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MILITARY THOUGHT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES OF EUROPE IN 1918–1940

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Military Thought and its Transformation
in the Newly Independent States of Europe in 1918–1940

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Military attachés and officers from allied countries are observing the Polish cavalry manoeuvres near Brody in Volhynia. In the centre are Estonian Cavalry Inspector Colonel Arthur von Buxhoeveden (with binoculars) and Chief of Staff of Estonian Armed Forces Major General Juhan Tõrvand. August 1925. Photo by Stefan Plater-Zyberk. National Archives of Estonia, RA, ERA.1131.1.149

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Contents

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Introduction

Mari-Leen Tammela

Yearbook No. 13 (19) of the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum includes articles on the development and transformation of military thought between the two world wars, and on military thinkers of the European countries that became independent during or after World War I. This theme was the in the focus at the 14th Annual Baltic Military History Conference, *Military Thought and its Transformation in the Newly Independent States of Europe in 1918–1940*, held in the autumn of 2023 in Tartu. The conference was organised by the Estonian War Museum, the Baltic Defence College, and the Estonian Military Academy.

World War I resulted in a profound transformation of previous concepts of warfare. While military thinking still lingered in the 19th century, rapid technological advances had brought entirely new challenges to the battlefield, such as positional warfare and the industrial-scale destructiveness of total war. As the great powers faced the urgent need to reconsider existing principles of warfare, the newly independent countries, born amidst the cannon fire of the world war, did not have the luxury of revising their armies or military thinking – these had to be built from scratch. The challenges were similar for the Second Polish Republic, which had restored its independence, as well as for the newly independent Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Czechoslovakia. The creation of armed forces was expensive, placing these young and, for the most part, small nations before difficult choices, further complicated by the continual rapid development of military technology. The war machines and aircraft acquired by these small states at the end of World War I and in early 1920s had become hopelessly obsolete by the 1930s. At the same time, economic limitations hindered their ability to keep pace with latest technological innovations.

How did theoretical military thought develop in the newly independent countries between the two world wars? What were their role models, and what challenges to development were posed by the absence or prolonged interruption of their own national military science? How did military theory keep pace with technological advancements, and how was this reflected, for instance, in ideas of developing separate service branches and types of weaponry? How did societal processes, including political and economic changes, influence military theory and the development of military thought? How receptive were military personnel in these young states to new ideas, and what influenced them, or what were the factors shaping military theorists in the interwar period? These were only some of the topics that were discussed at the 2023 conference, now explored in this collected volume.

This yearbook publishes six studies on the evolution and transformation of military thought, based on presentations at the 14th Annual Baltic Military History Conference.

Michal Cáp, researcher in the Historical and Documentation Department of the Military History Institute, Prague, outlines in his article the broader institutional framework in which Czechoslovak officers published their military-theoretical texts. He demonstrates how officer-authored writings, despite undergoing censorship by military authorities, contributed both to advancing military readiness and significantly shaping national identity, indicating that military-theoretical debates were part of nation-building.

Markus Wahlstein, senior lecturer at the Finnish National Defence University, analyses in his article how threat assessments regarding the Red Army influenced the development of Finland's defence system and related military thought in the 1920s. He concludes that the outlines of the tactical-defensive foundation established in this period are still traceable in Finland's contemporary defence system.

Assistant Professor Tomasz Gajownik from the Institute of History at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, provides an overview of the factors that shaped military theoretical positions

in interwar Poland, with Marshal Józef Piłsudski as the central figure. The article analyses the enduring impact Piłsudski and his authority had on the development of Poland's military potential, and explains the state of affairs at the end of the 1930s.

Following up on the same theme in the Estonian context, Colonel (ret.) Aarne Ermus, lecturer at the Estonian Military Academy, focuses on the Republic of Estonia's defence capabilities in the second half of the 1930s as exemplified by the character and activity of General Johan Laidoner. Colonel Ermus examines the extent to which Laidoner's views on national defence, sometimes articulated as an 'active defence' doctrine, were reflected in the State Defence Modernisation Plan approved by the National Defence Council in 1938. Being the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces in the authoritarian period following the 1934 coup, Laidoner possessed great authority and, presumably, his views would have been particularly influential, especially considering his experience. How did he utilise this power for the advancement of national defence?

The increasing threat to national security posed by two totalitarian major powers – Germany and the Soviet Union – was perceptible even to those who did not live in a *cordon sanitaire* country. Using the writings of one of the most prominent Dutch military theorists of his time, Michal Calmeyer, Professor Wim Klinkert of the Netherlands Defence Academy in Breda explores the experience of a small state regarding theoretical discussions on reinforcement of national security. His paper also reveals an intriguing discourse on how state neutrality framed and restricted public debates concerning alternatives to neutrality and the search for potential allies.

Visions of future warfare are discussed, to a greater or lesser extent, in almost all of the contributions. However, this is the central theme of the essay by Assistant Professor Peter Mitchell of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and Major Tanel Tatsi of the Estonian Defence Forces. Analysing Estonia's military preparedness in the interwar period, they also direct the reader's attention towards the future, attempting to formulate lessons the Estonian Defence Forces might learn from past shortcomings and highlight the important

aspects for the development of a defence strategy, given that Estonia's geographic conditions and the historical adversary have not changed over the past century.

Headed by Lead Research Fellow Dr Igor Kopõtin, the Estonian Military Academy launched the research project "Estonian Military Thought 1920–1940" in 2021, aiming to map the history, origins, and influencers of Estonian military thought. This project has now yielded initial results, with the publication of five collected volumes or brief monographs focusing on military theorists such as Lieutenant General Aleksei Baiov and General Johan Laidoner, or on specific fields such as naval and aerial warfare and moto-mechanisation. Toomas Hiio, Research Director of the Estonian War Museum, provides a thorough scientific review of two brief monographs published in this project – one addressing the development of naval military thought and related individuals, the other examining the role and influence of professor and former Imperial Russian Army Lieutenant General Aleksei Baiov on development of Estonian national military thought.

MILITARY THOUGHT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION IN THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT STATES OF EUROPE IN 1918–1940

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The Challenges of Our Defence: Military Knowledge and Officers' Writings in Interwar Czechoslovakia

Michal Cáp

A central focus of this study is the process of knowledge creation and circulation of military texts in interwar Czechoslovakia and the role of professional officers in it. Their writings were circulated through books, professional journals and the daily press, but their ability to publish was managed by the military administration. At first, these publications provided a platform for the articulation of the role of the Czechoslovak military in an often antimilitary-minded society. Later, they functioned especially as instruments of military preparedness propaganda. This article aims to demonstrate both the societal context and the control over officers' writings, not only in discussing military thought but also in bolstering society's resolve, thereby contributing to the military culture of fledgling Czechoslovakia in the interwar period.

Introduction: Enter Emanuel Moravec, officer, writer and knowledge actor

In 1937, under the shadow of a military threat to the Czechoslovak Republic from Nazi Germany, the seventh edition (in less than a year) of the book *Úkoly naší obrany* (The Challenges of Our Defence) was published. It was written under the pseudonym Stanislav Yester by Colonel Emanuel Moravec, who would later become infamous as one of the most prominent collaborators with the Nazi regime. In the 1930s, however, he was known as the most prolific Czechoslovak

commentator and writer on military issues, a lecturer at the War College, and a promoter of military preparedness.[1] The book itself was published by the Association of the Czechoslovak Officers (Svaz československeho důstojnictva), a corporate group closely aligned with the Ministry of National Defence and official state policy.

Aimed at the wider public, it contained chapters on the future of war, military theory, strategy in a wider societal context, the roles of politics and policy, and military history. Its opening, though, dealt with the interrelation of the army[2] and the various types of print media – including the press – and described the perceived two-way road on which the knowledge must pass back and forth in a democratic state.

> The army proper does not need uncritical admiration, nor does it need the flat-out defiance of the unthinking. Our army needs to have a healthy and rational understanding of its purpose and meaning, to be what it is, the blood of the people – A citizen who loves his country must honour the task of the army, and the army, in turn, must understand the feelings and aspirations of the citizen and value his convictions.[3]

The Challenges of Our Defence, from which this article borrows its title, illustrates specifics of interwar Czechoslovak military culture and its relationship with a civilian society in an era of total wars. As was the case in other interwar states,[4] Czechoslovakia's intellectual

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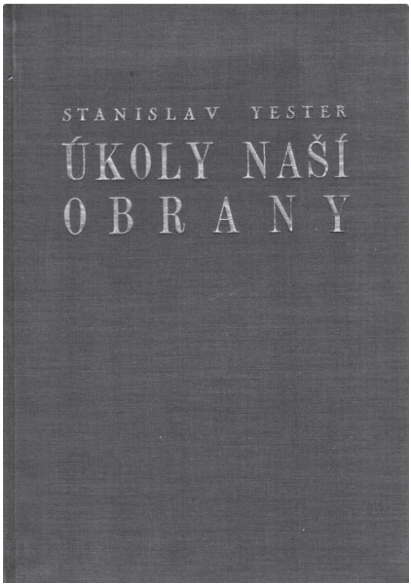
[1] Jiří Pernes, *Až na dno zrady* (Praha: Themis, 1997), 93–118, on his publication activities see Michal Cáp "Konštrukcia profesionálneho dôstojníka v dielach Emanuela Moravca", *Vita trans historiam,* edited by Mária Molnárová and Viktória Rigová (Nitra: Filozofická Fakulta Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2022), 172–173.

[2] The official name in use was *Československá branná moc*, meaning Czechoslovak armed forces, which included ground and air forces (the small Danube flotilla was operated by the engineer battalion), as well as support services. However, it was used interchangeably even in official documents with *Československé vojsko/Československá armáda*, meaning Czechoslovak army, understood to consist of all the above, even the air force.

[3] Stanislav Yester, *Úkoly naší obrany* (Praha: Svaz čs. důstojnictva, 1937), 11.

[4] See Azar Gat, *Fascist and Liberal Visions of War: Fuller, Liddell Hart, Douhet, and Other Modernists* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period,* edited by Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). On the debates in smaller European states, see Wim Klinkert, *Dutch Military Thought, 1919–1939. A Small Neutral State's Visions of Modern War* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).



Úkoly naší obrany *(The Challenges of Our Defence), written by Emanuel Moravec under the pseudonym Stanislav Yester, was one of the most popular books published by the Association of Czechoslovak Officers concerning military thinking and especially military preparedness in the interwar era. The edition pictured here was the seventh in less than a year after its first publication in 1937. Source: Author's Archive*

officers of the time wrote not only about narrow military themes and not only in technical and professional journals, but also reached outwards, towards civilian society. This paper describes the sociocultural and institutional basis of the production of these texts and therefore aims not to describe the contents of interwar Czechoslovak military thought,[5] but to illuminate the process of circulating specific military knowledge. It is inspired by the approaches of the history of knowledge, with "knowledge" being a programmatically nebulous term that combines the approaches of the history of science with cultural and intellectual history.[6] This attempts to delineate the various forms military knowledge could take, how it

[5] The main themes of Czechoslovak military thought are covered in Stanislav Polnar, *Vývoj a proměny československého strategického myšlení* (Brno: Univerzita obrany, 2023), 20–32.

[6] *Forms of Knowledge: Developing the History of Knowledge,* edited by Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2020), 9–11, 14–16, also cf. *Circulation of Knowledge Explorations in the History of Knowledge,* edited by Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018) and *Knowledge Actors: Revisiting Agency in the History of Knowledge,* edited by Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2023).

was produced and circulated, and who the knowledge-producing actors, both individuals and institutions, were. In this article, there is a focus on the infrastructure supporting the process.[7] The text thus aims to describe the publishing platforms available to Czechoslovak officers, institutional processes of text production and the role of the military administration, generally understood to be the Ministry of National Defence itself.

In the Czechoslovak context, Moravec is often seen as an archetype of officer-intellectual, in part due to his fame and later notoriety, but also thanks to his sheer output. He authored several books and brochures, published numerous articles in a variety of military-affiliated journals, and was a resident military expert at influential civilian newspapers and magazines.[8] He was not alone, with other more notable examples such as Colonel Rudolf Smetánka,[9] Major Richard Wolf,[10] generals Vojtěch Vladimír Klecanda and Silvestr Bláha[11] and Major Jiří Letov.[12] But these were just a few better-known men from among the many officer-writers who answered the call to produce military texts to improve Czechoslovak military knowledge.[13] They exemplified a trend of officers in European armies engaging intellectually in military affairs – a result of the professionalisation of the officer corps in the late 19th century.[14]

Until the second half of the 20th century, the officers were dominant in producing writings on military topics. Dramatic change after

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7 *Forms of Knowledge*, 16.

8 Cáp, "Konštrukcia profesionálneho dôstojníka" 175–176.

9 Prokop Tomek, "Rudolf Smetánka", *Kalendárium VHÚ*, 18 May 2018, https://www.vhu.cz/rudolf-smetanka/, 15 February 2024.

10 Michal Cáp, *Vojenská história v medzivojnovom Československu* (theses defended at Praha: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 2019), 65.

11 Polnar, *Vývoj a proměny*, 20–21, 29–30.

12 Markus Pape, *Sólo Jiřího Letova* (Praha: Triáda, 2019), 31–65.

13 MNO Prezídium 1924–1927, Inv.č. 10560, Sign. 8/1/32, karton 626, *Podpora voj. písemnictví a odborné literature – pokyny náčelníka hl. štábu.*1–3, for distribution through official channels ZVV Košice, karton 1, *Čs. voj. písemnictví – výzva ke spolupráci*, 19 November 1926, 436.

14 Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge II: From the Encyclopaedia to Wikipedia* (Oxford: Polity, 2012), 221.

the totalisation of warfare during and in the aftermath of the First World War expanded interest in military matters. In central Europe, after the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire and the creation of successor states such as Czechoslovakia, officers wrote not only to discrete professional journals but also to a wider public. The officers, with their professional competence, were among the best prepared to play the role of military experts for the benefit of a whole society, aspiring to be teachers of the nation, as opposed to their Habsburg predecessors, who were cast as "latter-day knights".[15]

As the first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk put it:

> True, the modern democratic officer must be a teacher, but therefore he must teach himself. A teacher who does not learn is worth nothing. But, as said, that is not enough. An officer is not only a teacher of knowledge, but an officer must also be a steady leader and a true model of military prowess, of military manhood, especially he must be a role model in danger, in war. Of course, also in a non-war, whenever there is a more difficult situation where strategic acumen and decision-making are needed.[16]

This was an aspirational rather than an accurate image of the new "democratic" officer. But Masaryk was serious about the need for the officer corps to undertake intellectual activity. For example, he personally instructed Moravec to write a scientific yet propagandistic book about Czechoslovakia's military and society.[17] This thinking illustrates the possibilities that became available to officers in a newly created mid-sized state like the Republic of Czechoslovakia.

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[15] Cf. István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

[16] *Cesta demokracie. I, Projevy, články, rozhovory 1918–1920,* edited by Vojtěch Fejlek and Richard Vašek (Praha: Masarykův ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2003), 101.

[17] Pernes, *Až na dno*, 96–98. This intervention led to the publication of two books: Emanuel Moravec, *Vojáci a doba* (Praha: Svaz československého důstojnictva, 1934) and Emanuel Moravec, *Obrana státu* (Praha: Svaz československých důstojníků, 1935), from the same publisher as the later *Úkoly naší obrany.*

Colonel of the General Staff Emanuel Moravec, despite later gaining infamy as a notorious Nazi collaborator, was by far the most prolific and well-known military writer of interwar Czechoslovakia. Photo from 1935. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Much of the historiography on the interwar Czechoslovak officer corps has focused on personal biographies, memoirs and sometimes outright hagiographies of individual actors.[18] More analytical monographs generally deal with political and structural aspects of the military, such as nationalities policy, democratisation efforts and the influence of the Legionary narrative. They are usually only parts of broader monographs on warfare and society, chief among those being the works of Martin Zückert[19] and Ivan Šedivý.[20]

Michal Horejší's master's thesis on the Association of Czechoslovak Officer Corps provides a basic outline of its publishing practices and interactions with the Ministry of National Defence.[21] Karel Straka has

[18] Those concerning officer-writers such as Moravec (Pernes, *Až na dno),* or Letov (Papé, *Sólo*) offer some insights into their motivations to produce the military knowledge, but they often suffer from the typically Czechoslovak limitations of such biographies, focusing disproportionally on the subjects' experiences from the two world wars.

[19] Martin Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität: Die tschechoslowakische Armee und ihre Nationalitätenpolitik 1918–1938* (Munich: Verlag Oldenbourg, 2006).

[20] Marie Koldinská and Ivan Šedivý, *Válka a armáda v českých dějinách* (Praha: NLN – Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2008).

[21] Michal Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva, organizace, vývoj a činnost v letech 1920–1938* (thesis defended at Filozofická Fakulta Univerzita Karlova, 2003).

done important work on the organisation of interwar Czechoslovak military historical institutions and their cooperation with political actors.[22] Especially valuable is his research on the last years (1936–38) of the Military Scientific Institute and its plans to expand Czechoslovak military preparedness through systemic reform of its goals and organisation.[23] Czech "non-military" historiography of science and knowledge generally passes over the military press[24] and military scientific institutions, or mentions them only in general outlines, such as overviews of Czech scientific institutions and scholarly societies Bohemia docta.[25]

Czechoslovak state, society and military knowledge

Czechoslovak military *písemnictví* ("literature", "body of texts" or just "writings")[26] and the role of professional officers in it is, of course, part of the transnational discussion of military innovation and thoughts in the interwar era.[27] But the political, societal and cultural context is needed to grasp how this military knowledge was produced and distributed.

The Czechoslovak Republic emerged in 1918 out of the flames of the First World War, from the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Its independence was due to many factors, notably to the ability of its foreign resistance, headed by Masaryk, its first president, to gain recognition from the Entente powers. Their success was in

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[22] Karel Straka, "Památník osvobození (1929–1939) a jeho předchůdci", *Historie a vojenství: časopis Vojenského historického ústavu* 58, no 3 (2009): 32–64.

[23] Karel Straka, *Souvislosti vědy a výzkumu s obranou Československé republiky. Vojenský ústav vědecký v letech 1936–1938* (Praha: Ministerstvo obrany ČR, 2006).

[24] It is completely ignored in the otherwise seminal work, Barbora Osvaldová and Jana Čeňková. *Česká publicistika mezi dvěma světovými válkami* (Praha: Academia, 2017).

[25] *Bohemia Docta. The Historical Roots of Science and Scholarship in the Czech Lands,* edited by Alena Míšková et al. (Praha: Academia, 2018).

[26] Vojenské ústavy 1919–1939, č.j. 19., karton 1, *Patnáct let Vojenského ústav vědeckého*, 2–3, cf. ZVV Košice, karton 1, *Čs. Voj. Písemnictví – výzva ke spolupráci*, 19 November 1926, 436.

[27] Polnar, *Vývoj a proměny*, 20–31, cf. Gat. *Fascist and Liberal Visions,* Murray and Millet, *Military Innovation.*

significant part due to the Czechoslovak Legions, a sizeable volunteer armed force recruited mainly from the Czech and Slovak prisoners of war of the Austro-Hungarian army.[28] The so-called Legionaries became the main bearers of the republic's culture of victory,[29] and their rights as war veterans (unlike for those who served until the end in the Austro-Hungarian army) were almost exclusively recognised.[30] They became politically dominant in the new army.[31] It was not by chance that many of the officially supported military writers, such as Moravec and Bláha, came from their ranks.

From its founding until the surrender to the conditions of the Munich Agreement of 30 September 1938, Czechoslovakia was a parliamentary republic with strong presidential influence, due to the overwhelming presence of its founding father figure, Masaryk. This was facilitated by a cross-party (and informal) support group known as "the Castle" (a reference to the seat of the president in Prague Castle). It was also supported by society by the formation of a cult of personality centred on Masaryk as an enlightened "philosopher on a throne".[32] The Castle was able to mobilise the influence of powerful state and civic society institutions, journals and individuals to create what was described as the myth of Czechoslovakia as a progressive, liberal, tolerant and democratic state.[33]

This had its military dimension, in the idea of a so-called democratic army – not in the sense of the army not being a completely hierarchical institution, but as an ideology opposed to the old regime, dynastic army of the Habsburg Empire, from which Czechoslovakia

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[28] Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914–1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 37–56.

[29] James Krapfl, "Sites of memory, sites of rejoicing. The Great War in Czech and Slovak Cultural History", *Remembrance and Solidarity. Studies in 20th Century European History,* no 2 (2014): 109–146.

[30] Václav Šmidrkal, "The Defeated in a Victorious State: Veterans of the Austro-Hungarian Army in the Bohemian Lands and Their (Re)mobilization in the 1930s", *Zeitgeschichte* 47, no 1 (2020): 81–105.

[31] Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee und staatlicher Realität*, 80–95.

[32] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 53, 119–132.

[33] Ibid., 57–94.

and its army were born.[34] Many writers repeatedly elucidated this point and defended it against the possible misunderstanding that "democratic" meant "anarchic", or even "antimilitaristic".[35]

But the First Czechoslovak Republic was riven by vicious party politics, often opposed to the Castle. It had inherited from Austria-Hungary a political party system defined by class and nationality, along with a vibrant civil society associative culture,[36] and vast media ecosystem split along party lines. The idea of Austria-Hungary as a prison of the nations must, at least for its Austrian part, be relegated to the dustbin of historiographic and political interpretations. We must remember that, due to its multinational population, Czechoslovakia can be seen as a miniature Habsburg state in terms of nationality.[37] At the same time, it was considered a nation-state of Czechoslovaks"[38] by a Czech political elite and the country became firmly Czech-dominated.[39]

Czechoslovakia was a product and proponent of the Versailles system, to which it owed its existence because that system established it as a victor state of the Great War. Czechoslovak citizens who considered themselves Germans, Hungarians or Poles were limited by both democratic and less-than-ideally democratic mechanisms. The participation of Slovaks and Ruthenes was also problematic, as was their incorporation into the unified Czechoslovak narrative, which included the Legionary narrative and the idea of the Czechoslovak army.[40] By 1938, over 90% of professional officers were Czech,[41] and with a few exceptions, all the military writings, journals and books were published in Czech.

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[34] Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda,* 145–146.

[35] Ibid., 281–284.

[36] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 83.

[37] Ibid., 16–17.

[38] Elisabeth Bakke, "Conceptions of Czechoslovakism among Czech politicians in government inauguration debates 1918–1938", edited by Adam Hudek et al, *Czechoslovakism* (London: Routledge, 2022), 149.

[39] This pertains to a military elite as well, see Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee*, 115.

[40] Zdenko Maršálek, "The failure of Czechoslovakism as a state-civic concept: national minorities in the army, 1918–1945", *Czechoslovakism*, 251–252, cf. Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee.*

[41] Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee*, 115.

Despite the reality of the new state often not living up to its self-created political myth of a democratic, liberal and progressive "golden age",[42] the Czechoslovak First Republic was indeed an era of expanded knowledge production. This was partly due to the newly independent state's need to create a network of scientific and cultural institutions.[43] But the free, democratic and until the mid-1930s[44] almost unrestricted publishing opportunities played a significant role. Newspapers, magazines, books and brochures were all booming.[45]

Czechoslovak society was often described as antimilitaristic, especially in the 1920s, and there is a kernel of truth in that.[46] "Antimilitaristic" did not mean uninterested in military matters. Those were monitored and reported on by both the national and the regional newspapers. The texts published ranged from informative to scandalmongering. It was in the interest of the armed forces to monitor these and to allow for their officers to contribute to and thus moderate this written production.

Military control over officers' publications

The military administration monitored the press's writings about the armed forces,[47] but it enforced localised censorship only rarely.[48] It was more strident in control of what its members published. Every professional soldier, both officer and warrant officer,[49] was liable for

[42] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 219–220, cf. Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: The State That Failed* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2009).

[43] *Bohemia Docta*, 258, 270–271.

[44] Osvaldová and Čeňková, *Česká publicistika*, 13.

[45] Ibid., 17; Zdeněk Šimeček and Jiří Trávníček, *Knihy kupovati ... Dějiny knižního trhu v českých zemích* (Praha: Academia, 2013), 227–270.

[46] Koldinská a Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 281–284.

[47] "Reorganisace vojenské služby tiskové", *Věstník,* 14 February 1920, 6, 71.

[48] For example, MNO Prezídium 1924–1927, Inv.č. 8903, Sign. 28/9/1, karton 523. Various cases and ex post summaries sporadically appear throughout the whole interwar era.

[49] The Czechoslovak term *rotmistr* refers to the professional non-commissioned officer corps established in the new republic, and is best translated as warrant officer as opposed to non-commissioned officers, who were referred to as *poddůstojník*.

disciplinary action concerning the tarnishing of the "good name of the army" in public, which included the opinions published in print.[50] The officers' publications, alongside their political and associative activities, were regulated by the service regulations A-I-1, according to which active professional officers and warrant officers could not be publishers or members of the publishing boards of political newspapers. They also were not allowed to discuss military issues that "are against the discipline and interests of the armed forces and which contradict, diminish or even ridicule orders, regulations and decrees".[51]

They were also forbidden to diminish the honour of their comrades and commanders, especially anonymously. Officers' "literary works themselves" could be only concerned with military affairs or warfare in general, and had to be presented to superior bodies in the military administration and be granted permission from the Ministry of National Defence.[52]

The ministry was expected to publish a dedicated list of publications edited by military personnel, to which officers could contribute without prior approval. This exemption was given only to texts that "undertake a factual and scientific discussion".[53] The potential critique had to be aimed especially at the "betterment of the armed forces of the state".[54] The "list" never actually existed as a single official document. Instead, it took the form of a permission and/or recommendation published in *Věstník čs. ministerstva národní obrany*,[55] an official

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[50] *A-II-5a. Seznam čs. vojenských služebních předpisů*, Praha: Fr. Borový, 1924, 15. More on disciplinary proceedings see Michal Cáp, "Dôstojníci verzus kárne výbory – k (seba)reflexii stavovskej cti v medzivojnovom Československu", *České, slovenské a československé dějiny 20. století XVIII*, edited by Davod Nykodým et al. (Hradec Králové: Univerzita Hradec Králové, 2024), 107–116.

