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Some national security aspects of emergencies

Possible preventive measures in national security

Introduction

The preparation to any emergency on behalf of the national security structures is linked neither to time nor to events. It is a permanent and endless process. The renovation of national security as a comprehensive concept has to go parallel to the changing conditions in this realm and the national security services have to upgrade their tools, methods and tactics permanently to solve any emergency. Thus, the preparation of the national security structure has to start before the challenges of an emergency appear.

Some elements of the legal background and their importance

Analyzing the effective National Security Strategy of Hungary¹, we see the description of the security environment of the country and its possible changes in the Chapter 5. In Chapter 7 the lawmakers enumerate the factors qualified as special national security risk, including the field within the competence of the national security services. One of these risks, the consequences of mass migration, is mentioned in point 124 a).

During the decades during which I was in charge as a consul in various countries I had to deal with issues related to the general problems of migration. I confirm that every diplomatic or consular mission abroad has to follow and analyze the migration policy of the host country, how the positions of the state bodies change, how the public opinion changes in this regard. Another basic task is to analyze the readiness and capabilities of the local

¹ Governmental decree 1163/2020. (IV. 21) on the National Security Strategy of Hungary

official and non-official institutions and organizations to handle the migration waves.

The permanent tasks of the diplomatic and consular missions, such as maintaining the contacts with the governmental and non-governmental bodies of the host country, the exchange of information, the discovery of the fields of possible cooperation are preventive national security activities that do not go beyond the regulations of the Vienna Convention of 1961 on Diplomatic Relations.

To my mind, the ‘sudden armed attack’ mentioned in point 124 b) does go beyond the frames of national security risks because in cases of armed attacks one can suppose that the covert organized preparation and the sudden implementation have been targeted against the governability of our country, against the critical infrastructure and institutions or objects important for public safety and security. These cases of explicit national security threats need immediate response.

Such a situation emerges as the result of a long process, the discovery of which falls within the remit of national security activities beyond our borders. The key element of success in this field is the coordination of the activities of the non-military and military national security services.

Point 124 c) qualifies the “*coordinated and wide-scale diplomatic, intelligence operations and the operations of the secret services along with financial and economic pressure and also speculative financial attacks or military threatening*”² as a national security risk. Among other things, the following imminent risks are named in the National Security Strategy quoted already above:

- the cyber-attacks in point d);
- the risk of terrorist attacks mentioned in point e).

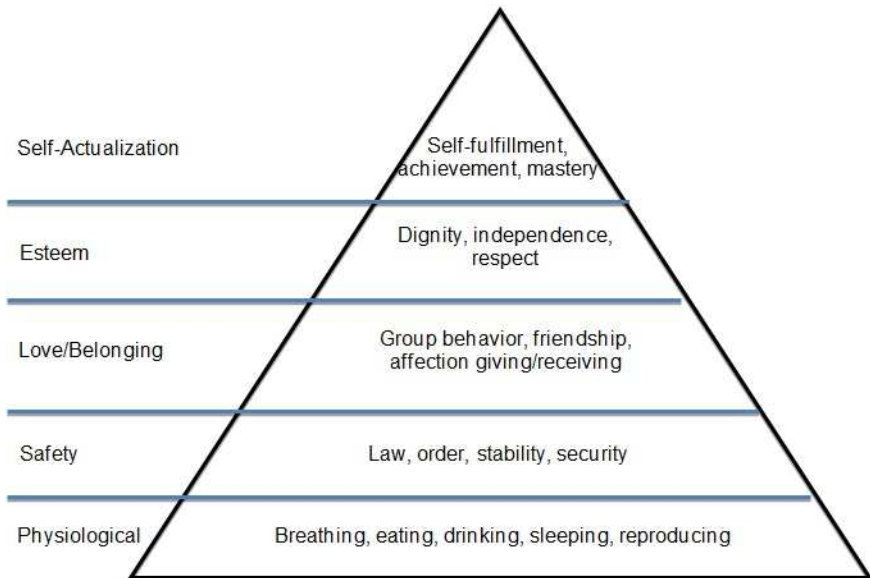
The latter makes clear that the information gathering activities abroad and intelligence and counter-intelligence activities within our borders,

² Ibid.

along with the creation and maintaining of the necessary analytical and assessment capabilities require the cooperation and regular exchange and sharing of information among all the institutions and services of the national security community of our allies. Another important factor might be the ad hoc cooperation with national security services of other states.

From theory to practice: the dimensions of security

Let us overview the question from the other side! What are the fields that the national security services should especially focus on in an emergency? The best way to make the tasks clear is to look at the Maslow-pyramid!³



³ Maslow, A. H. (1943): A Theory of Human Motivation, Psychological Review, 50, Secondary publication: Study Corgy Free Essays: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Its Criticism. 370-396.

