

“You have yet to be able to produce a defense plan that has been funded.”

Dr. Thomas Durell Young is a lecturer of defense planning at the Center for Civil Military Relations in Monterey, California. His latest book “Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions The Mirage of Military Modernity” was published by Bloomsbury Publishing, England, in 2017. On Wednesday 11 April 2018 in Ljubljana, we discussed with the author the novelties and important features of defense planning, with emphasis on Slovenia.

Dr. Young, you have been the Program Manager Europe at the Center for Civil-Military Relations in Monterey, California, for more than 20 years. During your carrier, you have been privileged to visit all the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and work with their defense institutions. Were you an expert in defense planning at the beginning of your work at CCMR or did you specialize later? Where can one get the proper knowledge to become a defense planning connoisseur?

I started working for the U.S. Army staff, I was posted to U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, but we actually worked for the Army staff, the policy and plans people. That is where I learned the U.S. system; I later learned other methods, other Western European, Australian, New Zealand defense planning methods, what you would call a scientific perspective, but it was not until I started at CCMR and working in Eastern Europe that I realized how little I knew. And my knowledge of defense planning continues. Even though I have been teaching it for ten years, I change the

curriculum probably every year, add things, drop things... And when I teach defense planning, or actually, when I teach defense organization and management, I use a country that I did an assessment of back in 2008. I called it »Padania«, the kingdom of Padania, you might know about this in Slovenia. It is a real country, I was actually there, I did the assessment, I know the country well. I don't say which country it is. I use this for the students to give them a context of a dysfunctional defense institution that has very poor planning capabilities and then as we go through the course, we continue to refer back to Padania, so that they can associate aspects of the theory and the application back to a framework, you know, in their own brain. Then I come up with my conclusion of 2008 and I challenge the students. I ask them if they think the conclusions were right, and they always say yes, and I yell at them: "No! My conclusions were all wrong. I was a hundred percent wrong." Just to demonstrate to them that I am quite fallible and for them to be as skeptical as I should have been back in 2008. So they always like that when the professor says I screwed up, I made a mistake. And so I feel that way about defense planning. As I wrote the book and as I write articles for scientific journals, I always learn something else, because I think of it a bit differently. So in the last year, I have been thinking about what is it with the

defense planning systems, probably in Slovenia, definitely in the U.S... They do not address the whole question of escalations. So you have a peacetime defense planning system, but what happens when you go from peacetime – tension – crises – war? Do you change the method, or do you keep the same method? I would like to think your peacetime defense planning method should be the same no matter what. But as we have seen in many countries, it is not that way at all. So my question is if your defense planning system does not work in war, why would you use it in peacetime? Our system in U.S., our planning and programming budgeting system does not work in wartime; that is why we have a second, war budget. So we plan for peace and not for war. It is insane.

Your latest book was published last year at Bloomsbury Publishing, England with the title "Anatomy of Post-Communist European Defense Institutions The Mirage of Military Modernity". Obviously, there is still some presence of post-communist heritage in defense systems of Central and Eastern Europe. Can you describe this phenomenon briefly?

This is the old concepts not wanting to let go. They are in your brain; they have been inculcated in your brain. The problem is, in Eastern Europe - and it does not matter which communist system you were in - the defense concepts as codified in the military doctrine, as it was called in that period, this was very coherent, very logical, and very scientific. And it all made sense; it was all given to you. In the Westerns sense, we do not give you any answers; we only teach you how to frame problems. So it is very hard for people who have been brought up in a "scientific system"; which was not scientific, but it was very coherent. And now, I give you no guidance at all. I just tell you: "You have to think, you have to use critical thinking, you have to look at the problem and you have to come up with a solution." In accordance with guidance and general doctrine, which is the same - different procedures, ways of thinking things... And you have to come up with a solution, if you are a military officer or even an NCO. And this is very, very hard for countries to deal with, because - think about it - the old communist-based concepts are antithetical to democratic governance-based defense and military concepts. You have the centralization of power or you have decentralization of power. You cannot have them coexisting. It does not work. So that is just it.



A special chapter in your book is dedicated to former Yugoslav republics' defense institutions. After so many years following the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it is quite hard to imagine that there are still some similarities between those countries, since so many changes have occurred in the past now almost 27 years. Are there still any similarities except the common history and the legacy of the Yugoslav People's Army?

