so that the individual units that are activated for an exercise do not reach the threshold of notification and observation individually. Hence, the figures, if communicated at all, are shared as a goodwill gesture only. Goodwill gestures may alleviate concerns. However, they are easy to ignore or revoke. In other cases, some activities may reach the notifiable level but not the level subject to observation. It can be stated that the thresholds are too high particularly when taking into consideration increased mobility, connectivity and units capable of cross-border combat from their permanent peacetime location including boundaries with de facto states.¹²
- It is more difficult for a state to legitimize the non-provision of data on armed forces when they are in an area that it has declared unilaterally to be under its sovereignty. Sovereignty, irrespective of whether other participating states recognize it, is accompanied by responsibility. It is objective and, hence, the participating state cannot be in breach of its

¹¹ For an example see: Andrzej Wilk, "The Zapad-2017 exercises: the information war (for now)," *OSW Commentary*, accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-commentary/2017-09-04/zapad-2017-exercises-information-war-now>.

¹² Gregory G. Govan, "Conventional Arms Control in Europe: Some Thoughts About an Uncertain Future," *Deep Cuts Issue Brief #5* (July 2015), http://deepcuts.org/files/pdf/Deep_Cuts_Issue_Brief5_Conventional_Arms_Control_in_Europe%281%29.pdf.

obligations. When a state's government declares a change in its national territory, the argument for not notifying the size of its armed forces occupying the new territory is void unless it is below the limit and hence not subject to notification. However, other states, which do not recognize such a change, could face a delicate situation when demanding notification from the state that has, according to their opinion, annexed a territory belonging to another participating state. This could result in a situation in which the participating state, a part of whose territory has been annexed by another, may continue to provide information about forces on the territory that it claims to be its own.

- It defeats the object and purpose of confidence- and security-building if a state simply denies that its forces are present on the territory of another. It has the effect of eroding confidence irrespective of whether the number of troops, their equipment and activity exceed the notifiable level. In the light of such a denial, no risk reduction measure is applicable and no question can be raised concerning unusual military activity as it clashes with the denial. An arms control regime that starts out from the principle that participating states are honest about their military capabilities, the location of their troops and their military activities cannot manage such a situation.

The phenomenon of so-called protracted conflicts presents other challenges than the territorial conflicts that are still in the active phase. Although some conflicts outlined above carry the danger to morph into protracted conflicts, it would present a philosophical problem to speak about a potentially protracted conflict. How long a time period should pass before we may safely conclude that a conflict is protracted? It presents a further problem that some so-called protracted conflicts have arrived at a new status quo whereas others continue to threaten with volatility and their moving from a 'frozen' phase to one of high intensity.

The existence of *de facto* states, statelets, or pseudo-states, as different authors call them, presents a problem as they are sovereign entities without sufficiently wide-ranging international recognition and thus have no participation in international regimes or membership in international organizations. It should be worrying that the number of such 'states' has been on the rise for nearly three decades consecutively. It is understandable that no information is provided by such *de facto* states about their own armed forces or their activities. They are not participating states of the OSCE and have not taken part in the Vienna Document. It is a different matter when a participating state stations forces and conducts military activities on a '*de facto*' state's territory and does not provide information about it. The problem then arises as to whether it is a non-compliance case or not, and whether it is in the area of application? For most participating states it is, as the territory legally belongs to another partici-

pating state. For a minority of participating states it is not, as it is on the territory of a non-participating state.

In some cases, violations may reach the level of absurdity. For example, when a participating state does not provide notification of activities, that should be subject to notification, while it informs its own public about them by providing the media with numbers that leave no doubt about activities that should be subject to both notification and observation. Although such cases are not frequent, they are all the more regrettable.

Last, but not least, there are participating states that do not provide CSBMs with data on their armed forces. These participating states can be divided into two categories. There are small states with extremely limited state capacities, weak governance and poor organization that probably, incidentally, do not provide information when it is regularly required. But there can be others that systematically avoid providing information. Whereas in the case of the former, it would be difficult to attribute this behavior to concealment measures, in the case of the latter it may well be their intention to gain some marginal advantage from non-compliance.

Compliance with the Open Skies Treaty

Whereas in the area of CSBMs the West is perceived to be in the position of *demandeur*, compliance with the Open Skies Treaty presents a more complex picture. Once again most of the non-compliance issues are related to ongoing conflicts or the changing of hands of territories. With the latter, they are regarded as having arrived at a new status quo for some states but not for others, and therefore have unsettled territorial status of some parts of the treaty's area of application and the pending protracted conflicts.

Beginning with the purpose of the Open Skies Treaty, its objective is to provide for military transparency. Hampered by a history of using overflights for complementing information gained by other intelligence means (using U-2 flights, for example), some parties, understandably, want to exempt certain sensitive areas where overflights must not be allowed, should be restrained or the use of highest quality equipment/sensors ought to be curtailed.

Difficult relations generate the temptation to create complications in order to prevent the treaty from functioning properly. In some cases, states use the unregulated status of a territory to exempt it from overflights; in others, states argue on the basis of the 'independent statehood' of a territory, and so they impose technical conditions, which make full access to a territory impossible.

In case of the South Caucasus, the situation, with reference to separatist entities, is based on the claim that for one participating state (irrespective of which name the different participating states use) they are independent states, not participating states of the OSCE and not parties to the Open Skies Treaty either. As they are not parties to the Open Skies Treaty they must not be overflown. In accordance with the rules of the Treaty, their borders shall not be approached within ten kilometers. The disagreements over this matter are derived from the larger political issue of the 'independent statehood' of the two

entities and can hence only be resolved by addressing the root cause. A state's reluctance to allow overflights by a participating treaty member that has been backing the independence of the two statelets since 2012 is one example¹³ and can be regarded as a counter-measure to the flight ban in the vicinity of their border.