[51] *A-I-1. Služební předpis* (Praha: Fr. Borový, *1926*), 153.

[52] Ibid.

[53] *A-I-1. Služební předpis,* 154.

[54] Ibid.

[55] *Věstník čs. ministerstva národní obrany* (Praha: Ministerstvo národní obrany, 1918–1925). After the bulletin was split into different content lines, it became *Věcní věstník ministerstva národní obrany* (Praha: Ministerstvo národní obrany), 1926–1950.

informative weekly bulletin from the Ministry of National Defence informing serving personnel of the newest laws, regulations and events concerning the armed forces. The ministry and its central military administration, represented by the so-called Presidium – which handled personnel matters, education, social care, disciplinary actions, press relations and other non-operational issues under the purview of the Main Staff – along with the relevant departments of the Territorial Land Commands at lower levels, were the principal entities responsible for managing the flow of texts produced by the officers.

Several of the publications mentioned later were never actually given permission in *Věstník* or were only recommended, yet they very clearly expected serving professionals to publish in them.[56] These general permissions never included works not published directly by the Ministry of National Defence, even when they dealt with military matters. This was established in the service regulations A-I-1 in 1920 and was monitored by the 2nd Department (Political), which included the press service officers of the Presidium, the Ministry of National Defence and the respective departments of the army Territorial Military Commands (located in Praha, Brno, Bratislava and Užhorod, later moved to Košice).[57]

Because of these obstacles, very few officers published in the non-military institutional press regularly. Few newspapers had truly competent military writers on their payroll. Here again, the prime example was Moravec (under his pseudonym Stanislav Yester), writing in the 1930s for the pro-Castle weekly *Přítomnost* and pro-Castle newspaper *Lidové noviny*. Both were among the most respected publications of the time and were not affiliated with any political party – a rarity in the interwar press landscape.[58] He commented on

[56] The regulation could likely have been interpreted quite liberally when it concerned official or semi-official institutions and associations. Another problem is that very few individual permissions remain in archival collections. Archivists at the Vojenský historický archiv (Military History Archive) suggest this could be because such documents were discarded, or the permissions were given only orally.

[57] "Reorganisace vojenské služby tiskové", *Věstník*, 14 February 1920, 6, 71.

[58] Cáp, "Konštrukcia profesionálneho dôstojníka", 173.

ongoing military conflicts, such as the wars in Abyssinia, China and Spain, and the military situation in Europe.

We have no archival evidence and only historiographic speculation on why he used the pseudonym. Some of the speculation concerns his politically exposed role in the so-called Gajda Affair in 1926[59] – the rather sordid removal of General Radola Gajda from the military – in which Moravec played a role in service of the Castle.[60] But in terms of military writings in the early 1930s, he might have wanted to present more critical views without being disciplined. By 1938, it was common knowledge that Stanislav Yester was actually Emanuel Moravec, because of his prolific writing and public activities.

He remained a staunch, pro-Castle partisan (which might seem rather ironic in hindsight, given he became a Czech Quisling during the Nazi occupation). As this group fully realised the need to reinforce the Czechoslovak myth,[61] it had chosen Moravec to publish an important piece of defensive cultural propaganda, *The Strategic Importance of Czechoslovakia for Western Europe*.[62] This attempt at projecting strength and knowledge of the military position of the First Republic was also published in German and French, and was reprinted several times. It shows the military side of a wider attempt to tie Czechoslovakia to the fortunes of the Western allies.[63] Moravec was one of the very few active service officers who gained such prominence.

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[59] The Gajda Affair was a series of rumours, scandals, investigations, disciplinary proceedings and trials between 1926 and 1928 concerning the supposed ambitions and conspiracies allegedly involving General Radola Gajda (1892–1948), hero of the Czechoslovak Legions and deputy chief of the General Staff, which led to his being sacked and eventually becoming the leader of the National Fascist Community. It is generally seen as an exertion of civilian control over the military by President Masaryk and the Castle, and an effort to curb the right-wing authoritarian tendencies of a popular army leader with political ambitions, albeit by unsavoury extralegal means. Cf. Ivan Šedivý, "Gajdova aféra 1926–1928", *Český časopis historický* 92, no 4 (1994): 732–758.

[60] Pernes, *Až na dno*, 73–81.

[61] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 11.

[62] Emanuel Moravec, *The strategic importance of Czechoslovakia for Western Europe* (Prague: Orbis, 1936).

[63] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle* provides a comprehensive overview of Czechoslovak cultural propaganda and its mechanisms.

Perhaps Moravec's best-known colleague was Major Rudolf Smetánka, who was in retirement for most of the interwar era.[64] He was a resident military expert for Tempo, a publishing house owned by independent nationalist politician Jiří Stříbrný, whom Smetánka later joined as a member of the parliament. Tempo produced what we could justly consider coarse tabloid publications, such as *Polední list* (Noon paper) and *Kurýr* (Courier), by their nature the most read daily newspapers in the interwar era.[65] Smetánka´s writing consisted of staunchly anti-Castle analyses of military preparedness, lessons (not) learned from the history of the Great War, and the current military, strategic and international situation. Despite being critical, he was never disciplined because he was retired for most of his writing career, so the A-I-1 regulation did not concern him. Also, he never strayed into an all-out attack on the army. Under disciplinary regulation A-XIV, he could still be penalised – for example, his pension could be cut if he besmirched "the good name of the army".[66] The military controlled the narrative it wanted to present and circulate.

Self-publishing was one of the ways in which a dissident view on military matters could be voiced, but its impact was limited. It could be considered entering the political "wilderness". After the fall of Gajda, his friend Captain Jan Karlík published views contrary to the orthodoxy of the Czechoslovak military administration but stopped writing for military-approved journals.[67] Only a few officers got their

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[64] Rudolf Smetánka (1887–1958) was a Czech military officer, politician and writer. He served both in the Austro-Hungarian army and the Czechoslovak Legions, and was pensioned from the Czechoslovak armed forces in 1923. Smetánka was reactivated during the Munich Crisis and later emigrated to Great Britain, becoming a member of the Czechoslovak State Council in London. He went on to serve as director of the Military History Institute in Prague, but after the communist takeover in 1948 was forced to emigrate again. He was posthumously rehabilitated and reinstated to the rank of brigadier general after 1989. Prokop Tomek, "Rudolf Smetánka", *Kalendárium VHÚ*.

[65] Osvaldová and Čeňková, *Česká publicistika,* 19–20.

[66] *A-II-5a. Seznam čs. vojenských služebních předpisů*, 15; Cáp, "Dôstojníci verzus", 111.

[67] Polnar, *Vývoj a proměny*, 18–19; Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 154–155.

Rudolf Smetánka pictured here after World War II, when he was a colonel and before retiring as a brigadier. Despite being retired for most of the interwar era, Smetánka was an important military writer, especially because he reached a wider public. During the World War II he served as a propaganda officer in London and in the postwar years was the director of the Military History Institute in Prague. Photo c. 1946. Source: Vojenský ústřední archiv – Vojenský historický archiv, Praha

books on military subjects[68] published in respectable publication houses not affiliated with the military, but more often than not, those proved to be regular contributors to military periodicals.

Among the most influential was *Budování armády*[69] from the series *Z války a revoluce* (From War and Revolution), published by the famous interwar publishing house Melantrich and written by Rudolf Kalhous, an important former Habsburg officer and one of the architects of the Czechoslovak armed forces after 1918.[70] Written

[68] There was a small exception in a sub-genre of "Legionary literature," which was mostly a cross of romanticised memoirs and fiction. The authors were mostly Legionary veterans and not serving officers.

[69] Rudolf Kalhous, *Budování armády* (Praha: Melantrich, 1936).

[70] Rudolf Kalhous (1879–1939) was a professional officer and military writer. He served as a staff officer in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War and after that, was one

as a half memoir, half contemporary critical history of the early years of the state's military, combining institutional and operational history with questions of the military's culture, its social background, and the future of art of warfare, including society-wide military preparedness and mechanised warfare. The reception of his work never really critiqued his opinions on the need for wider societal mobilisation or his views on the future of warfare, which included predicting the total industrial warfare expanded by a new technology. Instead, it focused on his negative opinions of the Czechoslovak Legionaries and the French Military Mission, which were even in the 1930s considered statements that went against state policy and undermined its military culture.[71]

Professional writing was not only a way to further the intellectual (and political) debate, but also a welcome addition to the officers' wages.[72] Letov[73] has said that it was crucial for Moravec and probably for others.[74] Official calls for articles in *Věstník* offered the writers money for their work.[75] In the 1930s, during the heightened propagation of military preparedness, few illustrated magazines with military themes – such as monthly *Vojenský svět* (published 1933–September 1938)[76] – were brought out by private civilian publishers. Serving officers did write for them, but they needed official permission.[77]

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of the instrumental organisers of the Czechoslovak armed forces. He was pensioned off in 1920 due to his disagreements with the direction of the army organisation and personnel issues. He wrote widely on military affairs and became an influential patron of various associations of Czech Habsburg veterans and projects. Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 153–154.

71 *Důstojnické listy*, 28 May 1936, 9.

72 Pernes, *Až na dno,* 96–97.

73 Pape, *Sólo*, 33.

74 Jan Zellinger, an Air Force officer facing dire financial straits and disciplinary proceedings due to them in the early 1930s, suddenly reappeared several years later as an author of numerous works about the country's airpower and antiaircraft defences, such as Jan Zelinger, *Letectvo* (Praha: Svaz československého důstojnictva, 1938), cf. Kárne Výbory, inv.č. 93, č.j. 11/27, karton 29.

75 ZVV Košice, karton 1, *Čs. voj. písemnictví – výzva ke spolupráci*, 19 November 1926, 436.

76 *Vojenský svět* (Praha: Otakar Vaněk, 1933–1938).

77 Pape, *Sólo*, 322.

But as described above, it was a limited and dangerous market. Politics was a sore issue and from 1926, after years of fear of both communist agitation and protofascist sympathies – exacerbated by the Gajda Affair – enlisted men and active officers were deprived of their active and passive voting rights.[78] Public statements by serving officers that could be seen as damaging the "good name of the army", which was supposed to be apolitical, were actively prosecuted by the army disciplinary committees even when they were expressed only as opinions.[79] Rudolf Kalhous was the target of one such proceeding,[80] and a whole chapter about the role of the French Military Mission, an issue he was especially bitter about, is missing from his book, with the explanation that "pages 93–115 were excluded at the wishes of the Ministry of National Defence".[81] It was much safer and more stable for officers, as actors producing military knowledge, to circulate their texts in the periodicals green-lit by the Ministry of National Defence. This was explicitly called censorship, and it did not necessarily carry negative connotations.[82] What divided the approved texts from the ones that were blocked was not differences in tactical or strategic concepts, but questions of politics, interactions with society and military tradition.

The army, its official institutions and their production of knowledge

In spite of the heroic Legionary myth and its achievements in the creation of the republic, the military was not popular in the new Czechoslovakia. This was a sign of continuity with the Habsburg era, especially when the Czech national society considered armed forces

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78 Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 297.

79 Numerous cases in fond Kárne Výbory (Disciplinary Committees).

80 Kárne Výbory, inv.č. 12, č.j. 9/38, karton 15.

81 Kalhous, *Budování*, 93–115; MNO Prezídium 1928–1939, Inv.č. 15867, Sign. 24/4/26, karton 11496. His articles at the time also came under criticism, and he was denied permission to have them published. Inv.č. 16054, Sign. 24/5/533, karton 12402.

82 There are numerous cases of "censorship," but it was viewed by the ministry as a useful tool for institutional control. Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva,* 81.

in general to be a threat to the national culture. The army and its officers were seen as remnants that needed to be "de-Austrified".[83] But the new state needed armed forces, and they needed their institutions for knowledge production and circulation. These served as platforms for propaganda, information, as well as scientific discourse and were formed under the strong influence of active military officers.

Many politicians, including for a short time Masaryk himself, at first advocated the creation of a militia based on the Swiss model or the retention of the returning Czechoslovak Legions as a volunteer force.[84] One of the proponents of the militia solution was the staunch antimilitarist Václav Klofáč (who started in his youth as an anarchist),[85] the first minister of national defence.[86] At his initiative, the first official military weekly magazine, *Bratrství* (Brotherhood), subtitled "the Paper of the Czechoslovak Militia",[87] was launched in late 1918. It was a magazine aimed at soldiers and its production values were often low, but it contained various kinds of official texts that were loyal to the state, propagandistic and informative, including describing changes in the military's legislature and regulations. Its articles provided news about the army and technological innovations, and were often aimed at building a military tradition through commemorative and historical topics. Articles were often penned by professional officers. After the first few years, the magazine attempted to expand its appeal by prominently featuring popular pictures and large print photographs.

The militia project proved unrealistic and so the Czechoslovak army was at first a combination of Legions, volunteer detachments

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[83] Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 162–164; Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee*, 88.

[84] Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 149–151.

[85] Václav Klofáč (1868–1942) was a Czech politician, journalist and co-founder of the Czech National Socialist Party (not to be confused with or considered an equivalent of the Nazi party). A fervent advocate for Czech independence, he was persecuted during the First World War by Austro-Hungarian authorities and later served as the first Minister of National Defence of Czechoslovakia. He was active in interwar politics until the late 1930s when he withdrew from political life and retired to his country home, where he died in 1942.

[86] Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 147.

[87] *Bratrství* (Praha: Miloš Maixner, 1918–1927).

Naše vojsko *(Our Army) was a periodical directly published by the Ministry of National Defence to influence soldiers and keep them culturally mobilised. Despite the Czech domination of the officer corps, the magazine reflected the multinational character of the Czechoslovak army by publishing German and Hungarian versions. The magazine issue pictured is from November 1937. Source: Digitální studova Ministerstva obrany ČR*

and former Austro-Hungarian units that swore loyalty to the new republic. After 1920, it was refashioned into an army based on mass compulsory military service, with a professional cadre of officers and warrant officers.[88] This was reflected in magazine subtitle being changed to "The Paper of the Czechoslovak Army", and finally, in 1927, it was retitled *Naše vojsko* (Our Army) and published biweekly for the rest of the interwar era; after the breakup of Czechoslovakia it continued to be published in exile.[89]

Bratrství/*Naše vojsko* was one of the first magazines that explicitly allowed serving officers to publish without prior permission.[90] Although it was distributed to the general public, it was aimed at enlisted men. In its first year, it was supposed to be distributed for free. The weekly publication was also one of the few Czechoslovak military magazines published in the minority's languages – German

88 Cf. Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*; Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee*.

89 *Naše vojsko* (Praha: Tiskárna MNO, 1927–1938).

90 "Reorganisace vojenské služby tiskové", *Věstník*, 14 February 1920, 6, 71.

and Hungarian – either as special issues or as supplements. Due to the universal military service and conscription policy, the Czechoslovak state couldn't ignore soldiers who did not speak Czech or Slovak, but its attempts to reach them were far from ideal.[91]

Another group the state ignored for a long time was non-Legionary veterans.[92] At the same time, permission and recommendation for publication in *Bratrství* were also given[93] to the magazine *Československý legionář* (Czechoslovak Legionary), which came out weekly throughout the First Republic era.[94] Like *Naše vojsko*, it was an official bulletin of the Chancellery of Czechoslovak Legionnaires, serving as a source of social and political information, and proclamations loyal to the state, as well as texts about the history of the Legions and their battles. As the ministry's official publication, it showed the privileged position of the Legionary narrative and culture of victory. Experience and the needs of the non-Legionary Czechoslovak veterans, either from the Habsburg army or later the Czechoslovak volunteer forces in 1918–1919, were not officially recognised in the Czechoslovak nation-building project.[95]

As made clear by Masaryk's words, as well as the works of the various military writers mentioned, Czechoslovakia fully subscribed to the idea of an army as a school of the nation. The national and nationality problems of this aspiring nation-state, as well as the democratic ideology of the army, were considered to be at the forefront of useful military knowledge. This was fully supported by the Ministry of National Defence and its publication of the magazine *Vojenská výchova* (Military Education), which brought out ten issues a year between 1924 and 1939.[96] It was aimed at the educational officers – or what were referred to in Czech a s*osvětový* or "enlightenment" officers.

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91 Cf. Maršálek, "The failure of Czechoslovakism".

92 Václav Šmidrkal, "The Defeated", 84–90.

93 "Reorganisace vojenské služby tiskové", *Věstník*, 14 February 1920, 6, 71.

94 *Československý legionář* (Praha: Kancelář čsl. legií, 1919–1938).

95 Cf. Šmidrkal, "The Defeated"; Krapfl, "Sites of memory".

96 *Vojenská výchova časopis věnovaný otázkám metodiky výcviku a výchovy československého vojska* (Praha: Fr. Borový, later Praha: Otakar Vaněk, 1924–1939).

These officers were established first in the Czechoslovak Legions and, in contrast to the old-regime ethos of aloof officers, were taken over by a new army. On its pages, officers disseminated the knowledge of how to educate soldiers from less-developed parts of the republic – such as Subcarpathian Ruthenia or parts of Slovakia (who often had problems such as illiteracy and poor hygiene) – and how to educate the men on the idea of the new state and its military traditions. Hygiene and medicine found their place in another magazine, *Vojenské zdravotnické listy* (Military Scientific Medical Papers), published from 1925 until 1939, with a new version launched after the Second World War and still active. It was published directly by the ministry and targeted medical and veterinary officers.[97] It was repeatedly officially recommended (but not "put on the list") in *Věstník*. It is possible, or even probable, that due to its "scientific" and "non-political" nature, there was an implicit understanding that serving officers did not need permission to write in it. They covered highly technical and seemingly non-military topics, such as medicine and hygiene.

In an era of rapid military innovation and technologisation of warfare, the army also created scientific institutions to systematically research and produce useful military knowledge. The Technical Military Institute and the Aeronautic Military Institute were merged to form the Military Technical and Aeronautic Institute,[98] with its journal *Vojensko-technické správy*, published monthly from 1923 to 1938.[99] This became a forum for discourse on the problems with military technology and innovation. The functioning of the institute was marred by a lack of funding and practical questions of rearming the military with standardised infantry and artillery weapons and,

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[97] *Vojenské zdravotnické listy. Vědecký orgán československých vojenských lékařů, zvěrolékařů a lékárníků, vydávaný vojenským zdravotnickým poradním sborem za podpory ministerstva národní obrany* (Praha: Vojenský zdravotnický poradní sbor, 1925–1939).

[98] *Bohemia Docta,* 272.

[99] *Vojensko-technické zprávy. Časopis věnovaný otázkám vojensko-technickým a vydávaný péčí Vojenského technického ústavu za účasti odborů M. N. O.: technického, dělostřeleckého a zbrojního a leteckého* (Praha: Vojenský technický ústav, 1923–1938).

later, fortifications. Questions of motorisation and tanks were of secondary importance. Aeroplanes and airborne warfare were discussed mostly in technical terms, without a wider doctrinal vision. The foreign debates were followed, and it remained a professional journal of the technical branches, dealing with problems of armament. Another new military institute that proved necessary to the new state was the Military Geographical Institute.[100] Its officers were fully engaged in military mapping and map creation, and their only publications other than maps were yearbooks.[101]

The scientification of the conduct of war was visible in another journal, *Vojenské intendační rozhledy*,[102] published quarterly by (High) Intendancy School between 1928 and 1938. This became the professional journal of intendancy focusing on supply, logistics, nutrition, and the question of the national economy and its mobilisation for warfare. It also followed and commented on logistical issues in foreign armies, especially the increasingly threatening Germany. It highlighted the importance of materiel in waging modern total war. Interestingly, despite repeatedly advertising calls for articles from serving professional soldiers, it was never put on the list of approved publications by *Věstník*.

Another issue arising from the creation of the new state was the need for a military archival service and an army military history service. Here, the situation was fluid and complex. At least three different archives were created in 1918–19, alongside a forgotten historical section of the Main Staff, which was supposed to produce an analytical monograph of "useful" operational histories of the Great War as well as the wars in Teschen (Těšín) and Slovakia.[103] During the 1920s, they coalesced into the Memorial of the Resistance, which focused on the history and popularisation of Czechoslovak Legionaries, and the Military Archive and Museum of the Republic of Czechoslovakia,

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[100] *Bohemia Docta,* 272.

[101] *Výroční zpráva za Vojenský zeměpisný ústav* (Praha: Vojenský zeměpisný ústav, 1923–1949).

[102] *Vojenské intendační rozhledy* (Praha: Vojenská intendační škola, 1928–1934, Praha: Vysoká intendační škola, 1934–1938).

[103] Cáp, *Vojenská história*, 58, 72–73.

whose *Zprávy*[104] (News) became the first Czech(oslovak) periodical dedicated to military history. It was published rather irregularly between 1926 and 1929, with a total of six issues. It also focused on "useful" histories and military history in the more scientific sense, not only in terms of practicalities or tradition building.

In 1929, these disparate institutions were united in the Monument of Liberation, which systematised archival and museum work in the army.[105] In the 1930s, it also launched *Vojesko historický zborník*, published twice a year between 1932 and 1938.[106] Again it was propagated, but never officially put on the approved list in *Věstník*. It was another curious case of a periodical seemingly illogically lacking ministry approval, but we might consider that military history is highly sensitive, and the organisational problems of the institution in the early 1930s may also have played a role.[107] Monument of Liberation also produced editions of historical sources and published its members' private research, which yielded several regimental histories of the Legionary units. It must be said that the quality of the publications and of the officers assigned to these institutions was often questionable. Basic, but all the more appalling, deficiencies in the professional military historical training of personnel meant that the project of creating a military historical department remained a mere declaration or indeed, wishful thinking. The output of history as military knowledge was often on the shoulders of a few dedicated individuals, such as military archivist Major Richard Wolf. The problem with the military historical work in the army was that officers who committed to it fully received no special bonuses to their career progression. This could also be said about the other forms of this kind of military knowledge work. It truly depended on the personal motivation of the individual to make a full-time commitment to scientific work and professional writing in the military.

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[104] *Zprávy Vojenského archivu a musea* (Praha: Vojenský archiv a vojenské museum RČS v Praze, 1926–1929).

[105] Straka, "Památník osvobození", 42.

[106] *Vojensko historický sborník* (Praha: Památník osvobození, 1932–1938).

[107] Straka, "Památník osvobození".

But this work was instrumental in the creation of a Czechoslovak military culture. As was recognised about military history, but applied to all fields of knowledge, during an audience with the republic's second President Edvard Beneš in 1938: "The issue of good historical study is the basis for further enhancing the operational effectiveness of our army leadership. But it is also important for the strategic and political education of the leaders in the state and, psychologically, for the establishment of tradition".[108]

Military culture, associations and the production of military knowledge

Military culture, as any sum of beliefs, mentalities and practices,[109] cannot be created only from above and is nearly impossible to create from scratch. Czechoslovak officers as a specific socio-professional group were both successors of their Habsburg predecessors and attempts of the new democratic republic to forge something new. Professional officers of the old regime were a separate group – in the nationalising atmosphere of late Austria-Hungary, they were supposedly loyal only to the emperor and aloof from the problems of wider society.[110]

This cultural image of a proper officer survived even after the officers themselves were mowed down by machine-guns in the fields of the Great War. The prewar professional officer corps ceased to exist as early as late 1914, and relying on the junior field command positions, it became a war of reserve officers. In Austria-Hungary, these officers came mostly from the ranks of the educated middle class of each national society, as they would in the future Czechoslovakia. The First World War marked the beginning of a true age of total

[108] Vojenská kancelář presidenta republiky. Č.j. 128/38, karton 270, 25 February 1938.
[109] Peter R. Mansoor and Williamson Murray, *The Culture of military organizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 17.
[110] Cf. István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*; Koldinská and Šedivý, *Válka a armáda*, 136.

war, emphasising the need to understand and adapt to new trends in warfare. It also highlighted the necessity of preparing society for potential future conflicts. This shift was recognised not only by the later historians but also by the interwar officers, who themselves were veterans.[111]

Veterans associations, newspapers, literature, theatre plays and movies were all parts of the larger Czechoslovak military culture and provided an important background, both intellectual and institutional, for the production of various forms of military texts and thus publication opportunities for military officers. Veterans of the Great War in Czechoslovakia fell into two broad categories – the dominant Legionaries and the largely ignored non-Legionaries. Both were internally divided, and these divisions produced civic associations and publication platforms that were open to serving officers, but carried the dangers of politicisation and disciplinary action.

