BULGARIA IN NATO
AND THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE
Defence Policy Vision 2030

Atlantic Council of Bulgaria
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1 WHY BULGARIA NEEDS THIS VISION?

The Bulgarian state and society face unprecedented security risks and threats – we are living in the most complex security environment since the end of the Cold War. The strategic situation in Europe and in our region has fundamentally changed since the 2014 unlawful annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the latter’s support to separatist and other anti-constitutional movements. Its actions in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina are quite telling. Russia’s line of behaviour is a direct threat to our national security. At the same time, the menace of the so-called “Islamic State” is not over, and the continued destabilization of Syria and Iraq is a serious source of instability in the region. Developments within Turkey and its recent relations with the EU, the US and Russia are a source of uncertainty about the future conduct of this key regional factor.

More than two decades ago, Bulgarian society made its strategic civilization choice to be an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic family of free and prosperous nations.

This choice materialised thanks to the consistent national effort towards change in the period 1997-2001, which led to our accession to NATO in 2004 and to the European Union in 2007.

Today Bulgaria is again facing a choice: What kind of a NATO and EU member we want to be? Should we remain a passive and weak ally, incapable of building an up-to-date national defence system and of actively participating in the collective defence and security effort? Or should we build a strong country, respected within NATO and the EU, and increasingly integrated within the Alliance and the emerging common European defence.

The goal of “Bulgaria in NATO and the European Defence – Defence Policy Vision till 2030,” is to provide the basis for national consensus over Bulgaria’s defence.

“Bulgaria in NATO and the European Defence” was drawn up by the experts of the Atlantic Council of Bulgaria; it has been presented to the Bulgarian public and our allies. The vision contains the key elements of a long-term, realistic national program for the development of Bulgaria’s defence and armed forces by 2030.

Vision 2030 is based on the existing national accord over an effective NATO membership of the country and an active contribution to the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union. A responsible and perspicacious defence stance requires unity around a national agenda for building up a defence system encompassing multiple government mandates: thus, it will add sustainability to the national defence policies regardless of the changing incumbents. The main factor behind this necessity is the technological time it takes to create and maintain modern defence capabilities requiring comprehensive rearmament – which Bulgaria needs after a 15-year delay.

Vision 2030 is based on the lessons learned from past mistakes as well as on the good practices applied in the period 1997-2002 that led to our successful accession to NATO, and subsequently to the European Union. Now, 20 years later, with the bitter experience of so many missed oppor-
tunities and meandering without a sustainable and long-term vision for the development of our defence system, we should now be reaching for a higher goal: to achieve a qualitatively new level of Bulgarian defence.

At the core of these efforts are: introduction of a new model for career development and motivation of military personnel; a decisive rearmament by acquiring modern equipment; a rapid decommissioning of obsolete and inefficient Soviet weaponry; achievement of full and unconditional interoperability with NATO and EU allies; and vigorous integration in the allied force structure. The ability to take and apply these solutions requires a sophisticated and effective defence command and control and management system, as well as a new level of leadership.

The vision is based on an objective analysis of the facts from the perspective of Bulgarian national interests and the stated unequivocal choice of Bulgarian society that the country develops as an integral part of the family of free and prosperous nations of Europe and North America. Bulgaria sits at the external border of the European Union and NATO – in a region of renewed overt claims for redesigning existing national borders and establishing spheres of influence. Regardless of the targeted campaigns trying to convince our public to the contrary, today, just like 20 years ago, Bulgaria has no rationale alternative to membership in NATO and the European Union.

This vision aims to provide a starting point and a benchmark in the drawing up of a national program for development of defence and the armed forces by 2030, underpinned by relevant financial commitments. Its implementation will require decisions to channel significant public spending into intense defence capabilities development – constituting a huge investment with long-term, multiple returns. In the last 20 years, the financial resources freed as a result of defence reforms and the reduction of military personnel have not been reinvested in defence. The stopgap funding in response to emergent issues has not been able to offer a sustainable solution for our defence and security. This approach must give way to an informed national decision that will commit the Bulgarian governments over the next 12 years to targeted investments in defence. It will create the premises for rapid rearmament with weapon systems and equipment, which are both up-to-date and interoperable with those of our allies, accompanied by increasing spending on combat training and adequate remuneration of military personnel.

A critical feature of this vision is the awareness that it is necessary to enhance our integration into the force structure of NATO and in EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy, as well as to strengthen Bulgarian contribution to projects under EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation on Defence (PESCO). While acquiring, operating and maintaining enhanced defence capabilities in the context of a deteriorating security environment and significant financial constraints, we need to make the most of the joint project approach with allies, as well as to harness the potential of our joint agencies within NATO and the EU. Enhanced integration will achieve the greatest positive effect through the deployment of NATO and EU multinational formations on our territory.

This vision is based on:

- Our belief that Bulgaria’s national interests found a definite confirmation in the national accord achieved back in 1997 and the unequivocal choice our society made that Bulgaria ought to develop as a European state, part of the family of free democratic nations, capable of guaranteeing its security and providing broad opportunities for the prosperity of its citizens;
- Our conviction that we can address existing and future risks and threats effectively only when we stand united with our allies, while continuously and objectively analysing the se-
curity environment and predicting all possible fluctuations in foreign policy, economic, social and military terms;

- The premise that any decision to develop the national defence capabilities **must be matched by a reciprocal financial commitment**;
- Our understanding that the development of defence capabilities may not be limited to individual investment projects, but instead demands a comprehensive program comprising integrated actions across all elements of military capability: (1) Doctrine, (2) Organization, (3) Training, (4) Materiel, (5) Leadership and education, (6) Personnel, (7) Facilities, and (8) Interoperability.

