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**STRATEGIC PLANNING – AN ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN
STRATEGIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND THEIR
RELEVANCE IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT
(CASE STUDY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA)**

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Abstract:

This paper is presenting an analysis and evaluation of the Republic of Moldova strategic documents development in the defense and security area, starting from the early creating of its statehood till present times. The main focus of attention is given to the thorough analysis of current documents, and namely the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy and the Military Strategy, which were recently nominated by law as a framework strategic planning documents, as well as providing their role, importance and relevance for the state. At the end of the paper the author is driving conclusions with regards to “lessons learned” in development process and provides some recommendations to better organize the process and improve documents implementation.

Key words: Strategic planning, National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, Military Strategy, Republic of Moldova, Defense policy evolution.

1.Introduction (Times New Roman 14 Bold)

Decision-making process on the very strategic level is a very cumbersome mechanism, which involves actors and stakeholders, procedures, values and documents. Its effectiveness is strongly influenced by well functioning, tried and tested governance system with its checks and balances, democratic institutions, norms and practices.

Planning process in all walks of life is a cycle which involves specific management tools to ensure efficient achievement of goals. To ensure good planning in an organization, for instance, one need to assess and review the current condition, identify needs for improvement and gaps to be eliminated in the following period of time [1]. From this perspective, planning process is looking for a successful accomplishment of the tasks and positive results the every organization or domain, intends to reach at the end a comfort and containment of the final customers.

Thus, following above-mentioned logic, planning on the very strategic level involves the highest political institutions responsible for issuing and approval of state policies in the country. Scenery of strategic documents in each and every country is a matter of choice and necessity, which depends on political order and state maturity, on democratic rules adhesion, country size and power, and the last, but not the least on security situation.

Strategic documents reflect the state's main security and defense objectives, determines what action is required to protect and ensure these interests and the fundamental principles of security policy, determines the threats and risks that affect the national security and defense, the main methods to address them, the means and the

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resources to be used for this purpose. These documents altogether form by their context and content policy in security and defense area, which is an indispensable element in the national policy framework.

The most important part of any planning process is institutionalization of the strategic planning documents. Once the cycle is set up, planners are guided through the whole process according to rules, terms of reference and timeframe.

The strategic planning in defense area is closely linked with security per se and security sector reform process. You cannot have one without the other [2]. The main aim of security sector reform is to have democratic institutions, well-functioning one that are able to provide necessary level of security for its citizens, though institutions accountability, transparency and democratic oversight.

Strategic documents play a great role not only for country itself, but also for the outside world. These documents are intended to respond to a range of external expectations - particularly from neighboring countries and partners - and to internal expectations - both from society in general and from different state institutions, whose areas of responsibility are to ensure national defense and security.

Internal expectations are based on the need for an integrative vision, which offers the opportunity to combine the efforts of the state institutions in a joint effort and to create the necessary capacities. While, expectations from outside are largely related to the concerns of neighboring states about the possible risks and threats that would arise from the certain state and would hamper their national security. On the other hand, the expectations of the partner countries are largely related to the state's willingness to contribute to securing regional or international security, to participate in joint efforts and to provide respective capacities in this regard.

This paper is envisaged to ensure a view overlooking the Republic of Moldova strategic picture with regard to defense planning, providing a retrospective of strategic documents evolution, describing the institutionalization of current documents and their perspectives, as well as stipulating a set of recommendations and conclusions to improve their implementation.

2. Analysis of Strategic Documents Evolution

The Republic of Moldova's statehood began its construction in conditions of radical changes in the geopolitical situation, caused by dissolution of the Soviet Union. The National Army construction tackled a series of problems due to scarcity of funding, lack of legal framework and defense management experience. Nevertheless, one can trace an evolution path in strategic documents development in defense and security policy, which envisaged several stages, and namely:

- 1st stage (1991-1997),
- 2nd stage (1997-2002),
- 3rd stage (2002-2007),
- 4th stage (2007-2012),
- 5th stage and current (2013- till present).

