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**THE BLURRING OF BELGIUM'S
SECURITY: DELIBERATE OR
UNINTENDED?**

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SECURITY AND TERRORISM

An economist who is only an economist, is not an economist.

– J. S. Mill

Security, as a concept, is usually approached and analysed by researchers in the areas of policing, justice, politics and defence. It is less common to see defence economists intervening in this debate, although for a long time they did indeed examine the economic aspects of war and peace, under the heading 'Economics of Security'.

Since 9/11, however, more and more emphasis has been placed on terrorism and on organised crime, together with the associated policy.

It is clear today that security cannot be understood without a certain degree of ambiguity. This paper addresses security's equivocal nature from the point of view of a defence economist and analyses its similarities and differences.

Even before the end of the Cold War, Western Europe lived in the assumption of a stable, even peaceful environment. However, since 2001, terrorist attacks have continued worldwide. Terrorism has become the primary threat, and many countries have clearly become targets.

France has endured the most attacks in Western Europe. Since 1982, France has suffered nearly 20 attacks, resulting in many deaths. Many other countries have also been impacted, like the United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, Sweden, and others.

The observation that Europe – or rather the values that it represents – has become a prime target for Daesh as well as a theatre for terrorist operations, is something of an understatement. Europe has also turned into a jihadist recruiting pool. Today, we are dealing with a multifaceted threat with roots both inside and outside our borders. Potentially, no European citizen is safe.

COUNTERTERRORISM ON THE GROUND IN BELGIUM

*The 21st century has begun as an era of uncertainty,
with a heightened focus on security and public safety.*

– Gavin Newsom

Belgium has not been spared from terrorist threats and attacks. The deadliest were the suicide attacks organised by Daesh on 22 March 2016 in Brussels Airport and at the Maelbeek subway station, which resulted in 32 deaths.

But already on the night of 20 November 2015, following information that several dangerous terrorists were lurking in Brussels a week after the murderous attacks in Paris, the alert level rose to its maximum in Brussels. Potential targets included major events, shopping malls, public transportation and shopping streets. There was even a lockdown for a week: schools, nurseries, sports and cultural centres, cinemas, shopping malls and public offices were closed, and sporting events as well as concerts were cancelled. The streets were completely deserted and armoured vehicles were even stationed on the Grand Place.

Belgium's present counterterrorist actions in the field began on 15 January 2015, when the Belgian police conducted a successful major armed operation in Verviers against an armed terrorist cell that was planning imminent attacks across the entire Belgian territory.

On 17 January 2015, the Cabinet gave approval for the immediate domestic operational deployment of 300 soldiers to carry out surveillance and monitoring tasks for an initial – but renewable – period of one month in support of the Federal Police.

Following the decision of the Council of Ministers and consultation with the National Security Council¹ (NSC), a protocol agreement determining the legalities of the implementation modalities for the Ministry of Defence's support for the Federal Public Service Interior (Ministry of Home Affairs) was established. It came into force on 15 January. The NSC analysis is always based on the evaluation of the Organisation for Threat Analysis Coordination (Organe de Coordination pour l'Analyse de la Menace, OCAM), communicated to the Crisis Centre of the Federal Public Service Internal Affairs, but only when a specific general threat level (level 3) is reached.

Several different federal public services are involved in the fight against terrorism and are coordinating their efforts.² Among them, OCAM's mission is to perform

¹ Royal Decree of 28 January 2015 establishing the National Security Council.

² http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/policy_areas/peace_and_security/terrorism/fight_against_terrorism, accessed 22 August 2016.

punctual and strategic assessments on terrorist and extremist threats against Belgium³ since December 2006.⁴

There are four levels on OCAM's scale of threat determination:

- Level 1 is equivalent to a *weak risk* of terrorist attack.
- Level 2 is considered to represent an average threat and signifies an *unlikely* threat of attack.
- Level 3 is regarded as serious, and implies a *possible and likely* terrorist attack.
- Level 4, the highest, means that the threat is *very serious and imminent*.

The practice of defence forces supporting the integrated police has, however, become a recurrent policy. Indeed, since January 2015, the Council of Ministers has repeatedly approved the continued deployment of troops in the field after considering the views of the Strategic Committee of Intelligence and Security⁵ and the threat analysis conducted at least weekly by OCAM.

