

Introduction / Editor's Note

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In the early 1990s, when the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania restored their independence in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, the subject of civil-military relations also reasserted itself in both public and scholarly debate. All of a sudden, it became an area of study of as much interest as the major changes in international relations set off by the demise of the Soviet empire. With the old adversary gone and an entirely new landscape of international politics emerging, the armed forces of Western countries have been exposed to radical changes in their environment, both domestically and internationally, which have resulted in the imperative to adapt and seek new forms of interaction with socio-political actors.

In addition, the post-Communist states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) embarked on a process of democratization, which has profoundly affected their military establishments and civil-military relations. Reshaping these relations appeared to be an important, if not essential, step in the transition to democracy. Armed forces that are accountable, impartial, loyal, transparent, and well integrated into the emerging civil society became a prerequisite for consolidating fragile democracies. What made the scholarly interest in the subject even more intense was that the militaries of the CEE states, apart from the immense task of reinventing themselves as constituents of democratic societies, have been exposed to the same set of challenges as their Western counterparts in a drastically altered international and socio-political environment. These two types of pressure, converging and reinforcing each other, have affected the reforms of the armed forces in the CEE states for more than a decade and continue to influence civil-military relations there.

In this context, the Baltic states found themselves in a somewhat different situation. With no armed forces at all in the wake of independence, the immediate imperative in the Baltics was to establish rudimentary military structures rather than reform huge, cumbersome, and secretive armies as in the CEE states. The situation was not, however, a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, on which the entire framework of civil-military relations could be constructed as the policy-makers pleased and in a way consistent with the tasks of democratization. Historical legacies, post-Soviet mentalities, and the lack of experience with democracy have influenced the processes of economic, political, military, and social reform. As a result, civil-military relations, being a part of this wider socio-political phenomenon, have

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been subject to those influences as well. The gradual build-up of entirely new defense establishments did not imply a smooth and uncomplicated process of establishing democratic patterns of civil-military relations. Through trial and error, however, the Baltic states have achieved a reasonably efficient and well-designed model of civil-military relations, with democratic control over the armed forces as their centerpiece. As candidates for NATO membership, the Baltic states usually win praise for having functioning systems of democratic control in place. The three articles on democratic control of the armed forces in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, contained in this volume of *Connections* bear witness to that success.

The situation is not as perfect, however, as it may seem from having read these three contributions. As they indirectly acknowledge themselves, the three systems of democratic control and oversight of the military have not been tested in and by crisis. Functioning well in peacetime, they may prove susceptible to dangerous deviations from democratic practices and procedures during military crisis or in wartime. Another problem lies in the scope of debate about civil-military relations in the Baltic states. Aside from the fact that there are precious few academic studies in this field, the Baltic discourse is focused on democratic control of the armed forces only through institutional and political mechanisms and procedures – or the politics of civil-military relations, if speaking in Huntingtonian terms – although this constitutes just a small part of an entire field of study in civil-military relations. Other dimensions of civil-military relations, so succinctly described in the eloquent study by Gerhard Kümmel on the theory of civil-military relations that is the fifth article in this volume, remain on the margins of discourse in the Baltic states.

In particular, society at large is regarded merely as a contextual factor, assessed in terms of public support for and trust in the armed forces. Although it is understood in the Baltics that the armed forces need to build ties with society, the understanding of the ways and means to achieve this remains simplistic and rudimentary. It is usually confined to building greater transparency and implementing various public relations strategies, both of which are important but not sufficient to address the range of complexity posed by the social dimension in civil-military relations. To borrow terms from Gerhard Kümmel's article, while the "hardware" of civil-military relations has been well developed in the Baltic states, installation of the "software" has hardly begun.

So-called post-modern issues, such as a growing gap between military and civilian values, the situation of sexual and ethnic minorities in the armed forces, and women in front-line positions, have barely entered the public discourse. I recall one Baltic officer saying that these "post-modern" issues are simply non-existent in the Baltics and, therefore, are being artificially injected by the Western community into the debate in the Baltic states. Thus, post-modern problems of civil-military relations are viewed as side effects of integration into NATO and other Western organizations. But this view is a direct reflection of the absence of

a vigorous civic debate over issues such as women's rights or the rights of sexual minorities in the societies at large. Nonetheless, academic inquiry should look ahead and, anticipating the same social shifts and tendencies as in the West (of which the Baltic states quite rightfully claim to be a part), embrace the complexity of civil-military relations writ broadly and inspire a discussion on the implications of those changes and trends among both policy-makers and the public.

In this respect, this volume of *Connections* fails to push the boundaries of inquiry on the case studies much further, although a comprehensive account of civil-military relations in the Baltic states was not our original ambition. The contribution by Gerhard Kümmel represents a detailed look into theories of civil-military relations, and the scope of the subject as such, as well as at the post-modern issues that confront militaries around the world. It may provide valuable guidance to further studies of civil-military relations, especially in expanding the effort in the Baltics. It is followed by a thorough and insightful article by Simon Lunn, which focuses on democratic control of the armed forces, setting this element in the wider context of civil-military relations. It lays the ground for the case studies, where the discussion narrows down to the politics of civil-military relations in the individual Baltic states.

The articles on Estonia (by Jüri Luik), Latvia (by Janis Karlsbergs), and Lithuania (by Algirdas Gričius & Kestutis Paulauskas), in addition to providing detailed examinations of individual cases, bring to the reader's attention many valuable points, either fully elaborated or barely touched upon, which can be taken as points of departure in further studies of civil-military relations in the Baltics. The legacy of history and its implications for the legitimacy of the newly formed armed forces in the eyes of society, difficulties in delineating the responsibilities and functions of civilian and military authorities, and the lack of expertise in and understanding of military affairs among civilian policy-makers are all interesting and thought-provoking issues that are reflected in the theoretical discourse as outlined in the articles by Kümmel and Lunn. In the end, it does not come as a surprise that, in spite of the unique characteristics of the Baltic states, dictated by their historical, social, political, and economic conditions and their status as emerging democracies, a broad range of problems in the area of democratic civilian control of the military are inherent to mature democracies as well; this fact may diminish the importance of a transition to democracy as an independent factor in civil-military relations when studying the experiences of the CEE countries. And yet, while the issues are common, different solutions apply, as is well depicted in the three case studies.

Finally, the editors are pleased to include the paper by Marina Caparini and Philipp Fluri of the Working Group on Civil-Military Relations of the PFP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes. This initiative will definitely help to broaden the scope of debate on civil-military relations, as its focus is on the role of civil society in defense and security decision-making—an area

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that received scant attention in the CEE and Baltic states during the last decade. Hopefully the Working Group on Civil-Military Relations of the PfP Consortium can serve as a platform for shaping the follow-up discussion and research efforts in this area.