



GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF
ARMED FORCES (DCAF)

WORKING PAPER SERIES – NO. 42

**DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES:
NOTES ON LESSONS LEARNED AND UPCOMING
RESEARCH ISSUES**

Marie Vlachová

*Research Department, Ministry of Defence of the
Czech Republic*

Geneva, July 2002

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DCAF Working Papers Series

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DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF ARMED FORCES: NOTES AND LESSONS LEARNED AND UPCOMING ISSUES

Marie Vlachová

1. Lessons Learned Regarding the Promotion of Democratic Control of Armed Forces in the Past Decade

From the point of view of formal parameters all Central and Eastern European countries managed to install a standard level of democratic control of armed forces during the last decade. Political institutions overtook the control of the military, controlling and managing competencies were gradually transferred to the actors defined by the Constitution and legislation. The history and characteristic features of this process have been already described sufficiently in literature ((Donnelly, Szermekényi, Bebler, Sarvaš).

The attention has been paid to the behaviour of the democratic control systems both with regard to specifics of single countries and interconnection of their democratic control systems elements. Judging from the situation in the Czech Republic, politicians and representatives of security ministries are convinced that the system is fully operational. According to their prevailing opinion the system guarantees that armed forces cannot be misused against country interests and civil surveillance of the budget allocated to security and defence purposes enables a sufficient control of all important processes in security and defence area. Justly these two parameters – the barriers to armed forces misuse and the budget control are considered to be the main reasons of the democratic control.

On the case of the Czech Republic it can be proved that installation of formal parameters of democratic control does not necessarily mean a fully functionality of the system known from developed democracies. Practice shows that installation of democratic control is a gradual and long-lasting process, reflecting military traditions, development of civil-military relations during communism period, speed of democratic changes during the last decade and level of political system stability. According to my

opinion the best evidence of the functionality of democratic control system is transparency of important processes running in the military. Armed forces as a typical bureaucratic institution resist naturally the infiltration of “incompetent” civilians into their realm. They tend to seek various ways of avoiding the fully transparency of what is going on inside. It concerns mainly the following processes, relations and phenomena connected to democratic control of armed forces:

- Relations between security ministries and politicians – do they tend to co-operation or rancour (more or less hidden)? What is the politicians participation in the managing of important processes running in the military? Is the participation random or systematic? What are politicians’ information sources? Are their invited to take part in formulation of substantive ministerial documents, especially those which are supposed to be submitted to political approval (security strategy, military strategy, military doctrine, concept of a perspective development of the military etc.)?
- Transparency of financial flows within the ministry of defence – do politicians have information about the relocation and usage of the resources? Do they have possibility to influence the relocation of money? If yes, in which military and ministerial interest group/groups they are engaged?
- Transparency of intelligence services – are politicians satisfied with their control?
- Transparency of ministry of defence towards the public and media – is the existing legislation in the area of providing information from state departments sufficient? How it works in practice? Is the policy of defence ministry towards the public open enough? What is extend of ministerial communication with the public, to which groups it is oriented and why? What is the prevailing media attitude to the military and ministry of defence? What is the development of public relationship to the armed forces?

- Transparency of ministerial acquisitions in the area of armed forces modernisation, which seems to be the most important present process in post-communist militaries.

Trying to answer these questions, we shall come to conclusion that the Czech Republic is still in the process of building of its fully functioning system of democratic control of armed forces.

2. Upcoming Research Issues in CMR and Democratic Control of Armed Forces Particular

- Existence and functioning of security community in various countries (a present state of the community, range, structure, prestige, its relationship to democratic control formal actors)
- Functioning of parliamentary control in practice (structures of parliamentary control, relations of members of parliament to security ministries, competencies of parliamentary committees in democratic control of armed forces, information and knowledge background of members of parliament in the field of security and defence)
- What is the real practice of budget democratic control? To which levels of military management it penetrates?
- What is the proportion of managing competencies and activities in democratic control system? Is the control narrowed to controlling of institutions, processes, events or are managing elements included into it? Who formulates the political concept of the armed forces (the basic political framework of armed forces development, long-lasting perspectives, visions and prognoses)?

- What is the relationship between politicians and military experts, what is the development of civilian management and military leadership, between ministry of defence and general staff? Is there a lobbying from the side of military representatives oriented to politicians? If yes, on which level it appears and what are the results?



Established in 2000 on the initiative of the Swiss government, the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), encourages and supports States and non-State governed institutions in their efforts to strengthen democratic and civilian control of armed and security forces, and promotes international cooperation within this field, initially targeting the Euro-Atlantic regions.

The Centre collects information, undertakes research and engages in networking activities in order to identify problems, to establish lessons learned and to propose the best practices in the field of democratic control of armed forces and civil-military relations. The Centre provides its expertise and support to all interested parties, in particular governments, parliaments, military authorities, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic circles.

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