

DOCUMENT No. 61: "Problems with the Policy of Safeguarding the Internal and External Security of the State, Their Status at Present, the Basic Ways to Resolve Them," Czechoslovakia's Plans for Future Changes in Military and National Security Policies, July 1968 (Excerpts)

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The State-Administrative Department of the CPCz Central Committee, headed by General Václav Prchlik, drafted this report in early July 1968. In its final form, the report would have provided the basis for changes in military and security policies scheduled to be discussed at the 14th CPCz Congress in September 1968.

Although the report states that Czechoslovakia "will take as a starting point its allied obligations before the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact," the Prchlik plan sought to redefine the whole nature of the alliance as well as Czechoslovakia's place within it. Internally, the report called for changing the "erroneous and obsolete premises" of Czechoslovak military doctrine, ending direct party control of the armed forces, and revamping the "illegal and inhumane" internal security apparatus. Externally, restrictions imposed by the Warsaw Pact, according to the authors, were contributing to the "deformations" and "recurrent crises" in civil-military relations in Czechoslovakia. These restrictions prevented the Czechoslovak leadership from developing "any conception of our own military doctrine," which would take full account of the country's "circumstances and capabilities" and would reject the "unrealistic and dangerous scenarios" that had long been the inspiration for the Pact's military doctrine.

Among those "scenarios" was nuclear war in Europe which, according to the report, would be "purely senseless" and would "bring about the total physical destruction of the ČSSR." At the time, the Soviet army had several secret agreements with Czechoslovakia entitling them to deploy nuclear weapons on Czechoslovak territory during an emergency and authorizing the Soviet Union to store nuclear warheads at three sites in western Czechoslovakia which were under construction at the time of the Prague Spring. The report's language implied that a military doctrine appropriate for Czechoslovakia would eschew nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare—a challenge to the most sensitive aspect of the Czech-Soviet military relationship.

Shortly before the invasion, a copy of this document was leaked to S. I. Prasolov, a counselor at the Soviet embassy, on a "highly confidential" basis by "Czechoslovak friends"—presumably from the Czechoslovak People's Army or State Security. The materials were then transmitted by the Soviet ambassador, S. V. Chervonenko, to a number of top Soviet officials, including Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Defense Minister Andrei Grechko, and the two most senior CPSU CC officials who were directly handling the crisis, Konstantin Katushev and Konstantin Rusakov. In his cover memorandum, marked "TOP SECRET," Chervonenko noted that the main author of the report was the "infamous General Prchlik."

(See also Documents Nos. 68, 69, and 70.)

SECRET

PROBLEMS WITH THE POLICY OF SAFEGUARDING THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY OF THE STATE, THEIR STATUS AT PRESENT, AND THE BASIC WAYS OF RESOLVING THEM

State-Administrative Department⁹⁰ of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party

1. Direction and Goals

I.1. In this report we examine the contemporary situation and current problems of the party's policy on defense and the protection of security. We seek to define the basic directions and main

⁹⁰ This was an alternative name for the Eighth Department, which Prchlik headed.

paths along which the further resolution of these problems must proceed. After refinement on the basis of further consultations or recommendations from party organs, the work will be the starting point for formulating decisions of the Extraordinary 14th Party Congress. Simultaneously it must permit a more precise elaboration of points of view regarding the content, methods of work, and organizational and personnel structure of party organs and other organizations in the military and security sphere.

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The report has been compiled on the basis of materials prepared by the Ministries of National Defense and Internal Affairs, with especial attention to the materials for their action programs.⁹¹ Assessments and documents of party committees, organs, and departments were used. When examining specific problems, we turned for help to certain comrade-activists. A significant contribution to the theoretical formulation of the problems examined here was made by the academic staff of the State-Administrative Department and others. This was particularly true when considering the results of the scientific-technical revolution and the revolution in the army, as well as their respective achievements, which have not been used in practice until now.

