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## State's soldier or soldier's state: A glance at civil-military relations theory<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

A country can be regarded as a democratic one within its encompassing approach to human rights, political participation, equality among its citizens, rule of law and freedoms such as speech, thinking and practices of all them. To this list, robust and consistent civil-military relations can be added. Military in a country has a noble and altruistic task to defend its country against internal and external threats. To accomplish this task, the civil-military relations should be treated and maintained carefully by related actors in favour of the nation. As Gregory Foster claims, when this relationship deteriorates, common benefit of political cadres and military staff which is protection and security also fails. A country's cultural and historical background can give reasons to the armed forces to intervene into politics. The military officers may act as if they are politicians and real guardians of the nation. Sometimes, the comrade spirit among themselves can trigger the processes of the coups d'état or bitter military interventions. However, whatever the reason is these military involvement in politics cannot be tolerated and permitted. So, democratic mechanisms must be well-designed, smoothly working and protected by the state actors to sustain the rule of the civilians in a country. The literature of civil-military relations serves us to deepen our notion to understand how military should act and limit its involvement in its intervention into politics in a country. Besides, this literature enables us to understand how civilians implement their supremacy over the military. This article aims to define to the civil-military relations theory and clarify its nature and also illustrate the dangers of the military's tutelary power in a democratic country.

**Keywords:** Civil-military relations, democracy, coup d'état, military interventions, tutelary powers.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important qualities of a democratic country is the existence of balanced and strong civil-military relations. There is no doubt that to study civil-military relations as a branch of political science teach us how state and the armed forces are interacting with each other, what kind of role the armed forces should have in a country, under which conditions it implements tutelary powers on state's bureaucratic cadres and how a political actors can build up and maintain themselves and armed forces' staff. In the contemporary world and its geopolitical circumstances, especially newer democracies such as Poland, Hungary and developing countries such as Pakistan, Egypt struggle to strengthen the roots of civil-relations and transform it into a smooth path. To remind, robust civil-military relations is demanded by many defense cooperation and international security organizations from their member and candidate states. For example, the principal international organizations such as the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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do not desire the armed forces to intervene political life and bureaucrats daily tasks in their affiliated countries. On the other hand, to exemplify, Shanghai Cooperation Organization do not have the democratization of the relations between civilians and the armed forces in its member states in its agenda. Naturally, in a complex structured globalized world, evaluation of civil-military relations require a vigorous research by taking many scientific fields such as political science, international relations, sociology and economy into consideration. In this study, it is aimed to elucidate civil-military relations theory by addressing the related literature and unfold the shady and troubled side of the link between political actors and the armed forces in a country. Mainly, the term “democracy” will be discussed to construct a basis to understand civil-military relations theories. This discussion will be followed by the civil-military theories in the literature. Without doubt, to understand the civil-military-relations, it is important portrait the civil-military theory and its involvement with democracy should be dealt with in the first place.

## 2. DEMOCRACY

Democracy is one of the most charming words in the history of mankind. Since its first usage dating back to the 5th century BC, it has been used for different purposes by different communities and people. It is abused in the political sense sometimes so-called premise for the good of the governed as we can frequently see in cases of coups d'état and sometimes as a rationale to invade countries as in the case of the Iraqi invasion case in 2003. It seems that the meaning of democracy has a tendency to change from one circumstance to another. So, it is our first mission to clarify the definition of democracy and to understand it better.

In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2007: 330), democracy is explained as the reliance in independence and equality between people, or a system of government grounded on this reliance. Democracy is fulfilled by elected representatives with different governmental systems in many countries. There are also cases in which democracy is taken place by the direct involvement of people. For Italian political scientist Giovanni Sartori (Sartori, 1987: 259), it is possible to give a seemingly contradictory meaning to it as he defines it as democracy means eastward what autocracy means to the West, and vice versa. In its most popular and conventional definition, democracy is simply the rule of the people by the people. Etymologically, Democracy is a word that is a combination of two different Greek words, *Demos* (People) and *Krathos* (Rule). Therefore, it means in direct etymological terms rule of the people. This word and concept date back to Greece in the 5th century BC. Athenian democracy is accepted as the first form of democracy and Athenians were the first community that was willing to let themselves be ruled by their own people. American political scientist Robert Dahl sees the Greek democratic ideas to be more influential than their institutions ironically (Dahl, 1989: 14). Athenian Democracy was an example of direct democracy which means that all the adult male citizens were participating in all the functions of the democracy in the assembly.

