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MILITARY AND SOCIETY: NEW MODELS FOR NEW CHALLENGES

WG: Civilian Control of the Armed Forces – Session 4: Civil-Military Relations in Established Democracies: Recruitment Systems and Civil Society (Thursday, 29 June 2017)

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Expectations of National Defence for Society in Finland

Is There Any Sense to Study Military-Civil Relations in a Highly Democratic and Peaceful Country?

The security environment and threat scenarios have changed a lot during the last few years and the role of the civil infrastructure, authorities and citizens has significantly increased. The nature of warfare has become closer to citizens and affects society more than ever. Interdependencies, cross-effects and long subcontracting chains in the supply of critical supplies, as well as the functionality of the critical infrastructure cause Finnish society to be quite vulnerable.

Military defense is seriously contingent upon civil infrastructure and well established cooperation and commitments with collaborators.

“There is a kind of permanent tension between an authoritarian military organisation and a democratic society – especially in peace-time. As to society, the question is thus about enduring something unpleasant but necessary, and of minimising the possible disadvantages caused by it. Even in the Finnish Defence Forces’ role and in integration into society, the question is precisely about this.” (Valtanen, J., 2017, p.1)

- ➔ **It is absolutely important to make clear those evident, basic determinants and reasons that affect the relations of military and society actors on a practical level in peaceful countries and situations, too.**

Background, Preconceptions and Some Presumptions

Defence forces prepare to defend the country and its citizens in case of a possible war. The military organisation has been, and still is, an authoritarian system built according to the requirements of possible war and combat.

The typical characteristics of a military organization are e.g. authoritarianism, military discipline based on special regulations and a great number of norms, using sanctions and punishments, using numerous abbreviations, symbols and modes of behavior with a unifying function.

“It should also be noted that the structures and features of military organisations are similar throughout the world. The differences in the social systems have barely affected them “. (Valtanen, J. 2017, p. 3).

“At the same time when a strict hierarchy prevails in the military organisation the class distinctions are blurred in society. Military organisation requires obedience and aims at uniformity whereas in society, the

permissibility and the approval of difference is increased as well as possibility to select and influence.”
(Valtanen, J. 2017, p. 3)

The Question is:

Do the military and civil officials share a common understanding of the threats and what meanings appear in their interaction?

In many different situations during preparedness planning processes and preparedness exercises, in task forces etc., I have noticed that some authorities and some business actors understand military actors quite easily and get a shared awareness with them faster than others.

These observations are important and lead us think about the origins of manners. Do the observed manners indicate individual or organizational practices, and are they organisational features or just coincidental traits.

I presume there are partly unconscious tensions between military and social actors. The tension or hesitation is presumably due to a lack of knowledge of the operation procedures of each other.

I presume also that there are conscious tensions between military and social collaborators. This argue has not yet any answers, but we can be sure that the answers will be complex and ambiguity.

-> The observed attitudes and manners contribute to insufficient interaction between military and society actors and increase contingency of planning, and directly affect the ability to defend.

Finland's Defence is Based on General Conscription and Compulsory Military Service for Men. All Citizens Have the General Liability to Participate in the Defence of Country

The current defence system enjoys widespread support in Finland. According to surveys the citizens' willingness to defend Finland has been high during the past decades measured by surveys. Most Finns (71 %) share the opinion that Finns should defend themselves by military means even in the face of an unpredictable outcome. Nevertheless there is a gap on qualitative research on the meanings and attitudes of the national defence and defence will. (By Kosonen, J. 2017)

In Finland the President of the Republic is the Supreme Commander. The Chief of Defence as the holder of military authority is the immediate subordinate of the President. The Chief of Defence is directly responsible to the President for the Defence Forces' military readiness, equipment, training, mobilisation and other matters related to defence. (Valtanen, J. 2017, p. 4)

The Minister of Defence is, of course, politically important. The Minister is in charge of appropriations, legislation, construction, social affairs, etc. concerning the Defence Forces. The “dualism” of our system also originates in the serious events of our independence. It has functioned well until now, and for its part, it has strengthened the non-political character of our Defence Forces, and thereby also the approval of our system among all circles of the population. (Valtanen, J. 2017, p.4-5)

