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The Adelphi Papers

ISSN: 0567-932X (Print) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/tadl19

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To cite this article: Andrew Cottey & Anthony Forster (2004) Chapter 2: Promoting Democratic Civil-Military Relations, The Adelphi Papers, 44:365, 31-50, DOI: 10.1080/05679320412331340427a

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/05679320412331340427a

Chapter 2

Promoting Democratic Civil–Military Relations

The second key purpose to which Western governments have put defence diplomacy since the 1990s is the promotion of democratic civil–military relations. This is not entirely new. The US (and to some extent other countries) played an important role in the democratic rebuilding of the German and Japanese militaries after the Second World War, as well as in a number of later cases, such as Spain in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the promotion of democracy has become much more central to Western foreign policies since the 1990s, and defence diplomacy has increasingly been used as a means of promoting democratic civil–military relations.[1] This shift reflects a number of factors. First, the so-called 'third wave' of democratisation has seen transitions from authoritarianism to democracy in Southern Europe, South America, East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Africa since the 1970s, dramatically increasing the number of democratic or democratising states in the world.[2] These states have often faced significant challenges in establishing democratic civilian control of their militaries. Second, since the 1980s democracy has been an important element of many post-conflict peace processes. Within this context, the reintegration and democratisation of armed forces has become a significant component of international peace-building strategies. Third, the end of the Cold War altered the strategic environment shaping Western governments' policies, making them less willing to support authoritarian allies and pushing support for democracy up the policy agenda. As a consequence of the spread of democracy, there was also growing support for the hypothesis that

democracies do not go to war with one another.[3] The promotion of democracy became seen not only as a means of supporting democratic values, but also of contributing to international security.[4] Against this background, in Eastern Europe, Africa and elsewhere, Western governments have sought to assist in depoliticising armed forces, civilianising defence ministries and securing more effective civilian control over defence expenditure and procurement.

The commitment by Western governments to use defence diplomacy as an instrument to promote democratic civil–military relations, however, faces a number of serious problems and dilemmas. Most importantly, Western support for democracy remains inconsistent and constrained by other competing interests – and defence diplomacy inevitably reflects this. Despite the end of the Cold War, Western governments continue to provide support, including military cooperation and assistance, to authoritarian regimes in various parts of the world. Most prominently, the need for secure access to oil supplies, stability in the Persian Gulf and the deterrence of Iraq and Iran have led the US, the UK and to some extent France to maintain close defence relations with Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states (it remains to be seen whether the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq will produce a long-term change in this pattern). Similarly, Western governments have maintained ties with oil-rich Nigeria despite its military's poor record on democracy and human rights. The US has close military ties with Egypt and Jordan because of their roles as promoters of peace with Israel and their perceived positions as bastions against Islamic fundamentalism. In South America, the 'war on drugs' has resulted in close military cooperation between the US and some of its southern neighbours, but also a relative downgrading of the priority attached to democratising civil–military relations. Since September 2001, the US and other Western countries such as Australia, Britain and France have significantly strengthened military ties with Pakistan, Central Asian states, the Philippines, Algeria and other allies in the 'war on terrorism', despite their often poor records on democracy, human rights and civil–military relations.

The double-standard implicit in Western defence diplomacy – support for the democratisation of civil–military relations in some cases, close military cooperation with authoritarian regimes in others – has a number of negative effects. First, military cooperation with

authoritarian regimes makes Western governments appear hypocritical. Second, it risks generating anti-Western feeling and creating the circumstances for regime collapse (as in Iran in 1979, and potentially in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or Central Asia). Third, the competing objectives of Western defence diplomacy sometimes undermine each other in direct ways: cooperation with the military in relation to terrorism or counter-narcotics may reinforce their influence and thereby undermine prospects for the democratisation of civil–military relations. Western officials sometimes argue that engagement with the armed forces of authoritarian regimes can help to promote long-term democratic reform, or at least curb the excessive abuse of power by the military. Decades of Western military cooperation with countries like Turkey, Pakistan and the Gulf states has, however, failed to produce significant changes in civil–military relations. Indeed, by making military cooperation a central element of relations, the West may actually have reinforced the political power of these countries' armed forces.

