

3. Development of Civil-Military Relations in Croatia

I Introduction

The changes that Croatia is facing in the new millennium can already be defined as tremendously significant. The departure of the authoritarian leader, cessation of “single-party democracy”, as well as the strengthening sense of the necessity to adopt the European standards of life and behaviour, may be seen as principal landmarks of the new development – which will not be achieved neither easily nor quickly – but which is, nevertheless, the only alternative to national confinement and international isolation. A comprehensive process of changes will inevitably have to encompass political, economic, social, cultural and scientific and military spheres, and will represent the beginning of the true evaluation of the recent Croatian achievements in its transformation from single-party, socialist system into the world of democracy.

What are the Croatian specifics?

Differing from other European socialist states that have recognised in the Great Spring of 1989 their chance for transition from socialism to democratic European societies by relatively simple replacement of state attributes, Croatia, within its fight for independence, has introduced several specifics which are characterising it even today:

- Impossibility of a peaceful secession from federal Yugoslavia, uprising of Serb population in Croatia and imposed military conflict that followed, represent the first such characteristic that has strongly marked the beginning of Croatian path towards independence. All other events and developments on that path: creation and build-up of its military forces; withdrawal of the Yugoslav Peoples Army (YPA) from Croatia; creation of the, so called, Krajina; and finally, the fight for liberation of all Croatian territories and their reintegration under the sovereignty of the Croatian state, were observed by disoriented and unprepared international community. Unprepared for the break-apart of Yugoslavia, the international community was unable to act in a more resolute manner even in times of fierce attacks on

Vukovar, on Dubrovnik, or in times when some 30% of Croatian territory was occupied by Serb rebels.

- Croatia, which was along with Slovenia by the level of economic development and structure undoubtedly the most advanced of all former socialist countries, was, instead of accessing Europe, thrown into the whirlpool of war which resulted in large number of victims, huge material destruction and enormous expenditures for creation and strengthening of the military, followed by the process of rebuilding the country and return of refugees after the liberation.
- Spread of the conflict into Bosnia and Herzegovina, where Croatian population felt threatened by the new relations, has also entangled Croatia in the conflict with Muslims, which was actually the third military conflict that Croatian military was forced to fight. In the first conflict Croats were defending their homes against Serb rebels and YPA forces, in the second it was liberating Croatian territories, and in the third it was engaged in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with the Croatian military forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina (HVO). And it was this, third war, that has led Croatian policy into a very specific situation, since the international community, which has by the time already accepted Croatia as a stabilising factor in the region, was suddenly faced with the new situation, difficult to understand, and especially difficult to justify. The Washington Agreement on the relations between Croats and Muslims, from 1995 has opened the possibility for new mutual relations, but in spite of all international warnings, the Croatian side remained engaged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely in parts populated by Croats, supporting and assisting all those forces that were openly or covertly advocating for the division of Bosnia and Herzegovina and for inclusion of the Croatian parts into Croatia proper.
- Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) as a structure that was by vast majority winning on all elections, and that held a considerable majority in the Croatian Sabor (Parliament), became a principal actor in the creation of the Croatian state. Besides a relatively short period of coalition government, CDU was governing Croatia and has had a final word in all activities of political, economic and social character. By that the so called multi-party system was to a large extent curtailed, and the level of democracy depended mostly on the

willingness of the CDU to accept or not accept a particular solution, having the major mass-media firmly in its hands.

- Croatian foreign policy was not only exclusively the policy of the leading political party, but was strongly influenced by a single person – the President of the Republic of Croatia. All other factors that are in a normal democracy participating in the creation of foreign policy were transformed into a sheer transmission of political solutions created in the President’s Cabinet by the leading actor.
- Such specific internal and external developments were preventing Croatia to catch pace with other countries in transition. Even more so, it is possible to argue that only now, after the recent changes in the direction of stronger democracy, the doors for Croatian transition have been fully opened. In this way Croatia has lost valuable time in comparison to other former socialist states, and its model of internal transition and its present distance from Europe represent a heavy burden for the new policy. Although it might be said that the transition has not been achieved to a full satisfaction in none of the former socialist countries, the results in Croatia are probably among the worst ones. The number of the employed was cut in half, huge unemployment (over 20 per cent), rise of foreign debt (some 9,3 bill. USD), decrease in the production and exports, and distancing from sources of investment capital have all resulted in a difficult economic situation and have at the same time created a negative climate for any serious foreign investment.
- The relations with the international community were also under the influence of a strong nationalistic policy led by the CDU. Following the criticism of the “Storm” military operation, the international community continued to criticise Croatia for violating human rights, for limiting the freedom of media, for insufficient independence of judiciary, for lack of control over the activities of security and intelligence institutions, for “wild” privatisation and development of the economy, lack of transparency in military structures and for constant support to Croatian factors in Bosnia and Herzegovina that were advocating the creation of a third entity, or secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina. By all this the Croatian policy, which was the favourite of the West in the early days, and for which the Croatian president was stating that represents the “US regional strategic partner”, became isolated and distanced from the European

