Showing the Way: Contributions from NATO's Newest Members

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Introduction

Trying to identify the symbolic turning points with respect to Poland's focused contribution to NATO's Defense Education Enhancement Program (DEEP) is a complex task.[1] To begin, it is necessary to mention the Twelfth Annual Conference of the PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes. Poland was pleased to host this meeting in Warsaw, in June 2010, and to welcome a broad group of representatives from defense academies, security studies institutes, foreign affairs and defense ministries, as well as from other institutions dealing with security matters.

For many representatives from Poland, and especially the National Defense University in Warsaw, this conference provided a chance to confirm the importance of building networks of educators, policy makers, and practitioners in order to develop an effective defense education system. During the conference's many debates and discussions, it was underlined that the PfP Consortium—as the key network that connects defense practitioners in Europe and Central Asia—directly contributes to building a better understanding of security problems and, in consequence, to ensuring the security of the societies in its member states. The meeting also gave the participants the opportunity to understand and share their similar perception of security. And the conclusion was that this "joint" perception can only be achieved and guaranteed through an education based on a shared

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[1] The Defense Education Enhancement Program was initiated in 2006 to realize the Alliance's initiative to enhance defense institutions in selected Partner countries in order to help ensure civil and democratic control over the armed forces. The main aim of the program is to develop and reform education in the defense sphere. This includes such activities as preparing programs and methodologies for teaching or conducting research. These efforts are coordinated by International Staff (IS) representatives and a country that has undertaken the leading role in a particular project, in cooperation with International Military Staff (IMS), ACT, NATO School Oberammergau, NATO Defense College in Rome, and the EUCOM. There is a common fund of resources from NATO and the U.S. Department of Defense (Warsaw Initiative Fund) to finance the activities.

foundation. And it was clear that, in the Polish case, Warsaw was definitely the best place for such discussion to take place, and that NDU Warsaw was the best institution to be directly involved.

Why Should Poland Lead the Way?

Poland has successfully managed the transition to democratic governance since the end of the Cold War, having enjoyed over twenty years of post-Warsaw Pact democracy. The main results of cooperation that Poland has achieved with its external partners are its membership in the key European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, including NATO and the European Union. For these reasons, Poland may provide a good example to follow for other countries that are at the beginning or middle stages of their process of democratic transformation.

There is no doubt that military education is an essential element of modern armed forces. Educated and skilled soldiers constitute the core of the military. Well-trained personnel are the most important instrument, first of all, for peace. That is why, at present, the notion of "education and training" should be perceived in a very broad context, especially from the perspective of the changing nature of the security environment. This environment has shifted rapidly from the beginning of the 1990s, and even more dramatically over the course of the last ten years. We are facing brand new challenges of such number and variety that it is not possible to identify or name all of them. Our picture of the overall security environment is blurred and foggy. Yet, on the other hand, in order to successfully cope with this realm it is crucially important to maximize the efficacy of the education and training process. Education is required to train leaders and to develop new skills, and it is only trained leaders that will be able to navigate a changing security landscape.

Therefore, Poland highly values and appreciates all the efforts aimed at stimulating the process of defense education reform in its Partner nations. These tools assist Partner states, especially in the South Caucasus and Central Asia, in introducing improved standards in defense education.[2] Consequently, the PfP Consortium and NATO activities contribute to meet the basic goals of the Partnership for Peace: ensuring and developing interoperability of thinking.

Why Should NDU Warsaw Lead the Way?

Poland's National Defense University is an unusual institution of higher education. Despite the fact that it is the highest university in the Polish Armed Forces, more and more civilians are applying to study there. Hence, in order to meet all this wide range of ex-

[2] The National Defense University experts participate in DEEP events (according to the respective matrix) focused on Armenia (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, sending lecturers dealing with professional military topics); Azerbaijan (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, hosting faculty members); Georgia (ADL activities, the Bologna Process, support to the backward planning activities and Master's degree programs); Moldova (ADL activities); and Iraq (the Bologna Process).

pectations, NDU is looking for innovative solutions, while it is also fully implementing Bologna Process principles and seeking to share them. Thus, there are military and civilian students whose needs must be taken into account as far as the forms of learning and training are concerned. On the one hand, the university's dedicated organizational structure (two faculties and three centers) supports traditional models of education, while on the other hand the education and training process is supported by new technology and innovative solutions. The NDU has been trying to switch from being structured around the principle of teaching "what to think" towards showing students "how to think." As the nature of security challenges, risks, and threats have changed, the opportunities for an effective response have shifted as well. NDU Warsaw's education and training process is supported by advanced technology and innovative systems. This is done so that, to the greatest extent possible, the key actors in conflict areas, especially military actors, can be effectively prepared for the challenge of the new security environment, especially related to cultural awareness.

In this context, this article will offer some reflections on two activities of NDU Warsaw that could be perceived as the examples to follow – cases in which Poland, and its defense university, are leading the way. These two areas deal with the essence of the Bologna Process within the military-civilian realm and with the development of efficient advanced distributed learning (ADL) activities within a relatively short time period.

