



Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes
"Strengthening Democracies Through Knowledge"

**The 23rd Annual Conference of the
Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group of the Partnership for Peace Consortium of
Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes**

**"Shaping Armed Forces for Conflict and War. Education, Training and
Lessons-learned Processes Before, During and After Military Deployment.
Implications for Policymakers"**

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Overview



The 23rd Annual Conference of the Conflict Studies Working Group, organized by the PfP Consortium of Defence Academies and Security Studies Institutes, was held from June 11-13, 2024, in Vienna. The conference, entitled “Shaping Armed Forces for Conflict and War: Education, Training, and Lessons-Learned Processes Before, During, and After Military

Deployment – Implications for Policy Makers”, revolved around the question *How were/are military experiences – both during conflict and peacetime, and both in recent times used within the armed forces?*



This scientific event was jointly organized by the Institute for Strategy and Security Policy of the Austrian National Defence Academy and the Department of Military History and Social Sciences of the Swedish Defence University. The conference brought together 40 military historians, scholars, and experts in warfare and strategic

studies from 21 countries, who presented research papers across 8 panels. Each panel addressed distinct topics and case studies by emphasizing the implications of historical perspectives and contemporary military-strategic dynamics on the processes of education, training, and the application of lessons learned.

The participants have been provided with a platform for drawing insights from historical contexts and applying them to contemporary military and political decision-making. The underlining assumption was that informed analysis and strategic readiness are indispensable for effectively navigating today’s complex global security environment.

Panel 1: Motivation, Mindset, and Activation

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics: effectiveness of covert military training; difficulties in building the will to fight within present-day society; boosting the morale of the military through indoctrination; the high relevance in the current security context of establishing large reserve forces.



A key factor enabling Slovenia to successfully wage the short war leading up to its independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was the training in great secrecy of its Manoeuvre Structure of National Protection (MSNP). The level of confidentiality was so high that this

endeavour was concealed even from the democratically elected president of Slovenia who, nominally, exercised the function of supreme commander of the national defence forces that were being set up. Consequently, the training of MSNZ and the broader process of establishing it was effectively conducted outside the political control democratically exercised.

At the end of 1943, in a desperate attempt to turn the tide of war, officials from the Nazi Party initiated within the Wehrmacht a mass and intense indoctrination campaign designed to instil the Nazi ideology among the military. The campaign was implemented through specially selected officers assigned to military units where they acted as ideological trainers. The assumption underpinning this approach was that the best means for boosting the morale of the German army was fanaticism.

The rebuilding of the will to fight is indispensable for the ability of European countries to effectively defend against the Russian Federation. However, the attainment of this objective is made difficult by the longstanding public conviction that the post-Cold War Europe will remain free of war. Moreover, the absence of precise means to measure the level of the will to fight among European citizens adds further complications.

The scale of the war in Ukraine proved that European security cannot rely on professional army alone because an effective defence requires the mobilization of at least 1 million voluntary reservists in each European country. Therefore, the attainment of this goal

should be prepared during peacetime by providing the legislative basis and developing the communication and training strategies for attracting, motivating and organising reservists. Military training has to begin early in life and take the form of history lessons and physical exercises conducted in educational institutions. For people meeting the conditions for joining the reserve corpus, dedicated training must be conducted in military bases and include a variety of engaging military exercises.

Panel 2: Education and Military History

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: importance of continuity over time of the provision of high-quality military education; impact during wartime of the broad diffusion of lessons learned on battlefield; standards for excellence in teaching military history to officers; background requiring training in guerrilla warfare tactics.

The reputation acquired by the Serbian army during the Balkan Wars and the First World War was largely due to the high quality of education and training constantly provided over a long period of time to both professional and non-commissioned officers. The achievements of the interwar Serbian military education could provide some useful suggestions for contemporary military educational institutions.

The victory in the Battle of St. Mihiel was an outstanding achievement for the American Expeditionary Force fighting in the First World War given that it marked the first ever participation in an international war of the army of the United States. Success provided the



opportunity for turning the acquired experience into lessons learned enabling the American troops deployed in France to better adapt to the changing context of war. To be effective, such a learning process necessarily required the recognition of errors committed during the fight and a clear understanding of the

peculiar circumstances which favoured the defeat of the German forces.

