

**Session I:**  
**The Challenge of Defence**  
**Institutions Building I – The View**  
**from the West**

# Parliamentary and Executive Oversight of the Defence Sphere

*Mr. Simon Lunn, Secretary General,  
NATO Parliamentary Assembly*

## Introduction

Let me first express my appreciation to the Georgian parliament and to the joint organizers, NATO and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) for the invitation to speak at this important and timely event.

The NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA) has, over the years, developed a constructive relationship with the Georgian parliament which has enjoyed the status of “associate member” since May 1999. Your parliamentarians have participated in a wide range of assembly activities, sessions, seminars and training programs. We welcomed the pivotal changes here last year which confirmed this country’s aspirations and its commitment to the goal of a European future.

During a recent meeting with speaker Nino Burjandaze, at our secretariat in Brussels, I confirmed our willingness to continue to do whatever we can to assist Georgia and its parliament during this crucial and difficult period of transition. Assisting the development of parliamentary democracy in the transition countries has been a central feature of the Assembly’s work since 1989. Our first partnership seminar took place in Vilnius in December 1991, when Lithuania was facing a number of difficult problems, including, it is appropriate to notice, the unwanted presence of Russian troops.

It is gratifying to know that Lithuania, along with its Baltic neighbours, has been prominent in providing support to Georgia. It is

also good to see that Romania, another new member, is also playing a prominent role at the conference/training course later this week.

During the long process of NATO enlargement, we gathered considerable experience on what needs to be done in the way of reform and how it should be achieved, particularly in the field of defence and security. The evidence for this learning experience lies in the development of MAP's, IPP's and now the DIB initiative. Countries such as Georgia can and will benefit from this experience.

This is certainly true for the theme of this conference 'The Challenge of Defence Institution Building' and my own contribution on 'Parliamentary and Executive Oversight of the Defence Sphere'.

The parliamentary and executive oversight of the defence sector are defining characteristics of the principle of democratic control of armed forces. It is worthwhile to remind ourselves what is meant by the expression and why it is important.

The expression democratic control of armed forces<sup>2</sup> (herein referred to as democratic control) is generally understood as the subordination of the armed forces to those democratically elected to take charge of the country's affairs. In its fullest sense it means that all decisions regarding the defence of the country - the organisation, deployment, and use of armed forces, the setting of military priorities and requirements and the allocation of the necessary resources are taken by democratic leadership and scrutinised by the legislature in order to ensure popular support and legitimacy.

Armed forces must serve the societies they protect and military policies and capabilities must be consistent with political objectives and economic resources.

As a subject, democratic control has become highly visible because very early on in the enlargement process NATO identified it as a principle that countries seeking membership in NATO must

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of "armed forces can cause problems. This presentation will refer to forces under Ministries of Defence. However, in many countries, there are a variety of forces who bear arms and do not fall under the authority of the MOD, for example, internal security forces or para-military. It goes without saying that all forces should be democratically accountable irrespective of subordination.

implement<sup>3</sup>. However, as would-be-members turned to NATO for help in the implementation of the principle, it became clear that providing collective guidance was problematic as no single model existed. Differences of history, culture, and geo-strategic location have meant that each member of the Alliance has evolved a different approach to the organization and management of its armed forces.

### *The essential elements for DCAF*

Nevertheless, while no single model exists, it is possible to identify the basic elements that should be present in one form or another to ensure democratic control. Those are:

- Legal and constitutional mechanisms which clarify the relationships between the head of state, the government, parliament and the armed forces.
- An appropriate mix of military and civilian personnel within the MoD (including a civilian Minister of Defence).
- Effective parliamentary oversight to ensure democratic legitimacy and popular support.
- Maximum transparency and openness including independent research institutes and an active and inquisitive media.
- Armed forces at ease with their role in society.

These elements are easy to define on paper. Making them work in practise, however, is another matter. Successful implementation rests on the respective roles of the executive and the legislature, and on the relationship between them. It rests equally on the relationship of both bodies with the armed forces themselves and on the division of responsibility and competence between the political and military sides.

Developing the trust, confidence and mutual respect on which these relationships depend lies at the heart of effective democratic control. This is what it is all about. Building trust, confidence, and respect between the executive and the legislature and between the civilians and the military.

