

Speech by President Rosen Plevneliev to the Atlantic Club in Bulgaria on ‘Current Issues and Priorities in the National Security of the Republic of Bulgaria’

Dear Dr. Passy

Dear Ministers, MPs, deputy ministers,

Your Excellencies,

Dear generals, admirals, officers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Thank you to the Atlantic Club for the invitation and for the opportunity to be with you, in front of such a highly respected audience, and share some of my views on topical issues of security and defence.

We live in turbulent times, triggered by profound global transformation. The world, as we know it, is changing rapidly and irreversibly. The processes are highly dynamic, and they are characterised by numerous challenges to the sustainable development of countries. In terms of security and national priorities, we need to think and plan not just only for 2020, but for much further ahead. There are many factors that will shape the future security environment at a global and national level. But four of them are particularly important. These challenges will determine the priorities for national security from here onwards.

The four keywords are integration, technology, resources and demographics.

The first keyword – integration.

Bulgaria is part of a very dynamic region. It borders the Middle East, it touches the Western Balkans and the Black Sea region. We have an interest in more integration and the sharing of defence resources both in NATO and in the European Union. More integration means more security for Bulgaria. It is one thing to go it alone, and another to be part of a strong and active international community sharing common values, a common vision, common opportunities and common action. More integration externally means more integration internally. For example, in the field of defence. In my capacity as Commander-in-Chief, I encourage the development of a modern, flexible, mobile and high-tech military; we must be prepared to effectively fulfill our core mission - defence, participation in allied operations and contribution to national security in peacetime.

In the National Security Strategy, which was adopted with almost complete consensus, and I thank the National Assembly, since March 8 2011, new policies have been developed in the field of defence and security. We conducted very careful observations and analysis and took our decisions, on the basis of a rapidly changing and dynamic environment, not only nationally and regionally but also globally. All members of Parliament took part in what were very serious discussions and we have a very legitimate national strategy.

At the same time, on the basis of this, we came up with strategic defence documents – a White Paper on Defence and Armed Forces, a National Defence Strategy, an Armed Forces Doctrine and, of course, many other national documents. These are in absolute harmony with the Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the NATO member states, adopted on December 8 2010, and the European Union's Lisbon Treaty, which came into force on December 1 2009.

At present the most serious challenges facing the armed forces are:

First, modernisation and rearmament of the army in accordance with the investment programme of the Ministry of Defence;

Second, military restructuring, securing and maintaining the forces;

Third, resources and logistical support for Bulgarian military units and their operations anywhere in the world, for example, in the ISAF operation in Afghanistan.

The pragmatic approach, I confess, means that we must have clear priorities and try to achieve more with fewer resources. Therefore, we have set as a national priority the inclusion of smart defence in the NATO concept, and the “merging of capabilities and sharing of costs” in the European Union.

We know that the financial crisis is a serious problem and a major risk. But yes, it is also a huge opportunity. Much has been said about that. But really, it stimulates – and this is a fact – co-operation and the sharing of resources. It teaches us to integrate and work together. And that was the message of the NATO summit in Chicago - to combine efforts, to build and develop skills through the application of co-operative, multilateral and regional approaches. There is no alternative to co-operation and integration to ensure lasting peace and stability. More integration - more stability! This leads to less risk and more investment and regional development.

The second key word - technology.

Entrepreneurship and talent are the main weapons of the nations that will thrive in the 21st century. Long-term development and security of the state will directly depend on support for innovation, the development of high technology and in particular for the industries of the future - information and communication technology, food production, biotechnology, and all industries related to human health. So I cannot stop insisting, I keep repeating, that we need effective programmes and projects to stimulate innovation for quality education in engineering and technical fields of technology, industrial parks as part of a national cluster policy and innovation ecosystems.