Thirty months after the Verviers operation, the military are still on the streets. Two distinct operations remain ongoing: Operation Vigilant Guardian (OVG), the support contributed by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to the Federal Police with regards to terrorist threat, and Operation Spring Guardian (OSG), an immediate response capacity provided by the MoD to secure nuclear sites.⁶

The government continues to determine the degree of support provided by the Belgian armed forces on a monthly basis. This suggests that this decision was not initially intended to constitute a long-term policy. Under the constraint of the OCAM analyses, on-the-street realities and probably public opinion, the presence of the soldiers has ceased to be questioned.

Is this situation temporarily permanent or permanently temporary? In any event, this shows both the duality and the complementarity between external and internal security.

³ Royal Decree of 28 November 2006 implementing the Law of 10 July 2006 on the threat analysis.

⁴ Law of 10 July 2006 on Threat Analysis (M. B. 20 July 2006).

⁵ Comité Stratégique du Renseignement et de la Sécurité – CSRS.

⁶ On 15 September 2016, the Council of Ministers extended until 19 December 2016 the protocol relating to the protection of nuclear power stations by the Federal Police. Pending the entry into service of a security corps, a protocol between the MoD and the Federal Police provides for a military commitment for this mission. A detachment of 140 military personnel is deployed in support of existing unarmed private security personnel.

THE DEIXIS OF SECURITY

At the end of the day, the goals are simple: safety and security.

– Jodi Rell

While the police traditionally embody security, the current military presence in the streets of most big cities has led analysts to scrutinise an increasingly hazy interpretation of the concept. Several aspects may be involved in the political, diplomatic, economic, financial, social, health and environmental spheres.

The Federal Police are customarily viewed as the natural guardians of security. In the present government of Prime Minister Charles Michel, a ‘Security and Home Affairs Minister’ has even been appointed. This designation is, of course, a reference to *internal* security, related to public order, civil security and domestic threats.

On the other hand, the MoD oversees external security, namely protection against armed aggression and external threats. Defence policy is subordinated to foreign policy and determined by respect for alliances, treaties and international agreements.

Security is therefore a much broader concept and gives way to a dichotomous interpretation: the national security strategy embraces both external and domestic security, and implements military, civil, economic and diplomatic means.

Consequently, security is the first service owed by a state to her citizens. Therefore, the Minister of Defence could equally well be depicted as the Minister of Security, just like his colleague in Internal Affairs.

However, the notion that concerns this paper is based on its sovereign functions: External Security (MoD) and Internal Security (the Federal Police).

✧ ✧ ✧

Any terrorism is an attack on libertarian values.

– P. J. O’Rourke

Overall, security must allow us to live in freedom as well granting us the opportunity to lead a fulfilling life. Consequently, one fundamental of security consists in the protection of basic liberties; it is therefore appropriate to refer to some inescapable articles in basic international declarations and agreements.

The call for security is logically based on the need to take advantage of all the individual and collective freedoms, as provided in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Paris, 1948). Belgium guarantees 14 fundamental, collective and

individual freedoms in an identical manner in its Constitution.⁷ Article 11 represents its quintessence: 'the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised to all Belgians must be ensured without discrimination'.

In the context of these fundamental statements, the Federal Police and MoD have specific roles.

Security, a pure or an impure public good?

Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety
Benjamin Franklin

Another aspect of their complementarity consists in the fact that these two faces of the security of a country, which are also sovereign functions, are nothing less than public goods. Indeed, they are not supposed to be consumed individually, but by all members of the community.

A public good is a necessary commodity for the functioning of society, usually provided by the state. There is a wide range of goods from a *pure public good* to a *private good*, via *impure public goods*.

A pure public good has two well-defined properties:

- a) *Non-rivalry*: a pure public good can be enjoyed simultaneously by all potential consumers; they can enjoy not only the same amount of the good as any other individual, but also the *entire* available quantity.
- b) *Non-excludability*: once the good has been created, it is impossible to exclude individuals from the enjoyment of it – or it is extremely costly to do so.

The corollary of the second property lies in its *indivisibility*: benefits resulting from consumption of a pure public good are indivisible; all individuals use the same quantity of the public good.

The financial aspect brings another confirmation: no additional cost should be incurred if an additional individual becomes the consumer of a pure public good; in other words, a pure public good has a marginal cost of zero.

When one of the above criteria are not fully respected, the public good becomes impure.

⁷ *La Constitution belge*, 7 February 1831. The current Constitution is online on Belgian monitor site, the Coordinated Belgian Constitution, 17 February 1994, http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=1994021730, accessed 20 September 2016.

