

Defence Planning

Getting Transparency Right

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Liz Arnanz
Indrek Kaik

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International Centre for Defence Studies
Toom-Rüütli 12-6, 10130 Tallinn, Estonia
info@icds.ee, www.icds.ee
Tel.: +372 6949 340
Fax: +372 6949 342

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Executive Summary

On 24 January 2013, the Estonian Government approved the National Defence Development Plan 2013-2022 (NDDP), which will guide the Estonian defence planning over the next decade, converting the defence objectives into solid projects. Since the plan was completely devised by the government, with little public input, this has generated a debate on transparency and accountability in defence planning. The present analysis is a constructive critique aimed at bringing defence planning closer to the public.

This paper begins with a theoretical approach that reviews the academic literature on civil-military relations, military budgeting, and civil society. These theories emphasize the balance between transparency and secrecy in defence planning, highlighting the significance of being transparent whenever possible. Our close review of the current NDDP shows that the plan is inconsistent with these theories, and could be considerably improved by a greater awareness of them. In addition, while our comparative international analysis of similar documents in other countries shows that no state is perfect in this respect, this review nevertheless highlights many features that could improve the next NDDP.

In addition to positive elements in the NDDP such as the four-year planning cycle and its straightforward approach, the research paper presents five areas in which the plan could be improved. First, since defence planning necessarily must depend on forecasts made with incomplete information, increased attention to priority setting would allow the public to know which projects will prevail over others in case of setbacks. Second, whenever it can be done without harming national security, proposed projects should incorporate as much detail as possible, so that taxpayers can meaningfully participate in the debate for or against. Thirdly, defence projects should include more precise budgetary details in order to allow the public to assess their financial viability; moreover, the multi-annual defence budget should designate how much of the budget goes to each defence cost category. Fourth, the document's usability should be improved from the perspective of the reader to ease the access to information. Finally, the process of defence planning should ideally consider the point of view of civil society.

Introduction

Thanks to the constantly increasing pace of change in recent decades, the ability to adapt and be flexible is one of the most valued attributes of successful contemporary organizations. Yet, while quick reaction to change as well as overall flexibility are indeed crucial, proper planning remains more important than ever. One of the spheres that relies profoundly on adequate preparation is national defence planning because this sector has to manage a limitless amount of domestic and international threats.

But what is defence planning exactly? In general terms, it is complex combination of policy formulation, force planning, and resource allocation that ensures a state will have enough military power to achieve its security objectives.¹ There are different levels to defence planning,² from a broad conception of the global security environment all the way down to operational plans that dictate troop movements in potential conflict scenarios. Arguably the most important part of this multi-level planning is the process that translates the ‘big picture’ background into meaningful and concrete steps. In the case of Estonia, this part of the process is found in the National Defence Development Plan (NDDP), which sets forth the concrete steps to be taken in light of the international environment and of available resources. It presents a ten-year path of action, to be reviewed and amended every four years.³

The plan is developed jointly by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Estonian Defence Forces (EDF), drawing also from other relevant institutions’ input.⁴ However, parliament does not have much influence on the conceptualisation, drafting, or details of the plan, since the document is a product of the executive power (the Government): the parliament is only consulted on the National Defence Committee level.⁵ Moreover, while it is understandable that not all details of the plan can be revealed due to security reasons, the status quo leaves little room for the general public to have any impact on the discussion due to a lack of access to relevant information. The lack of information and the absence of public debate thereof extend beyond a single document: the creation of the NDDP is connected to a wider discussion on transparency and accountability.

Indeed, the authors would like to highlight that this article is a constructive critique aimed at bringing defence planning closer to the public. This research paper starts by laying out its methodology, which is based on a comparative case-study analysis of the NDDP and equivalent documents in other states. Second, the paper introduces theories relevant to democratic defence planning that are used throughout this. The section will be followed by an in-depth investigation of the current Estonian NDDP, highlighting translation errors and differences between the English and Estonian-language versions, and comparing the present NDDP with the previous plan. The analysis continues with an exhaustive comparative study of NDDP equivalents from Australia, Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Finally, the paper concludes by presenting a series of recommendations for improving the next NDDP.

Methodology

Based on a comparative, multiple-case study method, the current research sits on two pillars, best characterised as theoretical and empirical. The theoretical section focuses on civil-military relations theory, budget theory and civil society perspective; while the empirical section comprises an exhaustive analysis of the current NDDP. Both the theoretical review and empirical analysis of the NDDP have been used as a benchmark for investigating other similar documents, focusing on transparency and accountability.

