

Original article

Perspectives and development of the Bulgarian military-educational system

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ABSTRACT

The report presents all the current challenges which the Bulgarian military-educational system is facing in the context of the basic features of the security environment and trends for the first half of the 21st century by identifying the main problem areas in its functioning. The status and capabilities of the military-educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria are discussed on the basis of an analysis of key strategic documents in the sectors of education, security and defence, as well as the current state of military and civil education and the inherent activities of the training institutions. Outlined are the basic principles of construction and operation of military-educational systems and the fundamental strategic goals and tasks according to modern strategic security environment and dynamically changing conditions in NATO and the EU. Described are the main elements of the military-educational system as a complex, adaptive and flexible system that develops in unity and complementarity with the system of civil education in Bulgaria. Guidelines are formulated for improving the military educational system in relation to its contribution to strengthening national security and defence of the country in three directions – conceptual, organizational and technological improvement.

KEYWORDS

education, military education, training, civil rights, security



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Introduction

The modern world acknowledges the significance of quality education. In the Lisbon Strategy, Europe declares the necessity of long-term investments in education. Each country needs enough and well-educated human resources as a fundamental prerequisite for enhancing national security. The concept of national security defines national security as a dynamic status in which there is no direct danger of armed attack, political pressure or economical compulsion for the state as well as for the society, so that they can freely realize their development and progress. Specific problematic areas with political, economic, social, ethnic, spiritual, military, information and ecological components are inherent to the national security. Each

one of these components, independently or in combination with the others, as well as with a number of side (secondary) factors, may prove crucial for the national security and all of them are characterized by being, one way or another, dependent on the human resources' level of education. The great problem of our society today is the establishment of a clear and correct policy in the field of education and science, taking into consideration the requirements of the national security system. The employed in the field of security and defence have specific knowledge and skills, acquired through special education, practical experience, skill and individual improvement in work. This defines education as a fundamental element of the human resources preparation, which ensures the appropriate knowledge, skills and competences. We could say, in this very context, that a country's educational system has a significant contribution to the national security, contributing to enhancing the erudition, competence, forming appropriate skills and capacity, acquiring adequate qualification as well as, to a significant extent, affecting personal progress. The educational system should be referred to as a subsystem of the national security system and the military-educational system (MES) is its basic element.

1. Contemporary challenges of the military-educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria

Security strategic environment is complex, dynamic and possesses hardly foreseeable dimensions. The following factors and circumstances influence its forming: globalization; crisis phenomena in the field of finances and economics; spreading of mass destruction weapons and of the means for their supply; climatic, health, demographic, ecological and energy problems; ethno-social and asymmetric risks and threats; threats to the information security; countries with weak systems of state; internal and regional conflicts; European and Euro-Atlantic integration; international democratic community's efforts for maintaining peace and stability [1].

The listed processes, factors and moments form the main features of the security environment and enable the definition of major trends in its development during the first half of the 21st century. We will dwell on the more important characteristics of the security environment.

Firstly, one of its significant characteristics, which was unknown till the end of the 20th century, is the extending globalization.

Secondly, perhaps as a result of globalization, ethno-social, asymmetric and other transnational risks and threats occur constantly.

We can point to the occurrence of transnational organized criminality and illegal human, drug and weapon trafficking as the third important characteristics of the security environment. They threaten not only the stability of countries but also world economic order, and they complicate the strategic security order. Globally, a characteristic feature of the security environment is that the radical Islamic organizations use the Internet space not only for attracting followers and recruiting new members but also for conducting information war.

Fourthly, the financial and economic crisis that occurred as well as the negative trends prove that the economic stability is very fragile.

Fifthly, climate changes, the natural anomalies and calamities occurring as well as the wide reading of dangerous illnesses additionally complicate the existing problems – poverty, social tension, and ecological situation – and threaten the governance and stability of countries.

Sixthly, the problems connected to the emerging and escalating lack of energy and natural resources become a more and more serious challenge for all economically developed countries.

Seventhly, there is a sharp increase in the risks for the information security and the threats of cyber-attacks against strategic civil and military communication-information systems and powers participating in missions and operations outside the country's territory.