processes. Along with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Yugoslavia, Croatia is the most distanced country from any European and trans-Atlantic integration, which is to a large extent the result of activities of the formerly ruling political establishment. Self-content with its achievements, the political elite was absorbed with the creation of a national myth of self-sufficiency and of the need to preserve the national and state interests, of avoiding any links with eventual new Balkan associations, as well as on highlighting the dilemmas regarding the need and the costs of closer approach to Europe. The ideology of national self-sufficiency has led Croatia into isolation, at the same time giving the national policy the opportunity to use the attacks on international community in order to defend and preserve its positions at home and to justify the existing situation.

II Objective Circumstances and Subjective Weaknesses in the Development of the Croatian Military Forces

The Croatian state did not inherit any of its armed forces from the previous regime, but was rather created and developed them within very detrimental conditions, created by the transition and war. The Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) came to power after the first elections in May 1990, and on October 8, 1991, Croatia declared its secession from the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). It also gained international recognition. But through the internal armed rebellion by part of the Serb population, as well as by external Serbian aggression a quasi-state called the Republic of Serbian Krajina was formed on almost 1/3 of the centrally located Croatian territory. With the support from the international community Croatia managed to liberate the largest part of the country by military operations in the spring (“Lightning”) and summer (“Storm”) of 1995. The occupied Danube region (Podunavlje) was peacefully re-integrated by Croatia, again with international assistance, in January 1998.

Under the pretext of assistance and support to Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia was in various ways participating in war, fought in that neighbouring country. It helped forming quasi-state political institutions of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Croatian Republic of

Herzeg-Bosnia), as well as in forming Croat's military forces (Croatian Defence Council – HVO). Croatian forces were assisting Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Croatian-Bosniak “war within the war” during 1993-1994.

1. Transition

The war in Croatia and its neighbourhood was reflected on the transitional processes in Croatia too. The transition of the Croatian political system began after the first multi-party elections (parliamentarian, presidential and local). In the period August 1991 to August 1992 a joint government of Democratic Unity was formed, with participation of opposition parties as well. Throughout the remaining time of war the CDU was continuously in power, and due to a very favourable election law and notorious “Diaspora list”, was winning all subsequent elections. The main feature of the Croatian political system of that time was a quite unclear limit between the authorities of the legislative, executive and judicial powers. Bluntly, the main power was concentrated in the hands of president Franjo Tudjman.

The media were formally free and independent, but the HDZ (CDU) managed to obtain a firm control over the main daily newspaper and TV, defined as “state television”. During the war days it was the television that was the principal source of information for the majority of citizens.

The war has further strengthened the crisis in the economy, typical of all transitional countries. But one of the fundamental problems of the Croatian economic transition is in the fact that the representatives of the ruling party came into possession of the best companies, obtained the most influential media, the telecommunications, etc. The ruling party guaranteed to itself favourable loans, low prices of shares and/or equity of privatised companies as well as other ill-founded privileges. Through such schemes the HDZ had practically gained control over everything that survived and possessed some worth in the Croatian economy.

The unemployment was partially amortised through inclusion of a part of the active population into police and military forces needed for

the defence of the country¹ and by employment in other ministries and newly founded institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of the President). Some important parts of the national economy, like tourism, transit traffic, shipbuilding and others, came to a standstill due to the war. Furthermore crimes, drugs and a rising moral and material crisis were felt all over the devastated country.

The international community was mostly critical of the Croatian transition processes. Main objections were aimed at the lack of media freedom, the electoral law, the Croatian policy regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina and the problem of the Serb refugees. Based on this, the doors to main European economic and security integration processes were closed for Croatia, although Croatia has declared its interest to join the EU and NATO. During the CDU and president Tudjman Croatia was accepted into the UN, OSCE, the World Bank, IMF, the Council of Europe and to a regional organisation – the Central European Initiative (CEI). But the exclusion from major organisations like NATO, EU, WEU, Partnership for Peace, and their activities have disabled Croatia to strengthen its concrete political, economic and military forms of co-operation with the developed Western European countries. Furthermore, Croatia was firmly rejecting all attempts by the international community to take part in the regional forms of co-operation, stating that these are all attempts to bring Croatia into some “new Yugoslavia”, “Balkanoslavia”, and to link Croatia firmly again with the “backward Balkans”.

2. The War

The war has additionally exhausted Croatia’s economy. Direct war damages are being estimated to USD 27 billion. The price of war was huge. During the war, military expenditures were as high as 15% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

¹ Estimates state that during the whole time of the war some 350,000 people, or 7.3% of the overall population, were connected with the army. Croatian Army 2000 – National security, armed forces, democracy, Zagreb, 1999, p. 50.