Of course, not all of these documents correspond perfectly to the Estonian case. Nonetheless, each white paper considered still has chapters and sections that closely resemble the NDDP, keeping in mind that this analysis does not focus on each country's defence priorities, but rather on what levels of information are available to the public.

For the case study, a wide range of countries and their documents have been chosen in order to have a more diverse and complete overview of other modern defence planning. Apart from the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), frequently chosen for comparisons to Estonia due to shared cultural features, this analysis focuses on: France and United Kingdom, the only

nuclear powers in Europe; Spain, which holds a key strategic position in Southern Europe; and Australia and New Zealand, which demonstrate that transparency is not incompatible while maintaining deep defence-related relationships with key Estonian security partners like the United Kingdom and the United States.

Theory

In considering the ideal relationship between a state's military structures and its civilian authorities, scholars of civil-military relations generally argue that oversight of the armed forces must be carried out in a democratic manner by parliament, appropriate state bodies, and the public.⁶ To this list of actors that should be given an oversight role, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF), an inter-governmental organization with over 61 member states adds civil society⁷ and independent media.⁸ This relationship should not be understood as strict control but rather as communication and dialogue between the political and military authorities emphasizing that security and defence are shared responsibilities.⁹

Ideally, parliament should have real influence over the government's decisions.¹⁰ In this way, a broader societal consensus on defence planning can be reached, as opposition parties can therefore participate in the process via parliamentary committees. Moreover, parliamentary involvement ensures greater government accountability, as the executive has "to reveal, explain and justify *what is done* - policy accountability; and *what is spent* - financial accountability."¹¹ In addition, final executive decisions should be made constructively, relying on expertise both inside and outside government¹²; in the latter category, think tanks dedicated to security and defence matters offer a valuable comparative and theoretical perspective to policymakers while also increasing the influence of civil society on the planning process.

Financial accountability provides one of the most significant tools in exercising civil oversight and control over the armed forces of a state: "The decisions made within resource allocation may maximize or render insignificant those taken on defence strategy or on force transformation."¹³ Even more, the financial planning of defence is considerably more complex than other public fields due to its role

in securing the nation and to its financial long-term approach.¹⁴ Therefore, fiscal decisions are the one of the most determining factors in defence development.

Nevertheless, these monetary decisions must correspond to the foundations of accountability; from the perspective of budget theory, full accountability cannot be achieved without complete budget transparency and resource allocation.¹⁵ However, the balance between transparency and secrecy can be hard to establish, as the release of too much information can have a negative impact on national security.

Yet, the defence budget should be seen as an instrument to improve the national defence strategy and, therefore, whenever it can be done without harm, information should not be restricted.¹⁶

Furthermore, real transparency and accountability can be crucial elements of the viability of a given defence plan. Financial planning as well as legislation share a common burden: there should be no gap between what is legislated and what is really implemented. This challenge is even greater when it comes to medium and long-term planning.¹⁷ Thus, transparency would often allow the public to question unrealistic assumptions in a given budget.

Still, the civilian influence cannot be underestimated either. Firstly, the government is directly accountable to voters and taxpayers and, secondly, the institutions of civil society play an increasing role in contributing to defence planning.¹⁸ Once again, the keyword here should be transparency: “Without transparency and a healthy debate about the level of ambition of the nation, defence will not be able to count on popular support”.¹⁹ Unlike other major oversight bodies within government, which often have access to classified data, both the general public and the elements of civil society depend only on open-source information, which generally comes from the relevant establishments (defence ministries, etc) directly. Consequently, it is clear that transparency and accountability are inseparable; both are prerequisites and foundations for successful, democratic defence planning.

The NDDP

As stated above, the National Defence Development Plan (NDDP) is the most meaningful document in Estonian defence planning. The current NDDP²⁰ is divided into four sections. The first section clarifies the economic impact on the previous NDDP budget. The second specifies the multi-annual defence budget for the current NDDP period, while the third describes the development plan for 2013-2022 in more detail. The document closes by, specifying that the plan is based and dependent on conjecture, and noting that an implementation plan for the NDDP will be soon approved.