The introduction at the Royal Danish Army Officers Academy of the module Military history and the Army Officer builds upon a profile of competence which includes parameters that either explicitly or implicitly refer to military history, or which could be linked with this field. Moreover, the module should ensure both the importance and independence of teaching military history by means of a tailored theoretical framework, adequate teaching methods and relevant empirical studies that all balance the different expectations of the four institutes making up the Faculty within the Royal Danish Defence College.

The Maneuver Structure of National Protection (MSNP) was able to play a vital role in securing the independence of Slovenia back in 1991 because its initial sparse organization established under clandestinity was significantly reinforced through the direct involvement of the Sloven ministers of defence and of internal affairs. One core objective was the training of the members of MSNP in guerrilla warfare tactics that were to be employed against the Yugoslav People's Army in the event of the outbreak of an armed conflict.

Panel 3: Education, Training, and Doctrine (I)

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: military educational system built against the background of shortage of didactic and training expertise; management of challenges raising from national and confessional diversity from military education and training institutions; armed forces as a learning organization capable of keeping the right balance between tradition and innovation; adaptation of national military planning and doctrine to major changes in the art of warfare.

The Slovak Republic that emerged in the wake of the 1939 dissolution of



Czechoslovakia experienced serious difficulties in building its own armed forces. Confronted with the departure of Czech officers, the Slovak authorities could rely mainly on young and unexperienced Slovak active officers, a shortfall which negatively affected the newly

formed army not only in terms of its fighting power, but also with respect to its capacity to provide quality military education and training. Against these adverse circumstances, a system of military education that followed the Czechoslovak model was eventually established in Slovakia.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which was formed after the First World War, had to create its armed forces and the development of a system of military education and training was a central part of this endeavour. The institutions responsible for instructing the military personnel were to take into account its national and confessional diversity and to provide programs for non-commissioned officers.

Between 1888 and 1926, the German army operated as a learning organization in the field of tactical knowledge, and this required for the military educational institutions to approach the training of officers by keeping a delicate equilibrium between elements of tradition and the introduction of innovative changes. An illustrative case for how this balance was achieved is provided by the activity of General Hans von Seeckt in his capacity as the second Chief of Army Command of the Reichswehr (1920-1926). Against the background of military limitations imposed by the Treaty of Versailles, von Seeckt developed the German air force by establishing an aviation school in Soviet Union, imposed high educational standards, and trained officers for combined arms combat. Equally, in line with von Moltke's vision, he demanded that officers exercise independence with respect with command and control and promoted the character traits and the skills traditionally attributed to German officers.

In the second half of the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War, the invasion of Finland by Soviet Union and of that Poland by both Soviet Union and Nazi Germany demonstrated a significant evolution of the art of warfare in the direction of increased reliance on air forces and mechanized units. Reflection on the new characteristics defining modern armed conflicts prompted Latvia to initiate a process of adapting to these changes its national defence concept and mobilisation plans.

Panel 4: Education, Training, and Doctrine (II)

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: national peculiarities of the officer selection and training process; practical relevance

of military history for contemporary military organization; the evolution of Staff Ride as a tool for military training and education.

The training of future officers for the Polish Armed Forces takes various forms such as master studies at military academies and military programs for civilians holding a master's degree in relevant fields. The final stage for becoming an officer requires the passing of an exam certifying competences in the areas like military education, physical education, and foreign languages. The educational model for the Polish officer on which his/hers training and testing is grounded on should both accurately reflect the tasks to be entrusted to him/her and facilitate the democratic control over armed forces.



Depending on how learning from history is understood, the military history as a whole and, particularly, the historical battlefield tours, could be useful for present day military organizations. Conceived as a practical guide to contemporary warfare, a historical approach is of little relevance given that war is subjected to fast and substantial changes brought about by multiple factors such as technological progress. However, an historical outlook brings a significant contribution to current military education because it grounds military traditions, provides the much-needed examples of heroism and creativity on the battlefield, and unveils the complexity and variable dynamics of military operations.

