GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES (DCAF)

WORKING PAPER – NO. 137

ADAPTATION OF SECURITY STRUCTURES TO CONTEMPORARY THREATS

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Geneva, April 2004

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International security has entered into a period of profound change. This process was initiated by the end of the Cold War and its rigid, yet stable bipolar power structures. It was further accelerated by the attacks of 11 September 2001 as well as the US war against Iraq. This new security environment is bound to require a no less profound corresponding reform of the security sector and renders the principle of good governance of the security sector even more imperative.

The end of the Cold War did not bring the end of history, but its return with a vengeance. In South Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus, and elsewhere, there were attempts to redraw borders in blood. Nationalism and religious fundamentalism gained in strength. In Africa, countries faltered or virtually collapsed, while entire regions of the continent threaten to slid into endemic conflict. The horrible words of ethnic cleansing and genocide re-entered the political vocabulary. While in Europe the old dividing lines came tumbling down - and a continent that grows through the enlargement of the Euro-Atlantic institutions together again promises the creation of an area of stability, peace, and the rule of law - on much of Europe's periphery the number of refugees exploded and human security declined. "9/11" did not trigger the "clash of civilisations", but it horribly highlighted both the inherent vulnerability of an interdependent world and the globalisation of terrorism. NATO's decision to invoke in response, for the first time in its history, the Alliance's Article V underlined that an important threshold had been crossed. The United States decision to attack Iraq and to shift towards a strategy of preventive strikes – with or without UN resolution and regardless of the impact that move was bound to have both internationally and with respect to transatlantic relations – crossed yet another Rubicon.

It is still much too early to take full stock of what this changing security environment implies; yet some first observations can be made:

- The Westphalian world of the nation state as the unchallenged pillar of international order - and, consequently, territorial defence as the main task of the armed forces – have, in a world where not only the economy, but also security have become globalised, been superseded by a much more complex reality. The need for a military defence capability persists (for interstate war remains in parts of the world a possibility); yet it must today be coupled with a rapid reaction capability and the ability to ward off new forms of global threats (from organised international crime and Al Qaeda to hackers).

- The enemy from without is increasingly replaced by the enemy from within. Civil strife and internal conflict have indeed replaced traditional war as the most widespread form of armed conflict. Internal and external security cannot be any longer clearly separated. At the same time, the borders between organised crime and armed domestic factions have, in many countries, become fluid. The "warlord" has made his return – and often he is an entrepreneur, cynically dealing in human beings, drugs, blood diamonds, tropical woods, or arms. A trend towards eternalised conflicts and a growing inability to conclude peace have been the result.

- The state monopoly of legitimate force is under attack. It has fully collapsed in what are euphemistically called "failed states" (the Somalias of this world). It is perverted in authoritarian states, in which parts of the security apparatus turn at night into "death squadrons". It is under siege in post-totalitarian states where young and vulnerable democratic institutions see themselves confronted with a non-reformed security apparatus inherited from the past. It is by-passed by the rapid growth of private security agencies and private military companies (PMC). Today, some 100'000 private security guards form the biggest single sector of the Israeli economy. Similarly, PMC form – with more than 10'000 men – after the US armed forces the second largest military contingent in occupied Iraq.

- The rules and principles regulating the use of force that were accepted unanimously by the founding members of the United Nations have been called into question, if not been dealt a broadside blow. Confronted with a fundamental challenge, the United States has left the world of Article 51 of the

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UN Charter. The golden age of multilateralism of the second half of the last century threatens consequently to come to an end – at the very moment when globalised and more complex security challenges call for more, not less, international cooperation.

- At the national level, civilian and parliamentary (i.e. democratic) control of the security sector remains weak in many post-totalitarian countries. Oversight mechanisms, if they exist, tend to focus on the individual aspects of the security sector (armed forces, paramilitary forces, police, border guards, intelligence and state security agencies, other armed formations), but fail to be able to deal with the sector as a whole. PMC largely escape traditional democratic and parliamentary oversight. This is particularly worrisome in times when the fight against terrorisms tends to swing the pendulum away from the protection of the rights of the individual towards the need for security of the collective.

The reform and the civilian and parliamentary oversight of the security sector have, therefore, become a crucial precondition for peace and stability as well as development (*cf*. UNDP Human Development Report 2002, Chapter 4) – as good governance of the security sector has become a precondition for human security.

Security has ceased to be the exclusive domain of the armed forces. Nor can it be defined any longer predominantly in military terms. In order to cope with the new spectrum of threats close and efficient cooperation between all components of the security sector is indispensable.

In totalitarian states the security sector is organised in rivalling "power ministries", unwilling to cooperate with each other, forming not only a "state within the state", but indeed "states within the state", and easily played out against each other by the dictator according to the age-old concept of *"divide et impera".*

In democracies, the security sector must be seen as a set of communicating vessels, in which each component is dependent upon the other. Each of these components – from the armed forces to traffic police - must have by law a specific, unique and clearly defined mission derived from an overarching national security strategy that

has been adopted after a broad public debate by government and parliament in a transparent political process. Each component of the security sector most not only be responsible for fulfilment the mission assigned to it, but also accountable – to the government, parliament, civil society – for any failure to do so. This requires transparency in the execution of the job – which is in turn the precondition for effective civilian and parliamentary control as well as for a functioning civil society and hence democracy. The lessons learned in this respect in Central and Eastern Europe apply also to the problem of rebuilding a security sector from the ashes of dictatorship (Iraq, Afghanistan).

Today's security environment requires, however, not only close cooperation at the national, but also at the international level. Interoperability cannot be defined any longer only in military terms; the ability to closely cooperate is equally required for police forces, border guards and intelligence agencies. This includes the ability to cooperate across institutional borders.

This will, in turn, further increase in the need for strong parliamentary oversight.

Finally, there is the need to establish at the international level common norms and standards. International crime and terrorism can only be fought, if law enforcement agencies fusion their intelligence and are able to cooperate; borders can only become safe, if the border guards on both sides follow the same procedures. Conflicts can only be contained, if not only their symptoms, but also their root causes are fought. Ultimately, security can only be founded on broad international cooperation anchored in international law.

Switzerland has, in response to these trends, created in the fall of 2000 the "Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces" (DCAF). Organised as an international foundation (with some 45 governments from the Euro-Atlantic region and from Africa as members), the Centre has as mission to systematically collect the lessons learned in the area of security sector reform and the democratic government of the security sector and to put this knowledge – through projects on the ground – at the disposal of countries in transition towards democracy. The centre of gravity of DCAF's work is today Eastern and South Eastern Europe, but projects have also been initiated in Africa and other parts of the world. DCAF offers assistance to

governments in the reform of their security sector (formulation of a national security strategy, related documents as well as legislation; ministerial reform; integration and reform of the various components of the security sector), parliaments (handbooks; seminars; strengthening of parliamentary staffs; organisation of international hearings) and civil society (empowerment, local ownership). DCAF is also actively promoting common international standards in its area of work.

For more information see: www.dcaf.ch