



Iraqi army soldiers line up to vote in elections in Assariya, Iraq, December 2005

# How to Build Democratic Armies

BY ZOLTAN BARANY

**D**emocratization and thus the building of democratic armies usually take place in response to a major change that shocks the political system and sets it on a new path. The pivotal event may have been a long time coming or triggered in response to external causes. There are three categories of events to consider: building an army after war, during regime change, and following state formation.

Wars, particularly the two kinds of wars discussed in this article—cataclysmic wars such as World War II and civil wars—typically upset the status quo and induce major political changes that include the rebuilding of the armed forces. In the case of major wars, I am addressing the losing side, the country that suffered a devastating defeat (for example, Germany and Japan).

Regime change is another principal reason for building new armies. The old authoritarian regime—here I consider both military and communist regimes such as South Korea and Chile vs. Romania and Russia, respectively—was, by definition, supported by antidemocratic armed forces that must be reformed in order to be the servants of the emerging democratic political order.

Finally, state transformation poses another sort of demand for a new military. The two subcategories of state transformation I take up in this article are those following colonialism (for example, India and Ghana), when a former colony becomes an independent state, and after (re)unification or apartheid (for example, Germany and South Africa), when two different political or social entities are joined. The number of these contexts might be further increased or subdivided, but they are broad enough to present most of the different challenges political, military, and civic elites face as they attempt to democratize their armed forces and, more generally, military politics.

In my recently published book, *The Soldier and the Changing State*,<sup>1</sup> I examined the following cases in the contexts and settings shown in the table.

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Table.

| Context              | Setting (following)           | Cases  |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| War                  | Major war                     | West Germany, Japan, Hungary                 |
|                      | Civil war                     | Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, Lebanon |
| Regime change        | Military rule                 | Spain, Portugal, Greece                      |
|                      |                               | Argentina, Chile, Guatemala                  |
|                      | Communist rule                | South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia             |
| State transformation | Colonialism                   | Slovenia, Russia, Romania                    |
|                      |                               | India, Pakistan, Bangladesh                  |
|                      | (Re)unification and Apartheid | Ghana, Tanzania, Botswana                    |
|                      |                               | Germany, Yemen, South Africa                 |

Some crucial disparities between these settings appear even at first glance. For instance, after defeat in a major war, outside power(s) took on the responsibility to build new armed forces (West Germany, Japan). External influence is also considerable in the postcolonial and post-civil war settings, but

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in the others the project of building democratic armies is usually managed mostly internally. And, of course, integrating parts of East Germany’s armed forces into the West German Bundeswehr and establishing an army free of racial discrimination after white supremacist rule in South Africa presented challenges not experienced elsewhere.

Which of these predemocratic settings are the most conducive to the successful

democratization of military politics? What are the main conditions and policies that encourage the development of democratic civil-military relations and which ones impede it? How does the process of army-building differ in the various political environments in which democratic armies are built? These are some of the key questions those in charge of military reform ought to be able to answer.

**Different Tasks, Different Processes**

One conclusion that quickly emerges is that there are enormous differences not only between contexts and settings, but also within the same settings between the individual cases. The key objective in every setting is the same, however: to develop armed forces committed to democracy and overseen by civilian politicians in the executive and legislative branches of government. What are the major tasks and what generalizations (indicated by the bulleted lists) can one make about the process?

*After Major War.* The main tasks for army-builders after a major war are demobilization,

disarmament, purging the armed forces of personnel implicated in war crimes, and the indoctrination of the emerging army's officers and soldiers with democratic values. In many cases, and certainly in West Germany and Japan, after defeat in a major war politicians and society at large are deeply suspicious of remilitarization, and the military profession tends to lose its former luster. Moreover, the new constitutions place constraints on military activity that in some cases might even strait-jacket the armed forces in future defensive scenarios or effectively prohibit the state's use of the armed forces. Such legislations have given rise to curious situations, such as Article 9 of the 1947 Japanese constitution that banned collective self-defense.