Czechoslovak officers found themselves in a radically different cultural climate from the one in which their Austro-Hungarian predecessors operated. The transition from the Habsburg military tradition to the Czechoslovak armed forces represented more than a mere change in allegiance; it marked a fundamental reorientation of the officer corps' role within society. Czechoslovak officers were no longer bound by allegiance to a multinational empire but were instead imbued with the responsibility to nurture a cohesive identity for a nation-state, which was Czechoslovak and mostly Czech in practice.[112] But they retained their separate corporate identity, which could flourish when combined with the associative culture for which Czechoslovakia was famous. It was an umbrella of various associations, which proved conducive to the production of various forms of military texts.

The first attempt to create the Association of the Czechoslovak Officers failed in early 1919, as it was perceived by the Ministry of National Defence and various commanding officers as potentially

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[111] Emanuel Moravec, *Vojáci a doba* (Praha: Svaz čs. důstojnictva, 1934), 6–11.

[112] Cf. Zückert, *Zwischen Nationsidee.*

an antistate body.[113] But the need for officers to organise was met through several asymmetric means. First was the creation of the Support and Education Association of Czechoslovak Officers (Podpůrny a vzdělavaci svaz československeho důstojnictva), focused on education and social support.[114] The second, more successful initiative was the utilisation of the drive to promote military knowledge, as opposed to narrow corporate interest. The Scientific Association of Czechoslovak Officers (Vědecký svaz československeho důstojnictva) was founded under the auspices of Minister of National Defence Václav Klofáč. It was inspired by the older military scientific societies, but the only known direct predecessor was the so-called Militärwissenschaftlicher Verein of the Prague garrison, whose library the association took over.[115] Its stated goal included the defence and social support of officers and their dependents (showing the undercurrent of social and corporate interest), strictly forbidding any political entanglements. But this was achieved by its main task, and that was the propagation of "useful"[116] military knowledge. It planned to publish a professional journal and handbooks, as well as create an army museum (which later merged into the Monument of Liberation, as mentioned above) – all in cooperation with the military administration and the Ministry of National Defence.[117]

The difference between the two main goals was recognised, and when the political situation of the new republic calmed down in 1920, the organisation split into the Military Scientific Institute (Vědecký ústav vojenský (VÚV)) and the Association of Czechoslovak Officers.[118] The latter took over the representative, professional and corporate interests and became one of the most influential military associations in interwar Czechoslovakia.[119] The association continued

[113] Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva*, 36–37.
[114] Ibid., 36.
[115] Vojenské ústavy 1919–1939, č.j. 19., karton 1, *Patnáct let Vojenského ústav vědeckého*, 2–3.
[116] Ibid., 3.
[117] Cf. Karel Straka, "Památník osvobození".
[118] Cáp, *Vojenská história,* 83.
[119] Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva,* 38.

engaging in knowledge production and circulation, firstly through publishing the weekly (originally biweekly) *Důstojnické listy* (Officer's Papers). It was published from 1921 until 1939,[120] and was also sent to all paying members of the association. From its starting print run of 8,000 in 1921, it expanded to 30,000 in the 1930s.[121] It was a forum promoting discussions of social and corporate interest but often strayed into debates on army organisation, military needs, and military history and traditions.

The association created its own publishing house, Military Professional Bookshop (Vojenské odborné knihkupectví (VOK)),[122] which distributed military publications by Moravec/Yester, Bláha and many others – not only officers (the most notable was probably Beneš) – via both subscriptions and commercial booksellers. Its publishing expanded after 1933, with state support and interest in promoting military preparedness and cultural mobilisation for the defence of the republic against the rising German threat.

Numerous books received new editions, often several times in a year, as The Challenges of Our Defence shows. It started producing the magazine *Obrana obyvatelstva* (Civil Defence; 1935–39, total of six issues), aimed solely at the question of civil defence,[123] as well as the biweekly *Branná politika* (Defence/Military Preparedness Policy; 1938–39),[124] aimed at societal questions of military preparedness in international contexts, following the pan-European preparations for the next world war. These magazines and books were regularly put on the recommended list in *Věstník* or approved through weekly orders from higher units of the military administration.

In the late 1930s, the association cooperated with several other organisations, both military and civilian, as well as with the Ministry of National Defence to create two massive representative

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[120] *Důstojnické listy* (Praha: Ústřední výbor Svazu československého důstojnictva, 1921–1939).

[121] Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva,* 78.

[122] Ibid., 83.

[123] *Obrana obyvatelstva ústřední orgán pro obranu a ochranu obyvatelstva proti leteckým útokům* (Praha: Vok, 1935–1939).

[124] *Branná politika list věnovaný branným otázkám doma i v cizině* (Praha: VOK, 1938–1939).

publications: *Armáda a národ* (Army and the Nation)[125] and *Dvacet let československé armády v osvobozenem státě* (Twenty years of the Czechoslovak Army in the Liberated State).[126] Although these were propagandistic and did not delve into the less-than-positive sides of the history and practices of the interwar army, they remain even today the most comprehensive publications about it. They describe the army's composition, traditions, ideology, education system, military preparedness, relationship with society and much more. Being very much part of the myth of Czechoslovakia and its democratic army, they also show what by 1938 was the official image of Czechoslovakia as an aspiring nation-in-arms.

The association shared this shift from a narrowly corporate group to a society-wide propagator of military knowledge with its sibling organisation, the Association of Czechoslovak Warrant Officers (Svaz československých rotmistrů). The latter group defended the interests of long-serving professional non-commissioned officers through its own periodical, *Hlas národní obrany* (Voice of the National Defence; initially weekly, biweekly from 1920 to its closure in 1939).[127] It published a regular supplement aimed at the educational *osvětová* (enlightenment) work in the army, as well as editions of books concerning military history, science and Czechoslovak military tradition. Despite being a corporate journal often at odds with the officer corps, several officers (again, including Moravec) contributed to it.

It must be noted that both Officer's Papers and Voice of National Defence were not only absent from the official *Věstník*, but their pages dealt with issues of military science and conscription in a broader sense, and their corporate interest sometimes clashed with official structures. Both Papers and the Voice, especially the latter, featured

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[125] *Armáda a národ*, edited by Jan Malypetr et al. (Praha: Národní rada československá v nakladatelství L. Mazáč, 1938).

[126] *Dvacet let československé armády v osvobozeném státě 1918–1938,* edited by Rudolf Medek and Silvestr Bláha (Praha: Svaz čs. důstojnictva, 1938).

[127] *Hlas národní obrany* (Praha: Ústřední svaz jednot československých poddůstojníků z povolání, 1919–1939).

articles by more combat-minded warrant officers, and were subject to preliminary censorship and direct control of the military authorities.[128] Both associations were nominally independent from the army, but members who were serving officers had to keep in mind the possibility that if their activities crossed the interests of the military administration, they might be reassigned from their serving locations, especially if they were based in Prague – the capital giving the most access to the influential associative culture – to a less-popular border garrison.[129] The shadow of the disciplinary proceeding was still present, even for inactive officers and warrant officers.

Most of the scientific and scholarly publishing functions were taken over by the VÚV. Despite its name, it was a voluntary association[130] primarily devoted to research and popularisation of the military sciences, or "only scientific and educational work".[131] In other words, it was devoted to the creation and dissemination of military knowledge. Its most important publication was the premier Czechoslovak professional military scientific journal, *Vojenské Rozhledy* (Military Revue).[132] This was published monthly from 1920 until early 1939, and was reinstated between 1941 and 1944 by the exiled Ministry of National Defence in London. Its successor is still active today. Its goals were to study the history, strategy, tactics, technology, supply and personal experiences of the Great War, to deal with the history of past wars (especially Czech ones) and military traditions, to learn about military advances abroad and at home, and to keep track of all important military and war literature.[133]

Revue was the main place for officially sanctioned discussions[134] of military knowledge in interwar Czechoslovakia. It included

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[128] For example, MNO Prezídium 1928–1939, Inv.č. 12638, Sign. 24/7/8, karton 7818, 5–9, 11–13 and others.

[129] Horejší, *Svaz československého důstojnictva,* 79–82.

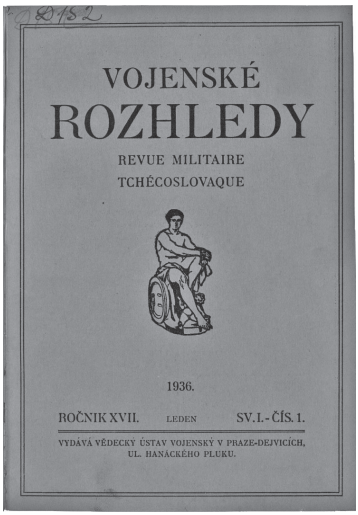
[130] *Bohemia Docta*, 105–106 incorrectly considers it state "institute"; Cáp, *Vojenská história,* 83.

[131] Vojenské ústavy 1919–1939, č.j. 19., karton 1, *Patnáct let Vojenského ústav vědeckého*, 1.

[132] *Vojenské rozhledy Revue militaire tchécoslovaque* (Praha: Vědecký ústav vojenský, 1920–1939).

[133] Cáp, *Vojenská história*, 88.

[134] "Reorganisace vojenské služby tiskové", *Věstník*, 14 February 1920, 6, 71.



Military Revue was a monthly journal published by the Military Scientific Institute. It was the flagship publication for discussions on military science, art and thought in interwar Czechoslovakia, following the international trends and literature. Its successor of the same name is still being published. Source: Digitální studovna Ministerstva obrany ČR

numerous supplements on various types of military units (Infantry Revue, Artillery Revue, Air Force Revue, etc.). In the 1930s, it also published summaries of foreign military-themed articles. Revue was not VÚV's only product. It also published handbooks for officers, warrant officers and army specialists, books and brochure series on military technical topics and other "useful" knowledge, as well as books on Czechoslovak military history.

Many of the publications were reprints or collections of articles originally published in the Revue, such as "Nástin spolupráce politiky a strategie" (Sketch of Cooperation Between Politics and Strategy)[135] by Silvestr Bláha, a close adviser to both Beneš and Masaryk and later chairman of the VÚV. This and other publications illustrate a recognition of the wider contexts of military knowledge, beyond the realms of tactics, technology and narrowly defined strategy.[136]

The VÚV also organised its members into topic "circles", and one of the first, coordinating between officers and civilian academics,

[135] Silvestr Bláha, *Nástin spolupráce politiky a strategie* (Praha: Československý vědecký ústav vojenský, 1932).
[136] Cf. Polnar, *Vývoj a proměny.*

was the Circle of Czechoslovak Military History, which, for a while, included Moravec.[137] In the second half of the 1930s, military preparedness and military preparedness propaganda became the most acute problem of the Czechoslovak state in the face of Nazi aggression.[138] The VÚV rose to the challenge of organising these cultural defensive efforts.[139] After its reorganisation in 1936, the VÚV created the Writers' Club and the Czechoslovak Military Editors' Club (Klub spisovatelů and Klub československých vojenských redaktorů) to organise the cooperation of the military authorities with the civilian press, as well as the new medium of mass communication, radio.[140] Knowledge was power and, through individual active officers and various corporate associations, state institutions were more than prepared the mobilise it in defence of the Czechoslovak Republic against Adolf Hitler's Germany.

Conclusion

The First Czechoslovak Republic was born from the war and perished under the shadow of war in late September 1938. War was always with it, despite its multinational population's unwillingness to contemplate it before 1933. This study illuminated the structures and possibilities of disseminating military knowledge in its interwar era and how these contributions went beyond technical details and the art of war to encompass broader sociopolitical narratives that shaped both military thought and state loyalty.

Forms of military knowledge were numerous and ever-expanding. Writings delved into technical areas, armament (including modern weaponry) and military history, emphasising "useful" knowledge gleaned from World War I. This emphasis on practical military

[137] Pernes, *Až na dno*, 92.
[138] Straka, *Souvislosti vědy*, 72.
[139] Ibid., 12.
[140] Ibid., 72–85.

knowledge was intertwined with efforts to build a nationalistic history, distancing the young republic from its Austro-Hungarian past. State loyalty and military preparedness were of utmost importance but were limited by the simple fact that the officer corps, with its officer-writers, was dominated by Czechs, as Czechoslovakia itself was. But these texts helped justify the armed forces' role in an often-antagonistic society, projecting a democratic and progressive ideology that showed that the new army was supposed to be different from its predecessor.

How did knowledge circulate? Czechoslovakia had a booming newspaper and book publishing culture, but most of the military topics were dealt with under the umbrella of official and semi-official organisations. One such body was the Ministry of National Defence and its numerous military institutes, which produced periodicals and brochures later distributed to military and civilian libraries as well as other subscribers. Various civil society associations and corporations, most notably the Association of Czechoslovak Officers and the Military Scientific Institute, contributed greatly to creating a military *písemnictví*, facilitating the controlled Czechoslovak debates about military problematics and its popularisation to a wider, civilian public. From the 1930s onwards, there was a concerted effort to mobilise society for the anticipated struggle, projecting the strength of the army both domestically and internationally. This involved widespread military preparedness initiatives, propaganda and civil defence efforts, which were enhanced by this wide array of institutions and their publications.

However, institutions were not the only knowledge actors. There were, of course, the military officers. Debate about the problematics of military science was becoming a part of the military profession. However, in Czechoslovakia, the officers' writings also reflected the changed military culture. The Czechoslovak army proclaimed a democratic, enlightened ideology and many officers could supplement their wages by publishing texts in their area of expertise, which also boosted their prestige. The dual control exercised by the military over officers' writings must be recognised. Through prepublication

censorship and potential disciplinary proceedings, it restricted the scope of possible debates, even in a purportedly democratic environment. But it never prevented them and often encouraged them.

In conclusion, the intellectual contributions of Czechoslovak military writers were instrumental in shaping both military debates and national identity during the interwar period. Their writings, produced in an open society, albeit under official supervision, played a crucial role in promoting military readiness and fostering a societal understanding of defence issues. This output not only reflected the internal state of the Czechoslovak First Republic but also offered valuable insights into the broader military cultures of interwar Europe. The legacy of these efforts underscores the enduring contemporary discussions of civil-military relations and the role of military knowledge.

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The Red Army Rises – the Impact of Threat Assessment on Defence System and Military Thinking in Finland in the 1920s

Markus Wahlstein

This article examines how the threat of the Red Army was perceived in Finland during the 1920s and 1930s, and how this threat assessment influenced the development of Finland's defence system. The main focus of the article is on the developments of the 1920s and the solutions that were reached during that time. It primarily addresses the development of the defence system, but also considers the evolution of Finnish military thinking in its early stages. The research question of the article is: "How did the threat assessment affect the development of Finnish defence and military thinking during the 1920s and 30s?" The article is mostly based on the author's dissertation project that examines the development of the Finnish covering troop concept from 1918 to 1942.

The War of Independence of Finland in 1918 led to the establishment of the defence forces of independent Finland. The development of the Finnish Defence Forces and the entire defence system began after the war and was later tested during the Winter War and Continuation War in 1939–44. A significant factor in the development of Finnish defence and its phases, as is always the case with armed forces, was threat assessment – particularly of the threat from the Red Army.

One of the key turning points in the development of the defence forces and the general situation was the Treaty of Tartu (Estonia), signed on 14 October 1920, with which Finland made peace with Soviet Russia. The Finnish Defence Forces took a peacetime stance, and the work of developing the country's defence could begin. However, Finland continued to closely monitor the situation beyond the

eastern border. Despite the peace declaration, Soviet Russia continued to be seen as a threat.

The situation in Soviet Russia also began to calm down. The Russian Civil War started to turn in favour of the Red side, and the situation stabilised. The war concluded in 1920, but military action continued until 1922, in the form of border wars aimed at suppressing independence movements in the border areas of Soviet Russia, which believed separatism was fomented by foreign forces. The border wars were also an attempt by the Soviet state to regain areas that had already seceded.[1] With the arrival of peace, the Soviet Union was established in 1922. At the same time, the process of transitioning the Red Army to a peacetime stance and developing it began.

The development of Soviet armed forces begins

During the War of Independence, the headquarters and the post-war General Staff of the Finnish Defence Forces closely monitored the situation beyond the border. The intelligence branch collected and analysed information and prepared intelligence summaries. Intelligence information was gathered through the military attaché network from Western allies, information acquired from the domestic and foreign press, as well as intelligence organisations.[2] Based on the documentary material preserved in the Finnish National Archives, it can be stated that very good situational information was obtained. The sources provided fairly accurate information on the numbers, units and deployments of forces beyond the border, as well as their

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[1] Jukka Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun. Johdatus Neuvostoliiton maavoimien sotataitoon 1917–1991* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2004), 10; YE tiedustelutoimiston viikko- ja yleiskatsaukset 1920–1922, YE Os IV, SArk-1401/8-10, Kansallisarkisto (KA); YE, Tykistön tarkastaja, R-98/50, KA.

[2] *Suomen Puolustuslaitos 1918–1939, Puolustusvoimien rauhan ajan historia,* toim. Jarl Kronlund (Porvoo: WSOY, 1988), 226–227; Reino Arimo, *Suomen puolustussuunnitelmat 1918–1939, osa I* (Helsinki: Sotatieteen laitos, 1986), 141–142; Heidi Ruotsalainen, *Salatun tiedon tuottajat, Suomen sotilasasiamiesjärjestelmän kehitys 1918–1939,* väitöskirja (Tampere: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2020), 72–73.

movements. Events on the border, in areas adjoining Finland and even farther away were also fairly well known. The main intelligence products were the weekly intelligence summaries, which in 1921 became bi-weekly publications called general summaries. In 1924, the reporting interval was further extended to a month. These summaries provided a good understanding of the contemporary situational awareness.[3]

The development of the Red Army was also monitored publicly. Finnish military magazines published articles about the development of the Red Army during the 1920s and 1930s. The most active writing occurred in the 1930s. Special attention was given to the Red Army's training and armament efforts. Attention was also paid to the rearmament that took place within the framework of the five-year plans and the growing strength of the Red Army.[4]

The experiences of the Russian Civil War had an impact on the direction in which the Red Army was developed. Soviet threat scenarios saw the possibility of enemy strikes from multiple directions, with the greatest danger coming from the west. To respond to the threat, the Red Army had to be capable of waging war on a wide front and fighting a powerful enemy.[5]

However, there was no initial consensus on the direction in which the Red Army should be developed. Opposing views were represented by Lev Trotsky (1879–1940), who challenged Lenin's authority, and his main opponent, Mikhail Frunze (1885–1925). Trotsky saw a permanent Red Army as an intermediate phase, and held that it should be disbanded after the Civil War and replaced by a small professional army supplemented by a militia system.[6] Frunze believed

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[3] Viikkokatsaukset 1918: YE Os Ia, R-82/23, YE Os IV, Sark-1401/8; 1919: YE Os IV, Sark-1401/8; 1920: YE Os IV, Sark-1401/8; 1921: YE Os, Tsto IV, Sark-1401/10; 1922: YE Tykistön tarkastaja, R-98/50; 1923: YE, Toimisto IV, Sark 1401/10; 1924: YE, Toimisto IV, Sark 1401/19, KA.

[4] Antti Laitinen, *Puna-armeijan uhka. Kirjoittelu Neuvostoliiton puna-armeijasta suomalaisessa sotilaslehdistössä 1922–1939*, abstract (Itä-Suomen yliopisto, 2020).

[5] Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun,* 20.

[6] Petteri Lalu, *Syvää vai pelkästään tiheää? Neuvostoliittolaisen ja venäläisen sotataidollisen ajattelun lähtökohdat, kehittyminen, soveltaminen käytäntöön ja nykytilanne. Näkökulmana 1920- ja 1930-luvun syvän taistelun opit*, väitöskirja (Tampere: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2014), 72.

that there would be no swift resolution in war, so a sufficiently strong force was needed to attack decisively. Therefore, Frunze rejected the idea of a small professional army and believed there was no alternative to a mass army – one that was sufficiently strong, highly prepared and based on a cadre system.[7]

The dispute was also partially related to internal power struggles, which ultimately led to Trotsky being sidelined and Frunze's views prevailing in military matters.[8] From 1924 onwards, the Red Army began to be reformed in line with Frunze's ideology. Official Soviet history dates the reforms to the years 1924–28, but they continued into the 1930s.[9]

The threat of the Red Army

The developmental stages of the Red Army and the differences of opinion did not go unnoticed in Finland. The situation across the border and in the entire Soviet Union was closely monitored. In the general assessments, the years 1920 and 1921 stand out, as the Russian Civil War faded and came to an end, and the transition of the armed forces to a peacetime composition was noticed. The post-Civil War border skirmishes, the Karelian uprising, and other internal disturbances – such as the Kronstadt rebellion – led to some confusion in the reorganisation of the Red Army. These matters were noticed and reported on quite meticulously in Finland.[10]

From 1922 onwards, the general summaries show a clear calming of the situation in the Soviet Union. For Finland, the turning point seems to have been the suppression of the Karelian uprising in winter 1921/22 – an attempt by Karelians, who lived in East Karelia, to gain the independence from the Soviet Russia. Karelians were supported

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7 Lalu, *Syvää vai pelkästään tiheää?*, 75; Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun,* 24.

8 Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun,* 25.

9 Lalu, *Syvää vai pelkästään tiheää?*, 78.

10 YE tiedustelutoimiston viikko- ja yleiskatsaukset 1920–1922, YE Os IV, SArk-1401/8-10, KA; YE, Tykistön tarkastaja, R-98/50, KA.

by about 500 Finnish volunteers. The withdrawal of troops from the Finnish border in the late summer of 1922 finally stabilised the situation and established a state of peace as the number of troops started to settle. But the troops were only being rearranged, and at the same time, border security was taking shape. This marked the beginning of Finland's close monitoring of the development of the Red Army, which also became the focus of reporting.[11]

In the following years' summaries, the reporting on the situation beyond the Finnish border became minimal, as the content of the summaries focused almost exclusively on the development of the Red Army.[12] However, in the general summaries of the early 1920s, there is no sign of concern about the growth of the threat. At times, the summaries even stated that there was no immediate threat of attack. This was likely due to the difficult internal situation in the Soviet Union and the Red Army being in an early stage of development after the Civil War and border skirmishes – a kind of "starting point". However, deep conclusions about contemporary analysis cannot be drawn from the summaries since they were not very analytical. The nature of the summaries was highly descriptive, so mostly analyses were conducted and conclusions were drawn elsewhere, most probably in the operations department of the General Staff.[13] The summaries should be seen more as building blocks of analysis.

By the end of 1919, the threat potential was already quite clear. A memorandum sent to the Ministry of War in December discussed plans for the mobilisation and development of the armed forces, outlining the future challenge of the balance of power and the rapid

[11] YE tiedustelutoimiston yleiskatsaukset 1922, YE Os IV, SArk-1401/10, KA; YE, Tykistön tarkastaja, R-98/50, KA.

[12] YE tiedustelutoimiston yleiskatsaukset 1923–1926, YE Os IV, SArk-1401/10, 19 ja 22, KA.

[13] The material produced by the intelligence section of the General Staff (Yleisesikunnan tiedustelutoimisto) was mostly quite descriptive. It seems analytical reports and general summaries were produced outside the intelligence section. Analytical documents and summaries can be found mostly in the material produced by the operations department.

mobilisation capacity of the Soviet Union.[14] Even though Soviet Russia was in chaos and it would still be several years before the determined and systematic development of the future Red Army, the problem of inferiority and time was already recognised before the 1920s.

At the turn of the decade and in the early 1920s, threat perceptions and threat assessments were established, and their foundations remained the same throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The analyses always concluded that the Russians would have the opportunity to concentrate strong forces on the Karelian Isthmus near Leningrad (St. Petersburg) quickly and without being noticed, allowing them to take the initiative. According to the assessments, if the Finnish government were to mobilise, the Red Army would at worst already be positioned behind the border river in starting positions. Three scenarios were seen in the threat assessment: a complete surprise attack, a significant cavalry attack across the border, and a delay in Finland's own mobilisation due to delays in the government's decision-making. It was estimated that the opponent would aim to swiftly advance towards Viipuri (Vyborg). The main focus of the attack would be on the Karelian Isthmus, supported by a secondary attack north of Lake Ladoga. There, the attack would also take place on a broad front across the border. In addition, the threat of an amphibious landing on the north shore of Lake Ladoga was assessed. The goal of the Red Army would be a breakthrough on the Karelian Isthmus or to compel Finnish forces to retreat north.[15]

These threat assessments formed the basis for the development of the defence forces and defence plans. In the summer of 1920, the so-called Enckell Committee (Komitea armeijan uudelleenjärjestelyä

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[14] YE:n muistio sotaministerille, YE Os Ia, 2113, 13.12.1919, YE Osasto I 1919, T10590/1, KA.