The use of defence diplomacy to promote democratic civil–military relations is thus highly context-dependent. In entrenched authoritarian regimes, the prospects for the democratisation of civil–military relations are likely to be very limited. By contrast, in reforming regimes or countries undergoing democratic transitions, external defence diplomacy may play an important role in promoting democratic civil–military relations. Defence diplomacy may include political and material support for reformers and democrats, pressure to prevent a slide back into authoritarianism, the provision of models and examples of best practice, and practical technical and material assistance for the development of democratic institutions and norms. It might also include constructive engagement with groups – such as the military – that may oppose or be wary of democratic reform.

Defence diplomacy can help to promote the democratisation of civil–military relations in a number of specific areas:

- **Civilian political control over the military**: key challenges in this area include depoliticising the military; altering the constitution to entrench the principle of democratic civilian control; establishing a chain of command that unambiguously reflects this principle; and reforming or establishing controlling institutions (a national security council, a ministry of defence and the like).

- **Democratic civilian control over defence policy**: key challenges in this area include reforming and civilianising the institutions for the management of defence policy (in particular the ministry of defence); developing systems for the management and control of the defence budget and procurement; and training a new cadre of civilian officials.
- **Legislative/parliamentary oversight**: key challenges in this area include defining the powers of the legislature/parliament in relation to the armed forces and defence policy; establishing parliamentary foreign affairs, security and/or defence committees; ensuring the role of parliament in approving relevant legislation, appointments, the defence budget, and the overseas and domestic use of the military; enabling the legislature/parliament or its committees to have access to information, hold hearings and to interview personnel; and the publication of parliamentary reports.
- **Rule of law, human rights and justice**: key challenges in this area include ensuring the submission of the armed forces and the executive to the rule of law; reforming the relevant legal and judicial systems; developing a culture of respect for human rights within the armed forces; and the problematic issue of justice in relation to past crimes or abuses committed by the military.
- **Civil society engagement**: key challenges in this area include transparency and freedom of information in relation to the armed forces and the defence budget; the development of independent research institutes, think-tanks and advocacy and campaigning groups; and a free and independent media with expertise in defence and security.

External defence diplomacy can provide political support for reformers, offer models of good practice, tender advice and material support in relation to technical aspects of reforms, provide training for military and civilian personnel, and promote a broader socialisation in democratic norms. This chapter examines such Western efforts to support the democratisation of civil–military relations in two contrasting regions: post-communist Europe, where it has been a central element of Western defence diplomacy; and South America, where the issue has been only one part of wider US defence engagement.

NATO, Partnership for Peace and Democracy

During the 1990s the promotion of democratic civil–military relations in post-communist Europe became a central goal of NATO, in particular through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Alliance's enlargement into Central and Eastern Europe. Although NATO had always in theory been an alliance of democracies, the promotion of democracy was not central to its role during the Cold War and the strategic goal of countering the Soviet Union led it to accept the authoritarian Salazar regime in Portugal and the military regimes in Greece and Turkey in the 1960s and 1970s.[5] With the end of the Cold War, the promotion of democratic civil–military relations became a key aim of NATO's new eastern outreach policies, and democratic civilian control of the military became a prerequisite for membership.[6] When the PfP was established in January 1994, ensuring the democratic control of defence forces was defined as one of the programme's key objectives.[7] Since then, almost all the states of post-communist Europe have joined the PfP (as of spring 2004, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro are the only major European countries outside the PfP).

