

Conclusions and Prescriptions for Improving Democratization Outcomes in the Postcommunist States

In the post–Cold War era, U.S. foreign policy goals and grand strategy have increasingly become tied to the idea of pursuing the “democratic peace.” Specifically, U.S. policy has focused on enlarging the number of democracies in the international system¹ despite the dangers inherent in the transitional period of democratization.² The democratizing states of the former Eastern bloc have been prime targets of this effort.

However, the combined effects of inadequate funding from Western cof-fers and an insufficient understanding of how best to foster democratic transi-tions in the postcommunist states led to uneven results in the effectiveness of Western and U.S. assistance efforts to the region. This was especially true of the U.S. military’s attempt to influence the democratization of postcommunist military institutions.

The U.S. military programs were flawed from the start because they did not address the scope of the military democratization problem across two crit-ical dimensions: democratic political control and democratic military profes-sionalism. The military democratization initiatives failed to sufficiently take aim at patterns of professionalism forged in the Soviet era that are incompatible with democratic norms of military professionalism.

The task of democratizing the postcommunist militaries is complicated by widely held, putatively classical assumptions of civil-military relations, pro-moted by such theorists as Samuel Huntington. These traditional views do not take into account the specific problems of states transitioning from authoritar-ian to democratic rule. Traditional interpretations of military professionalism ignore both *how* the officer corps comes to accept the principle of civilian su-premacy and *how* this professionalism is manifested in particular behaviors and practice. The ideological underpinnings of the state must play some role in the inculcation of the value of civilian supremacy in the officer corps. Ideological shifts, in turn, result in different forms of military professionalism, defined by norms and behavior patterns in the conduct of their social functions as “man-agers of violence.”

The comparison of democratic and Soviet-style military professionalism in chapter 1 showed that military professionalism is not a static phenomenon immune to changes in political systems. Indeed, the evidence presented in chapter 1 demonstrated that there are many elements of the form of military professionalism practiced in the Soviet bloc that are incompatible with military professionalism in a democracy. Additionally, great adjustments must also be made to democratic methods of political control where multiple actors have legitimate roles in the process of democratic oversight. These differences cannot be addressed, however, unless military professionals from both systems are aware that they exist.

Chapter 2 began the process of assessing the match of theory and policy in the implementation of democratization assistance programs. The survey of the overall U.S. democratization assistance effort showed missed opportunities at every level. Political, economic, and military programs were poorly conceptualized and consequently ineffectively carried out. The U.S. military democratization programs in particular clearly lacked an understanding of the challenges confronting the postcommunist militaries faced with the task of transitioning from authoritarian to democratic political systems.

An analysis of specific military democratization initiatives, which have been applied across the Soviet bloc, revealed low levels of funding, poor coordination among similar efforts, inconsistent mission statements, and an appalling lack of strategic vision for the achievement of military democratization objectives in the region. The inability of U.S. military policymakers to diagnose the democratization needs of the transitioning militaries inevitably led to the prescription of inappropriate solutions for their problems. The advent of Partnership for Peace initiatives under the auspices of NATO enlargement served largely to focus attention away from military democratization tasks in favor of NATO interoperability objectives. Consequently, the U.S. military's contribution to the overall strategic aim of assisting in the process of democratic consolidation across the former Soviet bloc has been negligible.

Chapters 3 and 4 applied the criteria developed in chapter 1 for military institutions in democracies to the specific cases of Russia and the Czech Republic. Their military democratization needs were identified across the two critical dimensions of the military democratization problem: the achievement of democratic political control and democratic military professionalism.

The evidence presented in chapter 3 illustrated that democratic deficits persist within both the civilian and military institutions of the transitioning cases that limit the full achievement of democratic political control. The specific democratic deficits explored included the existence of weak budgetary control, shortage of expertise on defense issues, insufficient confidence within civilian oversight bodies to exercise control, limited political will to influence

the defense process, poor relationships between ministries of defense and parliaments, inadequate transparency throughout democratic institutions, and the strength of civilian and military leaders' commitment to democracy.

Chapter 4 examined the second critical dimension of the military democratization problem in the two cases—democratic military professionalism. Once again the criteria for democratic military professionalism developed in chapter 1 were applied to the specific postcommunist experiences of Russia and the Czech Republic. The evidence presented highlighted the difficulty of adapting inherited forms of military professionalism to the norms of democratic accountability found in the military institutions of developed democracies.

An examination of the democratic deficits explored across the cases in specific issue areas—recruitment and retention, promotion and advancement, officership and leadership, education and training, norms of political influence, and compatibility of military and societal values—suggested that militaries transitioning from authoritarian to democratic political systems find themselves caught between two incompatible systems of military professionalism. The evidence also supported the contention that progress in the military sphere of democratization lags behind progress achieved in other democratic institutions in the process of transition.

The contrasts between the experiences of Russia and the Czech Republic were clear and can be attributed to the varying degree of consensus on democratic norms and practices across democratizing postcommunist institutions. Overall, a steady though hesitant advance toward democratic consolidation characterized the Czech case, while Russia was shown to be sporadically moving forward and backward in its democratic transition. The overall progress of democratization in each transitioning state subsequently affected the path of democratic transition for their militaries.

In both cases, the prevalence of democratic values and expectations as evidenced in the oversight capability of the developing democratic institutions, the media, and the society at large determined the extent of democratic political control of the armed forces. Adapting inherited forms of military professionalism from the Soviet era to the norms expected of militaries in service to democratic states also depended on societal attitudes toward democratic values and the ability of democratic institutions to enforce standards of democratic accountability.