Intervening in the economy through new industrial policies and building a system of technology parks and industrial areas is a matter of vision and responsibility for the future of Bulgaria. This must be coupled with active national policies to improve the business environment. Positioning of Bulgaria in the field of high technology and ideas will make our country an important ally and partner. My ambition is for Bulgaria to position itself as a regional hub in the “information and communication technology” sector. We have already achieved a lot. In ICT and the cluster that

brings them together, we already have 550 companies, we already have created 35 000 jobs and currently we are growing by 16 per cent a year. And this is just the beginning.

Cyber security has emerged as one of the most important factors in the future security of the State. We recognise the link between the availability of skilled professionals - talents that we have in abundance in Bulgaria, and, of course, the development of high technology and the possibility for Bulgaria to build our talent and our resources to play an important role in the development of overall allied cyber security. That is the reason why next year we are planning, and I want to announce to you, that one of the themes of the Consultative Council on National Security in the coming years will be the topic of cyber security and Bulgaria's capacity to develop in this strategic direction.

You know that my total priority is e-government. You know that I follow carefully the progress of this project that is strategic for Bulgaria. But in carrying out and achieving e-government, we must integrate the topic of cyber security. And, yes, that is hundreds of millions and billions in investments, but they lead to huge results. Bulgaria must specialise in this field.

The third keyword - resources.

When I say “resources”, I mean water resources, energy and production of food in accordance with the available land we have. Reforms and measures related to the management of each of these resources are strategic for the development and security of the state. That is why you often hear in my speeches talk about reform of the water sector, an emphasis on energy efficiency, on energy diversification and on investing in research and food production, the potential of arable land in Bulgaria.

We as a country need to have a clear long-term plan of how, where, how much and in what way to manage our resources. And when they are not enough for us, from where to augment them. Of course, I am glad that as a minister I initiated water reform, and now it is already in Parliament. And we know that water is the future petrol. And we know that this time Bulgaria has a long-term strategy, it is already in Parliament. Bulgaria also, with the World Bank - and this is one of the secrets that I can share with you – that when I was a minister, we started jointly with the World Bank 35-year master plans for managing every drop of water in Bulgaria. This means one thing: that we will not work piecemeal, that we will have an integrated plan, that we have a vision and know where we want to be in 35 years.

At the same time, we also started work on a national programme to support the interests of agriculture. If you look at the figures, investment in the agricultural sector in 2008 was 200 million leva, while in 2012, it is now 1.3 billion leva. Agriculture is a priority, the numbers prove it. Exports of agricultural products have grown in the past two years by 40 per cent a year. Planned investments in the sector to the end of 2020 add up to more than 10 billion leva. I expect of the agricultural sector that Bulgaria will become a producer and exporter of food, because only that way will the value added stay in Bulgaria. This is a high priority for "2020". Many times I have given the example, and I repeat to you - do not be happy when we export millions of cubic metres and tons of raw wheat from ports. I will be very happy when we export millions of tons of prepared foods made in Bulgaria, with a Bulgarian brand that is a symbol of quality and trust.

It was at its most recent meeting that the Council of Ministers adopted its first energy strategy of the community - it was on October 18 in Budva, Montenegro, that opened in Europe, of course, the big theme of general policy and overall strategy for energy resources, energy efficiency, as such. Of course, this strategy that was adopted in Budva, was based on the national energy development plans of each country, arising from EU legislation according to the vision of each of the countries. In this specific strategy document, which we welcome, three main themes are set out at European level.

First, to create a specific and integrated, competitive and totally liberalised energy market in Europe, attracting investments in the energy sector and, of course, secure and sustainable energy supplies. In light of the energy strategy of the European Union and in the energy community we want to achieve our goals. We have to deal with three key societal challenges and of primary strategic importance for Bulgaria - energy efficiency as a national priority, energy diversification and development of energy infrastructure.

I am proud that I was the first Bulgarian President to prioritize energy efficiency and energy diversification. The first pilot projects are already being implemented. I want to energy efficiency to come in everywhere - at home, in factories, small and medium enterprises, residential and institutional buildings. We are planning investments in energy efficiency. And with the outstanding support of the Cohesion and Structural Funds, at least three billion leva will be invested in energy efficiency in all these areas by 2020.