By implementing the solutions put forward in Vision 2030, Bulgaria will develop a flexible national defence capacity and adaptive capabilities to successfully meet the challenges, risks and threats even in the face of unforeseen deterioration of the security environment.

2 SECURITY ENVIRONMENT AND DEFENCE REQUIREMENTS

The last 10 years have seen a sharp deterioration of the security environment, coupled with a more prominent role of military power in inter-state relations. In a rapidly fluctuating strategic situation like the current one, Bulgaria is well-advised to seriously rethink its defence policy if it were to halt the degradation of its armed forces and upgrade their capabilities to a qualitatively new level. Having done this, jointly with the other NATO and EU countries, we will be able to genuinely warrant the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of our country and protect its interests.

*The best guarantee for the security of Bulgaria in the face of increasing global instability is the development of our national defence capabilities and guaranteeing interoperability with our allies, immediate readiness to provide a vital contribution to multinational operations by hosting allied multinational formations and implementing joint projects for development and acquisition of weapon systems and equipment.*

2.1 Security environment, risks and threats

The post-Cold War period, characterized by the lack of significant security threats to the countries of the Euro-Atlantic region, has come to an end. As a result of global political, economic, demographic, technological and military changes, the ability of international institutions to maintain the existing international order has weakened, which leads to their slow but tangible erosion. This process has been exacerbated by the actions of a number of countries that regard the values, principles and rules of the existing international order as incompatible and even hostile to their own interests and political ideologies.

Liberal democracy, with its principles of respect for individual freedoms, human rights and the rule of law, has stood at the heart of a peaceful and prosperous Europe for several generations after World War Two. Yet today, liberal democracy is subject to persistent attacks under the pressure of populist appeals and bellicose rhetoric. Reviving the politics of power balance and flaunting
one’s military might, of unabashed exertion of military pressure on smaller or weaker countries is increasingly crowding out diplomacy and negotiation in international relations.

This trend is bolstered by a process of centralization and increasing concentration of power by leaders of the dictatorial type. Exploiting the current technological advances, they establish state control over societies and craftily manipulate the public mind frame. Along with that, they disregard and undermine the principles, rules and procedures that underpin both domestic laws and the international legal order. The authoritarian trends in some countries along the European continent’s periphery generate instability and threats by dint of sudden, unforeseen shifts in their foreign and defence policy, of internal political upheavals and civil conflicts, with all their negative consequences for security.

The role and importance of hybrid security challenges is growing. Both states and non-state groups are increasingly using hybrid methods and tools. Information and cyber-attacks, economic, financial and corruption mechanisms, paramilitary groups and private armed formations are a permanent and increasingly important part of their military toolkit.

A major threat to NATO and EU member states, including Bulgaria, is the Kremlin’s policy aimed at restoring the former USSR’s spheres of influence and at undermining and weakening the two organizations. Given NATO's overall military superiority, Russia will continue to use primarily hybrid methods and means to achieve these goals. Primarily targeting the most vulnerable countries, including Bulgaria, the constant hybrid subversion against NATO and EU members will constitute a lasting challenge to our national security. The provision of support to local paramilitary formations and “private military companies” are well-established instruments for attaining political goals by force, without open state involvement and accountability.

The actions of the Russian Federation are a direct challenge to the prospect of a peaceful, free and united Europe. Moscow will continue to undermine Euro-Atlantic integration efforts in regions that it sees as its monopoly zones of strategic interest. This is particularly true for the Black Sea region and the Western Balkans. Russia will continue to exploit “frozen conflicts” like the ones in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Transnistria and the Donbass with the aim of destabilising Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine – and obstruct their Euro-Atlantic prospects. The significant residual conflict potential of the Balkans has led to a sustained Russian policy to strengthen its military presence in Serbia, to foster separation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and to hinder the Euro-Atlantic future of Macedonia. All this strengthens the case for Bulgaria’s building a strong army, ever more closely integrated with the forces of its allies by working to strengthen NATO and EU presence in the Adriatic-Caspian region.

The political situation within Turkey is also a matter of concern as it turns the country into an ally drifting away from NATO and its shared Euro-Atlantic values. The potential for rapprochement and partnership between Moscow and Ankara on a number of issues – based on their traditional ambitions for greater influence on the Balkans – is not to be neglected as at some point it may be detrimental to Bulgaria, NATO and the EU alike.

Failed countries are a reality in the Middle East, North and Central Africa, creating continual threats to European security in the form of uncontrollable migration flows, transnational organized crime and terrorism. Although Al-Qaeda’s and the Islamic State have suffered military defeat, their ideology is vital and attractive to large groups of people, including nationals of EU and NATO member states. Therefore, religious extremism and the violence it engenders will continue to be among the main threats to international order and security. It will be further exacerbated by flawed statehood, the processes of social modernization, and the demographic boom in large parts of the Islamic world. At the same time, some traditional rivalries and tensions along the periphery of
Europe will continue to exist and escalate. This requires Bulgaria to be ready to participate in NATO and EU expeditionary operations against terrorist and paramilitary organizations or undesignated armed forces. At the same time, the Euro-Atlantic community ought to actively seek ways to build stability and capacity for development in troubled countries.