The situation that has emerged since 2014 that allows scheduled flights of one state's air company to fly within the airspace of another does not prevent the parties conducting overflights under the Opens Skies Treaty. However, claims from one conflicting party for prepayment of the costs of the flights from the other is not in accord with the decision of the OSCC and is also an unfriendly gesture. Similarly, flights in the border area between a treaty party and its non-treaty party neighbor can be constrained and it will need the root cause of the problem to be addressed in order to overcome this difficulty. Conventional arms control treaties, including transparency measures, are really peacetime measures and are not meant for situations in which a part of the area of application of the treaty is a war zone.

Attempts to prevent the treaty from functioning as it was intended, are more conspicuous when a state has introduced regulations that prevent the overflight of a fully strategically sensitive area. Irrespective of whether the necessary information can be collected and verified by other means, it is not practical to accept this erosion of the treaty regime as it may serve as point of reference to undermine compliance further. The fact that there are no overflights conducted by NATO member-states among themselves curtails the access of other states to raw data among others.¹⁴ Again, it is the sovereign choice of members of an alliance to follow such practice, although there might be cases when reasons to reconsider it may prevail.

There are several technical issues that the state parties ought to discuss in order to find constructive solutions, if necessary, in the framework of classical tit-for-tat bargaining. These include the use of sensors in some areas, the technical conditions at certain airfields (apron, length of runways) and the number of permitted landings for refueling, for example. Although the violations may be numerous, none of them ought to cause existential security concerns.

Conclusions

After an interval of more than two decades, military security has returned to the political agenda in Europe. The illusion that many have pursued, that security is guaranteed for most European states, turned out to be unfounded and temporary. The revival of military security is at odds with an arms control regime that has not been successfully adjusted to the changes since the beginning of the post-Cold War era. Due to the unadjusted (and partly outlawed) arms control regime, violations of the letter of various accords have remained

¹³ Shakirov, "Kontrol' nad obychnymi vooruzheniyami v Evrope," 33.

¹⁴ Shakirov, "Kontrol'," 33.

limited. Violations gain significance in conjunction with crises, real or potential, protracted conflicts and the strategic reassessment of the importance of certain areas in the application of the treaties. It is important to closely monitor the so-called 'norm challenging behavior' as it prepares for norm erosion and increases the danger of institutional decay.¹⁵ It is irresponsible to create a situation in which participating states or state parties could mutually refer to each other's violations of commitments. On a larger scale with respect to some major conflicts (Kosovo, Iraq, Georgia, Ukraine) this has been going on for nearly two decades without anybody providing reasons why one state's violation legitimizes that of another state or, to put it more bluntly: Why states have to follow each other into the mud.

In spite of the quest to make arms control measures not only applicable in fair weather, this request has remained only partially fulfilled. Some measures have been introduced in the CSBM packages of the early 1990s in order to address this matter.¹⁶ The measures have also been applied under stressful circumstances, like the so-called Kosovo war of 1999. Still, further measures may be necessary to advance the applicability of CSBMs in other difficult circumstances.

The current fora should be adequate to address compliance matters unless they are being obstructed by some participating states or state parties. However, because of their politicization, some fora (like the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) or the Open Skies Consultative Commission (OSCC)) are used for megaphone diplomacy in which delegates make statements and use harsh rhetoric in order to demonstrate their toughness to their own masters rather than conducting dialogue with their partners. This, inevitably, reduces the relevance and usefulness of these fora. Consequently, there are working bodies like debates on Open Skies in a smaller framework or the Structured Dialogue, which take the place of the larger fora. They function as genuinely multilateral fora even though NATO assembles 29 allied nations from among them. However, the expectation that the smaller members will simply accept positions about which large parties persuade them or which are imposed upon them by larger ones even when it is not in their national interests, reflects a way of thinking not shared by every participating state.

The current thresholds for notification and observation are too high and can be misused. The violation of their spirit can start by not providing sufficient transparency and then simultaneously mobilizing units for so-called snap exercises. It is understandable that some armed forces will have to catch up after a period in which they did not take training sufficiently seriously and did not allo-

¹⁵ Ulrich Kühn, "Cooperative Arms Control in Europe: The Consequences of Complexity, Decay, Power, and Norms" (Presentation to the Expert Roundtable on Conventional Arms Control and Confidence-Building Measures in Europe, OSCE Security Days, Vienna, November 10, 2014), 6.

¹⁶ "Vienna Document 1990," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, November 17, 1990, Chap. III.

cate adequate resources to defense, like the Russian Federation in the 1990s. However, providing information on a voluntary basis must be possible in order to alleviate concerns even if a new set of confidence- and security-building measures cannot be agreed upon. Such a step would be contingent upon an improved or at least more relaxed political atmosphere.

It is essential to see that some of the notification and observation measures were agreed as long ago as 1986 so that they would not be applicable to the then most frequent Warsaw Treaty exercises using mechanized divisions. Clearly, many of our concerns reappear faster and are more vivid when they are grounded in Cold War history. Diplomats need to know that analysts are well aware that the current heating up of tension, partially grounded in objective reality, is complemented by the fact that today's re-emerging adversary is a state that is often regarded as being identical with the old familiar Cold War adversary. It makes drawing conclusions rapid and simple without much consideration being given to the major differences between the two periods.