If we owe the idea of democracy to the Athenians, we owe the constitutional models of it to the Romans. The Romans successfully transferred the pillars of the Athenian democracy into theirs: consuls (representatives), a senate and tribunes of the plebs (people). In the Middle Ages, the control wielded by the Churches and the feudal landlords prevented democracy from gaining a foothold in Europe. In England, thanks to the Norman conquest in 1066, the unification of the landlords created the centralized state and its King. Centralized authority was strengthened with economic and technological development. The Magna Carta Libertatum (Great Charter of Freedoms, 1215) made it incumbent upon King John of England to proclaim certain rights to the people of England and to be committed to the rule of law. By this document, the king was sharing his sovereignty with his people and he was guaranteeing their life and the security of their goods. As capitalism spread around the continent, the demand for freedom and participation in the governments began to increase among the Europeans. The laws that were regulating the affairs between aristocrats, the bourgeoisie class and the commoners started to enter social life in the 15th century. Democracy had an aristocratic identity but it also started to allow the bourgeoisie class to participate in it. It is important to mention that the Puritans, English-speaking Protestants of the 16th and 17th centuries, played important roles

in promoting the ideas of liberty and conscience that are the essential ingredients of democracy. Sartori remarks that the legacy of the Puritan circumstance lies in its success of the abolishment of the link between God and the sovereign (king, Caesar etc.). This fact let the state to be more independent from its religious roots (Sartori, 1987: 289). The Enlightenment Age's prominent figures Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant and J. J. Rousseau asserted their views on the term democracy in the 18th century. The French Revolution (1789) as a movement against the monarchy system was a trigger for the people who were deprived of liberty and without a public voice but it also caused the birth of a concept called Jacobin Democracy a violent and turbulent form of democracy. The French Revolution changed the dynamics of political and social life and spread the concepts of liberty, equality and human rights. Moreover, the emergence of the British parliamentary system is worth mentioning because of its good representative combination of including monarchy, lords and commons. French thinkers Alexis de Tocqueville and Benjamin Constant are the ideologues of the current modern and liberal democracy of today. Tocqueville wrote his masterpiece *Democracy in America* (1835) and proclaimed that an ideal democracy should establish mechanisms to prevent the dangers against the liberty, equality and fair representation of the masses. According to the English political scientist Alan Ball, the modern and liberal democracy mostly favored by today's people has aspects of the following: (Ball, 1973, 46-47)

- It should have multi-party system and fair competition among the parties to come to power,
- It should have open and pre-accepted procedures of competition,
- It should have open entries to the political power positions,
- It should have periodical elections with extended right of voting,
- It should have a system in which the syndicates and charities are not under the government control and they have opportunity to influence the government's decisions,
- It should have a system in which the government secures people's lives, the freedom of thought, expression and religion and there is no arbitrary detention,
- It should have free justice,
- It should have a system in which mass communication devices are not in the hands of the government and there is an atmosphere of criticism.

Today, liberal democracy has many different forms of its antithesis such as autocracy (unlimited power of one man's government), theocracy (government that takes God as a reference to govern), totalitarianism (a single organization or party rules by limiting the fundamental freedom and rights of people), fascism (authoritarian regime with radical nationalism) and communism (liberty-free, classless ruling system). The 20th century was a laboratory for the test of democracy and despite the people's ardent desire for it in many countries, the establishment of the ideals inherent in liberal and modern democracy has proven to be a challenging task.

The military is one of the most important apparatuses of a state in its effort to defend itself against internal and external threats. According to Gregory Foster, the military is the chief realization of the violence centered in the state and ruled by the state (Foster, 2002: 41). A state that calls itself democratic should also take care to institutionalize the relation between the civilians and the military. Naturally, in a democratic government composed of civilians, civilian supremacy over the military is essential. When this relationship deteriorates and fails, the shared interest, safeguarding and safety of the people also fail (Foster, 2002: 41). Military interventions start and democracy loses its continuity and stability.