NATO and its member states have provided a wide range of support to PfP partners to help them reform their civil–military relations, focusing on areas such as constitutional frameworks for democratic control of the military, operational chains of command for political control of the military, the organisation and civilianisation of defence ministries, defence planning and budgeting, the rule of law and parliamentary accountability. The main forms of cooperation include:

- Conferences and seminars on issues relating to the democratic control of the armed forces and defence policy.
- Advice on specific issues, often through visits by civilian and military officials from NATO and its member states or visits by partner states' officials to the West.
- Placement of advisers from NATO members in key positions in partner states' ministries of defence and military staffs.
- Participation of partner states' civilian and military personnel at NATO's political headquarters in Brussels and the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in Mons, giving those personnel direct experience of NATO's model of multinational civil–military cooperation. Most partners have

permanent delegations at NATO headquarters, participate in the Partnership Coordination Cell within SHAPE, which provides the framework for practical military cooperation, and second staff to NATO's own multinational political and military staffs.

- The PfP Planning and Review Process (PARP), where partners coordinate their national defence planning with NATO, giving them experience of how NATO and its members undertake their own defence planning.
- Since 1999, a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to assist countries aspiring to join NATO to prepare for membership of the Alliance, including help in establishing 'appropriate democratic and civilian control of their armed forces'.[8]
- Participation in multinational military exercises and in SFOR and KFOR peace-support operations (again giving partner states direct experience of NATO's model of civil–military cooperation).

After a decade of civil–military reform and defence diplomacy in post-communist Europe, a number of conclusions may be drawn.[9] Despite fears of praetorianism in Central and Eastern Europe, armed forces have largely not intervened in domestic politics or emerged as central obstacles or threats to democratisation. In a core group of countries now in the process of joining NATO and the EU – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – the norm of armed forces as the apolitical servant of democratically elected civilian authorities has become entrenched, the military is no longer associated with the former communist (or any other) political party and the risk of military intervention in domestic politics is minimal. A number of factors explain this development. First, although the communist system was not democratic, it did establish the principle of civilian control of the military. Second, to the extent that armed forces were politicised their loyalty to the communist system was often superficial. As Polish President Lech Walesa put it in the early 1990s, the Polish military was like a radish: red (communist) on the outside, but white (Polish and national) on the inside.[10] Third, the general desire of these countries to integrate with the West has been a powerful force supporting democratisation, including in the area of

civil–military relations. Fourth, NATO's PfP-related outreach activities have helped to reinforce and operationalise democratic civilian control of the military.

Establishing effective democratic and civilian control over defence *policy* has, however, proved more challenging. The communist system left a legacy of military domination of policy and weak or non-existent structures for civilian control. Indeed, for the core group of countries noted above, establishing effective structures for the control, management and oversight of defence policy has proved their main challenge in civil–military relations since the early 1990s. This has involved establishing high-level policymaking structures (national security councils and the like), undertaking strategic defence reviews, reforming and civilianising ministries of defence, introducing clear and appropriate divisions of labour between ministries of defence and military staffs, establishing mechanisms for the control and management of defence budgets, strengthening the capacity of legislatures (in particular parliamentary defence or security committees) to provide oversight of the executive's management of defence, and encouraging the development of non-governmental expertise capable of contributing to debates on defence policy. In these areas, cooperation with NATO through PfP was key in providing governments with external political support to push through difficult reforms and overcome military resistance, as well as affording expertise and advice on the development of new policymaking structures. By the end of the 1990s, the states aspiring to membership of NATO and the EU had all taken important steps in establishing structures for democratic civilian control of defence policy.

Civil–military relations in the former Soviet and Yugoslav states have developed along different lines to Central Europe. The dominant pattern of politics that emerged in most of these countries was one of strong – often authoritarian – presidential rule, with few if any parliamentary, judicial or legal counterweights. In this context, civilian executive control of the military (and other security services) was one of the key tools of presidential rule, but the military also retained considerable autonomy and influence. In Russia, the support of the 'power ministries' and the military vote have been central to the Yeltsin and Putin administrations. In Yugoslavia/Serbia-Montenegro and Croatia, close ties with the military were key

elements of the Milosevic and Tudjman regimes. In these states, the military also retained a much greater degree of control over defence policy than in Central Europe, and efforts to assert civilian political control over defence policy (for example by subordinating general staffs to defence ministries and civilianising defence ministries) have been much more constrained.