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2. The Existing Approach to and Principles for the Policy of the State's Internal and External Security

II.1. At the basis of the party's existing policy to the state's internal and external security are principles and activities that took shape at the beginning of the 1950s. In essence the problem here is the same as the problems in the whole Czechoslovak political system, which have been critically scrutinized from a methodological point of view at recent sessions of the CPCz CC.

The foundation for Czechoslovakia's existing defense system was laid down during the tensest period of the Cold War when there was a possibility of a military clash between the superpowers. Consequently, a strategy was adopted to defend socialism against imperialist aggression, a strategy that simultaneously must allow for a strategic offensive and a complete victory by the socialist revolutionary movement in Europe under the leadership of the Soviet Union. An especially relevant position, from this point of view is the one formulated by J. V. Stalin in January 1949 at a Moscow conference on international relation problems and the military tasks arising from them.⁹² One gets the impression that there has been no reevaluation of the coalition strategy worked out then, even though the conditions for its implementation have changed drastically.

For almost twenty years, Czechoslovak military strategy has been based on the notion of maximum expenditure of human and material reserves, often at very high rates and to the detriment of other important social demands. This has been the case even when international tension has significantly diminished and a policy of peaceful coexistence has gradually taken shape. One might say that this new state of affairs is only discernible in words, since in the economic and military spheres, despite some changes, the old approach still prevails. The ties of the coalition continued to be strengthened, particularly against an acute threat of aggression from German imperialism. But in fact this supposed threat was always a superfluous external factor, which served as a basis, on the one hand, for strengthening the unity of the socialist camp and, on the other, for justifying the extraordinary human and material resources that were demanded by the armed forces. The military factor in many respects compensated for the inadequate development of economic cooperation and other ties among the socialist countries.

⁹¹ This document is largely a compilation of the draft Action Programs of the National Defense Ministry and the Interior Ministry, which Prochlik's department supervised.

⁹² This is a reference to Stalin's speech proclaiming an irreconcilable struggle between the two "camps."

Such an approach became the source of political and ideological positions that embrace differences in historical development, differences in social-economic interests, and different levels of economic development in the individual countries. It reached the point where our participation in the events of 1956 and 1961 caused us to be dragged into a risky global policy, even though we were given insufficient opportunity to take part in the decisions on these very actions.⁹³

The party's military policy was not based on an analysis of our national and state needs and interests. For this reason, the CPCz CC Commission on Defense, despite all its efforts, was not successful in taking on board national and international interests. The commission was unable to expose the roots of the continual state of crisis between the defense system and other systems of society, even crises within the defense system itself. The attempt to gloss over these profound contradictions by direct control basically accounted for the preservation of the extraordinary forms and methods of leadership in the armed forces in the first half of the 1950s. It was also telling that the concept of building socialism, of international relations, and of proletarian internationalism, was still carried out along the mistaken and obsolete ideological-political bases of the Stalinist era. Hence, the leadership was limited to a certain degree by individual measures that were deficient both in their logic and resolution. For the above-mentioned reasons, the Commission on the Defense System of Czechoslovakia did not propose any changes when it announced its decision on 14 February 1967. This decision absolutely failed to correspond to the genuine national and state interests and in many respects was simply bizarre. The widespread disaffection in this regard within the ČLA at present is proof of how bad the decision was.

One of the key reasons for the lack of success of the Czechoslovak defense system was that it was not based on formulations of Czechoslovak military doctrine and basic decisions of Czechoslovak political and military strategy. When it was devised, it was based on operational tasks set forth by the Warsaw Pact command, without taking into account whether the state had the human and material capacity to execute them. This was possible because the implementation of the individual articles of the Warsaw Treaty was drastically different from what was set down on paper, to the point where it did not even correspond to the spirit of the treaty. This fact, which has no legal basis, was reflected above all in the lack of any conception of our own military doctrine. Every government should be responsible for this most important sphere of state authority on both the national and the international levels. This led to a violation of the equilibrium in our society and a deformation in the organization of our armed forces and their removal from politics. There arose a basic crisis in the military organism, as it was torn from the social structure of its own society. In the process, the military lost its national sense and the feeling of being needed by the society. This was even more pronounced in the higher command structure, from which all the other representative and executive organs were excluded. This could not help but produce a rupture of ties among the political, economic, and military aims of the state. This also led to difficulties in creating good relations, between especially young people and the defense of the state, military service, and the command staff. Finally, the direct leadership of the armed forces by the party (*de facto* by a narrow party-state organ or individual persons) could not help but have negative consequences for the party itself and its internal procedures.