- Foreign actors are highly likely to be involved in postwar state-building, including the building of the new armed forces.
- The devastating defeat of the old regime and the old army tends to advance the building of the new regime because it increases the victors' leverage and, in democratizing states, society's openness to a new political system and new army.
- The traditions of the defeated army are likely to be rejected and the new regime may overcompensate for past political mistakes by introducing regulations that limit the new army's effectiveness.

*After Civil War.* Thinking about army-building in the wake of civil war sharpens one's appreciation of the importance of peace treaties. While peace treaties ultimately end war, they occasionally undermine state authority (Bosnia), do not address the basic issues that spawned civil war to begin with (El Salvador), and even legitimize foreign military presence

in the country (Lebanon). The main tasks after civil war are demobilization, the disarmament of former combatants, the reintegration of the erstwhile warring parties into a newly integrated military force, and the demilitarization of politics. Some of the issues requiring careful decisionmaking are the timing of withdrawal for international peacekeepers and administrators. Another important concern is the equitable allocation of political and military positions according to the proportion of ethnic or religious communities. The most difficult task of all, however, is to convince former enemies that their loyalty to the new democratic constitution should come before their allegiance to their own community.

- Foreign actors, especially international organizations, frequently play a major role in building the new post-civil war army.
- Peace agreements, often hastily concluded, all too often do not focus sufficiently on actual provisions for postconflict army-building. For instance, disarming the former combatants is nearly always difficult and hard to complete.
- Due to the extremely time-consuming process of building trust between former enemies, army-building in post-civil war environments usually takes longer than it does in other contexts.

*After Military Rule.* The steps that must be taken in post-praetorian political systems everywhere are virtually identical: the army must be extracted from politics, the economy, and internal security organizations; its autonomy must be reduced along with its size and privileges; and a new institutional framework must be created for democratic civil-military relations. The question of how democratizers

should proceed is largely determined by the amount of leverage the outgoing military regime enjoys. In countries where the military regime retained some public support (such as in Chile, Spain, and South Korea), army-builders must act with caution and not jeopardize the transition process by needlessly accelerating the tempo of transition. In countries where the military regime retained minimal or no public backing (such as Argentina and Greece), democratizers can forge ahead without having to appease the generals of yesterday. Still, in many cases the military responds to the diminution of its privileges with hostile action, whether putting troops on alert as a warning to politicians or staging an outright rebellion or coup attempt. Prudent political leadership

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is needed to take the sting out of the military's bite or, better yet, prevent them from engaging in threatening activities.

- The military regime's record will largely affect its leverage in dealing with the successor regime.
- During the transition period, democratizers should prepare for the possibility of political interference, even coup attempts, from the armed forces.

***After Communist Rule.*** If the main task of post-military rule democratizers is to take the military out of politics, in postcommunist systems it is the opposite, to take politics out of the military. In this kind of polity, the military was heavily indoctrinated by the Communist

Party, which maintained its organizational network in the armed forces down to the company level. In the wake of communism's demise, the Communist Party, along with all other political parties, must be removed from the barracks. The political indoctrination of officers and soldiers must be replaced by professional education and training and instruction in democratic principles in the armed forces.

- Civilian oversight of the armed forces must be transferred from the Communist Party to the executive branch and the legislature.
- In newly independent postsocialist states, the occupational prestige of the military will likely rise because officers and non-commissioned officers will be representatives of national interests, not supranational (that is, Soviet) interests, as in the past.
- The more difficult the process of transition, the more interest postsocialist regimes will display in joining military alliances.