2.1. The first stage could be defined by the statehood formation, National Army creation and development of the military security of the state, drafting first strategic documents: the Constitution [3], Concept of Foreign Policy, National Security Concept and Military Doctrine. Main importance for us plays the last two documents, as they are specifically looking into defense and security matters.

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The Military Doctrine is still valid, but at time it was approved it constitutionally framed and defined Armed Forces political military policy. It is considered as a strategic document in defense area which outlines principles, the character of defense, as well as military and defense policy on global, regional and national level. It is a mixture of a declarations of intent on international level from military point of view, as well as an outline of military organization. Taking into account that this document was approved in 1995, one can realize the relevance of its provisions and guidance, as well as some structural aspects which are now more than outdated. Nevertheless, what stay valid are the principles of self-defense and peaceful resolutions of the conflicts.

The National Security Concept, the way it was presented, constitutes a general assessment of the security environment in which Moldova operates and defines the aim of the national security, outlined guiding lines, general principles and values that are essential for the state and society. It lost its power once the new concept was issued in later phase. Worth mentioning though, that the approval of all strategic documents elaborated at this stage was conditioned by the provisions of the Constitution, which rather gave an outline and a list of them without any concrete deadlines and provisions.

2.2. The Second stage is the period of initial conclusions and lessons learned, which fostered initiation of Military Reform Concept, aimed to fill the existing gap, and namely to bolster and give impetus to defense in the state, to create legal framework and to institutionalize the reform. The main outcome of this phase is the drafting process of Military Reform Concept, which was successfully finished in the following stage.

This Concept [4] was envisaged for the period of twelve years and was pursuing solution of security issues by peaceful means, through the development and consolidation of the international relations to ensure national security and proper defense. Moreover, military reform was imposed by the need to reinforce our capabilities and forces in changing conditions of security environment, as well as to create modern, flexible, small, well trained and well-equipped army able to protect state interest inside and contribute to regional and international security abroad.

2.3. The third stage can be characterized as a pro-active one, once it ensured the adoption and execution of Military Reform Concept, as well as adoption of the most important laws on defense, on statute of military, law on mobilization, on state of emergency, siege and war, etc.

Also at this stage the Concept of „Restructuring and Modernization of National Army in perspective of year 2014” was adopted creating the conceptual basis for the development and Implementation of Long Term State Programs and Plans in defense area. The main aim of the document was to improve country defense in terms of its proximity to the western standards, to implement optimization and the modernization of the National Army. It served as a starting point for the development of the „State Mid Term Plan on Development and Construction of the Armed Forces.”

2.4. The fourth stage main accent was put to revise the provisions of defense reform and promote transformation process of the National Army. Defense Assessment of the Armed Forces Capabilities was undertaken in early 2004 and became the starting point for the Strategic Defense Review (SDR), which became a key element of comprehensive defense reform at the later stage in 2007 when the process started. In fact this was a detailed inventory of the entire defense system (National Army, Carabineer Troops and Border Guard Troops) and the final document on SDR [5] outlined strengths and weaknesses of the system, proposed conceptual and organizational changes to develop military capabilities to provide the required level of defense of the Republic of Moldova.

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In April 2011 SDR report was approved “in principle” by Supreme Security Council with assumed gradual increase of budget allocation for the defense. Due to the political and economical downturn, the defense budget did not meet a proposed SDR assumption. Thus, in July 2012, Supreme Security Council issued special clause on SDR that financial coverage is postponed until austerity limitations overpasses.

With regards to main strategic documents it was a quite productive stage. In 2008 a new National Security Concept was adopted, to define state interests and national priorities and new threats to national security in the context of new geopolitical changes. Also, a Risk and Threat Assessment was accomplished in February 2010, which became a start point for National Security Strategy elaboration and adoption in July 2011.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) [6] envisaged a review of the Armed Forces structure. The NSS stipulated that the Carabineer Troops to be removed from the defense structure, to assume police functions for public order and to gradually professionalize. The Border Guard Service has been transformed into Border Police becoming a law enforcement agency subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The National Security Strategy also proposed transition to defense planning based on defense capabilities and financial resources, harmonization of defense planning process with the state strategy and budget planning for defense and security sector, delimitation of command and control structures, introduction of modern communication systems and software to improve national mobilization system, improvement of legal framework with regard to concept, ways and means in tasks accomplishments, planning and organization of military operations, modernization of human resource management.