Staff Ride was introduced in the second half of the 19th century by the Prussian General Moltke the Elder and it initially designated tactical discussions among commanders and their staff officers conducted in areas envisaged as future battlefields. The U.S. Army latter developed Staff Ride into a tool for military training and education that made extensive use of history; cadets visited areas where fighting took place during the American Civil War and learned in detail about how battles unfolded. Currently, Staff Ride continues to rely on military history, but its educational potential is directed towards enabling cadets to explain the military operations that occurred on the site they are walking on.

Panel 5: Technological Development and Military Progress

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: contribution of military history to the study of hybrid warfare; role of UAVs in the advent of the fifth-generation war; importance for Cold War studies of the history of weapons technologies; learning process behind turning aerial intelligence into a prominent instrument of warfare.

Hybrid war implies a comprehensive approach that directs both conventional and unconventional instruments towards the achievement of the same goal. Military history bears almost no relevancy for the study of hybrid war if this type of war is considered a new reality that emerged as a result of technological developments which followed the end of the Cold War. But hybrid war could also be said to have been a constant presence along human history, in which case military history becomes a tool for the exploration of its evolution, for identifying its successive typologies and equally for the study of illustrative cases.



The Second Karabakh War that took place in 2020 marked the emergence of the fifth-generation war given that the victory of the Azeri armed forces largely depended on the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for command-and-control purposes. This

approach was grounded on a change at doctrinal level where the tasks of UAVs were expanded beyond intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance and target destruction. The innovative role attributed to UAVs in this armed conflict opened the way for the drone-based war strategies to become a new standard in the military field.

The complex relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union that developed in the first decade after World War II could be considered from the so-called “low perspective” of the history of weapons technology. This approach builds upon the existence in post-war Czechoslovakia of two directions in the field of national defence industry, namely one leading towards unification with the Soviet Union in the area of armament and another one pushing for the production of nationally designed armament. An illustrative case-study for the tension

between these directions is provided by the cartridge 7.5 x 45 mm and its corresponding weapons that Czechoslovakia produced by its own design.

In the context of the Indochina War but especially during the Algerian War, aerial intelligence became an important instrument in support of French military operations. The French Air Force gradually developed its intelligence capabilities by relying on the experience of the British and U.S. pilots deployed in Malaya and Korea respectively, and by engaging in a sustained process of testing various ways to develop and employ aerial intelligence in connection with the needs of the French Army. Moreover, the French Air Force established a system of collecting feedback from the use of aerial intelligence and of disseminating among all relevant forces the lessons learned with respect to both success and failure. This learning process made possible for this new instrument to be adequately tailored to tactical and strategic requirements, standardised, and incorporated into French military doctrine.

Panel 6: Military Experience and Development (I)

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: knowledge of military history as a key factor enabling officers to contribute to develop national armed forces; challenges faced by military chaplains in being recognised as relevant for the needs of the armed forces; armed forces reform in former communist states through participation in peacekeeping operations; war as a decisive factor for stimulating the development of military medicine.

The Swedish Topographical Corps was established in response to the important role that maps acquired in the military art as it developed in the context of the Napoleonic wars. The officers making up this structure were selected on grounds of their high military competence and solid academic background and therefore they were able not only to elaborate accurate maps but also to act as military historians and teach younger officers elements of tactics and strategy. The pedagogical skills of senior topographical officers also enabled them to relay on military history and on their own experience on the battlefield to advance and teach innovative solutions to challenges faced by the Swedish army.



The recognition of the value for the British armed forces of the work by military chaplains followed a difficult path, with their usefulness being disregarded at the outset of the First World War. When, latter, their training was adapted to respond to the needs of the

British military personnel from all branches, the pastoral and spiritual activities entrusted to them during war and in peacetime gained visibility and were accepted as bearing relevancy for the profession of arms. The training programmes were intended to make chaplains sensitive towards the traditions and history of the units they were assigned to, but also capable to raise the morale of their fellows and to provide spiritual counselling tailored to their peculiar expectations.