### 3. CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS AND ITS THEORIES

A state has many responsibilities to its people. It has to establish and maintain the welfare system to secure the needs of the people economically and socially. In Western liberal democracies, the representation of every citizen of the state is ultimately regarded as a policy. One of the most important duties of any civilian authority is to protect its citizens against the internal and external threats. The military forces are responsible for combating these threats, especially the external ones

when necessary. In democracies, the military accepts the supremacy of the civilian rule unconditionally. Otherwise, there would be a dichotomy of authority or even an absence of this authority which is a significant danger for the state and its people.

In order to discuss how civil-military relations can be established reasonably, it is better to define the military itself and its meaning for a country. To understand this it is important to lay down the responsibilities, capacities and duties of civilian power and its position compared to military power. The democratic front which is civilian includes legislative, executive and judiciary powers. As the civilian authority is elected democratically by the citizens, their responsibilities are for these civilians and not for other interest groups. Civilian authority is the primary ruling power in a democratic country. On the other hand, the military is a combination of services that has a duty to defend the country with a navy, army, and air force. The military has to subordinate itself to civilian power as a rule of democratic politics in a country. Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz explains this subordination as follows:

Subordination of the political view to military would be contrary to common sense, for policy has declared the War; it is the intelligent faculty. War only the instrument, and not the reverse. The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible.

(Clausewitz, 1982: 405)

In his book *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (2003), Peter D. Feaver discusses the importance of studying civil-military relations. He asserts that an army organization has a coercive power in order to preserve the freedoms and interests of a political group in the establishment stage. However, it can turn into a potential threat to this political groups. So, the civil-military problematique occurs and becomes a paradox: the very institution created to protect the polity is given sufficient power to become a threat to the polity (Feaver, 2003: 4).

The military has the legal power to use the weapons it possesses and this power is granted by the civilian authority itself. The problem starts when the military which has the legal possession of the instruments of violence use these weapons against the civilians who created them (Feaver, 1996: 150). According to American political scientist S.E. Finer, the Armed Forces in a country holds three main superior factors: a noticeable primacy in organization, an intensified symbolic position in the society, and a grand capacity of using arms. The existence of a strong civilian authority is remarkable in that sense (Finer, 1962: 14).

There can be several factors that determine the relations between civilians and military forces in a country. It would be true to claim that the civil-military relations theories literature try to analyze these factors. For instance, Robert Putnam puts forward four factors to define military's tendency to intervene into a country's politics: "(1) aspects of socio-economic development; (2) aspects of political development; (3) characteristics of the military establishment itself; (4) foreign influence." (Putnam, 1967: 84)

Carrying out politics would not be the duty of the military in a democratic regime. Samuel Huntington clearly sets out the qualifications and duties of a professional military officer in the state hierarchy in his masterpiece *The Soldier and The State* (1957). According to Huntington:

Professionalism distinguishes the military officer of today from the warriors of the previous ages... The distinguishing characteristics of a profession as a special type of vocation are its expertise, responsibility and corporateness... In practice, officership is strongest and most effective when it mostly closely approaches the professional ideal: it is weakest and most defective when it falls short of that ideal.

(Huntington, 1957: 11)

Huntington thinks that the function of a military force is to be successful in armed combat and that the commitments of the army officer comprise:

- the organizing, equipping, and of this force;

- the organization of its activities; and
  - the management of its facilities in and out of the action
- (Huntington, 1957: 11)

In the military, an officer or soldier must be obedient to his superior without questioning the orders. The management of violence requires a chain of command in the military. This requires that the military show due caution in performing its role. In the following excerpt, Huntington makes an analogy between society and military to illustrate the military's responsibility to it:

It must be remembered that the peculiar skill of the officer is the management of violence not the act of violence itself. ...The skill of the physician is diagnosis and treatment; his responsibility is the health of his clients. The skill of the officer is the management of violence; his responsibility is the military security of his client, society...Consequently, he cannot impose decisions upon his client which have implications beyond his field of special competence. He can only explain to his client his needs in this area, advise him as to how to meet these needs, and then, when the client has made his decisions, aid him in implementing them.