I think very much so. You do not have to look very far. I mean if we look at Serbia, if we look at Slovenia, we see territorial defense, alive and well. So I should call this maybe even "area defense" as well as "territorial defense". The difference is one is operational and the other is maybe more tactical, but you still see this. Now, I do not know why you would have territorial defense and area defense in Serbia when you have no longer conscripts you do not have numbers, you cannot carry out the operational concept. You can make the same argument in Slovenia. You do not have the numbers to do it. Where are the numbers going to come from? Ok, let's say if you could get it... If Hungary invaded or Martians invaded, you would need 30 000 or 40 000 troops. Where are you going to train them? How are you going to feed them? How are you going to arm them? How are you going to do command and control, because none of your officers have had experiences in such a wide span of control? How are they going to do it? Well, they can't. So, why do you continue to hold on to these concepts? Maybe, this is a little sensitive, but these are questions that people need to ask. If you are maintaining old concepts that are no longer relevant to today's security environment then you are eating money. You are wasting money and you are not producing the outcomes you need on the modern battlefield, and that means people are going to die, or it means you are not relevant.

Defense planning is hard work. Predicting many different future circumstances requires highly qualified personnel with a lot of knowledge and many experiences. You probably have some explanations and views on defense planning that everyone can use to understand and improve their defense planning?

Primacy of policy. Every country that has poor defense planning typically does not have primacy of policy. We have a policy framework where you do not spend one euro, unless it is in accordance

with the guidance and the priorities. So if you do not have priorities, it is like not knowing where you are going, so any road will take you wherever you want to go, because you do not know where you are going. It is the same thing in defense planning. If you do not have the priorities, tied to an operational focus of the armed forces, you are lost and you will spend money on all sorts of really cool things that in the end really do not produce coherent armed forces. It is simple as that.

It seems like the Slovenian Armed Forces is dealing with two main problems – lack of money and lack of personnel. What are the experiences of other countries and what is your advice for Slovenia?

I would look very hard and ensure that you have clear priorities. I would start off with a clear policy framework, clear priorities... Nothing is done unless it is sanctioned by policy and it is one of the priorities that is allowed funding. You need to empower your commanders, so that commanders are given the opportunity to grow. You grow commanders. You do not just take them out of school. They need a lot of time in the field with troops, on ships and in airplanes. You need to give them responsibility, you need to stress them. You definitely have to do that. And I see that is a problem throughout Eastern Europe. It is not alone to Slovenia, but it is everywhere.

Could you say that the lack of money and lack of personnel are symptoms not the cause?

Yes, I think so.

So we have to look at it as a symptom and then find a cause?

Yes, that is pretty clear. I have written about it and I am happy to talk about it. You have yet to be able to produce a defense plan that has been funded. That has been tied to money. So why would you do another one? Maybe your whole concept of doing mid-term defense plans is erroneous, because the people who told you to do it are simply wrong. If you are not spending money today to fix the defense force today why do you think you are going to be able to fix it in five years? Technology changes, the security environment changes, you need to be prepared to fight today. And indeed I have an article that I am trying to get published with an academic press or academic journal that looks at the origins of long-term defense planning. When



you look at the origins and how it has turned out, they are completely different. I have never seen one that has been implemented. So what is the definition of insanity – continuing to do the same thing over and over again expecting a different outcome? I think we may be at that point. Slovenia is not by any stretch of the imagination the only one that has this problem. You could say the U.S. Department of Defense has the same problem. Because we do our defense budget three years out, we bake it like a cake and then nobody can touch it. What if you need money today to fight a war? What if you need money today, to capitalize on a new technology, new breakthrough? You have to wait three to four years before they even start to spend money on it. What kind of insanity is that?

In the preface of your book, you wrote that there had been “some instances of apparent qualified success” and you mentioned Poland, Slovenia and Romania. Can you tell us more about this?

You can find successes in all three of those defense forces. Indeed you can also find it in others, but I like to use them as examples, because all three have deployed extensively, all three have tried to buy western equipment and have had variable levels of success. But if you had to prioritize who has done the best, I would argue those three. So if you look at those three, you will find islands of excellence.