[15] YE:n muistio Sotaväen päällikölle 8.1.1920, YE Os Ia,11/20 sal, YE Osasto I 1920, T10590/5, KA; YE Muistio eräästä Suomen sotavoimien uudestijärjestelyä koskevan ehdotuksen tarkastelusta, päiväämätön ja n:otta, T2855/5, KA; YE muistio Suomen puolustusmahdollisuuksista, Tsto I ak 84/21 sal, 2.2.1921, YE Tsto I, T-10590/10, KA; YE:n muistio kannaksen puolustuksesta, YE Tsto I ak 447/I/22 sal, 7.9.22, YE Tsto I 1922, T-2856/1, KA.

varten – Enckellin komitea)[16] met to consider the reorganisation of the defence forces in peacetime. In 1922, another committee, the Wetzer Organisation Committee (Kenraali Wetzerin määrävahvuuskomitea – Wetzerin komitea),[17] met to examine the composition and mobilisation arrangements of the Defence Forces.[18]

In the fall of 1922, the Wetzer Organisation Committee concluded that the existing composition and mobilisation plan did not adequately respond to the threat and sought a solution to the problem. As a result of the committee's proposals and the ensuing discussion, the president accepted the defence minister's proposal and appointed a War Council (Sotaneuvosto) in 1923 to further consider the

[16] The committee received its unofficial name from its chairman, Major General Oscar Enckell (1878–1960), who served as the Chief of the General Staff of Finland from 1919 to 1924. He received his education under the Russian Empire at the Finnish Cadet School and the Nicholas General Staff Academy in St. Petersburg. Enckell served in the Imperial Russian Army, participating in the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905 and serving as the head of the intelligence office of the Russian Army General Staff from 1907 to 1914. During World War I, he served as the Russian military attaché in Rome. After leaving the Russian Army, Enckell served in the Serbian Army General Staff from 1918 to 1919 and, in the spring of 1919, handled special assignments for the commander of the Entente forces in Constantinople and the Caucasus. Enckell returned to Finland in the late spring of 1919 and was registered in the Finnish Army's official list as a colonel on 27 May 1919. *Itsenäisen Suomen kenraalikunta 1918–1996*, toim. Rauno Lipponen (Porvoo: WSOY, 1997), 66.

[17] The committee was named after its chairman, Major General Martin Wetzer (1868–1954). Like Enckell, Wetzer received his training in the Imperial Russian Army. He completed his officer training at the Finnish Cadet School. However, Wetzer did not attend the Nicholas General Staff Academy and instead served in various positions in Finnish units until the dissolution of the Finnish Army in 1906. In the following years, he worked as a civilian until he was called back to service at the outbreak of World War I. Wetzer served in the war as a battalion and regiment commander until 1917, when he resigned from the Russian Army. After that, he served in various roles during the Finnish War of Independence in 1918 and the Estonian War of Independence in 1919. Wetzer resigned from the Estonian Defence Forces in the spring of 1919 and returned to active service in the Finnish Army, where he commanded the 2nd and 3rd Divisions, while also working in civilian jobs from 1920 to 1921. Wetzer ultimately retired to the reserves on 5 June 1925. *Itsenäisen Suomen kenraalikunta 1918–1996*, 456.

[18] YE ak:t Komitea armeijan uudelleenjärjestelyä varten, n:o 1. sal, kesäkuu 1920 ja n:o 2. sal, 8.9.1920, YE Os I, 1920, T-10590/5, KA; Wetzerin määrävahvuuskomitean mietintö 10 February 1923 ja pöytäkirjat, PLM-32/Ee2, KA; Sotaneuvoston pöytäkirja ja liite, 6 November 1923, YE Tsto I 1923, T-2858/1, KA.

situation. After two days of work, the council submitted its report.[19] In its statement, the council clarified the threat assessment, stating that the only real threat was Russia. At the same time, the assessment of the attack area was expanded. An attack could occur along the entire eastern border from the Karelian Isthmus to the Arctic Ocean. However, due to its circumstances and central location, the Isthmus was still considered the focal point. To further examine defence issues in depth, the council proposed the establishment of a separate Defence Preparations Council in its statement. This proposal led to the establishment of the so-called Defence Revision Committee (Puolustusrevisionikomitea*)* on 26 November 1923.[20]

The task assigned to the Defence Revision Committee established by the government was to examine Finland's defence arrangements and, if necessary, propose "restructuring" considering economic resources and military aspects. The Defence Revision Committee was created as a parliamentary committee in order to gain political support for its proposals. The committee was chaired by Principal of New Swedish Coeducational School in Helsinki Eirik Hornborg, and its membership included five military members and five representatives from political parties.[21]

After working for about two years, the revision committee submitted its report to the government on 21 January 1926.[22] The report was a situational analysis that thoroughly considered the entire defence system for the first time and made extensive development proposals. The revision committee report also defined the tasks of the defence forces, emphasising their preventive role in war. The Defence Revision Committee also paid significant attention to the threat of the rapid concentration of the Red Army and its resource superiority.[23]

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[19] Wetzerin määrävahvuuskomitean mietintö 10 February1923 ja pöytäkirjat, PLM-32/Ee2, KA; Sotaneuvoston pöytäkirja ja liite, 6 November 1923, YE Tsto I 1923, T-2858/1, KA.

[20] Sotaneuvoston pöytäkirja ja liite, 6 November 1923, YE Tsto I 1923, T-2858/1, KA.

[21] Ibid.; Raine Pölönen, *Yhteisen komiteatyön ensiaskeleet. Sotilaiden ja poliiitikkojen suunnittelutyö puolustusrevisionissa 1923–1926*, diplomityö (Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2019), 38–39.

[22] Puolustusrevisionin mietintö 1926, osat I-II, PLM-32/Ee8 ja osat III-IV, PLM-32/Ee9, KA.

[23] Puolustusrevisionin mietintö 1926, osa I, luku 1, Suomen sotilaspoliittinen asema, PLM-32/Ee8, KA, 3–19.

The final session of the Defence Revision Committee, 11 January 1926. Source: Military Museum, Finland

The work of the Defence Revision Committee was the first comprehensive assessment of the state of Finland's defence and its development needs. Its report proposed extensive changes,[24] but these could not all be implemented due to differing opinions and resource constraints. At the same time, the powerful development of the Red Army continued in the Soviet Union, and Finland was very aware of this.

Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893–1937), who served as Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army in the late 1920s, advocated, like Frunze, for the strong development of the Soviet forces. He saw a need for a large number of mechanised troops and new weapons. In the Frunzean view of war, the importance of attack and modern technology would increase. In the 1920s, the Red Army did not yet

[24] The revision proposed, among other things, increasing the wartime troops from seven divisions to at least 13 divisions, as well as significantly strengthening the covering troops. Puolustusrevisionin mietintö 1926, osa I, luku 5, Puolustusmahdollisuudet, PLM-32/Ee8, KA, 88–92, 99, 114.

have the capacity for this, but the focus was firmly on the future. The key to its development would be the improvement of heavy industry and the production of modern military equipment.[25] Even in the late 1920s, it was clear that if the Soviet Union's economy could not be improved and the country industrialised, the technological backwardness of the Red Army compared to other European states would continue.[26] The start of industrial production took time, so in the 1920s, the strength of the Red Army still lay in infantry masses. The real change came only in the 1930s.[27]

The reports of the General Staff of the Finnish Defence Forces in the late 1920s noted a continuous increase in budget allocations directed towards the development of the Soviet armed forces. In the Soviet Union's 1925 budget, 20% of the total funds were allocated to defence expenditure. Attention was also paid to the growth of motorisation and mechanisation of the Red Army. A new position was also established in the spring of 1929: the commander of mechanised and motorised troops.[28]

The Finnish General Staff assessed in 1931 that the Red Army had 450 tanks, divided into four tank regiments and three detached companies. In 1934, a comprehensive assessment of the development of the Red Army was completed. It was noted that the Red Army was at the forefront of European development in all defence branches, as a technically advanced million-man army with good tactical skills. It was reported that the Red Army had two motorised divisions and two motorised brigades, as well as 18 smaller motorised units in infantry and cavalry divisions.[29] The development of the Red Army, noted in the early 1920s, gained significant momentum in the second half of the decade and accelerated even further in the 1930s.

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[25] Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun,* 27–28.

[26] David M. Glantz, *The Military Strategy of the Soviet Union. A History* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 29.

[27] Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun,* 60.

[28] Vesa Tynkkynen, "Daavid vastaan Goljat", *Tuleva sota – ennustamisen sietämätön vaikeus,* toim. Vesa Tynkkynen (Keuruu: Edita, 2017), 154.

[29] Ibid., 155.

Red Army moto-mechanised troops in exercise. Source: Soviet publication Rabotche Krestjanskaja Krasnaja Armija, *Moskva 1934*

In March 1933, it was observed that the Soviet Union had deployed tank troops to the border with Finland. According to intelligence reports, one regiment with 120 tanks had been deployed to the border.[30] By the end of 1937, according to a memorandum from the General Staff's intelligence branch, the 11th Mechanised Army Corps and two detached mechanised brigades had been deployed to Leningrad and its surrounding areas. In the event of a conflict, Finland would likely be a secondary direction of the main campaign, but if Finland were to face a conflict with the Soviet Union alone, a total of nine infantry divisions, one mechanised army corps, one detached mechanised brigade and one cavalry brigade would be stationed behind the borders.[31] The establishment and deployment of mechanised forces near Finland posed a completely new and significant threat to Finland.

The development that began in the 1920s posed not only the significant challenge of the Finnish defence being outnumbered, but also perhaps the most threatening and immediate issue of the high

30 Ibid., 158.
31 Ibid., 160.

readiness, rapid mobility and firepower of the Red Army, which meant that Finland had been too late to react. How could it now prevent the Red Army from passing through before a field army could be established and concentrated? Thus, the issue of the covering force became a matter of life and death in the 1920s.

Protecting mobilisation and concentration: The covering mission becomes key

The question of covering troops, the need to reduce defence spending, and the pressure to shorten military service in the 1920s created a dilemma, the solution to which would be a key issue. The starting point for everything was the task of covering and its successful execution. However, economic pressures and the desire to shorten military service[32] were a challenging reality that could not be ignored.

In the 1920s, Parliament had repeatedly demanded a reduction in defence spending and a shorter period of military service. The challenge, however, was how a shortened service period could allow Finland to respond to the threat of a sudden attack or to fulfil the covering mission.[33] The mission of peacetime forces was to protect the establishment and deployment of wartime forces if necessary. To have a sufficient number of peacetime forces – that is, conscripts – the question was how long service periods would need to be to fulfil the covering mission.

In 1927, the government set up a committee to consider the issue of service time. The committee, after finishing their work in the late summer of 1928, concluded that the service period could not be shortened without jeopardising the covering mission.[34]

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[32] The service period was 12 months for troops and 15 months for leaders. *Suomen Puolustuslaitos*, 181.

[33] Reino Arimo, *Suomen puolustussuunnitelmat 1918–1939, III osa* (Helsinki: Sotatieteen laitos, 1987), 82.

[34] In addition to the chairman, the committee had eight members, of whom four were members of parliament and two were military personnel. The chairman, Kyösti Kallio, later became president of Finland. Ibid.

Colonel Leonard Grandell, a chief of the Mobilisation Department in the Finland General Staff, 1927–1936. Source: Military Museum, Finland

Peacetime forces were inherently insufficient to meet the level of covering troops required by the General Staff and Defence Revision, because part of the peacetime forces were untrained recruits, while the rest operated mainly as the backbone of the field army in the prevailing cadre system. According to calculations, a service time of up to two years would have been needed to effectively fulfil the covering mission. Despite this challenge, the Defence Revision Committee did not support an increase in service time.[35]

In 1924, Major Leonard Grandell, a member of the Defence Revision Committee, had proposed a transition to a territorial system. In the territorial system, the forces would move away from the cadre-based system. Instead of supplementing peacetime forces, the field army would be entirely composed of reservists by region. This would

[35] Vilho Tervasmäki, "Maanpuolustussuunnitelmat", *Talvisodan historia. 1., Suomi joutuu talvisotaan,* toim. Sotatieteen laitoksen sotahistorian toimisto (Porvoo: WSOY, 1984), 71.

have solved the covering troops challenge, as there would then be almost sufficient strength in peacetime forces for covering troops. The revision committee approved the proposal, but the idea was rejected due to criticism from the General Staff.[36] However, the solution remained under consideration.

In 1928, the Conscription Committee completed its work and suggested a reconsideration of Grandell's idea. In the same year, the government appointed a full-time investigator to study it. Lieutenant Colonel Aksel Airo, the investigator, completed his work in October 1929.[37]

Right at the beginning of his study, Airo explored the possibilities of shortening the service period within the existing system and concluded that it could not be done. However, if the absolute starting point was to be the shortening of service periods, the existing system would have to be changed. Airo proposed shortening the service time for troops to nine months and for leaders – NCOs and reserve officers – to twelve months. He also decided to keep the three main tasks of the defence forces: training, establishment and covering.[38]

Airo's study concluded that the solution to the whole problem was to abandon the cadre system. In his proposal, mobilisation was separated from the main tasks of the defence forces during peacetime, leaving only the training and covering missions. This would result in sufficient resources for both tasks. For mobilisation purposes, a separate territorial system would be built within the defence forces leadership, and a separate regional organisation would be established to implement it. Airo's study was largely based on Grandell's previous idea, which Airo further developed.[39]

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Arimo, *Suomen puolustussuunnitelmat 1918–1939, III osa*, 82.

[38] Reino Arimo, "Puolustusvoimien siirtyminen aluejärjestelmään 1930-luvulla", *Tiede ja Ase,* no 45 (1987): 87; Juha Ratinen, *Kaaderiperustamisesta aluejärjestelmään, suomalaisen liikekannallepanojärjestelmän kehittyminen 1918–1945,* väitöskirja (Tampere: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2018), 64.

[39] Ratinen, *Kaaderiperustamisesta aluejärjestelmään,* 75.

From left: Major General Erkki Raappana, Marshal Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim, and Lieutenant General Aksel Airo in Lieksajärvi, Repola, White Karelia, 9 September 1942. Raappana was the architect of the Ilomantsi victory in 1944. Photo by Pauli Jänis. Source: Museovirasto, HK7744:337

There was a debate about the results of Airo's work for about a year, after which, in the fall of 1930, the Ministry of Defence established a committee to plan the reorganisation and its implementation. At the beginning of 1931, the committee's work was completed, and in the summer it was presented to the Defence Council and approved by the government, after which Parliament began to consider the necessary changes to the law. The preparations for the reorganisation began immediately in the fall of 1931, and it came into effect in 1934.[40]

In the reform, the peacetime army was divided into the regional organisation and border army units. The regional organisation was responsible for mobilisation and the border army units for covering

[40] Arimo, "Puolustusvoimien siirtyminen aluejärjestelmään 1930-luvulla", 103; Ratinen, *Kaaderiperustamisesta aluejärjestelmään,* 75.

A Bicycle Battalion on the march somewhere in South-Eastern Finland. Source: Military Museum, Finland

and training missions.[41] During wartime, the forces would consist of field armies and covering troops, with the covering troops being mainly composed of conscripts from peacetime units. The field army was composed of nine divisions. The covering troops consisted of a light brigade and forces set up by three peacetime divisions. Each division's three training infantry regiments formed a covering battalion. The divisions' bicycle battalions and Cavalry Brigade were already in their wartime compositions during peacetime, forming the mobile elements of the covering troops. The divisions' artillery regiments, like the infantry regiments, set up one artillery battalion each.[42]

The 1934 reform established both the peacetime and the wartime defence forces with which Finland would enter the Winter War five

[41] Ibid., 74.

[42] Arimo, "Puolustusvoimien siirtyminen aluejärjestelmään 1930-luvulla", 101.

years later. The wartime field army was planned in the form and strength in which it would eventually be established in the fall of 1939. When the time came, the covering troops were also deployed exactly as envisioned in the 1934 plan.

The concerns that arose in the early 1920s about the threat of the Red Army, which became significant in the mid- and late 1920s, were resolved after ten years of debate and planning. The timing problem was solved by implementing a major reform. The results of that reform were tested a couple of years later when the Winter War began.

The issue of inferiority, however, could not be solved concretely, as Finland naturally could not in any way challenge the Red Army in terms of manpower or arms and materiel. The solution had to be found through tactics and operational methods.

If you are inferior, attack!

In Finland during the early 1920s, the Red Army's capabilities were not highly regarded. Finnish observers viewed Soviet tactical skills and methods as primitive, discipline as poor, and training levels as inadequate. They perceived the Red Army as clinging to old Tsarist traditions that emphasised mass formations and rigid, formal offensive operations. Finnish military thinking held that such mass, formal attacks would not succeed against a flexible, informal and mobile opponent, as the Finns saw themselves.[43]

Finland began developing awareness of Red Army tactical innovations in the mid-1920s, with this development accelerating strongly in the second half of the decade. The publication of the Red Army's temporary field manual in 1925 revealed a strong emphasis on offensive

[43] Vesa Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen. Taktiikan kehittymisen ensimmäiset vuosikymmenet Suomessa,* väitoskirja (Joutsa: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 1996), 31; Tynkkynen, "Daavid vastaan Goljat", 153; Jarkko Kemppi, *Suomalaisen sotataidon kehittyminen vuosina 1918–1924* (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2006), 223.

tactics, with infantry remaining the main branch while technology and concentrated firepower began receiving greater emphasis.[44]

In the following years, as material development gained momentum, the role of armoured forces also grew, and their position in Red Army tactics began to crystallise. The 1929 release of the next field manual clearly elevated offence as the main combat discipline, incorporating elements of the deep battle doctrine of Tukhachevsky and Vladimir Triandafillov (1894–1931).[45]

The deep battle doctrine took shape in the early 1930s and was formalised in the temporary field manual issued in December 1936. This doctrine aimed to simultaneously incapacitate the enemy's entire defence system throughout its depth, ultimately destroying opposing forces.[46] As noted earlier, the Soviet army was regarded as one of Europe's most powerful by the mid-1930s.[47] However, Finland faced not only questions of timing and material inferiority, but also significant challenges in military expertise.

The consistent development of Finnish tactics began in the early 1920s, once conditions had been stabilised and the defence forces' development was underway. Given Finland's limited military experience, lessons were initially drawn from World War I experiences abroad while simultaneously monitoring tactical developments in post-war Europe.[48] However, it was soon realised that World War I experiences could not be directly applied to Finnish conditions. The latest trends of the 1920s were also seen as incompatible with Finland. J.F.C. Fuller's and B.H. Liddell Hart's ideas of mechanised warfare were noted, but the large-scale use of mechanised forces on Finnish terrain was seen as impossible and beyond Finnish resources.[49] Finnish tactics were developed based on their own circumstances: Finnish conditions and resources would be the determining factor.

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44 Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen*, 32; Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun*, 45.
45 Kulomaa, *Syvään taisteluun*, 28; Lalu, *Syvää vai pelkästään tiheää?*, 94.
46 Tynkkynen, "Daavid vastaan Goljat", 158.
47 Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen,* 34.
48 Ibid., 22; Kemppi, *Suomalaisen sotataidon kehittyminen,* 231.
49 Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen,* 23.

A machine-gun squad exercising in winter 1926. Source: Military Museum, Finland

The basic factors of development were thus seen to be the local conditions: forests and winter. These were seen as offering opportunities to balance the strengths. Winter combat experiments were initiated in the early 1920s, while forest combat experiments began in the 1930s. Trials tested procedures and equipment to fully utilise Finnish conditions. Many of the innovations resulting from the trials are still in use today, such as the field kitchen, half-platoon tent and march compass.[50]

The results of the defence revision also laid down certain cornerstones for tactical development. The committee's report had extensively analysed Finnish conditions, as well as the operational possibilities of the Red Army and their own forces in terrain and areas. The report identified the threat from the Red Army as significant, guiding all development.[51] It was stated that in battle, the inferior must strive

[50] Tynkkynen, "Daavid vastaan Goljat", 153.

[51] Puolustusrevisionin mietintö 1926, osat I–II, PLM-32/Ee8 ja osat III–IV, PLM-32/Ee9, KA.

Combat exercise in South-Eastern Finland, August 1933. Source: Military Museum, Finland

for continuous activity and use of movement to even the odds.[52] The report, therefore, emphasised that in Finnish tactical thinking, activity is an absolute prerequisite for survival in adversity. Offence became the decisive combat discipline in Finnish thinking. Only by attacking can solutions be achieved.

Offence formed the foundation of tactical thinking and training in the 1930s, up until the Winter War. Exercise scenarios involved delaying operations of covering troops, followed by concentrated counterattacks by the main forces.[53] In combat against a superior force, the goal was to engage the enemy by encircling it, utilising movements through covered terrain in all seasons.[54]

The Finnish Army published its first field manuals in the early 1920s. These manuals had influences from many foreign field

[52] Ibid., osa I, PLM-32/Ee8, KA, 58–61.
[53] Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen,* 54.
[54] Tynkkynen, "Daavid vastaan Goljat", 153.

manuals. At the beginning of the decade, these manuals reflected influences from German manuals, and later, influences from Swedish manuals were incorporated. The field manuals from the early 1930s reflected Finland's own military thinking, which took into account its geographical conditions.[55]

The idea of using offence as a main combat method had already become established in the early 1930s. The inferiority of Finnish forces to the Red Army emphasised the importance of creating a local centre of gravity. By creating a centre of gravity, the aim was to achieve local superiority and thus reach a resolution. In decisive points, one had to strive to be superior even with smaller forces. Quality was also emphasised as a factor in levelling the playing field in terms of leadership and troops. In addition, the element of surprise was considered a way to equalise the balance of power.[56]

When examining the relative importance given to combat methods, it can be stated that until the Winter War, attack guided all thinking. Defence was not yet highly valued in the 1920s, but its importance increased in the late 1930s. Delay was recognised as a combat method in the 1930s, but it did not reach the level of significance of attack or defence.[57]

The challenge of numerical inferiority was addressed through activity. After covering forces engaged the enemy, Finnish commanders had to seize the initiative and launch counterattacks with their main forces. Passive, static defence would cede the initiative to the opponent, allowing them to concentrate firepower and choose breakthrough points at will. Instead, by utilising well-trained, mobile and capable troops, exploiting the favourable Finnish terrain and conditions, forces could potentially equalise the balance of power and achieve success. The principle that attack serves as the best form of defence thus became deeply embedded in Finnish military thinking once the harsh reality of inferiority became apparent.

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55 Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen,* 52.
56 Ibid., 55.
57 Ibid.

The importance of activity was later proven during the Winter War. The most significant defensive victories were achieved in areas where mobile operations were feasible and Finnish forces could leverage overwhelming local superiority, particularly when desperate circumstances demanded only creativity and initiative for survival.

Summary: The cornerstones of Finnish defence arrangements and tactics set in the mid-1920s

Threat assessment has always been a fundamental starting point in the planning and development of armed forces throughout history. This is especially evident in the development of Finnish defence in the 1920s. The intensity of development can be attributed to two factors: the Finnish Defence Forces took their first steps, making strong development work natural and obvious. Second, the Soviet Union emerged and began the construction and development of the Red Army at a time when the only real threat to Finland was identified as a formidable armed force.

In Finnish military history research, the prevailing view is of the realisation of the threat of the Red Army and the awakening to it in Finland in the latter half of the 1920s. The view is mostly correct, but it may be considered somewhat simplistic. It is indisputable that the threat of the Red Army materialised clearly in the latter half of the 1920s and early 1930s. The visible and strong structural and tactical development of the Red Army that began in 1924 did indeed cause significant concern and attention in Finland.

However, it should be noted that the potential threat was quite clearly understood as early as 1918, even though the Russian Civil War continued for several years after. The foundations on which the concern about the Red Army was built and materialised were also clearly articulated in the analyses of the end of that decade and in the early 1920s. These same foundations were further reinforced in the reports of the War Council and the Defence Revision Committee in 1923 and 1926, respectively.

The importance of the War Council and the Defence Revision Committee as key driving factors in the development of Finland's defence shows that threat assessments and the weaknesses in Finland's defence were already known and accepted before the latter half of the 1920s. The strengthening of the Red Army and its tactical development in the latter half of the 1920s materialised and demonstrated the previously acknowledged threat that had been identified in the analyses. New, even more threatening elements – such as motomechanisation – were added as well.

The development of Finland's defence system and Finnish tactics were already well underway when the threat of the Red Army materialised. The progress can be seen as parallel, accelerated by the observations of the latter half of the 1920s and driven by serious concern. The development of the Red Army was not a sudden realisation, but a process that had already begun in the early years of independent Finland's defence forces. This is evidenced by several memoranda and threat assessments that laid the groundwork for the development of the defence forces in various committee reports.

The years 1923 and, especially, the Defence Revision Committee report of 1926 can be seen as culminating points in the development of Finland's defence system and, to some extent, tactical thinking. They confirmed the threat assessments and challenges that guided the development of Finland's defence system in the following years. The reports also laid out the frameworks of tactical thinking based on geopolitics, power dynamics and circumstances, as well as the possibilities for action of Finnish and enemy forces in specific areas and terrains.

The threat thinking that emerged at the end of the War of Independence evolved, solidified and strengthened in the early 1920s, playing a fundamental role in the 1923–26 period. Guided by the established foundations, the entire defence system was developed, and tactical thinking and Finnish operational skills and tactics were framed. The power-balance thinking of a small country, the problem of timing, and the tactical thinking that began to develop in the 1920s are still evident in Finland's defence system and thinking to this day.

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Polish Military Thought in the Interwar Period of the 20th Century and the Role of Marshal Józef Piłsudski

Tomasz Gajownik

Polish military thought of the interwar period was derived from the country's position in the international arena, its geostrategic location, the position and role of Józef Piłsudski, as well as economic and social factors determining specific development opportunities of the armed forces of independent Poland.

Introduction

The newly reborn Second Polish Republic was forced to fight for its survival from the very first days of its independence in 1918. The war with Bolshevik Russia and conflicts with Lithuania and Czechoslovakia, as well as with Germany, required the government and authorities to make difficult and sometimes even painful decisions, demanding tremendous effort from a large part of society, not only militarily but economically as well. However, owing primarily to military successes, it was able to maintain Poland's independence.