(Huntington, 1957: 13-17)

Before the 19th century, the military forces were not professional and they were led by the same person who was at once military and political expert. The professional military forces started to emerge during the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815). It was understood that simply gathering the citizens together and making them soldiers was not feasible anymore. Defending the nations was a demanding goal and only a professional army, which had hierarchy, regulations and a permanent nature could be successful in seeing this goal through. The same century is regarded as being the era of the unfolding of the democratic demands and movements in Europe. Civil-military relations were, naturally, taken into more consideration with these developments. These relations have been vulnerable and the interventions and coups that have been carried out over time, have been the results of conflicts and disagreements between two sides.

Sharing of the power is an important aspect in civil-military relations. It is possible that a government can be stronger and turn into a tyrant when the military is systematically weaker. Feaver mentions that a government should be powerful in order to safeguard its citizens. But, its power should not turn it to tyranny (Feaver, 1997).

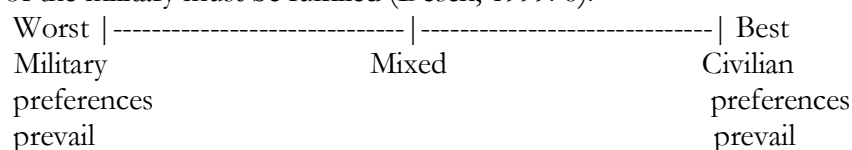
In his book, Huntington brings two terms to our attention: subjective civilian control and objective civil control. In subjective civilian control, the military does not have a professional standing and a have say in the politics of the country which means it is the mirror of the state controlled by the civilians. In objective civilian control, we witness a healthy sharing of political power between the civil cadres and military members. There is a professionalization of the military. The military becomes the tool of the state in the objective civilian control (Huntington, 1957: 80-81)

Subordination of the military becomes fundamentally important in maintaining the balance between the military and civilians. Although there might be tension between these two spheres, the role of the experts taking role in the civilian and military side can help to minimize and erase this tension.

Morris Janowitz distinguishes four types of military-political elites (Janowitz, 1964: 2). The first one is the *aristocratic model*. In this model, civilians and military elites are merged functionally and socially (Janowitz, 1964: 3). There is mutual benefit between military and aristocratic sides in this model. The second is the *democratic* one. Janowitz contends that under the democratic model the civilian and military elites are not integrated. In opposite, they are distinctly differentiated. The professional military is subordinated to the civilian elites and have responsibility to serve the state under the formal rules approved by the civilians. According to Janowitz, when there is the absence of a democratic model, the *totalitarian model* replaces it. This model is based on subjective control as was seen in Italy, Germany, and Russia. The professional military's organizational nature is demolished and secret police becomes the enforcement tool for the authoritarian regime (Janowitz, 1964: 3). And lastly, Janowitz describes the last model called, *the garrison-state model* using Harold D.

Lasswell's conception of it. Janowitz states that in garrison state, military elites play a highly part in the day-to day political decisions in a country (Janowitz, 1964: 3).

In theoretical studies of civil-military relations, Michael Desch's analyses are remarkable in understanding the balance of power between these two spheres. He notes (Desch, 1999: 5) civilian control is frail when military leanings predominate in many times; the most striking example is coup d'état or military intervention that expels a democratic civil regime and install another. He adds that military institutions cannot be democratic by their nature and their emphasis on hierarchy. Military can always be a threat to the democratic regime if they are not subordinated to the civil authority. *Figure 1* shows that civilian control generally becomes weak when military preferences prevail. Civilian control should be firm vis-à-vis military control. Naturally, to establish firm civilian control, the subordination of the military must be fulfilled (Desch, 1999: 6).