NATO in turn has played a more limited role in promoting civil–military reform in Russia, Ukraine and the other former Soviet republics: these countries have been more wary of engagement with NATO, their militaries have tended to resist 'imposed' Western reforms and NATO's leverage over them has been weaker than in Central Europe. The same was true in Croatia and Yugoslavia/Serbia until the collapse of the Tudjman and Milosevic regimes in 1999 and 2000. Since then, Croatia has joined the PfP and, with NATO's support, is undertaking the types of reform implemented by the Central European states in the 1990s.[11] Serbia–Montenegro is now seeking membership of the PfP, but this remains dependent on its cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). It has initiated civil–military reforms, but given the military's central role in both the Milosevic regime and in the Balkan wars of the 1990s these may be more difficult than elsewhere in post-communist Europe. Bosnia also remains a special case because of the division of the country into two 'entities' – the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb Republika Srpska – with separate militaries.

NATO's efforts to promote democratic civil–military relations – and democracy more broadly – highlight the difficult issue of democratic conditionality. In general, NATO has not made PfP membership dependent on democracy or respect for human rights. Membership was offered to all European states, including the authoritarian regimes in Belarus, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Until recently, however, PfP cooperation with these countries was constrained both by their own limited interest in relations with NATO, and by reluctance within the Alliance to engage too deeply with them. The main exceptions to this lack of conditionality have been Croatia and Serbia-Montenegro, where PfP membership has been made conditional on progress in democratisation and cooperation with the ICTY.

In contrast to PfP, NATO has made membership of the Alliance dependent on the consolidation of democracy, including democratic

control of the military. When Visegrad Group states the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were invited to join NATO in 1997, Slovakia, the fourth Visegrad member, was left out because of the authoritarian tendencies of its Prime Minister, Vladimir Meciar. Slovakia's exclusion probably contributed to Meciar's election defeat the following year. NATO has also demanded specific civil–military reforms from its candidates. In 1994, attempts by Walesa to gain the support of the military in struggles with his domestic political opponents led NATO governments to warn that this threatened Poland's prospects for membership of the Alliance; as a result, Poland clarified and consolidated the chain of command for control of the military and defence policy. Since then, and especially since the institution of the MAP in 1999 and in the run-up to the 2002 decision to invite seven countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) to join the Alliance, NATO has made explicit and detailed demands, in particular with regard to clarifying chains of command and establishing control over defence budgets. The prospect of NATO membership has been a powerful inducement to candidate countries to implement reforms, underpinning the successful use of defence diplomacy.

The US-led 'war on terrorism' and NATO's 2002 decision to extend membership are likely to significantly reshape the Alliance's role in promoting the democratisation of civil–military relations. The 'war on terrorism' has added an important new dimension to NATO and especially US defence diplomacy in post-communist Eurasia. The US has significantly intensified military cooperation with and assistance to the Central Asian states, in particular Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, in return for their support (including the provision of military base facilities) for the US intervention in Afghanistan and against terrorism and Islamic radicalism more generally.[12] The US has sent military advisers to train the Georgian armed forces fighting Chechen and Islamic militants in the Pankisi Gorge region bordering Chechnya. NATO has intensified its own military cooperation with the Central Asian and Caucasian states. This cooperation takes place notwithstanding the authoritarian nature of the Central Asian and Caucasian regimes, their poor human-rights records and the role that their armed forces and security services play as important pillars of authoritarian rule. Some suggest that defence diplomacy can help to moderate the behaviour of such regimes and be a long-term force for

democratisation. Critics argue that the US, and to a lesser extent NATO as a whole, risks bolstering these regimes and, by closing down other avenues for dissent, making Islamic radicalism the only means of opposition.[13]