A significant step towards adapting the Czechoslovak and, later, the Czech armed forces to the radical changes brought about by the Velvet Revolution took place during the 1990s when they participated in the Gulf War (operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm) and in UNPROFOR operation from the Balkans. The combined effect of these experiences led to a redesign of military training and improved the national public perception on the armed forces previously seen as a key instrument relied on by the communist regime for staying in power.

The First World War represented an important landmark in the history of Romanian military medicine because it accelerated the development of research, practice and education in this field. Advancements involved both civilian and military medical personalities from Romania and significantly depended upon a process of adapting to national circumstances some well-established foreign models.

Panel 7: Military Experience and Development (II)

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: foreign policy implications of inadequate assessments by political leadership; dilemma raised by asymmetrical warfare with respect to balancing protection of military against protection of civilians; difficulties of training the Israeli

police force in West Bank and Gaza; inadequacy between national military doctrine and participation in international military operations.

A state could neglect its own interests and become involved in a war on grounds of misinterpreting the intentions of an opponent or/and as a result of a wrong assessment of its and own capabilities that are either overestimated or underestimated. Moreover, the political leadership of a state already engaged in a war risk taking wrong decisions by means of setting untenable military objectives or failing to understand the evolution of the conflict. An illustration of such faults is provided by the ongoing war between Russian Federation and Ukraine given that Russian decisionmakers, similar to many Western politicians, underestimated the morale and capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces and, equally, because Russian officials, similar to their Western counterparts, overestimated the potential of the Russian army. At their turn, Ukrainian policymakers did not understand the real intentions of the Russian Federation and therefore downgraded the likelihood of a large-scale invasion.



The experience acquired by Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in asymmetrical urban warfare prompted a change in the doctrine of IDF regarding the balance between the protection of its own forces and that provided to civilians. When, back in 1982, IDF first engaged in this type of fighting, minimizing civilian casualties took precedence over reducing victims among its military personnel. However, amid severe increase in the number of military casualties resulting from subsequent operations (Operation Defensive Shield – 2002; Operation Cast Lead - 2008-09; Operation Protective Edge – 2014), IDF focused on minimizing casualties among its troops and this approach grounded criticism of Operation Iron Sword launched in 2023 against Hamas. The new approach, albeit safer for IDF, could be regarded as a vulnerability for it in terms of public legitimacy of its combat actions directed against non-state actors.

Following the Six Day War, Israel gained control over West Bank and Gaza and had to establish in these areas a police force dealing with both civilian and security issues. The forming of this Israeli police force, which started in September 1967, had to cope with the difficult task of selecting and training personnel coming from among Israelis and Palestinians

local residents. The process of educating future policemen played a central part in the administrative effort undertaken by Israel in the mentioned territories.

Norway, similar to other countries that contributed to ISAF operation, was inadequately prepared for the responsibilities it had to assume in Afghanistan. The main obstacle for the Norwegian armed forces was that, according to their underpinning doctrine, they were mainly trained for defending the national territory so that they lacked a clear guidance for conducting the complex tasks entailed by managing the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the Afghan city of Meymaneh. Despite their shortcomings, Norwegian forces initiated an extensive learning process which was adapted to the peculiarities of the conflict in Afghanistan and relayed on the learning while doing principle. However, the outcomes of the PRT fell behind expectations.

Panel 8: Transformation and Conception

The presentations delivered fall within the broad topics of: doctrinal response of NATO to countering terrorism; flexibility in face of unexpected as a key objective in military education; development of the methodological and epistemological basis of lesson learning; modernization of the armed forces of former Soviet states through participation in international peace operations.

The participation of Western European states in the so-called war on terror confronted them with insurgency warfare which made necessary for a dedicated approach to be developed at NATO level. The doctrinal response of the Alliance took the form of ‘Allied Joint Publication – 3.27 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counter-Insurgency (COIN)’ which gave priority to interactions with civilian population and, thus, emphasized cultural awareness and the means for legitimizing democracy among the local people. COIN was particularly relevant for the adaptation of Western European members of NATO to the objectives assumed through the ISAF mission in Afghanistan.