***After Colonialism.*** The most important objective of army-builders after colonial rule is to establish independent armed forces and train a new officer corps. A related task is to get the colonial officers, who frequently stay behind until new officers can be trained, out of the country. Most often, postcolonial armies are not built from scratch but are built on the foundations of the armed forces left behind by the colonial power and can draw benefit from the positive attributes of that organization. For instance, even 65 years after the end of colonial rule on the subcontinent, the training, professionalism, and esprit de corps instilled by the British are some of their most lasting legacies in India and Pakistan. Many newly

independent countries are led by intellectuals who are strongly affected by the antimilitary bias of their activist years. Such a predisposition can negatively affect defense policy and, ultimately, the country's security. Another danger in many postcolonial settings is conflating the roles of the military and the police, which result in the former getting bogged down in domestic disturbances. This, in turn, is bad for the army's morale and societal reputation and introduces all kinds of negative vibes to the barracks (temptation to treat one ethnic or religious community differently, corruption, and others).

- Ethnic/tribal/religious identity is one of the most sensitive issues in the building of political institutions, including the armed forces.
- Especially in less developed states, the importance of competent political leadership is difficult to exaggerate.
- The robust executive control of the military in many postcolonial environments is accompanied by the legislature's weakness in overseeing the armed forces.

*After (Re)Unification and Apartheid.* There are only a few cases of army-building when two entities are brought together. But while re(unification) took place only in Germany and Yemen in modern times, one might contemplate the issue in past scenarios, such as the process of building a new army from the erstwhile warring sides of the U.S. Civil War. Also, reunification may well come about in the foreseeable future between the Koreas as well as between China and Taiwan. Post-apartheid army-building is even more unusual and presents interesting challenges to the would-be army-builder. The most important task in this

kind of context is to decide whether the two armies/guerrilla forces should be integrated (South Africa) or should one be essentially dismantled and/or a certain part of it be absorbed by the other (Germany). Depending on the political situation, this context is usually the most politically sensitive and must be dealt

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with circumspectly. An important danger in the army-building process in this setting is the diminution of the newly integrated fighting forces' quality.

- The Cold War is a key background in all of the contemporary cases (including several potential future cases).
- The relative strength/leverage of the sides that are being united will largely determine the shape of the postunification/integration regime, including the kind of armed forces it will maintain.

### **Which Settings Are Most Conducive to Military Democratization?**

There are profound disparities not only among the three contexts and the six settings they encompass, but also within the individual regions themselves. Still, the settings that hold out the most promise of successful democratization are those following a devastating defeat in a major war, those following military rule in Europe, and those following a communist regime. Why?

Four things become immediately clear about the success of democracy-building in post-World War II Germany and Japan. First,

their democratization process had enduring and committed support from powerful democratic states. Second, both enjoyed high levels of social and economic development that aided postwar reconstruction. Third, because of the overwhelming political defeat of the ancien régime, institution-builders could start pretty much with a clean slate and did not need to excessively concern themselves with appeasing the old ruling class. Finally, these societies' memories of the excesses of militarism and the devastation visited on them by a self-inflicted war are likely to have motivated the extraordinary dedication of political and societal elites to the task of creating a democratic future and democratic civil-military relations.

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Another setting favorable to democratization was Southern Europe after military rule. Although the shining example in this regard is clearly Spain, Portugal has also succeeded in developing democratic military politics, even if it has taken longer.<sup>2</sup> Greece is somewhat of an outlier primarily because of the weakness of its parliament in defense-security affairs. The important commonality in all three cases is the lure of membership in international organizations, particularly the European Economic Community (the precursor of the European Union), which holds out the promise of prosperity and international respectability for the sake of which political compromises are worth making.

Postcommunist states, particularly European postcommunist states, have also

been quite adept at transforming their civil-military relations. Slovenia was perhaps the most successful, but Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary compiled strong records as well. The prospect of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union membership were strong incentives for postcommunist states, especially those such as Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, whose progress toward democratic consolidation was more halting in the 1990s.<sup>3</sup> In other words, just as in Southern Europe, in Eastern Europe, too, international organizations were able to push domestic policies in a more democratic direction. Another reason for the relative success in building democratic armies in the postcommunist context is that this setting posed comparatively few difficult challenges for transforming civil-military relations. Most importantly, communist armies were firmly under civilian control even if the Communist Party exercised that control. Once party organizations were banished from the barracks, the hardest project was to infuse legislative oversight with substance.