The NSS specified that the National Army will be the only element of the armed forces of the Republic of Moldova and it will have the following 4 tasks to accomplish:

- Discouraging and rejection of armed aggression by conducting defense operations (combat actions);
- Ensure control and airspace management;
- Support civil authorities in exceptional situations;
- Participation in peacekeeping missions, including the international and humanitarian missions.

Once the NSS was approved, Ministry of Defense has developed in 2011 a draft of National Military Strategy, which was based in large part on the planning and development of the military capabilities set out in the Strategic Defense Review. It was perceived as a concept on how National Army is going to manage the SDR and put it in place. Due to the special clause on Strategic Defense Review finance constraints, work on the first draft has been stopped.

To conclude this stage outcome, all this documents were elaborated without any legislative framework and no legal stand and were considered as „an intellectual exercise” done by Ministry of Defense and General Staff personnel. Despite the fact that, this period was lacking certain documents approval it gave a great „basement” for the further work, and provided a certain level of professional maturity for experts involved in the process.

So, concluding this stage we may underline that political development in the country during the years 2008-2011 and defense expenditures decrease have influenced the whole process of defense reform and strategic document development, in particular by creating a delay in finalizing the strategic framework.

It is worth mentioning that for development of strategic documents, we have received assistance from NATO experts, as part of the DCB initiative [7], as well as on the bilateral level with subject matter experts from Romania.

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2.5. The fifth stage brought into light the problem that several strategic documents elaborated at the previous stage hadn't any implementation tools. The logical step forward became development of SDR implementation tool, to ensure better allocation coverage.

Thus, at the end of 2012 the MOD developed an Implementation Concept for the SDR, which envisaged three-phased implementation, aimed to translate into financial and planning terms the postponement of necessary financial allocations.

The main principle used for the development of the strategic framework during this stage was one of „learning by doing”. So, according to Constitution of the Republic of Moldova and Law on National Defense, there was outlined a set of strategic documents in defense area, and namely, Military Doctrine of the State [8], National Security Concept [9] and Concept of Military Reform. Despite the fact, that mentioned above documents were overlapping themselves in the area of stipulating strategic guidance on the mid and long term, the Moldova's national security objectives remained unchanged: to protect its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity; to ensure constitution order and prosperity of the state and the population; to promote democratic values, rule of law and human rights.

3. Documents Relevance in the Current Framework

3.1. Institutionalization of the process

Within the context of the global and regional security, economic developments the necessity to adjust the national defense system to new threats and challenges has become a evident and critical. Thus, the urgent need for institutional and legal framework amendment became more than evident. Moreover, changes envisaged by the National Security Strategy on the national defense sector force structure (according to which were reorganized – Border Police Department and General Inspectorate of Police of the Ministry of Interior) the Law on National Defense required fundamental modifications and amendments, due to the fact that this very Organic Law has outlined the structure of Armed Forces.

To improve institutional and normative framework with regards to organization of national defense, Ministry of Defense identified the need to develop and systematize legal guidelines (requirements) in national defense planning, as well as democratic control of security and defense sector. In this respect, law identified the role and responsibility of state institutions in the defense planning process. Recently, the Republic of Moldova made all possible amendments and has institutionalized its strategic planning documents by the process of revision of Law on National Defense [10] (see Annex 1 figure 1.)

According to the law [11] the framework of strategic documents should be constituent of: National Security Strategy (NSS), National Defense Strategy (NDS) and Military Strategy (MS). By this law were eliminated the National Security Concept and Military Reform Concept, which were considered the outdated and unnecessary documents. The Military doctrine continues to be among the strategic documents, due to the fact that it was articulated by the Constitution.