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<sup>3</sup> The Alliance was always careful to stress that there was no fixed or rigid list of criteria for inviting new members, readiness for membership would be a political judgement based on all relevant considerations.

In this presentation, I shall try to indicate with examples drawn from real world experience the problem of turning theory into practice.

### *Why defence is different*

In all areas of government a degree of tension between the executive and the legislators is inevitable, in view of their respective functions. The balance that has to be found is somewhat simplistically described as between “efficiency” and “democracy”.

The need to establish such a balance is both more important and more difficult in the field of defence than other fields of activity. Defence is not just another spending department. It brings with it certain characteristics and qualities that complicate the relationship between the executive and the parliament and increases the inherent potential of friction between the two branches.

First, because defence concerns the security of the nation and involves decisions to commit lives and expenditure for the nations defence. Decisions of this magnitude impose an additional burden of responsibility on the political leadership to get things right and to ensure that decisions and policies enjoy popular support.

Second, because defence involves the maintenance of armed forces. In any society the military assume a special and distinctive position, chiefly as the principal possessor of weapons and armaments - the “instruments of the state monopoly of violence” as it is sometimes described.

Furthermore, the military also represent a highly and disciplined group, knit together by traditions, customs and working habits, but above all, by the need to work together and to depend on each other in times of crisis and conflict - a dependence which can literally mean the difference between life and death. Such dependence builds strong bonds and loyalties and requires a degree of cohesion and coherence that few other professionals can claim. It is these qualities - discipline, dedication and loyalty - that make the military profession different, and in some ways, distinct from the rest of society.

There is also a natural tendency for the military to believe that military things are best left to the military men. This is understandable as the business of armed forces is to prepare for conflict and the potential loss of life, but it makes the intrusion of outsiders or non-professionals a sensitive issue. Nevertheless, all military activities must, at some stage, come under the scrutiny of the political leadership to ensure that they are consistent with, and reflect, political aims and priorities. No action is immune from direct or eventual accountability. Implicit in this situation in which the military accept the primacy of politics, is the responsibility of the political side to ensure that it exercises informed judgement.

A final aspect of the civil-military relationship is that the highly organised and structured character of military life tends to give the men in uniform a rather straightforward and uncomplicated view of the world, a view that contrasts and is often at odds with the more complex, and by comparison, apparently “murky”, world of politics. The terms concession and compromise, essential to the balancing and reconciliation of competing interests in domestic and international politics, do not sit easily with the clarity and directness of assessment and decision that are essential characteristics of an effectively functioning military. This can lead to very different perceptions of the same problem and can represent a source of friction between the military and political sides<sup>4</sup>. At the most extreme it can lead to military interference with, or defiance of, the government of the day. When such

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<sup>4</sup> For a flavour of this difference in perceptions between man in the field (or in this case at sea) and the politicians, see the comments of Admiral Sandy Woodward, Commander of the Falklands Battle Group as he took his force towards the Falklands.

“None of our plans seems to hold up for much more than twenty-four hours, as Mr. Nott (Defence Minister) footles about, wringing his hands and worrying about his blasted career. And the Ministry men play their intricate and interminable games with an eye to the aftermath (‘get in quick if there’s credit, be elsewhere if there’s not)’

In ‘One Hundred Days; The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander’, Admiral Sandy Woodward with Patrick Robinson, Fontana, 1992. A thoroughly readable and informative account of the problems of modern warfare including the difficult interaction between the political and military considerations.

Similar frustration was expressed by General Sir Peter de la Billiere, Commander of the British Forces in the Gulf War, during the build up of forces:

“The level of ministerial indecision and looking backwards is appalling and desperately time wasting. There is every likelihood that we shall stay behind while the Americans go to war and our ministers dither over their decisions.”

In “Storm Command, a Person Account of the Gulf War” by General Sir Peter de la Billiere. Harper Collins, 1992.

episodes occurred it has been frequently because the military men have suggested an allegiance to a higher calling — the nation, the constitution - than the transient government of the day<sup>5</sup>.

Most of our governments have at some time in their history experienced in differing degrees a “turbulent” military. Several members of the Alliance - Turkey, Greece, Spain and Portugal - have experienced such problems in their relatively recent past<sup>6</sup>.