**Figure 1:** Measures of Civilian Control (Desch, 1999: 6)

Desch also argues nature of civil-military relations also related to whether the threat that the nation is facing is internal or external. After the end of the Cold War, it has proven how it is difficult to maintain civilian control when there is a domestic (internal) threat. He explains when there is an international (external) threat, civilians control the military relatively easier. On the other hand, when there is a domestic (internal) threat, it is very hard for the civilians to control the military (Desch 1999: 6). Both threats affect the military and political actors, as well as the society itself. International (external) threats can cause war or international tension and it increases the solidarity and unity in the state. The nature of the domestic (internal) threat is different. If there is a threat that is directed to the state and society excluding the military, the necessary precautions are taken to combat it with the civil and military power. When there is a threat from society on the military and civilian structure of the state, this can lead to a civilian dictatorship supported by the military. On the condition that the threat is from the state on the society and military, there is a possibility that a military intervention or coup resulting in a military rule can occur. Desch emphasizes that it is important to measure the degree to which the domestic threat affects the military. The military would be averse to having its organizational autonomy, budget share, cohesion and survival as an institution affected (Desch, 1999: 13). Desch also argues that there is some evidence that increasing factionalization within the military leads to more coup attempts (Desch, 1999: 15).

Eric Nordlinger believes that in some cases the military feels that it has a right to implement a veto power over governmental decisions and political disagreements and this leads to the preservation of the status quo in a country (Nordlinger, 1977: 25). Lucien Pye suggests that the military officers are sensitive to the socio-economic changes of their country in relationship with the modernization of their organization and weaponry. Above all else, the military elite of the newly built or emerged countries are dramatically willing to extend the capacity of their countries' technological capacity in the era of revolutionized military equipments (Pye, 1962: 78). Manfred Halpern supports this thought, saying the modernization of the armies brings the discussion of the predominant political system in their countries (Halpern, 1963: 258). Edward A. Shils (Shils, 1962: 17) emphasized the socio-economic background of the military officers in non-western societies to identify their role in civil-military relations: In non-western countries, military officers are mainly from the lower middle-class families which are deeply aware of their economical, sociological and cultural differences between the rich and influential class of the society that they live in.

This factor plays a decisive role particularly in non-western societies. It gives us a valuable clue to understand the socio-economic motivation behind the embodiment of civil-military relations. Nordlinger thinks that these officers do not like conservative political figures and people from the business life. Moreover, he asserts that they establish a connection with the newly emerging middle class which are the salaried class that stands in opposition to the rich class. This class is composed of

scientists, lawyers, teachers, engineers, military officers and white-collar workers. Halpern thinks that the army becomes the tool of the new middle class to raise their voice and interests in the society (Halpern, 1963: 258).

In the Turkish case, the criticisms governing the practice of interventions are somewhat untenable, except for the 1960 intervention. According to Bülent Daver, the Democrat Party's ultraconservative social and economic policies discomfited the Turkish Armed Forces (Daver, 1967: 60). In Ülman and Tachau's article on the 1960 intervention (Ülman and Tachau: 1965), it is pointed out that the military, the civil-service and the intelligentsia were socio-economically related to each other and these groups were adversely affected by the economic policies of the Democrat Party after 1950. Although the first years of the Democrat Party rule are regarded as the golden years economically, in 1954 the economy began to stagnate, with the growth rate dropping to 9.5 per cent from the 13 per cent it held to between 1950-53 (Ahmad, 1993: 116). The effect of the downfall was one of the leading causes of the approaching intervention.

In the governing of democratic and welfare states, there is no doubt that the civilian authority is superior to the military. The military is not a suitable instrument to establish and maintain the democracy in a state. Finer (1962: 14) mentions that there are two weaknesses of the military regarding the administration of a state: First weakness is on the military's inadequateness to administer the state and society. The next weakness is about its legitimacy deficiency which means to be lack of moral title to administer. A military officer is not brought up to be politician or civil authority. His profession is to perform his military abilities to defend his nation when needed. His ruling is also inadequate and unlawful. Being forceful does not create the legitimacy to rule a state. Finer uses French writer Victor Hugo's statements on French Emperor Napoleon III's (the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte) illegitimate ruling in France and oppressive regime: (Finer, 1962: 19)

Mr. Bonaparte's crime is not a crime, it is called a necessity; Mr. Bonaparte's ambushade is not an ambushade it is called defense of order; Mr. Bonaparte's robberies are not robberies, they are called measures of state; Mr. Bonaparte's murders are not murders, they are public safety; Mr. Bonaparte's accomplices are not called malefactors, they are called magistrates, senator, and councilor of state; Mr. Bonaparte's adversaries are not the soldiers of the law and right, they are Jack Cades, demagogues, communists...