At the same time, the 2002 decision to extend NATO membership means that the Alliance's most active PfP partners and the states which have made most progress in democratising civil–military relations will become full NATO members. Although NATO's leverage over these states may decline once they do, they have already passed the key threshold of consolidating democratic civilian control of the military and defence policy. While NATO and its longer-standing members may continue to provide low-key assistance to new members in reforming civil–military relations, the issue is likely to be much less important than it was in the 1990s. Aside from the European neutral and non-aligned states, who may eventually opt to join NATO, most of the remaining PfP partners will be countries with more troubled democratic records and less interest in integrating with the West than the countries now in the process of joining NATO and the EU. Enlargement therefore may reinforce the shift in NATO/PfP defence diplomacy towards counter-terrorism and expanded ties with the Central Asian and Caucasian states. It remains to be seen how far such activities will become the core focus of NATO's PfP outreach, and to what extent the 'war on terrorism' will provide new reasons to overlook or subordinate the promotion of democracy. At a minimum, while the PfP may continue to act as a framework for promoting democratic civil–military relations, it will do so in more challenging and less amenable circumstances than in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s.

The US and South America

South America provides a key example of a region that has undergone democratisation since the 1970s, where governments have faced significant challenges in establishing democratic civilian control of the military and where a major external power – the US – has extensive defence diplomacy engagement. In contrast to post-communist Europe, however, the geostrategic and political context has been less propitious for the promotion of democratic civil–military relations, that goal has been less central to US defence diplomacy and other objectives have sometimes been in tension with it.

Armed forces have historically played a central role in the politics of Latin and Central America and the Caribbean, with numerous military coups, military governments and military-backed authoritarian regimes.[14] When new democratic governments came to power across the region in the 1980s, establishing democratic civil–military relations was a major challenge. Given its position as a long-established democracy and the region's dominant power, the US might have been well placed to support the democratisation of civil–military relations in South America, particularly given its extensive defence diplomacy engagement with the region. History, geopolitics and other competing interests, however, have made US support much more problematic than might be expected. The countries of South America have ambiguous attitudes towards the US and are often wary of its overwhelming power and dominant role. The US itself has a long history of military intervention and support for authoritarian regimes in the region.[15] Defence diplomacy has been an important part of this, with the US cooperating with and providing assistance to the region's militaries despite their involvement in authoritarian rule and human-rights abuses. Policy towards South America has often been controversial in the US and some administrations, notably Jimmy Carter's in the 1970s, have sought to make support for democracy and human rights a central aim, and have ceased military ties with authoritarian regimes.[16] Nevertheless, the dominant historical trend in US defence diplomacy towards South America was the subordination of democracy to other security or economic interests.

Democratisation and the end of the Cold War altered the strategic context for US defence diplomacy towards South America. With the exception of Cuba, all of the countries of South America became democracies – albeit imperfect and often fragile ones. The strategic argument for supporting authoritarian allies against left-wing political forces was mostly, although not entirely, removed, and the promotion of democratic civil–military relations became an explicit and relatively more important goal. The Clinton administration's 1995 *Security Strategy for the Americas* defined one of the 'strategic objectives' of US policy as 'supporting the commitment to democratic norms in the region, including civilian control in defense matters, constructive civil–military relations, and respect for human rights'.[17] At the same time, however, US defence diplomacy

towards South America since the 1990s has been shaped by two other new factors. First, the US-led 'war on drugs', initiated by George Bush senior's administration at the end of the 1980s, has become a central element of US policy, resulting in a major increase in military assistance to the Andean countries, in particular Colombia, that are the major source of narcotics entering the US from the region. Second, since September 2001, the US-led 'war on terror' has seen a significant increase in, and redirection of, US military cooperation. The use of defence diplomacy to pursue these two goals is sometimes in tension, if not outright contradiction, with the goal of promoting democratic civil–military relations.

The US maintains extensive defence diplomacy ties with South America.[18] While these activities are managed by the Department of State and/or the Department of Defense, the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM, based at Fort Benning, Georgia) plays a central role in shaping and implementing defence diplomacy towards South America. SOUTHCOM's Commander-in-Chief (CINC) maintains a CINC Initiative Fund and Traditional CINC Activities programme to support military cooperation within the region. The individual US service heads also have Latin American cooperation funds. Each year, approximately 50,000 US military personnel are sent to South America in about 3,000 separate deployments, and each year more than 10,000 South American military personnel are trained by the US. In 1999, then SOUTHCOM CINC General Charles Wilhelm said that 'In the last 12 months I have made 33 trips to the region during which I have made 60 individual country visits'.[19] Most US attention is focused on Argentina, Brazil and Chile (the largest countries in South America), and more recently also Mexico and the Andean states.