Today, none of the established democracies have serious worries on this issue. The respective roles of the military and civilians are well established and understood - albeit, there are some areas where the dividing line between competences is easily blurred. The significance of democratic control lies elsewhere - in the fact that in any society the military represent a strong corporate body, capable of exerting considerable influence over policy and the allocation of resources. Effective democratic control ensures that the armed forces and their requirements occupy an appropriate place in the nation’s priorities, that they do not absorb an undue proportion of the national resources nor

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, the well known statement by General Douglas MacArthur “I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance or loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the Executive branch of government rather than to the country and its constitution which they are sworn to defend” quoted in Telford Taylor, *Sword and Swastika*, p. 354. And in a similar vein ‘I have never served Tsars or Commisars or Presidents. They are mortal men and they come and go. I serve only the Russian state and the Russian people, which are eternal.’ General Lebed quoted in the *Financial Times*, September 6, 1994.

During the first of the summer schools for CEE parliamentarians organised in the mid-1990s by the NATO PA in conjunction with the George C Marshall Centre in Garmisch, there was considerable discussion of the question of whether there were ever circumstances under which the armed forces have the right to intervene internally: for example, to “save” democracy as when the army in Algeria prevented the fundamentalists taking power, or when there are competing democratic institutions as was the case when President Yeltsin used the Russian army against the Parliament. While it was agreed that there was never any justification for intervention against democratically elected authorities, it was evident that grey areas arose when the democratic legitimacy of the government itself was in question. This issue also raised questions as to whom armed forces took their oath of allegiance.

<sup>6</sup> The experiences of Spain and Portugal in making the transition to democracy and returning the armed forces to their appropriate place in society has been particularly helpful to the new democracies. See for example, the Rose-Roth Seminar on “Defence in Democratic Societies: The Portuguese experience.” Lisbon 20-22 April 1995.

The particular role of the Turkish armed forces is also frequently noted in discussions of civil-military relations and the influence of history and political culture on the place of the military in society.

exert an undue influence on the development of policy, and that defence policy is consistent with national goals. If I emphasize the resources element, it is, because it is particularly important in transition countries where resources are scarce and social and economic demands high and that the defence expenditure is appropriate to its country's security needs and that it is effectly used. For those reasons, it is important to ensure that defence, and the security sector in general, is organised and managed in a way that maximises military professionalism and efficiency, but also guarantees political control and popular support.

### *The role of the executive*

The executive of any nation comprises the democratically-elected or appointed leadership, whether President or Prime Minister, or both, plus the permanent cadre of civil servants and military officers. It is responsible for allocating defence to its appropriate place in the nation's priorities, for adjudicating between competing claims, and for ensuring defence requirements are consistent with political goals and economic resources. In other words, the executive is responsible for seeing the 'big picture' and for defining the national strategy within which defence must be set. The executive is responsible for the decision to go to war - with legislative approval - and for the strategic command and control of any conflict. Clarity of responsibility and in the line of authority is obviously crucial. In this respect, the judiciary has an important role.

Within the executive, the MoD together with the General Staff (GS) is responsible for the 'hands on' organisation and management of the defence establishment and for the running of the armed forces.

The MoD has to reconcile military requirements with real world political and economic constraints and has also to arbitrate between the various services. The Ministry must also regulate the degree of autonomy of the armed forces and the degree of intrusiveness of political supervision.

In looking at the role and responsibilities of the executive there are three broad areas where political and military interaction is of particular interest.

First, the question of command, where it is imperative that arrangements for the command and control of the armed forces in peace

and war must be clearly and unambiguously defined. Where possible, this should be vested in a single individual albeit, subject to the agreement of parliament. In Presidential-parliamentary systems it is critical that the role of the President vis-à-vis the Prime Minister should be clarified. Likewise, there should be no doubt as to whom the Chief of Staff reports, nor the line of authority. This again is easier said than done. No matter how tightly drafted, constitutions and legal frameworks frequently leave room for interpretation, particularly by forceful personalities. Several Alliance members, old and new alike, have experienced difficulties owing to an unclear chain of command<sup>7</sup>.

Second, the role of civilians in the MoD, working together with, and often alongside their military colleagues, which is a standard feature of most Alliance members. As is the fact that the Minister of Defence has a civilian background. There are a number of reasons for this, notably the fact that a civilian is considered better equipped to take account of broader policy issues and influences, and better able to fight the MoD's corner in the competition for resources. This is not to say that military men cannot bring the same qualities to bear to the position of Minister. However, Western experience suggests that a civilian background is more appropriate to cover the full range of tasks required of the position<sup>8</sup>.