Sharing Experiences

The Bologna Process

The issue of the implementation of the principles of the Bologna Process principles has required NDU Warsaw to receive coverage under the charter belonging to Erasmus University.[3] Being empowered under this charter, it was possible for NDU Warsaw to initiate the following activities:

1. Mobility of students for a period of study at a partner university
2. Mobility of students in order to implement a practical course at a partner company, organization, training or research institution in another country participating in the program
3. Mobility of academic staff in order to lecture at a partner university
4. Mobility of academic staff to participate in training at a partner academy or non-academic institution in another country participating in the program
5. Exchanges of students and staff
6. Participation in projects such as an Intensive Program (IP).

All these activities are carried out under the rubric of the Lifelong Learning Erasmus Program. It is implemented by a dedicated team focused on the following tasks:

[3] The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels has given these rights to the university on 8 April 2009.

1. Taking action to intensify the development of the Erasmus Program at the university, including the coordination of strategic decisions related to cooperation with partner universities
2. Internal operations to increase the mobility of the entire academic community
3. Implementation of the tasks of international cooperation related to the acceptance of foreign teachers
4. Integrating the university into international educational programs under the EU flag
5. Ensuring full use of received grants
6. Maintaining bilateral relations with partner universities
7. Monitoring of system achievements and ensuring their recognition
8. Co-organization of intensive courses
9. Stimulating the activities of the European student organization ESN (Erasmus Student Network) of the university.

The internationalization of the NDU that has been realized through its participation in the Erasmus Program has allowed for, through the end of the 2011–12 academic year, 127 employees and 184 students of the university to travel to partner universities. As of 1 November 2012, the NDU had signed more than fifty agreements with foreign universities and partner institutions regarding various forms of bilateral cooperation, including mobility programs. Erasmus Program activities are constantly being developed, so having funds in the amount of almost EUR 300,000, we hope to realize at least 200 mobility activities for teachers, students, and administrative staff during the 2012–13 academic year. As a result of the Erasmus Program, the NDU enjoys a sixth-place ranking among the 73 universities in Warsaw in the volume of student and faculty mobility, and a 34th place among the 368 universities in Poland. In addition, in order to increase the internationalization of the NDU, a variety of European Union projects and grants are being realized, including a three-year intensive course in aviation for citizen security and safety ("IP LotSec") for students from five countries, and the Erasmus Polish language intensive course (EILC) for thirty students from eleven countries.

The increase of educational cooperation with military universities in neighboring and V-4 countries—such as the University of Defense in the Czech Republic, the National Defense Academy in Slovakia, the Military Academy of Lithuania, the National *Public Service University* in Hungary, and the German Armed Forces University in Hamburg—is of special importance. In addition to these educational institutions, there are many more, both military and civilian, located all over Europe, that offer possibilities to undertake many more partnership activities should the need arise.

Advanced Distributed Learning

While presenting a picture of the advanced distributed learning (ADL) activities under way at NDU Warsaw, it is important to start with the basic assumptions behind these

activities, and to set out the initial steps toward creating an efficient ADL system. We can identify the following steps:

1. Gathering knowledge about e-learning/ADL
2. Implementation of the concept
3. Development of the necessary technical capabilities
4. Development of educational and training capabilities
5. Development of the human resources capabilities.

The first piece is knowledge that can be gained from various sources, including textbooks, databases, teachers, or subject matter experts. This knowledge is packaged, combined into objects, called Single Content Objects (SCO), which can then be transferred into the Learning Management System (LMS). There are many different LMSs available, mainly commercial ones, but there are also open-source options like ILIAS, which NDU Warsaw decided to implement.[4] Choosing the correct LMS depends on the real needs of the user and the type of institution. The next element is the delivery device, which includes everything that delivers the knowledge, already managed in the LMS, to the learner. It can be a web browser, a mobile device, etc. And the last (and most important) element is the user, the learner.

When considering the institutional environment of NDU Warsaw, it is important to stress that the development of ADL activities is in itself a very complicated process, especially given that educational needs must also be taken into consideration. So, the first step is to create the course, upload it into the LMS, launch it, and, most important, maintain it, which means to control it. To further develop the idea, it is important to define, measure, analyze, control, and improve courses, just as in any quality management process. The NDU's ADL model has been developed with all of these considerations in mind, and it is important to underline that this model is very similar to those used by the International Security Network, the Allied Command Transformation, or the Joint Forces Command. Due to the fact that LMS ILIAS is open source, it was possible to save approximately USD 50,000 for evaluating and comparing activities. As the result of this dedicated work, NDU Warsaw has developed many in-house courses for the Polish Armed Forces as well as for civilian students.