While the Estonian NDDP has been translated into English, the translation leaves out the foreword section as well as a single key paragraph.²¹ These two missing parts are not as relevant as the essential word missing in paragraph 3. Because of this error, the Estonian version says that the estimated budget has been reduced by 33%, while in the English version (due to a missing “less”) it is said that the real budget will only be 33% of what was planned.²²

Transparency and accountability in the NDDP

Although the new NDDP takes into account the potential of further budgetary constraints and acknowledges the role of other determinants such as a substantial change in the security environment,²³ it is perhaps surprising that the document does not provide any concrete priorities. Naturally, intelligence gathering and cyber defence are always priorities,²⁴ but if the financial environment changes and budget has to be reduced, the document does not clarify if the land forces would prioritize anti-tank capabilities or the acquisition of self-propelled howitzers.²⁵

Moreover, it is also surprising that the section heading that introduces the NDDP’s defence plan is titled “*Summary of the National Defence Development Plan 2013-2022*”. That raises the question of whether there is a full version of the NDDP elsewhere. Moreover, the last paragraph of the plan mentions that by April 2013 an implementation plan for the NDDP will be approved; however, as

of this writing there is no public information that this approval has in fact taken place.

Worse, many of the points made in the document suffer from a lack of clarity; for example, descriptions such as “[t]he units belonging to the territorial defence structure shall be equipped and completely armed”²⁶ could benefit from further detail. Similarly imprecise at times is word choice: what does the document mean by “modernized”?²⁷ Another example is the vague description of paragraph 24 which, instead of being a practical objective, it looks more like a political claim.

Elsewhere, the NDDP does describe some projects in enough detail to let the public know about upcoming changes, though without explaining how or why they will take place. Paragraph 17 explains how the bureaucracy will be reorganized in order to be more efficient, but provides no detailed timeframe for this reorganization. Similarly, paragraph 19b specifies a deadline for modernizing the infrastructure, but offers no rationale for to justify why one of the bases that will be closed was considered salvageable in the previous NDDP.

In addition, all the projects mentioned in the NDDP are lacking financial detail. The document only indicates the multi-annual defence budget for the ten-year period, broken down on a yearly basis; none of the plan’s projects have any information about their costs. In order to have efficient and viable defence projects, “early identification of total costs is paramount” in medium and long-term planning.²⁸ As previously noted, there is a balance between transparency and secrecy; however, whenever the publication of financial estimations would not be a threat to national security—as in the base modernization project in paragraph 19b—this information should be published. Therefore, taxpayers can not only be aware of how their money is exactly spent, but also understand the significance of defence development.

The previous version of the NDDP

Furthermore, the previous NDDP released in 2009 was clearly not viable enough, since even an overly optimistic budget estimation would not end in a budget reduction of one third. (By contrast, the current NDDP appears to be strongly

focused on available financial resources and, therefore, presents a more realistic budget.) In addition, the information given for the multi-annual defence budget in the previous NDDP is extremely broad—only one monetary figure for the entire ten-year period is provided.²⁹ Again by comparison, not only does the current NDDP specify an annual budget, but it also a visual chart that explains predictions of the annual defence budget through economic variables.³⁰

Nevertheless, the previous plan acknowledges the interests of in a way that the new version does not: the 2009 NDDP emphasizes that a considerable amount of resources are invested in capabilities that are hardly visible to the general public.³¹ Furthermore, the previous NDDP is more user-friendly, as it features clear headings and a basic table of contents, both of which make information more accessible; by contrast, the current NDDP layout is so poor that it could be perceived as an unofficial document rather than an official government product.

These critiques notwithstanding, both NDDP versions offer roughly the same level of transparency, offering only selected information in detail: for example the new NDDP is more precise about the number of future conscripts,³² while the older version gives more detail on prospective anti-tank capabilities.³³

Conclusions of the NDDP

To sum up, the current Estonian NDDP has considerable shortcomings, and ultimately does not meet the standards of transparency and accountability. In fairness, the abstract ideals for a transparent, accountable defence planning document are very difficult to reach in practice. For instance, a 2009 study by DCAF notes that when it comes to defence procurement sphere, only few NATO countries actually followed the model sequence.³⁴ Therefore, a more practice-centred approach is also needed. Accordingly, the next chapter will concentrate on international defence planning documents.