The blurring boundaries between war and peace will be a key feature of the emerging conflicts by 2030. The armed forces will have a role to play in them, but their effectiveness will depend on the overall condition of statehood and society. Along these lines, cyberspace is emerging as the most vulnerable environment for hostile operations aimed at disrupting the functioning of the government and, in the event of conflict, at paralyzing its institutions, including its armed forces. In this setting, Bulgaria must be able to preserve its basic national identity and public integrity, the public's trust in its institutions and the rule of law; it should also ensure the robust functioning of key systems, e.g. its banks, its energy grid, its communication facilities, among other strategic infrastructure. This will only be possible in close coordination with other NATO and EU allies to maximize the potential of allied power and capacity in neutralising such hybrid threats.

The free and widespread use of high and dual-use technologies has allowed non-state actors to have access to weapons-grade systems that have until recently been reserved for national states. Along with this, there is a significant erosion of arms control agreements. The deployment of offensive long-range systems is increasingly a common practice aimed at putting pressure on the behaviour of and political developments in targeted countries by instilling a sense of insecurity and fear among their public.

The substantial technological progress, especially in defence, of countries outside the EU and NATO presents a direct threat to the member states of both. This is particularly relevant for Bulgaria, where the dearth of research funding and the practical absence of a national security and defence research agenda has condemned the country to trailing far behind in technology terms – as well as to severe constraints when it comes to effective participation in multinational NATO and EU projects.

### 2.2 Defence requirements

The analysis of the security environment results in the following requirements for the national defence system:

- Applying the principles of good governance to the process of building up defence capabilities;
- Fast acquisition of new defence capabilities in line with contemporary and future risks and threats, with significant participation in joint alliance projects;
- Effective and sustainable system for command and control, intelligence and early warning;
- Well-trained armed forces with a high degree of response readiness, together with a capacity for rapid reinforcement by NATO and EU forces;
- Full interoperability of the Bulgarian armed forces with those of our allies in NATO and the EU;
- Specialization and compensation of absent capabilities in terms of type and quantity by establishing multinational formations on Bulgarian territory.
3 RESOURCE FRAMEWORK

3.1 A review of the resource environment

In the aftermath of 1991, societies have enjoyed the unique opportunity to consume the so-called “peace dividend,” i.e. the substantial financial resources redirected from previous commitments to sustain and develop a hefty military potential. This trend was particularly noticeable among developed Western countries where these funds have been channelled to various social programs. In a historical perspective, this “window of peace” has logically peaked, and has subsequently been replaced by the traditional “realpolitik,” where security and stability are based primarily on the balance of power.

For Bulgaria, the “peace dividend” materialised in tens of billions of leva relocated from the military towards social spending and government investment. If until 1989-1990, defence had been getting anywhere between 5% and 7% of GDP (without accounting for the Transport and Construction and Labor forces, the forces of the Post and Telecommunications Committee and the arms industry), military spending in 2016-2017 amounts to roughly 1.25-1.28% of the GDP, against the backdrop of a significantly more vigorous national economy.

In fact, the bulk of the equipment the Bulgarian Army has today reflects costs incurred in the period 1970-1990. While military personnel were being reduced, a large part of this weaponry was sold out on international markets, with private companies making good margins. Facing up to the challenges of a changed security environment cannot hinge on investments made 30, 40 or 50 years ago. What today's generations need to do is to take resolutions and act towards full rearment over the next 30-40 years. Regardless of the new circumstances and constant pressure towards a more effective use of public resources, the defence transformation will not be possible without robust investments.

Despite the number of negative factors, some of which are not directly related to Bulgaria, the country's GDP has nominally increased by 50% compared to 2008 over a 10-year period, reaching almost BGN 100 billion. Public spending has seen a similar rise (the Consolidated Fiscal Program) from just over BGN 25 billion in 2008 to nearly 35 billion in 2017. At the same time, the GDP share redistributed by the state has stood at around 38% on the average.

The following conclusions can be made regarding the financial framework of the country's defence policy:

- Bulgaria is able to increase its defence spending to 2-2.25% of its GDP;
- This increase can be carried out without a severe encumbrance of the country's economy and without the accumulation of additional long-term liabilities;
- A closer look at public spending reveals an oversize share of fixed costs – i.e. expenses for staff and on-going maintenance – and a relatively low share of investment costs;
- Increased defence spending would require a higher degree of accountability, discipline and a stronger linkage between financial commitments and outcomes across the rest of the public policies.

Defence spending declined significantly over the same period: from over BGN 1.5 billion annually in 2007-08 to below BGN 1.1 billion a year at its lowest points thereafter. This was actually the trend across Europe up until 2014-2015. But what this has led to in Bulgarian setting was a failure to develop up-to-date defence capabilities.
A breakdown of defence spending demonstrates a structural problem in the way resources are allocated. Despite the fact that up to 75% (expected to reach BGN 900 million in 2018) of the budget is allocated to personnel costs, there is a serious crisis with the recruitment and retention of sufficient personnel numbers. Within the range of BGN 220-280 million, spending for equipment maintenance and training has led to compromises in this area that are borderline permissible. Capital expenditures have kept within 5-8% (BGN 50-80 million) and have mostly gone to prolonging the life of outdated equipment – therefore, they have not added up to investments in fresh acquisitions. The overall outcome of the over BGN 1 billion of annual defence spending is the degradation of national defence capabilities and personnel motivation at a critical low.