The war has intensified nationalistic feelings, and the ethnic and religious communities that were living in Croatia before (especially Croatian and Serbian) found themselves separated by a deep ditch. Both in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina numerous war crimes over civilians of other nationalities were committed. People were murdered, looted and expelled. This has caused significant demographic changes, as well as changes in the structure of the population. Croatian atrocities were often justified by the aggression on Croatia, which culminated by the extreme statement given by the President of the Supreme Court – that no crime can be committed in a war of defence war of our territory.²

War has also caused a strong national cohesion of all three sides (Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian). The Croatian government was underlining the “statehood” as a paramount value that was expected to engage all existing resources, energies and emotions of the population and direct them to the creation and the defence of the national state. In those days a very influential president’s adviser marked the police, army and the Church as “institutions that are forming an axis of Croatian state and society”. President Tudjman was also often accenting on the significance of the development of the Croatian armed forces. On several occasions president Tudjman described Croatian armed forces as something, “on which the Croatian state politics and the Croatian people may found their overall policy”.

After the military successes in 1995, in which vast majority of the occupied Croatian territories were liberated, as well as large parts of the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina (in co-operation with Croatian Defence Council and the Croatian Army in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina), the leadership declared Croatia as a “regional power”.³ The proclaimed “strategic US-Croatian alliance” was meant to underline the Croatian military contribution to the overall policies of the international community on the territories of former Yugoslavia. But, notwithstanding the military contribution, the relations with military-political and other Western

² Ibid., p. 50.

³ Official domestic and foreign sources were, as a rule, using the term “regional power” only for the Croatian military, not for Croatia as a state.

institutions that Croatia was willing to join - NATO, WEU, and EU – are based on acceptance of a system of values, promoted by those very institutions. The Croatian authorities made a wrong assessment, believing that it will be based only on the strength of the Croatian military and on the readiness to use it that Croatia will be accepted as an equal partner of the new international community. Ever since the “Zagreb crisis” 1995-1996, when the President of the Republic refused to recognise and accept the results of the local elections in Zagreb, won by the opposition – the systematic criticism by the international community was rising. In the overall post-Cold-War security system the so called “hard-security” was being gradually enlarged with “soft-security”, through the introduction of democratic standards, respect of human rights, extended democratic civil control of the armed forces, application of non-military dispute resolution mechanisms and so on. Advocates of this new concept (especially among the former army commanders) were labelled by the Croatian leadership as national traitors, dilettantes, devils, “sheep”, “goose” and so on.

It may be concluded that the Croatian system of national security and Croatian armed forces were being created and developed in an extremely unfavourable initial conditions characterised by transition and war, with no existing tradition of democratic institutions in that segment of society. The situation on the battlefields and the unclear competences of the various institutions of the political system has resulted in a full convergence of the military and the political decision-making. Both the security-defence system and the Croatian armed forces of that time were certainly not meeting the criteria and the standards, expected in a democratic society.

III Organisation and Legal Structure of the System of National Security and Armed Forces

The system of national security and defence in Croatia consists of several institutions, differing in functions, authorities and relations among them.

1. Structure

According to the Constitution, the President of the Republic is a Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, and according to the Law on Service in the Armed Forces his title is “Vrhovnik” (“Supreme Commander”). The Law on the Defence further regulates his authorities and responsibilities, regarding the armed forces as well. The President of the Republic issues directions, orders, decisions, rulings and other acts governing the foundations of the structure and preparation of the armed forces, as well as their training, armament and equipment. Following the proposal made by the Minister of Defence, the President of the Republic issues acts determining the overall volume, number and mobilisation development of the armed forces, as well as the organisation of units, services, headquarters and commands. The Military Cabinet is at President’s disposal, as counselling and preparatory body, as well as the Military Adviser.

Croatian Sabor (Parliament) is the highest legislative power of the country. It consists of the House of Representatives and the House of Counties. In the field of national security the House of Representatives issues legislation governing the obligations that the national defence imposes on the citizens, their property and determines the basic principles of the organisation of defence. Deliberations on the draft Law on Military Budget, adopted every year, should enable all interested Members of Parliament (MPs) to get to know the defence situation and to determine their position regarding the further development of the defence and the military policy. Prior to the deliberation on certain issues in the House of Representatives, these issues are being discussed at the Sabor’s Committee for internal policy and national security. The scope of responsibilities of this Committee is very wide and issues like national security and defence represent only a narrow segment. The State Auditing Office is directly accountable to the House of Representatives. This is the only body through which Sabor may control the activities of the Ministry of Defence and the Croatian Army, namely through the control of finances. Until 1998 the State Auditing Office was not auditing the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior and was not submitting at least those findings to the House of Representatives.