Arms control has changed a lot over the last decades in Europe. Still, there are matters in which no change is apparent. There are still participating states with significantly larger military capabilities than others. Although all regimes are required to meet the same normative obligations, the strategic importance of compliance focuses mainly on a few states. The agreements provide tools to observe eventual violations of one sort or another. However, there are difficulties in taking action in the light of detected violations. When Fred Ikle wrote his seminal article in 1961¹⁷ concerning the dilemma states were facing when they detected the violation of an arms control accord by a party whose participation was essential to the accord, he raised the ultimate question of what to do about the violator. What means the other parties have (not in the sense of international law as that is fairly clear) beyond publicly 'naming and shaming' the violator is open to conjecture. In the end, expelling the pivotal partner from the arrangement with reference to its massive or systematic violation does not solve the problem; it simply gives a free hand to the violator to get rid of the commitments that it was previously obligated to obey. Fortunately, there are no premeditated, concerted, large-scale, systematic violations of strategic significance nowadays and, hence, the unresolved dilemma is not high on the agenda of interested parties. This is the case even though some military experts and diplomats, for tactical reasons, may make attempts to portray the differences as strategic in the area of compliance with arms control.

It seems, under the current conditions, that there is no chance to negotiate new, substantive arms control measures. Even those initiatives that were put on the table have been taken back or meant more for strategic '*sondage*' than anything else. It has usually been a question of whether there is a resolve to free some small area of conventional arms control from strategic counter-in-

¹⁷ Fred Charles Iklé, "After Detection – What?" *Foreign Affairs* 39, no. 2 (January 1961): 208-220.

terest on a higher level. This would require visionary statesmen/women on a higher political level than the present managers and power perpetuating egoists. However, history never ends. If there is little chance for new arrangements to agree upon, states have to decide on what to do next by focusing on the process and leaving the outcomes for better times. It seems that what is being done is precisely what may help under the current conditions:

1. Not seeking to negotiate any new document on European arms control due to the unfavorable atmosphere and the conflicts that impose themselves on European security nowadays
2. Maintaining dialogue on a professional level to discuss items of relevance
3. Decoupling the process of forward looking considerations from some of those established frameworks (JCG, OSCC) that have lost some of their relevance as fora for professional exchange due to the historical burden of formal exchanges
4. Keeping watch on compliance in order to prevent further erosion and a growing irrelevance of the existing arms control regimes.

The lasting stalemate results in an increasingly busy expert community trying to address and contribute to its resolution. Most of their efforts will not bring about immediate results but may contribute to creating a depot of intellectual ammunition that can be explored when the opportunity arises.

It is essential to reassess the situation objectively and to conclude whether the overwhelmingly technical violations can be separated from the eventual strategic discord. It will also be essential to leave the professionals to gain more autonomy so that they can act in the best interests of their nations rather than having to meet the expectations of certain groups, which may wish to impose their ill-informed positions upon them.

Disclaimer

This paper is based on information in the public domain and on interviews with delegates of eight participating States who were kindly available during my visit to Vienna in July 2017. The asymmetry of publicly available information could influence the analysis. It goes without saying that the responsibility for the content rests with the author.

About the Author

Dr. **Pal Dunay** is Professor of NATO and European Security Issues at the Marshall Center and Academic Advisor of its Central Asia program, PASS, ESS-E, and SES courses. *E-mail*: pal.dunay@marshallcenter.org.



Irina Tsertsvadze, *Connections QJ* 16, no. 3 (2017): 73-86
<https://doi.org/10.11610/Connections.16.3.05>

Research Article

Britain and the Common Security and Defense Policy of the European Union

Irina Tsertsvadze

Ministry of Defense, Georgia, <https://mod.gov.ge/en>

Abstract: This article analyzes Britain's position towards the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) of the European Union from 1998 to 2016. It considers the reasoning for Britain's position toward CSDP through posing the research question: Why did Britain backed the launch of the CSDP and then not consistently support all its developments? Using a case study approach, it concentrates on the main developments of the CSDP, which are: launch of the CSDP (1998–1999); development of the operational headquarters (2010–2011); role of Britain in the Libyan crisis, which is not related to the institutional developments, but still is very important as the first real chance for the CSDP to be tested after its launch.

Through Putnam's Two-Level Game Theory, the article seeks to support the twin hypotheses that domestic affairs influence Britain's decisions towards CSDP, and that developments within the European Union impact on Britain's position towards CSDP through the interplay with domestic factors.

Keywords: Security and defense policy, EU, Britain, game theory, national interest, CSDP.

Introduction

Every international negotiation can be considered as a 'game' on two levels and the struggle to achieve consensus – first between the domestic constituents and then to bargain the achieved consensus on the international level. This is the

essence of Putnam's Two-Level Game Theory.¹ At the domestic level, policy makers are trying to lobby their policies through the different political groups and, in seeking for power, they are looking to create different coalitions in order to pursue their policies. At the international level, negotiators are trying to minimize the risk of sacrificing domestic pressure and minimizing negative consequences of foreign developments. "Any [national] leader who fails to satisfy his fellow players at the domestic table risks being evicted from his seat," says Putnam.²

This article analyses the reasoning behind Britain's position toward the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) prior to the Brexit decision by asking the question: "Why did Britain back the launch of the CSDP and then fail to consistently support all of its developments?" The answers will be found in the way that British domestic affairs influenced Britain's decisions towards CSDP, just as developments within the European Union impacted on Britain's position towards CSDP.

It appears that the decisions made by the British Government from 1998 to 2016 towards the CSDP were indeed influenced both by domestic politics and by the developments in the EU, as indicated by Putnam. Three concrete case studies give the examination structure and chronology. These are:

- Launching CSDP: Constructive role of UK (1998-1999)
- Operationalizing CSDP: UK blocking the Operational HQ (2010-2011)
- The role of Britain in the Libyan crisis (2011)

Depending on one's point of view, taken together, these studies show either different facets of British policy-making in the security and defense field, or a singular kind of inconsistency that led, eventually, to the Brexit decision and its aftermath.