The following conclusions must be made in regard to the allocation of the national defence budget:

- Personnel spending should increase as an absolute value to make defence jobs a more attractive option on the labour market;
- Personnel spending should not exceed 60% of the overall defence budget, with the more ambitious goal of keeping them within 50-55% being even more relevant;
- Personnel numbers and the military’s organizational structure ought to be determined by means of a careful analysis, based on a realistic projection of recruitments that could be made on the labour market;
- Maintenance and training costs should be significantly increased as an absolute value with the aim of reaching at least 25% of the defence budget in order to ensure an adequate level of personnel qualification and equipment sustainability and availability;
- Investment expenditures should reach at least 25% of the defence budget to allow sufficient resource generation to undertake a major re-armament by 2030, with increased research and technology spending leading to innovation and opportunities for participation in joint transformation projects.
3.2 Financial resource framework for 2018-2030

Three possible scenarios can be outlined based on the country's economic projections by 2030 ranging from a most conservative to a most optimistic one.

**Scenario 1 (Conservative):** This scenario follows strictly the conservative estimates provided by the Ministry of Finance and some of the international financial institutions. It projects a real average annual GDP growth rate of 2.75% and a price deflator of 2% for the period 2020-2030. Under this setting, the country's GDP will be in the vicinity of BGN 190 billion by 2030.

**Scenario 2 (Realistic):** This scenario allows for a faster GDP growth, at around 4% per annum and slightly higher deflator values of roughly 2.5%. For 2019 and 2020, GDP growth is aligned with recent projections in the context of an accelerating global growth. Lower growth values are foreseen into the post-2020 decade. This version anticipates a much higher GDP level by 2030, at about BGN 230 billion.

**Scenario 3 (Optimistic):** This scenario allows maintaining a balanced budget without draining the economy of financial resources. At the same time, we can expect an accelerated growth of about 5-6% on an annual basis. This might have additional positive effects, e.g. Bulgaria emerging on the radar of large multinational corporations seeking friendly locations for new investments, raising the country's credit rating, which in turn might further boost growth, incomes, the national birth rate, etc. Faster growth and rising commodity, service and labour prices will inevitably lead to higher deflator levels. Based on this, the scenario projects average GDP growth rates of 5% and a deflator of 3.5% for the period. Under this scenario, the country’s GDP will have reached BGN 287 billion by 2030.
This Vision is based on the ‘conservative’ and the ‘realistic’ scenarios. This choice is underpinned by two assumptions:

- The period until 2030 is not immune against global financial and economic upheavals, which may lead to a slowdown or even a decline in global economic development;
- Political and/or military conflicts might take place before 2030: they will require the deployment of available military capabilities – and thus negatively affect Bulgaria’s economic development.

Another key prerequisite in defining the resource framework is the decision to increase defence spending to 2% of GDP by 2020 and maintain that level by at least 2030. Postponing the increase to 2024 is tantamount to a practical failure to undertake a broader-scale rearmament program shifting the country’s defence to a higher technological level. By 2024, the security environment will very likely undergo mutations, which will have to be matched by significant advances in defence capability levels.

Growing defence spending can be underwritten through a combination of approaches. In the initial period up to 2020-2022, in order to provide the time needed to put the state finances on a different footing, raising the funds necessary for investment projects might be done through external borrowing. After 2020-2022, a redistribution of public resources has to go into full swing, which will obviously require the reallocation to defence of funds heretofore made available to other public policies. This would undoubtedly trigger certain resistance, but the security environment demands a priority focus on military capabilities.

The allocation of financial resources, which could bankroll a comprehensive defence capability build-up program by 2030, is based on the above-mentioned conclusions about budget redistribution and on the ‘realistic’ scenario for the development of the country’s economy.

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### Conservative scenario

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This spending pattern presumes a relatively more abrupt raise in defence spending in view of reaching the 2% of GDP target by 2020. Thereafter, the increase in allocations to the military should be coupled with the overall GDP growth.

**Military personnel costs** should increase significantly by 2020 as a nominal value to ensure adequate human resource recruitment and retaining the army direly needs. After 2020, these expenditures will rise incrementally to reflect the overall remuneration growth across the national economy. At the same time, their share of defence spending will decline from almost 75% (in 2017) to 54-55% during the early and mid-term – and to 50% by the period’s end.

**Investment spending** is bound to grow steeply at the start of the period to reach up to 30% of defence spending (at the expense of external borrowing) and gradually level at 25% by its end. The possible investment expenses set the framework for the rearmament program. Approximately **BGN 10 billion (EUR 5 billion)** can be generated for the whole period to allow a comprehensive replacement of pre-1990 equipment by 2030. However substantial this financial resource might seem, it will only allow to make up for the lag compared to European averages. Development plans should take into account that by the end of the first six-year period (by late 2023) the total capital expenditure could reach **BGN 4 billion (EUR 2 billion)** while the second six-year period will see capital investment of **BGN 6-7 billion (EUR 3-3.5 billion)**. The implication is that without raising the necessary amount of allied funding, no more than two major investment projects (each within BGN 1.5-2.5 billion) can possibly materialise by 2024.

**Maintenance and training costs** will increase incrementally at the start of the program, to see a more abrupt raise during the mid and late stages to ensure the full-scale introduction of newly acquired equipment. At the end of the period they will reach 25% of total defence spending.
It should be emphasized that this proposal does not force the defence build-up program beyond any reasonable expectations for the advancement of Bulgarian economy, society and state as a whole. It is based on the assumptions that the country will not reach the EU average development levels within the period in question, but can nonetheless make significant progress out of its current state. This earmarking pattern is based on the projected 2% of GDP for defence spending as the level achieved in 2020. Contingent on a favourable growth of Bulgarian economy, the ambition to reach a higher defence capability level will require the commitment of an even larger public resource, similar to the one in countries such as the United States, France, Poland, Greece or Turkey.

