

TRANSPARENCY MATTERS

Several previous issues of *Information and Security* have carried material directly or indirectly relating to transparency in the conduct of defence and wider security-sector affairs. For example, Volume 5 (2000) contained a lead article on his country's military reform agenda by Guest Editor Velizar Shalamanov, then Deputy Defence Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria. Among other things this piece incorporated a strong endorsement of the importance of *domestic* transparency. In pursuing the reform agenda, Dr Shalamanov wrote, 'we give priority to the improvement of the system of democratic control of armed forces and the security sector as a whole' through, among other things, promoting transparency and accountability. In the same issue, a contribution by Kate Starkey and Andri van Mens noted the growing South-East European interest in *international* transparency – with particular reference to defence budgets – and clearly stated the confidence- and security-building rationale for regional information-sharing.

Since these pieces appeared, interest in the topic has grown steadily – across the Balkans, and especially in Bulgaria – to the extent that it is now appropriate to devote an entire volume to the subject. *Information & Security* invited David Greenwood, Research Director of the Centre for European Security Studies (CESS) – located at Groningen in The Netherlands – to edit this issue. This was a natural selection. In recent years few people have been more energetic in aiding the cause of defence budget transparency among and within the countries of South-Eastern Europe, and few people are more knowledgeable about the subject generally, about what has been accomplished, and about what remains to be done. Most notably, David Greenwood has been one of the godfathers of the Initiative on the Transparency of Military Budgets in South-Eastern Europe – the Budget Transparency Initiative (BTI), for short – that was launched in 2000/2001 under the aegis of the Stability Pact for the region; and in 2002 he was Project Director (and Principal Investigator) of an independent inquiry into arrangements for defence transparency and accountability in the eight so-called 'beneficiary' states of the Stability Pact.

The lead article in this number – written by the Guest Editor himself – is based on the research done for that 2002 investigation. In fact it is a revised version of one of the concluding chapters of his report on the exercise – *Transparency and Accountability*

in the Conduct of Defence Affairs: Policy and Practice in South-Eastern Europe – completed at the beginning of 2003 and scheduled for publication, after updating, in the second half of the year. The piece here summarises the project’s transparency ‘audit’ of arrangements in the region. There are some general observations on these, a long section on ‘good practice’ in the neighbourhood, and a discussion of the problems of ranking or categorising the countries covered in terms of their information-disclosure policies, procedures and publications. In this connection the CESS study opts for a ‘rating’ system – not unlike that used by credit risk organisations – to classify the eight nations. Not surprisingly, Bulgaria and Romania earn the highest ratings. This is attributed in part to the fact that since 1999 they have been following the Membership Action Plan (MAP) process of monitored preparation for NATO (and, of course, at the Prague Summit in November 2002 duly received invitations to accede). The ‘best of the rest’ are the regional candidates for NATO’s third wave of post-Cold War enlargement, viz. Albania, Croatia and Macedonia. The troubled states of the old Yugoslavia – Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro – come lower in the transparency league table. Moldova sits in bottom place.

There follows an essay on the situation in Turkey, by one of that country’s leading civil-military relations specialists. Professor Nilufer Narli’s article is not a comprehensive ‘audit’ of Turkish policy and practice but rather an examination of the factors that explain why there has been some pressure for greater defence transparency in Ankara as there has in other South-East European capitals in the past few years. She identifies and analyses the international, regional, and national (domestic) influences that have been at work, while emphasising that the special position that the military occupy in Turkish politics means that promoting transparency there is a daunting struggle.

The other articles in the ‘Policy’ part of the journal are both about Bulgaria. The theme of Professor Tilcho Ivanov’s piece is that transparency-building here is still very much work-in-progress. He would presumably dispute the high rating that the country gets in David Greenwood’s audit exercise. What clearly distresses Professor Ivanov is the failure of the powers-that-be in Sofia to take on board the lessons of contemporary thinking on public administration, organisational communication theory and management science (for which he has interesting citations). This is a legitimate academic critique, but probably does less than justice to the accomplishments of the dedicated professionals who have been working very hard of late to improve policy-making, planning, programming and budgeting in the country.

One such individual is Bisserka Boudinova, who has written a candid insider’s account of the recent work on an ambitious Integrated Defence Resources Management System that has been undertaken by the Directorate of Defence Policy

and Planning at the Bulgarian Ministry of Defence (with input by consultants from the United States and advisers from the United Kingdom and elsewhere). This system is now up and running, but not without its problems. Bisserka Boudinova identifies these and presents ideas for solutions. (These prescriptions are, of course, her own and do not necessarily represent official policy.)

Turning to international transparency, the important South-East European BTI has been mentioned earlier. Full details of this venture are available now on the BTI website; and there is a short note on this source of information in this copy of *Information and Security*. Among other things the website introduces the first substantial product of this enterprise, namely a (pilot) *Yearbook on South-East European Defence Spending* published in 2002. As the title indicates this is envisaged as an annual compendium, and the 2003 edition is in preparation as this journal goes to press.

The second product planned as part of this enterprise is a survey of South-East European defence budgeting processes. The problem is: how to gather the requisite information for such an overview (and for subsequent analysis)? Fortunately, Dr Todor Tagarev has been applying his mind to this challenge; and his methodology for comparative assessment of military budgeting systems and practices is the leading article in the 'Technicalities' part of this issue. At the heart of this scheme is a carefully-constructed questionnaire designed to elicit the information needed for a comprehensive survey and to aid the identification of good practice. The methodology also involves description of an idealised military budgeting process to serve as a benchmark for appraisal of actual systems.

The other two contributions in this section provide examples of how contemporary information technology may be put at the service of transparency (and transparency-building), thus bringing some balance to the issue: material of interest to the information technology specialists as a counterweight to the earlier articles for which security policy specialists are the principal target audience.

In the first of these articles Juliana Karakaneva and Georgi Pavlov from DARI, the MoD Defence Advanced Research Institute in Sofia, initiate an extensive study on how to apply sound scientific methods and tools in support of decision making in the process of managing defence acquisition projects. Such an application, in itself, shall be cost-effective. Therefore, the authors' focus is on the procedure and tools used to select appropriate and affordable methods and models for decision support. Not surprisingly, the solution is based on effective implementation of (possibly adapted) commercial-off-the-shelf software tools. According to the authors' claim, the application of such advanced approach throughout a project life cycle improves the capabilities of decision makers to understand the impact of a particular decision, to

generate options and assess alternatives, thus improving decision-making capacity and transparency of the decision making process.

In the final article Pavlov and Aleksandrova present a framework for implementation of electronic online tenders. The resulting software product called “e-Tender” may be implemented in accordance with the purposes of laws on public tenders, facilitating transparency of defence modernisation policy and defence procurement. The policy expert will find in this article intelligent basic description of the information technologies used, while the IT specialist is provided with novel ideas on possible technology contributions to the cause of good democratic governance.

For those, interested to learn more about transparency in managing defence and security, this issue of *Information & Security* presents two recent compendiums on transparency matters. The presented books portray not only theory, but also in-depth studies on the status and recommendations for further development of transparency in the region of Central and South East Europe. Two ongoing projects, described in the final section of the journal, already bring tangible results in increasing the level of transparency in Bulgaria.

This issue brings to the readers attention only one Web site on defence transparency matters – the site of the Stability Pact Budget Transparency Initiative. Additional links in Tagarev’s contribution point to sites with in-depth information on transparency of defence policy, budget management and procurement.

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