It is clear, however, that the kind of context we are considering has no convincing correlation with the successful democratization of military affairs. The "after military rule" setting spawned positive examples in the Southern European context, but experiences in Latin America and Asia were more mixed. In the other settings, there were few cases of democratizing civil-military relations that did not have some serious drawbacks. One exception may be South Korea, which succeeded for a number of reasons including solid political leadership, relative economic prosperity, robust civil society, and the absence of the divisive issue of ethno-religious identity, the last particularly important in postcolonial and post-civil war

settings. Botswana could be another such outlier were it not for the domineering role of the executive branch in its civil-military relations.

### What Have We Learned?

What should democracy activists and politicians do in the defense-security domain to accelerate democratic consolidation? What should they avoid doing? What advice can we offer to those who formulate and implement policy?

**Good Leaders.** The availability of inspired and inspiring leadership is a factor that can be and often has been exceedingly important in successful democratization. Generally speaking, the more sophisticated the network of political institutions and the more highly developed the political system, the less impact individual leaders have. In contrast, where political institutions are embryonic and basic political relationships are yet to be defined—such as after colonial rule—good leaders can be hugely influential. Put differently, a long-standing consolidated democracy can successfully weather a mediocre and even an incompetent leader, while for a fragile state in the process of regime transition, a bad leader could be ruinous. Charismatic postcolonial leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania are often instrumental in establishing their countries' first effective political parties.

Nyerere and Seretse Khama of Botswana were great postcolonial leaders who astutely conceived the proper role of the armed forces in their states. Following the 1964 Mutiny of the Tanganyika Rifles, the precursor of the Tanzanian People's Defense Force, Nyerere understood that his country's political stability required close collaboration between the

party-state and the military. Seretse Khama, however, wisely refused to establish a standing army—the cost of which, in any event, would have likely been prohibitive for the country prior to the discovery of major diamond deposits—until external security threats made it necessary, more than a decade after independence. It is easy to appreciate the stature of these politicians when they are contrasted with someone like Nkrumah who, while no less charismatic, was far more concerned with burnishing his own myth while needlessly antagonizing the army and running his country into the ground. Nehru is an unusual example of an otherwise great leader who was utterly ignorant of military affairs but nonetheless got deeply involved in them. He marginalized and humbled India's highly professional armed forces and involved them in an unnecessary war—the 1962 clash with China—that they could not possibly win.

Strong and enlightened political leadership is especially beneficial during regime change. Several states in my study were fortunate enough to have excellent and even visionary leaders such as Konrad Adenauer of West Germany and Yoshida Shigeru of Japan in times of epochal transformations. A number of them were instrumental in democratizing or attempting to democratize civil-military relations: Kim Young-sam in South Korea, Chuan Leekpai in Thailand, Raúl Alfonsín in Argentina, Patricio Aylwin and Ricardo Lagos in Chile, and Alfredo Cristiani in El Salvador. As in other contexts, some leaders rise to the challenge in difficult times while others do not. Michelle Bachelet, a victim of Augusto Pinochet's rule, became an outstanding politician and an able and judicious steward of the Chilean armed forces as defense minister and later as president. But Néstor Kirchner and

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner needlessly antagonized and humiliated the Argentine military as an institution decades after the fall of the generals' regime. Monarchs, unelected as they are, are no exception. Spain was lucky to have King Juan Carlos during the heady days of the 1981 coup attempt. Thailand's widely idolized King Bhumibol Adulyadej, however, has continued to support coup-makers and military rule and has remained deeply apprehensive about real and substantive democracy.