Does security belong to the category of pure public goods? As security is not homogeneous, the specific instances of defence and policing should be scrutinised separately.

In an ideal world, defence fully meets the criteria of a pure public good, since every citizen 'consumes' the same amount of defence, even if his approach to this public good is unlike. Therefore, everyone benefits in equal measure, whether he contributes a lot, little or not at all.

Nonetheless, this applies only if defence plays a dissuasive role, as in the days of the Cold War, when any attack was dissuaded by the capacity of the protagonists. Every citizen enjoyed defence in all its aspects, even if, like anti-militarists, they did not desire it. Defence, in its *deterrent* role, was without any doubt a pure public good.

This is, however, different in times of war, i.e., if deterrence fails. Defence then becomes an action tool on the ground (*boots on the ground*), and the consumption of defence resources for the protection of a priority objective can only be done at the expense of other sectors. Each operational plot implies in fact a differentiation in efforts, a prioritization. As a result, defence is characterised by *rivalry*, *exclusivity* and *divisibility* and becomes an impure public good.

Today, the 'classic' threat of a nuclear war between two major antagonistic blocs has disappeared, giving way to many polymorphic and diffuse risks. In the event of *peacekeeping* or *peace restoring* missions, and even in the framework of *humanitarian* assignments, defence is blatantly an impure public good from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries of its interventions.

Policing also contributes to security. However, contrary to its external equivalent, internal security comes in more concrete forms, and hence police activities are well known by citizens. Knee-jerk reactions against police work are, therefore, rarer than those against the military.

Unlike defence, policing never evolves in 'peacetime' and never behaves like a pure public good. In practice, every police intervention in favour of an individual citizen prevents many other 'consumers' from benefitting from the security provided.

For instance, during major events and sports competitions, such as the Olympics or Football World Cups, police reinforcements from across the organising country are mobilised, resulting in a lower level of security in small towns.

DEFENCE AND POLICE MISSION STATEMENTS

The Constitution does not exhaustively describe and therefore imposes no limits on the MoD's role in maintaining security. It follows that domestic operations are not contrary to the Constitution. But given that the primary task of the armed forces is still maintaining national independence and territorial integrity (Article 91), other tasks are justified only insofar as they do not endanger the primary task.⁸

Therefore, the protection of national interests is enhanced by the implementation of Belgium's national security strategy in an international context, namely commitments arising from the United Nations Charter and the Treaties of Lisbon and Washington.

In his updated *Mission Statement for Defence*,⁹ Belgium's Chief of Defence (CHOD) stressed in 2014 that

Defence contributes to secure peace in the world and to the defence of the interests of our nation by maintaining and committing military capabilities, if necessary with the legitimate use of force to ensure the security of our nation and its allies and to preserve the founding values of our society and to promote them in Belgium as well as abroad.

This includes participation in the collective defence and collective protection of vital and essential interests, protection of fellow citizens or Belgian interests abroad; partaking in security operations, in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations, as well as in humanitarian operations.

The armed forces can also be deployed in aid of the nation, for instance, in cases of serious political or social conflicts.¹⁰

It should, however, be noted that the contribution of the MoD to the security of Belgian society within national borders is to be exercised solely based on expertise or military capabilities, or when civil resources are inadequate. Hence, other tasks, such as aid to the nation, are only really justified insofar as they do not compromise the main task.



⁸ J. VELAERS, 103.

⁹ *Déclaration de mission de la Défense et cadre stratégique pour la mise en condition*, CHOD-mission – Édition 1 (March 2014). Diffusion Interne. CabCHOD.

¹⁰ These contributions were very rare: in 1950, during the insurgency following the referendum over the monarchy; in 1960 throughout the general strike; in 1966 on the occasion of the mine closure in Limburg, and in 1985 during the Communist Combatant Cells terrorist attacks.

The balance between freedom and security is a delicate one.

– Mark Udall

The *National Security Plan (NSP) 2016-2019*¹¹ is the ultimate police mission statement. The title of this NSP – *Together to the heart of the matter* – emphasises integral cooperation between the integrated police and their partners in the security chain. The NSP determines ten security issues. However, no specific mention is made of the MoD or the military.

In France, a government plan called 'Vigipirate' was created in 1978 and reformed in 2014 to adapt to sustained terrorist threats. It involves the deployment of significant numbers of military personnel in the streets.