Combat against Bolsheviks, Germans, Czechs and Lithuanians was conducted based on experience gained by Polish soldiers who had fought in Polish Legions, armies of the former empires that had partitioned Poland at the end of the 18th century, and in different regions not only of Europe but also across other continents. Within just two years (November 1918–October 1920), the Polish military authorities were forced to implement strategic and operational plans based on the experience of the officers involved in their preparation, but also, more importantly, taking into account the rapidly changing situation on multiple fronts.

This demanding art of assimilating knowledge from various schools of warfare theory, while conducting hostilities in correlation with ongoing situational analysis, brought not only a significant contribution to the victory over Bolshevik Russia, but also raised important questions about Poland's military future: In what direction should Polish military thought develop? What criteria should operational art adopt in a geostrategic dimension? Which factors should be focused on regarding potential conflict scenarios involving Poland? And consequently, in what direction should Poland's armed forces develop? Polish theoreticians devoted themselves to addressing these questions. Several figures had a decisive influence in shaping certain theories that gained enormous popularity or attracted significant interest not only from military authorities but also the broader officer corps of the Polish Army.

Józef Piłsudski and his influence on the development of military thought

During the interwar period, Polish military theoreticians concentrated on a number of key issues, such as the nature of future warfare, the role and capability of aviation, the relevance of mobile and mechanised troops, and the effective deployment of infantry and cavalry. Strategically, the focus was, above all, on the concept of mobile defence as the most predominant fighting form against a stronger opponent, for it was assumed that potential conflicts would take place with Germany and/or the Soviet Union, whose military potential was substantially greater than Poland's, despite the limitations imposed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. In theoretical terms, manoeuvre warfare doctrine dominated Polish military thought, and its authorship was attributed to Marshal Józef Piłsudski.

This belief was fuelled by Józef Piłsudski himself. However, it was not so much his genius as factors such as the nature of the theatre of war and its opportunities, the duration of war, as well as the tactics used by the Bolsheviks that led to the implementation of the strategy

of manoeuvre warfare. Disregarding the questionable authorship of this theory, which is ascribed to Piłsudski, it is worth noting that he claimed that the conditions of the war forced both sides to conduct manoeuvring operations whose aim was the destruction of the enemy's armies. He remained a supporter of the theory until the end of his life. Its main theses boiled down to the need to maintain strong reserves in case of unfavourable developments on the front. Skilful manoeuvring would compensate for the lack of strength and resources. However, this was a wrong assumption because the Second World War proved the need for both strength and resources as well as manoeuvres. He believed in the superiority of improvisation in war over planned activities, and this reluctance to create military doctrines had a negative effect on the organisation and training of the army.

In Polish geostrategic conditions, against the militarily more powerful neighbouring countries – Germany and Soviet Russia – the theory of manoeuvre warfare was associated with the concept of operational (mobile) defence as the main form of combat against a stronger opponent. It was supposed to bring the balance of power to a point that would allow for the destruction of a tougher enemy through prolonged combat, conducted in stages.[1] As mentioned previously, Polish manoeuvre warfare theory was accepted and its ideas replicated by the majority of Polish military theoreticians, including General Marian Kukiel[2] and

[1] Lech Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl wojskowa 1914–1939* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, 1988), 191–192, 264–269.

[2] Marian Włodzimierz Kukiel (1885–1973) was a Polish general and military historian, dr. phil. from the University of Lwów in 1909. He fought in the Polish Legions in World War I, and in the Polish–Soviet War, he was commander of the Komorowo Cadet School. In 1920–23, he served as the head of the Historical Bureau of the General Staff. Kukiel was made a Brigadier General in 1923. Following Piłsudski's May Coup of 1926, Kukiel moved to the reserves. In 1927, he received a dr. habil. from the University of Kraków. Between 1927 and 1939, he lectured on modern history and was made a professor in 1935. Kukiel served as Minister of War (national defence) of the Polish government-in-exile in 1939–40 and 1942–49. His best-known works include *Zarys historji wojskowości w Polsce* (An Outline of the History of Military Science in Poland) (1921) and *Wojna 1812 roku* (The War of 1812) (1937) (Editor's note).

Colonel Stefan Rowecki.[3] Its critics included General Tadeusz Kutrzeba,[4] who claimed that the specificity of the Polish–Soviet war limited the value of conclusions drawn from it and that it was impossible to build Polish military doctrine based on it, assuming only offensive and manoeuvring actions.[5]

However, the doctrine dominated further studies on the development of operational plans in case of conflicts with neighbours, as a kind of testament to Marshal Piłsudski's influence. In fact, it was actually implemented in the "West" plan devised in the spring of 1939, which became the basis for preparations for war with Germany. The course of events in September of 1939 made all the flaws of this doctrine evident. Nevertheless, we should also note the completely

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[3] Jan Pilżys, "Wojna i doktryna wojenna w myśli wojskowej lat 1921–1939", *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Oficerskiej Wojsk Lądowych* 164, no 2 (2012): 212; Tadeusz Urbańczyk, "Polska myśl wojskowa i doktryna wojenna na łamach "Bellony" w latach 1918–1939", *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego* MCXLII*: Prace Historyczne*, no 112 (1994): 36; Marian Kukiel, "Miejsce kampanii 1920 w historii wojen", *Bellona* XVI, no 2 (1924): 125–136; Stefan Rowecki, "Polska źródłem świeżej myśli wojskowej", *Bellona* XXVIII, no 3 (1927): 228–262. Stefan Paweł Rowecki (1895–1944) was a general and journalist who fought in World War I and the Polish–Soviet war. After the war, he became chief of the Science and Publishing Institute of the Polish Army and co-founded a military weekly called *Przegląd Wojskowy* (Military Review). He was commander of the 55th Infantry Regiment in Lezsno in 1930–35, and in summer 1939 organised the Warsaw Armoured Motorised Brigade. In 1940–41, he was commander of the Union of Armed Struggle, and in 1942–43 served as commander of the Armia Krajowa (Home Army). Was arrested by the Gestapo and likely executed in Sachsenhausen concentration camp (Editor's note).

[4] Tadeusz Kutrzeba (1886–1947) was a general and military theoretician. He studied in 1910–14 at the General Staff Academy in Vienna, and fought as a general staff officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army in World War I on the Serbian, Russian and Italian fronts. In the Polish–Soviet War, he served as chief of staff of various divisions and larger formations – during the battle of the Niemen (1920), for example, he was chief of staff of the 2nd Army. Afterwards, he became a lecturer in general tactics at the General Staff School. He also participated in developing military regulations. In 1927, he was made a Brigadier General and served from 1928 to 1939 as commandant of the Higher Military School, where he lectured in tactics and combat history. In 1939, he was promoted to Major General. He published works on the Polish–Soviet War and on theoretical and practical issues. He advocated for modernising the army, especially by motorising it and creating armoured units. In 1939, he was named commander-in-chief of the Poznań Army. He was captured by the Germans and was in prisoner-of-war camps from 1939 to 1945. In 1945, he moved to London, where he became the chairman of the Historical Commission of the September Campaign and the Polish Armed Forces in the West (Editor's note).

[5] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 198.

Colonel Tadeusz Kutrzeba at his desk, 1925. Source: Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, 3/1/0/7/259

different nature of the theatre of warfare at the time (as opposed to the conditions of the Polish–Soviet war of 1919–1920), as well as inconsistent Polish strategic planning, which altered with the changes of the geopolitical situation.

Concepts of conducting warfare

Like Piłsudski, the remaining Polish theorists considered the future theatre of warfare on Polish territory in terms of the concept of defensive warfare. However, they varied in terms of their emphasis on individual issues resulting from the very nature of defensive warfare. In any case, none of them had either the influence or the potential to influence the actual development of the Polish armed forces in the way Piłsudski did.

Nonetheless, their voices did not go unnoticed, and they were even subjected to analysis, comments and criticism. The leading role here was played by two officers: General Władysław Sikorski[6] and Colonel Stefan Mossor. To a lesser extent, officers such as General Jan Romer[7] and Colonel Stanisław Rola Arciszewski were involved in this field.

Sikorski was a well-known military theorist and a longtime critic of Piłsudski's activities and his political antagonist. He had been a military commander during the Polish–Soviet war, and later served as prime minister and minister of military affairs in pre-war Poland.[8] He wrote several books, prominent among which was one on the nature of a future war,[9] its many facets and scenarios for how events might unfold. Mossor, meanwhile, was distinguished by a theoretical sense that predisposed him to assume functions connected with military planning. As a graduate of the Higher School of Naval Forces as well as École Supérieure de Guerre in Paris, he had extensive theoretical knowledge, which resulted in him becoming a lecturer at the Polish Higher Military School and a staff officer at the General Inspectorate

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[6] Władysław Eugeniusz Sikorski (1881–1943) graduated from Lwów Polytechnic in 1908, attended the Austro-Hungarian Military School, and became a Lieutenant Colonel in 1914. He was made commissioner in charge of the recruitment to the Polish Legion and later commander of a Legion's officer school. In 1915, he was given the rank of Colonel. In 1921–22, he served as the Chief of the Polish General Staff before becoming Prime Minister in 1922–23. In 1923–24, as Minister of War, he led the modernisation of the army. In the late 1920s, Sikorski joined the opposition against Piłsudski. In 1939–43, he served as Prime Minister of the government in exile in London. Sikorski died in an air accident in Gibraltar (Editor's note).

[7] Jan Edward Romer (1869–1934) graduated from the Technical Military Academy in Vienna in 1890. He became Lieutenant Colonel in 1911 and Colonel in 1914. He fought in World War I in the Austro-Hungarian Army on the Russian and Italian fronts as the artillery commander of the infantry divisions and army corps. In 1918, he was promoted to Major General. In the same year, Romer joined the Polish Army and fought in the Polish–Ukrainian and Polish–Soviet wars. He headed the Polish Military Purchase Mission in Paris in 1919 and was a member of the Polish delegation at the armistice negotiations with Soviet Russia in 1920. He rose to the rank of Division General in 1922 and was appointed a member of the War Council in 1924. From 1926 to 1932, he served as Inspector (i.e., Commander-in-Chief) of the Army (Editor's note).

[8] Marek Jabłonowski, "Gen Władysław Sikorski w świetle publicystyki", *Generał Władysław Sikorski w zbiorach Centralnej Biblioteki Wojskowej*, joint publication (Warszawa: Centralna Biblioteka Wojskowa im. Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego, 2011), 9–27.

[9] Władysław Sikorski. *Przyszła wojna – jej możliwości i charakter oraz związane z nimi zagadnienia obrony kraju* (Warszawa: Bibljoteka Prawnicza, 1934).

of the Armed Forces, where, together with General Tadeusz Kutrzeba, he was involved in expanding on a study of Polish strategic planning against Germany. His most important book, concerning the art of warfare in the conditions of modern war, was published in 1938.[10] The remaining theoreticians no longer had such a significant impact on military thought, although their works did not pass unnoticed.

As already mentioned, the nature of a future war became the subject of Sikorski's study. His most influential work, *Przyszła wojna: jej możliwości i charakter oraz związane z nim zagadmienia obrony kraju* (The Future War: Its Possibilities and Nature, and Related Issues of Defence of the Country), published in 1934, made several accurate predictions about the next war. He believed that it would be global in scope. Analysing the geopolitical relations of the time, he saw the real threat of the outbreak of a new war and predicted that Adolf Hitler's Germany would be responsible. He correctly foresaw that Hitler would likely launch a blitzkrieg within five or six years. The consequence, he accurately predicted, was that in response to the German aggression, a coalition would be formed based on the alliances and pacts in place in Europe.[11]

Another distinguished Polish officer, Major General Jan Romer, agreed with Sikorski on the nature of a future war. In fact, he predicted even earlier, in 1927, that the conflict would prove to be global.[12]

One last theoretician who had a crucial impact on the perception of the nature of the next war was Colonel Stefan Mossor.[13] Like

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[10] Jarosław Pałka, *Generał Stefan Mossor (1896–1957). Biografia wojskowa* (Warszawa: Rytm, 2008).

[11] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 86–89.

[12] Ibid., 90; Jan Romer, "Przyszła wojna", *Bellona* XXVI, no 3 (1927): 249–268.

[13] Stefan Adolf Mossor (1896–1957), general, fought in World War I in the Austro-Hungarian Army and graduated from the Austrian cavalry officers' school (1918). He joined the Polish Army, also served in General Józef Haller's army in France, and formed the 5th Siberian Division (1919). After studying at Lwów Polytechnic in 1921, the Higher Military School in Warsaw in 1927–28, and École Supérieure de Guerre in Paris in 1928–30, he lectured at the Higher Military School (1930–34, from 1935). He was promoted to Captain in 1922. From 1937 to 1938, he served as the 1st general staff officer in the Headquarters of General Inspector of the Armed Forces, where he developed the Study of the Strategic Plan of the War Against Germany (known as 'General Kutrzeba's memorandum'). He published works on modern warfare. In 1939, as Lieutenant Colonel

Sikorski, he anticipated that it would be a clash of coalitions of warring states and, naturally, its reach would be worldwide.[14]

All three officers noted that the duration of a future conflict would be crucial. Sikorski believed that the war would be long-lasting and would require full mobilisation of all the human and material resources. He did not preclude the possibility of employing a blitzkrieg variant, but not as a key tool for the implementation of strategic planning.[15] Mossor, in turn, heavily criticised the concept of a blitzkrieg. He affirmed that it was impossible to win a war using only a professional army that was highly mechanised and supported by a strong air force. He underestimated the importance of tanks and aircraft on the battlefield. His remarks may have stemmed from the fact that he was familiar with Poland's economic and military situation.[16]

Yet another issue that emerged among Polish theoreticians discussing a future war was whether it would prove to be a positional conflict or one of manoeuvring. The majority agreed with Piłsudski and the Polish theory of a manoeuvre-based conflict, based on the experience of the Polish–Soviet war. The major assumption here was that war would be waged with traditional weapons, namely infantry supported by cavalry, through active forms of manoeuvring activities. Colonel Stanisław Rola Arciszewski[17] should be included among the

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of the General Staff, he commanded the 6th Cavalry Regiment of the Łódź Army. From 1939 to1944, he was held as a German prisoner of war and later volunteered the Polish People's Army, advancing to Major General in 1947. He headed the Study Office of the Ministry of National Defence (1949–50) before being arrested in 1950, accused of conspiracy against the communist party, and tried in a show trial in 1951. He was released in 1955 (Editor's note).

[14] Stefan Mossor, *Sztuka wojenna w warunkach nowoczesnej wojny* (Warszawa: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Oświatowy, 1938), 165; Urbańczyk, "Polska myśl wojskowa", 38–39.

[15] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 104.

[16] Ibid., 91.

[17] Stanisław Teofil Rola Arciszewski (1888–1953) graduated from the Technical College of Vienna in 1910. During World War I, he fought in the Austro-Hungarian army on the Russian and Italian fronts, graduated from ensign school in 1915, and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1918. He served in the Polish army as a logistics officer from 1918, studied at the Higher Military School in Warsaw (1922–24), and became a lecturer of general tactics there, advancing to Major in 1924. In 1928–30, he served as Chief of Staff of the 13th Infantry Division, was promoted to

main proponents of this theory. Romer had a somewhat different view that converged with this one in some respects. He claimed that the future war would consist of two stages, the first one involving manoeuvring activity, and the other comprising positional fights as a result of the stagnation of the front.[18] This indicated that, unlike Piłsudski or Arciszewski, Romer recognised the possibility of interrupting offensive activities. Similar viewpoints were formulated by authors such as Sikorski and Mossor, who also presumed that a future conflict would involve both active measures and elements of positional warfare.[19]

Concepts of using new types of weapons

Modern combat measures used in the First World War became an object of interest for military theoreticians in terms of their applications in future conflicts. In Poland, the focus was, above all, on determining the role and tasks of aviation and fast troops, which emerged from the shape of the Second Polish Republic's borders, as well as economic possibilities of the country.

Aviation was first mentioned in the independent Republic of Poland as early as 1919, in lecture topics presented by members of the Air Force Officers' Club. In their speeches, they touched upon issues such as the development of Polish aviation. However,

Lieutenant Colonel in 1931, commanded the 1st Motorised Regiment in Modlin (1931–35), the 1st Motorised Artillery Regiment in Stryj (1935–37), and the 7th Light Artillery Regiment in Częstochowa (1937–38). In 1938, he was promoted to Colonel, and served as Commander of the 3rd Armoured Group in Warsaw. In September 1939, he was the Commander of the Armoured Forces of the Łódź Army, later Deputy Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Army. In 1939–45 Arciszewski was a German prisoner of war. In 1945, he joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West. From 1947, he lived in London, working in the Historical Commission of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces in the West. His best-known book on military history is *Sztuka dowodzenia na zachodzie Europy* (The Art of Command in Western Europe), published in 1934 (Editor's note).

[18] Romer, "Przyszła wojna", 266.

[19] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 103–108.

the most principal accomplishment was pilot Stanisław Jasiński's[20] book *The Most Urgent Demands of Polish Military Aviation*.[21] Jasiński, being unfamiliar with Douhet's work,[22] put forth an interesting and original concept of how aviation can be used. He believed that it could be used for independent operations. However, unlike Douhet, he did not foresee that those actions would allow the achievement of strategic goals of war. According to Jasiński, the task of the air force was to support the operations of ground armies.[23]

Another theoretician who played a major role in discussing air force issues was Colonel Sergiusz Abżółtowski, who was also trained as a pilot.[24] In 1923, he released his first book,[25] in which he predicted that the main task of bombers in a future war would be to destroy material and people, and to lower morale. Fighters' assignments

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[20] Stanisław Jasiński (1891–1932) studied at the Austrian Mining Academy in Loeben and graduated from the school of air observers in Wiener Neustadt in 1916. He served as an observer and later as a fighter pilot in the Austro-Hungarian Army and subsequently in the Polish Army. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1924 and to Colonel in 1932. He commanded the 3rd Air Force Division (Grupa Aeronautyczna) in Kraków. He participated in the theoretical development of the Polish Air Force, published articles in the military press and served as a member of the editorial board of the journal *Przegląd Lotniczy* (Air Review). He died in a car accident (Editor's note).

[21] Stanisław Jasiński, *Najpilniejsze postulaty polskiego lotnictwa wojskowego* (Warszawa: s.n, 1921).

[22] Giulio Douhet (1869–1930), Italian air power theorist and Air Force General.

[23] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 120–127; Tadeusz Kmiecik, "Węzłowe problemy wykorzystania lotnictwa w przyszłej wojnie w polskiej myśli lotniczej lat 1919–1939", *Słupskie Studia Historyczne*, no 10 (2003): 133–135.

[24] Sergiusz Abżółtowski (1890–1939) studied at the Sumy Cadet Corps and attended the Michael Artillery School in St. Petersburg (1907–10). He left Russia in autumn 1917 and initially served as an Artillery Lieutenant in the Polish Army. In 1920, he underwent pilot training in France in Dijon and Pau and was promoted to Major. He became a general staff officer (1922) and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel (1924), serving as military attaché in Moscow (1922–23). He commanded the 3rd Poznań Air Force Regiment (1925–29) before being dismissed and retired. Later he lectured at the Higher Air Force School (1936–39), was a prolific author on air force matters, formulating the foundations of Polish operational air force, and served as editor-in-chief of the *Mała encyklopedia lotnicza* (Small Aviation Encyclopaedia) (Editor's note).

[25] Sergiusz Abżołtowski, *Taktyka lotnictwa* (Tactics of the Air Force) (Warszawa: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1923).

would result from the need to gain air superiority. A year later, he published another book in which he clearly put forth a thesis on the need to develop independent air force units for offensive tasks such as bombing communication centres and destroying enemy airfields or industrial centres. In the years that followed, Abżółtowski's views evolved, influenced by the research of European theoreticians as well as the changing geopolitical and economic situation of the Polish state. In 1932, he published his most influential work on the operational use of the air force.[26] He recommended that it become a separate branch of the armed forces. He forecast that the air fleets of the leading countries of the world would be designed to fight enemy aircraft and gain superiority. However, he rejected the possibility of implementing strategic aviation tasks – i.e., defeating the opponent through air power alone.[27]

It is crucial to keep in mind that Polish theorists endeavoured to create their own original visions and avoid imitating others. Regrettably, the inability to postulate was influenced by Piłsudski's own attitude. He was not a supporter of new, mechanised forms of fighting. For him, the air force's role was limited to conducting surveillance and reconnaissance activities only.[28]

In Polish military thought, work on the use of troops concentrated around five fields of study: the theory of manoeuvring war and the experiences of the Polish–Soviet war; the operational role of the cavalry; concepts of creating mixed and light units; using motorised and armoured troops; and the role and significance of anti-tank defence.

Concepts for the use of mixed and light units in Polish military thought appeared after foreign theoreticians had already addressed the topic, and they were quite conservative in comparison. What did this mean? Above all, a small number of officers saw the need for total motorisation of the army and the creation of light

[26] Sergiusz Abżołtowski, *Operacyjne użycie Lotnictwa* (Operational Use of the Air Force) (Warszawa: Wojskowy Instytut Naukowo-Wydawniczy, 1932).

[27] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 128–133; Kmiecik, "Węzłowe problemy", 136–140.

[28] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 151.

units. General Kazimierz Fabrycy,[29] Colonel Marian Przybylski,[30] Major Jan Rzepecki[31] and Captain Wacław Popiel[32] were supporters of this idea. It was the same with forming mixed units. However, the tone of the entire discussion was set by cavalry officers such as Colonel Aleksander Pragłowski,[33] Colonel Tadeusz

[29] Kazimierz Fabrycy (1888–1958) graduated from the Technical University of Munich. He fought in the World War I and in the Polish–Soviet War, where he successively commanded the XXXI, XX and XXII Infantry Brigades. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 1924. From 1926 to 1934, he served as Deputy Minister of War. He was promoted to Major General in 1931, and from 1934 to 1939, he held the position of Inspector of the Army. In 1939, he commanded the Carpathian Army and was subsequently evacuated to Romania. During World War II, he served in the Middle East and later lived in exile in London (Editor's note).

[30] Marian Emil Przybylski (b. 1884) graduated from the Lwów Polytechnic as an engineer. He joined the Polish Army in 1919, advancing to Major (1920) and Colonel (1922). After studying at the Higher Military School (1922–23), he served as Chief of Staff of the District Command of the 1st Corps in Warsaw (1924–25) and then as acting head of the department of Technical Troops at the Ministry of War. He became editor-in-chief of the monthly *Przegląd Wojskowo-Techniczny* (Military-Technical Review) in 1927, retired in 1929, and served as railway commander of the Kraków Army in 1939 (Editor's note).

[31] Jan Rzepecki (1899–1983), military historian, fought in the Polish–Soviet War. He studied at the Higher Military School in 1922–24 and lectured on tactics and military history at the Infantry Officer School in Warsaw. Promoted to Major (1931) and later Colonel, he lectured tactics at the Higher Military School (1935–39). During World War II, he served as Chief of the Bureau of Information and Propaganda of the Home Army (1940–45). After remaining in Poland and enduring a show trial, he worked at the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences (1955–59) and received his PhD in 1964 (Editor's note).

[32] Wacław Popiel (b. 1896) was a military writer, he graduated from the Michael Artillery School in Petrograd in 1916. He joined the Polish Army in Siberia in 1919 and served as an instructor at the school of artillery officers of the 5th Field Artillery Regiment, was promoted to Captain in 1919. After studying at the Higher Military School in Warsaw (1925–27), he was promoted to Major (1930) and Lieutenant Colonel (1938). In September 1939, he was captured by the Germans. After his release, he served as head of the department of tactics at the Higher School of Artillery, the Higher Officers' Artillery Course and at the Artillery Training Centre in Toruń (1945–47). He published several works mainly on artillery tactics (Editor's note).

[33] Aleksander Tadeusz Pragłowski (1895–1974) studied at the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt (1912–14) and served as an officer in the 4th Uhlan Regiment of the Austro-Hungarian Army, fighting in the Carpathians and Alps. He served in the Polish Army during the Polish–Soviet War, reaching the rank of Captain by 1920. After studying at the General Staff School, he served as an assistant in general tactics until 1924 and was promoted to Major in 1923. Following further training in France in a course for regiment commanders (1926), he became a lecturer at the Higher Military School, advancing to Lieutenant Colonel (1928) and Colonel (1931). He commanded the 17th Uhlan Regiment in Leszno (1929–36) and served as 1st general staff officer of the Army Inspector Headquarters (1936–39). During World War II,

Machalski,[34] Major Włodzimierz Dunin-Żuchowski[35] and Major Zygmunt Powała-Dzieślewski,[36] who criticised concepts of mixed and light units for fear of restricting the role of cavalry.[37] The opponents of fast motorisation included preeminent theoreticians such as Sikorski and Mossor.

Polish theorists had a wide variety of views on army mechanisation issues, in particular on the possibility of employing tank units. On this, they lagged behind the findings of theoreticians elsewhere. Above all, the experience from the Polish–Soviet war, where the use of tanks brought negative sentiment, lingered. Therefore, negative conclusions regarding the potential of armoured weapons dominated in Polish analyses. The prevalent thesis was that armoured units could not undertake independent operations, let alone achieve strategic goals. Regrettably, technical progress in the construction of new models of tanks went unnoticed. Concepts of using the tank as an auxiliary means, cooperating with infantry, were preferred. Finally, they emphasised that tanks were useless in night combat, difficult atmospheric and defensive

he was a German prisoner of war, later served in the 1st Armoured Division (1945–46), and lived in London after 1947. He was promoted to Brigadier General in 1964 (Editor's note).