Additionally to the new proposed documents the mentioned law proposed realization of Strategic Defense Review, to be the tool for revision of the defense sector existent and necessary capabilities and to be undertaken if necessary.

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3.2. National Security Strategy

The utmost strategic document according to law is considered National Security Strategy. It is a policy document which stipulated, based on the security environment analysis, the way state institutions are implementing their obligation to ensure national security.

Strategy envisages covering medium term perspective and should consist of national security interests and objectives, profound analysis of threats and risks, of security environment, as well as the directions for actions, ways to implement the security objectives. The president of the country is responsible to initiate its development. In case some major changes occur during the period of validity of the strategy, the President will initiate the process of its revision or development of a new one, with its further presentation to the Parliament for the approval. The cumbersome procedures owns to the fact that Republic of Moldova is a parliamentary republic, and strategic documents (national security strategy, the national defense strategy and the military doctrine of the state) needs to be adopted by the Parliament.

A good „grand strategy must be multifaceted, addressing all the components of strategy... to establish directions and priorities” [12] and it is a rather abstract paper. Nevertheless, it should obligatory has to have financial clause to ensure the implementation of its provisions. Otherwise, it’s a dust accumulating paper for the decision-makers’ shelves.

Another crucial element which is more than essential is the implementation tool and evaluation element. Both should be clear enough to be used by planners to keep the planning process going, first in a form of a detailed plan of implementation and the latter in a self-explanatory procedure of evaluation.

In May 2015 the process of development of NSS started through creating of National Commission, from all defense and security institutions, as well as parliamentarians, academia and civil society representatives. According to Presidential Decree signed by the President Timofti, the Strategy was to be accompanied by the Implementation Action Plan and leading agency was assigned the Supreme Security Council. Initially the deadline for NSS approval was set the beginning of October 2015. However, due to unrest and political and economic instability it was prolonged.

This draft of NSS had a new structure and multifaceted approach to security, it had focused on 6 major imperatives in security area to be solved, and namely: rule of law, good governance, anticorruption, economic development, legitimate use of public funds, consolidation, development and modernization of national defense system. Unfortunately, the document was not approved by the Parliament, but is still available on the President Office official web page. Moreover, on 27 on June 2017 actual President [13] recalled the final draft of the Strategy, which passed almost all prerequisite stages before the much expected approval. The NSS has given enough hooks for defense policy drafters to initiate the work on subsequent Defense strategy.

3.3. National Defense Strategy

Not all states consider having a National Defense Strategy. The Republic of Moldova came to this point lacking a clear guidance on defense matters, which are definitely set in the NSS, but considered to be too generic. Having in mind the fragile situation in a security sector in the country, the frozen conflict on its territory, as well as appearance of new threats the National Army could not address solely, the decision to conjugate the efforts of all institutions with defense implications become more than evident. Firstly, the state institutions would undertake more specific responsibilities in

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defense-related matters, according to their scope of activity. Secondly, to fulfill those responsibilities, and hence the objectives of the defense policy, it would be necessary to establish a common and integrated coordination between these institutions. NDS aims to identify, clarify and combine the efforts of all state bodies responsible for implementing the defense and security related policies, as well as to efficiently coordinate their actions.

Rightly one year later after initiation of NSS, Ministry of Defense started the preparation of the National Defense Strategy, which was designed to meet the imperatives stipulated in NSS. The NDS, along with the NSS and other strategic documents in the field, is a policy document that lays out the basis for national defense planning process, along with the functioning modalities of the state bodies involved in ensuring the national defense, in accordance with the provisions of the Law on national defense [14].

The NDS derives its objectives from the NSS and the Activity Program of the Government of the Republic of Moldova 2016-2018.

Thus, according to law, NDS should consist of potential risks and threats in the area of defense, based on a thorough analysis of security environment; it should name the defense policy objectives, as well as ways and means necessary to carry them out. Government is the structure responsible for issuing the documents, but the Ministry of Defense „silently” is nominated as a leading agency in coordination and organization of the whole process. Defense strategy has medium term coverage and it is presented by the Government to the President, who submits it to the Parliament for the final approval no later than 6 months after the approval of the National Security Strategy.