In Germany, internal and external security operations are clearly delineated. Patrols of soldiers, rifles slung over their shoulders, are now commonplace in France and in Belgium, but constitute a taboo in Germany. Since 17 August 2012, the German Constitutional Court has, however, authorised the deployment of the armed forces 'in the event of an exceptional catastrophic situation' and 'as a last resort'. It is, however, for the government to estimate the cases of extreme urgency justifying such an operation. After the shooting that left nine dead in Munich on 22 July 2016, there was no agreement within the government on deploying military police as proposed by the Minister of Defence. The same refusal emerged after the attack on 19 December 2016 in Berlin.

¹¹ National Security Plan 2016-2019, police publication presented on 7 June 2016, <http://www.police.be/files/fed/files/ORG/INT/NSP2016-2019-S.pdf>, accessed 20 September 2016.

THE FLUCTUATING PRIORITIES OF BELGIUM'S SOVEREIGN FUNCTIONS

There is no doubt that our nation's security and defeating terrorism trump all other priorities.

– Arlen Specter

Economics, as a science of scarcity, finds justification in its fundamental paradigm: *the needs of an individual and of groups of individuals are unlimited, while the means capable of satisfying them are rare*. All economic activity therefore involves definitions of priorities, classifications, decision and choices.

Those in charge of all aspects of the *Economics of Security* claim that they are victims of the consolidation of public finances and of European constraints imposed via the Stability and Growth Pact. In times of financial crisis, all government branches must show solidarity and participate in the reduction of their expenses. Cutting defence, policing and intelligence budgets became a popular trend that was less costly electorally for politicians than reducing investment budgets or social benefits.

Obviously, security should also participate in the solidary strengthening of public finances, but policymakers, as well as the public, care little about this, particularly when it comes to defence. Security budgets have been in the crosshairs for decades. In all public sectors, debates are passionate and each decision-maker claims that his own goals can no longer be achieved.

It is interesting to determine whether the savings have been across the board in all public departments. To verify this, one cannot use the statistics of the different Federal Public Services or ministries, as they are far from consistent over a longer period, considering, on the one hand, the number of governments in Belgium and, therefore, the number of administrations, and on the other hand, the changes in ministerial attributions and fluctuating distribution of competencies between the different levels of government.

It is therefore imperative to appeal to the Classification of the Functions of Government¹² (COFOG) statistics. According to this method, government spending regroups the expenditures of 'functions', regardless of the departmental organisation and budget on which they depend. These statistics, available from 1995 on, are therefore the most relevant in comparing the ten functional categories of government spending¹³: public services, defence, public order and safety, economic affairs,

¹² United Nations Statistics Division, <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/regcst.asp?Cl=4>, accessed 25 August 2016.

¹³ Struys (CRAIG, 2014) used these data for the first time to compare the financial evolution of the MoD with those of other government functions. Actualised data accessed on 29 January 2017.

environmental protection, housing and community amenities, health, recreation, culture and religion, education and social protection.

Two are relevant to our argument:

- The function of *defence* is broken down as follows: *military defence, civil defence, foreign military aid, defence research and development, defence not elsewhere classified (n.e.c.)*.
- *Policing* is part of the function '*public order and safety*': *police services, fire-protection services, law courts, prisons, research and design for public order and safety, public order and safety n.e.c.*

The first important deduction,¹⁴ is that in 2015 these two functions represented only 4.79% of the total public administration expenditures: the breakdown of this total allots 1.55% for defence, and 1.97% for policing. Security *lato sensu* thus barely arrives at 3.24%.

To assess the evolution of the purchasing power of security budgets, which determine the potential to achieve the optimum levels of efficiency and effectiveness, the most relevant criterion consists of their evolution in *chained euros*, a method that removes the effect of price changes from changes in value.

Concerning the most relevant evolution criterion, the progression of the expenditure in *chained euros*¹⁵ considered over the period 1995-2015, leads to the following conclusions: the purchasing power of the MoD decreased by 18.54%, while total public expenditure recorded a growth of 44.8%. The statistics show, on the other hand, that the *public order and safety* function budget increased by 77.08%.

The defence budget has indeed been most severely affected by financial cuts; it is, however, totally wrong to claim, as many do, that this has only been the case since the twenty-first century crises. In fact, defence has been undergoing a price index jump since 1985 (Cf. Struys). The government has never given security a high priority.