Uncertainty in war could emerge even against the background of a very good planning and that is way military should demonstrate flexibility and be able to rapidly design an alternative course of action. Preparing officers for successfully coping with unforeseen circumstances is mandatory for military education which needs to emphasize the

study of past failures in battlefield. Such an approach is currently highly relevant because the war in Ukraine plainly exposed the defence shortcomings of Western European states.

Lesson learning as a well-established approach in military education is grounded on history and its corresponding methodology and epistemology most likely require further development. Advancements in these two areas reflect the theoretical peculiarities of the disciplines in whose framework they emerge and encompass issues such as the causal relationships between past events and the elaboration of scenarios.

After the dissolution of Soviet Union, a prominent trigger for the modernization of Georgian Defence Forces (GDF) was their participation in international peace operations. Benefiting from specific training delivered by the United States Armed Forces and from the experience of working closely with NATO members, the unites of GDF involved in international operations significantly contributed to the spread within the whole GDF of the Western-style military management. The process of reform entailed the introduction of a new organizational culture where commissioned officers were educated in view of assuming leadership responsibility.

Key Takeaways and Policy Recommendations

After the post-war order of 1945, Europe was lulled into a false belief that large-scale wars of aggression would no longer be accepted on our continent. In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine revealed a different reality. Politicians must find mechanisms to reinstall the “will to fight” in society. Who is still willing to defend our freedom with a weapon in hand? Since 2022, freedom has a price again and politics must respond and find solutions as to who and also how to pay this price. Against this background, the findings of the conference, grounded on historical considerations, support the formulation of several key practical guidelines.

Key Takeaways

❖ *Awaking interest in military history among young officers is crucial*

Awakening an interest in military history among young officers is crucial to foster a deep understanding of the development of military strategies and tactics. The planned module “Military History and the Army Officer” at the Royal Danish Army Officers Academy could provide a valuable opportunity to integrate historical perspectives while taking into account the current demands of army leadership.

By combining historical knowledge with modern military challenges, officers can not only learn from the past but also develop innovative approaches for the future. It is important that training includes both theoretical and practical elements in order to optimally prepare officers for their tasks.

❖ *Creation of knowledge centers that analyze and improve existing doctrine*

Creating an environment that promotes the exchange of knowledge and best practices at a horizontal level as well as in education and training is crucial for the further development of the armed forces. By sharing experiences and best practices, lessons can be learned and strategies continuously improved.

Another important step to consider would be the establishment of knowledge centers at regimental level. These centers can serve as central points of contact for the development and adaptation of doctrines. They enable current knowledge and experience to be systematically collected, analyzed and integrated into training and operational preparation.

These measures serve to ensure that armed forces are better prepared for future challenges and that lessons learned from past conflicts are effectively implemented, thus creating a strong foundation for military training and doctrine development.

❖ ***Training programs for small units at the tactical level can bring strategic results for the country***

Training programs for small units, as the example of the Georgian army shows, at the tactical level are indeed crucial to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of the armed forces. Through targeted training, with larger armies, these units can better respond to specific challenges and thus achieve strategic results for the country. Revising and realigning the strategic direction can help ensure that military forces are optimally prepared for current threats and requirements. This not only promotes operational readiness, but can also lead to a more stable security situation in the long term.

❖ ***Adapting Military Doctrine and Training to Current Realities***

It is a challenging situation that has become clear as a result of the war in Ukraine. The realization that the Western armed forces have weaknesses in terms of military competence and readiness is alarming. The need to address these shortcomings is paramount, especially considering that a sudden conflict could break out at any time.

Military educational institutions play a crucial role in addressing these challenges. They should not only analyze past failures and dysfunctionalities, but also develop effective counter-strategies to improve readiness. This includes a comprehensive review of training methods, personnel structure and industrial capacities.

A proactive approach could help to increase military efficiency and ensure that the West is better prepared for future conflicts. It is important to learn from the past in order to shape the future.