3.3 Demographic trends and constraints

Planning the development of the armed forces should also take into account the country's deteriorating demographic trends. According to the latest projections, by 2040 Bulgaria's population will, under an optimistic outlook, recede to about 6 million; the more pessimistic scenario forecasts a figure of 5.7 million – to boot, with a significantly worsened demographic structure. The decrease of working-age population by 40% and the concomitant rise of the average age from 44.2 years in 2018 to 50.5 in 2040 will make the armed forces subject to fierce competition in terms of recruiting and retaining the workforce it needs. Therefore, its plans for future development must increasingly take into account not only the country's limited financial resources, but its strained human potential as well.

4 THE SOLUTIONS – IN-DEPTH ALLIED INTEGRATION

4.1 Our strength is in our integration

The Eastern and South-eastern European area consists of networks of countries acting together to ensure their security and defence. NATO and the EU are taking measures towards a more robust military presence and promotion of inter-group interaction. Partnership relations have gone beyond the Alliance, including potential future members. The rise of interoperability due to multinational operations, exercises, formations and projects for joint development and acquisition of armaments and equipment, is a factor that greatly enhances the security of NATO and EU countries.

Vision 2030 is not limited to the acquisition of new Western armaments. Almost 30 years after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact Organization and the USSR, our armed forces are built on principles rooted in the 19th rather than in the 21st century. We still fail to realize that our state, nation, society, and defence are functioning and developing as part of the communion of states between the Atlantic Ocean and the Black Sea, between the Arctic and the Mediterranean Sea, in close cooperation with our allies across the pond. The myth of strictly national solutions to security and defence issues now more than ever proves its irrelevance. Bulgarian defence is not a mechanical appendix to NATO and the common European defence: instead, it should be building up as their integral part. This does not imply any loss of national specifics or sovereignty, but rather the opposite – we share our sovereignty and we avail ourselves of the cumulative power of all the other allies. Through its integration with these alliances, Bulgaria legitimately receives the possibility of powerful protection of its interests and national sovereignty as an integral part of the common allied security and defence system. A closer look into any other options shows that they are either naïve or purposefully and surreptitiously destructive to our defence capacity and our national security.
The implementation of NATO’s Readiness Action Plan, together with its Forward Presence and the Atlantic solidarity have changed decisively and will have an even stronger impact on the structure of NATO forces – and of the European Union – in Central and Eastern Europe. The B9 Initiative and NATO and EU commitments to the Western Balkans and the Black Sea area will determine the Alliance’s long-term adaptation and the development of European defence in our region. Hence the extreme importance of Bulgaria's decisions to participate in multinational formations and host similar formations on its own territory. These decisions will affect the structure of its national forces, of its weapons programs, as well as its defence personnel career development. NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in the Southeast should apply the experience of its Forward Presence in the Baltic, with a more ambitious allied participation to warrant the security of this extremely imperilled region. Apart from multinational formations, allied participation is also realized through multinational projects, by dint of offering special conditions for accelerated rearmament and the decommissioning of obsolete equipment that perpetuates our dependence on countries outside NATO and the EU. This calls for putting our national defence program in sync with a number of multianual bilateral programs to shore up NATO/EU synergies in the region.

4.2 Multinational investment projects

- While implementing the key investment projects for the three branches of armed forces, Bulgaria ought to establish close cooperation with Romania and Poland, and possibly also with Croatia;
- Air and maritime surveillance and defence systems should be built as an integral part of the relevant NATO and EU systems, using all the possibilities of allied funding
• The development of a comprehensive and up-to-date C4ISR\(^1\) system should allow integration with NATO and EU allies (full interoperability and warranted cyber-security), by using all the opportunities to attract allied funding.

4.3 Multinational military formations

• Ground-based elements of the allied air defence and missile defence system should be permanently deployment of on Bulgarian territory;
• The future Kapitan Spisarevski air force base\(^2\) near Plovdiv should be developed as a multinational one, with one Bulgarian and at least one allied multirole fighter aircraft squadron;
• Intensifying our integration with Romania vis-a-vis a mutual build-up, maintenance and operations of the two countries' navies;
• Special operations forces should be developed in close cooperation with our NATO and EU allies;
• A Bulgarian medium infantry (mechanized) brigade should be incorporated in the Multinational Division South-East; the opportunities for Bulgaria to become a framework nation along with Romania should be considered;
• Bulgaria should host a medium-sized multinational infantry (mechanized) brigade, using all the opportunities to raise allied funding;
• Jointly with Italy, Bulgaria should provide assistance to the development of Macedonian and Albanian armed forces. Deployment of joint multinational military formations in both countries while assisting them in the process of integrating their armed forces with NATO.

5 THE SOLUTIONS – A NEW HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY

Even a superficial comparison between the Bulgarian armed forces and those of our allies and our potential enemies leads to obvious and unflattering conclusions regarding the technological level and the materiel of our army. Yet even the most up-to-date robotic armament and equipment systems as well as the cyber action systems need motivated and qualified staff to operate them in the extreme conditions of combat.

The current crisis in the recruitment, retaining and career development of the army officers, sergeants and soldiers is not accidental or short lived: instead, it is a systemic problem, and tackling it requires a whole new policy of human resource management in defence. This policy should not only address personnel numbers, but above all the attainment of the professional expertise the armed forces need to muster. Professionalism should go hand-in-hand with a new organizational culture that promotes ethics, loyalty, initiative and a higher general professional and motivational level of the human factor in defence. Its core is formed by the basic values of the military, inspired by the finest examples of our military history and the experience of our allies.