Third, is the perennial issue that permeates all aspects of democratic control — the division of competence and responsibility between the political and military sides. Are there areas which are strictly military only, where the military should be allowed to get on with their business unimpeded by political interference? Common sense

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<sup>7</sup> Even the American Constitution much admired for the simplicity of its language and clear separation of powers has not escaped unscathed. Under the Constitution, the President is Commander-in-Chief, the Congress has the power to declare war. These definitions leave open the possibility for disputes over authority for those conflicts which fall short of a formal declaration of war, yet require the deployment of American forces. See "Congressional checks on Military Initiatives" by Louis Fisher. *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 109, number 5, 1994—1995 and also "The War Powers at a Constitutional Impasse: a Joint Decision Solution" by Joseph R. Biden and John B. Ritch III, *The Georgetown Law Journal*, Vol. 77, No. 2, December 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Again during the first summer school for CEE parliamentarians held at Garmisch, the Western assumption that a civilian was best suited for the post of Minister of Defence was hotly contested by some of the CEE parliamentarians, indicating how deeply embedded were the norms of the previous Communist regimes in fencing off the field of defence for the military only.

suggests yes: that there are areas such as the development of doctrine and tactics and the education and training of armed forces which should be left to the military professionals. Likewise, in conflict situations, it would appear obvious that the handling of operations should be governed by professional military judgement. Nevertheless, practice and experience suggests that at some stage, all areas must be subject to political oversight and accountability.

One of the areas where political and military considerations can frequently collide are in the definition of 'Rules of Engagement' (RoE's) for operations in which military forces are involved. RoE's are guidelines for the armed forces which define their scope of action in carrying out their mission, taking account of the political context. Many of the caveats that restrict the operational effectiveness of Alliance forces in operations like Afghanistan derive from RoE's imposed by individual nations<sup>9</sup>.

The new security environment, in which non-military risks or threats are as significant for our security as military, also increases the blurring of the military and political roles. Furthermore, this new environment and the impact of new technology, in which international events are fed directly into our homes, increases public awareness and the need for accountability to public opinion.

Which leads me naturally to the role of parliaments.

## **The Role of Parliaments**

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<sup>9</sup> Admiral Sandy Woodward, leading his Task Force towards the Falklands and uncertain about the interpretation of the ROE's he has been given, provides a graphic description of a Commander's frustration:

"the picture is gloomy. The politicians are probably going to tie my hands behind my back and then be angry when I fail to pull their beastly irons out of the fire for them."

In the same vein, the Commander of British Forces in the Gulf War, General Sir Peter De La Billiere facing the dilemma that his own ROE's deal with potentially threatening Iraqi aircraft were much more restrictive than those of the American forces with whom he was deployed:

"The politicians are ducking and weaving, and trying to avoid the real decisions they are there for. They love section-commander type decisions, like organising uniforms or deciding on the British Forces' radio. ROE matters, where the future conduct of the war and their own and the Government's position could be in question, they avoid if at all possible."

The importance of parliaments to defence should be self-evident. No defence policy can endure without the support of the public that it is deemed to protect. As the elected representatives of the people, parliamentarians are at the heart of the democratic system. They represent the electorate from whom armed forces are drawn and whose taxes pay for their upkeep. Parliaments perform a dual function. It is their task to explain and justify defence policy and its consequences to their constituents; why defence expenditure is necessary and why the men and women of the armed forces should put their lives at risk in overseas deployments.

In this respect, it is worth reemphasizing the changed security context in which public support for the maintenance and employment of armed forces must be sustained. Armed forces are increasingly engaged in operations away from national territory, in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan, and in a broad range of contingencies ranging from enforcement to post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction. Public and parliamentary support is as important as ever. There is a further dimension to NATO's new role that has ramifications for parliamentary oversight. NATO's current emphasis on the need for rapidly deployable forces — best demonstrated by the creation of the NATO response force (NRF) — may not be consistent with national requirements for parliamentary approval.

The importance of parliaments to defence is indisputable. However, there is less agreement on what role they should play. The key issue is how much influence a parliament should endeavour to exert over the development of the defence budget and the organisation and running of the armed forces; with what degree of detail and intrusiveness should parliamentarians scrutinise defence?