*Unambiguous and Transparent Institutional Framework.* Providing the armed forces with a transparent political environment ought to be a key objective of democratizers. Constitutions should be clear about the chain of command in peacetime, wartime, and during national emergencies. Just how important it is to clarify what signifies a "national emergency," for

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instance, was demonstrated by the Salvadoran example. According to the 1992 Chapultepec Peace Agreement, the Salvadoran army was constitutionally limited to external security operations and providing help in national emergencies—the latter was to denote, but did not explicitly state, natural disasters. When years later the army was deployed to counter an escalating crime wave, the government justified it with the national emergency provision.<sup>4</sup> What is an acceptable political endeavor by active duty, reserve, and retired armed forces personnel? Should they be able to vote? Join political parties? Appear in uniform at political rallies? Run for office? Such matters must

be explained and regulated, and the consequences of noncompliance must be unambiguously and consistently applied.

In its dealings with the armed forces leadership, the government should strive for transparency. If at all possible, political leaders should explain to the top brass, for instance, the political, social, and economic justifications for the defense budget, why the promotion of General X was vetoed by the prime minister, or the reasons for party debates regarding the abolition of universal conscription. Such transparency reduces insecurity, builds trust, and helps eliminate rumormongering and scheming.

*Gradualism and Compromise.* In many democratic transitions following military rule, swift and drastic changes are inadvisable because they might unnecessarily provoke the ire of those for whom regime change means the loss of their power and privileges. A gradualist approach that favors coalition-building and a willingness to make acceptable compromises is usually a prudent way to proceed. For instance, Adolfo Suárez, Spain's first democratically elected prime minister, was smart to collaborate with reformist groups within the army and implement changes after consulting with them. In South Korea, too, Kim Young-sam was wise to discuss his reform initiatives with influential generals. They, in turn, became supporters of his reform program and used their clout to neutralize budding opposition in the high command.

In countries where the armed forces retain some political clout and public esteem after withdrawing from power, it is especially important not to needlessly alienate them by overly rapid reform programs designed to reduce their autonomy and perquisites. The inability of politicians to compromise when

necessary or to cut some slack to the generals on issues of minor importance might easily serve to alienate people who would otherwise be willing to subordinate themselves to civilian control. In other words, strategic compromises can enhance the prospects of successful democratic consolidation and civilian control over the armed forces.

For example, Patricio Aylwin was prudent not to start prosecuting generals for human rights abuses because he understood the timing was not right and that insistence on expediency could have resulted in a military coup. Nevertheless, by establishing the Commission on Truth and Reconciliation to search for the truth, identify victims, and investigate accountability, he signaled to Chileans that neither Pinochet's victims nor his henchmen would be forgotten.<sup>5</sup> In due course, once the army's political influence had faded and Pinochet was no longer a lightning rod for the officers' political activism, those guilty of human rights violations began to be held accountable. Similarly, Indonesian President S.B. Yudhoyono acted judiciously by not insisting on terminating the armed forces' business activities in late 2009, even if that meant not delivering on his promise to his constituents. He understood that budgetary restrictions did not permit the drastic expansion of defense outlays that would have been imperative to cover the revenue—which was used in part for operational expenses—the military would lose if they were banished from the economic realm. This concession ensured the generals' quiescence while allowing the state to gradually improve finances and create the fiscal conditions for the army's complete withdrawal from moneymaking ventures.

***Strengthen Legislative Involvement.*** One of the important conclusions of this article is

that there is a direct correlation between vigorous parliamentary participation in defense-security affairs and democratic civil-military relations. Consequently, enhancing the legislature's clout by increasing the authority of its defense committee(s) and encouraging or even requiring its substantive contribution to procedures and deliberations pertaining to the armed forces should be a priority for democracy activists. In fact, the legislature's robust involvement in defense issues is usually a reliable predictor of democratic civil-military relations.

