



CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS AND POLITICAL MILITARY RELATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF THREAT RESILIENCY

Date: November 21, 2022

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

KEY EVENTS

On November 21, 2022, Dr. Carrie Lee, associate professor and Chair of the Department of National Security and Strategy at the US Army War College, presented on *Civil-Military Relations and Political Military Relations in the Context of Threat Resiliency*. The key points discussed included the importance of good civil-military relations, how they are critical in establishing resiliency, and some of the threats that require good civil-military relations.

NATURE OF DISCUSSION

Dr. Lee's presentation set forth how the shifting balance of power, new technologies, democratic backslides, and climate change affect civil and military interactions. She also discussed what civil-military relations (CMR) are, why they are important, and the requirements to maintain healthy CMR.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Lee argued that even though we tend to think we are in the most complex, unique, and rapidly changing era the world has ever seen, historically speaking, that is not the case because we now have a good idea of what trending challenges await in the future. However, Dr. Lee noted that we are still unprepared to face these threats.

Several security implications emerge as the balance of power shifts, information technology changes the speed and scope at which we communicate, democracy backslides all around the world, and climate change threatens humanity. With the shifting balance of power, the United States, Canada, and the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries may have

less global influence and thus be more susceptible to economic and military coercion. New technologies are changing the pace and speed of war, as well as the battlefield itself (e.g. new domains such as space, cyber, and information environment). Authoritarianism reduces stability and trustworthiness of international partners. Climate change affects humanity and how we interact. Additionally, Dr. Lee stated that these threats also have implications for democratic, societal, and infrastructure resiliency.

Arguably, these threats and challenges increasingly move us towards single points of failure and blur the line between civilian and military interactions. For example, cyber threats in the information environment blur interactions between civilian and military infrastructures. In terms of the constant shifting balance of power, states can enforce different types of coercion upon one another, so the effects are no longer contained in separate spheres. This can have significant effects on the civilian population as we have seen after the United States and Europe applied harsh economic sanctions on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. As a result, European civilians are now dealing with an energy crisis. In terms of climate change, military infrastructure, time, and attention, particularly when it comes to disaster relief, can be affected.

Dr. Lee asserted that as the line between civilian and military blurs and civil-military challenges increase, healthy civil-military relations (CMR) are going to be a critical part in establishing resiliency in a rapidly changing environment. Dr. Lee emphasized that CMR in this context meant high level relations between political and military elites, as well as military as an institution and society itself—how much does society trust the military, and how much does the military reflect and respect the society it is protecting.

Dr. Lee pointed out that CMR are important for a variety of reasons: 1) CMR affect decisions a state makes to engage in war; 2) CMR influence military recruitment and retention; 3) Democracy itself is protected by healthy CMR as armed forces remain loyal to the protection of the state; 4) Healthy CMR are essential to appropriate conduct and effectiveness in war, disaster relief, and other missions.

Dr. Lee posited that good CMR are about 1) civilian control and oversight of the military, as well as civilian leadership having the authority, influence, and willingness to shape the direction of foreign policy, rather than military officers forming military or foreign policy only for civilians to approve; 2) mutual trust and respect amongst political leaders/elected officials, enlisted military officers, and society; 3) democratic ethos (respect between the military and society—

understanding that its legitimacy comes from the society it serves) and; 4) military professionalism to self-regulate and hold itself accountable, promotions based on merit, and a strong code of ethics.

To conclude, Dr. Lee argued that the three threats that specifically require healthy CMR are the rise in political domestic violent extremism and instability, democratic backsliding and the threat to democratic norms, and climate change as more resources will be needed to improve infrastructure and the help of armed forces are increasingly required in disaster-relief.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- Although states now have a good idea of the potential threats they will face in the future, they remain unprepared; therefore, it is necessary to focus on building healthy civil-military relations.
- Security threats emerging from the shifting balance of power, new information technologies, backslide of democracy, and climate change move us towards single points of failure and blur the line between civil and military interactions.
- Healthy civil-military relations will be a critical part in establishing resiliency in a rapidly changing environment.
- Civil-military relations are important because they affect the decisions a state makes to engage in war, influence military recruitment and retention, protect democracy itself, and help fulfill military mandates and missions.
- The threats that require healthy civil-military relations are the rise in political domestic violent extremism, democratic backsliding and the threat to democratic norms, and climate change.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

© (CARRIE LEE, 2023)

Published by the Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare and Simon Fraser University

Available from: <https://jicw.org/>

The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare
Volume 5, Issue 3