However, as the end goal here is to identify best-practice solutions that can contribute to the formulation of an improved and comprehensive public document during the next cycle of NDDP planning, the case study will have a slightly different focus. The other documents will be approached from a mixed perspective, drawing from the insights presented here in the previous two

sections. The analysis will centre on five core areas: *priorities, project detail level, financial details, document usability, and finally public inclusion.*

Comparative case study

Before going into the case study, it should be noted that, apart from the Spanish document, all papers have been written in the context of post-crisis financial austerity; accordingly, one expects to see heavy reference to monetary aspects, overall efficiency and cost savings. The analysis is structured around individual countries and focuses on the above-mentioned five core areas.

Australia

In the development of the Australian 2013 Defence White Paper³⁵, not only were the views of think tanks and other institutions were taken into account, but public opinion was also carefully considered. From December 2012 to February 2013, the Australian MoD received and weighted one hundred and seven public submissions aimed at improving the future defence white paper. Most of these submissions are now public.³⁶ Furthermore, the public can contact the MoD with post-publication comments on the new paper.³⁷

In addition to these welcome elements of transparency, itself, the 2013 Australian White Paper itself is also a good example for Estonia. The document provides a clear structure from the beginning, with a complete table of contents; it also makes reference to other national defence documents and reviews. After the Australian Defence Force Posture Review suggestions, the paper explains how Australia will improve the geographic location of its defence force personnel and capabilities.³⁸ In addition, the document dedicates an entire chapter to explaining in detail Australia's future approach towards international defence engagements (via partnerships, treaties, projects, specific collaborations or increasing cooperation), an aspect that the Estonian NDDP addresses only vaguely and in brief.³⁹

In a chapter entitled "Developing the Future Force," the White Paper specifically mentions what capabilities are expected to be acquired during the next years in

each defence sector; for many sectors, these new capabilities and their importance to the nation are considered in detail.⁴⁰ The description of submarine capabilities stands out in particular: not only are the projects explained in detail (what will be done and not done, and why), but the actual planning budget—A\$200 million (€139 million) has been spent on determining the future development of submarine capability since 2009.⁴¹ Moreover, the paper also specifies which projects will be replaced or phased out.⁴² And even though most projects are accompanied by such precise detail, the broad picture of defence planning remains strongly accurate.⁴³

The white paper also describes the ongoing reform process in the Australian defence sector as a whole, one that has already saved A\$3.3 billion (€2.3 billion) over three years.⁴⁴ To this reform—which has a broader focus on improving viability⁴⁵--the country has also added and implemented a new system aimed at reporting changes in project approvals, so as to improve defence transparency and accountability.⁴⁶

One brief negative aspect of the white paper that should be noted is that, although the document focuses on a new model for defence budgeting, it does not include a general multi-annual budget.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, Australia has released another relevant document for this case study: the Defence Capability Plan. This paper only focuses on defence acquisitions and is therefore not an equivalent of the Estonian NDDP. However, the Defence Capability Plan can serve as an appropriate example for the NDDP. The 2012 Defence Capability Plan⁴⁸ lists a specific number of defence development proposals that are being considered for approval before 2016⁴⁹ and offers a broad view of how much expenditure by the Defence Material Organisation has estimated for unapproved defence proposals in each defence force sector.⁵⁰ For each proposal, detailed information is available, such as the planned achievements for each phase of a project, the schedule for approval and delivery, and the opportunities that a proposal can offer to Australian industry.⁵¹

In the 2006 Defence Capability Plan, there is an entire chapter organizing proposals according to their expected total spending (grouping together, for example, those costing from \$20m to \$30m, from \$250m to \$350m, from \$2b to

\$2.5b, etc).⁵² In the current plan, proposals are organized according to their “acquisition categorization score”⁵³, while there are fewer and larger project cost categories, making budget planning less precise.⁵⁴ Another aspect of the current DCP worth emulating is that it also incorporates relevant contact information for the officials responsible for each proposal, in order to facilitate public questions about any particular project.

Denmark

The Danish Defence Agreement 2013-2017 represents a close equivalent to the Estonian NDDP as it covers a 4-year timeframe. Moreover, the document is rooted in parliamentary culture, being more of a coalition agreement on defence, rather than a document produced solely by the executive body. The document lacks a table of contents, while its subsections could be more logically connected and the information less scattered randomly throughout the document. However, what the Danish defence paper lacks in form, it really makes up for in transparency. The document has clear and coherent information covering nearly every aspect of defence planning, including chapters on the general defence budget⁵⁵ and fiscal efficiency.⁵⁶ Moreover, the paper provides a very detailed outline of financial inflows and outflows over all four years,⁵⁷ and lists estimated operational and running costs in appendices. Although the document does not establish any priorities, the planning process has thoroughly reviewed the country’s fiscal situation, implying that the set targets correspond very accurately to available means.