Two problematic areas can be defined in the general context of analysis of these processes:

The first one – is unprepared for “showing off” and functioning of the academic staff in the “new” and dynamically changing environment, meaning that the development of the academic staff of MES has been conducted according to other specific rules until now, where proving their competences, skills and abilities depended on certain rules and restrictions.

The second one is that the civil educational system has opened towards the outside environment long ago and this process is progressing considerably faster – i.e. it has offered its scientific product, succeeded in commercializing its scientific and scientific-applied results, which puts it in a different position.

To summarize, we can point that researchers, experts and political analysts are unanimous that the contemporary security environment is more complicated, unpredictable and full of risks and threats of various nature, origin, direction and power of effect.

The following major conclusions can be defined:

1. Contemporary strategic security environment.
2. Due to the changing security environment, MES is facing a number of challenges.
3. In order to meet the listed requirements, MES should satisfy a number of conditions.

2. Condition and capabilities of the military-educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria

According to the National Defense Strategy and the Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria, one of the key priorities in the development of a modern defense institution is *training and preparation of the people in the defense according to the present-day standards*, as the human resources are the most important element of the defense capabilities and basic capital of the armed forces [1]. *Military preparation* represents quite a purposeful process of selection, training, education, development, evaluation, self-evaluation and self-training for establishing leaders capable of implementing modern, effective and resulting operative-tactic and strategic management.

The system of preparation of human resources for the armed forces is implemented as individual military preparation of the staff, collective preparation of the permanently appointed formations and joint preparation within established national or multi-national military formations [1]. The military-educational system ensures individual training for the servicemen in the system of armed forces preparation, defined in the Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Bulgaria. That is why individual training is reviewed in details [2-5].

Individual preparation includes the training in national and foreign military academies, higher military schools and professional colleges that ensure the initial training and the consecutive professional qualification of servicemen and military leaders. Individual training ensures basic knowledge and skills of servicemen and constitutes one of the main criteria in their career

development as well as the base for building ready-for-action headquarters and formations [6]. The military-educational system provides the necessary education and qualification for successful realization in the military profession as well as in other fields of public life, after discharging the servicemen from the contract-based engagements for service in the armed forces.

The mission of the military-educational system is to conduct training of military servicemen and civilians aimed at acquiring education, qualification, and competences as well as to form value orientations and mind-set, physical and mental qualities that comply with the needs of the armed forces with regard to building the necessary defense capabilities [6].

The main principles concerning the building and functioning of the military-educational system are:

- conformity with the applicable legislation,
- combination of uniform governance with academic autonomy and self-governing,
- innovation and conformity with the modern practice,
- education relevance, according to the cadre's declarers,
- unity of training and education,
- system, succession and continuity between the educational stages and qualification levels, modules and stages of preparation,
- conformity to national and allies' doctrines and standards,
- efficaciousness and economic effectivity,
- openness, mobility and competitiveness,
- market orientation.

The main elements of the military-educational system are:

- staff,
- training organization,
- training technology.

These elements are functionally connected to the implementation of the training – educational, administrative-managerial, social and living as well as financial activities for individual preparation of cadres needed for the armed forces [7].

We can summarize that the military-educational system in the Republic of Bulgaria is a complex, adaptive and flexible system that develops in unity and is complementary to the civil education system without duplicating it. It is meant to correspond to the needs of the Bulgarian armed forces with regard to the training of servicemen and civilians and other administrations as well as of foreign citizens on the issues of security, defense policy and military science by the Ministry of Defence. The characteristic feature of the MES is the wide scope of trainees' categories – cadets, post-graduate students, listeners and doctorate candidates.

Since 01.06.2010, the higher military schools are structured as follows:

Vasil Levski National Military University:

- All-army Faculty – town of Veliko Tarnovo,
- Aviation Faculty – town of Dolna Mitropoliya,
- Artillery, Air defense and CIS Faculty – town of Shumen,
- Center for professional and continuing education,

- Center for post-graduate qualification,
- Center for distance training,
- Center for preparation of cadres for peace-keeping operations and experience study,
- Institute for Research and Innovation,
- Language and Physical Training Department,
- Foreign Language Training Department,
- Professional Sergeant College.