In the Czech case there was greater consensus on the importance of consolidating democratic values and meeting Western democratic standards within all democratizing institutions, including the military, although the implementation of many democratic norms in the military institution remains problematic. In Russia democratic values have made some inroads in the authoritarian culture, and expectations have taken root that they will continue to be protected to at least some degree. However, the actual implementation of norms of

democratic accountability across all postcommunist institutions has been met with stiff resistance from military and civilian authorities in the government who are reluctant to subordinate themselves to legitimate democratic oversight bodies. Progress is limited further by the failure of postcommunist governments to build democratic institutions capable of consolidating democracy.

The evidence showed that the need for external assistance is great even in the most advanced of the cases. However, U.S. military democratization programs have been plagued by their long delay in the development of a framework to focus their assistance efforts. An analysis of the Czech and Russian cases across both dimensions of the military democratization problem laid out the specific democratization needs of these militaries across a variety of issue areas. The hope is that the identification of specific democratization deficits will lead to deliberate efforts to address them and result in an end to the randomness and weak conceptualization of democratization objectives that currently characterize program activity.

Finally, chapter 5 analyzed the effectiveness of the U.S. military programs in the cases. An in-depth analysis of program activity in Russia and the Czech Republic was conducted in order to measure the degree to which the military democratization needs presented in chapters 3 and 4 were being addressed. An objective study of the implementation of the military assistance programs in Russia and the Czech Republic showed that the United States' attempt has fallen short of meeting the military democratization needs of these armed forces. Although the attitude toward the West and Western assistance was markedly different between the two cases, with the Czech Republic's enthusiasm contrasting with Russia's reluctance, opportunities for influence have been lost in both cases, and, presumably, throughout the region.

The military to military outreach efforts between the United States and the countries studied were found to be particularly deficient in terms of adequate policy guidance and evaluation, sufficient funding, and appropriate staffing to carry out their vaguely conceptualized objectives. The shortcomings of the military democratization programs indicated a lack of learning from previous military assistance endeavors and a fundamental inability to exploit U.S. political-military expertise in order to design effective programs.

Through the identification of specific shortcomings in the civil-military relations literature and an analysis of post-Cold War military democratization programs, this book has attempted to develop the theoretical underpinnings needed to guide the democratic transition of postcommunist militaries that are lacking in both theory and practice. The hope is that the development of civil-military relations theory that is appropriate to the needs of the transitioning states in the former Soviet bloc will influence the work of U.S. and NATO policymakers as well as domestic actors in the transitioning states engaged in the struggle to facilitate the democratic transitions of postcommunist militaries.

Unfortunately, the role of the military institution in the democratization process of the postcommunist states has been neglected at every level. Civil-military relations theorists have failed to offer appropriate solutions and recommendations for the specific problem of militaries transitioning from advanced authoritarian states to democratic states. The assumption that military professionalism is constant across political systems was subsequently reflected in assistance programs that did not address the distinctiveness of professional norms and practices between militaries in service to democratic political systems and those loyal to totalitarian regimes. The resultant emphasis on strategic interoperability instead of ideological issues related to the shift in the political system has led to the proliferation of programs mistakenly believed by their implementers and overseers to be effectively addressing the problem of military democratization. In reality, however, these programs have done little to focus resources on the specific democratization needs of the postcommunist militaries. Ironically, the efforts undertaken to date may actually be counterproductive because they have fostered military and strategic competence over ideological compatibility. There is a danger in providing such one-sided assistance to militaries serving states that have not yet become consolidated democracies and that consequently pose a greater threat to the stability of the international system.

The promotion of democracy in the post-Cold War world has emerged as a pillar of U.S. foreign policy and the foreign policy of NATO member states, but the pursuit of this aim, especially at the military level, has been ineffective. There are many reasons for this: the United States' inability to overcome its own Cold War legacy, the scarcity of economic resources across the developed democracies, universal unfamiliarity with the unique problem of simultaneous political and economic transitions, and low public support for overseas assistance. While the current international context prohibits an influx of aid that even begins to approach Marshall Plan proportions, the limited appropriations released for democratization ends could be utilized much more efficiently if policymakers had a better understanding of which steps would lead more directly to democratization outcomes.

U.S. military democratization efforts have a particularly acute need for such policy guidance based on sound analysis of the task at hand. Policymakers have shown a virtual ignorance of the dimensions of the military democratization problem and have been content to squander precious resources on the perpetuation of either unfocused, random activities or focused, but weakly conceptualized frameworks. An almost complete breakdown between theory and practice has characterized the effort due to policymakers' inability to understand the problem of military democratization.

Meanwhile, the task of democratic transition continues in the postcommunist states within their societies at large and within their military institutions

in particular. Whether or not these states ever join the family of consolidated democracies depends on their steady progress along a range of transitional issues. Their militaries are just one of many postcommunist institutions in transition. However, the support of the military for the overall process of transition, along with the realization that it, too, must adapt its patterns of political accountability and professionalism to democratic norms, is an essential condition for the achievement of democratic consolidation.

Different political systems result in different patterns of civil-military relations that in turn affect the conduct of states in the international system. States with mature democratic institutions are more likely to behave peacefully in their international relations. Democratic gains achieved by civilian institutions are threatened by postcommunist militaries that are not similarly transformed. The democratic peace thesis depends for its successful implementation on militaries that are both supportive of democratic institutions and that are professional in meeting states' external and internal security needs. The achievement of this outcome is not a free good, but comes at substantial cost to the states themselves and to the external actors whose interests dictate the provision of extensive resources in the realm of expertise, financial support, and membership in relevant democratically based international organizations. The application of a theory of civil-military relations for states in transition from communist rule is crucial for both the success of individual postcommunist transitions and for the achievement of the democratic peace.