The **Cabinet of Ministers**, within the scope of its authorities, proposes the legislation to Sabor, including the legislation governing the military, and if presided over by the President of the Republic, it may issue certain decisions regarding the defence policy.

National Security Office (UNS) is a state executive body entrusted with co-ordination and supervision of the work of other administrative bodies, especially of ministries dealing with matters relevant to national security. A Chairman, who is appointed and released by the President of the Republic, runs the Office. The UNS is a mixed civilian-military body, encompassing also following services: Croatian Intelligence Service (HIS), Headquarters for National Security (SONS), Security Headquarters and Intelligence Academy. During the mandate of president Tudjman a military unit – the I. Croatian Guard Regiment – assigned for president's security, was also a part of the Security Headquarters.

The Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Croatia (MORH) is one of the, so called, state ministries, and performs administrative and expert tasks in the area of the defence, as regulated by the Law on Defence, Law on Service in the Armed Forces, Law on State Administration, as well as by the decisions of the President of the Republic.

The Ministry of Defence has undergone several transformations since its creation in 1990. The present structure of the Ministry of Defence is regulated by an unpublished Decision on Basic Structure of the MORH of December 1997. The Decision should have been applied as of August 1998, but, allegedly, is being applied only partially as of October 1998. This structure was to transform the wartime structure into a peacetime structure of the Ministry. Basic purposes of this transformation are the creation of the organisation adjusted to the peaceful development of the country and reaching the Euro-Atlantic standards.

The chain of command runs from the President of the Republic, as the Commander-in-Chief, to the Minister of Defence, down to the Chief of Staff and then to organisational units within their command.

The Minister of Defence is heading the Ministry and has one deputy and eight assistant ministers. The State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence conducts legal, property-related and protocol tasks at the MORH. The Minister of Defence is a civilian, while the deputy, assistants and state secretary are commissioned officers.

General Staff, Defence Inspectorate, Institute for Defence Studies, Research and Development and Administrations and Offices of the Defence are all part of the Ministry of Defence. The Military Council, as an advisory body, is also formed within the Ministry of Defence. Apart from the Minister and the Chief of the General Staff, a certain number of experts also participate in this body, appointed by the President of the Republic upon proposals by the Minister and the Chief of the General Staff.

General Staff of the Republic of Croatia (GSOSRH) structured within the Ministry of Defence for performing professional tasks for the President of the Republic. According to the Law on Defence, the Chief of the General Staff is directly responsible to the President of the Republic in all questions connected with commanding and use of armed forces both in war and peace. The Chief of General Staff is, after the Supreme Commander, the highest in rank military officer in Croatia and is superior to all commands and units, except those directly subordinated to the President of the Republic through the UNS and its Security department. The organisation of the GSOSRH is regulated by the act signed by the Joint Chief of Staff, who appoints the chiefs of certain units within it as well. A new structure of the GSOSRH is defined in a non-published Decision on Basic Structure of the GSORSRH of the president of 5 December 1997.

The Ministry of Defence and the GSORSRH have somewhat similar structure, but while in the Ministry the accent is put on preparation of the defence, the main task of the GSORSRH is operational conducting of defence and military operations. In case of the war a war Cabinet is being formed, members of which are being appointed by the Supreme Commander.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia are defined by the law as a form of organisation and preparation of Croatian citizen for armed defence and a main pillar of armed resistance. According to the Constitution and the Law on Defence, the Armed Forces are prepared during peace-time as a principal defence force capable of timely resisting and blocking of a sudden enemy strike, or to remove other threats. In peace-time, the Armed Forces are preparing human and other resources for defending the country in the case of war.

Since Croatia did not inherit any armed forces from the previous state, the Armed Forces had different organisational forms after the country's independence.

During the period that ended by the adoption of the Croatian Law on Defence (July 1991), they consisted of police forces (professional, reserve and drafted cadre). By the decision of the President of the Republic of April 20, 1991 the National Guard was formed (ZNG) as the first military formation of the new state. The National Guard as the first professional, uniformed and armed formation of a military organisation was a part of the Ministry of Interior, but under the command of the Minister of Defence. In 1991 members of the former Territorial Defence have joined the defence of the country within the newly formed brigades under the command of the Minister of Defence. By adoption of the Law for Defence the Armed Forces and the National Guard formed unique armed forces, subordinated to the Supreme Commander. Units of the former Territorial Defence became the reserve of the ZNG. By the presidential decision of 24 December 1991 Domobran forces were formed as a territorial component of the reserve, filled in accordance to the territorial principle. Therefore, the armed forces are formed of the Croatian Army, which consists of National Guard (ZNG) and Domobran units.

The Law on Changes and Amendments to the Law for Defence from 1996, removes the term Croatian Army from legislative terminology, so thereupon only the term 'armed forces' is being used. As of 1996 the Armed Forces of the Republic of Croatia have the following components: Croatian Infantry (HkoV), Croatian Military Maritime Forces (HRM) and Croatian Military Air Force.