II.2.2. These and other factors had a negative effect on the party's ability to devise a policy for safeguarding security. At the same time that a definite, albeit unsatisfactory, model of a defense system was worked out for the ČLA, there was no general formulation of a sense and purpose for security policy. In its present state the National Security Corps is living with the serious mistakes made in the organization of the armed forces after 1945 and 1948, especially concerning its leadership and training. Thousands of new workers in the Corps still study the

⁹³ The authors are referring to the November 1956 invasion of Hungary and the August 1961 Berlin crisis, in which the Warsaw Pact had at least a peripheral role (more of a role in the latter than in the former).

methods of investigation and other things by following old secret police methods, some of which were borrowed from German prisons (the intelligence department COV II).⁹⁴ This obviously has had a negative effect. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that during the struggle for political power, when the legal system was being formed and its activity was directed against occupiers, collaborators, and traitors, a hard-line position, especially at the beginning, was widely accepted. In those first postwar years some impermissible habits, norms, and approaches used by certain workers or groups of the Corps took shape and carried over into subsequent years.

The necessity to purge the organs of national security and recruit anew during the complex internal and international situation post February 1948, and especially after 1951, in addition to the majority of tasks that confronted them—meant that it was impossible to carry out any professional training of the Corps staff.⁹⁵ All the units of the Corps were ordered to help carry out decisive political directives from the central regime. The main criterion at that time was absolute devotion to the party, almost to the point of absurdity, and a sacrifice of one's own interests, and so forth. To this end, many crude mistakes were made while performing service duties and it failed to live up to its principled instructions. Under qualified and armored agents meant that many of them used unacceptable pressure tactics and force during their investigations. Essentially these same factors accounted for the inefficacy of the Corps. Results were evaluated in a mechanical way. Individual agents, as well as entire groups, wanted to achieve results at any price. One of the main reasons for using secret police methods was once again the lack of qualified specialists in the field, so they were unable to penetrate hostile intelligence service centers.

The basic reason for all this is that the party did not have a comprehensive policy for safeguarding security. The measures adopted after 1945–48 did not take sufficient account of the changes that take place in the course of development of a socialist society. They were subordinated to ideology, particularly to the unilateral pronouncement on the relentless intensification of the class struggle and the necessity of searching for evil within one's own ranks.⁹⁶

The specific consequences of this crude approach became especially apparent as they involved the essence of power. A one-sided evaluation of the political situation and the sociopolitical changes in society led to a consolidation of ruling habits which primarily relied on the instruments of power. The abuse of these organs during the internal political struggle rather than the use of political forms of leadership, prevented meaningful criticism and the correction of existing mistakes.

...

... The leading role of the party in this sphere went completely unchallenged. Among other things this resulted in a tendentious evaluation of the political situation, the adoption of political evaluations instead of genuine state security interests, and the manipulation of statistics. ...

...

An entire series of reorganizational measures in the national security organs inhibited their further development and successful performance. The first measures were adopted in 1954 in accordance with the organizational model of the Soviet police and included the elimination of the anti-crime squad, which fundamentally reduced the effectiveness of the struggle against traditional criminal activity. . . . Every reorganization in the Ministry of Internal Affairs always led to the strengthening of state security organs' positions to the detriment of the administrative

⁹⁴ COV II was the Second Department of the State Security apparatus, whose nominal responsibilities included counterintelligence against foreigners on Czechoslovak territory.

⁹⁵ This passage refers to the period in which the political repression and show trials in Czechoslovakia reached their height (1949–1954).