In consolidated democracies, members of parliament are—or, at any rate, should be—genuine representatives of their constituents. Nevertheless, in many democracies, legislators do not play an independent role in overseeing the armed forces because of limitations on their ability to act, insufficient access to objective data and information imposed by a more influential executive branch, or lack of expertise and/or interest in defense matters. Inadequate legislative involvement in the defense-security domain is a shortcoming in numerous states such as Botswana, Greece, and Japan that otherwise have overwhelmingly positive civil-military relations.

In only a few polities does the legislature play the kind of role necessary for properly balanced civilian control of the military. This role comprises not just the debating and passing of defense-related bills but also, crucially important, taking an active part in three aspects of the armed forces' fiscal affairs: determining the process of how defense budgets are devised and by what institutions, participating in the formulation of the actual defense budget, and overseeing the disbursement and implementation of defense outlays. In my case pool, the countries with a

long-term—say, a 20-year—record of active and vigorous parliamentary oversights were Germany and Spain. One can add Bosnia and Herzegovina, and also Slovenia and South Africa if one relaxes the condition requiring sustained performance.

Giving the legislature too much power over the armed forces, however, can result in an unbalanced institutional arrangement. This is admittedly a rare occurrence with its emblematic case being post-Cold War Germany, but it is nonetheless associated with serious problems. More specifically, a dominant role over the army by the legislature hampers expeditious political decisionmaking and compromises the armed forces' fundamental functions in a democracy, namely serving as able and ready defenders of the state and/or as active and useful participants in military alliances.

It is worth noting that the effectiveness of both Germany and Spain as NATO members is diminished, but not because their armies lack professionalism. Rather, politicians in Berlin and Madrid are loath to send their armed forces to participate in NATO operations, and when they do, German and Spanish units operate under restrictions that limit their utility. There seems to be a positive correlation between legislative authority and a lack of enthusiasm for military deployments abroad. One might argue that parliamentarians enjoy a closer link with society, which ultimately spawns soldiers, than members of the executive branch, the policymakers who are more directly involved in decisions regarding military deployments.

*Promote Civilian/Societal Participation in Security Affairs.* Independent civilian defense

DOD (Helene C. Stikkel)



Military officers escort Secretary of Defense William Cohen (second from right) during armed forces full-honors welcoming ceremony at Western Province Command (Castle), Cape Town, South Africa, February 1999

experts, nongovernmental organizations, and journalists focusing on security issues can play a constructive role in advising elected officials and the public about military affairs. Their involvement encourages transparency and promotes confidence among society, the state, and the armed forces. Introducing defense-related courses at universities, allowing civilians—journalists, bureaucrats, politicians, among others—to enroll in appropriate programs at military academies, and providing public funding on a competitive basis to nongovernmental organizations studying defense issues would contribute to the overall improvement of democratic civil-military relations. In general, guaranteed media freedoms are not only a requisite of democratic civil-military relations—without them democracy cannot be consolidated. Democratizing elites must accept that supervising the media is not the state’s function; rather, it is the media’s responsibility to keep an eye on the state.

***Civic Education and Military Training: The Proper Role of the Military.*** Both in the school system and in military colleges and academies, students, trainees, and cadets should be taught about the appropriate role of the armed forces in a democratic state and society. The state must make an effort to teach its citizens early on in their formal education that the army’s role is limited to protecting them from foreign threats, providing assistance following natural disasters, and, if possible, assisting international peacekeeping operations. Similarly, professional military instruction from the basic training of conscripts or enlisted soldiers to the staff academy courses catering to senior officers must feature educational components at the appropriate levels on democratic political systems, civic engagement in security affairs, and the professional socialization of military

personnel, underscoring again and again that other than casting their votes, members of the military have no political role.