The armed forces have peacetime and wartime regime. During the peacetime regime armed forces are filled with professional cadre (officers and sentries) and recruits who are serving obligatory 10 months service.

Peacetime composition of the armed forces is organised in six military areas of the Infantry. Seven professional guardian brigades – infantry and motorised - form an axis of this composition.

The Ministry of Defence provides a logistic support to the armed forces.

Catholic military ordinance headed by a bishop is also active in the Croatian armed forces. The ordinance has 16 chapels. There are no military priests of other religions in the Croatian armed forces.

After the war both military courts and military prosecutions have been terminated, leaving the regular courts to deal with all cases. The armed forces have kept only the internal disciplinary proceedings.

2. Legislation

Apart from the constitutional and legislative provisions regulating the general issues in structuring the national system of security and the armed forces, their primary tasks and responsibilities, the Croatian public has no knowledge of any other documents, which would regulate the policy of national security and defence, and organisation and use of armed forces.

National interests and goals of the security policy, coherent strategy, methods and resources for its implementation are all noted in a very general and abstract way in few programme documents. There are no legally accepted documents on concepts and strategies of national security and defence, nor on military strategy.

This lack of adequate documentation and discussion is especially notable when speaking of armed forces, their volume, methods of service, procurement, civil supervision, management, military budget

etc. Parliamentary discussions on budget present a rare opportunity to open these questions. But due to the absence of information these discussions usually lack expertise and quality.⁴

Except by the Constitution, management and basic relations within the armed forces are regulated by the provisions of the Law for Defence, changed several times since the beginning of the war, the Law on Service in Armed Forces (from March 1995), and a number of other regulations and internal acts.

A wider framework of regulation of the security and defence system was repeatedly changed through laws such as the Law on Organisation and Authorities of the Ministries and Administrations, Law on Internal Affairs, Law on the National Security Office, Law on Procedures in the Croatian Sabor, and a number of rulings, acts, decisions issued both by the President of the Republic and the Cabinet of Ministers.

3. Governance and control

The problems of the Croatian security and defence system, of the armed forces after the parliamentary and presidential elections⁵ of 3 January 2000 are still big. Competitions of different institutions and organisations are overlapping and partly they are not regulated by legislation. Even existing laws are not fully utilised. The Ministry of Defence is not sending yearly reports, which is the normal practice in democratic states (The White Papers). It is not known if the Office for National Security (UNS) was sending the report to the parliament, which

⁴ The Cabinet has proposed approximately USD 1 billion for the 1999 military budget, without specifying any developmental programmes that could justify this sum. The opposition parties were challenging the budget from similar abstract positions by calling it a “militaristic” one, while the advocates of the proposed budget were protesting against “insufficient means for defence”. Current statements that the Croatian military budget should be reduced to NATO standards have also been offered without any concrete argumentation of such reductions.

⁵ It should be noted that the Croatian military had recognised the results of the elections and they continued normal work with the new High Commander, President Stjepan Mesic who came from the Croatian National Party and with the new Prime Minister, Ivica Racan (Social democratic Party).

is also required by law. In the Parliament there is no specialised body, overseeing the armed forces, their development, supply of arms and technique. The question of national security and defence is mixed with other very wide questions of international and foreign policy.

There is not also an adequate control by the public. Due to the recent full closeness of the Croatian security and defence forces, and the rather negative feeling among some civilians and scholars, Croatia is now having very few educated civilians who are able to discuss and plan policy together with the military.

Former Study of Defence which was created at Zagreb's Department for Political Sciences in 1975., was abandoned in 1994. It was one of the first measures of the new Croatian Ministry for Education, which was also ideologically motivated as a continuation of elimination of the subject self-defence, which in the days of former Yugoslavia was taught in every school. Instead of this subject nothing new was offered.

Co-operation between civilians and military people, which is the basis for democratic control and compromise on political and military interests of the country, does not exist in Croatia yet.

From 1992 in the frames of the Office for strategic research, created in the Ministry of Defence, some research activities were started in different fields: anthropology, psychology, sociology. In the same year the work was started on some other projects: Experiences from the Patriotic War, geostrategic elements of Croatia, Armed forces of Croatia, Global and regional strategies, Logistic of Croatian Army, Command and Information System. In these projects co-operation of civilian experts and military people was reached. One of the projects was elaborating the Strategic defence of Croatia. It was partly published, but was classified as a whole. After the war work on the projects was abandoned, the teams of experts were not meeting any more, and the finished studies were not offered for public discussion.

