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"Military and Security Structures in/and the Regions" & "Women in/and the Military"

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**David J. Betz, Civil-Military Relations
in Russia and Eastern Europe,
RoutledgeCurzon Contemporary Russia
and Eastern Europe Series 2, London
and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004.
ix + 203 pages.**

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David J. Betz, Civil-Military Relations in Russia and Eastern Europe, RoutledgeCurzon Contemporary Russia and Eastern Europe Series 2, London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004. ix + 203 pages.

- 1 This meticulously-researched and well-written book provides a wealth of detailed information and analysis about the development of civil-military relations during the 1990s in four post-Communist countries: Poland, Hungary, Russia and Ukraine. David Betz is interested primarily at the civilian side of the civil-military relationship, and throughout the book he poses questions (and suggests answers) about the nature and extent of civilian control of the armed forces and the reasons why civil-military relations in each of the four countries under scrutiny depart from democratic norms to a greater or lesser extent. In his research for the book, Betz has made extensive use of interviews with elite politicians, military officers, defence analysts and journalists in the countries concerned in order to “penetrate beneath the rhetoric to explore the reality of civil-military relations in Eastern Europe at a time of great change” (p. viii).
- 2 The book is divided into four chapters. The first (“Approaches to civil-military relations”) sets out the major theoretical positions on civil-military relations and discusses their implications for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe during this period of transition. The author argues that the concept of civilian control of the armed forces essentially involves three inter-related themes, namely: civilian responsibility for directing military policy; an active role for civilians in defence policy-making and monitoring; and civilian oversight of the military through agencies such as parliamentary committees and national security councils. Each of the remaining three chapters is then used to explore one of these themes in considerable detail.
- 3 Chapter two (“Security policy-making and defence reform”) outlines the tasks of security policy-making and defence reform in the new environment facing these four countries after the end of the Cold War and indicates how well each managed this task in the face of reduced defence budgets. Very useful historical background is provided about the major components and functioning of a Soviet-type defence establishment as well as about the military forces of each country which sets the stage for the analysis of developments in the 1990s. The chapter goes into detail about the problems encountered and mistakes made in reform attempts.
- 4 Chapter three (“Civilian integration in the ministry of defence”) begins with an overview of a Soviet-type ministry of defence, with essentially no civilian involvement, and discusses the bumpy (and as yet incomplete) processes of integrating civilians undertaken in each of the four countries. Betz draws attention to the complexities inherent in civilianising a defence ministry, which amounts to far more than simply appointing a civilian defence minister. Instead, civilians need to be capable of exercising real influence on defence ministries, which in turn requires civilian expertise in military and security issues – expertise which was almost wholly absent in these countries during the period of Soviet control and has been very slow to develop subsequently. At the same time, the mistake was often made on both sides of the civil-military relationship of assuming that civilian control of the military equates to civilian command of a country’s armed forces.

- 5 Chapter four (“Agencies of civilian oversight”) focuses on those agencies of civilian oversight which exist outside the ministry of defence, such as parliamentary defence committees, military personnel commissions, security councils and military inspectorates. This chapter is particularly good at demonstrating the link between the functioning of institutions relevant to civil-military relations and the wider context of political developments in these countries, such as the relative constitutional and political strengths of the presidency and the parliament. For example, parliamentary scrutiny of the armed forces in Russia is seriously undermined by the fact that “neither the ministry of defence, nor any other ‘power ministries’ are required to report to parliament on their activities; the minister of defence is subordinate to the president and reports to him, not the legislature” (p. 137, emphasis in original). Another strength of this chapter lies in the use of material obtained through the author’s interviews with key insiders to illuminate the important gaps between the theory and practice of civil military relations. To take one example: “Neither the Ukrainian nor the Russian parliament exercised substantive and detailed oversight of security policy and defence spending in the period under review. While there is a constitutional provision for parliamentary oversight of the budget in both countries, in reality this mechanism does not work” (p. 138).
- 6 The book ends with a concluding chapter which discusses the impact of the prospect of NATO membership (or not) on the development of civil-military relations and institutions and also points towards some new directions in the theory of civil-military relations.
- 7 This book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of civil-military relations in post-Communist countries and also has insights to offer for the broader study of the relationship between militaries and societies. It is a work which will be useful for students and scholars alike who are seeking to get to grips with the details of developments in these four countries during a crucial stage in their transition towards fully-democratic rule.

References

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