The Setting and Context

CSDP is an unusual political phenomenon that does not fit easily into traditional international relations theories because of the grouping of sovereign states in an international subsystem. The main confusion comes with the collective decision-making over security and defense issues, which are commonly supposed to be the last thing that EU member states would give up within collective decision making. Jolyon Howorth, a leading scholar in the area of European security, describes the situation as follows: "The moves towards pooling that last bastion of 'sovereignty'—Security and Defence Policy—with all their limitations and

¹ Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460.

² Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics," 437.

caveats, constitute a sea-change in the way the EU and its member states will henceforth relate to the outside world.”³

That may have been part of the UK’s problems with CSDP but the beginning of the 21st century has also been marked by an increase in geopolitical volatility. The Arab Spring, the unraveling of Libya and Syria, the rise of ISIS in Syria and Iraq, Russia’s invasion in Georgia and Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and the refugee crisis – all these suggested that new ways were necessary to ensure the security of members of the Europe Union. Currently, the EU needs to rethink the way it acts, its principles, interests and priorities. As EU’s High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini pointed out, “In challenging times, a strong Union is one that thinks strategically, shares a vision and acts together. This is even more true after the British referendum.”⁴ It is clear that the crises beyond the borders are challenging the EU and its CSDP. The policy is a post-Cold War phenomenon stemming from the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.⁵ The appearance of it has corresponded to a precise historical context: the integration of Western Europe.

In that context, British leaders have been in a dilemma, trying to adjust the balance between American and European interests, rather than giving the EU priority. As one commentator put it, “In the 1970s, they leaned too far the other way, entering the European Communities on disadvantageous terms. Since the 1980s they have increasingly leaned away from Europe again, renegotiating their financial contributions in 1984-85, opting out of the euro in 1992, joining the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, and now divorcing the EU altogether.”⁶ From this political discourse, one may assume that being pro-European has been mostly unpopular in Britain: if politicians wanted to survive domestic debate, they would criticize Brussels. “British ministers often oppose measures coming

³ David R. Smith, *The EU Divided: Effects of Dissimilar National Foreign Policies on CSDP* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University, Yale College, December 2, 2011), https://politicalscience.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Smith_Devin.pdf. Jolyon Howorth, “From Security to Defence: The Evolution of the CFSP,” in *The International Relations of the European Union*, ed. Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

⁴ “High Representative Mogherini presents EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy,” EU Summit, Brussels, 2016, accessed November 20, 2016, https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/7337/high-representative-mogherini-presents-eu-global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy_en.

⁵ “Maastricht Treaty,” February 7, 1992, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv%3Axy0026>.

⁶ Ian Morris, “A Brief History of Britain’s Relationship, Starting in 6000 BCE,” *Harvard Business Review*, Digital Article, June 24, 2016, accessed February 20, 2017, <https://hbr.org/2016/06/a-brief-history-of-britains-relationship-with-europe-starting-in-6000-bce>.

out of Brussels or other capitals because they fear the reaction of the British media or public.”⁷

The interaction is clear between the domestic and international politics as it applies to British policy towards the European Union’s CSDP. This is the reason behind choosing the three case studies as illustrations: they best explain the positive, negative and in-between roles of Britain within the CSDP. All three of them underline different positions of Britain towards the institutional developments of the CSDP and thus give us ground to analyze the reasoning behind them. The launch of CSDP is historically the most important development of the concept; without Britain, it is hardly imaginable that it could happen. Developing a military-operational Headquarters for the EU could have been the second major event in the history of the CSDP, but it did not happen because Britain rejected the idea. Intervening in Libya in the 2011 crisis with an EU military force could have been the first ever real test for the policy, but EU opinions were divided. For Britain, the principal issue was a technical one – to be involved individually, bilaterally with France, or collectively through either the EU or NATO. Ideologically, France, the other big military power within the EU, was for a united and strong Europe relying on its own military capabilities. With the Libyan decision, domestic politics operated differently on security policy-making in London and Paris. In both cases, the Two-Level Game theory by Robert D. Putnam is a useful tool for analysis.

The heart of the theory is that international negotiations are characterized by simultaneous activities at the domestic and international levels. A national negotiating team seeks to maximize its state’s international ‘win-set,’ in Putnam’s phrase, and does so by constantly being aware of its own domestic inhibitions and constraints. Agreements internationally are therefore the outcome of overlaps between the win-sets of the states involved in the negotiations. For the three case studies here, this can be articulated in our case studies as following: for Tony Blair in 1998, without domestic support on his decision to help launch CSDP, it would be difficult to have achieved the win-set. For David Cameron ten years later, because he did not have support from the major political parties on establishing the Operational Headquarter of the EU, the win-set of the EU in this case could not be achieved.

Application of the Two Level Game Theory to the Case Studies

According to Robert D. Putnam, domestic politics is crucial in any kind of international negotiation theory. Power and preferences of the major political actors on the domestic level should be taken into account. If the big win-set is to be achieved on the international level, the chief negotiator needs to keep in mind that all the constituents at the internal level will take part in the ratification

⁷ Charles Grant, “Why Is Britain Eurosceptic,” Essay, *Center for European Reform*, December 19, 2008, accessed February 28, 2017, <http://www.cer.org.uk/publications/archive/essay/2008/why-britain-eurosceptic>.

process on the domestic level.⁸ On the EU's level, this theoretical approach demonstrates that when the time of the decision-making comes, each member of the EU is thinking of the potential domestic consequences and less about the common good of the EU in general.

Launching CSDP / Constructive Role of Britain (1998–99)

After the end of the Cold War, the United States had other foreign policy priorities than guaranteeing the security of Western Europe. New security paradigms started to emerge. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, policy makers in Washington switched their attention to Asia, the Gulf and the Middle East, underlining the feeling that Europe was no longer a problem. The United States' approach was simple: European security had to be delivered by the Europeans themselves. Wars in Yugoslavia in the 1990s soon demonstrated the inability of the European Union to guarantee security on the continental Europe. This development made it obvious that the EU was in need of a permanent security and defense system on which it could rely.