SOF (Special Operations Forces) is world class. Well, I hope so, because the U.S. taxpayer paid for these gentlemen to be trained to world-class standards at SOF, so they better be good. We went to your air base today - world class. We went to the Triglav and, indeed, Ankaran, an old boat, good values, good management, great command - world class. Poland has F-16s. But, it took them ten years, but now they have figured out how to use them. So you find these islands of success, but as I talk in my conclusion of the book, they are in the midst of this huge ocean of legacy, of incoherence. In this case, Slovenia and the others have got army battalions that have deployed abroad. They come back, as I wrote in my book, when Polish soldiers go abroad, they are NATO, but when they come back to Poland and they are ‘Polish’ again. They no longer do NATO. They no longer use the ‘western’ military decision making process. Why? Because they are back in Poland. So you have this schizophrenic army, this is insane. But I think this shows the depth of the problem that has gone unnoticed in the West and indeed by many politicians in the Central Eastern Europe of how hard it is to let go of the old concepts and to adopt the new ones.

You are also member of the Editorial Board of the Contemporary Military Challenges. The article “The challenge to defense reform in Central/Eastern Europe, with reference to Slovenia” written by you was published in the last issue of 2016. A special chapter was dedicated to Slovenia. There have been quite a few changes since then. What are your impressions and comments?

I don’t know if there have been any changes. I haven’t seen any changes. It is not an insult; it is a statement of fact. I think the problem we have here is that the policy framework remains to be solidified. I think it is the policy people still have difficulty connecting policies and priorities with budgets. They are not alone. They have either missed that or they are probably mis-trained by Western experts and courses. They are focused on budgeting and they forget about the fact that it needs to be driven from policy and plans, the PPBS (Planning, Programming and Budgeting System). You can make it work, but it is incredibly manpower intensive and very difficult, it is very difficult and a complex thing to do. The worst thing about it is that after spending a lot of money on training people how to do it, you will be in the fantastic position of being able to solve problems you will

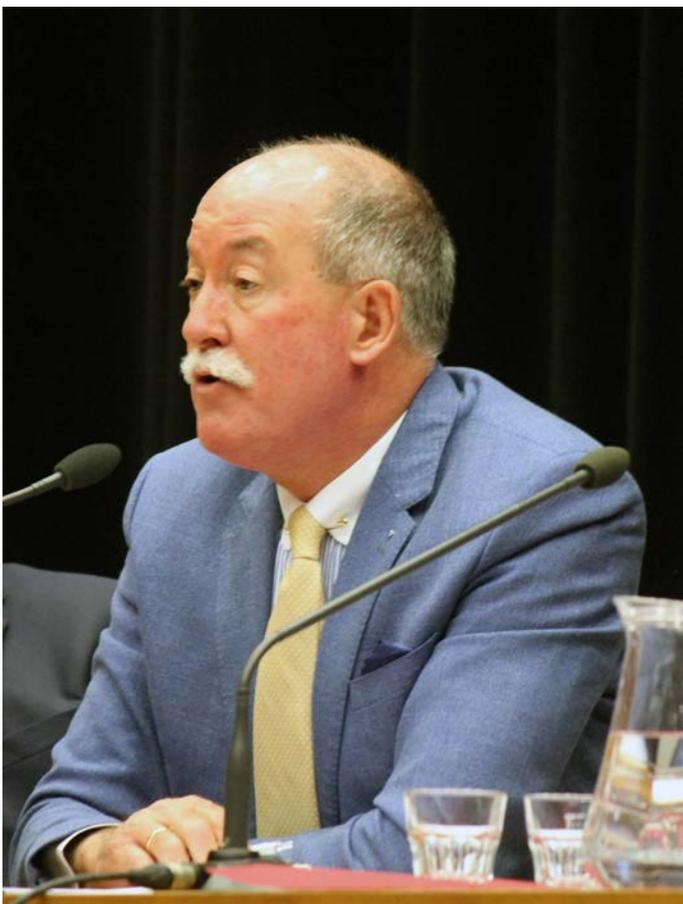
never have. So it is very simple. But it is very hard to do it. If you have policy priorities, that is where the money should go. You don't need another class of bureaucrats to play with the money. If you have the plan, and you have agreed the plan has been costed, that is where the money goes. The theory of the PPBS back in the 60's was that the planners decide what and the programmers decide how. But human nature being what it is, the programmers have never listened to plans or policy, they just go ahead and do all the three of them together and they call it strategic budgeting. Especially in a system where policy is still weak as a concept, let alone their bureaucratic power. In the U.S. Navy, we have come to realize that the old system which was all programming – 80 percent of the Navy staff were engaged in programming not planning or anything else – was so suboptimum, so bad, that in the last few years, this is all public information, the U.S. Navy has been leaving at the end of the financial year approximately 1 billion dollars unspent, because they could not spend it in time. Why? Because there weren't any policy priorities. They just went to optimize the existing capabilities and not in terms of "what we need for the next year", not in terms of "what we need today" and "do we really need old platforms?" Is that what we really need at sea, with drones and with artificial intelligence...? We are thinking really hard and to the