Nikola Vaptsarov Higher Naval School:

- Navigation Faculty,
- Engineer Faculty,
- Post-graduate Qualification Department,
- Professional Sergeants' College,
- Military Preparation Center.

**2.1. System for the training of officers and civil officers
at operative and strategic level**

Georgi Stoykov Rakovski Military Academy conducts training of officers at operative and strategic level.

Since 01.06.2010, the main departments of the academy are:

- National Security and Defense Faculty,
- Command-Staff Faculty,
- Linguistic Training Department,
- Institute for Perspective Defense Research.

The following conclusions can be made after analyzing the overall condition and possibilities of the military-educational system:

1. The construction, functioning and development of the military-educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria is in compliance with the legislation in force and consists of the *following structures*: military academies; higher military schools; scientific and research institutes and professional colleges that include elements such as lecturers staff, training and material base, organization and technology of training.
2. In compliance with its mission, MES, as a whole, performs its tasks successfully with regard to the training of all categories of servicemen (officers, sergeants and soldiers) and civil officers from the Ministry of Defense as well as of officers from other ministries and administrations, central and local administration, with a view to the acquisition of education, qualification, and competencies as well as shaping of qualities that correspond to the needs of the armed forces with regard to building the relevant defense capabilities. The acquisition of higher education by the officers' staff is implemented on a tactic, *operative and strategic level* in professional profile Military Sciences. Training in professional profile National Security at operative and strategic level is conducted for civilians. Moreover, they are all offered training for educational and scientific degree at the doctoral level in accredited professional profiles and specialties, and they can also acquire a job

and additional post-graduate qualifications, depending on the requirements for occupying a particular position.

3. Under the conditions of the dynamically changing security environment, under the influence of the processes originating from NATO and EU regarding the education and training and the limited resources allocated by the state to the security and defense sector, MES is confronted with new requirements that outline the directions for its development and improvement in the contemporary conditions. At the same time, there are a number of *discrepancies and problems* for MES to solve, namely: excessive burdening of the lecturers' staff, ageing of lecturer staff with academic rank, lack of motivation for new lecturers, limited financial resources for the maintenance of educational and material base and infrastructure, etc.

3. Directions for improvement of the military-educational system and its contribution to strengthening national security and the defense of the country

Analysing the condition of the main elements of the military-educational system (personnel, educational and material base, organization and technology of education) and considering the necessity of complete military education harmonizing with the requirements of the European and NATO directives, we can outline the main directions and possibilities of improving the Bulgarian military-educational system in conceptual, organizational and technological aspect [2-5, 8-12].

3.1. Conceptual improvement of the military-educational system

The membership of the Republic of Bulgaria in NATO and the EU brings the necessity for a medium turn plan for entire harmonization of military education with the military education provided by similar colleges and academies in the allied countries, for enhancing the competitiveness of the system of military education and increasing qualifications at operative and strategic level. In pursuance of the signed international treaties and the adopted national strategic documents, with Minister of defense's order № OX-249/18.04.2011, organization for development of the MES is established in compliance with the White Book of Defense and Armed Forces and the Plan for the development of Bulgarian Armed Forces to 2020. It is planned for the system of acquiring military education and qualification to be updated in compliance with NATO strategic doctrines and directives from the Lisbon strategy for building European education space and European qualification frame, as well as the requirements for higher military education and professional training connected to them.

Activities aimed at the development and establishment of the system of acquiring military education and qualification in compliance with the Alliance's strategic documents is conducted in the following directions:

1. Further improvement of the military-educational system according to national and European legislation and NATO directives aimed at achieving quality individual preparation of the armed forces personnel.
2. Acquisition of knowledge and enhancement of skills aimed at building necessary skills and competences for achieving conformity with the NATO member countries in participation in multi-national missions, trainings and operations.