Bulgaria should aim for energy independence by diversifying sources and suppliers of energy and increasing its own power supplies. Timely construction of gas links with neighbours, and the negotiation of supply from various sources, create long-term prospects for energy diversity and independence for the country. This is an invitation for investment, this is an invitation for factories, this is an invitation for development. When you depend on one pipeline, the situation is radically different and unfavourable.

The decisive factor, of course, in energy independence is energy stocks. In this respect, the domestic natural gas production has a large role, and I applaud the efforts in this regard, and we see that the government already is granting concessions. I am proud, I am glad, that our partners in the development of the promising Asparouh field in the Black Sea includes world-renowned giants such as Total, OMV and Repsol.

In terms of energy infrastructure, Bulgaria is working on large-scale projects of European interest. The Southern Gas Corridor is a fully-fledged priority for Bulgaria. It will transport gas from the Caspian basin and Central Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Mediterranean basin to the European Union. I hope that the Turkey-Bulgaria interconnector, about which we have been putting a lot of effort into negotiations – in a few days I will visit Istanbul and Ankara, for the first stage of Nabucco West. We are working on this, we support this project day and night, and I think it is strategically important for Bulgaria and for Europe.

Of course, Bulgaria signed together with a number of other European countries, giving the green light to the South Stream project. This is a large and important project for Europe and for Bulgaria because it will diversify the route by which we receive gas. And, of course, let us not forget, that to date Bulgaria is still dependent on one supplier and one pipeline.

The fourth keyword - demography.

Negative demographic situation in Bulgaria is a topic that requires serious consideration by the institutions. Very often, when we have been debating “Bulgaria 2020” in the Presidency, I tell people: you know what is the biggest problem we shall have to deal with from January 1 2021 - the demographic problem. But we should not put it off until then. Bulgaria needs simply to address its problems, to be fair, to be honest, putting them on the table. That brings together the elite, that provides solutions, it creates positive energy for action and decision. And I say that the demographic problem in Bulgaria is a big one. And of course, together we have to come up with a solution and not wait until January 1 2021.

Three things. The trends are clear. We have a strong National Statistical Institute. It shows those trends. There are solutions.

First, we have to adopt innovative policies to encourage fertility. Second, we must focus on improving the quality of life as an important element of modern demographic policy. The priorities here are education, health, and above all regional development, creating economic prospects and quality of life in the regions of Bulgaria. This stimulates the development of the nation.

Third - we need to adopt policies that would bring back our compatriots abroad and attract talent and highly skilled immigrants from third countries.

A few words about the continuation of reform of the security sector. The main problems and weaknesses in the system of national security are the following. Above all, important elements of the national security system do not operate in a single legal space. They work without a clear conceptual framework and model, without laws to govern and manage their planning and management. This applies to the National Protection Service, National Security Service, none of which had statutes to govern them. From this arise the big questions – who sets the tasks, how are they perform, on the basis of which rules and what public, political and parliamentary checks have there been on their activities so far? A great question!

This was not regulated by the law on the activities of the National Security Council at the Council of Ministers, an exceptionally important body. It is precisely this body that assures us that we are not working in the dark or working piecemeal. Now it operates on the basis of regulations that do not burden its role as a single state body organising the interaction, co-operation and co-ordination of actions in the area of national security.

There are unresolved issues in connection with the theme of natural disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks. Flooding in the village of Biser, the earthquake near Pernik, the terrorist attack at Bourgas Airport, blasts at several ammunition depots, show that there is something to be done about the safety of people in extreme situations. Local authorities today are not fully prepared to assume their responsibilities. They rely on the power and the resources of the central government.