Source: <https://studycorgi.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-and-its-criticism/>

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Physiological needs as the components of the physical dimension of safety

The satisfaction of the physiological needs is easily derivable from the demand of self-preservation and reproduction. To satisfy these needs the population must be supplied with food, gas, electricity and water. This requires the safe functioning of the communal services' networks, roads, sewage system, fuel supply system, telecommunication networks and channels, etc. ... All these are closely linked to governability, to maintaining the operability of the administrative, defence and health care institutions under the special rules implemented in an emergency. Under such circumstances any factor and action threatening the operability of the above-mentioned institutions and services that emerges incidentally or accidentally or on purpose, or threatening with such actions or even the untrue statements spread about the occurrence of such factors and actions require an immediate response on behalf of the national security services. Any delay in taking such measures or failing to take them is not a "simple" threat to national security but it can be seen as an even more serious act, a service offence. In this case, the aggravating factor is the period of non-compliance, that is the period of the emergency. Thus, it becomes clear that the satisfaction of physiological needs also requires certain safety, so the inter-connection of the first and second level of the Maslow-pyramid is imminent. Consequently, from a certain aspect, the satisfaction of the physiological needs may be seen as a part of safety at the second level of the pyramid.

Safety as a need (a social value)

Before we look at how safety changes in an emergency, let us clarify what safety means in general, how this phenomenon may be understood as a phenomenon, as a state subjectively perceived and related to individuals, social groups and their relations to each other. Safety might be described in general terms as a dynamically changing combination of objective and

subjective factors that depend on the historic age, the circumstances and the given individual.

Safety as such a combination should be considered in the context of the above-mentioned factors and their effect on the psychological perception of individuals, groups, communities and society. The basis of dependence on the historic age, the circumstances and the individual features is the level of development of the given society and the interaction of this development level with the objective and subjective factors. It is a frequent theoretical and practical mistake when to identify safety with the lack of threat. Unfortunately, this simplified attitude excludes the specific character of threat and its different levels. Threats may be unknown for us. We may not know their origin, or their direction of spreading, or the target area threatened. A threat may latent or may grow slowly and it may accumulate and become concentrated. Considering the extension of the threat it may affect small areas, it may be locally limited or larger that can be defined geographically. The target of the threat may be of material, technical character, it may be certain individuals or a group of individuals linked to each other. A threat may be aimed at institutions, economic, social, and political bodies or organizations. If we further analyse the features of potential threats, we find that the threats may have a direct or an indirect impact, they may spread from one source or from different sources, the speed of spreading may be constant or it may grow fast or slowly. Now, to determine the threat itself we have to see the types of threats enumerated in the national security strategy.⁴

The previous paragraph has clarified some connections proving the hypothesis that safety means something bigger and broader than its most frequent explanation referring to the frequently fictitious lack of threat. Let us have a look at the content of and the criteria for safety in an emergency!

⁴Governmental decree 1163/2020. (IV. 21) Ibid.

The meaning and the criteria of safety, found on the second level of the Maslow pyramid undergo a peculiar change in an emergency. The limitation of constitutional rights in an emergency explicitly increases the rights and the responsibilities of the structures of law-enforcement, defence, the armed services and national security. It is clear that the limitations of the rights, as for example the right of assembly, the right of free expression or the right to private property or the limitation of free movement reduce the feeling of safety. These reduced feelings of safety are further diminished when the question is about the right of the authorities to enter a private property and make an inspection there. In similar situations, when the population is more dependent on the minimum safety guaranteed by the activities of law-enforcement, security and national security organizations, the commission of any kind of crime – against property or individuals or against their groups – provokes an increased impact and reaction from the vulnerable population. Any infringement of rights shrinks the feeling of safety amongst the people, whether the perpetrator is an individual criminal or a member of a criminal group, an opposing private or public actor.⁵

In the event of an emergency, along with the defence and law-enforcement structures, national security services are also involved in protecting the operability of critical infrastructure, supply chains and service networks. Maintaining permanent contacts with the population, open source intelligence (OSINT) and intelligence using human resources (HUMINT) have a key role in this work. Intelligence obtained by HUMINT or OSINT may be the most important, since it may give an opportunity to prevent or to react to the risks and threats emerging in closed communities or in different communities communicating with each other as early as possible. It is especially important to prevent the formation of the most harmful ideas generating radicalism within these different communities. This is one of the clearest threats of our days.

⁵ Beside the special units of the regular forces, in asymmetric operations behind the enemy's lines units of non-state actors may be used as well. These may be private structures, the so-called private military companies (PMCs).

The dimensions of safety

Two of the dimensions of safety play a special role in handling the emergencies, in the development, shaping and maintenance of the necessary individual or group behaviour of the population, which is indispensable for governability. These dimensions are mental and psychological safety.

The mental dimension

The mental dimension includes the satisfaction of the need of the population for knowledge during the emergency, in accordance with the circumstances of the emergency and the interests of sustainable governability. Meeting this need is more than pure information because it involves providing education and training at all levels, including primary, secondary and higher education, as well as continuous professional, further training and retraining, during the emergency, if the situation so requires. The satisfaction of cultural demands and the access to such programmes is also a part of the mental dimension of safety. These factors – along with other sources of the sense of safety – play an important role in the development and maintenance the psychological safety. Among the objective and subjective factors of the latter, it is essential to mention active and passive communication and its platforms.