3. Implementation of a close and continuous relation between educational and training institutions and the users/requester of cadres.
4. Better use of information technologies based on WEB-training, simulators and trainers and the introduction of modern technologies of lecturing and learning.
5. Ensuring the quality of higher education and professional training in qualification courses.
6. Establishment and conformity with the national qualification system with the European qualification frame (EQF).
7. Establishment of new and modification of the existing courses for acquisition and extension of qualifications with a view to ensuring career development of sergeants' staff.
8. All certificates from the qualifications acquired, diplomas and other type of documents issued by higher military schools, testifying to having a thorough grounding on the relevant EQF level.
9. Improvement in the preparation of sergeants' staff in professional sergeants' (petty officers') colleges as well as through creating opportunities for adopting the military rank of a Junior Sergeant after completing training in a training center of the relevant type of armed force.
10. Provision of training throughout the entire period of military service and use of the possibilities of information and communication technologies to enable access to training at any time.
11. Increase in the investments in military education and qualification and efforts for up-dating and modernizing the material and training base [13].

Apart from the above-mentioned problems with the ageing lecturers with academic rank, the presence of a great number of vacant lecturers' positions and the lack of motivation system for the officers from the headquarters and armed forces to become lecturers could be solved by means of:

- elaboration of new conceptual documents or making changes in the existing ones to turn them into a powerful tool, with which the status quo can be changed,
- change in some of the strategic organizational regulating documents – Defense and Armed Forces Act (DAFA),
- in order for the position of a lecturer in higher military schools to gain attractiveness, the positions there should be equal or higher than similar ones in the forces or relevant headquarters,
- establishment of 2-3 years of practice in an academic position as a mandatory condition for employment in particular positions at the operative and strategic level in the Ministry of Defense.

3.2. Organizational improvement of the military-educational system

The organizational improvement of the MES includes the elements of personnel and training organization, as far as this process concerns the inter-relation between the academic staff, trainees, administrative and servicing staff of the military-educational entities, but it also influences the organizational structure, responsibilities and inter-action between the institutions that conduct the training, and organizations users and requesters of cadres.

In pursuance of the Plan for the Development of Bulgarian Armed Forces, section Education, Science and Training, it is planned for higher military schools to maintain their institutional and program accreditation, optimize their structures, mainly through the reduction of the administrative and provisioning staff, and create new possibilities for maximum scope of the candidates for training in them [14].

Generally, these directions do not exhaust all possibilities for the optimization of activities but give a path for overcoming the difficulties and opportunity for MES to meet more fully the higher requirements and challenges that result from the security environment [5, 11, 12].

3.3. Technological improvement of the military-educational system

The technological improvement of MES includes the elements of personnel, training and material base as well as technology of training, as this process requires an improvement in the preparation of academic staff, improvement of the training and material base and application of modern forms and methods of training as well as a training quality management system.

Summarizing the information on the actual condition with the main profiles and possibilities for improvement of the Bulgarian military-educational system, the following conclusions could be made [11, 12]:

1. The impact of the processes taking place in NATO and the European Union regarding education and training is the main favorable factor for the future development and improvement of the Bulgarian military-educational system. All this imposes continuous improvement of the system for military education and qualification in at least three aspects – organizational, technological and conceptual.
2. The main issues in the conceptual improvement of the military-educational system are the change and maintenance of the basis of legislation in accordance with the national and European legislation and with the NATO directives, as well as creating favorable conditions for attracting young officers to the lecturers' job, and in the organizational aspect – internal optimization of structures of higher military schools; administrative and providing staff reduction; change in the forms and terms of training; expansion of joint training at strategic and operative level; close interaction and cooperation with the types of armed forces on joint projects; international cooperation and experience exchange with scientific-educational and scientific-research institutes in the country, etc.
3. The opportunities for technological improvement include extended introduction of information technologies, modelling and simulations, building of a new information environment of training and application of new interactive methods and technologies of real-time distant lecturing and life-long training of serviceman and civil officers.

Conclusions

1. The changes in the strategic environment at the beginning of the 21st century, country's equal-rights membership in NATO and the EU, changes in the regulatory acts regarding collective security and defense, transition to professional army, development of a new structure of the armed forces, personnel, armaments and technics reduction, and participation of Bulgarian Armed Forces in international missions and multi-national headquarters

imposed new requirements, challenges and directions for development and improvement of the military-educational system for building efficient armed forces adequate to the dynamically changing circumstances in the security environment.