Following the end of the Cold War, the idea of a Common Security and Defense Policy was announced after the introduction of the Common Foreign and Security Policy as the second pillar of the EU under the Maastricht Treaty. However, it was not implemented straight away. In fact, it was not until the Saint-Malo Summit in 1998 that it became a possibility.

It is well known that the Labour government that came to power in 1997 was distinctly more pro-European than any of its predecessors. "Tony Blair arrived strong and with a modernizing agenda that seemed to put Europe at the heart of Britain as much as the other way round."⁹ The most important aspect of Blair's European legacy is widely considered to be the Saint-Malo Summit where, together with the French President, Jacques Chirac, he tried to launch a real foreign and security policy for Europe. The Saint-Malo Summit in September 1998 ended with a declaration stressing the importance of the security dimension and that implementation machinery and the ability to deploy forces were essential for the EU's external policy.

This part of the case study very much strengthens the Putnam-related notion that domestic affairs influence Britain's decisions towards the Common Security and Defense Policy. However, the international level should not be ignored. Three issues were important at the time. The first was the dominant role of the USA in European defense; secondly, the aftermath of the wars in Yugoslavia; and, thirdly, the readiness within the EU itself to strengthen security and defense capabilities. Together they created an interplay between the domestic and international factors and pushed for a positive decision: in effect, a win-set both for

⁸ Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics."

⁹ Simon Berlaymont, "Tony Blair and Europe," *Open Democracy, free thinking for the world*, May 30, 2007, accessed January 31, 2017, https://www.opendemocracy.net/tony_blair_and_europe.jsp.

Britain and EU. With the Saint-Malo declaration Britain, together with France, was aiming to transform the EU into a positive actor in the security field in Europe and for Europe by equipping itself with the kind of military capabilities so obviously absent during the recent Yugoslav conflicts.

The wording of the declaration, which Britain and France signed, was clear and demanding, saying: "... The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises."¹⁰ For a number of scholars, this declaration did not outline the real intentions: "Even if Britain was so supportive of the European defense project after the Saint-Malo initiative with France in 1998, the British idea was more to lead than to participate. If various continentals got together and compensated for individual weakness by working together, then that was fine, but the UK itself would of course have no need to resort to such shifts."¹¹ This is not surprising, having in mind the historical heritage of Britain as an empire, which did not believe in credible military partnerships with European countries. In addition, British Atlanticism and the 'special' relationship with the US gives the ground to some scholars to say that: "The US has consistently pressured the UK to become a full and active participant in all EU policy areas, including defense and security. That was one fundamental reason why Tony Blair went to Saint-Malo. If the UK found itself outside the EU, what could it offer the US in terms of security and defense."¹² Thus, it can be said that the position of the British decision makers—and of Tony Blair in particular—were very much influenced by the developments within the EU, especially the EU's desire itself to strengthen security and defense and on the broader international level when the US had become very much more interested in a strong EU responsible for the security of its borders.

To sum up the first case, it should be mentioned that the launch of the CSDP was not purely the result of developments within Britain or the EU. One can go even further and say that the major factor was the limited role of the United States in European security. Despite the fact that Tony Blair was the leader of the Labour Party, he was more enthusiastic towards the EU than anyone else was in the British Labour Party. Because of the changed political environment and the interplay of domestic and international factors, his policies in the office of the Prime Minister of Britain were different from previous governments. Blair

¹⁰ Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, August 12, 2008, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/?view=News&id=2244063>.

¹¹ Clara Marina O'Donnell, "Britain and France should not give up on EU defence co-operation," Policy Brief, *Center for European Reform*, October, 2011, accessed March 15, 2017, https://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2011/pb_csdp_24oct11-3907.pdf.

¹² Jolyon Howorth, "The CSDP without the UK: bad for Europe but even worse for Britain," in *The Common Security and Defence Policy: National Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Fiott (Brussels: The Royal Institute for International Relations, May 2015), 19, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://aei.pitt.edu/64766/1/ep79.pdf>.

had no opposition to his taking the leading role in the CSDP. He very well understood what the US expected from Britain – to take the initiative within Europe in order to guarantee a strong partnership. Having concluded that it would be unacceptable for Britain to join the Euro Zone and the Schengen Agreement, he concentrated on the areas of security and defense. This was also in alignment with the historical British tradition of having a strong military force. However, looking at the Britain's role within CSDP almost 20 years afterwards, one can assume that the decision was more tactical than strategic, because very soon after that historical decision Britain isolated itself from the major institutional developments of the CSDP. The following case studies will consider further developments in the CSDP and Britain's role within it.

Initial Development of the CSDP: UK Blocking the Operational HQ (2010–11)

The Lisbon Treaty, which was signed in 2007 and implemented in 2009, is about the establishment of a stronger and more focused central foreign policy with significantly upgraded tools at its disposal. The treaty moved away from the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) to CSDP. "According to the Lisbon Treaty, the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has been bolstered in order to strengthen the EU's voice on the world stage. He will preside over the Foreign Affairs Council and will also be Vice-President of the Commission. A new European External Action Service will support the High Representative."¹³

The Lisbon Treaty introduced important provisions connected to the CSDP, including a mutual assistance and solidarity clause and the expansion of the Petersberg tasks.¹⁴ The creation of an Operational Headquarters (OHQ) became one of the major issues in the relationship between the EU and Britain after David Cameron's Conservative Party took office. For Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the creation of the OHQ was closely connected to the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. But the interplay of domestic and international factors during the ongoing discourse on the establishment of the HQ very much defined its future.