This very detailed approach extends to overall planning as well – fiscal discipline goes hand in hand with careful analysis and deliberation. In addition to financial prudence, the planned projects also often include a timeline of implementation. For example, the new army structure is presented in broad terms; however it has additional information in the appendix and clearly mentions when decisions affecting these developments will be made public.⁵⁸

Moreover, the plan holds back little regarding the restructuring of the armed forces, pointing out the bases and the centres that will be closed or merged with others.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, there are some areas of lesser transparency; for example

the plan suggests the reduction of army battalions from six to three without going into further detail.⁶⁰ On the other hand, new substantial initiatives, such as the establishment of a Joint Special Forces command⁶¹ and the future replacement of the Danish Air Force F-16 fighter jets,⁶² are explained in a similarly detailed manner, providing a timeframe and planned resource allocation. Regardless of the relatively poor usability of the document, the paper meets the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

Finland

The Finnish Security and Defence Policy 2012 Government Report⁶³ provides full information about its publication and a complete table of contents. From the beginning of the chapter dedicated to defence development, the report clearly establishes the major objectives for defence development and the major factors of defence capabilities.⁶⁴ Moreover, the document not only recognizes the significance of multinational defence cooperation for improving improve defence capabilities, but also describes the country's main cooperation partnerships with other nations,⁶⁵ something that Estonia only loosely mentions in the NDDP. In addition, the general explanation of every defence force sector is more detailed than the equivalent descriptions in the NDDP; however, the Finnish document has few projects that are specific.⁶⁶

Furthermore, the paper has a chart comparing how many wartime units each service defence force (army, navy and air force) had in 2008 and will have by 2015;⁶⁷ this allows readers to visualize the change that the defence capabilities will undergo. Additionally, the document offers another chart comparing many defence capability indicators, such as peacetime personnel, before and after the planned reform (2011 and 2015);⁶⁸ at the end, the paper also clarifies the structure of defence in peacetime planned for 2015.⁶⁹ Finally, the document highlights that Finnish defence capabilities will require a significant amount of investment in the middle and long-term and, therefore, defence reform must reduce the cost burden by 2015; moreover, the paper already estimates how much will be needed by 2016 and 2020 for defence allocation.⁷⁰

France

The French 2013 White Paper⁷¹ is not closely equivalent to the Estonian NDDP. Featuring a complete table of contents, the white paper both and determines the general multi-annual defence budget for the period 2014-2025 and specifies the budget for 2014-2019, coinciding with the next military programming period.⁷² Despite such detail, the white paper's description of future defence development projects is so broad that it borders on a list of intentions. All this vagueness has a reason, however: the white paper is the framework for the future 2014-2019 military programming law.⁷³

This law will indicate the defence development projects in the annex, if it follows the same format as the previous 2009-2014 military programming law.⁷⁴ The latter specifies both where they money will come from and how much will be spent on defence development; it also specifies how much personnel reduction will take place each year. The law's annex gives a very technical list of all the defence projects that are aimed at acquiring, modernizing, or transforming defence capabilities. However, there is no financial information about each project, only a general multi-annual budget. In addition, there is a public annual implementation report for 2011⁷⁵ that explains what has been achieved to date regarding the 2009-2014 military programming law, a process that significantly increases the public accountability of defence planning. Among other things, the report describes how the financial plan has been implemented to date, and lists which specific changes have been accomplished in the defence sector.

New Zealand

The New Zealand Defence White Paper of 2010 has the longest scope out of all the documents analysed – 25 years. This longer time frame means that the document provides more general guidelines that steer the defence development, rather than going into specifics. However, the document reflects some healthy practices which could provide valuable advice to transparent and accountable defence planning in Estonia and elsewhere.

First, the document clearly identifies priorities and connects them to planned material acquisitions: in order to boost intelligence, surveillance and

reconnaissance capabilities, for example, better maritime patrol aircraft and satellite imagery will be obtained.⁷⁶ Second, the plan gives detailed information on areas that have already been decided on, such as missile upgrades or vessel decommissioning. ⁷⁷ Thus, the New Zealand report shows that it is possible to provide reasonable detail even in a very long term plan.