credit of the current Chief of the Naval Operations Admiral Richardson. He is pushing very hard that we start thinking in the Navy, in terms of planning, of capabilities and those platforms. Because all armed forces traditionally have thought in terms of platforms – "I am a tanker", "I am a boat driver", "I am a submariner", "I am a pilot"... That is not the point any more, the point now is what capability most effectively and hopefully efficiently can service that target. Doesn't matter how you do it. Platforms are going to change. They have to, particularly big ones, because if not they are just big stupid targets.

How many times have you visited Slovenia? What fascinates you most?

I first came to former Yugoslavia in 1978, January 1978. It was a mess. I slept through in a couchette from Munich to Belgrade. Belgrade was still being rebuilt from the Second World War; that was very obvious to me. Then we went to Vojvodina and to the Binat. It was fascinating. But I slept through Slovenia. I first came to Slovenia in 1994. I came from Vicenza where I was working with the airborne brigade and I took the train and I came through Trieste and I was like every other aspiring English and American writer and poet. I fell in love with Trieste, because it is so dysfunctional and out of place. It does not belong. There is something artistic about that. Then I took a train to Ljubljana and I saw the wonderful hay-drying racks you have and the country side. Only you have them. Then the long walls to protect that empyreal rail line from Vienna to Trieste. I got to the train station in Ljubljana and I just thought: "This is a completely different world. I am fascinated by this." And I have been coming back. I have been here maybe a dozen times. I have been on holiday with my family, I have been all over the county, I think. I find it very "Gemütlich" as the Germans would say, I think very appealing. Maybe another word is 'Heimat'. I like the ocean, I am in love with the Adriatic, I am in love with the history of this northern part of the Adriatic.

Liliana Brožič



Thomas-Durell Young, Ph.D.

Senior Lecturer, Academic Associate for Certificate Program Curriculum 245

Defense Planning, Defense Management, Defense Institutions, International Economics

Thomas-Durell Young is Program Manager, Europe Center for Civil-Military Relations (CCMR), Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. He is also Academic Associate for the Comparative Defense Planning Certificate in the Department of National Security Affairs. His responsibilities at CCMR are to develop and manage the execution of defense planning and change management consultancies throughout Central and Eastern Europe. He has worked in the national defense organizations of every country in Central and Eastern Europe, save one. Some of the key reform projects he has managed include the oversight of comprehensive defense planning and change management projects in Estonia (2000-2002), Ukraine (2003-2013), Moldova (2004-2008), Bulgaria (2008-2011), Serbia (2010-present), and Montenegro (2011-present). He developed and executed the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Defense Institution Building survey and road-map development process from 2007- 2008.

Dr Young also holds the position of Staff Consultant at the RAND Corporation (Santa Monica) where he assesses defense planning and change management subjects. Prior to taking these positions in March 2000, he was a Research Professor at the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College for 12 years where we had responsibilities for producing analyses of European politico-military issues, as well as joint planning, execution and management systems and procedures for the Army and Joint Staffs. In 1999, he was the inaugural Eisenhower Fellow at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy, Breda, The Netherlands.

Dr Young received his Ph.D. and Certificat des Etudes supérieures in international economics and policy from the Institut universitaire de Hautes Etudes internationales, Université de Genève (Geneva, Switzerland). He is a 1990 graduate of the U.S. Army War College (Carlisle Barracks, PA) and holds an M.A. with Great Distinction from the School of Advanced International Studies, the Johns Hopkins University (Bologna, Italy / Washington, DC). He has authored / co-authored 3 books and monographs and over 100 book chapters, articles and book reviews. He is currently completing a book-length manuscript that is the first comprehensive assessment of the current state of defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe and identifies innovative reform techniques. Its tentative title: Anatomy of Post- Communist European Defense Institutions: Why Reform Has Failed.

Since 1989, he has been the North American editor of *Small Wars and Insurgencies* (London) and is on the editorial boards of the PfP Consortium's *Connections*, and *Defense and Security Analysis* (Lancaster, UK). He is a long-standing member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (London).

Teaching Interests:

Comparative Defense Planning

Comparative Defense Organization and Management