Human resources management policy comprises three key elements.

The first one is to create attractive and competitive socio-economic conditions encouraging a sufficient number of individuals with the necessary qualities to join up and stay in military service or as civilian defence employees. The Army needs to provide a higher level of staff motivation

\(^1\) Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
\(^2\) Position of “National and International Security” Program od ACB from 01.11.2017
and confidence that its system enjoys the integrity that makes individual efforts worthwhile. For the purpose, it is necessary to introduce a more reasonable differentiated remuneration across individual military ranks and an objective system of career development based on outcomes and merit, with particular attention to participation in operations and service in multinational structures. The training of a high quality and motivation personnel for the armed forces is unthinkable without relevant financial allocations. An important role in this system is to be played by training centres where newly recruited soldiers, cadets or civilian specialists have their first encounter with the armed forces. It is also necessary to eliminate the possibility for retired staff members to remain in active military service as this undermines the proper pattern of incentives in the Armed forces.

There needs to be a special emphasis on a policy to utilise civilian defence resources, in particular the reserve and the military training of civilians. This policy should promote a more intensive military training in the secondary and tertiary school systems; it should also enlist the opportunities provided by the current Reserve Act. It is of vital importance to co-opt and train specialists in strategic areas (e.g. cyber defence) that cannot be recruited to permanent positions in the army. The experiments some politicians appeal for – such as the revival of conscription or the introduction of a six-month “voluntary” military service – will only drain significant financial resources without meaningfully addressing the army’s need for modern warfare capabilities.

The second element is the development of modern organizational culture in the armed forces. It should be based on the ability to quickly uptake and assess situations, to take decisions and act within the fluctuating and unstructured environment of contemporary conflicts. This organizational culture ought to be based on a mix of loyalty, intelligence, courage in decision making, professional expertise, initiative, self-esteem, self-improvement, flexibility and adaptability. The recruits’ inception into this kind of culture begins with their first day in the military; it is based on a set of values and principles and is closely related to the third element.

The third element is the ability to operate in a multinational allied environment. For the Bulgarian soldier, sergeant, officer or civilian employee, excellence of performance in a multinational environment must be a matter of routine, an indispensable career stage rather than an exception. Bulgaria has an interest in filling all NATO and EU quota positions and encouraging its civilian specialists to take up vacancies in these organizations; it also needs a special policy for voluntary national contributions in areas where the country enjoys higher expertise or has a particular interest.

6 THE SOLUTIONS – TECHNOLOGICAL REARMAMENT

In technology terms, Bulgarian armed forces are despondently frozen in the Warsaw Pact era. Bulgaria needs a decisive rearmament with modern and interoperable weaponry and equipment. This applies to both complex systems worth hundreds of millions, or even billions, and for individual equipment. Having said that, it is clear that the country does not have the resources it would need to perform such a technological leap out of its backwardness up until 2030. It is therefore necessary to prioritize, to seek partnerships with allies, to make the most of the country's industrial sector and resort to compromise decisions.

We have to be keenly aware that by 2030 Bulgaria’s armed forces must have left behind the twentieth century and become relevant vis-a-vis the armed conflict of the 21st century. In the past, the nation's accelerated re-rarmament has always been linked to borrowing from and strategic partnerships with technologically advanced allies: this experience is worth revisiting today as well.
The rearmament of the Bulgarian military cannot be based on individual, isolated investment projects. It would require the drawing up of a comprehensive national program for the development of the three branches of our armed forces, of the special operations forces and supporting military units. For this purpose, it is necessary to perform two waves of investment projects.

6.1 **Priority investment projects of the first rearmament wave (2018-2024)**

- Acquisition of a squadron of multipurpose combat aircraft and ground-based airspace monitoring and control systems (including advanced 3D imaging radars) and integrating them into NATO's air and missile defence system;
- Rearmament of a medium infantry (mechanized) brigade;
- Acquisition of modern equipment for special operations forces and alpine troops in order to turn them into a specialized facility to counteract asymmetric threats;
- Upgrading of Wielingen-class frigates, Panther naval helicopters and mine warfare vessels to ensure their use at least until 2030;
- Acquisition of modern and integrated C4ISR and cyber defence systems, inclusive of space-based systems.

6.2 **Priority investment projects in the second wave of rearmament (2025-2030)**

- Acquisition, jointly with NATO and EU allies, of multi-purpose patrol vessels and other state-of-the-art anti-submarine equipment;
- Rearmament of second medium infantry (mechanized) brigade;
- Acquisition of precision long-range missile and artillery systems;
- Acquisition of mid-range reconnaissance and combat unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV/UCAV);
- Acquisition of coastal Long Range Anti-Ship Missiles (LRASM);
- Acquisition of a squadron of attack helicopters;
- Major replacement of firearms and portable anti-tank and anti-aircraft missile systems.

6.3 **Industry and multinational cooperation**

The implementation of a rearmament program includes the following key elements:

- Enlisting NATO and EU agencies to build capacity for the management of complex defence programs aimed at quick and cost-effective implementation of priority programs, with guaranteed interoperability and security;
- Integration into the European and Euro-Atlantic defence technological and industrial system;
- Attracting technologies and investments from allied countries;
- Making the most of allied funding;
- Multinational acquisitions and maintenance of operational capabilities;
An adequate combination of these approaches will reduce the cost of our rearmament, will establish manufacturing and maintenance capacities on our territory and integrate us with the European defence technology and industry system.