***Military Reforms: Sequencing and Interference.*** Different settings require different types of defense reforms. The main tasks for democracy-builders range from building new independent armies on the shaky or absent foundations left by imperial powers all the way to drastically reducing the autonomy, privileges, and size of the armed forces in post-*praetorian* environments. The thoughtful sequencing of defense reforms can be extraordinarily important in ensuring the military’s compliance and cooperation. Consulting with democratic-minded senior officers regarding the details and order of reform usually signals the state’s willingness to consider the perspectives of the armed forces and can be

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expected to foster an agreeable inter-institutional climate. Such discussions do not mean, of course, that the government is obligated to take its generals’ advice, but, as the Spanish case suggests, they are helpful in learning the top brass’s preferences and usually benefit both sides. Military elites who are closely consulted by the state about prospective defense reforms are more likely to take ownership of the reforms, even if they do not agree with every single measure, than those who are cut out of the loop.

There are numerous other steps the state should take, such as following Samuel Huntington’s advice and decreasing the military’s presence in the capital city and

other political centers and developing political organizations capable of mobilizing throngs of supporters to help avert potential coup attempts.<sup>6</sup> Another eminently sensible Huntingtonian tip to civilian rulers is to identify themselves with the armed forces, attend their ceremonies, award medals, and praise the soldiers as exemplifying the most noble virtues of the nation.<sup>7</sup> To illustrate the good sense of this point, we need look no further than post-*praetorian* Argentina. President Carlos Menem significantly reduced the military's political autonomy and budget and yet was held in high regard by the officer corps due to his gestures signaling his appreciation of the armed forces. In contrast, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner created an unpleasant atmosphere between the executive branch and the army that has been damaging to civil-military relations.

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Ideally, the army's involvement in the economy should be terminated. At the same time, sequencing is critical. Practical issues must be considered before hastily outlawing the military's commercial pursuits. For instance, if the resources the military gains from its business activities are used for vital operational expenses, where else will the funds to cover those costs come from? If there is no satisfactory answer, a timetable should be set for the military's gradual withdrawal from the economy during which the state must find the resources to compensate for lost revenue.

Rigidly abiding by the timetable, however, is not advisable, and compromises might have to be made—as they were in Indonesia—for the sake of the larger public good.

The state should have the ability to oversee the promotion of the most senior members of the armed forces—in small- and medium-sized armies, promotions over the rank of colonel should be approved by appropriate civilian officials; in a large army, perhaps such approval should be in effect beyond the two-star general level. At the same time, if politicians veto promotions, they must make sure their reasoning is based on solid evidence regarding the objectionable candidate's professional incompetence or holding political attitudes incompatible with democratic civil-military relations. Politicians should not interfere with the routine promotions of those in the lower ranks, nor should they get in the way of military education, training, and professional concerns unless they are in conflict with fundamental democratic values.

**Identify New Missions.** In numerous countries experiencing democratic transitions, the obvious question of why armed forces are needed has been the subject of public debate. Why maintain an expensive army, people in the Czech Republic and Slovenia asked, in the absence of any real security threats or troublesome neighbors? In Argentina and Chile, journalists and pundits frequently question the utility of the armed forces. Nonetheless, there are very real uses for the military, even in the post-Cold War world. A state ought to have the capacity to protect itself from potential threats to its security and to fulfill its alliance obligations. Armed forces are also needed, for instance, to defend a country's air space from unauthorized air traffic and to repel illegal fishing vessels from its coastal waters.

Conventional armed forces ordinarily are unique in possessing the capacity to provide help in natural disasters.

Huntington wrote that policymakers should equip their armies with “new and fancy tanks, planes, armored cars, artillery, and sophisticated electronic equipment”; in other words, “give them toys” to keep them happy and occupied.<sup>8</sup> But most states do not have the resources to follow this advice. What should they do? One important part of the solution is to search for new missions for the military. For instance, the government could sign the armed forces up to participate in international peacekeeping operations. These activities will make soldiers feel useful, enhance their own prestige as well as international regard for their countries, and might even be a significant source of income for military personnel in poor states. In addition, the special skills and training peacekeepers require create the need for international peacekeeping centers and conflict prevention, management, and resolution programs that boost international cooperation and improve the army’s public image at home.