Regular military personnel cannot be members of political parties. Parliament has repeatedly retained this legal provision because of the positive effect that it has on the integration of the Defence Forces into society. (Valtanen, J. 2017, p. 4)

Tasks of the Finland's Defence Forces (FDF) are:

- Finland's military defence means monitoring Finland's land and sea areas and its airspace, ensuring its territorial integrity, securing the livelihood and basic rights of the population and the freedom of action of the government, defending the rule of law, providing military education, guiding voluntary national defence and promoting the will to defend the country.
- Supporting other authorities means providing assistance to other authorities to maintain order and security, prevent and stop terrorist crimes and to secure society, and taking part in rescue activities by providing equipment, personnel and expertise, and taking part in providing assistance to another state in the event of a terrorist attack, natural catastrophe, disaster or other similar event.
- International military crisis management.

Finland has been seen as a Nordic welfare state. Democracy, gender equality as well as social and health services have had high standards in Finland. Finland, as any other modern society, has a complex critical infrastructure, and social welfare is largely dependent on long subcontracting chains. As far as preparedness is concerned, all public authorities and actors are liable to prepare for abnormal conditions in normal circumstances and states of emergency (exceptional situations, such as war, threat of war etc.) based on the Act of Preparedness (1552/2011, not translated). The private sector as well as NGOs prepare themselves voluntarily.

The Purpose of the Study and Some Tentative Observations

The purpose is to find out different types of meanings that are used in the context of preparedness in the interaction between military and social officials. The focus of this study are practical interactions.

This study is qualitative and will be carried out using ethnographic methods. In order to acquire initial and genuine information from both parties I will collect the main data from reciprocal collaboration situations.

During this spring seven military leaders in different positions, one NGOs representative and one official from National Emergency Supply Agency has been interviewed. Observations have been made on three different preparedness exercises organized by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Western and Inland Finland. Because of unbalanced information, the results are very preliminary.

We should identify differences between the culture of military organizations and the very versatile social organisations including authorities, businesses, NGOs, the church, citizens – which all have the aims of their own → both sides need to understand each other better

Finnish national emergency supply and preparedness for exceptional situations is mainly based on agreements, a well-established network of key persons and regular preparedness exercising → too many cooperation pacts are made as a mandatory basis, they are too indefinite. Too many times too few officers are responsible for cooperation and regular contacts. There can be discontinuities.

→ Updating regimes and increasing shared awareness is necessary for achieving successful and reliable cooperation between the military sector and society sector in unexpected situations for effective defence.

Theories and Practices – Differences and Similarities

Mostly the literature focuses on the relationship on a political level, with the concept of power. In addition, the literature and numerous scientific articles focus on civil-military or military-civil relationship in developing democracies. Nevertheless, the needs of the national defence could be effectively supported by research on civil-military relationships in peace conditions and peaceful countries.

As Valtanen has said, there is a kind of permanent tension between an the authoritarian military organisation and democratic society in Finland – especially in peace-time. And my task is to find out whether there is a so-called civil-military gap. When speaking about the civil-military gap we can mean very different things based on our background, education and experiences. That is why Rahbek-Clemmerens et al. (2012) conceptualized the gap in terms of four distinct ideal types called cultural, demographic, policy preference and institutional types. These descriptions can help scholars identify and untangle the causes and effects of the gap.

As Kosonen says, there is a gap between qualitative research on the meanings and attitudes of the national defence and defence will. But is there uncertain or high confidence between civil and military actors in Finland? And what makes us think and act as we do? I have to be sure about things that I want to examine and I have to know much about comparable results achieved in other countries and military cultures. Gronke & Feaver have studied civilian and military attitudes toward civil-military relations. Although these results describe attitudes in a very different military culture than the one in Finland, I can adopt methods, some ideas and achieve comparative results to some extent.

Valtanen argues that conscription ties the Defence Forces to society. In this sense, conscription can be seen as democracy's way of guaranteeing that the armed forces are not used against the will of the people and democratically elected state bodies. (Valtanen, J. 2017, p. 6). This can be one of my conclusions, too, but not necessarily.

He continues that the social pressure on the Defence Forces reflects the changes in people's values, of which the development of individualism and individualistic thinking is perhaps the most influential. And this is one of the most important trends that I have to take into account in my study.

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