Currently, the situation with strategic documents development is quite laborious, due to the fact that new NSS project was recalled, the further approval of the NDS faced some challenges and delays. Despite this, the Ministry of Defense assumed the risk starting analytical work before the NSS was approved. At the moment, the great piece of hope lays on the approval of the very strategy, since it is a cornerstone document not only for the defense planners, but even for defense reform project, assumed within the NATO DCB initiative.

Recently, on the 1st November 2017 The Cabinet of Ministers approved the National Defense Strategy and the Action Plan for its implementation for the years 2017-2021. The document aims at strengthening the inter-institutional cooperation mechanism in order to develop a modern and efficient defense system.

The strategy, presented by the new appointed Defense Minister Eugen Sturza, sets the objectives, stages and mechanisms for strengthening the capabilities of the national defense system. The aim is to ensure the defense of the state border, the development of airspace control and protection capacity, the improvement of the military training system and the improvement of the national emergency management system. Among the main actions envisaged by the National Defense Strategy are: providing the armed forces with modern equipment and equipment, reviewing the responsibilities of the force structures, harmonizing the legal provisions that regulate the national defense system with the European norms.

The costs for implementing these actions will be covered from the state budget and from external sources.

3.4. Military Strategy

Once the defense policy has been agreed in the National Defense Strategy, setting out the aims and objectives of the Armed Force, the General Staff initiated development or better said “translating” their roles and activities – into military tasks and missions.

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According to new law amendments, the Military Strategy is the policy document that sets out how to perform the functions of the Armed Forces structures in order to ensure the achievement of the military objectives. The MS comprises the security environment, the military risks, the military objectives, the necessary capacities and the priorities of their realization, the concepts of using the Armed Forces, the tasks of the force categories, the structure of the forces, their training and endowment, presenting at the same time, the resources necessary for their execution.

The MS shall have a medium-term horizon and shall be submitted for approval to the Government, with the approval of the President of the Republic of Moldova, within six months after the approval of the national defense strategy.

The Republic of Moldova has a long lasting institutional memory on this document development and approval. Since the defense reform concept was issued, National Army went through diversified attempts to find and settle this document role and place in the national defense system. At the very beginning, it has the statute of a departmental document, on the level of General staff, which was envisaged to parade defense reform initial outcomes and further short and mid-term plans. There were uncountable number of its edition with various authors view on the defense and military issues. Later on, the idea and necessity of a document with a much wider scope and more strategic role has come to place, to encompass the Government implication in order to have an adequate financial resource allocation. It was an approach to link and squeeze in fact two documents the NDS and MS. Unfortunately, those efforts were rather an institutional need than a ripened outcome.

So, we can summarize that, the current status of these strategic documents is unclear and far from being finalized and approved, despite the fact that political will to create and institutionalize the Defense Planning System was a strong one. A new National Security Strategy was elaborated by the former President, Nicolae Timofte, acknowledged by the Supreme Security Council, but never approved by the Parliament. Therefore, despite the strenuous work and concerted effort of pro-European political coalition to finalize and approve subsequent strategic documents, and namely the National Defense Strategy and Military Strategy, their final stage approval is still pending. The Defense strategy was elaborated and already approved by the Government, but hasn't been promoted by the Government for the further Parliamentary Commissions audience and approval. The Military Strategy is in the process of its development.

4. Conclusions

Examining the overall picture, one can trace the certain lessons learned from the whole process of strategic security and defense documents drafting. Thus, there are certain concerns that delay the progressive evolution and development of the defense sector strategic documents. First and foremost, there is a lack of common vision on what defense sector means. Many state institutions do not understand the importance of the defense sector within the entire national security system and their own role in the national defense system. As a result there is lack of interagency cooperation. Second, underfinancing of the institution prevents the state institutions in defense and security area from effectively conducting the reforms, and has a negative effect on their capacity to respond to crisis situations and other unpredictable situations.