2. The military-educational system of the Republic of Bulgaria is built on historical roots, experience and traditions. It has highly qualified academic, scientific and expert staff, developed training and material as well as documentary and scientific base, maintenance and improvement of information and training fund, rules, processes and procedures, organization and technology of training and other assets that currently ensure the high quality of the acquired education and qualifications, in compliance with the state educational and qualification requirements, national qualification frame, European and NATO directives.
3. In the circumstances of the dynamically changing environment, complicated processes taking place in NATO and the EU regarding education and training, and limited resources allocated by the state to the security and defense sector, MES faces new requirements thus outline the directions from its development and improvement in the contemporary conditions. In addition, MES has a number of discrepancies and problems to solve, namely: Excessive burdening of lecturer staff, ageing of lecturers with an academic rank, lack of motivation for new lecturers, limited financial resources for the maintenance and modernization of training and material base and infrastructure.
4. NATO and the EU constitute a favorable factor for the future development and improvement of the Bulgarian military-educational system. However, that imposes continuous improvement of the military education and qualification system in three directions – organizational, technological and conceptual. In the *conceptual aspect*, it imposes the establishment and maintenance of legislation compliant with the national and European legislation and the NATO directives for attracting young and perspective officers for lecturers, and in the *organizational aspect* – structures optimization; administrative and providing staff reduction; change in the forms and term of training; joint training; successful financial management; collaboration and cooperation with different types of armed forces; international cooperation and experience exchange within the country, etc. The possibilities for *technological improvement* include extended introduction of information technologies, modeling and simulations as well as application of new interactive methods and technologies of real-time distant lecturing and life-long training of servicemen and civil officers.
5. In the changed security environment, the system of preparation of human resources for the armed forces (individual and collective) includes activities and processes that require time and resources for the training of servicemen towards achieving certain standards. Regardless of where and at what level the serviceman prepares, they have to be provided purposeful, realistic, and challenging preparation with access to adequate resources. These requirements towards the military-educational system are the grounds necessary for building skillful and situation-adaptive servicemen, headquarters and forces.

The condition of MES at the time of the research is objectively connected to and dependent on the security environment in the country and the processes taking place in NATO and the EU regarding education and training. The system functions in the conditions of insufficient financial, material and human resources for the execution of its mission and tasks and develops for setting in full compliance with the state educational and qualification requirements, the national qualification frame and the European and NATO directives.

The military-educational system has established national strategic documents for its future development in medium term and has the potential to perform the planned actions for improvement and contribution to the enhancing of national security and the country's defense. The Bulgarian military education and qualification synchronizing with the ones in the EU and NATO countries in conceptual, organizational and technological aspect is of primary significance for the transformation of military education and for achieving the goals concerning operative compatibility between the armed forces.

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The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Biographical note

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Perspektywy i rozwój bułgarskiego systemu szkolnictwa wojskowego

STRESZCZENIE

Raport przedstawia wszystkie aktualne wyzwania stojące przed bułgarskim systemem szkolnictwa wojskowego w kontekście podstawowych cech środowiska bezpieczeństwa i trendów pierwszej połowy XXI wieku poprzez identyfikację głównych obszarów problemowych w jego funkcjonowaniu. Status i możliwości systemu szkolnictwa wojskowego w Republice Bułgarii są omówione w oparciu o kluczowe dokumenty

strategiczne w sektorach edukacji, bezpieczeństwa i obrony oraz obecny stan edukacji wojskowej i cywilnej oraz nieodłączne działania instytucji szkoleniowych. Przedstawiono podstawowe zasady konstruowania i działania systemów edukacji wojskowej oraz fundamentalne cele strategiczne i zadania w korelacji ze współczesnym środowiskiem bezpieczeństwa strategicznego i dynamicznie zmieniającymi się warunkami w NATO i UE. Główne elementy systemu edukacji wojskowej zostały opisane jako złożony, zdolny do adaptacji, elastyczny system rozwijający się zgodnie i komplementarnie z cywilnym systemem edukacji w Bułgarii. Sformułowano wytyczne dotyczące ulepszenia systemu szkolnictwa wojskowego w Bułgarii w odniesieniu do jego wkładu we wzmocnienie bezpieczeństwa narodowego oraz obronności w trzech kierunkach – rozwoju konceptualnego, organizacyjnego i technologicznego.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE edukacja, szkolnictwo wojskowe, szkolenie, prawa obywatelskie, bezpieczeństwo

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