US defence diplomacy engagement with South America may be divided into a number of areas:

- **High-level political ties**: US Secretaries of Defense meet bilaterally with their counterparts from the region; Assistant Secretaries of Defense and their staffs maintain regular contacts with their counterparts; there are formal bilateral defence ministry working groups with Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Mexico; and the Department of Defense maintains numerous lower-level contacts with defence ministries. These various linkages often provide a framework for the provision of US advice.

- **Military-to-military contacts**: CINC SOUTHCOM maintains numerous contacts with its counterpart militaries in the region; the US Joint Chiefs of Staff also have contacts with their counterparts, including annual bilateral consultations with Argentina, Brazil and Chile; and there are many visits by US military personnel to South America and vice-versa, as well as exchanges between units.
- **Military training and education**: South American military and civilian personnel attend courses at US military training and education facilities; the US sends Military Training Teams (MTTs) and special forces to provide training within the region; the US also maintains a number of institutions specifically to train personnel from South America, including the US Army School of the Americas (renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001), the smaller US Air Force Inter-American Air Forces Academy (IAAFA), the US Navy Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) and the Centre for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS).
- **Joint exercises**: SOUTHCOM organises bilateral and multilateral military exercises with South American militaries (such as the annual UNITAS naval exercise, when a small US task force circumnavigates South America engaging in exercises with the countries of the region[20]); aside from more traditional defence operations, these cover areas such as peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief and counter-narcotics activities. SOUTHCOM also supports a Humanitarian Civic Assistance (HCA) programme, in which US military personnel support the construction of basic infrastructure and the provision of medical services.
- **Arms sales and transfers**: the US government supports the sale or direct transfer of arms to South American states under programmes such as Foreign Military Sales (FMS), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), Direct Commerical Sales (DCS), 'emergency drawdown' and Excess Defence Articles (EDA), as well as more recent counter-narcotics initiatives; a 20-year-old ban on sales of high-technology weapons to the region under FMS, the main programme through which the US government sells arms to other governments, was lifted in 1997.

The promotion of democratic civil–military relations is only one of a variety of objectives behind these various activities. Supporters argue that US defence diplomacy towards South America helps to promote democratic civil–military relations by providing the region's militaries with direct experience of the US model of a democratically and civilian-controlled military, and enhancing their military professionalism.[21] Critics charge that, on top of a history of close cooperation during long periods of authoritarian and military rule, US defence diplomacy reinforces the power and independence of still-powerful militaries and perpetuates patterns of weak or non-existent civilian control.[22]

During the 1990s, the US took a number of steps to redirect its South American defence diplomacy towards supporting democratic civil–military relations. Congress established the E-IMET programme in 1991 specifically for defence management, civil–military relations and military justice. The Department of Defense has used E-IMET to provide courses on these subjects, and to provide training to civilian defence officials.[23]

As part of the reorientation of its defence diplomacy towards democracy and human rights, the US has reformed the Army School of the Americas. The School was established in 1946, and provided training to about 1,000 South American military personnel annually. In the 1980s and 1990s, the School became controversial when it was discovered that its training manuals encouraged counter-insurgency techniques that violated human rights, and that soldiers who had attended it had subsequently committed serious abuses. Pressure grew in Congress for the School to be fundamentally reformed or closed. Congressional amendments to close the School were defeated in 1993 and 1994, but reforms were undertaken, including establishing a Board of Visitors (including independent outside experts) to oversee its activities, and the introduction of a core module on human rights. After continuing pressure, the School was closed in 2000 and reopened the following year as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. The new Institute is mandated 'to provide professional education and training … within the context of the democratic principles set forth in the Charter of the Organization of American States ... and promoting democratic values, [and] respect for human rights'. The Institute, however, appears likely to remain controversial: although to its supporters the renaming reflects a real

commitment to democracy and human rights, to its critics it is little more than window-dressing.[24]