Norway

The case study takes a slightly different approach with Norway and focuses on the official procurement document⁷⁸ of the country's armed forces. Since Estonia does not differentiate between overall planning and equipment purchase documents, giving only a very rough estimate in the NDDP, Norway offers a great example of a far more transparent acquisition process.

The document divides the planned period into two four-year cycles, giving an excellent and very detailed overview of the priorities and revenue/expenditure flows.⁷⁹ Moreover, the paper also distinguishes between six broad investment categories,⁸⁰ providing a yearly estimate for each. In addition, the document approaches the -projects in a very systematic manner, presenting appropriate information through five key categories, labelled as *background and overall objective, scope, milestones, cost estimates, and point of contact*. Although some planned initiatives go into more detail than others, it is clear that the document is on a level on its own when it comes to transparency.

Spain

The Spanish case is obsolete and, therefore, is a crucial evidence of how important it is to review defence long-term plans on a more regular basis, at least at every change in government.⁸¹ The most recent Spanish White Paper⁸² dates from 2000; since then, the country has adopted the euro, changed its government twice, and seen itself strongly affected by the current economic crisis. Moreover, it is not very forward-looking; the chapter about defence financial support focuses not on future defence spending, but on how much had been annually spent during the last years and the financial implications that the major projects had.⁸³

On the other hand, the report's chapter about defence modernization establishes clear priorities and describes major projects for each branch of service.⁸⁴ Moreover, the importance of any proposed change is generally well-argued, and supported with reference to relevant legislation⁸⁵. In terms of usability, it includes a complete table of contents and relevant visual aids.

Sweden

The Swedish white paper⁸⁶ is a comprehensive approach to security and includes an overall assessment of potential threats. In its timeframe, the paper falls into a similar category with the United Kingdom, Denmark and Estonia, covering a five-year period (in this case, between 2009 and 2014.) The document is divided into eight chapters, with the mid-term development plan being presented in a single chapter.⁸⁷ The paper comes with a very detailed table of contents, making the initial navigation very easy, but the chapters are divided into sub-sections written in full text, forcing the reader to wade through long blocks of text in order to find information. On the positive side, the document puts heavy emphasis on accountability with its repeated references to other relevant documents and legislation.⁸⁸

The Swedish white paper is mostly concerned with major structural reform, since in 2009 Sweden moved away from conscript-based national defence towards an all-volunteer military; however this reorganisation does not include a detailed timeframe. Still, the document sets out clear priorities, valuing the reform to the armed forces' functional structure over material acquisitions and equipment purchasing: some units might have to continue with older gear in order to facilitate the smooth transition to the new system.⁸⁹

The fiscal planning aspects of the defence paper are concentrated in a single separate section,⁹⁰ but the broad estimates of post-reform costs are included in the mid-term development chapter.⁹¹ Moreover, there are references to other documents dealing with monetary matters,⁹² but this – like many other plans – leaves the citizens to wonder how much money is allocated for the planning cycle, as well as which projects such funding covers.

On specific project level, the Swedish document follows a logic best described as “zooming in”. The paper describes the planned undertakings from the broadest scope, providing the planned 2014 force structure⁹³, and then descends step-by-step into more detail, beginning with strategic- level capabilities before then moving onto the tactical level. Some operational- level projects are accompanied by corresponding cost evaluations and timeframe,⁹⁴ but unfortunately this does not continue throughout the paper.

Still, the information provided about the post-reorganisation of the armed forces is rather clear; again the wider implementations are described first,⁹⁵ going into more detail, usually to the weapons-system level.⁹⁶ However, this line of presentation is inconsistent, leaving the restructuring of some units vaguer than others. The latter applies to Swedish Home Guard battalions which, according to the plan, will be reduced from 60 to 40, though no further detail is provided.⁹⁷

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom’s Defence White Paper⁹⁸ from 2010 is a traditional defence planning document, with a scope of ten years and a broader security outlook. However, the plan is up for review every five years,⁹⁹ and includes a mid-term plan, making the document very suitable for comparative analysis here. The document is divided into six chapters (excluding the foreword and glossary sections). The foreword also serves an executive summary and offers a quick and surprisingly detailed overview of the planned changes. However, the table of contents is very general, making more topic-specific data hard to find. Still, the chapters themselves are well outlined, divided into subchapters and based on an easily comprehensible paragraph system.