Research activities, connected with the Patriotic War were also politicised. In the days of President Tudjman no one dared to touch the issue of a "sacred war". But the new regime, under the influence of the

international community, has started now to draw new light on the war crimes. Conditions were created for co-operation with The Hague Tribunal, the return of Serbs and the re-compensation for all refugees. But radical elements from former military and civilian structures are strongly criticising this policy, stating that with such new policy the government is betraying the Patriotic War, the sacrifices of the people, and the position of all patriotic fighters.

The new Minister of War Veterans is sharply attacked as a person who started the process of revision of the privileges, which were lavishly given to the veterans (pensions, invalidities, privileges in getting apartments, cars, schooling). The strongest attack of these factors was a letter of 12 generals, in which they asked the President to change the policy towards the international community. The main point of criticism is the Croatian co-operation with The Hague Tribunal. But the next day after the letter was published a Presidential act dismissed all 12 generals.

At the same time the Croatian Parliament after bitter discussion promulgated a Declaration on Patriotic War, which is stating that Croatia was leading only a defensive war. It was a political attempt to cool the pressure. But it is quite sure that many issues connected with the war will be on agenda in the future: veterans' privileges, war crimes, Croatian military participation in the war in Bosnia. They will represent a cause for potential political troubles.

Recently accepted changes in the Croatian Constitution,⁶ connected with the position of the President, could clear the relations within the military and the security services and they could improve the democratic control over the armed forces and civil-military relations. A main precondition of this is the change in the present armed forces.

⁶ By accepting constitutional changes on 9.November 2000 Croatia has changed the semi-presidential system with the system of parliamentary democracy.

4. Cadre policy

Having no clear basic documents, national goals, concepts, strategies and doctrine and the pointed responsibility of their shaping, it was hard to talk on concrete structuring of military forces. All political actors in Croatia are in agreement that this is needed and this restructuring has to be on the level of NATO standards.

The peaceful structure of the armed forces includes 62,450. 38,450 of them are professional soldiers and officers and 24,000 conscripts. 9,500 civilians serve in the Ministry of Defence.

Critics are saying that even such peace projection number is too high, considering the territory of Croatia and the number of its inhabitants. Also it is not in the frames of the new European security architecture and particularly it is not proportionate to the magnitude of the security challenges. Members of NATO and transitional countries which are invited to NATO, are having less forces compared to number of inhabitants (Poland - 0.62%, The Czech Republic - 0.57%, Hungary - 0.43%) With its 1.34% Croatia would be second in Europe, immediately after Greece (1.59%)⁷.

It is hard to say what is the real number of the military in Croatia. The former Minister of Defence claimed on 29 January 1999 that the armed forces have in service only 66 per cent of the number, which is projected with the new structure. The Ministry of Defence in December 1998, according to the obligations with the OSCE, was informing the Organisation that in the services of the Croat armed forces there are 61,506 men and women.

The number of 45,000 professional soldiers and officers is used in the end of 2000. In the period of the last three years the tendency is to cut this amount by 16,000 and another cut should be made in the next ten years when 6,000 will leave the forces. This number does not include the people who would for different reasons leave the ranks voluntarily.⁸

⁷ Vecernji list, 2 January, 2000.

⁸ Normal fluctuation from the military is 3-5% yearly.

On the other side, the reduction of the armed forces of Croatia cannot be made easily, due to the harsh economic situation (more than 360,000 unemployed, which makes 22% of the population). The problem is that the whole Croat economy is in crisis, there are no foreign investments and the domestic resources are not adequate to start the production. All cuts in the military sphere should be made with maximum sensitivity, and try not to deepen the economic and political crisis. A set of measures should be created like loans for employment and stimulation of employers. Beside those unfavourable economic and social conditions the big problem is in the lack of formal training of military people.

5. Training

The creation of the Croat military forces in the conditions of war and transition from one regime to another has led to the heterogeneous composition of the Croat military.

In the beginning of the Patriotic War a small group of officers of the former Yugoslav Peoples Army (YPA), mostly Croats, had joined the ranks of the Croatian fighters. In the ranks of the fighters were people coming as volunteers and they were bearing strong animosity against the YPA. Former officers were also confronted with these sentiments, but they were needed as professionals. Still the majority of the people who were in commanding positions were without professional training and they were getting their formal ranks due to their courage, party affiliation (mostly members of the Croatian Democratic Union) and family connections. This system for long time was the main source of recruiting new officers.⁹

During the Patriotic War fighters were unable to get a formal civilian education. For the objectives of military education a special school was opened to offer courses for the officers at the different levels of command. Special short courses for officers were organised and for the highest in rank officers the Military School was created. The future military attaches are educated in the Military Diplomatic Academy. All

⁹ Minister Susak was stating that “war experience is much more important than some diplomas”, *Hrvatska vojska...* pp. 179.

these programs are for people who already are in the military services and are not open for civilians.

Unity and compatibility of military and civilian education systems were not created during the war and there is no sign that it could happen now.¹⁰

As professional training is more and more becoming a product of peaceful evolution and of the new Croatian ties with NATO, many officers are applying for the Graduate Programme in International Relations at Zagreb's University.