⁹⁶ Stalin's dictum held that the class struggle intensifies (and hence the need for the suppression of "class enemies" increases) as socialism evolves into communism.

bodies and other functions in the ministry.⁹⁷ This was one of the decisive reasons that, despite criticism and periodic changes, there was no qualitative change in the understanding of the functions, methods, and style of work; and for the same reason nobody who bore responsibility for illegal and inhumane activities was sacked.

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When the whole regime was controlled by an individual who had his own subjective whims, it was impossible to speak of a comprehensive, systematic framework in the intelligence service. The old ties between the intelligence service and state and economic organs, as well as with public organizations and individual citizens, were reflected in the centralized and bureaucratic model of the state.

In the course of the last twenty years leadership and control over party organizations in the intelligence service by the highest party organs meant administrative interference in the security organs. In essence, there was really no leadership to speak of. The intelligence service was formally subordinated to the first secretary and president of the republic, who never voiced any concerns at sessions either of the CPCz CC or of the government. However, he himself did not actually supervise the work. For this reason, the intelligence service was forced to find its own way, to satisfy the demands of different departments, and to recommend the duties it would carry out. In this way, a permanent situation of ambiguity arose concerning the way its work was directed and its methodology and organization. There was also no control over it by elected party organs. For this reason, the intelligence service was not able to operate as a true information bureau. The security organs were extremely secretive when it came to the party, state, and legislative organs and repeatedly served as the main arm of the repressive apparatus.

The socialist state did not evaluate at any stage of its development the existence of its own intelligence services and did not include them organizationally in the system of the Czechoslovak foreign service in a way that meant that they could fully serve the public interests of the state.

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3. The Current Status of the Czechoslovak People's Army and the National Security Corps

3.1 We are only able to provide a preliminary assessment of the general situation in the Czechoslovak People's Army after the December–January plenum of the CPCz CC. . . .

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In recent years the situation in the army was characterized by huge delays when it came to the solution of any basic theoretical and operational problems. The issue of the correlation between the country's defense demands and its actual capabilities was not clarified. Over a prolonged period, shortcomings in the organizational and leadership systems accumulated. The basic tension was caused by the fundamental disproportions between the demands, based on the obligations stipulated by the Warsaw Pact, and the conditions of their fulfillment. And also by the failure of its technical wing, combat equipment, and its support equipment to take account of the human factor. Serious problems accrued regarding the technical equipment of the whole system of organization and leadership. Frequent changes in the general concept of the organization of the army created a situation of permanent reorganization, which inevitably led to ill thought-out changes in the organization of branches of the forces. The technical level achieved and the structure of the armed forces were not commensurate with the norms demanded. And above all the quality and technological parameters of certain types of equipment and combat

⁹⁷ State Security (*Státní bezpečnost*, or StB) forces were headed by a deputy minister, who reported to and acted on behalf of the CPCz CC first secretary.

technology did not meet the standards of modern warfare (the air defense forces, anti-tank defenses, military aviation units, classical artillery, communications equipment, etc.). The problems just mentioned are connected, among other things, with the failure to work out ways of developing the Czechoslovak defense industry and its ties with other treaty member states.

The modernization of the army and the huge expenditures involved took place, to a large degree, at the expense of the living standards of the soldiers. For this reason this must be solved as soon as possible. The above-mentioned shortcomings weaken the preconditions for the successful operations of the forces in case of the sudden outbreak of war.

In the course of the army's organization, a whole series of major financial problems will arise. The basic problem is that expenditure on equipment is rapidly growing in light of the relentless increase in prices. The preservation of the army at its present size and its current financial state is extremely difficult to maintain.⁹⁸

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An important task is the search for a positive solution to the system of political supervision and political leadership in the army. The existing system is a mechanistic and ill-conceived conglomeration of very different and mutually incompatible types of activity within the party-political organs. This system does not accord either with the demands to strengthen the leading role of the party on the basis of new principles or with demands for leadership of the army under modern conditions.

The party-political organs have gradually overcome the depression of the first months and have more actively begun to organize political work with people. They inform servicemen in a quicker and more comprehensive way and spur on their activity in the spirit of the CPCz Action Program. The first steps toward the democratization of the leadership of party work were carried out. At the party conferences, in the spirit of the CPCz CC Presidium's decision, preparatory committees were set up and have begun their work. . . .

