# **Integrating the Military Instrument to enhance social resilience**

# Assess the utility and limitations of the military as an instrument of national power in addressing non-traditional national security threats in concert with other instruments available to states.

# Speaker 1

# Speaker 2 – Organisational Adaptation

# and Interagency Synergy

Building on Sinéad’s analysis of how Ireland grapples with non-traditional threats from critical-infrastructure vulnerabilities to pandemic response, my task is to examine how military organisations must change structurally and culturally to assume resilience roles while preserving autonomy, ethics and legitimacy. The argument is simple: []

In line with our research question, we shall [] – using Ireland as the primary case-study.

**1| Civil–Military Trust and the Ethics of Resilience Roles**

As stated in Ireland’s Defence Policy Review (2024, p26) “national defence policy prioritises the military defence of the state and its contributions in support of national resilience through its assistance to other departments and state agencies”.

We will now use Ireland as a handrail to explore where trust in the military instrument is structurally weak. This is important since real resilience depends on the military and civil servants trusting one another, while still respecting democratic oversight.

**Cottey (2002), Brooks (2024), Burk (2002) and Feaver (2003)** show that new democracies often focus on coup-proofing through limiting military power or so-called “grand bargaining”. This is a pattern reflected in post-independence Ireland. It removes the military from politics. After the 1924 Mutiny, political suspicion in Ireland created what **Huntington (1957)** referred to as “subjective control”, producing politicised micromanagement that weakened autonomy. This is better suited to authoritarian structures rather than democracies – such as China.

The PLA is inherently politicised – since it is the military of the Party rather than of the State. This binds them and their interests to those of the civilian regime. Indeed, in recent times, Xi Jinping’s dual leadership of the party and miliary has modified the power balance in favour of the military. As will be discussed later, Schiff contends that separation theory is a US invention based on US culture.

In Ireland civilian oversight, rooted in fear rather than confidence, discouraged democratic professionalism. Through the lens of defensive procurement, I have seen how inexpert interference hindered effectiveness, causing delays. This contrasts with **Janowitz’s (1960)** constabulary model of integration through shared values.

The Department of Defence’s dominance exemplifies **Cottey’s** idea of “civilian supremacy without democratic depth”, securing compliance but constraining accountability. Ireland’s so-called first-generation mindset towards Civil-Military affairs undervalues cooperation. It confines the military to administrative rather than strategic roles.A shift towards so-called ‘*democratic governance*’, through shared norms, mutual trust, and transparent coordination, would transform control from a constraint into an enabler of national resilience. Without embedded trust, integration will remain superficial and resilience, sub-optimal.

We will now show why weakness in the military instrument matters when the Defence Forces operates within the state – which is required for national resilience.

**Cottey (2002)** notes that democratic governance must include all security actors, including paramilitary police forces. In Ireland, however, the Garda Síochána remains outside that conversation, even as it develops such units. This creates a paradox: the state restrains its military through dense supervision yet grants its police growing coercive powers with limited policy scrutiny. The result is an incomplete model of

**2| Concordance: Is Ireland’s Subjective Control Still Relevant**

**Cohen (2002) describes the need for constructive *friction* between military and civilian agents. Burk (2002) agrees, arguing that effective civil–military relations depend on *collegial partnership* rather than control. He links this to Janowitz’s (1960) idea of the citizen soldier—an individual who embodies shared civic values while remaining a professional combatant. This balance is visible in states such as Finland and Switzerland, where military utility is instinctively understood across government and society. Burk notes that even mature democracies struggle to maintain this balance, suggesting that federal or decentralised systems often provide the strongest models of trust and oversight.**

**Expanding military roles inside society carries real risks. Burk (2002) reminds us that democratic legitimacy rests on consent, not control. Cook (2004) defines this as the officer’s duty to balance obedience with conscience. Forster (2006) and Freedman (2006) warn that excessive securitisation of domestic life corrodes trust faster than external threats. Forster (2001) also observes that in “new wars”, non-military instruments dominate statecraft, making collaboration rather than command the essence of resilience. As Sinéad noted, the Defence Forces’ societal value depends on ethical execution. Roles in health, logistics or cyber must build trust, not dependency, if they are to contribute to genuine national resilience.**

**Schiff’s (1995) concordance theory helps explain why this balance matters. She argues that stability arises when the military, political elites and society agree on four factors: the officer corps, political decision-making, recruitment, and military style. When these align, the risk of domestic intervention falls and democratic resilience grows.**

**Applied to Ireland, the model reveals strengths and weaknesses. The Defence Forces perform well on three indicators but remain excluded from the political decision-making process, which follows Huntington’s (1957) separation model—an approach Schiff critiques as too rigid and rooted in the American experience.**

**Officer corps. The Defence Forces are becoming more representative. Where officers once came mainly from universities, the Potential Officer Programme now promotes non-commissioned officers and embraces greater ethnic and religious diversity. This reduces distance from society and enhances legitimacy.**

**Recruitment. Ireland’s voluntary system, open to all backgrounds, mirrors Moskos’ (2000) “post-modern military”. It reflects inclusive civic values and builds social connection. Like Israel and India in Schiff’s examples, Ireland’s shared acceptance of voluntary service strengthens concordance.**

**Military style. Irish military culture is restrained and professional. The 2024 Public Perception Survey shows broad alignment with national values of humility, peacekeeping and community service. Yet a small but vocal minority, such as Connolly’s critique of the Defence Amendment Bill 2024, remain sceptical. Bureaucratic caution reinforces this distance, suggesting partial misalignment at elite level even as societal trust remains high.**