Struys' conclusions, based on 2014 data (RMB 2014), are confirmed by the latest available figures showing that the defence budget's purchasing power has been dramatically reduced since the 1980s. When we compare this to the evolution of GDP purchasing power, it is evident that defence not only loses funds during a recession, but also in economic boom years. The defence budget and GDP essentially evolve in opposition.

¹⁴ My analysis is based on statistics published by the National Bank of Belgium Online statistics. Government spending by functions and transactions, <http://stat.nbb.be/?lang=en&SubSessionId=b980e18c-b27b-426e-89af-f131ee53dce0&themetreeid=-200>, accessed on 4 June 2017.

¹⁵ In the national accounts statistical system, an earlier technique of using *constant prices* based on a fixed base year was replaced by an annual updating of the reference year that allowed a calculating growth at *chained volume measures*. This removes the effect of price changes from the changes in value. The choice of the reference year has no influence on the growth profile of the series.

In real terms, the defence budget has declined by EUR 2.554 billion between 1981 and 2015, or a loss of 46.73%, while GDP has increased by EUR 190.5 billion, or 87.2%. Defence has therefore been treated very shabbily for three and a half decades.

A PR OPERATION

Contrary to what some argued at the beginning of the operation, the presence of soldiers in the streets is certainly not indicative of a coming *coup d'état* in Belgium.

Nevertheless, the Belgian population traditionally demonstrates very little empathy towards the armed forces, and even exhibits a significant dose of anti-militarism. Before the operation in Verviers, the armed forces could only count on about 20% favourable reviews. Since the attacks, this percentage has risen to 72%. Moreover, people have become accustomed to the presence of soldiers in the streets; 65% of the population were in favour of keeping the military on the streets.

Even better, at the end of 2016, as many as 81% of Belgians showed confidence in their armed forces, an increase of 10% compared to 2015. The MoD is now the public institution that carries the most sympathy according to the Standard Eurobarometer 86 (Autumn 2016) commissioned by the European Commission.

In fact, the soldiers have contributed less to their operational mission than to the psychological support of citizens and to a *confidence building* effect. By installing soldiers in the streets, the government helped to rehabilitate symbolically a profession of which many Belgians were genuinely ignorant.

Some insist that the presence of soldiers on the street creates a deterrent effect, dissuading terrorists from carrying out attacks. It is obviously difficult, if not impossible, to assess how many attacks have been prevented by OVG. Granted, deterrence is only theoretical when a military deployment is visible and easily circumvented.

If dissuasion does indeed pay off, it is in another area altogether. One positive collateral effect is undeniably the decline in petty crime. As a result, some mayors would be disappointed to see the return of the soldiers to their core activities – i.e., manoeuvres or deployment abroad – whereas an increase of the number of military at events such as music festivals, fairs and amusement parks is regularly required. This has led to bizarre results: during national holiday celebrations on 21 July 2016, there were more military deployed in the streets than in the military parade. During the visit of President Trump on 25 May 2017, the security deployment was further expanded by 250 military personnel in addition to the existing 1,200.

Motivation, missions and operational constraints

While at first the soldiers felt proud to be able to prove themselves and participate in a PR operation, their motivation eventually took a hit.

Indeed, forced to confine themselves to an unusual posture in front of buildings, in shopping malls, concert halls, stations, airports or prisons, or even to patrol in streets

without being able to take any initiative or even intervene, the military has run out of patience and are now carrying out their 'missions' very reluctantly.

The discomfort they experience may seem minor at first, but has become increasingly uncomfortable and even unbearable:

- The missions are long and tedious, and tend to be extended constantly, with weekly rotations; in 2015, some soldiers even performed 22 weeks of guard duty.
- Unlike the police, the military do not return home in the evening or after their shift.
- They must accept many extra hours that are impossible to recover.
- Some leaves are cancelled and many cannot even take their holidays.
- In many cases, an external mission is extended by a month's extra duty in OVG.
- The family impact of such an intensive and frustrating work regimen is cumbersome and creates marital problems.
- The military feels less and less useful and has become demotivated, even demoralised.
- This professional life therefore does not really constitute a selling point for attracting young people to the armed forces, even with generous financial recompenses.

Since the 1990s, the external missions of the armed forces have become a priority. It follows that the deployment of the armed forces in the streets is very cumbersome, too heavy even to bear, especially since the beginning of 2016 and even more so since the attacks at Brussels Airport and the Maelbeek metro station on 22 March 2016.