6. Military Expenses

The real figures of the military budget are not very precise. Official statistics are just one part of the picture. During the Patriotic War part of the military expenditures were not registered anywhere. President Tudjman was claiming that during the war years the military forces were getting around 15 per cent of the GDP. At the same time official statistics were not giving more than 10 per cent.

The claims that the military budgets of 1997, 1998 and 1999 have been reduced should be met with doubts. Part of the budget was re-distributed to other institutions. The so-called transfers to the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina were taken away from the military budget and were channelled to the Croatian part of the Federation via the Ministry of Finance.¹¹ The sum of money, which Croatia was sending to Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina: pensions for veterans, support for invalids, medical care, rehabilitation, was representing in 1999 680 million Kuna or 109 million USD. After the change of regime these

¹⁰ All efforts to create a Centre for Strategic Studies had no impact and the Centre was not organised.

¹¹ Croatian Prime Minister Ivica Racan stated that Croatia "will fulfil all its obligations toward Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina: military pensions, invalidities but on transparent way through legal institutions". I. Racan, "Making up for lost time", NATO review-Building Stability in the Balkan, summer-autumn 2000, pp. 8-10.

costs were transferred to the newly created Ministry of Croatian Defenders.

All these changes towards transparency in the military budget were made under the strong pressure of the international community, which was clearly saying that only democracy would open the door for Croatian membership in Partnership for Peace.

This structure of the military budget is still not favourable on many issues. More than 90 of per cent of the whole budget is for salaries,¹² logistic and supply. Less than 10 percent of budget is provided for technical equipment and modernisation.

For all these reasons it could be said that the predicted 3% military spending from the budget would not be reached soon or easy.

IV Politicisation of the Military and Civil-Military Relations

The Law for Defence of 1991 forbids in its paragraph 42. any political activity, the creation of parties, organising political meetings and manifestations in the armed forces. However, in the Rules of the armed forces from 1992 membership of military in the political parties was allowed. Later it was confirmed by the changes of the Law for Defence from 1993. During the Patriotic War and the years in which Croatian Democratic Union (CDU) was in power, the majority of the highly ranking officers were members of the CDU. The former Minister of Defence, Miljavac, who was claiming that the majority of the officers were active in the CDU, also confirmed this.

In the days of war political affiliation to the CDU was very often substitute for the lack of formal training or military experience. Beside President Tudjman, who was charismatic leader of the Party and the Supreme commander of the military, Minister of Defence, Gojko Šušak

¹² There are important differences in the salaries. Members of guards' brigades (professionals) are having much higher salaries in comparison to professionals, employed by other services.

was practically the second ranking person in the Central Board of the CDU. Generals and high in rank officers were regularly on the party election lists. In the House of Representatives of the Croatian Parliament (1991-1995) there were three representatives of CDU who were also on the highest military positions (chief of staff, commander of the Osijek military area and the leader of the Office for political activities. In 1995 the political activities of the military in legislature and courts were eliminated.

The Croatian political opposition started to fight for de-politicisation of the police and the army in 1993. But the CDU was strongly rejecting these proposals, claiming that it would diminish the human rights of the military people. The next attempt of the political opposition had also failed in 1995, but was having only one concrete impact on the abolishing of the Political Office in the Ministry. Soon, it became clear this was only a cosmetic change and that its tasks were transferred to the Office for Public Relations, whose slow reactions, apologetic writing, the mythology created around the military, and politically inspired speeches were becoming a normal way of communication.¹³

The politicisation of the military forces, the political, social and financial powers of the Ministry were extremely strong when Gojko Šušak was the Minister of Defence. A lot of special links were created with the Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry made lucrative contracts with the members of CDU, and on the other side 120,000 lawsuits were started against the Ministry, which was not paying its bills.

After Šušak's death Dr. Andrija Hebrang was appointed as the new Minister. He was the former Minister of Health. Immediately after taking office he announced radical changes in the Ministry and in its

¹³ When some Croatian journals were publishing materials, connected with poor behaviour of the security services, protecting President Tudjman on the island of Brijuni, Ministry of Defence issued a statement in which all journalists and citizens, witnessing such behaviour of the military, were called "citizens with no Croatian origin, Serbs, and children of officers and generals, of former YPA who are still having strong hate for everything that is Croatian", Hrvatska vojska.... pp. 175.

financial activities, the creation of a new peaceful structure, control by the civilian sector and the new model of training the military. Confronted with very strong internal opposition in the military, Minister Hebrang after two months of crisis resigned. Pavao Miljavac was appointed as a new Minister. Since he was the actual chief of staff during the same day he retired and immediately received the ministerial position.