**Political decision-making. Here Ireland performs poorly. The Defence Forces have limited influence over budgets or structure; authority lies with the Department of Defence and DPER. This separation reduces agility and mutual confidence. The British Armed Forces Covenant provides a useful contrast: it establishes shared norms through which the government’s treatment of the military can be assessed (Forster 2012).**

**Overall, Ireland shows strong concordance with its people but weak concordance with its political elites. Improvement requires dialogue. Joint committees or structured advisory roles for senior officers could align Defence and government priorities without undermining civilian primacy—reflecting Brooks’ (2024) call for adaptive partnerships in resilient democracies. Achieving fuller concordance would enhance legitimacy, reduce the need for supervision, and allow the Defence Forces to operate as a trusted, integrated instrument of national resilience.**

**Cohen (1996)** speaks of the requirements for constructive “friction” between the military and civil agents..

**Burk’s 2002** paper concurs. He encourages us to think about how to ensure appropriate “collegial relations” between the miltary and civilan elites. He concurs with Janowitz’s description of the citizen soldier. For integrating the military instrument for national reslieience, the citizen solider is reminiscent of apparent successes in states such as Finland and Switzerland. Therein, the military is not required to explain its utility. A baseline understanding prevails within society, the civil service and government alike. The literature appears to concur that mature demoacracies all face challengeiss to in civil military relations with Burk suggesting that the federalist ideas may be strontest.

Expanding military roles within society carries real risks. **Burk (2002)** reminds us that legitimacy in democracies rests on consent, not control. **Cook (2004)** defines this as a professional duty to balance obedience with conscience. **Forster (2006)** and **Freedman (2006)** caution that over-securitisation of domestic life erodes trust faster than external threats. **Forster (2001)** describes “new wars” in which nonmilitary instruments of national power dominate statecraft.

As Sinéad noted, societal value depends on ethical execution, seen during pandemic restrictions and Defence support to civil authorities. For the Defence Forces, resilience roles in health, logistics or cyber must build trust rather than dependency.

**Schiff’s (1995)** concordance theory holds that stability depends on agreement among the military, political elites, and society. When those partners share understanding across the four indicators, domestic military intervention becomes unlikely and democratic resilience is strengthened.

Applying concordance theory to Ireland’s civil–military relations shows a nation that performs strongly on three of the four indicators. Since the DF is excluded from the political decision-making process, it lags in this metric. This still follows **Huntington’s (1957)** separation model, which is rooted in the American experience that Schiff assess to be too rigid.

**Officer corps.** The Defence Forces are becoming more representative. In the past, officers came mainly from universities and narrow social groups. Today, the Potential Officer Programme promotes non-commissioned officers and the organisation welcomes diversity. This reduces distance from society and builds shared understanding.

**Recruitment.** Ireland relies on voluntary service, aligning with **Moskos’ (2000)** depiction of the so-called “postmodern military”. All backgrounds are welcome. There is no conscription. This approach builds legitimacy and civic connection. People join because they want to serve. It is assessed that military, political elites and society agree on voluntary service. It mirrors Schiff’s examples of inclusive recruitment in Israel and India. Therefore this aspect strengthens overall concordance.

**Military style.** Irish military culture is restrained and professional. It values service and discipline rather than bravado. The *2024 Public Perception Survey* shows that this aligns with national values of humility, peacekeeping and community engagement. This indicates strong concordance from the military’s perspective. However, a small but vocal minority remain sceptical of the military instrument, as seen in Connolly’s debate on the Defence Amendment Bill 2024. Bureaucratic caution and these dissenting voices suggest that some political leaders still question how the military fits within Ireland’s civic identity. This partial misalignment at the elite level weakens overall concordance, even as societal trust remains high.

**Political decision-making.** The Defence Forces exert minimal influence on budgets, size, or structure. Authority rests largely with the DOD and DPER. This separation reduces agility and responsiveness. It follows Huntington’s separation model, not Schiff’s cooperative one. The result is low trust and limited agility.

The British model of the “Covenant” is of note because it provided a normative framework no which to judge and influence government actions (Forster 2012).

**Ireland shows strong concordance with society but weak concordance with its political leaders.** Better alignment would reduce the need for supervision. It would also make Defence a more flexible and trusted partner in national resilience.

Improvement depends on dialogue. Joint committees or structured advisory roles for senior officers could align Defence and government priorities without eroding civilian primacy—reflecting **Brooks’ (2024)** call for adaptive civil–military partnerships in resilient democracies.

Achieving full concordance would strengthen Ireland’s legitimacy and responsiveness. A Defence Force trusted to contribute insight yet firmly under democratic oversight would need less management and offer a more agile, integrated military instrument for national resilience.

**5 | Closing Transition to Romin**

Across these moves, the logic is consistent. [].

I close where Sinéad opened: resilience is not a slogan—it is a design discipline. It succeeds only when the military changes itself first and aligns with others second. Romin will now test this against the Ireland and United States cases Sinéad introduced, exploring cyber and disinformation threats—the true frontier of societal resilience.

“Taken together, these reforms show that the military instrument enhances societal resilience only when integrated deliberately with the diplomatic, informational and economic instruments of power, not when it substitutes for them.”

Dáil Éireann (2024) Debates: Defence (Amendment) Bill 2024, 2 May 2024. Available at: https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2024-05-02/32/ (Accessed: 9 October 2025).