While trying to identify the direction of future efforts, it is necessary to consider two main areas. The first is e-learning, which includes the various educational services that support Bologna Process accredited education tracks on the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels of study. The second is ADL and ADL-mobile training, which are understood to include the full spectrum of life-long learning processes, consisting of short professional courses that are also dedicated to Polish Armed Forces' needs. Seen from the NDU Warsaw perspective, the added values of the ADL activities are: lower costs of

[4] NDU Warsaw is not only the "consumer" of the LMS ILIAS, but also a "producer." A member of the NDU Warsaw ADL team is the responsible person for the Polish interface of the LMS ILIAS, and NDU Warsaw's installation is one of only three installations officially recognized in Poland.

training, minimal system requirements on the user side, availability of open-source applications and platforms, support from external partners, and enrichment of the educational offering. Potential risks and threats are mainly related to the technical issues (security and system management, IT infrastructure). Encouraging faculty members to implement the new methods of delivering knowledge has also proven challenging.

The development of ADL activities within the National Defense University in Warsaw has been widely recognized and very well received by the NATO and PfP Consortium countries. The members of the Polish ADL team have participated in various international and domestic events, including conferences, seminars, workshops, and meetings, where they have focused mainly on the exchange of experiences and best practices. These meetings have also provided the opportunity to discuss technical and methodological issues and share data on the latest developments. The concrete example of this approach is the PfP Consortium's ADL Working Group.[5]

ADL can provide great support to traditional learning. It is particularly suitable for the training of troops, especially those who are geographically dispersed. Additionally, it can often be used to improve competence levels before field training (as an initial course or pre-course). ADL also aims to develop such qualities as self-reliance, self-discipline, time management, and ability to self-assess.

The key to success is the human factor – choosing the right team that will implement any project, taking into account different methodological aspects. Only adequately prepared teaching materials will engage students in the learning process, increase their motivation and, consequently, broaden their knowledge. The Polish Armed Forces place great importance on ADL activities: each officer and NCO of the PAF who is sent to NATO or EU structures is obliged to participate in the dedicated ADL course organized at NDU Warsaw.

NDU Warsaw can be seen as an example of how to develop efficient ADL activities within one year and to do it "on the cheap." The main factor in implementing an innovative approach such as ADL is individual motivation and an institutional commitment to encourage e-learning principles. If there's a will there's a way: this is the response to the question of how to be efficient. It takes dedication, passion, and work, but it is a source of satisfaction that the NDU Warsaw has been mentioned on various occasions as an excellent example to follow as far as the implementation of e-learning solutions are concerned.

Conclusions

The Allies and Partners have taken a positive view of endeavors aimed at the support of defense education. The DEEP initiative is an important element in providing practical support to selected Partner countries. Another advantage is that initiating any activities in this field does not incur substantial costs, either from the Partner nation or the supporting country. This makes it possible to consider expanding the group of participating countries.

[5] NDU Warsaw will host an ADL Working Group meeting in November 2013.

Poland's role in this field is highly visible, and is appreciated by experts who note the importance of reforms in military education in the post-Soviet states and are involved in such efforts. Currently there are eight individual programs in place in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Mauritania. Some related activities were also organized for Jordan and Albania. In most of these cases, the leading country is the United States (except for Armenia, where Canada is the lead country). Each program implementation in a Partner country starts with a study visit by NATO experts, including staff from Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and Allies interested in supporting reforms in defense education. Together they work on goals, types of changes, and an action plan that is to be realized within three years. Every year, current activities are assessed with regard to their pace and possible adjustments.

Poland's commitment to these efforts is an essential element of its practical support for Partner countries. In this context, in the assessment of an institution, any further activities could be oriented at expanding DEEP to other countries. The PfP nations expect the Alliance to be able to provide the assistance and expertise to enable such programs, therefore there is a requirement to continue to invest the time and resources in order to help Partner nations in their efforts to streamline the education reform.

The first functional clearing-house conference to sum up current activities of donor countries involved in DEEP activities took place at NATO headquarters in September 2012. Such events are to be continued, giving this initiative more organized and institutionalized form within NATO's spectrum of activities. The conference showed that Poland is one of the most active nations in this field. This meeting helped solidify the fact that the National Defense University is and will remain an important element of the network that works to enhance defense education, and is also a significant academic contributor in the field of security.[6] During the first clearing-house conference, three offers were made to host future events: by the Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, VA; by the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch-Partenkirchen; and by the Polish National Defense University in Warsaw.[7]

NDU Warsaw's recognition in various international settings as a model to follow in its innovative approach to education and training is deeply satisfying, as it stands as an affirmation of the effort and commitment that Poland has brought to bear on this crucial issue. In an era of shrinking military budgets, education is the best investment. The new ICT tools and Bologna Process activities are not exactly "low cost solutions," but in the

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[6] In this context it is important to stress that in November 2012, NATO received a formal request from the Ukrainian MOD asking to participate in DEEP. Assessment visits are scheduled for the first trimester of 2013 in order to prepare a tailored action plan that will form the basis of NATO's peer review program. There is a standing offer from the Polish NDU to act as an academic co-lead.

[7] It was decided that the next functional clearing-house should be held in June 2013 in Norfolk. The next one, in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, would take place in December 2013. The following such meeting would be in Warsaw in 2014.

fact of the matter there is no choice. What other option is there? If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.