In 1997, the US established the Centre for Hemispheric Defense Studies (CHDS), based at the National Defense University in Washington DC.[25] The CHDS originated in a request from the first inter-American defence ministers' meeting in 1995 for US support in developing civilian defence competence. It is mandated to develop civilian specialists in defence and military matters by providing graduate-level programmes. Between 100 and 200 students participate in CHDS programmes each year, of which about half are civilian government officials, a quarter non-government civilians and a quarter military personnel.

An additional feature of US defence diplomacy since the 1990s has been its multilateralisation in the context of the OAS.[26] Various frameworks for inter-American defence cooperation were established from the Second World War onwards, but these had largely become moribund. After the democratic transitions of the 1980s, interest in inter-American defence dialogue re-emerged. At the initiative of then US Secretary of Defense William Perry, the Western hemisphere's defence ministers met collectively for the first time at Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1995. Since 1996, such meetings have been held biennially. Support for democratic civilian control of armed forces and defence policy has been one of the themes of these meetings. Although this Americas-wide defence dialogue remains relatively limited, it is an additional force for the consolidation of democratic civil–military relations across the region.

US defence diplomacy towards South America has also been shaped by a more powerful dynamic – the 'war on drugs'. The US has provided counter-narcotics military and security assistance to South America, in particular the Andean states. A number of programmes are involved: the State Department's International Narcotics Control (INC) programme, which provides aid to countries where drugs are produced and transported; Department of Defense Section 1004 assistance (which allows the Department to train and transfer equipment to foreign militaries for counter-narcotics purposes) and Section 1033 assistance (which, since 1998, allows it to aid the Colombian and Peruvian security forces in efforts to stem drug smuggling on their waterways); and the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) programme, under which US special forces train

overseas with, or provide training to, foreign militaries, including for counter-narcotics purposes. There is also specific congressionally authorised Department of Defense aid to Colombia, Mexico and Peru.[27] The most high-profile element has been Plan Colombia (renamed the Andean Regional Initiative in 2000), under which the US is helping Colombia to counter the left-wing Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) guerrilla group, which is also involved in the drugs trade. Plan Colombia has made that country the third-largest recipient of US military aid in the world, with the US providing military helicopters and supporting the development of a three-battalion counter-narcotics brigade.[28] This militarised approach to the drugs issue is controversial, and its effectiveness in Colombia and elsewhere remains contentious. In terms of its impact on the democratisation of civil–military relations in the region, however, a number of conclusions may be drawn. For Washington, counter-narcotics military and security assistance is a much higher priority than civil–military relations and has received much more political attention and significantly larger resources. In Colombia and elsewhere in the Andes, counter-narcotics cooperation has involved turning a blind eye to the poor record of the region's militaries on democracy and human rights. At best, US counter-narcotics cooperation does little to support the development of democratic civil–military relations. At worst, it strengthens the region's militaries vis-a-vis civilian governments, reinforces patterns of human-rights abuse and thereby contributes to underlying domestic instability.[29]

The inauguration of the Bush administration and the September 2001 terrorist attacks have reinforced these trends in US policy. The 'war on drugs' and the 'war on terror' now converge in Colombia, with FARC viewed as a threat on both counts. Following the election of President Alvaro Uribe in May 2002, the US has increased military assistance to Colombia as part of Uribe's policy of intensifying military action against FARC. The 'war on terror' has also led to stepped up counter-terrorist cooperation with America's southern neighbours more generally. There are also sometimes tensions within US policy between the goal of supporting democracy in South America and fears that some elected South American governments or leaders, especially of the left, may pose a threat to American interests. US defence diplomacy in the region reflects these tensions. Some within the US, especially on the political right, still

view left-wing politicians and movements in South America as a threat to American interests. Against this background, the US appears to have provided tacit backing and limited military support (in communications and intelligence) to right-wingers and elements within the Venezuelan military during their attempt to overthrow the democratically elected president, Hugo Chavez, in April 2002.[30] Although the exact nature of US involvement in the coup attempt remains unclear and there appear to have been divisions within the US government on the issue, the incident sharply illustrates the way in which, especially for the US political right-wing, other perceived interests may run counter to and take priority over the goal of democratising civil–military relations or supporting democracy more generally.[31]

Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, the use of defence diplomacy to support the democratisation of civil–military relations has become an important component of broader Western efforts to promote democracy worldwide. At the same time, the foreign policies of the Western democracies remain shaped by other strategic interests that sometimes lead them to support authoritarian regimes. Even in situations where states have democratised or are democratising, as in South America, tensions may remain. Given these competing interests, the contradiction between support for democracy in some circumstances and cooperation with authoritarian states in others seems likely to remain a feature of Western foreign policies, and defence diplomacy will inevitably reflect this.

The use of defence diplomacy to support the democratisation of civil–military relations is also deeply dependent on both the nature of the regime with which one is engaging and the wider political and strategic environment. Although Western governments sometimes argue that engagement can help to moderate behaviour and even encourage democratic transitions, the evidence suggests that entrenched authoritarian regimes are remarkably resistant to external influence (whether through constructive engagement such as defence diplomacy, or pressure such as political or economic sanctions). The utility of defence diplomacy as a means of influencing civil–military relations in authoritarian regimes is therefore likely to be distinctly limited. States that are reforming, beginning democratic transitions or

attempting to consolidate democracy are much more amenable to external influence. In these circumstances, defence diplomacy can be an important means of providing political and practical support for the democratisation of civil–military relations.

The utility of defence diplomacy also depends on the historical, political and strategic circumstances of the countries concerned. The states of post-communist Central and Eastern Europe view themselves as rejoining the West after their artificial separation by the Cold War. Western support has accordingly been actively welcomed, the Western democracies have been seen as a model to be emulated, NATO/PfP has provided a strong institutional framework for cooperation and the prospect of NATO membership has created powerful incentives to implement reform. In contrast, the countries of South America are wary of the United States' hegemonic role within the region, and there has been no equivalent driver for the democratisation of civil–military relations. Given their experience of Western imperialism, intervention and support for authoritarian regimes, many countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are similarly wary of Western attempts at defence diplomacy, often viewing it as a cover for the promotion of strategic or economic interests, and so resist or at best reluctantly accept it.

A further problem is the military-to-military character of much defence diplomacy. While cooperation with Western militaries may help to spread norms of democratic civilian control and professionalism, it also risks ignoring other dimensions of the problem (such as the need for parliamentary oversight and civil society engagement with defence issues). Western governments have sought to address this problem by increasing the training available to civilians and encouraging civil–military interaction in defence diplomacy activities. More could and should be done, in particular with regard to parliamentary oversight, the rule of law, respect for human rights and civil society engagement.

Although the 'war on terror' is reshaping Western, especially US, defence diplomacy, the promotion of democratic civil–military relations, and of democracy more generally, remain long-term goals of Western policy, even if the priority attached to them has been lowered. At the same time, the 'war on terror' has created new situations in which defence diplomacy is being used to support the democratisation of civil–military relations. In both Afghanistan and

Iraq, Western governments are backing attempts to establish reformed, democratically controlled armed forces as part of wider efforts at stabilisation and democratisation. The 'war on terror' has also provoked wider debate on Western support for authoritarian regimes: some (including influential neo-conservatives within the Bush administration) argue that a key underlying cause of radical Islamic terrorism has been the absence of democracy in the Middle East and the West's support for authoritarian regimes in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, with the implication that such support should be abandoned. While the September 2001 attacks have in the short term led to closer military cooperation with a number of authoritarian regimes, the longer-term impact on Western attitudes to democracy and authoritarianism elsewhere in the world and on Western defence diplomacy remain to be seen.