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Another characteristic tendency of the current political situation in the army is the gradual formation of a unity of views and a unified position in connection with the most important social and state issues.

This refers above all to the full support that the process of democratization in the society and in party life, the federal arrangement of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the fair solution to the nationality question enjoy. Categorical demands are being expressed for a split in the party in order to get rid of those who were responsible for deformations in the past, especially those members of the CPCz CC who compromised themselves by their activities. The necessity of the unity and mutual cooperation between the ČSSR and the Soviet Union and other socialist states is fully understood.

Although the majority of servicemen subscribe to a united point of view on the above-mentioned questions, there are still discrepancies and even contradictions that emerge, especially concerning the way to resolve them. Some express views that border on anarchism and are devoid of good sense. Others express a wait-and-see position. These include servicemen who have a negative view of their own situation and reject the process of democratization.

An important factor that markedly affected the political situation in the army was the development of public opinion vis-à-vis the army.

Strong pressure and a mass of published material evoked feelings of hostility in part of the command staff and channeled public sentiment both against individuals and against the army as a whole. Some commanders encountered physical violence. The command staff, which was

⁹⁸ Starting in the spring of 1968, the military press in Czechoslovakia had been featuring a lively debate about defense spending and economic tradeoffs.

blamed for all internal shortcomings, directed sharp criticism at the political apparatus. Gradually these hostilities faded. At present the public's relationship to the army is more level-headed and only occasionally becomes excessive.

3.2. The situation in the National Security Corps is complicated. The State Security service (counterintelligence) at present is in a state of crisis, both politically and in its work. This can be explained above all by the serious mistakes committed in the past, for which the former leaders of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and State Security organs bear responsibility. This includes direct ties with the previous political system of personal power and the negative consequences of direct party control over this sphere.

The State Security service, from its outset, was arranged on the basis of the old view that its work constitutes one of the pillars of the socialist system.⁹⁹ This false thesis corresponded with the spirit of the administrative-centralized system, which was condemned by the January plenum of the CPCz CC. The service had a highly privileged place as a specific organ of the party not only in relation to other parts of the executive apparatus of the National Security Corps, but also in relation to organs of the procuracy and judiciary. As a result of this, these organs were not genuinely controlled by the party leadership or socialist society, and they committed violations of the law with impunity, even after 1953. State Security organs did not often take into account the basic principles of professionalism, science, law and legality, socialist ethics and morality, and did not take account of the political consequences of the results of its work.

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In accordance with the party's Action Program, it is necessary to begin with an objective and scientifically-based analysis of the intentions of the foreign enemy and the necessary risk in connection with preserving the country's security. Precise criteria must be defined, as must the methodology and approach to this sort of problem.

Exposing these intentions to public scrutiny and analysis demands coordinated work between the security organs and other organizations. One must have knowledge of corresponding military situations, and one also needs an apparatus for observations, analyzing hostile propaganda in the framework of psychological warfare, etc. These tasks go beyond the framework of the functions of the security organs and demand coordinated leadership within the framework of the entire state apparatus.

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4. Basic Problems and Directions When Formulating the Party's Policy in Promoting the Internal and External Security of the State

A serious analysis of the contemporary situation clarifies the directions one should go in studying the problems of how to preserve the internal and external security of the state.

With regard to the country's defense:

4.1.1. In accord with the clarification of the general political doctrine of our socialist society, the elaboration of a Czechoslovak military doctrine as a brief formula of the country's military missions and needs is both a theoretical and an ideological precondition for a military-political strategy and the kind of Czechoslovak defense system that arises from it. The formulation of a military doctrine would be based on a comprehensive balance of the capabilities and demands of our state and on its dynamic development and the interests of the development of European socialism. Above all, one must realize the necessity for fundamental political, economic, and

⁹⁹ The authors are alluding to the Stalinist concept that evolved out of the bolsheviks' view that the security organs were the "sword and shield" of the revolution and the socialist state.

other changes in our society. Conclusions based on the study of the consequences of the scientific-technological revolution in separate spheres of public life must be employed as much as possible.