There is, of course, no single model — Alliance parliaments exert varying degrees of influence and in different ways. The basic distinction to be drawn is between those who exert direct influence through formal powers of consultation and decision and those whose influence is indirect through their ability of a variety of mechanisms and procedures to hold the executive accountable, albeit 'after the event'.

At one end of the spectrum, there is the US Congress which, because of the US Constitution and the separation of powers, plays an influential role in the development of the US defence budget. Congress

holds the DoD firmly accountable, often in excruciating detail and in a manner described by some, particularly those on the receiving end, as excessive micro management. Congress has often been seen as the model for those who sought real legislative influence<sup>10</sup>. However, two factors should be noted. Congressional powers are not easily replicated as they are obviously a product of, and specific to the US Constitution, and they require substantial supporting infrastructure in the way of committee staff, experts and supporting organisations and therefore substantial resources.

Other parliaments exert less direct influence and play a rather different role. For example, the British Parliament, whose direct oversight consists of voting the defence budget as a global figure once a year, plus various debates. The government does not have to obtain parliamentary approval for specific expenditure decisions. Parliament exerts little influence over the development of the British defence budget as this rests firmly in the hands of the executive. Again, this relationship is a function of British history and the development of a strong executive depending on a highly-professional and relatively insular civil service.

The British Parliament's Select Committee on Defence plays a rather different role in informing public opinion and making defence more transparent through focused hearings and reports<sup>11</sup>. Likewise, the National Audit Office, which reports to parliament, keeps the government on its toes by in-depth assessments of various programmes looking specifically to see that expenditure has been used effectively.

Most other parliaments exert considerably more direct influence than the British but fall short of the congressional model. The German Bundestag, the Netherlands and Danish parliaments offer more appropriate models as they enjoy formal consultative powers on issues such as equipment purchases and force deployments. In all parliaments it is the defence committees which provide the opportunity for detailed examination and assessment, supported by Budget and Foreign Affairs Committees. The institutional arrangements to implement parliamentary

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<sup>10</sup> This was also because Congress was very quick into the field in providing advice and assistance to the new parliaments, notably through the Congressional Research Service.

<sup>11</sup> For a frank assessment of the role of the British parliament, see the presentation of Bruce George MP (Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence) to the Rose—Roth Seminar on “Armed Forces in Democratic Societies” Herstmonceaux Castle, 23 - 26 July 1996.

powers include debates, hearings, written questions and formal enquiries.

Within this overall distinction of direct and indirect influence, parliamentary activity can therefore be grouped into three broad areas: accountability, oversight and transparency.

### *Accountability*

All parliaments hold their government accountable through the annual voting of the necessary funds, whether this is the end of a long process of examination as in the US model or the merely formal endorsement as in the British case. Whatever the model, the ‘power of the purse’ requires every government to explain and justify its expenditure demands<sup>12</sup>.

### *Oversight*

However, the crucial issue is the degree to which oversight translates into real influence over the decisions of the executive. Parliamentary authorisation is an important instrument of influence. In many countries, parliamentary authorisation is required for the deployment of forces abroad or for the purchase of major weapon systems.

The real question is how far parliaments should intrude into the making of defence policy and the running of the armed forces: for example, should the parliaments be consulted on the development of strategy and doctrine, or on procurement decision?<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Accountability is also achieved through hearings or the establishment of special committees to look into specific issues. Examples of the latter were the investigation by the Canadian parliament into the conduct of Canadian soldiers in Somalia, and the enquiry by the Belgian parliament into the events that led to the deaths of Belgian peacekeepers in Rwanda (23). The Parliamentary inquiry into the Canadian Peace Mission in Somalia, Professor Dr. D. J. Winslow, paper presented at the fourth PCAF Workshop, Brussels, July 12- 14, 2002. See also the report of the Belgian Parliament on the murder of Belgian UN peacekeepers in Rwanda, “Parliamentary commission of inquiry regarding the events in Rwanda”, Belgian Senate, December 6, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Some of the new parliaments initially attempted to micro manage their armed forces even attempting, for example, to write military doctrine. Frequently this degree of intrusion was due to the suspicion with which the military was viewed rather than a realistic assessment of what was feasible and appropriate.