34 Tadeusz Machalski (1893–1983) graduated from the Theresian Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. He fought in World War I and the Polish–Soviet War. From 1921 to 1922, he studied at the Higher Military School in Warsaw. He later served as military attaché in Turkey and as Minister of Finance of the Polish government-in-exile (Editor's note).

35 Włodzimierz Dunin-Żuchowski (1893–1940) graduated from the cavalry school in Saumur, France, in 1920 and the Higher Military School in Warsaw in 1923. He later served as a lecturer at the Higher Military School. He was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1932. From 1932 to 1934, he served as head of the studies section of the Department of Cavalry of the Ministry of War. In 1939, he commanded the 8th Uhlan Regiment in Kraków. In late 1939, he was taken prisoner by the Soviets, held in a camp in Starobielsk, and was among the victims of the Katyń massacre (Editor's note).

36 Zygmunt Henryk Powała-Dzieślewski (1898–1953) graduated from the Higher Military School in 1925. He served in the 2nd Cavalry Division in Warsaw, in the 3rd Silesian Uhlan Regiment, and in the Cavalry Brigade in Toruń. He was promoted to Captain in 1931 and later to Major. In 1939, he was taken prisoner by the Germans but fled to London in 1940. He published works on cavalry organisation (Editor's note).

37 Włodzimierz Dunin-Żuchowski, "Związki mieszane. Zasady użycia i celowość", *Bellona* XXXIII, no 1 (1929): 111–122; Tadeusz Machalski, "Zagadnienie organizacji wielkich jednostek kawaleryjskich", *Przegląd Kawaleryjski*, no 2 (1927): 185–198; Tadeusz Machalski, "Związki mieszane", *Przegląd Kawaleryjski*, no 10 (1927): 907–915; Zygmunt Powała-Dzieślewski, "Nowoczesne poglądy na organizację kawalerii", *Przegląd Kawaleryjski*, no 1 (1927): 21–34; Aleksander Pragłowski, "Związki mieszane", *Bellona* XXIV, no 2 (1926): 123–136.

operations. This was the prevalent opinion in the twenties. Even in the thirties, there was talk of the need to create big motorised and armoured units of various ranks. Notable among these works were papers by Stanisław K. Kochanowski[38] on motorised divisions, by Colonel Roman Saloni[39] and Colonel Marian Jurecki[40] on armoured brigades, and by Rzepecki on armoured divisions.[41] Curiously enough, neither Sikorski nor Mossor were supporters of a greater use of armoured weapons.

Polish theoreticians did not discuss the issue of anti-tank weapons much for two reasons: Poland lagged significantly behind the developments of the armoured forces in the world, and the theorists underestimated the advantages of armoured weapons and so saw no need to research anti-tank defence measures or equip the infantry and cavalry units with them to any significant extent. It was believed that grenades and armour-piercing ammunition for small arms would be sufficient.[42] That situation reversed slightly in the lead-up to World War II, when Poland began to equip units with anti-tank rifles such as the UR Anti-tank Rifle. However, it did not affect the course of events.

The role of the infantry and cavalry in military thought

The most space in theoretical deliberations was devoted to the role of the infantry and cavalry, because of the conviction that the main burden of warfare would rest on them.[43] It was recognised that infantry

[38] Stanisław K. Kochanowski (1873–1943) was a military officer, lecturer and painter. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts at the University of Kraków, fought in World War I in the Polish Legions and served in the Polish Army during the Polish–Soviet War, was promoted to Captain in 1918. He later served as a lecturer at the Academy of Foreign Trade in Lwów (Editor's note).

[39] Roman Saloni (1895–1986) was a Colonel who commanded the 10th Infantry Regiment of the Polish Army in France in 1940.

[40] Marian Jurecki (1896–1984) graduated from the artillery school in Odessa and fought in World War I in the Russian army. He studied at the Higher Military School in Warsaw (1922–24) and was promoted to Major in 1927. From the late 1920s until 1932, he served as an anti-aircraft artillery officer in the Artillery Department of the Ministry of War. He published the *Podręcznik obrony przeciwlotniczej* (Anti-Aircraft Defence Manual) in 1936 (Editor's note).

[41] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 216–217, 219–225, 231–232.

[42] Ibid., 246–247.

[43] Pilżys, "Wojna i doktryna", 213.

would continue to be the most useful and versatile type of troops, and also the cheapest. Accordingly, the majority of theoreticians agreed that the infantry would be an essential component of operational units. It was to perform the most important offensive tasks and to be capable of defence, even when the enemy had a significant advantage. Following Piłsudski's theory of manoeuvre warfare, it was believed that by virtue of its mobility and manoeuvrability, the infantry would manage to eliminate the enemy's technical advantage. Apart from Piłsudski himself, the supporters of this thesis included Mossor, Rowecki and Arciszewski. However, a group of opponents directly asserted that if using only horses, the Polish infantry would be unable to engage in combat on an equal footing with other modern infantries or eliminate their technical advantage. Tadeusz Felsztyn, Jurecki and Rzepecki were among them.[44] They saw the solution as increasing the number of supporting weapons in the Polish infantry units and partially motorising them. The weaknesses of the infantry were noted by many officers, but few of them made their voices heard.

In 1930, Colonel Roman Umiastowski drew attention to the fact that the Polish infantry would be unprotected in a battle involving not only armoured weapons, but even infantry units reinforced by armoured units.[45] In 1937, General Kazimierz Sosnkowski confirmed that the organisation of the infantry division was the same as it had been in 1914 and that the staff training was also outdated.[46] Colonel Tadeusz Zakrzewski postulated the creation of mixed units, including formations and services beyond just infantry with transport vehicles.[47]

Given the long tradition of using the cavalry, its role in a future war was one of the most interesting issues theoreticians discussed. There was little disagreement on how to use it on a battlefield, but its possible mechanisation was debated. Above all, the theoreticians

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[44] Jan Rzepecki, "Kierunki przyszłych zmian w organizacji piechoty", *Przegląd Piechoty*, no 4 (1937): 426–438; Marian Jurecki, "Walka piechoty z pancerzem", cz. I., *Przegląd Piechoty*, no 8 (1932): 33–84; Tadeusz Felsztyn, "Broń towarzysząca", *Bellona*, no 10 (1921): 867–875.

[45] Roman Umiastowski, "Bezbronna piechota", *Przegląd Piechoty*, no 4 (1930): 32–54.

[46] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 253.

[47] Ibid., 253–254.

Cavalry manoeuvres around Brody in Poland, Volhynia, August 1925. From left to right: General Jan Romer, Major General Juliusz Malczewski (?), head of cavalry manoeuvres General Jósef Haller (1873–1960), inspector-general of Polish cavalry units General Count Tadeusz Jordan-Rozwadowski (1866–1928), member of the War Council General Władysław Sikorski, and Inspector of the 4th Army in Krakow General Stanisław Szeptycki (1867–1950). The chief of the Estonian General Staff, Major General Juhan Tõrvand (not in the photo), observed the manoeuvres. Source: National Archives of Estonia, RA, ERA.1131.1.149.104

considered whether to use the cavalry to cover mobilisation and strategic military development, or to carry out independent operations.[48] Supporters of the first concept included General Edward Śmigły-Rydz (also sometimes called Rydz-Śmigły) and General Juliusz

[48] Juliusz Tym, *Kawaleria w operacji i w walce. Koncepcje użycia i wyszkolenie kawalerii samodzielnej Wojska Polskiego w latach 1921–1939* (Warszawa: Fundacja Polonia Militaris, 2006), 199.

Edward Śmigły-Rydz, General Inspector of the Armed Forces and Marshal of Poland, speaking, between 1936 and 1939. Photo by Witold Pikiel. Source: Biblioteka Narodowa Polski, F.40714/II

Rómmel,[49] both of whom played a significant part in cavalry. In order to cope with the military-technical innovations, the cavalry would have to be organised into major troop units. Zdzisław Chrząstowski and Tadeusz Machalski discussed independent cavalry operations in both joint and independent publications.[50] In order to carry out the tasks assigned to the cavalry, they, like Śmigły-Rydz and Rómmel,

[49] Juliusz Karol Wilhelm Józef Rómmel (until 1918 von Rummel, 1881–1967) graduated from the Cadet Corps in Pskov and in 1903 from the Konstantin Artillery School in St. Petersburg. He fought in World War I in the Russian Imperial Army as commanding officer of the 1st Artillery Brigade, was promoted to Captain in 1915 and to Colonel in 1916. He joined the Polish Army in 1917 and served as commander of the 1st Legions Infantry Division and commander of the 1st Cavalry Division. He became inspector of Vilnius in 1921, promoted to Brigadier General in 1922, and to Major General in 1928. He served as Army Inspector from 1929 to 1939. In 1939, he commanded the Łódź Army and surrendered in Warsaw. He was held as a German prisoner of war from 1939 to 1945 and retired in 1947. He was a prolific military and political writer (Editor's note).

[50] Such as Zdzisław Chrząstowski. *Zasady natarcia konnego małych jednostek* (1925); *Natarcie współczesnej kawalerji (taktyka jednostek wielkich)* (1926).

saw the need to form large corps-level units. However, opponents argued that such huge formations would constitute an enormous mass of horses and people vulnerable to airstrikes and armoured weapons.[51] The independent operational use of the cavalry faced a similar fate, due to indecision on the part of Marshal Śmigły-Rydz, who took on all the most important military roles after Piłsudski's death. In fact, the lack of clear and precise directives resulted in the use of cavalry units as covering formations and to conduct delaying actions in the campaign of 1939.

Cavalry mechanisation is an example of an issue on which Polish theorists' views were very conservative, even archaic. Due to the growing number of publications in the world indicating the need to create mixed units or strengthen the process of motorisation of the army, Polish theoreticians, especially cavalry officers, felt the existence of the cavalry as an independent branch was under threat. Therefore, they came up with fierce criticism of those theories, with Machalski, Pragłowski and Klemens Rudnicki playing a special role. Machalski based his arguments on the notion of the need to form large cavalry units.[52] Pragłowski held that too much motorisation of the cavalry would inhibit or paralyse its combat assets.[53] Strictly speaking, the greater the motorisation of cavalry, the lower its effectiveness. On the other hand, Rudnicki stated in 1937 that the decisive role of the cavalry as a speed factor could not be questioned. He insisted that the operational and even strategic future of the cavalry was huge. A year later, he still tried to prove that cavalry was the most versatile branch and that there was no question of eliminating it from modern battlefields.[54]

In conclusion, it can be said that while plans to use armoured and motorised troops were being developed in other countries, Polish theorists were claiming that cavalry was the primary branch that would provide manoeuvrability in a future war.

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[51] Tym, *Kawaleria w operacji*, 202–203.

[52] Machalski, "Zagadnienie organizacji".

[53] Aleksander Pragłowski, "Kawaleria samodzielna w nowoczesnem wojsku", *Bellona* XLIII, no 3 (1934): 358–369.

[54] Wyszczelski, *Polska myśl*, 261–262.

The navy and its role

Because Poland had few achievements of its own in naval warfare, Polish military thinkers tried to learn from the experiences of other countries. Nevertheless, it was impossible to employ different theories to the full as the sea border of the Polish state was limited to a narrow strip of coast and it faced the threat of being cut off in the event of a conflict. For that reason, the navy was treated as a supporting armed service, although it was strong enough to take on the naval forces of Germany and/or Soviet Russia. The main idea deliberated, in the first years of independence, was cooperation between the Polish fleet and the allied fleets in the Baltic Sea in case of war with Germany. The task of the Polish fleet was to attempt to cut off communication routes between Germany and East Prussia. However, the Polish fleet did not have the potential to achieve that, so the possibility of cooperation with the fleets of the Baltic states was considered.[55] This took into account the formation of a broad coalition of states acting against Germany and/or Russia, which was impossible to implement because of the wide gap in the political goals of potential coalition partners.

The lack of a unified position on the navy's goals, and consequently its needs and potential, proved to be problematic for Polish theoreticians. As with the remaining branches, Piłsudski also interfered with the navy. In 1927, he recognised that the Polish fleet would be able to operate only in the waters of the Gulf of Gdańsk, which led to the conclusion that Poland did not need a strong fleet.[56] This position left its mark on further work, both in the theoretical sphere and, more importantly, at the executive level. As early as the thirties, as a result of planning analyses, it was recognised in the highest echelons of the military that in case of conflict with Germany, the coast would be cut off and it would become an independent operational area, so the operational activities of the Polish fleet would be extremely limited or

[55] Bogdan Zalewski, *Polska morska myśl wojskowa 1918–1989* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2001), 64–66.

[56] Ibid., 75.

paralysed. Therefore, the two main tasks for the naval fleet were supporting ground forces by supplying them with weapons, equipment and supplies, and destroying the maritime communication routes of the enemy as well as defending important coastal points, enabling evacuation of the population by sea or exerting pressure on neutral states.[57]

Summary

During the interwar period, Polish military theorists' studies were shaped by several key factors: Poland's experiences in the war against Soviet Russia, the military's position within the state structure and Józef Piłsudski's influence, and constraints arising from Poland's economic potential and population.

The main idea shaping the positions of individual theoreticians was the concept of manoeuvre warfare as a strategy for future conflict scenarios, specifically the mobile defence concept attributed to Piłsudski. Owing to the position and role he held in society and the army, the concept was basically embraced as a dogma of sorts and went mostly unquestioned.[58] Piłsudski's position was taken as valid by Polish military planners preparing operational plans in case of conflict with Germany or the Soviet Union. The rebuttal of this way of thinking was reflected in a plan that, with some modifications, was implemented prior to the outbreak of World War II.

For economic and social reasons, Polish theoreticians did not envisage a considerable modernisation of the army in terms of mechanisation, instead planning to implement operational plans using the infantry and cavalry. The naval fleet and air force were left to perform solely auxiliary tasks. In both instances, Piłsudski had the deciding vote about the nature of their use. Simultaneously, cavalry officers strongly opposed the modernisation of the army, perceiving it as a threat to the existence of their branch.

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[57] Ibid., 81–82.

[58] Pilżys, "Wojna i doktryna", 216–217.

Some Polish theoreticians, led by Sikorski and Mossor, accurately predicted the nature of future conflicts and their genesis. They foresaw the potential for the war to go global and saw Germany as the greatest threat. They predicted that it would initiate the conflict and that a wide coalition of countries would be formed to fight against it.

Despite bold statements on the need for change, Polish military thought of the interwar period remained conservative. The deciding voice on the image of the army and its development, as well as on strategic planning, was Piłsudski's. Did he not see other solutions? Did he not take them into account owing to factors such as cost or his animosity towards their authors (such as Sikorski)? Regrettably, it is impossible to figure it out now. Undoubtedly, innovative ideas based on the latest trends of the time also appeared. However, their authors' clout in decision-making circles was negligible, or even non-existent. The Polish state experienced the results of this in 1939.

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Implications of General Johan Laidoner's Active Defence Doctrine in the Estonian Defence Modernisation Plan of 1938

Aarne Ermus

> "A commander is not only required to lead his army to victory. He must create, equip and train that army".[1]
>
> Major General Herbert Brede[2]

General Johan Laidoner's activities as commander-in-chief during Estonia's interwar period are often associated with his doctrine of active defence. While direct documentation is limited, scholars have reconstructed this doctrine from archival sources and analysed its defensive applications. This study examines how Laidoner's active defence principles influenced Estonia's military modernisation planning. Following the 1934 coup, Laidoner possessed unprecedented powers, providing him significant freedom to implement his strategic vision. The research addresses two questions: What were the main strategic and tactical principles of Laidoner's active defence doctrine, and what were their foundations? Can these principles be identified in Estonia's 1938 Defence Modernisation Plan? The analysis focuses primarily on the latter question, as development plans represent crucial forward-looking strategic management tools. The 1938 plan and accompanying discussions provide the clearest evidence

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[1] Herbert Brede, *Strateegia. Loengud Kõrgemas Sõjakoolis 1935–36. a* (Tallinn: Kaitseväe Ühendatud Õppeasutused, 1936), 58–60.

[2] Major General Herbert Brede (1888–1942), a graduate of Michael Artillery School in St. Petersburg (1910) and École Supérieure de Guerre in France (1929), was the artillery inspector of the Estonian Defence Forces from 1920 to 1930, commandant of Estonian Military Educational Establishments from 1930 to 1934, permanent lecturer of strategy in the Higher Military School from 1934, and commander of the 3rd Division from 1934 to 1940. He was arrested by Soviet State Security in June 1941 and executed in October 1942 in Norilsk.

of Laidoner's commitment to implementing active defence principles within the evolving security environment of the late 1930s.

The main peacetime mission of every commander-in-chief is to prepare the armed forces to be ready for the next possible military conflict. Of course, this is a collective or communal task for him and his staff, rather than for just the commander-in-chief personally. Relying on an educated and experienced staff greatly facilitates the performance of this task. Still, in a commander-centric organisation like the Estonian Defence Forces (EDF)[3] during the interwar era, the commander-in-chief's personal views and perceptions play a critical role in creating the vision and setting the priorities for force development. His understanding of the nature of possible future conflicts – by whom, why and when conflict will be ignited, as well as how and by which means war will be fought – will give direction to his staff for the necessary planning. More often, discussing General Johan Laidoner's views on warfare and battle, researchers bring up his doctrine of "active defence". Some researchers, like Urmas Salo,[4] Kaarel Piirimäe,[5] and Martti Turtola,[6] have made attempts to reconstruct this doctrine, to a greater or lesser extent, from archival sources. Salo[7] and Piirimäe[8] have also tried to analyse the suitability of this reconstructed doctrine in the defence of the state at that time.

In January 1933, more than a year before assuming the position of commander-in-chief, General Laidoner gave a very critical interview

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[3] Here, the designation Estonian Defence Forces (Eesti kaitsevägi) is used. From 1920 to 1929 and from 1 March 1937, the official designation was Estonian Armed Forces (Eesti sõjavägi).

[4] Urmas Salo, "Eesti kaitse üldised põhimõtted", *Sõja ja rahu vahel. I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani,* peatoimetaja Enn Tarvel (Tallinn: S-Keskus, 2004), 168–170.

[5] Kaarel Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s. The myth of the Independence War and Laidoner's "active defence"," *Estonian Yearbook of Military History 7 (13)* (2017): 116–150.

[6] Martti Turtola, *Kindral Johan Laidoner ja Eesti Vabariigi hukk 1939–1940* (Tallinn: Tänapäev, 2008).

[7] Urmas Salo, "Eesti kaitse üldised põhimõtted"; Urmas Salo, "Estimation of security threats and Estonian defence planning in the 1930s", *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 12, 2008: 35–74.

[8] Kaarel Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s".

to the newspaper *Vaba Maa* about the current state of the EDF.[9] He pointed out that the armed forces had fallen behind even smaller neighbouring countries in terms of technology and technological innovation. However, his biggest criticism was of the way the military tried to adapt to the conditions of the economic crisis. He stated that instead of reducing the existing force equally, a new, smaller organisation of the defence forces should be established. In his view, the main reason for the emergence of such problems was the absence of a person with sufficient authority, a commander-in-chief.

After the bloodless self-coup d'état by State Elder (head of the government) Konstantin Päts in March 1934, General Laidoner, as part of Estonia's authoritarian leadership, possessed powers that no subsequent chief of the Estonian Defence Forces ever had. Some authors even argue that in exchange for support for the self-coup d'état, Laidoner got total freedom to build defences.[10] Thus, he had relatively wide freedom of action to implement his ideas and beliefs in order to prosecute a future war in the best possible way. To understand whether and how Laidoner used his golden opportunity to prepare the Estonian forces to conduct a future war in the best possible manner, this article examines the links between his beliefs about future wars and the Estonian State Defence Modernisation Plan, approved in 1938 by the State Defence Council.[11]

The paper covers the period of 1934–38, known in Estonian historiography as the Silent Era. This period encompasses the original discussion regarding the necessity for EDF modernisation through the final authorisation of the Estonian State Defence Modernisation Plan as presented in the modernisation plan to the State Defence Council. In the author's view, Laidoner's active defence concept was mainly an artificial construct, a synthesis comprising fragments of his statements made on different staff rides, lectures, field exercises

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[9] "Kaitseväge vajab ümberkorraldust. Meie armee on rajariikidest praegu kõige nõrgem. Kindral Laidoneri seletusi "Waba Maale", *Waba Maa,* 4 January 1933, 2.

[10] Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s", 119.

[11] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid 1933–39* (Minutes of the Estonian National Defence Council), allikapublikatsioon, koostanud Urmas Salo, Uurimusi ja allikmaterjale Eesti sõjaajaloost 6 (Tartu: Eesti Ajalooarhiiv, 2013), 328–349.

and written comments in staff documents. I have excluded from the synthesis his public appearances, because they were intended more to raise the general morale of the people, and therefore what is reflected in them can be misleading in a military-technical sense. The paper does not evaluate the suitability of steps taken to defend the small country but builds links between Laidoner's theoretical and practical understandings of warfighting and the State Defence Modernisation Plan of 1938. In addition, the article is not looking into the moral and legal aspects of the 1934 self-coup d'état, but only the practicalities regarding the development and modernisation of the defence forces.

General Laidoner's active defence principles

To understand how Laidoner's active defence principles were taken into account in the State Defence Modernisation Plan, we need to figure out what he meant by an active defence. Salo notes that, after the self-coup d'état in 1934, Laidoner reintroduced the principles of the active defence for the EDF, which had been abandoned during the economic crisis. Based on information from different staff rides, he concludes that Laidoner emphasised the requirement for an active approach to holding positions along the first lines of defence at the border during the initial phase of a war. Additionally, he indicated the intent to take warfighting into an adversary's territory.[12] Piirimäe is more detailed, pointing out that active defence had not only tactical but also strategic content.[13] Turtola gives a generic overview of Laidoner's main activities to enhance the defence of the state, concentrating mainly on issues regarding the will to fight, and the shortfall in anti-tank and air defence capabilities.[14] Both Piirimäe and Salo link his approach to the experience of the Estonian War of Independence, 1918–20. This could be true, but only partly. Of course, the Estonian

[12] Salo, "Eesti kaitse üldised põhimõtted", 168–169.
[13] Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s", 120.
[14] Turtola, *Kindral Johan Laidoner ja Eesti Vabariigi hukk,* 105–119.

army's success in keeping the warfare away from Estonian territory during most of the War of Independence served as a positive example for new defence plans. At the same time, we must also consider the theoretical foundations that Laidoner acquired during his studies at the Imperial Nicholas Military Academy, also known as the General Staff Academy. The transfer of military activity to the enemy's territory from the very beginning of a war was also a favourite motif of the Imperial Russian military theorists. For example, General Antoine de Jomini, the founder of Russia's General Staff Academy, taught that there are very clear strengths in waging war on the enemy's territory: preventing the enemy from destroying its own territory, creating the opportunity to use the enemy's resources to support personnel and conduct operations, and affecting the enemy's fighting spirit and morale.[15] Such motives are also seen in Imperial Russia's 1912 plan for war against Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[16] Therefore, active defence can be considered a universal warfighting principle based on the belief that battles, and the war, can only be won by attack. This principle was taught to generations of Imperial Russian officers, and Estonia's success in the War of Independence reinforced the correctness of the approach.

Before 1938, the official document describing the EDF's warfighting principles was Battle Regulation of 1932.[17] Approved during the economic crisis, it gives us an understanding of the key decision-makers' mindsets at that time. The commission that prepared the document was led by Major General Juhan Tõrvand, chief of staff of the EDF, and consisted of various unit commanders and central staff members.

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[15] Antoine-Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1996), 17. Antoine-Henri de Jomini (1779–1869) was a military officer and theorist of Swiss origin who in the 1800s served successively in the French and Russian armies. He became a general in 1823. He was a founder of the Military Academy of St. Petersburg and was named *Général en chef* in 1826. He advised Nicholas I during the Crimean War and, after retiring to France, advised Napoleon III on the Italian expedition of 1859 (Editor's note).

[16] Vladimir Zolotarëv (Владимир Золотарёв), Istoriâ voennoj strategii Rossii [История военной стратегии России; History of Russian Military Strategy] (Moscow: Kučkovo pole, 2000), 101.

[17] *Lahingueeskiri* (Tallinn: KV Staabi VI osakond, 1932), 1–4.