At the end of 2016, 73% of the available military from the Land Component were deployed in the OVG mission. This situation is putting at risk the combat know-how acquired in external theatres of operations and dangerously reduces the capacity of Belgium to commit itself abroad for the duration. As a result, Belgium has already been forced to reduce its international commitments.

As is the case of the other EU member countries, Belgium's security actually begins in sub-Saharan Africa, in Iraq and Syria, in Afghanistan, and on the eastern flank. We can be adamant that our military should have its boots on the ground among the very sources of terrorism and not in the streets of Brussels.

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE LAND COMPONENT

*We are in a war on terrorism. We need to conduct that war
and take it to the terrorists, not here at home.*

– Craig L. Thomas

Defence personnel numbers are constantly decreasing and will be reduced to 25,000 according to the strategic vision of the MoD, even though the government demands greater numbers.

The Land Component is on the brink of rupture: it has barely 6,000 combatants, of whom only 350 – a thousand with rotations – are on mission abroad. Even instructors and logistic personnel have been deployed in the streets.

In 2016, 12,000 military personnel were deployed at least once in OVG; towards the end of 2016, the 1,828 soldiers on the street came from a cadre of 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers belonging to an exhausted Land Component. At some point in October 2016, 2,000 Belgian military personnel were deployed in operations, but 75% of them were engaged in OVG and OSG.

Some 1,500 military personnel need to be recruited annually for at least five years to catch up and reach a sufficient personnel level, to offset departures due to the age structure, and to improve the chronic recruitment gap.

In 2017, the Land Component dispatched a transport company of about 90 soldiers in support of the Enhanced Forward Presence operation in the Baltic countries. In Lithuania, the 18th Logistics Battalion handed over the logistical support of this operation to the 29th Logistics Battalion.

Belgium thus dispatches logistical elements on external missions, while the bulk of skilled para-commandos and infantrymen are on the streets at home.

The commitment of the Land Component in OVG has resulted in an overall unavailability which eventually limited the individual and collective training of military personnel to the minimum required for the planned missions (especially in Mali, Afghanistan and Iraq), not to mention the need to daily put in place a domestic supply chain which represents a burden as heavy as any supply chain used in operations abroad.

The government decided on 28 October 2016 to renew the defence commitments for a further period until 2 December, but also to gradually reduce the maximum authorised number of soldiers engaged in OVG from 1,828 to 1,250. This number takes into account a safety margin of about 150 soldiers, a reserve that is immediately operational. Since then, the government has continued to extend OVG from month to month.

Let us emphasise again that the use of armed forces for policing deviates from any customary societal norm; worse still, it does not in any way constitute the military's core business. The MoD mission statement still focuses on external security: i.e., external operations.

Accordingly, the government logically decided that the military personnel on the streets may not exercise any policing function and are to act under the command of the Federal Police. In the event of any suspicious activity, they must inform the police. However, they may legitimately defend themselves. Their competences and the prerogatives are severely delimited by their very strict *Rules of Engagement*.

This sometimes leads to awkward situations: if a soldier is a direct witness to a crime, he is not entitled to intervene. In fact, the military are supposed to undertake an aspect of police work without any responsibility or legal protection.

Manoeuvres and training

Since the attacks, more than 80% of the planned training schedule has been discarded, which corresponds to a loss of nearly 100,000 hours. The 2016 training programme was practically lost, and infantry training was often limited to platoon level. The skills required to deploy a battle group in a conflict of a certain intensity have been compromised.

This is appalling, because when a soldier, whose efficiency is based on intensive training, no longer accomplishes complex exercises and manoeuvres, he loses skills and qualifications. This insufficiency might put the safety of Belgian troops on a mission abroad in danger in the long run.

It is true that training and exercises are expensive, but budgetary considerations should not be the basis for decisions involving the operational value of troops.

In prison

Belgian military personnel were even required to perform 'humanitarian' interventions in prisons following a dramatic situation that developed in Belgian penitentiaries between 9 May and 21 June 2016, accompanied by wardens' strikes and picket lines.

Initially, the wardens were relieved by the police. But when the police, lacking in numbers and motivation, refused in turn to carry out prison tasks, the government decided to requisition the army. The aim was to restore the basic rights of the detainees, foster a return to calm and provide humanitarian support in the prisons in an environment of multiplying incidents.

Up to 180 soldiers were diverted from OVG to secure the three largest prisons in Brussels, even though military personnel are not qualified for prison work. Moreover, there were insufficient soldiers to carry out this mission, so they were clearly ineffective.