¹³ Herbert Smith Freehills LLP, "The Lisbon Treaty – brief overview of the key changes," European Union, November 4, 2009, accessed May 13, 2017, www.lexology.com/library/detail.aspx?g=48a4327a-c5e8-41a7-8000-c93e90abe763.

¹⁴ Petersberg tasks were set out in the Petersberg Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Council of the Western European Union (WEU) in June 1992. On that occasion, the WEU member countries declared their readiness to make available to the WEU, but also to NATO and the EU, military units from the whole spectrum of their conventional armed forces. By now, the list of Petersberg tasks includes: humanitarian and rescue tasks; conflict prevention and peace-keeping task; tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking; joint disarmament operations; military advice and assistance tasks; post-conflict stabilization tasks. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg_tasks.html.

As Alistair Jones puts it, despite the fact that it was the Conservative government which brought Britain into the EEC in 1973, the Conservative Party has traditionally been Eurosceptic.¹⁵ Margaret Thatcher saw Britain's role as crucial within the Union and, for her, being 'inside' meant protecting British interests far more effectively.¹⁶ But, the leaders after Thatcher did not always see it that way. David Cameron, for example, is sometimes considered to be the most Eurosceptic leader of his party. This can easily be understood by the careful policies he developed towards CSDP.

David Cameron was very cautious about policy towards the EU from the very first day of taking the office. On the domestic level, he knew that majority of his party members were Eurosceptic and took care in avoiding the risk of losing domestic support. Indeed, the first factor of Putnam's theory that the size of the win-set depends on the domestic political institutions is demonstrated by Cameron's actions in avoiding being active on the EU level. He, therefore, avoided losing the support of the domestic institutions. Nevertheless, he still had to take into account the views of his pro-EU coalition partners and the active media discussion over Britain leaving the EU as major factors in any CSDP-related decisions.

Catherine Ashton, a British Labour politician, was the first High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy after the creation of the post according the Lisbon Treaty. She considered the creation of the HQ as being part of the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty. She was strongly supported by Germany and France in this view. But, she was just as strongly opposed by the British government. Consequently, the headquarters arrangements were not made. As Ashton commented, "This was to fulfill what the Lisbon Treaty was all about," she said. "The position of the British government is the same as the last government. It is not a blow, it was no surprise. It is important to put ideas on the table even if member states decide to reject them."¹⁷

The Conservative Foreign Minister, William Hague, was concerned that Lady Ashton's initiative could give EU new security power, which would require additional finances in an era of big financial cuts and could also undermine NATO's role. After a row marking Britain's most serious rift with Lady Ashton, he warned that any mention of an EU military headquarters would trigger a British veto.¹⁸ So, although many EU member countries, including France, were very supportive of the initiative of creating an EU military HQ, because of the British veto, it was never implemented.

¹⁵ Alistair Jones, *Britain and the European Union* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

¹⁶ Jones, *Britain and the European Union*, 27.

¹⁷ Bruno Waterfield, "Britain blocks EU plans for 'operational military headquarters'," *The Telegraph*, July 18, 2011, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/eu/8645749/Britain-blocks-EU-plans-for-operational-military-headquarters.html>.

¹⁸ Waterfield, "Britain," 28.

Analysis of this case study shows the constant interplay between the domestic and international pressures which, in this case, did not bring to fruition the desired win-set for the EU. As in the first case study, we can argue that, while Britain was taking decisions over the creation of the EU operational headquarters, many factors, including developments within the EU, influenced Cameron. The EU was in the process of recovering from the post-2008 financial and economic crises and countries were hesitant to spend money on multilateral commitments; member states were resisting moves towards spending more on defense and security.

As with Saint-Malo, there was an ideological divide: the UK did not see the conceptual requirement for an EU military HQ. Instead, Britain was suggesting a cooperative approach, rather than creating this new institution. Hague's idea was to improve the links between existing national HQs. Simon Smith argues, "The UK's answer is always: we do not need one and there are plenty of military OHQs already in place in Europe. They will also say what type of military mission is so big that a national HQ cannot manage it? Or if it were, then NATO would most likely be involved anyway. Yet, this misses the need for CSDP to be able to do proper operational planning before a large crisis, especially combined civ-mil planning."¹⁹

From a British perspective, the reasons for opposing the OHQ were financial and the need not to duplicate NATO's role in Europe. Preventing the decision against the operational headquarters can therefore be seen, for Britain, as a significant win-set achieved on the international level. Nor was this just a benefit to the UK. As Daniel Fiott points out,

Of course, why UK officials were really skeptical was finding the necessary political will and capacity in Europe to fund, man and use such a sizable OHQ. It was very hard to get member states to invest in capabilities at all, never mind for CSDP. The nations all ask, how much will it cost us if they get used?²⁰

By that time, back in 2011, the EU was already running a series of overseas military missions and operations, such as a naval anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia and the Balkans peacekeeping mission, none of which seemed compromised by the lack of multinational HQ. The British argument about the effectiveness of existing military operations being managed from a national HQ was based on the EUNAVFOR Atalanta, with the HQ in Northwood, UK.

¹⁹ Simon J. Smith, "European Defence, CSDP and the UK: two cases of catch-22," in *The Common Security and Defense Policy: National Perspectives*, ed. Daniel Fiott (Brussels: The Royal Institute for the International Relations, 2015), accessed February 17, 2017, <http://aei.pitt.edu/64766/1/ep79.pdf>.

²⁰ Daniel Fiott, ed., *The Common Security and Defense Policy: National Perspectives*, EG-MONT Paper 79 (Brussels: The Royal Institute for the International Relations, 2015), accessed March 15, 2017, <http://aei.pitt.edu/64766/1/ep79.pdf>.