The psychological dimension

The psychological dimension of the sense of security is based on the reaction of the individual as the smallest factor in the community to the individual and collective influences. One of these factors is the position of the individuals and social groups regarding the political, administrative, economic, cultural, defence, law-enforcement and national security institutions and their management. The lawful restrictions of the right to free ex-

pression is an inherent phenomenon during an emergency. How the population accepts it and the reactions to the restrictions depend not only on the amount, quality and credibility of the governmental communication. It also depends on the level of knowledge and consciousness of the individuals who make up the groups and society itself, on the development of the social consciousness, on the individual and group psychological capacities and on the factors affecting them. Their effects may be different. In some cases they can lead to individual or group disobedience and in extreme cases to radicalization, perhaps even to organised or armed defiance. It must be clear for everyone how seriously these actions threaten national security and how important the counter-measures are.

Communication as a national security factor

It has already been mentioned that an emergency itself and its restrictions can be considered objective circumstances independent of the individual, which determine the framework of individual, group and social activities during an emergency. To keep them in force and to make them prevail is a real national security challenge. The circumstances are more than complicated. On the one hand, there are the growing accessibility of the information sources, such as the social media platforms, news portals, and on the other hand there is the complexity of domestic and international processes and their interactions. We should not forget the specificities of opinion-forming of the groups that are largely unversed in different fields, either. All these factors make the role of communication reaching out to groups and bigger communities is crucial to maintaining governability.

When we look into the passive side of the communication, i.e. the information-based impact on the individuals and communities communicating with each other, the expected and possibly predictable response, whether it is communicative or an action, is a very important consideration. The communicative reaction is not a passive one any more, since the information acquired passively is transferred in an active way to one or more targeted

persons or communities. It is this ‘multiplier effect’ that may even provoke actions that pose a national security risk in a growing group.

The shrinking of individual and social life in any emergency leads to the growing interest in communication. Communication may be considered as a part of the social demands on the third level of the Maslow pyramid. It is a well-known fact that the development of media devices and technology go far ahead of the human individual and group capabilities of acquiring and processing information for evaluation and assessment. Social media and the written and electronic press as well as the personal or group-based reproduction based on them strongly influence the way and content of communication as a form of satisfying social demand.⁶ Mónika Andok writes “*The explanations in the papers on sociology of knowledge was consistent with the hypothesis that hiding the subject is a key part in the process by which the subjectively perceived information is converted into objective knowledge.*”⁷ The situation is further complicated the emergence of a cognitive filter bubble based on what is believed to be objective knowledge. This filtering bubble is fundamentally influenced by the life context, family, work and community environment. These interact with the dominant cultural, intellectual, educational and even religious and social views of the individuals, groups and the community. The result of this interaction may be an accumulating potential leading to radicalization. About the internal dynamics, the characteristics and opportunities of the media communities Mónika Andok writes that “*the new communities are voluntarily created, have a temporary character, and their purposes are tactical. Any intellectual initiative in these communities can get stronger through the emotions used to persuade the others.*”⁸ Any change that falls into this category will

⁶ Andok, M. (2013): A hírek története. [The History of News.] L’Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest, 44-45

⁷ Ibid. 46

⁸ Andok, M. (2016): Digitális média és mindennapi élet - Konvergencia, kontextus, közösségi média [Digital media – everyday life – Convergence, context, community media] L’Harmattan Kiadó. Budapest, 74

inevitably have an impact, even if only small, on the evolution of the national security environment. Analysis and assessment of these changes, the preparation of the necessary decisions is a task not only for the national security structures but also for the whole government.

Instead of conclusions

In the past paragraphs, I have intended to make it obvious that the three major levels in the national security field, the challenges, risks and threats constitute a structured network with vertical and horizontal dimensions. All the elements of this network have certain aspects concerning national security, in politics, defence, the protection of public order and safety and countering terrorism. It is also clear that governability, predictability, development, legal certainty and integrity, and the guarantees of sovereignty represent a complex of principles and practices of fundamental interest in the political, economic, social and legal context of the emergency. No doubt, the permanent examination, analysis, assessment and review of the system of guarantees needed to maintain the complex mentioned above has high priority.

As the period between 2014 and 24th February 2022 has proved, some conditions threatening the European and global security architecture of the post-World War II period, including the most important regulatory documents, such as the Final Act of the OSCE accepted in Helsinki in 1975, may emerge and escalate in a relatively short time. The restoration of these basic principles will require long decades again.

Unmodelled emergencies may arise for which there has been no opportunity to prepare or for handling of which the modelled emergency scenarios are not or only partially applicable. It may occur that there is no comprehensive, wide-scale protocol for a new type of emergency that combines several elements of different types of emergencies in a new way. Therefore, the timeframe for planning and implementing is very short, and new factors may emerge during this time. This poses a very special challenge to the national security services as the practical implementing bodies of the tasks

and to the political structures as the sources of the request for intelligence and users of the information received, but also to the military, law-enforcement, national security, counter-terrorism and disaster management training centres. Thus, the primary aim of reviewing and examining the national security aspects of emergency is to reduce as much as possible the time needed to take the decisions that are essential in such situations.