In this sense the military doctrine will be defined by a compromise between demands and real capabilities, between the hoped-for growth in scientific achievements, including the military sphere, and the actual development of technology and the necessity of continually deploying the most effective defense system. Further, it is worth adding that the demands placed on the Czechoslovak defense system are based primarily on an earlier operational plan of the Czechoslovak army. An army which gave short shrift to both the human and material capabilities of the state, led to an irresolvable contradiction between the demands of the armed forces and the capabilities of fulfilling those demands. This had serious negative consequences for the further development of our society.

In the future the doctrine will also take as its starting point the alliance obligations to the Soviet Union and the other Warsaw Pact partners. Simultaneously, it will recommend that the circumstances and capabilities of individual countries be acknowledged in the decisions taken by the alliance. Such considerations are not strategic concepts, but yet we must not simply passively accept them.

In essence, Czechoslovak defense policy strives to be a policy of European security, a policy that helps ease international tensions, and a policy of friendly cooperation with all who have a direct interest in this. It strives to be a policy of close cooperation with all progressive forces. It must remain a valuable instrument of the whole Czechoslovak policy.¹⁰⁰ It must neither understate nor overstate the danger posed by the adversary, which in the end facilitates the development of conservative tendencies in both socialism and capitalism. It also does not underestimate the danger posed by different military confrontations, especially between opposing sociopolitical systems.

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It is necessary when formulating the state interests and needs of the ČSSR in the military sphere to encompass different versions of situations and to get rid of unrealistic scenarios and dangers of the past.

From the point of view of constituting Czechoslovak military doctrine as the most secure and most salutary unified approach, this is a method of simple logic. The notion of a general war in Europe that involves the massive use of nuclear weapons is, from Czechoslovakia's point of view, purely senseless. This form of war would bring about the total physical destruction of the ČSSR, irrespective of the scale of losses to its armed forces and also, ultimately, irrespective of the final results of the war.¹⁰¹

For this reason the aim should be to achieve a pragmatic stability of the state's defense system and the army's structure, a stability that flows from political demands and a dual goal: to prevent excessive danger on the part of the potential adversary, and to preserve the existence and sovereignty of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and in that way realize the necessary contribution of the ČSSR to the coalition, in the sense of fulfilling its internationalist tasks.

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¹⁰⁰ The formulations in this paragraph not only were at variance with the Warsaw Pact's general approach, but were particularly galling to East German officials, who had long suspected that Czechoslovak leaders were seeking to establish "friendly cooperation" with the FRG.

¹⁰¹ In 1965, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia secretly concluded two agreements on deploying Soviet nuclear weapons on Czech territory during an emergency, and a broader agreement authorized the Soviets to store warheads at three future sites in the western sectors of the country. Construction of the sites and deployment of the warheads were due to be completed by 1967, but last-minute delays meant that the facilities had not yet entered service when the Prague Spring began. This passage of the report, therefore, cast that agreement in doubt, as well as challenged the position of the Warsaw Pact at the time.

Guidance of the development of the army is only on the basis of simple logic, empirical analysis, and historical analogies, and if one speaks only of the interests of the coalition without taking account of one's own interests, that ultimately will contradict the interests of the coalition as well.

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4.1.2. In connection with the prospective concept of the development of the country's defense and security, one must accurately define the relationship between the armed forces and the security corps.

We start with the assumption that the party, through its activities and policy, is struggling for a leading role in society. In the political system that currently exists, there are conditions for relatively independent operations and activity by each of its constituent parts and individual citizens. If one speaks about the sphere of the internal and external security of the state, the party rejects direct leadership over the armed forces. The use of the principle of direct leadership in peaceful circumstances is one of the signs of the command-administrative method of leadership. In the process, of course, one would not have to go so far as to slacken one's attention to such questions. The party, on the contrary, will seek to bolster its political influence over the armed forces and security corps. The interests of society demand that leadership of separate parts of the armed forces be unified and clear, and that it be carried out in the same way that political leadership is exercised.

...