❖ ***Generating Knowledge Through Military History Staff Rides***

Staff rides offer a unique opportunity to bring military history to life and gain deeper insights into various aspects of the military. They allow participants to reenact historical battles or military operations and learn important tactical concepts in the process. They also promote an understanding of leadership styles, and the challenges associated with them, including ethical dilemmas encountered in the past.

❖ ***Drawing Lessons from History and Reinstating the “Will to Fight” in Society***

After the post war order of 1945, Europe was lulled into a false belief that wars would no longer be accepted on our continent. In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine revealed a different reality. Politicians must find mechanisms to reinstall the “will to fight” in society. Military history plays an important part in this endeavour because it preserves national military traditions and the memory of inspirational heroic figures.

Who is still willing to defend our freedom with a weapon in hand? Since 2022, freedom has a price again and politics must respond and find solutions as to who and also how to pay this price.

Policy Recommendations

❖ ***Enact National Legislation Tailored to the New Security Environment.*** Adapt the national security legislation to the need for a rapid and adequate response to the fast-evolving nature of threats affecting states. With respect to hybrid threats, including those generated by non-state actors, the legal framework should put in place swift decision-making procedures for preventing and countering them and should enable military to effectively implement the adopted decisions.

❖ ***Develop Large Reserve Forces.*** Give priority in peacetimes to the formation, training and equipping of a significant number of reserve forces and acknowledge at strategic level their relevance for successfully waging a large-scale war of attrition. It is necessary to consider and specify the mutually reinforcing roles of reserve forces and professional armed forces.

- ❖ ***Adjust to Evolutions in the Area of Democratic Control of Armed Forces.*** Consider the potential changes in civil-military relations arising out of the growing importance acquired by national armed forces in the context of the war in Ukraine. The dynamics of these relations as it operates at governmental level should be monitored and constantly assessed by political leadership.
- ❖ ***Integrate Military History into Officer Training.*** Develop and implement programs that integrate military history into the education and training of young officers. By combining historical lessons with contemporary challenges, military academies can provide officers with a comprehensive understanding of military strategy, leadership, and tactics, which can enhance their ability to lead in future conflicts.
- ❖ ***Review and Adapt Military Training, Doctrine, and Personnel Structures.*** Undertake a comprehensive review of military training, doctrine, and personnel structures to address gaps in readiness identified during recent conflicts. This review should focus on improving the overall competence of the armed forces, ensuring that they are prepared to respond effectively to sudden and complex threats. Tailored training programs, especially for small units, are vital for enhancing flexibility and effectiveness in response to specific challenges. Training programs should also be designed to adapt to evolving operational environments, including conventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and hybrid conflicts.
- ❖ ***Horizontal Knowledge Sharing and Knowledge Centers.*** Encouraging the exchange of knowledge and best practices between military units is crucial for continuous improvement. Establishing knowledge centers at the regimental level would serve as central hubs for collecting, analyzing, and integrating lessons from past conflicts into military training and doctrine. This fosters a culture of learning, adaptability, and operational relevance.
- ❖ ***Promote National Defence and Rebuild the “Will to Fight”.*** Political leaders should work to reinvigorate the collective “will to fight” within society. This could include strengthening national defence programs, military service initiatives, and public education campaigns that emphasize the importance of defending national freedom and security. The national education system should be adapted so as the process of instilling the “will to fight” to begin at an early age and be initiated through primary education institutions.

Conclusions



The discussions held during the 23rd CSWG Annual Conference have underscored the central role of military history, education, and training in shaping the adaptability and effectiveness of armed forces. By learning from the past, fostering a culture of knowledge exchange, and

adapting to the strategic realities of the present, military leaders can better prepare their forces for the challenges of the future. The policy recommendations coming out of the conference are designed to strengthen military institutions, improve operational readiness, and ensure that armed forces are equipped to protect national security in an increasingly unpredictable global environment.

As history continues to shape the present and future of warfare, it is essential that military and political leaders remain committed to learning from the past while proactively preparing for the challenges that lie ahead.