Although the military interventions lasted for a relatively for a short time, the military took some *exit guarantees* in order to enhance its role in the succeeding democratic regime as witnessed in the Turkish case (Özbudun, 2000: 105). These exit guarantees were largely put in force prior to the first free elections. *Tutelary Powers* and *Reserved Domains* are two important groups of the exit guarantees. Creating tutelary powers is an exit guarantee for the military to control the freely elected government. J. Samuel Valenzuela points out such powers have exercising broad control of the government and its ruling (Valenzuela, 1992, p.62). Valenzuela adds, a state cannot be called democratic if the elected civilians are subordinate to nonelected elites (Valenzuela, 1992: 62). This tutelary supervision can be exercised in the name of secular sensivity, the integrity of the state, law and order (Özbudun, 2000:106).

To clarify, the creation and mission of the National Security Council in the Turkish experience is a typical illustration of the existence of the tutelary powers in a state. The gradual increase of the power of the military officers over the civilians in the National Security Council after the 1971 and 1980 military interventions revealed that the military was not willing to relinquish the decision-making mechanism of the state on the issues concerning the indivisibility and secular character of it. Furthermore, the Article 35 of the Military Service Code enables the military to undertake the task of defending and securing the Turkish motherland and the Republic of Turkey as defined by the Constitution (Özbudun, 2000: 110).

In addition to the tutelary powers, "reserved domains" is an important concept to mention in regard to the military autonomy in the state. Valenzuela stated the reserved domains detach specific fields of administrative authority and real policy making from the democratic elected political elites. (Valenzuela, 1992, p.64). Initially, reserved domains referred to the existence of high capacity in

decision making of the military in some policy areas, for example defense policy. By this autonomy, the military may set its own guideline to form the defense policy by ignoring the civilian authority. For example, in the Turkish case, we do not directly see reserved domains of the military in the 1961 Turkish Constitution. But, the 1971 and 1973 constitutional amendments which were made with the influence of the military, substantially increased military autonomy in the state decision making mechanism (Özbudun, 1992: 111). After the amendment on Article 127, the military was exempted from being supervised by the Court of Accounts. The amendment on Article 140 created the Supreme Military Administrative Court in which the military officers and personnel were to be tried rather than the civilian courts (Özbudun, 1992: 111). Moreover, the State Security Courts composed of civilian and military judges were established for the crimes against the national security in the 1982 Constitution. The 1982 Constitution strengthened the military autonomy by exempting the military from oversight by the newly created State Supervisory Council (Article 108), the Supreme Military Council (a body of generals and admirals gathered to decide on the retirement and promotion of top military personnel) from the judicial appeal (Article 125) and the decisions of martial law commanders to be taken to the court (Özbudun, 1992: 112).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The civil-military relations literature relished its theoretical supremacy in the 1950s and 1960s. Prominent scholars of the field such as Samuel Huntington, Samuel Edward Finer, Morris Janowitz observed the period's turbulent political atmosphere especially in the developing countries and penned their opinions to define the fragile structure and nature of the civil-military relations. Military interventions in the nations always had damaged the democratic life in a country and to bind up the wound would not have been that easy. In a country, the Armed forces can have different motivations to intervene into politics. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the armed forces of some countries (namely Egypt, Turkey, Pakistan and many developing countries had ambitions to implement their political stances or optimize their socio-economic conditions in the expense of the loss of democracy of their nations. For some cases, as Shils asserts, especially non-Western countries, middle class origin officers ally with the new middle class citizens (teachers, doctors, judges etc.) in order to break up the power of the land owners or high-earning business people that use the politicians and gain the political in their country by interventions, coup d'état or memorandums. On the other hand, military can see itself as the guardian of the republic that was seen in many interventions and coups d'état in the political life of Turkey. Whatever the reason is civil-military relations can have a potential of deterioration in many countries especially in where the civic and democratic culture is not flourished. This article aimed to put forward that the deep analyses of the related literature with the theories discussed in the course of the decade and pave the way to strengthen the democratic rule of the political cadre and statesmen over the military officials whose main task is to defend the country within the framework of the job description.

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