Although the white paper is very concerned with financial matters as they apply to the defence sector, the general resource allocation situation is not explained clearly enough; the paper notes only the overall unfunded liability¹⁰⁰ and the promise to strive towards the unofficial NATO defence spending target of 2% of GDP. Surprisingly, the plan does not even list a yearly estimated budget for the UK defence sector, nor for the next 10-year estimation. Moreover, while the document does identify priorities among future dangers and security risks,¹⁰¹ the

actual development plan is divorced from this priority-based planning: in light of the recent economic downturn, the document does not even hint at a link between the possible worsening fiscal situation and the corresponding choices.

The strong suit of the document is the outstanding overview of future UK defence organisation developments, providing an excellent outline of the future structure and mission capabilities of British armed forces. The post-reform composition of the defence forces is displayed in a detailed manner, in most of the cases going down to the precise manufacturer of a given vehicle.¹⁰² This explanation also includes a chapter on the UK's nuclear deterrent, describing the planning phase, price estimations and technical details.¹⁰³ Moreover, information boxes often provide a solid justification for the hard choices planned. In addition to the future force structure and equipment, the paper also focuses on personnel-related developments, such as new medical and support capabilities,¹⁰⁴ and lays out the estimated savings that the new system will generate.¹⁰⁵

Conclusions of the comparative case study

The case study has revealed that the international defence planning documents do not always reflect all the aspects that theory tells us are desirable. Thus, comparatively speaking the Estonian NDDP is an average effort, fulfilling at least the most basic principles of defence planning. For instance, the paper has been regularly reviewed every four years by the MoD, in contrast to the obsolete and non-updated Spanish white paper or the New Zealand and United Kingdom documents, which were recently drafted due to the current financial pressure. Despite some inconsistencies in project description, the Estonian NDDP has a straightforward approach that avoids including trivial information or using overly bureaucratic language. Furthermore, the current plan includes a specific multi-annual defence budget and an estimation for each year, relevant information that is curiously not mentioned in many other defence plans such as those of Australia or the United Kingdom.

Indeed, no country fully meets all the principles behind the five studied core areas, but they all can provide some valuable insight for improving defence

planning. For example, there are no countries that establish clear priorities; however, Finland, New Zealand, Sweden and United Kingdom mention some priorities for their defence development e. Moreover, Australia, Denmark and Norway are exceptionally thorough in providing details for their defence projects; France, Sweden and United Kingdom are also good performers in this respect, but do not provide the level of detail shared by the previous countries. As for financial detail, Denmark and Norway are remarkably clear on the monetary matters and on specific project whereas Australia places each inside a range of costs (as we have seen in the Defence Capability Plan for each proposed project).

As for document usability, it is considerably higher most of the studied cases than in the NDDP. Australia, Finland, France, Spain and New Zealand have complete tables of contents that ease readers' access to information. In addition, Norway, Spain and United Kingdom include appropriate visual aids. Finally, regarding public inclusion, Australia is noticeably the most comprehensive country in this area, accepting any comments from the public before and after the development of the Australian defence white paper.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has analysed the current Estonian NDDP from the perspective of civil-military theory, budget theory and civil society values and concluded that the document could be better formulated. Furthermore, this paper has looked at other defence documents that are similar to the NDDP or could bring relevant ideas to improve the plan and concluded that the NDDP covers the basics, but could considerably improve in five core aspects: establishment of priorities, project detail level, financial details, document usability and public inclusion.

Recommendations

First, defence development objectives and projects should be ordered according to their priority. "Within the ministry of defence and the armed forces, it is vital to be absolutely ruthless in setting priorities; further, this needs to become part of the culture."¹⁰⁶ For example, the NDDP acknowledges that the plan and

depends on conjectures about the financial situation which could disrupt the planned course of defence development. However, the NDDP should go into more detail on how a worsening economic environment could specifically affect the objectives and projects of defence development. Therefore, besides those priorities that are now understood to be essential,¹⁰⁷ the NDDP should specify which defence projects will prevail over others in case of any unexpected fiscal shifts that necessitate such trade-offs.

Second, every defence project should be explained in more detail. These descriptions should provide information such as why the project is important, what its scope will be, and what is its timeframe for development. In other words, each project should include as much public information as possible, keeping in mind reasonable concerns about endangering national security, so as to keep the public updated about defence capabilities.