6.4 Constraints to rearmament

Our nation's drive to make a technological leap into the 21st century faces a number of constraints resulting from delayed decisions, limited resources, and the wrong kind of dependencies in the maintenance of major systems of armaments and equipment. Therefore, we will have to address two problems although we stand no chance for quick fixes in these areas.

First and foremost, Bulgaria is in possession of weapons and equipment manufactured mainly in the USSR or, under license, in the former People's Republic of Bulgaria or other Warsaw Pact countries. This is what makes Bulgaria dependent on Russia in its maintenance of basic weapons systems. At the same time, Russia, having openly declared NATO as the greatest threat to its security, pursues a consistent policy of undermining Alliance and EU unity (including weakening the former's defence potential and creating asymmetric superiority systems). Against this backdrop, our current dependence is clearly unacceptable. Bulgaria could work its way out of this by selectively holding on to legacy equipment it has the capacity to upkeep on its own, or with the help of NATO and EU. This should only be done until the country is able to replace this outdated equipment with modern, interoperable models. After its removal from active duty, part of the legacy equipment could be used in lower-level readiness or reserve units – or be sold to third parties.

Secondly, even allocating 2% of GDP will not go far enough in replacements with state-of-the-art weaponry and equipment. But according to its capacity Bulgaria may acquire second-hand, interoperable equipment at a favourable price/quality ratio.

7 THE SOLUTIONS – NEW DEFENSE GOVERNANCE: INSPIRING LEADERSHIP AND RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

However wise the strategy and however reasonable and financially prudent the action plan, they could not be successfully implemented by an organization where the leadership is ineffective or distorted. They will fail in an environment where the management suffers from conflicting or artificially restricted rights and obligations, hamstrung by ineffective and antagonistic functional ties.

The current organizational and functional arrangements of our defence and, partly, of the armed forces, do not offer robust safeguards against decisions that are arbitrary, inconsistent and even lacking common sense. This is clearly evident in how investment costs have been managed, in the structure and functional design of our armed forces, and in the way they are being trained and made ready to act. This is conclusively proven by the dangerously scant flying hours of Bulgarian Air Force pilots. The maritime days of Bulgarian Navy personnel are again nowhere close to sufficient – as are the days for field training and realistic field exercises of our land troops.

The lack of skill, drive or will to reorganize our defence institution in line with the principles of good governance continues to thwart the functions of our Ministry of Defence. Multiple attempts to address this situation have only had partial effect so far. This organizational impasse is manifested by the multiple amendments on the principle of trial and error undergone by MoD's rules
of procedure during the transition years. The same applies to the armed forces where organizational changes and personnel reshuffles have often lacked both strategic rationale and common sense.

This vicious circle can only be broken by a careful review, followed by a decisive change in the organization of defence management based on the uncompromising application of modern principles of good public governance.

A key tool in this vision is the creation of an adaptive and predictable system of process-based governance that finds optimal solutions to defence policy challenges, successfully addressing the risks and threats to our national security.

These must be the basic principles of building up a new leadership and management system in defence:

- Clear separation between political leadership and administrative management;
- Removal of any conflict of interests in the functional duties of defence leadership and management, both in the civilian and military administration, as well as in the allocation of command functions in the armed forces;
- Personal responsibility for the managerial decisions taken at all levels;
- Delegation of responsibilities along with a concordant delegation of resources;
- Independence of civilian and military expertise and firmly grounding it on facts, knowledge and experience;
- Adoption of robust legal barriers against any attempts at exposing the defence administration to partisan manipulation and politicking; special efforts to deal with the creeping politicization and partisanship among the army’s higher ranking officers and generals;
- Uncompromising application of the principles of project management of investment spending.

8 EXPECTED OUTCOMES UNTIL 2030

The time until 2030 is divided into four 3-year spells, with 2018 remaining outside it as a run-up period as the potential for significant changes is severely limited to investment costs financed by the central budget for that year. These are the main characteristics of the 3-year segments:

2019-2021

- Start of the first wave of investment projects to be completed by the end of 2022 – 2024;
- Increase in personnel costs by at least 30-40%, which should enable the armed forces to catch up on staff and compensate for the military profession’s lag on the labour market. This increase is the most abrupt one for the whole 12-year period.

2022-2024

- Completion of payments on first wave of investment projects;
- Gradual start of second wave investment projects;
- Personnel costs even out, with raises trailing labour market trends;
- Operation and maintenance costs are on the rise as a result of growing service prices, increased maintenance costs of freshly acquired equipment, and elevated levels of combat
training. Partnerships for maintenance of NATO-compatible technology are actively used to reduce costs and enhance readiness.

### 2025-2027
- Second wave investment projects are underway. While investment expenditure keeps growing in absolute terms, its share in defence spending is incrementally decreasing;
- Personnel costs remain at the same level or diminish in share of defence budgets, but their nominal value keeps rising to offset labour market developments;
- Current maintenance costs are rising due to equipment acquisitions, higher training levels and service prices.

### 2028-2030
- Second wave investment projects are completed and the equipment of the regular military units, manufactured in the USSR – or in Bulgaria – prior to 1989/1990 has been replaced;
- Older generation weaponry is still maintained for the reserve military units;
- Projects are being phased in to modernise equipment acquired during the first wave of re-armament (2018-2021);
- Personnel and armaments/equipment maintenance spending follows the trends from the previous period;

A trend of faster investment and personnel costs growth dominates the earlier stages of the 12-year period, with the aim being to kick-start the key investment projects – and simultaneously overcome the shortage of personnel, especially in combat units. The later stages see an evening out of personnel and investment spending. While it keeps growing in absolute terms, its share in overall defence spending is diminishing. The share of maintenance costs is growing, mostly due to higher levels of combat training and steeper outlay for a full-scale use and upkeep of incoming fresh equipment.