But one of the main shortages of strategic planning process is lack of political will. However, one may claim that political will is always in place, but it has different accents

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and it focuses on the issues, which seems to overlook the problem. Thus, it is crucial to have a directed political will, and how can we provide ideas and initiatives to promote and enable well functioning reform of security sector.

The low level of economic development in the Republic of Moldova also directly affects the defense system. The population is predominantly focused on their economic wellbeing and social problems. This directly impacts the defense sector, which is generally seen as a state institution that only consumes the scarce state resources and is not seen as a positive contributor to the general wellbeing of the population. So, it is important to maintain the balance between reinforcing the capacities and strengthening the oversight and integrity. Credibility from what defense and security forces are doing will appear once their activity will lead to positive changes simple citizen can comprehend.

The political dimension is an essential one. Drafting strategic security and defense documents framework involves political support of all stakeholders. Without any political support any outcomes achieved could be rapidly abandoned once the funding or political vision is changed.

And last, but not least the time issue. Time is an enabler, time in itself is not a criteria for success, because there are all those mentioned above criteria taken together, which could lead you to a relatively successful accomplishment. Time is crucial since all documents have certain coverage and are expected to be issued at a time the legal documents have stated. So, it is better to have a mediocre planning document at the expected timeframe, than a perfect document, but at very late and already unnecessary point.

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Annex 1

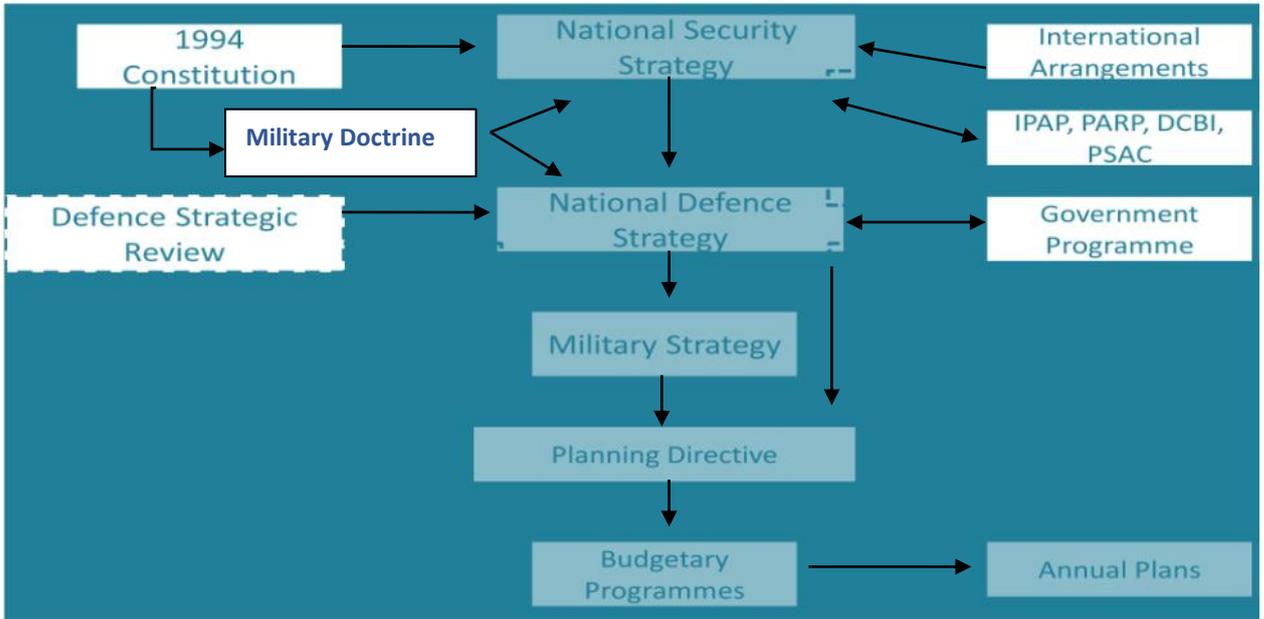


Fig. 1. The new approved Defense Planning System.