As President, I put these questions directly to the Consultative Council on National Security. The Consultative Council on National Security plays an important role in the national security arena. After 20 years of delay, we changed the whole basis on which the council operates. The law

approved 20 years ago said that the Consultative Council on National Security should have rules to govern its operations. There are such rules now, 20 years late. At the very first meeting of the Consultative Council on National Security under my leadership, we reached consensus on this, and I am fully grateful to all parties represented in Parliament for their wisdom and confidence in the Presidential institution. And this way, clarity was given to the National Protection Service, National Security and Military Intelligence. We achieved a historic breakthrough, there is consensus, there is a clear commitment to the introduction of a package of four laws, there have been hearings, of the public, experts, NGOs and as of yesterday, we have a decision by the Council of Ministers. So the way is paved for this package of laws to reach Parliament, and I am sure that this will become reality.

I believe that the Consultative Council on National Security should not be a platform for political speeches of party leaders and I do not run it that way. The Consultative Council on National Security is a forum for policy-making. The council is a forum for reaching an agreement, a consensus on national priorities, in the field of national security. And let me state very clearly – while I am President, each meeting of the council will end with a news conference afterwards. I want the Consultative Council on National Security to be a demonstration of political maturity, of wisdom. The proposals must be included in the agenda of the institutions and bodies linked to them, and results achieved. The Consultative Council on National Security must be a symbol of efficiency, of progress, of defined action.

While I am President, of course, the council will meet regularly, as required by law. And, of course, all possible topics will be put to it. An example is that at one of the council's meetings, energy security, the European Commission's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism and, of course, the terrorist attack at Sarafovo Airport were discussed. However, in this regard, that issue is also being worked on by the President's Council on Foreign Relations, Defence and Security, at which we give the opportunity to be a forum, a platform for many people - MPs, NGOs, experts, representatives of the scientific and expert community, to be able to hear their voice on appropriate relevant topics.

The issue of regulating the activities of the security sector is a high priority for me. I am sure that by April 2013, on the basis of consensus, the package of four laws, on the National Protection Service, National Security Service and Military Intelligence and a general development law will be adopted in Parliament. I rely on and trust in what parliamentary parties declared before me. I thank them and I hope that it will become a reality, and will monitor that it becomes a reality, by April 2013. It is in the best interest of national security. This will be a historic achievement, not only for the past 20, but for the past 70 years, adding in the years of communism in Bulgaria, in which the services operated in the shadows, without rules and without public and parliamentary scrutiny.

An extremely important strategic priority area of national security is public order, internal security, countering asymmetric risks and threats to security - and here this includes terrorism, smuggling, trafficking, corruption, organized and conventional crime. These issues are at the center of attention of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence and the special services. It is in this area that an issue that is cardinal for me will be decided, and it is not about how many people are caught and convicted, but that Bulgarian institutions in the security sector build up and benefit from a high degree of public approval and protect the rights and freedoms of Bulgarian

citizens, generating support and confidence everywhere and every day. This will be determined solely by the actions of these institutions and how they address problems.

I want to turn to the theme of civil security as one of special significance, which in the National Security Strategy, as a modern and current document, has a central role. The real meaning of national security in the new conditions and new realities is the protection of the individual citizen. Under the new conditions, economic prosperity, economic development of the citizen, the individual is part of national security. It is the main task of those who are responsible for it. And this is everything related to the justice system, reforms to improve the business environment, institutions working as a matter of high priority, including the Presidential institution, with a strong focus not on the strong personalities who promise that they will work, but on the strong institutions, those which, irrespective of the rules, work around the clock to do their jobs.

Transformations in the development of the national security system ultimately depend on the effective functioning of the Bulgarian economy, the economic potential of the country. In this respect, "Bulgaria 2020", which is the final stages and will soon bear fruit from negotiations with our partners at the European Commission, will create favourable conditions for the successful implementation of the reforms planned in the area of national security. We are now at a stage where the security of the state, society and citizens is not simply just a function of the uniformed services.

Along with the so-called hard cash, good governance, the proper functioning of public authorities and institutions, economic development and human resources development come to the fore.