### 9 CHANGES TO BE MADE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE DESIRED RESULTS
To practically implement the proposed solutions in the four key directions – deep integration, a new way to manage the human factor (internal integration), technological rearmament (external integration), a new type of defence leadership and management – Bulgarian governments should adopt the following defence policy priorities:

- To draw up a new national rearmament program and earmark the necessary funds to sponsor it based on a new national program for the development of Bulgaria’s defence and armed forces up until 2030;
- The build-up of defence capabilities should be consistently based on the premise that they comprise eight indispensable and complementary elements: doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, facilities and interoperability;
- Rearmament projects should be directly linked with Bulgaria’s commitments on the NATO capabilities packages as well as its PESCO commitments;
- Implementation of an effective project management methodology (and a more general programs and projects portfolio management as well as service management based on
established good practice models used in NATO and the EU) within an advanced resource management system;
- Clear allocation of responsibilities in laying down eligibility requirements, acquisition management and fund allocations, as well as risk management. A possible solution is to set up an agency for acquisition, as well as one for communication, information and cyber defence designed to manage the rearmament projects in close ties with the NATO and EU agencies;
- A more intensive participation in joint projects with allied countries aimed at better build-up, maintenance and use of defence capabilities;
- Enlisting the assistance of NATO and the European Defence Agency in the implementation of investment projects: a practice to be phased in until it becomes firmly established;
- Overcoming the dependencies on Russia in repairs and maintenance of legacy Soviet equipment;
- If such temporary maintenance of old Soviet equipment is necessary as cannot be performed by the Bulgarian defence industry, it is advisable to seek help from allied members or states seeking NATO membership; the capacity of NATO’s Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) should also be utilised;
- The deficiency of certain capabilities (e.g. air policing) should be complemented by NATO resources (e.g. through the periodic allied aircraft deployment on our territory to jointly conduct air policing or by a transition to a joint air policing mission until our air force adopts a new type of combat aircraft);
- Accession of Bulgarian military units to multinational NATO and EU forces and establishment of allied formations on Bulgarian territory;
- An abrupt increase of the national defence budget in the initial stages; adoption of a new national plan to increase defence spending up to 2% of GDP to be achieved by 2020;
- Targeting funds from the central budget for major modernization projects; exploring opportunities for cheaper, allied-backed loans for accelerated rearmament;
- Seeking external borrowing opportunities with leading allied countries under preferential conditions for rapid acquisitions of critical capabilities;
- Establishing an adaptable, predictable and flexible defence management system based on a clear separation of responsibilities and powers between the political level (defence minister with political cabinet), the administrative level (general and dedicated administration within the defence ministry) and the operational level (the armed forces);
- Removing the existing controversies in the current functional responsibilities of defence management in both the civilian and military administrations, as well as in the allocation of command functions in the armed forces;
- Delegating responsibilities and implementation resources to all relevant levels, as well as to suppliers of expert analyses or recommendations;
- Independence of civilian and military expertise and unambiguously making it based on achievement, knowledge and experience;
- Introducing firm legal barriers against partisan trends in the defence administration, as well as the officers' corpus and the generals.
The rearmament of Bulgarian armed forces and their further integration into the structures of NATO and the EU forces, including their participation in joint capacity-building projects and the deployment of joint formations on our territory, will demand changes in their structures and overall size.

Only plans, which go hand-in-hand with the necessary financial commitments – including joint projects with allies aimed at burden sharing and cost reductions – will be able to take us all the way. It is imperative to immediately discontinue the traditional bad practice of adopting financially unsupported plans and using open “framework agreements” designed to circumvent the planning, programming and budgeting system and the project management mechanism.

A realistic analysis of our economic capacity leads to the conclusion that despite the chronic recruitment deficit, given the current number of Bulgarian armed forces, even 2% of GDP for defence will fall short of the target. In view of our inability to sufficiently develop all types of defence capacity, Bulgarian defence will be increasingly reliant on joint capabilities and projects within NATO and the EU.

10 THE NEXT STEPS

“Bulgaria in NATO and the European defence – Defence Policy Vision 2030” is a document based on the political and expert potential of the Bulgarian Atlantic Council.

The paper outlines the main challenges facing Bulgarian defence and puts forward concrete solutions whereby the country will abandon its role as a passive security user in NATO and the EU, pestered by degrading national defence capabilities, and will instead transform itself into a source of security based on a modern and well-trained army robustly integrated with NATO and EU structures.

The proposed solutions are designed to make the national defence system capable of coping with the new challenges of an ever-changing strategic environment.

The implementation of these proposals, through their incorporation into another strategic document covering the period by 2030, will result in a critical mass of changes that will upgrade its way into a new quality of the Bulgarian armed forces. This is a key prerequisite if our country is to become a pillar of stability on the South-Eastern border of NATO and the EU.

Reaching a broad public accord on this vision by putting it through a process of vigorous discussion in government institutions, NGOs and the academic community, is a matter of urgency before the NATO summit in July this year and the forthcoming decisions under EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy.

In the aftermath of NATO’s summit in July, the vision will accommodate the summit decisions if necessary.

“Bulgaria in NATO and the European defence – Defence Policy Vision 2030” is designed to trigger a broad public debate on the future Bulgarian defence within a dramatically changed strategic environment and the challenges our country is facing today.

We expect the results of these debates to inform and urge the Bulgarian government to draw up the next programming document directing the progress of reform in Bulgarian defence and armed forces.