Third, each project should incorporate information about its cost, which would allow the public to identify if projects are viable or not. When designating the projects that will shape future years of defence development, each needs to be accompanied by detailed cost estimates. Of course, the above-mentioned caveat about national security applies to cost information as well. If project cost cannot be safely disclosed, the NDDP should at least provide financial detail about how much money of the multi-annual budget will be assigned to each cost category of the defence. That is to say, how much money will be allocated to the development of army, navy, air forces, personnel, logistics and joint forces.

Fourth, as for document usability, the next NDDP should feature a better design. The current plan should have included a detailed table of contents with sections and subsections; indeed, the description of the development plan could benefit from subsections that divide the projects according to the branch of defence in which they belong, so as to increase ease of access to the information. In addition, the document should provide a more professional impression by incorporating elements such as date and place of publication as well as insignia such as the Estonian coat of arms. Last, the NDDP would significantly benefit from more visual aids, such as a graph that visualizes the proportion of budget that will go to each branch of defence.

Finally, since the NDDP is a product of the executive, the document should allow for further public input into the planning phase. For instance, Australia accepts public submissions with comments for the future elaboration of its white paper, and as stated above provides contact information for each project in case any member of the public has further questions or recommendations.

References: Endnotes

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- ² Estonia has separate defence official papers defining its defence policy, while other countries generally merge all these documents into a single defence white paper. According the Peacetime National Defence Act, the NDDP is aimed at enhancing Estonian military capabilities in order to achieve the objectives set forth in the National Defence Strategy.
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- ⁷ Defined here as "part of society which is interested in public affairs, public welfare, and makes its opinions known to all, to the nation's citizenry and to political leaders, in order to change the course of events for the better". Quoted in: TRAPANS, Jan Arved, "Democracy, Security and Defence Planning", in Willem F. van EEKELEN, Philipp H. FLURI (eds.), *Defence Institution Building*, Vienna and Geneva: Study Group Information, 2006, pp. 197-218. (p. 214)
- ⁸ MAIGRE, 2009, p. 32
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- ¹⁸ DETOMASI, David, "The new Public defence Management Departments: The case of Canada", *Defence & Security Analysis*, vol 18, n^o1, 2002, pp. 51-73 (pp. 59, 63)
- ¹⁹ EEKELEN, 2006b, p. 141
- ²⁰ Approved on the 24th January 2013, the current NDDP is : Estonian Ministry of Defence, *National Defence Development Plan 2013-2022*. Available at: http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/nodes/13373_NATIONAL_DEFENCE_DEVELOPMENT_PLAN_2013.pdf
- ²¹ The point 25 in the Estonian version is missing in the English translation; the point lists the government institutions and branches that were consulted during the planning process.
- ²² According paragraph 1, the previous NDDP planned a budget of 5.456 billion euros for the years 2009-2018 and paragraph 3 states "the actual and forecasted defence expenditure for 2009-2018 total 3.665 billion euros, which is about 33 per cent [less] of the amount planned in the Military Defence Development Plan (MDDP) for 2009-2018." Quoted in: Estonian Ministry of Defence, *National Defence Development Plan 2013-2022*. p. 1
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- ³¹ "In a way we are talking of "invisible" capabilities for average citizen, [...]" Quoted in: Estonian Ministry of Defence, *Estonian Long Term Defence Development Plan 2009-2018*. p. 7
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- ⁴⁰ For example, "the Government announced in 2012 its commitment to a future fleet of 12 EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft for Australia. [...] Australia's EA-18G Growler aircraft will provide the ability to dominate the battle space electronically, enabling tactical options and reducing risk to Australian and partner forces at the same time. As the only operator of the Growler capability outside the United States, Australia will gain a significant enhancement in relative capability across the spectrum of military operations." Quoted in: Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 3 May 2013. pp.77-78, paragraphs 8.17, 8.18.
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- ⁴² "These MH-60R helicopters will replace Australia's current S 70B-2 Seahawk fleet [...]." Quoted in: Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 3 May 2013. p.84, paragraph 8.55.
- ⁴³ For example, the white paper explains Australia bought the *Choules* lift ship and *Ocean Shield* vessel while waiting for the delivery of the first Canberra Class ship. Afterwards, *Choules* will become a permanent amphibious capability and the *Ocean Shield* vessel will be used in the long-term from 2016 for the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service. See Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 3 May 2013. p. 84, paragraph 8.58.
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- ⁴⁷ Australian Government, *Defence White Paper 2013*, 3 May 2013. See chapter 7.
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