This situation indicates, to the extreme, the inanity of incurring important costs for training specialists who are assigned to tasks which are not their own.

Cost/efficiency

The primary goal of security spending is to ensure peace and safety. Like all public goods, security requires significant resources, while its links with economic well-being are, at first sight at least, relatively indirect.

This problem is thus rather a matter of balancing the general policy of the state, taking into account the priorities required to meet all the government's objectives. However, analysis of the evolution of Belgium's government functions demonstrates the low priority given to security.

Thus, Belgium does not have the means (insufficient personnel, both in the armed forces and in the police), the appropriate resources (no more reserves, no national guard), nor adequate equipment.

Even if one can count on a rapid and decisive response to an emergency, military units are still inefficient when operating in an unfamiliar environment, using unfamiliar methods.

Detractors claim that it is inappropriate to impersonate an accountant and draw up balance sheets for OVG and OSG, considering the dignity of the objectives pursued. But in order to make the right decisions, it is crucial to assess the cost-effectiveness of OVG and OSG and to determine whether these operations are a waste of capacity and money.

In relation to the tasks assigned in OVG, the military are clearly overqualified. Support for the Federal Police from the MoD therefore does not in any way correspond to a sound application of cost-effectiveness principles. The intervention by the armed forces is very expensive given the cost of the formation and training of the military, elite soldiers and specialists in their areas of expertise, which do not correspond to police tasks.

Some even go so far as to wonder whether the military is on its way to becoming a gendarmerie (Biscop, 2015).

OVERSTRETCHED AND HARASSED POLICE

The police are also operating in overdrive. A significant shortfall in police numbers affects the 42,000 police currently serving, who must redouble their efforts relentlessly. Local police are increasingly called upon to help their federal colleagues, to the detriment of local security. In 2016, even the traffic police force was stripped in favour of OVG.

Because of the decline in investment in the police over the last ten years, and the endemic lack of recruitment, the Central Directorate of the Fight Against Serious and Organised Crime¹⁶ was compelled to engage all its capacities, though its other responsibilities did not diminish, which resulted in mental fatigue and demotivation. In 2016, the incapacity days taken by officers tripled compared to 2015. In the anti-terrorist unit, 15% of agents were on sick leave. In January 2017, the police were fed up with conditions, as shown by a protest led by several police officers from the Brussels West area, who declared themselves unfit to work for medical reasons.

For 30 months, this problem has been solved by the presence of the army. This is in no way a lasting solution, either for the police, or for defence.

Following swiftly on from the demotivation experienced by both police and the military in domestic operations, recent government decisions or proposals are unlikely to boost morale. One proposal is the profound reorganisation of the police training system, resulting in the integration of the ten Belgian police schools into the regular education system. Another is the planned reform of pensions in the public sector, resulting in a substantial raising of the retirement age both in the police and the military.

Private security

There is no disputing the fact that, at the macroeconomic level, defence is a global public good and is only produced by the state. But the nature of security at the microeconomic level – the protection of an individual – is different.

Before the attacks, every businessman, shopkeeper or citizen knew that he enjoyed security; therefore, he unconsciously adopted a *free-rider* attitude. This derives from the conception of the human being both as a rational and an individualistic *Homo economicus*, who is only interested in profits and costs that affect him directly. He knows that he cannot be excluded from the benefit of the public good that is security, irrespective of whether he contributes or not.

¹⁶ Direction de la lutte contre la criminalité lourde et organisée (DJSOC). This branch of the Federal Police deals with anti-terrorism.

This lack of solidarity, leading to suboptimal results for society, can only be circumvented in two ways.

The first is the traditional route for all public goods: taxation. However, considering the constraints imposed on public finances and the excessive taxation burden in Belgium, this is not an adequate option.

Given the shortage of police forces and the need to withdraw the military in order to let the MoD go about its core business, this leaves the second solution: private security companies. In this case, like any other 'public' good provided by the private sector, security would be charged at a price higher than the production cost, profit margin included.

Not surprisingly, the number of private security companies is dramatically increasing. Even federal and regional public services rely increasingly on privately employed guards. Political authorities cannot afford to ignore the potential dangers faced by their staff and clients. The same also applies to international organisations located in Belgium (EU, NATO, SHAPE, etc.).

Since the attacks of 22 March 2016, the role of private security companies has been extended within the framework of measures adopted by the government. Today, private security firms can employ former soldiers and policemen as soon as they leave public service, whereas in the past, a five-year wait had to be respected.