Alternatively, the armed forces can be trained to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief abroad. Such a strategy generally requires enhancing the military’s airlift and transportation capabilities, though such services may be provided by a more prosperous partner nation. Another worthwhile objective is preparing specialized military units for counterterrorism operations. The military should participate in these types of missions abroad, however, within the framework of international operations. Domestic counterterrorist activities that might involve the generals in politics should be left to the police, intelligence, and/or paramilitary organizations.

In general, a sensible government would seek to design and build an increasingly outward-looking military establishment.

Maintaining a military establishment is an expensive proposition and, especially for states undergoing the democratization process, can be politically risky. Therefore, if no productive endeavors can be found for active-duty personnel, if there is no societal support for keeping the army at its current size, and if the political risks of reducing the military establishment are manageable, it should be pared down to the level politicians, experts, and societal groups believe is indispensable for national security.

*Use the Military’s Expertise.* States and societies make considerable sacrifices to educate, train, equip, and otherwise maintain their armed forces. Marginalizing military officers by not asking their advice during the process of devising defense and/or foreign policy, let alone military strategy—as in Argentina and India, for instance—is irresponsible public policy and wasteful of public resources. In other words, officers acquire their specialized knowledge at a significant cost to taxpayers who should get some return on their investment.

In many countries, including some liberal democracies such as the United States, high-ranking officers accept lucrative jobs as lobbyists, consultants, and military advisors as soon as they retire. Former generals who are hired by defense contractors turn into acquisition consultants whose influence is used to serve the interests of their employers and contravene those of the public. This practice is unethical and harmful to civil-military relations.<sup>9</sup> South Korean law prohibits the employment of officers by defense firms for 5 years after their retirement. This is an excellent example of an important lesson the United States and other

long-consolidated democracies could learn from relative newcomers to their ranks.

## Conclusion

Efforts to order civil-military relations in diverse places into neat theories do not succeed because they cannot account for the massive differences in political and economic and societal conditions, let alone military history, culture, and traditional attitudes, which all affect how armies behave. It is no coincidence that scholars who seem intent on building “grand theories” of military politics do little or no actual field research. There is no grand theory of civil-military relations and there is no blueprint for building democratic armies that can guarantee success. Quite simply, there is no substitute for knowing places, languages, cultures, and peoples and for having contacts with political decisionmakers as well as ordinary people, generals as well as junior officers and infantrymen. The point is not to devise fancy theories but to generate plans and programs that actually work.

The United States is privileged to have a military establishment that has succeeded in training thousands of officers and soldiers who understand the local conditions in an improbably large variety of countries and world regions. Throughout the course of working on my book, I was fortunate to learn from such individuals at the Defense Attachés’s office in U.S. Embassies in countries as diverse as Botswana and Chile, Indonesia and India, and Tanzania and Bosnia. These individuals—virtually all of them multilingual and with multiple degrees—probably know the countries where they serve as well or better than any others. They already play an important role in helping these nations build democratic armies. Because democracy cannot be consolidated

in the absence of democratic armies, these American soldiers actually help build democracies, and they do so efficiently and with relatively small cost to taxpayers. **PRISM**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Zoltan Barany, *The Soldier and the Changing State: Building Democratic Armies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> The best book in English on the Spanish military’s post-Franco transformation is Felipe Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> See Zoltan Barany, *The Future of NATO Expansion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> See Ricardo Córdova Macías, *El Salvador: Reforma Militar y Relaciones Cívico-Militares* (San Salvador: Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> See Brian Loveman, “Misión Cumplida? Civil-Military Relations and the Chilean Political Transition,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 33, no. 3 (Fall 1991), 35–74.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 252–253.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, “Old Soldiers Never Cash Out,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2009; and Matthew Moten, “Out of Order: Strengthening the Political Military Relationship,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 5 (September–October 2010), 2–8, especially 7–8.