

REVIEW

»HONEST DEFENSE« BY THOMAS DURELL YOUNG

Last year, a new book by Dr. Thomas Durell Young was published by the British publisher Bloomsbury, entitled *Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions: The Mirage of Military Modernity*.

The author probably does not need any special introduction for those whose work is related to security and defence matters. For all others, though, let me mention that he is a long-time lecturer at the Center for Civil-Military Relations (CCMR) from Monterey, California, USA. Prior to joining CCMR, Dr Young was a Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, where he focused on European politico-military issues, as well as on joint planning, execution and management of systems and procedures. He holds a PhD in international economics from Geneva, and has authored several monographs. From 1989 to 2017 he was an editor of *Small War and Insurgencies*, and he is currently an editor of *Defence and Security Analyses*.

An important fact is that his work has led him to travel to the majority of European countries and, as such, he is very well acquainted with their respective defence systems, defence and military history, as well as many defence and military decision-makers and experts, with whom he had shared his views and experiences. In most of these countries he has also acted as a defence adviser.

Dr Young is an author whose field of research is extremely rich, both in theory and practice. It is therefore no surprise that his new book reflects his thorough knowledge of the historical background of the former communist states, their defence systems and their armed forces.

The work is divided into nine chapters. In addition to the introduction and conclusion, it includes the following thematic sections: The State of Communist Defense Organisations and Armed Forces, circa 1990; NATO Exports its “New

Model Army”: Why It Did Not Take; Former Soviet Republics' Defense Institutions; Former Warsaw Pact Republics' Defense Institutions; Former Yugoslav Republics' Defense Institutions; Building Defense Institutions: Sharpening the Western Mind; Reforming Western Policy and Management of Defense Reform. The concluding chapter is entitled Getting to Honest Defense.

Young is very systematic and analytical when presenting the topic, and uses all the characteristics of comparative analysis. Wherever historical, political, defence and military bases are identical or highly similar, he provides a thorough explanation of the reasons for significant differences in further development, as well as those who had prevented the occurrence of changes or their sufficient implementation. He is very insightful in his attempts. The basic principle of his research or the criterion for the evaluation of defence institutions in the former communist states is the “Western Mind”, as he calls it. In short, a comparison of western and eastern thinking reveals key differences in planning, decision-making, leadership and implementation of the state’s defence function. The important criteria Young considers when implementing these policies are a review of defence institutions, the public policy framework and compliance of concepts, defence planning techniques, national-level command, the military decision-making process, and the concepts of operations, logistics and professionalism.

According to his findings, these are the major areas where the former communist states differ. The differences between them are normally related to the past regimes and mind-sets in the respective countries. With time, some of the countries have managed to successfully overcome those differences and implement the “Western Mind”, while others have not been so successful.

Although the author uses the Western Mind as the criterion to establish the level of development of defence systems in eastern countries, he does not claim this to be the only and the best criterion everyone should aim for. Quite the opposite: in his chapter “NATO Exports its ‘New Model Army’: Why It Did Not Take”, he provides a thorough explanation of where, when and why critical mistakes or flaws have been made, which still prevent some NATO members to perform up to their potential within the Alliance.

He does not, however, miss the fact that the western democratic concepts of defence management cannot serve just as a means to simply follow the model of others. Rather, these areas must be functional and effective, as well as adapted to each separate country. In his book, the author lists several examples of bad practice, highlighting at the same time some of the unique and good solutions put forward by some countries. Nevertheless, individual chapters reveal some of the characteristics specific to a subject area or a country, which are hard to classify as good or bad. They are just special features that require new solutions with a higher level of functionality.

In the conclusion, the latest monograph by Thomas Young lists proposals on how to build defence institutions using the Western Mind. These institutions first must be upgraded in order to be more effective in responding to new security threats. For young countries, which some twenty or twenty-five years ago still used communist concepts, Young proposes a new approach called "Honest Defense", which is generally intended for all those building collective defence. The approach brings something new for amateurs of such topics, and at the same time serves as a broadly useful and helpful study material for experts who wish and are obliged to find concrete solutions and opportunities for a new and safe future.

The monograph includes interesting concrete examples from individual countries, which the author professionally and critically comments on. The discussed examples comprise both good and bad practice. Additionally, they include an analysis of the development of the defence system and institutions in Slovenia, which enables a neutral external observer to understand our development as well as identify their own strengths and deficiencies.