Common sense suggests that there are many areas where parliament should not be directly involved in telling the military how to do their business. On the other hand, parliament should be kept fully informed through regular and timely consultation, and all areas should be open to parliamentary oversight and scrutiny. The executive should have the flexibility to exercise power responsibly but must also always be mindful that parliament is watching.

### *Transparency*

Parliamentary debates and reports help make defence more transparent and increase public awareness and understanding. They play an important role in building the public consensus essential for defence.

Parliamentary activities should form an important part of a general security environment and the creation of a defence community in which security is freely and openly discussed and ceases to be the property and prerogative of a few.

Discussion of the role of parliaments would not be complete without a mention of their role in the broader context of civil-military relations. Parliamentarians form a natural link between the armed forces and the society. Many parliamentarians have particular connections through having military facilities or defence industries in their constituencies or because they themselves have a military background. Defence committees are frequently active in looking after the welfare and rights of soldiers.

What then are the obstacles to effective parliamentary involvement?

Whatever the model and degree of involvement, parliamentary effectiveness depends on parliamentarians being well informed and knowledgeable. However, again the unique characteristics of defence make the acquisition of the required competence problematic.

There are two obvious obstacles — the secrecy and exclusivity which have always been dominant features of the defence world. National security is often given as the reason for denying the provision of information. With the passing of the Cold War, this factor has become less inhibiting but confidentiality still tends to limit the flow of essential information. Frequently, the executive is unwilling to make available the

required information, on the grounds of its sensitive nature. Membership of international organisations such as NATO can be used as a reason to withhold information due to the rules of the organisation, which inevitably always work at the level of the most security conscious. Parliaments deal with the issue of confidentiality in different ways. Most receive information from the executive on a ‘need to know’ basis. Although, as many parliamentarians point out, it is the executive that decides ‘the need’. Some hold closed hearings to satisfy the requirement. Some members hold security clearances.

Exclusivity, in the sense of propriety, often felt by military professionals towards their work and their reticence to accept the intrusion of civilians. This reticence is frequently more pronounced towards parliamentarians because of a perceived lack of expertise. In some instances, this is understandable because from the military professionals’ point of view ‘uninformed’ interference can have far-reaching consequences for the lives of service personnel.

This reticence is not just an issue between military and civilians but reflects a more general problem between the executive branch as a whole towards parliamentary scrutiny. No government is particularly enthusiastic to have parliament looking over its shoulder. As a NATO PA member noted recently, ‘we have democratic control over the military, but not over the diplomats and civil servants’. However, unwillingness by the executive to cooperate with parliament is ultimately counter productive. Not only is it contrary to the spirit of democracy, it is counter productive because no matter how irritating parliamentary scrutiny can be, parliamentary support is indispensable. Cooperation with parliaments is as the Americans would say, a “no brainer”.

A successful working relationship between the three components, or Triad, of democratic control - the civil servants, the military and the parliamentarians — depends on the various parties respecting the competence and professionalism of the others. However, developing this competence and understanding takes time and application. Both are available for the civilian and military professional. Not so for the parliamentarians who are faced with a range of competing domestic demands for their attention. Moreover, in few countries are there many election votes to be gained in being a defence or foreign policy expert.

However, defence is not some form of black art comprehensible only to a privileged and dedicated elite. With the appropriate supportive infrastructure, parliamentarians can develop the competence and expertise necessary to exercise responsible judgement in holding the executive accountable.

Effective parliamentary involvement in defence is best achieved with the help of a supportive infrastructure which should include: qualified staff to offer reliable and informed advice on government submissions; research departments and independent research institutes to provide in-depth and objective analysis; and a critical and inquisitive media. Parliament should have access to multiple sources of information and to independent counsel so that they are not forced to rely on, or automatically accept, government submissions.

The DCAF handbook on parliamentary oversight of the security sector offers invaluable advice on the overall parameters within which parliamentary involvement in defence should be set. This is required bed time reading for members<sup>14</sup>.

Interparliamentary organisations form an important part of this supportive infrastructure. As NATO's interparliamentary arm, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly has long been a transatlantic forum for parliamentary dialogue and a source of education, information and experience for its members. It has played a significant role in assisting legislators to become more effective in influencing national defence policy through their national parliaments; and in holding their executives to account. It has also assisted in making Alliance policies more transparent and, therefore, more understandable to public opinion<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> "Parliamentary oversight of the Security Sector: principles, mechanisms and practices". The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces and the Inter-parliamentary Union.