Table 1. List of the members of the working commission for Battle Regulation 1932[18]

	Rank and name	Position
1	Major General Juhan Tõrvand	Chief of Staff, EDF; head of the commission
2	Major General Gustav Jonson	Commander of the 3rd Division; inspector of cavalry
3	Colonel Herbert Brede	Commandant of the Military Educational Establishments
4	Colonel Aleksander Jaakson	Deputy to the Commandant of the Military Educational Establishments
5	Colonel Richard Tomberg	Commander of the Air Defence
6	Colonel August Traksmaa	Chief of the VI (Training) Department, Staff of EDF
7	Major Herbert Freiberg (Raidna)	Chief of the I (Operations) Department, Staff of EDF
8	Major Elias Kasak	Chief of the III (Mobilisation) Department, Staff of EDF
9	Colonel Emil Kursk	Commander of the 2nd Armoured Trains Regiment
10	Colonel Jakob Vende	Commander of the Kalev Infantry Battalion

The regulation emphasised the premise that effective resistance must be offered immediately at the border of the state to give ample time for the mobilisation and consolidation of forces. The intruder should be stopped and pushed back through a counterattack. Defence itself must be active and precise.[19] In the commander-in-chief's journal, compiled by Laidoner's aide-de-camp, there is a note that the general issued Directive No. 1 on 14 September 1938 in order to arrive at uniform principles of warfighting for the defence forces and the main tasks for the divisions (i.e., land forces), navy and air defence. From the description provided by the aide-de-camp, we can see that Laidoner foresaw not only defending Estonian territory on the border, but also shifting military operations to the territory of an adversary.[20] The directive itself has gone missing, and it is impossible to compare this document with the Battle Regulation of 1932. Nevertheless, some conclusions can be drawn from what fragments are available.

[18] *Lahingueeskiri*, X.
[19] Ibid., 3–4.
[20] Commander-in-Chief's journal (1934–1938), 14 September 1938, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 204.

During his first year as commander-in-chief,[21] Laidoner used the term "active defence" mainly in a tactical context. At the first senior commanders' staff ride to southeastern Estonia in August 1934, he emphasised the need to keep strong defensive positions in the heights near Petseri (Pechory) using a covering force and to maintain active defence at the tactical level.[22] The following year, during the senior leaders' staff ride to the 1st Division's defensive area, he stated:

> The Narva River line is one that we cannot give up and must actively defend. To do this, we need to create a bridgehead as deep as possible, because our defence must be fully active. The line of the Narva River can be abandoned only by order of the commander-in-chief. Although the Narva environs are most easily defended along the river, we must think further; that is, how to cross the river ourselves. However, the crossing must be sought in any case by delivering sharp blows to the enemy, and for this we must have the river crossings in our hands. Therefore, the destruction must also be coordinated with the possible intentions of our counterattacks, because the enemy can only be defeated by an offensive.[23]

In January 1935, making the comments on a General Staff 1935 annual working plan, he made a clarifying remark about the deployment of forces and engagement plan: "General principle: we cannot give away the defensive lines along the Narva River and in the Petseri heights. Losing these territories at the beginning of a war may cause catastrophe for us"[24] (see map). At the State Defence Council meeting in April 1934, Major General Nikolai Reek, Laidoner's Chief of Staff, introduced the main strategic concept of the defence: "We need to win time. We cannot allow our forces to be annihilated by the enemy's first strike. We must fight a series of battles for the step-by-step defence of our territory, trying to win on our own for at least

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[21] Laidoner had been commander-in-chief earlier during the War of Independence in 1918–20, and again during the communist putsch attempt from December 1924 to January 1925 (Editor's note).

[22] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 14–15 August 1934, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 16.

[23] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 September 1935, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 66.

[24] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 25 January 1935, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 32.

four to five weeks."[25] Evidently, the commander-in-chief's intent was to hold important defensible terrain on the border, and he needed the tactical-level commanders' initiative and readiness to counter-attack in every possible situation. Therefore, in this context, it can be assumed that, at least in 1934, active defence was a tactical-level principle to keep the initiative in Estonia's hands.

The first signs of Laidoner entertaining ideas of bringing the fight to an enemy's territory are found in February 1935, in Protocol No. 15 of the State Defence Council's meeting. Reek introduced the basic principles of the new mobilisation plan and referred to the commander-in-chief's guidance, stating that the overall intent in case of war should be to transfer military operations to the enemy's territory.[26] In April 1935, making concluding remarks after the Harju Military District war game, Laidoner declared, "We must cultivate the doctrine that we will defend our country at the border and not in retreat. When the opportunity arises, we must go on the offensive and bring the war to the enemy's territory."[27] He also used the same narrative in his Directive No. 1, signed on 14 September 1938. In order to take the fight to the enemy's territory, Laidoner apparently held that two things had to be done: mobilisation of all forces and finding the opportunity to take the offensive. Therefore, it was necessary to have very good reconnaissance to discover possible opportunities and enough fast, uncommitted reserves to exploit the openings.

From the strategic perspective, Laidoner had three main concerns. First, the almost non-existent strategic depth of Estonia and the lack of good natural obstacles inside the country would give strategic meaning to the geography and topography favourable for defence along the border.[28] In the northeastern region, the Narva and Luga

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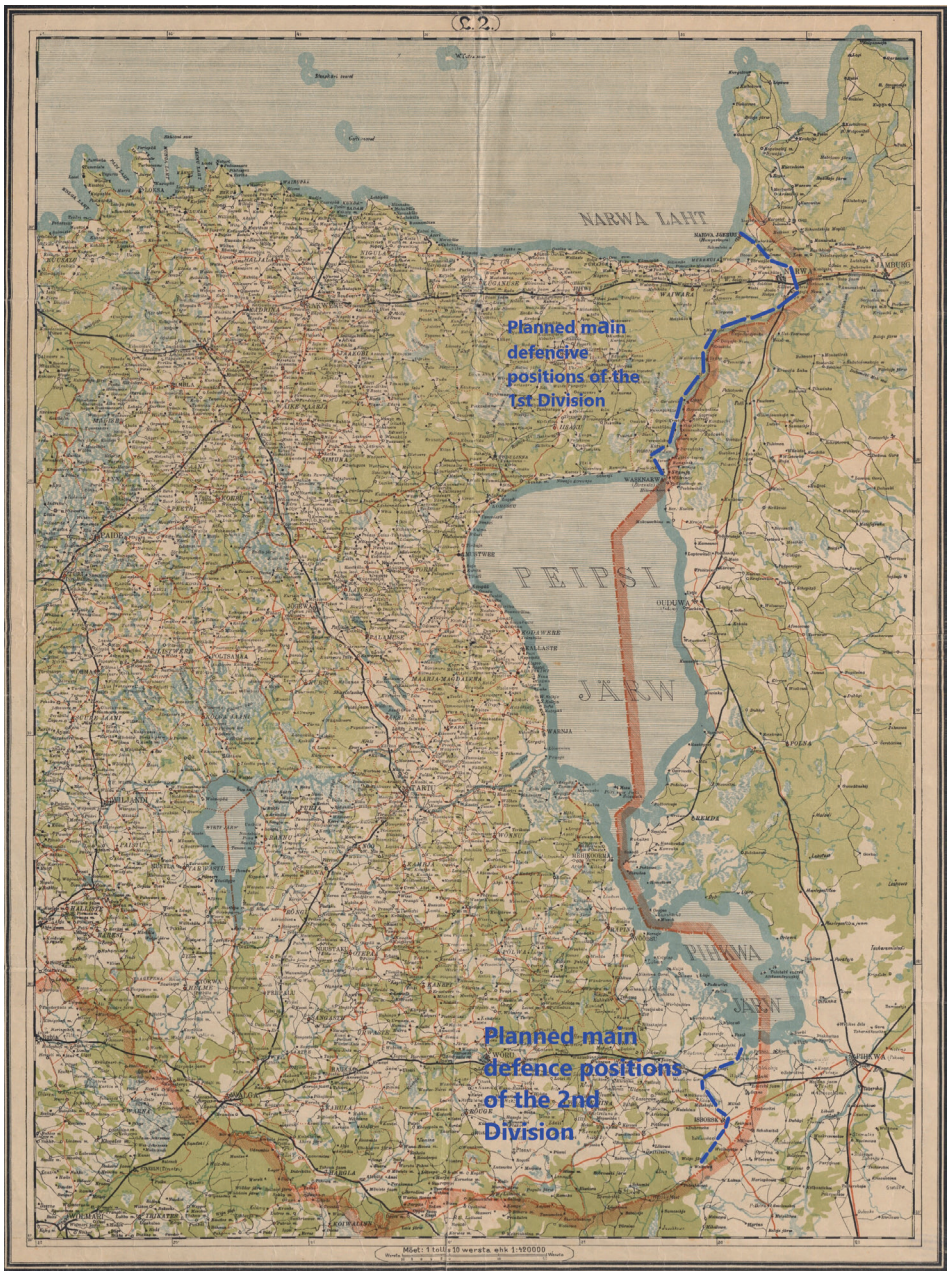
[25] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 250.

[26] State Defence Council Minutes No. 15, 16 February 1935 – *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 281.

[27] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 April 1935, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 45.

[28] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 14–15 August 1934, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 16.



Map of eastern and southeastern Estonia, showing the main planned defence positions of the 1st and 2nd Divisions

rivers and the swampy areas east of Jaanilinn[29] strongly restricted enemy manoeuvre. At the same time, the Narva River itself was a significant obstacle favouring defence. Fragmented landscape, with the hills, rivers and swamps in the southeastern region, west of Irboska (Izborsk)[30], also gave the defenders some advantage by limiting the use of moto-mechanised units.

Secondly, the understanding that the defence of Estonia would be difficult without outside support raised the need to win time for possible allies to both make the political decision to intervene and give them the time to react practically. Even if there were to be no bilateral or multinational political agreements in place, there was hope of acquiring matériel[31] or even practical support in the form of troops.[32] Therefore, fierce and determined fighting on the borders had a significant strategic meaning. Thus, the idea was to be able to defend and hold out for at least four to five weeks in order to give the politicians and diplomats the time they needed to organise possible outside supporters.[33]

Thirdly, there was a concern regarding Estonia's ability to mobilise the army within the required timeframe in order to build up strong enough forces at the eastern borders, especially taking into account Estonia's inability to maintain strong coverage forces on the border itself. According to the mobilisation plan of 1939, the EDF needed at least seventy-two hours for full mobilisation,[34] which made the first three days of a potential war the most critical from the perspective of the state's survival.

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[29] One of the districts of the city of Narva, located east of the Narva River. It was separated as the city of Ivangorod in 1954 after the eastern bank of the Narva River was annexed to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in 1945.

[30] Petseri (Pechory) and Irboska (Izborsk) together with most of the territory of Petseri County were annexed to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in August 1944 (Editor's note).

[31] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 247; Commander-in-Chief's journal, 30 September 1938, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 207.

[32] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 April 1935, RA, ERA.2553.1.2, 45.

[33] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 247.

[34] Readiness Report for the Implementation of Mobilisation According to General Plan No. 2, 23 May 1939; Explanatory Note to General Mobilisation No. 2; Overview of Mobilisation Implementation and Readiness of Military Units and Institutions, 7 September 1939, RA, ERA.495.12.479, 1v, 7v, 23–23v.

At the tactical level, Laidoner believed that a future war would be even more technical than previous wars and that the infantry and artillery would play the key roles in battle. The best and most compact overview of Laidoner's beliefs on tactics is given by his Order No. 247, issued on 9 December 1936.[35] In this order, he referred to the experience gained from various exercises throughout 1936 and gave guidelines to improve the training of units. In his understanding, quality of command, knowledge and use of the terrain, maintaining the initiative, and skilful manoeuvring would be the factors that would decide the battle:

"I demand quick and timely decision-making, and the prompt issuing of orders from all commanders. The order itself must clearly express the commander's intent – the idea of the manoeuvre and the outline of what to do, but not how to do it. Commanders must act actively by taking their own initiative to achieve the objectives set forth by higher command."[36] These principles sound quite modern even today, in light of the manoeuvrist approach[37] and mission command.

Knowing the terrain and exploiting its possibilities to one's own advantage was another principle Laidoner emphasised, not only in the aforementioned order, but also in every staff ride or field exercise in which he participated.[38] Tangentially, this contradicts the principle of carrying the fight to the enemy's territory. In so doing, individual units lose the advantage held by having firm knowledge of the terrain.

Knowing the terrain was, in his understanding, also a key feature allowing the ability to maintain the initiative and execute skilful manoeuvres. From his various statements, we can see that he favoured flanking manoeuvres as opposed to a frontal attack in battle.[39] He reasoned that with the increased firepower of infantry units, making

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[35] Infantry inspector's office, documentation on manoeuvres and tactical exercises, 1936–1940, RA, ERA.510.1.82, 40–42.

[36] Ibid., 40.

[37] For more detail, see William S. Lind, *Manoeuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

[38] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 April 1935, 27 May 1935, 30 December 1935, 3 March 1936, 45, 54, 80, 92.

[39] Infantry inspector's office, documentation on manoeuvres and tactical exercises, 41.

Commander-in-Chief Johan Laidoner at his desk, late 1930s. Source: Estonian War Museum, KLM FT 1793:2 F

frontal attacks was too costly to the attacker.[40] When discussing manoeuvre warfare, he usually emphasised manoeuvres by the force, but never talked about manoeuvres by fire. In this, he certainly differs from the contemporaneous French paradigm that defined the aim of manoeuvre as "to achieve the desired concentration of fire at the desired place and time, at the front or on the flank".[41] This may explain why increasing firepower up to the regimental level was never discussed during the development of the modernisation plans.

Interestingly, despite understanding the role of flanking manoeuvres, he was still quite pessimistic about the role of armoured and motomechanised units on the battlefield. Several times, he pointed out

[40] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 April 1935, 44.

[41] A.T., "Modern sõjavägede iseloomustus", *Sõdur* no 9/10, (1932): 214–221. The article refers to the lectures of the former Chief of the French General Staff, General Marie Eugène Debeney, "Caractères des armées modernes", which he gave in several Swiss garrisons in 1931 and were first published in *Revue Militaire Suisse* in December 1931 and in January 1932.

that these new capabilities were overrated due to their significant operational constraints, including limited terrain mobility and dependence on support infrastructure.[42] Of course, Laidoner believed that EDF officers, especially at the General Staff, overestimated the capabilities of moto-mechanised forces,[43] and in his statement, he aimed to reduce the "tank psychosis" in the army.

His preference for manoeuvres was so strong that at times he even seemed to denigrate other aspects of battlefield preparation such as engineering, especially field fortifications. For example, on 26 August 1934, while addressing the fortification works along the Narva River, he stated that the main defence of the river line will rely on a mobile defending force and the fortifications are just a supporting factor. Additionally, on 27 May 1935, after an operational test firing of one of the caponiers, he announced that he would personally place himself with a machine gun in the bushes alongside the caponier, rather than inside it.[44]

Laidoner's practical steps in preparing for the modernisation of the defence forces

Taking into account Laidoner's beliefs about the principles of warfare, it is logical that in developing the armed forces, his focus would have been on the units' manoeuvrability, firepower and organisational flexibility. The following analysis examines how his active defence principles were reflected in the planning for the modernisation of the defence forces.

The need to modernise the defence forces emerged as a critical issue by the early 1930s. First, it was in reaction to the deep battle theory and the development of the moto-mechanised forces in the Soviet Union. However, it was also a response to the rapid development

[42] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 13 April 1935, 45.
[43] Report on National Defence Activities 1934–1939, 9 March 1939, RA, ERA.2553.1.12, 34.
[44] Commander-in-Chief's journal, 27 May 1935, 54.

of military technology in the world and the reduction of military spending over the previous decade in Estonia. The issue was indirectly on the table of the State Defence Council as early as 12 June 1933, when the Chief of General Staff Tõrvand made a presentation on possible scenarios regarding a hypothetical attack by Soviet forces.[45] His report was quite pessimistic, pointing out the fast progress of Soviet moto-mechanised forces and the Estonian inability to stop their advance during the initial phase of the war. Potentially, Tõrvand also held the desire to illustrate to the State Defence Council that a decision it had taken at a previous meeting[46] to reduce the size of the wartime defence forces from 88,000 to 70,000 would have a direct negative impact on the implementation of the border defence and mobilisation plans. Nevertheless, it was imperative to start the modernisation of the defence forces immediately. At the State Defence Council's meeting in June, the topics that became the key issues of the later modernisation plan were touched upon for the first time: air defence, anti-tank weapons and armour. After the difficult years of the economic crisis, the report could have served as a wake-up call to start addressing defence issues more carefully and more precisely. Instead of the desired outcome, however, Tõrvand's report later provided an opportunity for his opponents, Laidoner and Reek, to accuse him of spreading defeatist thinking and pessimism amongst the officers.[47]

On 16 April 1934, for the first time since the self-coup d'état the month before, modernisation questions were discussed at the meeting of the State Defence Council. The only topic on the agenda of this meeting was establishing the principles for the future development of armaments, technical equipment and organisation of the defence forces.[48] The fact that this happened so quickly after the coup shows that the problem was acute. The fact that it took two subsequent

[45] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 155–172.

[46] The decision to reduce the EDF's wartime strength from 88,000 to 70,000 reservists was made at the State Defence Council meeting on 11 April 1933, RA, ERA.988.1.1, 9–13.

[47] Report on National Defence Activities 1934–1939, 2–4.

[48] State Defence Council Minutes No. 13, 16 April 1934, RA, ERA.988.1.1, 27–28.

meetings to agree to these principles demonstrates the complexity of the issue. In the opening statement of the first meeting, Laidoner addressed the need to identify the extent of the resources that the government would be able to allocate for defence in the yearly budgets. In his view, that was the only way to initiate five- to ten-year force development planning.[49] There appears to have been a common understanding that only ten years of peace might be possible,[50] and Laidoner was determined to utilise this potential window for military modernisation. The main rapporteur was Chief of the General Staff Major General Reek. Laidoner and Reek approached force modernisation as a long-term effort, and it was divided into multiple stages.[51] The intent was to purchase samples of new weapons systems and to ensure the ability to start training personnel in a modern way. The second stage aimed to provide the new equipment and weapons systems to the border protection units. The third stage consisted of the plan to modernise all the remaining forces. Of course, it is impossible to make clear distinctions between these stages in following practical steps, but procurement of sample weapons had started in 1935, and the preparatory phase for stage II began in 1936.[52]

The six main areas of development Reek identified in his presentation were:

1. Creating the conditions needed to start training teams on the requirements of modern tactics
2. Replenishing and maintaining ammunition
3. Enhancing active and passive air defence
4. Equipping the border protection units to enable them to fight moto-mechanised forces

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[49] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 244.

[50] Ibid., 244, 256, 265.

[51] During the meeting, Reek explained the three-staged modernisation model, but Laidoner mentioned only two stages in the modernisation plan. See *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 254–255.

[52] Plans for the modernisation of financial planning and sales of 1937, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 74–103. Somewhere in the middle of 1936, Laidoner tasked the Chief of the General Staff, Commander of Supply Administration, the Air Defence Commander and the Naval Commander to work out modernisation proposals in certain areas.

5. Strengthening air force
6. Modernising naval training.

The content of these development areas was not discussed during the meeting; therefore, it is impossible to build links between the developmental intent and active defence principles. At the same time, two guiding principles of modernisation were agreed on during these two meetings: improving the economic situation of officers and easing the budgetary situation of the Ministry of Defence by transferring part of the state defence-related obligations to other ministries.[53] The first principle was more related to the need to ensure the loyalty and support of the officer corps to the new powers after the coup d'état than to any modernisation process. The second principle, even though it eased the ministry's financial situation a little, did not have any significant effect.

At the end of the meeting, the State Defence Council tasked the General Staff to develop a plan to supplement and modernise the armament of the EDF.[54] Head of State Päts concluded the meeting with the words: "It's all for today. Next time we will meet when plans are ready."[55] The next meeting of the State Defence Council took place ten months later, on 16 February 1935. Of the modernisation issues, only the new wartime organisation, principles of the mobilisation and rear area organisation were discussed. The EDF modernisation plan was delivered to the State Defence Council almost four years later, in January 1938. The question arises of why it took so long to prepare the plan. There may be several answers, all possibly correct.

First, it was certainly a question of priorities. In 1939, summarising the results of his five years as commander-in-chief in a report to

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[53] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 139. Similar to the name change of the Estonian Armed Forces, which were called the Estonian Defence Forces from 1929 to 1936, the ministry responsible for coordinating the government's national defence policy was called the Ministry of War from 1918 to 1929, the Ministry of Defence from 1929 to 1936, and again the Ministry of War from 1937 (Editor's note).

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid., 271.

the President of the Republic,[56] Laidoner pointed out that he had six main tasks:

1. Elimination of political struggle inside the armed forces;
2. Transforming the mindsets and attitudes of the military leadership, especially in assessing the capabilities of their own and enemy forces;
3. Creating career opportunities for younger personnel;
4. Bringing the military out of a material depression;[57]
5. Elimination of deficiencies in the areas of military command, mobilisation preparations and military organisation;
6. Modernisation of national defence legislation.[58]

Modernisation-related tasks are down in fourth and fifth place on the list, indicating clearly that these issues were not the main concern of the commander-in-chief and his chief of staff. Additionally, from his remarks on the General Staff's working plan of 1935,[59] we can see that he considered even the modernisation of legislation a more acute question. He listed eight different legal acts and norms in his remarks, stating that issues with them should be resolved in 1935. From the plan itself, we can find just one sentence about the capabilities discussed during the State Defence Council meeting in April 1934: procurement of samples of anti-tank guns. Based on follow-up General Staff working plans, we find that Laidoner was more focused on finding more effective ways to use existing capabilities rather than experimenting with the creation of new ones, especially when there was not a near-term military threat facing Estonia.

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[56] Report on National Defence Activities 1934–1939, RA, ERA.2553.1.12. The report was mainly drawn up by Reek, the chief of General Staff, and was signed by him and the commander-in-chief.

[57] In the report on national defence activities, the term "material depression" was used to describe a situation characterised by continuous budget cuts in national defence, forcing military personnel to rely on reserve resources. This condition triggered numerous problems in national defence, beginning with a decline in training quality. Most critically, the complete lack of prospects for acquiring modern weaponry and equipment not only hindered operational effectiveness but also severely damaged morale and motivation among military cadres (Editor's note) – see Report on National Defence Activities, 3.

[58] Ibid., 2–4.

[59] Work plan of the Defence Forces Staff for the year 1935, 25 January 1935, RA, ERA.495.12.418, 6.

Secondly, there was a pall of uncertainty about the priorities and some confusion in finding suitable technical solutions inside the High Command and General Staff. At the State Defence Council meeting on 16 April 1934, Laidoner declared that of the three armed services, the most critical situation was in the army. In his opinion, the air defence situation was the best, and even the navy was in a more favourable situation than the army. It was also clearly stated that the main threat to Estonia would likely come from the land and air.[60] In January 1938, he assessed the air defence situation as more critical, noting that only twelve reconnaissance aircraft had combat value, and all the other remaining fighters and bombers were already obsolete.[61] This does not mean that his initial assessment was wrong. Rather, it shows that his assessment in 1934 was no longer valid and that his honest appraisal in 1938 reflected the rapid development of military aviation. Unfortunately, the sound Estonian Air Defence of 1934 had been overtaken by technological developments by 1938 and was lagging behind other European air forces.

Additional confusion in finding proper technical solutions may be illustrated by the case of anti-tank guns. Back in 1933, at the State Defence Council meeting, Tõrvand had declared that every infantry battalion must have an element of 47 mm anti-tank guns.[62] In April 1934, the State Defence Council even had a discussion regarding the possibility of producing the 47 mm anti-tank guns in Estonia.[63] In 1935, Laidoner appointed a special working group headed by Reek to figure out which anti-tank gun would be the best for the EDF. After visiting various factories from June to August 1935, Reek's commission proposed the Böhler 47 mm guns, and four samples were bought.[64] Agreeing with Reek's conclusions, Laidoner still made a written remark on the report: "Most probably, we need to stay with the Rheinmetall

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60 *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 255.

61 Commander-in-Chief to Head of State, 14 December 1937, RA, ERA.495.12.85, 71.

62 *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 173.

63 Ibid., 255.

64 Toe Nõmm, "Eesti tankitõrje 1940. aastani", *Laidoneri Muuseumi Aastaraamat 2003, 3,* (2004): 112.

37-mm guns."[65] In November 1936, in his proposal, Reek once again stressed the need to procure thirty-six Böhler 47 mm anti-tank guns. He argued that 37 mm guns were too weak and that the 47 mm guns were better suited to the needs of the modern battlefield.[66] There seems to have also been a conflict of opinion between the head of the Technical Department of the Supply Administration, Lieutenant Colonel Karl Tiitso, who was probably behind Reek's report, as all of its annexes bore his signature alongside that of the commander of the Supply Administration, Major General Rudolf Reimann. Reimann, in his written remarks to the commander-in-chief at the beginning of December 1936, agreed that the Rheinmetall 37 mm anti-tank guns were suitable for the EDF. Based on his assessment, Laidoner decided to procure a new set of samples, together with ammunition and vehicles, of the Rheinmetall 37 mm anti-tank guns.[67] However, this is not the end of the story. In February 1938, Laidoner once again sought to find a final solution to the question posed by the commission headed by Major General Herbert Brede that had been tasked to analyse how effective these guns could be against armoured vehicles with a mass of up to eighteen tonnes.[68] On 15 March 1938, Laidoner forwarded the results of this work to the Ministry of War with a comment that, from his perspective, there were no obstacles to starting the procurement of the 40 Rheinmetall 37-mm L/50 anti-tank guns.[69] It took three years to agree on the type of anti-tank guns to procure. Finally, Laidoner's arguments about the lower cost and better manoeuvrability of the 37-mm guns decided the outcome of the debate.

Thirdly, there was clearly a question regarding the cost and funding of the modernisation effort. In 1934, Laidoner initially estimated that the overall cost of the full modernisation would be

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65 Commander-in-Chief's journal, 27 May 1935, 54.