The first Minister who was a proper civilian was Jozo Radoš. He was a representative of the ruling coalition of six parties. Many transitional problems in the Ministry are not solved and there are also not easy relations between the Ministry and the Chief of General Staff. Some functions, which in democratic states belong to the Chief of General Staff are not yet given back and also many scandals connected with the past (sale of arms, drugs, war crimes) are influencing the work of the Ministry.

V Integration in the international security organisations and international co-operation

The new Croatian regime and some retired military people are stating that Croatia is Mediterranean, Panonian and Danube country and for that reasons her place in Europe must be unquestionable.¹⁴

In the PpP Croatia was invited only after the change of the political regime in the 2000. But even before that many areas of co-operation had existed and international links were cultivated.

The Croatian army with its engineering staff was accepted in the OSCE mission in Nagorny Karabakh. The co-operation was developed with missions of EU, observers of OSCE, UN forces in Croatia, NATO forces in Croatia and with the forces, which are stationed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia was supporting activities of NATO and WEU in the peace operations in the area. During all this time air corridors were

¹⁴ Antun Tus: "Obrambeni i sigurnosni aspekti integracije u europske i transatlanske strukture", in Hrvatska i Europa, Zagreb, 1997. pp. 125-139.

open and flight controls in Zagreb and Split were also co-operating with NATO.

The biggest results of the military co-operation were in the training.

USA was the first NATO country, which organised in 1995 joint Croatian-American civil-military programmes for professional training of the Croatian military, development of democratic institutions and civil control over the military. Soon after the American offer other European countries started also co-operation.¹⁵

From 1999 the Croatian military are trained in the Marshall Centre in Garmisch. There are also training programmes organised for medical staff and special seminars in German language. The value of the German support to the Croatian military is around two million US dollars.

Croatian and British forces are intensifying their co-operation after 1997. Britain is organising special language seminars for Croatian officers and also few seminars are organised on the Civil-Military relations.

A similar co-operation does exist with France, Turkey, Italy, Norway, Spain, Hungary and Poland. The Croatian Ministry for Defence has planned to spend two million US dollars¹⁶ for the training of military people abroad in the year 2000.

¹⁵ Direct US military training assistance to Croatia grew from 65.000 in 1995. to 500.000 US dollars in 2000. This money was provided to Croatia through the congressionally authorised International Military Education and Training (IMET) fund. During this period the USA trained nearly 200 Croatian military and civilian personnel in the USA and several hundred more at one or two week seminars held in Croatia. Kristian J. Wheaton: "Cultivating Croatia's Military", NATO review- Building Stability in the Balkans, summer-autumn 2000, pp. 10-12.

¹⁶ More than 90% of the candidates are going for training in the NATO countries.

It is hoped that all these Croatian candidates will help to foster the transformation of the Croatian armed forces in parallel with the democratic development of Croatia.

It was obvious that in Tudjman's time Croatia was not included in the European security structures not because of the military, but primarily for political reasons.

The acceptance of Croatia in the PfP during the first half of 2000 was a concrete award for the democratic changes, promoted after 3 January. The whole process of democratisation of society includes also civilian control over the military and stronger civil-military co-operation. Unfortunately, these transformations, which were announced by the coalition government now in power are going very slowly and this has an impact on the organisation, concept and direction of the Croatian security and defence system.

VI Conclusion

The security and defence system of Croatia should be based on the basic national interests and has to be part of the general democratic values, principles and norms of a new European order. The vital and unchangeable national interests of Croatia are: defence of the country, her integrity, independence, and national identity with permanent economic and cultural development.¹⁷

The threats to Croatian security are nowadays more connected with the domestic situation than with the international one. Despite the unsolved problems in the relations with Croatian neighbours (Piran's bay, savings in the Ljubljanska banka, Prevlaka, return of refugees, compensation for the war damages, succession of the property from former Yugoslavia)¹⁸ Croatian relations in the region are gradually stabilised.

¹⁷ Antun Tus: "Sigurnost i obrana", Hrvatska Agenda 2000, Zagreb, pp. 35.

¹⁸ See: R. Vukadinovic: "La Croatie de L'après Dayton", in Relations Internationales & Strategiques, Paris, No 28, Hiver, 1997. pp. 63-71., and

The international forces, stationed in the Balkans are very instrumental for stability, eliminating any thought of a serious military threat. Their presence helps stability in the area and gives an impetus to democracy in the Western Balkans.

The political, economic and social problems of the Croatian society and the consequences, which are stemming from them, could hamper the democratic reforms of the armed forces and of Civil-Military relations.

Respect for universal human rights, democratisation of society, transparency of military spending, strengthening of Civil-Military relations are crucial not only for the integration links that Croatia wants to create with the EU and NATO, but they also represent important elements of the new European security architecture. As a small country Croatia has to do all in its power not to miss this opportunity and to build its Euro-Atlantic democratic links.

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