<sup>15</sup> The NATO Parliamentary Assembly, founded in 1955 with a Brussels-based secretariat, brings together 214 national parliamentarians from the 26 NATO countries, associate delegations from 13 nations, Mediterranean Associate delegations from 3 nations, and 8 with the status of Parliamentary Observer.

The NATO PA is a policy influencing rather than policy-making body. The nature of NATO's intergovernmental decision-making process based on consensus means that the contribution of its interparliamentary counterpart lies primarily in creating greater transparency of Alliance policies and contributing to the development of Alliance-wide consensus. Direct influence on NATO policies lies through national parliaments. Obviously it is to be hoped that in developing Alliance policies, NATO's member governments heed and take account of the collective parliamentary voice as expressed in Assembly debates,

A central feature of the assembly's work for the past decade has been the integration of parliamentarians from partner countries into the full range of assembly activities in order to allow them to benefit from the experience of others. This was largely achieved through the Rose-Roth program<sup>16</sup> which established a special series of seminars, still going to this day, and training courses for parliamentary staff.

The Rose-Roth program has allowed us a first hand view of the experiences and problems of our partner countries.

Needless to say, most of the obstacles described earlier in establishing the norms of democratic control have been exacerbated in transition countries. While all faced similar problems due to their communist past, each has its own specific characteristics. Some had to deal with bloated military establishments and a top-heavy and frequently recalcitrant officer corps<sup>17</sup>.

Others had to build their armed forces from scratch. However, no-one starts with a blank piece of paper. They all had to cope with the most burdensome communist legacy of all — mentality and attitude — and the difficulties of inculcating a sense of initiative and responsibility.

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reports and resolutions. For a discussion of the role of the NATO PA, see the author's paper presented to the Fourth DCAF Workshop on Strengthening Parliamentary Oversight, July 12—14: "The Role of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly", a paper presented for the seminar on the parliamentary dimension of European Security and Defence Policy, The Hague, 14 May, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> The Rose--Roth initiative was named after the two members of Congress who initiated the program and scoured the necessary funding through US AID. The Rose- Roth initiative was based on two factors: recognition of the complexity and magnitude of the problems facing the new democracies in developing effective democratic institutions and a determination that the NATO PA could help.

The Rose—Roth outreach program has three component parts: the integration of East European parliaments into all aspects of the Assembly's work, the organisation of special seminars and of staff training for parliamentary staff. Held in partner countries, the seminars (60 to date) provide Alliance parliamentarians with first hand experience of regional problems. They and the staff training program also focus on providing advice and expertise on the development of democratic control. Overall the program has been successful not only in providing practical experience, but also in demonstrating political commitment and solidarity.

<sup>17</sup> The national standing of the armed forces varied greatly from country to country depending on historical experience. In Poland and Romania the military was held in high standing, in Hungary and the Czech Republic not so. However, irrespective of their national standing as a corporate group they were a repository of old thinking and represented an obstacle to successful democratisation.

For the parliamentary side, there was also the problem of inadequate structures, a dearth of resources, and insufficient expertise to develop the competences necessary to challenge the executive. Much had to be done, and indeed has been done. In many partner countries, the progress has been truly impressive. Mechanisms and practices have been put in place which rival those in some traditional member parliaments.

In conclusion, it is important to stress that putting in place the mechanisms and procedures for effective democratic control and making them work takes time. Building the necessary trust, confidence and respect needed for true cooperation involves a substantial change in attitudes and habits. Furthermore, the democratic control of armed forces is not a fixed point. It is a process that is constantly evolving in all of our countries, largely as a response to changes in the security environment.

This article has emphasised the centrality of relations between the executive and the parliament, and between the military and political sides in providing effective democratic control. In Alliance countries the tensions inherent in these relationships have been absorbed through custom and practice and have become an essential element of the dynamic of democratic government. Likewise, the same process will have to work its way through in the countries that have made and are making the transition to democracy.

Each country has to manage this process in its own way. The final goal is the same – finding an appropriate place for defence and the military in our respective societies. In achieving this goal, ideas and experiences can be shared and lessons learned. But the precise route chosen will be determined by the forces and influences at home.