In addition, each municipality can decide whether to designate private firms to monitor places where potential danger exists, and security agents are now authorised to

- carry weapons (only for contracts on military areas and in some embassies);
- run searches, i.e., inspection of buildings or locations for the presence of weapons, explosives and other dangerous items;
- scan people's clothing (only in non-public places);
- perform a visual inspection of luggage and cars;
- be drivers for the transportation of detainees.

Legislation on surveillance cameras has also been adapted, with the aim of giving additional means to police officers and investigators. The main objective is to strengthen preventive intervention capacities, but also to strengthen powers of investigation.

Security corps

Furthermore, the government approved on 18 May 2017 a draft bill intended to create a Directorate of Security named DAB within the Federal Police to alleviate the security burden and to allow police officers and military personnel to go about their normal business.

DAB's main tasks will be securing the following places: royal palaces, SHAPE and NATO infrastructures, international and European institutions, the buildings of national and international authorities, critical infrastructure, security of police operations, protection and security of nuclear sites, surveillance of courts and tribunals, transfer of detainees and the infrastructures of Brussels Airport.

DAB will also be responsible for the momentary security of police operations and, alternatively, of ceremonial escorts.. It will have a staff of 1,600. The draft bill first deals with the transfer of staff from three existing services: security corps officials, active military personnel with a rank of volunteer or NCO who apply and are selected, and, finally, security officers currently assigned to Brussels Airport.

Gendarmerie

The creation of DAB nevertheless calls for an important consideration: is this not a reinvention of the wheel, albeit a square wheel?

Indeed, the predecessor to the Federal Police, namely the *Gendarmerie*, was responsible for the maintenance of public order and carried out its missions throughout the territory under the supervision of the Ministers of the Interior, Justice and Defence. It backed up anti-terrorist missions and helped when needed in prisons. It participated in territorial defence and its mobile units could be placed in support of the armed forces. It could carry out military missions in wartime.

The Gendarmerie was, however, 'demilitarised' on 1 January 1992, and disappeared eventually in 2001, after the creation of the integrated police.

Considering its capacity to adapt to the challenges of the fight against terrorism, as well as the quality of its education and training, wouldn't it have been more effective to 'reinvent' the Gendarmerie?

CONCLUSION

The government will probably keep the military on the streets throughout the legislature, until 2019.

Given the enduring nature of the terrorist threat, does this mean that the presence of soldiers in the streets represents a new 'normal'? Are the tasks of the military becoming more and more comparable to those of the police? Are we therefore witnessing a permanent blurring of the distinction between police and defence missions?

The situation on the ground underlines both the duality and the complementarity of the two security concepts. But even if the Federal Police and the armed forces are complementary because they pursue an identical overall objective – security – they are not substitutes for one another.

Indeed, the military and the Federal Police pursue fundamentally different objectives. The former performs 'macro' security interventions, while the latter operates at 'micro' level. The military is not trained for the micro-level missions, except for large-scale surface protection missions (nuclear power stations, strategic industrial zonings, power distribution facilities and pipelines), which correspond more to their core business.

It has been said on numerous occasions that the fight against terrorism should be coordinated and even directed at the EU level. If more collaboration between European countries is clearly needed, this can, however, not replace investments in national capabilities.

This is precisely where the shoe pinches in Belgium. At both the police and military levels, the lack of personnel and equipment is merely due to the deficiency in their budgetary resources. Belgium should inspire confidence by increasing the security budget, hence providing the means to meet its declared security ambitions. The two aspects of security are neither cheap nor optional.

Belgium can no longer use its security budgets as a goal, as an instrument of fiscal policy or as a discrete budgetary variable for fine-tuning government finances in accordance with the European Generalised Scheme of Preferences norms. Neither the army, underfinanced for decades, nor the police, in search of a balanced budget since the beginning of this century, can supplement other failing public services.

Finally, there is really no controversy as to whether the blurring of Belgium's security roles was deliberate or unintended. At first, in the wake of terrorist attacks that required a rapid reaction that justified the engagement of the army, the presence of the soldiers in the streets was certainly unintended. Today, 30 months later, no one

can deny that decision-makers have had plenty of time to take adequate measures to return the armed forces to their regular missions.

Any deliberate and sustained use of the military in the streets is inappropriate; the security of citizens on national territory is a matter for the police.

*The presence of soldiers on the streets is as much use
as a poultice on a wooden leg.*

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