Role of the United Kingdom in the Libyan Crisis (2011)

In spring 2011, the president of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, used force to suppress a popular revolt against his regime. The Libyan crisis was “one of the pieces of the broader puzzle of the Arab Spring,” that spread with spillover effects through the Middle East and North Africa.²¹ In contrast to the previous two case studies, Britain’s role in the Libyan crisis cannot be defined as a decision to support or block institutional developments of the CSDP. The crises over Libya in 2011 tested the CSDP and Britain, among other military powers of the EU, definitely had a role in this context.

France, in particular, found itself struggling to convince European partners to embark on military action. Because of the inaction and reluctance of the United States, Britain and France first focused efforts on getting the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 adopted. London and Paris seem to have considered that securing the UN mandate took priority over developing EU control of the Libyan operations. This might also be explained by the fact that they were both reluctant to surrender operational control to an EU body, preferring instead to rely on their respective air force chains of command.

For Britain, the win-set in the Libyan crisis was effective military involvement. The issue was a technical one: whether the operation would be under EU or NATO auspices. Cameron had domestic support: the Labour leader, Ed Miliband, gave full backing to military action and the House of Commons approved the military action by 557 votes to 13. Anti-Gaddafi public opinion in Britain was already strong. Before the actual operation in Libya started, British oil workers in Libya had to be evacuated from an unfriendly situation. In addition, Gaddafi’s security forces captured and beat up members of a BBC team and six members of one of the UK’s elite special forces squadrons were allegedly captured and detained.²²

Cameron was mostly influenced by international factors because UK domestic opinion on intervening in Libya by the CSDP was not as problematic as it could have been. The positions of the EU member states were fragmented. Indeed, having specific relations with the Libyan Government over the oil deals made some member states reluctant to act. There was no united position on dealing with the crisis using EU’s military capabilities. This controversy between the domestic and international levels very much influenced Cameron not to push for the CSDP to be involved. If, on the EU level, the member countries had had a consensus, meaning the big win-set, it could have positively affected the final decision and the outcome for the CSDP. But, on Libya that consensus was missing across the EU for various domestic reasons. Frustratingly, for CSDP purists, 20 years after the Balkan crises when CSDP was initiated, it must have seemed that

²¹ Maxime H.A. Larivé, *Debating European Security and Defense Policy: Understanding the Complexity* (Aldershot, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2014), 209.

²² “Timeline: UK’s road to action in Libya,” *BBC News*, April 15, 2011, accessed April 2, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-12821505>.

the Libya crisis was the scenario for which CSDP had been created. As a result, the absence of a centralized command and control center of the EU itself became a reason for the limited possibility of acting rapidly. CSDP could not be the leading instrument; it was not institutionally in permanent readiness.

The Libyan intervention started on March 19, 2011, after the UN Security Council approved a “no fly zone” on March 17. The operation was conducted under the umbrella of NATO support, with Britain and France having the joint lead. This demonstrated that, even 20 years after the Balkan wars, Western Europe was incapable, on its own, of policing a no fly zone without NATO.²³ As to the actual operation, together with the US, UK launched 12 Tomahawk missiles from one submarine off the Libya coast and contributed as well one Royal Air Force base.²⁴ After this attack, articles appeared in the British press saying, for example: “Up to 20 per cent of the UKs Tomahawks has been used in the past four days in Libya, causing fears that it is burning through its armory.”²⁵ In sum, a very small engagement on the borders of Europe had exposed the fragility of Britain’s defense capabilities, a point that reinforced its skepticism about multinational command and control of operations. Nor was Britain alone in this. The response that the EU gave to the Libya crisis was a demonstration of the fact that EU could not process its military and defense capabilities within a multinational framework without an EU consensus. This was summed up by the International Institute for Security Studies thus: “They have shown the emptiness of claims that the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 could make the EU better fitted to take action than it was during the crises of the Balkans.”²⁶

Addressing the UK elements of the win-set, from Putnam’s Two-Level Game Theory, it can be said that the win-set in the Libya crises depended on both domestic and international factors. Cameron did not have to struggle much on a domestic level. But still, domestic factors were involved in the interplay with the EU – which itself did not have a united position on the intervention via CSDP. If the EU had had a strong position, the outcome of CSDP involvement would probably have been different. We can conclude that during the negotiations the outcome depended on the size of the win-set, the bigger win-set being successful. So, if EU could have had the bigger win-set, meaning having consensus between the members states on intervention in Libya, the last win-set, the inter-

²³ It is useful to recall that Germany abstained in the UN security Council on the matter of Libyan no fly zones.

²⁴ Thomas Harding, “Libya: Navy running short of Tomahawk missiles,” *The Telegraph*, March 23, 2011, accessed April 5, 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/libya/8400079/Libya-Navy-running-short-of-Tomahawk-missiles.html>.

²⁵ Harding, “Libya,” 32.

²⁶ “War in Libya: Europe’s confused response,” *The International Institute for Security Studies*, Volume 17, Comment 18, April 2011, accessed February 28, 2017. <http://deps.panteion.gr/images/Libya-Europe-confused-response.pdf>.

vention itself could be different, because EU's common decision could have influenced Britain's position as well.

It is reasonable to conclude that, even in the cases when Britain does not have radically positive or radically negative positions towards CSDP, the interplay between the domestic and international factors still applies. In the Libyan case, intervening via CSDP was not the win-set for Britain—the win-set was the intervention itself—but it was not the same win-set for the CSDP/EU, which had its problems of policy incoherence in this instance.