Today Bulgaria has to work for sustainable growth and it does so on the basis of new industrial policies, production, exports and support for small and medium enterprises. Only countries that are highly developed economically and intellectually can ensure, independently and with partners, the security of their citizens. Apart from the partnership between countries, there is a huge role for partnerships with the private sector. Many often forget the importance of public-private partnerships, the importance of business, the importance of non-governmental organizations, universities, academic centres, research institutions. The private sector has a huge potential in Bulgaria. Ninety per cent of the production business in Bulgaria is private. It would be good for the state to use this more efficiently and better. I want more examples of successful public-private partnerships. And let mayors and ministers not worry. Public-private partnership is the foundation of success from now on. This alone will lead to a different effect than the one we are seeing now - the budget and spending. And what shall we say about the budget and multiplication? But that can only happen when using the private sector. It can be a multiplier.

So, budget money with the private sector, there is money in the banks, our companies are developing, they have good business plans, they can be good partners for the state, together, government resources will be multiplied by at least four times. I want this multiplier effect to become reality and I will work towards that.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is no coincidence that I am looking at the clock, because I want to do something a little more creative and a little different. First, I want to remember where Bulgaria was 22 years ago. Communism had gone, leaving total collapse and bankruptcy, and gross domestic product per person in 1989 was far below \$1000 a year. Today it is \$7500 a year.

Remember that only 13 years ago, in our neighbouring country, bombs were falling, and in the region, wars were being fought. Remember that on this day 13 years ago, a great President and an inspiring world leader spoke in Sofia to hundreds of thousands of Bulgarians on the square and said, I quote, “I want you to remember what you left behind. A police state, in which there was no room for disappointment because there was no hope for anything better. Nobody felt left behind because no one was allowed to go ahead”. The struggle for constitutional democracy led not to paradise, this President said, but to opportunities. It was not about building a perfect world, but an opportunity to build a better world.

And another one of his great thoughts. He said from that podium that the Cold War had been fought and won by free people who did not accept the existence of two Europes in the 20th century. Now we need not and never will assume the existence of two Europes, separate and unequal in the 21st century. So said that great President, Bill Clinton.

Remember, that 10 years ago to the day, and that is why I looked at the clock at the same hour in the same minute, NATO Secretary General George Robertson said in Prague: “I propose to the Council of Heads of State of member states to invite Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Latvia, Slovakia and Slovenia.” This is the decision that the Council adopted.

And allow me, dear friends, on behalf of all of us, to congratulate everyone, but especially to congratulate, on the anniversary of this achievement, to shake hands in front of you all with a minister, a Bulgarian, a leader with vision and a cause who might be known in this world for his Trabant, but famous for much more in the world, and I want to shake his hand on behalf of all Bulgarian citizens, that with his ambition and non-stop work and his cause, he worked in order for Bulgaria to become a worthy member of the NATO family.

I am convinced that Europe, like none other, fully deserves the Nobel Peace Prize. Because the European integration of Bulgaria and the region means peace, security, stability and human progress. And in this fast-paced 21st century, ideologies play an increasingly smaller role. Today generals understand that it is not so important to win the war, it is more important to win the peace. Today, the biggest problem for politicians of the world is not ideological. Their major issues are how to grow the economy so that everyone gets to develop, and to have access to quality education, public services and, of course, to ensure security and solidarity with the individual.

In the parliaments of the world, the debates are now not on ideological issues, but on important topics - how governments can be effective and beneficial to the public, the debate is about the capacity of any government to do the work and deliver results in the interest of the people. The focus on the right priorities and performance today is fundamental and more important than anything else. And for a government to provide such solutions and such developments, of course, it must have long-term strategies, but governments have to work around the clock, consistently, regardless of who is in power, to achieve results. And to work for partnership and trust.

I am proud that Bulgaria is a NATO member, I'm proud that Bulgaria is a member of the European Union. This is the highest achievement of the country in the past 20 years. I am glad that Bulgaria is a good neighbour and a respected partner in the region and worldwide. The country is on the right track, it is developing and achieving progress. And the question is not

whether it will develop, the question is how fast it will grow. For that reason I am working on integration, for that reason I work for long-term priorities and the reputation of Bulgaria, because in this very hectic and interdependent world, I understood that I had to work for the development, for trust and above all, to build on the achievements of those before us.

Thank you.