Conclusion

The three case studies help to answer the research question, “Why did Britain back the launch of the CSDP but did not then consistently support all its developments?” The interplay between domestic and international levels is evident in the all three case studies, but the level of controversy between them is different. We can say that Britain has never had a strong political pro-European movement unlike the other EU member countries. The membership of the EU was important to Britain without having to play a full part in it. In the UK's Strategic Defense and Security Review 2015, there is not a single reference to Britain's role in the CSDP.²⁷ Some scholars interpreted this as Britain ignoring the Common Security and Defense Policy, thinking separately of its challenges and opportunities through the timeline of being part of it. Certainly, in Britain's positions towards CSDP there has always been an interplay between domestic and international factors. It is safe to assume that the Putnam concept of the win-set, in general, helps to explain Britain's domestic and foreign policy approaches to CSDP.

The first case study, launching the CSDP, is an example how Britain was pushing towards CSDP. Britain's role in the CSDP has been abundantly discussed after the Europe's attempt to develop autonomy in the security and defense spheres. The Saint-Malo Declaration was signed in December 1998 by British Prime Minister Tony Blair and French President Jacques Chirac, who met to advance the creation of a European Security and Defense Policy, including a European military force capable of autonomous action. The Saint-Malo declaration was a response to the armed conflict in Kosovo in the late 1990s, in which the international community, and especially the European Union and its member states, were perceived to have failed to intervene to stop the conflict. The fact that British Government was pushing for the EU's Security and Defense policy was taken by a wide range of scholars as Britain's initiative to lead CSDP. This first case study is the demonstration of the first factor of the win-set, Britain was very much for strengthening EU's defense capabilities and it had consensus at the domestic level as well. The decision made in Saint-Malo was influenced for

²⁷ “National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015,” Policy Paper (UK Government, November 23, 2015), accessed April 10, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-security-strategy-and-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015>.

Britain by both domestic and EU developments, reflecting Putnam's parallel levels game theory.

The second case study, between 2010–11, showed Britain blocking operational development and the establishment of an HQ, has a different outcome but the theory remains applicable from the UK side. The creation of the Operational Headquarters had become one of the major issues of the EU-British relationships after the David Cameron's Conservative party took office. Catherine Ashton considered the creation of the HQ "was to fulfill what the Lisbon Treaty was all about."²⁸ This case study is analyzed by the second factor of the win-set, where success of win-set depends on the strategies of the negotiator on the international level; the win-set for the David Cameron's traditionally Eurosceptic government was to block the creation of the operational Headquarters for the EU – again, this decision was influenced both by domestic politics in Britain and developments within the EU.

The third case study, which concentrated on Britain's role in the Libyan crisis, is not traditionally about the role of the CSDP in institutional development, but it is more about the chance of the CSDP to be tested in a real-life scenario and about Britain and others indirectly undermining it. On the domestic level, Cameron did not meet opposition to military involvement in the crisis, but on the EU and wider international level, there were contrary factors that defined Britain's position. First, the EU members were not of one mind on Libya; CSDP was always going to be a difficult instrument to use. Secondly, the UK preferred a bilateral involvement with France. Thirdly, there was the natural bias towards NATO which, with France, is also why the operation was carried out under the NATO umbrella. One can argue, for France, it was generally an ideological matter to prefer the idea of the strong and united Europe but for the Libyan crisis the necessary agreement was not in place across the EU. For Britain, the issue of leadership in the Libyan operation was purely technical. There was a decision to be involved, but it was not one to be involved via CSDP. Britain never believed in the military capabilities of the EU. Previous case studies show that even when supporting the idea of CSDP, it was very much the result of developments within the EU and the USA and fell well short of a wholehearted commitment by Britain.

This article and applied theoretical framework gives food for thought about the future of both Britain and the CSDP. In general, we could see CSDP as the future of the EU's global security. It is clear that Britain cannot avoid military cooperation with EU member states. Perhaps post-Brexit, conditions will make cooperation even closer. Our research shows that Britain never felt comfortable sharing military independence on the multilateral level other than within NATO. But NATO is a different case, everyone agrees that USA has the leadership of the organization and, having historically varied but usually close ties with the US, Britain is considered to be the European ally of Washington within NATO.

²⁸ Waterfield, "Britain," 28.

After the Brexit decision, Britain was accused of ‘paralyzing’ CSDP by the German Minister of the Defense.²⁹ However, this may be a superficial judgement. Things have traditionally worked better on a bilateral level. Therefore, in the next five years, we may see different forms of cooperation based on the concept of ‘plus’ – it can be Britain plus US; Britain plus EU; Britain plus member countries; and Britain plus extra-European countries as well. As for the CSDP, many scholars argue that Brexit gives a momentum to the EU to breathe new life into its security and defense policy. An additional factor is the United States and President Donald Trump, who, by his statements, appears to be reluctant to assist in European Security. Perhaps this, more than any other single factor, will be the catalyst for the CSDP to blossom – at last.

About the Author

Irina Tsertsvadze is Head of EU Integration and Relations with the International Organizations Division, Ministry of Defense of Georgia since May 20015. Prior to this, she worked at the Parliament of Georgia, Committee on European Integration, where she was leading the cooperation with the International Organizations, local NGOs and Media Outlets. Her background includes five years working as an international journalist in Moscow, Russia, as a Georgian Public Broadcasters correspondent (2007-2008) and International Broadcaster at VOA Georgian Service, Washington DC, USA (2009-2010). She holds a BA in International Journalism from Tbilisi State University, Specialist Diploma in TV Journalism from Moscow State University and MAS in International and European Security from the University of Geneva. Irina is alumni of George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies and was GCMC Fellow of 2014. She is also a fellow of CBGL program at Georgian Foundation of Strategic and International Studies of 2012. Currently Irina is PhD student at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia. Irina is fluent in Georgia, English and Russian.

²⁹ Daniel Keohane, “Can France and Germany lead European Defence?” *Europe’s World*, accessed April 12, 2017, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/publication/can-france-and-germany-lead-european-defence>.