66 Chief of Staff of the Estonian Defence Forces to Commander-in-Chief, 2 November 1936, ERA.2553.1.11, 75.

67 Commander-in-Chief's journal, 9 December 1936, 140.

68 Ibid., 5 February 1938, 175–176.

69 Ibid., 15 March 1938, 180.

approximately 72 million Estonian kroons.[70] In his letter to the president on 12 January 1937, he estimated the full costs of modernisation at 140 million kroons.[71] A year later, in January 1938, presenting the modernisation plan to the State Defence Council, he declared that the overall cost of modernisation would be 160 million kroons.[72]

At the same time, Ministry of Defence expenditures were almost 20% of the state budget.[73] In 1933–34, the EDF's permanent expenses to maintain existing force levels were approximately 12–12.5 million kroons, of which almost half were personnel costs.[74] Therefore, as the political guidance was to not dismiss officers and non-commissioned officers from the service, there were no good solutions to find additional funds within the framework of the existing budget. Even though it was decided at the State Defence Council in April 1934 that, in the coming years, the EDF would have 14–14.5 million kroons in its annual budget, this was sufficient only for the first stage of the modernisation. The yearly budget consists of only 2–2.5 million kroons in foreign exchange. This last fact set very clear limits on further planning, since most of the new armaments had to be procured from abroad, which required foreign currency. A quick response to the civil war in Spain helped Estonia sell some outdated weaponry and acquire additional funds for modernisation, but it was not enough to cover the whole second stage.[75] Therefore, the question of additional funding needs was brought to the president several times. The first requests were made by the commander-in-chief in July, and the second in October

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[70] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid,* 256, 260.

[71] Commander-in-Chief to the Head of State, 12 January 1937, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 105.

[72] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 339.

[73] For example, in 2024 Estonian Ministry of Defence expenditures were just 6,29% from the state's overall budget. See *State Budget Act of 2024*, https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/119122023019, 5 April 2025.

[74] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 496–509.

[75] In 1936–37, 11.3 million kroons were obtained from the weapons sales, with an additional 5 million kroons in 1938–39.

1936.[76] Laidoner also addressed the issue in January 1937 and took it up with the State Defence Council in January 1938.[77] In his letter to the head of state on 12 January 1937,[78] he introduced the modernisation plan and mentioned that the overall funding needs of the second phase of modernisation were estimated as 35 million kroons.[79] The State Defence Modernisation Plan, presented to the State Defence Council in January 1938, asked for 28 million kroons – in addition to the 11.3 million kroons that had been obtained from the sale of old weapons to Spain – to execute the second phase of modernisation within the next five to six years.[80] It is obvious that the commander-in-chief was ready to start executing the second stage of modernisation in 1936, but difficulties in finding political consensus on funding issues delayed the process by almost two years.

Based on General Staff working plans from 1934 until 1938,[81] we can identify four clear lines of operations related to the modernisation issue:

1. EDF's organisation and wartime force structure
2. EDF's mobilisation system and plans
3. Rehearsal and development of border protection operational plans
4. Preparing the procurement plans to establish new capabilities or to enhance existing ones.

The main timeline with the key events is shown in Annexe 1. It seems that most of the preparatory work to draw the modernisation plan was done in 1935–36. In 1935, the anti-tank commission visited various arms plants abroad. Modernisation, for Laidoner, was not only the procurement of new weapons systems. It was also about the

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[76] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 71. In July 1936, Laidoner asked the head of state for 8.8 million kroons within the next four years. But at the State Defence Council meeting on 22 October 1936, 15–17 million kroons had already been sought for the modernisation effort.

[77] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 328–349.

[78] General Laidoner to Head of State Päts, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 103–108.

[79] Ibid., 107.

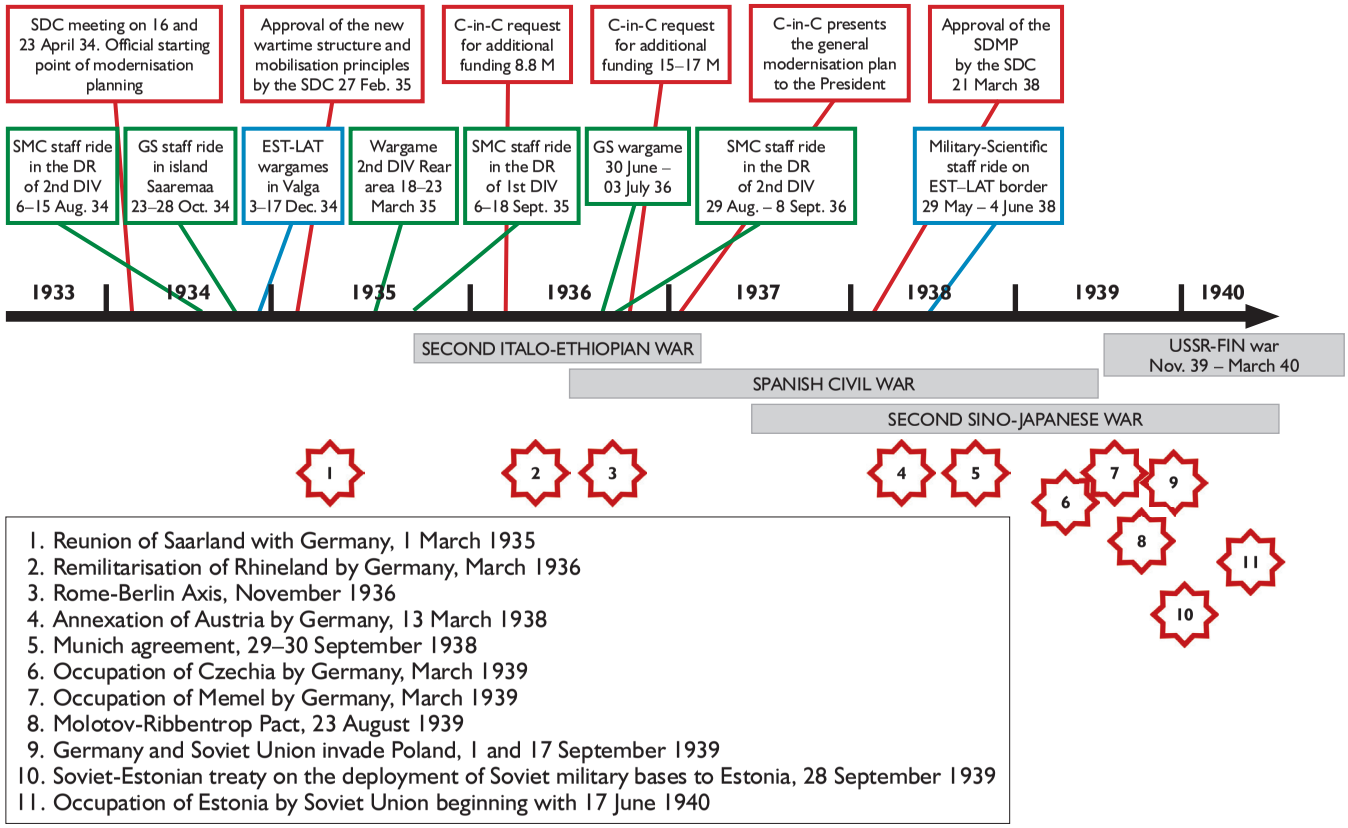
[80] National Defence Modernisation Plan, RA, ERA.495.12.85, 57.

[81] Report on the working plan of the Staff of the Defence Forces for the year 1936, 10 February 1937, RA, ERA.495.12.444, 1–13; Report on the working plan of the Staff of the Defence Forces for the year 1937, 13 April 1938, RA, ERA.495.12.464, 1–68.

mentalities of the officer corps. A series of high-level staff rides and war games were held in 1934–38 to address the "defeatist mentality" of commanders and to study the operational environment[82] (see Annexe 1). In addition to the commander-in-chief and the chief of the General Staff, every such staff ride included the General Staff's key department chiefs (such as the chief of the Operational Department), as well as the respective divisional and regimental staff officers. Laidoner's own thoughts and conclusions from these rides are documented in the commander-in-chief's journal. It gives us an idea of what he wanted remembered from the events, but it provides little explanation of the kind of "defeatist mentalities" he encountered and how he countered them. It seems some outcomes from the staff rides were considered in the project of the modernisation plan.

Alongside the staff rides, work continued on the new wartime structure and mobilisation plan. Work on the new wartime structure was initiated by the State Defence Council decision of 11 April 1933, reducing the number of soldiers and non-commissioned officers in the wartime structure from 88,400 to 70,000. The new wartime organisational structure, the new mobilisation plan and the rear area organisational plans were reviewed and approved at the State Defence Council on 27 February 1935.[83] With the approval of the new wartime structure, the plan to reduce the size of the defence forces was abandoned. The number of soldiers and non-commissioned officers in the approved structure was 81,681 instead of the 70,000 that had been requested. Of course, the new structure was slightly different from the older one, but the reduction was mainly done in a manner that Laidoner himself had criticised back in January 1933. It seems that in the process of working out the new organisational structure, no attention was given to maintaining or increasing the fighting power of units while reducing the number of personnel in them. Interestingly, taking into account the number of machine guns and indirect fire systems, compared with other European and

[82] Report on the activities of the National Defence in 1934–1939, RA, ERA.2553.1.12, 36–37.
[83] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 143.



Annexe 1: Historical-political context in which the State Defence Modernisation Plan was developed.

Soviet forces, Estonian firepower was weaker.[84] The previous wartime structure had fifteen infantry regiments and eighteen artillery battalions.[85] The new 1935 structure envisioned eleven infantry regiments, nine single infantry battalions and seventeen artillery battalions.[86] Laidoner declared that the new structure was more flexible than the previous one and therefore was more suitable for situations in which the EDF does not have enough troops to cover the whole border area properly. He also pointed to the importance of flexibility in active defence. The work on the new structure was not linked with the technical modernisation processes. It did not address the development of new warfighting capabilities, such as anti-tank companies. It seems that Laidoner and Reek had already accepted that it would not be possible to do something within the next three to four years that would affect the EDF's wartime structure.[87]

Interestingly, regardless of the position he had taken in the previous year, Laidoner did not fundamentally change the organisation of the defence forces but was satisfied with a uniform and moderate reduction in the personnel of the units.

The State Defence Modernisation Plan of 1938 from the active defence perspective

The State Defence Modernisation Plan (see Table 3) represented only a part of the broader modernisation effort, designed to cover the development areas that were not resourced through the Ministry of Defence's ordinary yearly budgets. Therefore, to gain a comprehensive overview of the overall modernisation initiative, the State

[84] "Lisa 9: Eesti ja teiste riikide jalaväerügementide sõjaaegne isikkoosseis ja relvastus (1939)" (Appendix 9: Wartime personnel and armament of Estonian and other countries' infantry regiments), *Sõja ja rahu vahel. I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani,* peatoimetaja Enn Tarvel (Tallinn: S-Keskus, 2004), 450.

[85] State Defence Council Minutes No. 1 (7), 12 June 1933, RA, ERA.988.1.2, 2–9.

[86] Ibid., 16 February 1935, RA, ERA.988.1.3, 6–17.

[87] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 274.

Defence Modernisation Plan must be analysed together with the overall fund allocations for the second stage of modernisation (see Table 2) and the plan for utilising the proceeds from the arms sales to Spain (see Table 4). It is clear that by the time it reached the State Defence Council, the State Defence Modernisation Plan of 1938 was already a compromise between the needs of the different branches of the EDF and the financial capabilities of the state.

Before going further to analyse the content of the modernisation plan, two points should be noted. First, from the beginning, Laidoner and the General Staff took a modern approach, buying not just weapons but systems – weapons together with the necessary ammunition, spare parts, and support and maintenance tools. Second, the State Defence Modernisation Plan was just a part of the overall defence modernisation effort.

The air defence programme was the largest in the State Defence Modernisation Plan as well as in the overall plan, from the funding perspective. Most of the additional funding was allocated to air defence. It demonstrates how important Laidoner thought the air force would be in the future war. The overall need for aircraft was estimated at 90, comprising 42 fighters, 24 reconnaissance planes, 18 bombers and six torpedo bombers. The specified plan included the procurement of bombers and reconnaissance aircraft, but not fighters.[88] Buying four new bombers most probably played a role in keeping updated knowledge in this field. At the same time, the plan foresaw the largest technological upgrade of reconnaissance aircraft capability. Taking into account the active defence concept, this was logical and complementary. The proper use of these aerial assets could ensure the frontline divisions had an adequate situational picture.

The air defence path of the programme consisted only of model systems necessary to build up possibilities for modern training (see Table 3). One battery of 75 mm air defence guns hardly covered the needs to protect the critical infrastructure in Tallinn against an air threat. As the

[88] In addition to the State Defence Modernisation Plan, 2.4 million kroons received from arms sales to Spain were allocated for air defence needs. The plan was to procure 10 new fighters and four additional bombers.

plan was for both the 1st and 2nd Divisions to receive one 37 mm anti-aircraft gun battery, there was the possibility to start not only technical but also combined arms training. Technical training on these guns had started in 1936, when the first five sample weapons had been procured.[89]

In the overall plan, three different programmes addressed mainly the army's needs (anti-tank, ammunition and motorisation programmes), totalling 13.5 million kroons. The State Defence Modernisation Plan allocated just 7 million kroons for the army.[90] However, 12.5 million kroons were allocated for the army in the overall plan for the second stage of modernisation (see Table 2). The programme included procuring one light tank company, motorising two anti-tank companies and procuring two long-range artillery batteries. The plan indicates that the initial intent was to have at least two tank companies, one for the 1st Division and another for the 2nd Division, as manoeuvre units. The question then became what type of tanks to procure. Reek argued that the most operationally suitable tank for the Estonian Defence Forces would be a medium tank armed with a 47 mm gun.[91] A smaller and weaker gun, in his opinion, would limit the tasks tanks could fulfil on the battlefield, especially if used as a mobile anti-tank weapon. Interestingly, in the initial proposal, Laidoner mentioned just one platoon of tanks for training purposes, even though Reek's advice was to have at least two companies. In the State Defence Modernisation Plan, Laidoner seemed to accept the role of tanks on the modern battlefield, stating that it was possible to maintain certain activity without tanks, but not possible to maintain the overall required activity level.[92] The anti-tank weapons programme involved the motorisation of two anti-tank companies. The proposal to procure 40 37-mm anti-tank guns was already being

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[89] Toe Nõmm, "Eesti sõjaväe varustus, sõjatööstus ja relvastuspoliitika", *Sõja ja rahu vahel. I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani*, peatoimetaja Enn Tarvel (Tallinn: S-Keskus, 2004), 237–238.

[90] Of course, there were some projects executed or prepared for execution using the weapons sales money. Almost six million kroons were allocated to procuring anti-tank weapons, artillery and small arms ammunition, and submachine and machine guns.

[91] Plan of procurement of the anti-tank weapons, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 74–75.

[92] The National Defence Modernisation Plan, RA, ERA.495.12.85, 13.

The Polish tankette TKS and its crew during their visit to Southern Estonia, August 1934. Source: Estonian War Museum, KLM ET 9184:53 F

processed by the Ministry of Defence. Therefore, it was not part of this programme. Since the overall need for anti-tank guns was estimated at ninety systems, we may ask why the capability cap was not met, especially if the estimated cost of the tank company was 2.4 million kroons and the price of the 40 anti-tank guns was 1.037 million kroons.[93] Laidoner explained his decision involved the need for balanced development of all branches of arms, as well as the need to build up expertise in armoured warfare.[94]

Unlike in the draft proposal of 1937,[95] the issue of 20-mm anti-tank rifles was not addressed at all. With the decision that anti-tank guns would be included in the force structure as brigade-level weapons,[96] the infantry battalion and regiment levels were left without any anti-tank

[93] Toe Nõmm, "Eesti suurtükivägi 1918–1940. Relvastus ja ülesehitus" (Estonian Artillery in 1918–1940: Weapons and Structure), *Laidoneri Muuseumi Aastaraamat 2004*, 4 (2005): 137–138.

[94] Commander-in-Chief to Head of State, 14 December 1937, RA, ERA.495.12.85, 65.

[95] The plan for the procurement of anti-tank weapons, 2 November 1936, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 78.

[96] Ibid.

tools. Additionally, taking into account that there were only four 20-mm anti-tank rifles procured as samples, there was no possibility of building up technical or tactical knowledge in regiments. Here, the decision to favour domestic production over the pace of armament had to be paid for.[97] Two motorised anti-tank companies certainly gave the division commander some flexibility and allowed him to react to the enemy's fast-manoeuvring armoured units. At the same time, the battalions and regiments didn't have any anti-tank capabilities, which made them an easy target for the enemy in manoeuvre warfare.

As in most other small European armies, upgrading the artillery was a challenge for Estonia. In the second half of the 1930s, some work was done to modify artillery ammunition to increase the range of fire of artillery pieces.[98] An additional 1–2 kilometres in shooting range was a remarkable achievement in terms of static defence, but still limited division- and brigade-level commanders' abilities to execute an active defence or support manoeuvring of the troops. Having two batteries of long-range artillery as a commander-in-chief reserve is certainly congruent with the principles of active defence. It addressed two critical weaknesses of the EDF's artillery: inadequacy in the range of fire and poor manoeuvrability (pre-First World War equipment). This part of the army programme was also remarkable because it planned to purchase these batteries as complete units. Not only weapons systems, ammunition, maintenance parts and transportation, but also questions of organic air defence and anti-tank protection were considered. Nevertheless, the overall artillery question remained unsolved until July 1939, when a contract was signed with Rheinmetall to procure 32 modern 105-mm howitzers.[99]

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[97] Nõmm, "Eesti sõjaväe varustus, sõjatööstus ja relvastuspoliitika", 237–238. The decision was made in 1936 to start producing 20-mm anti-tank rifles in the Estonian arms plant Arsenal, based on the Solothurn rifle. The first prototype was ready in spring 1938, and the first ten rifles were delivered in early 1940.

[98] Nõmm, "Eesti suurtükivägi 1918–1940", 203–204.

[99] Ibid., 177.

From the communications programme, the motorisation of the two divisions' signal companies increased the chances of their staff surviving by enabling faster relocation. However, brigade and regimental staff remained reliant upon horse-drawn carriages for their radio equipment.

From planned developments in the State Defence Modernisation Plan, the procurement of new reconnaissance and bomber aircrafts, one tank company, one long-range artillery battery and the motorisation of two anti-tank companies are positively related to the principles of active defence, as they improve the divisional-level situational awareness, increase long-range firing capabilities and provide new mobile units to react to the uncertainties. Also, the procurement of new radios and the motorisation of divisional signal companies had the potential to increase situational awareness and limit interruptions to command and control. At the same time, the unsolved fire support questions at the regimental and lower levels limited the use of these principles at these levels.

Table 2. Overall fund allocation of the State Defence Modernisation Plan, presented to the head of state Konstantin Päts in January 1937[100]

Field of modernisation	Sources allocated for development (million kroons)	% of overall funds
Air force and air defence	11.0	31.4
Anti-tank weapons and ammunition. Platoon-sized unit of modern tanks	10.0	28.5
Infantry small arms and artillery ammunition (procurement and maintenance)	2.5	7.1
Navy and coastal defence	2.0	5.7
Chemical protection	1.0	2.9
Motorisation programme. Vehicles, and fuel and lubricant reserves	1.0	2.9
Development of military industry	1.5	4.3
Development of infrastructure	6.0	17.2
Total:	**35**	**100**

[100] Commander-in-Chief to Head of State, 12 January 1937, RA, ERA.2553.1.11, 107.

Table 3. Final allocation of funds in the State Defence Modernisation Plan, presented to the State Defence Council in January 1938[101]

Field of modernisation	Requested funds in million kroons	% of overall funds
Army modernisation	*7.0*	*25*
• Light tank company (12 tanks)	2.326	
• Motorisation of two anti-tank companies	0.674	
• 150- or 155-mm long-range artillery batteries (2), with motorisation and anti-aircraft/anti-tank capabilities	4	
Air force and air defence modernisation	*11.5*	*41.07*
• Bomber aircraft (4) and		
• Reconnaissance aircraft (16)	6.0	
• 75-mm air defence battery (1); 37-mm anti-aircraft batteries (2); searchlight battery (1); 20-mm anti-aircraft guns (4); 13-mm anti-aircraft machine guns (4)	4.0	
• Tallinn airfield and maintenance facilities	1.5	
Navy and coastal defence modernisation	*4.0*	*14.29*
• Fast torpedo boats (3)	2.5	
• 305-mm armoured, turret-mounted, coastal defence artillery battery (1)	1.5	
Communication equipment	*0.75*	*2.68*
• Motorisation of signal companies of the 1st and 2nd Divisions	0.126	
• Procurement of R and B-2 type radios	0.554	
• Field wired communication	0.070	
Border defence fortification	*1.25*	*4.46*
• Narva area	0.75	
• Petseri area	0.50	
Chemical protection	*0.5*	*1.79*
Fuel and lubricant reserves	*0.5*	*1.79*
Infrastructure development	*2.5*	*8.93*
• Barracks for the battalion-sized covering force in Irboska	1.5	
• Hangars for aircraft, new equipment, and vehicles	1.0	
Total	**28.0**	**100**

[101] National Defence Modernisation Plan, RA, ERA.495.12.85, 45–49.

Table 4. Allocation of funds acquired from Spanish arms sales, presented to the State Defence Council in January 1938[102]

Field of modernisation	Sources allocated (million kroons)	Remarks
Air defence:		
• procurement of 75-mm air defence guns (8)	1.2	Ordered in November 1938
• 37 mm anti-aircraft guns (4)	0.5	Ordered in June 1937
Artillery ammunition: 84-mm and 114-mm	1.39	Partially used
Rifle ammunition (5 million cartridges)	0.675	Ordered in 1937
37-mm anti-tank guns (40)	1.5	Ordered in March 1938
Infantry small arms (submachine guns, machine guns from Finland, pistols FN from Belgium)	2.118	Ordered in 1937
Signal equipment	0.3	
Pioneer equipment	0.01	
Motorisation programme	0.127	
Air force equipment	2.4	
Unforeseen needs	0.149	
War museum	0.6	
Sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis	0.25	
Total:	**11.3**	

Conclusions

The overall process leading to the modernisation of the EDF was systematic. In a stable and peaceful environment, such a three-staged approach was definitely reasonable. The first stage aimed to acquire sample weapons and to start training teams with modern weapons. The second stage sought to equip the covering force, and the third stage intended to arm the remaining force with modern weapons. The modernisation planning process was initiated in April 1934, with

[102] *Riigikaitse Nõukogu protokollid*, 345–347.

the implementation of the first stage beginning in 1935 through the acquisition of the first samples of anti-tank weapons. The planning for the second stage was most probably initiated in 1936, and the plan for the second stage of modernisation (1938–44) was presented to the State Defence Council in January 1938. It should be mentioned that a part of the second stage's procurements was already prepared in 1936–37. The overall cost of the second stage of modernisation was 35 million kroons.

However, this long-term approach to modernisation in a rapidly developing political and technological environment presented both risks and opportunities. From the technological side, it was possible to discover at the beginning of the second or third stage that the samples of modern weapons purchased at the beginning of the process had already become obsolete. On the political side, Laidoner and his staff vigorously exploited opportunities offered by the Spanish civil war to dispose of obsolete weapons and used the acquired money to accelerate the modernisation process of the defence forces. At the same time, they failed, mainly due to the economic constraints of the state, to secure additional financial support for modernisation. Therefore, 1936–38 can be seen as a period of lost opportunities. Modernisation itself was driven mainly by financial considerations, not threats or capabilities. Most critical decisions were made based on the availability of funds.

There are small, recognisable links between Laidoner's rhetoric regarding active defence and his expectations for subordinate commanders' decision-making capabilities. Despite advocating for active defence principles and demanding aggression, initiative and determination all the way down the chain of command, Laidoner did not increase the combat effectiveness and tactical flexibility of the core of his organisation: the army's battalions and regiments. It seems that in his eyes, the strength of a battalion or a regiment could be judged by the number of bayonets rather than by their firepower. At the same time, the planned procurements addressed the active defence possibilities quite well at the brigade and divisional levels.

Given Laidoner's belief that the key players in a future war would be the infantry and the artillery, the modernisation plan's lack of provisions for upgrading the existing artillery was notable. However, the procurement of two heavy artillery batteries represented a significant attempt to enhance artillery capabilities. The quality of these new weapon systems was carefully prioritised – the selected 37-mm anti-tank guns, 150-mm howitzers, 37-mm anti-aircraft guns and 105-mm howitzers were the best weapon systems available at the time.

The positive aspects of the modernisation plan centred on strategic force development. Rather than simply purchasing individual weapons, the approach prioritised building comprehensive capabilities by acquiring the proper weapons along with supporting equipment. The organised procurement of the long-range artillery batteries exemplifies this strategy – planners addressed not only ammunition and maintenance requirements, but also battlefield survivability by incorporating anti-tank and anti-aircraft capabilities into the battery. Procuring weapon systems in a way that enabled the immediate start of unit-level training accelerated the acquisition of tactical knowledge. Additionally, the plan recognised that in certain technical fields, the EDF had limited or no knowledge. This led to a phased, gradual approach to introducing new capabilities, allowing for systematic knowledge building over time.

In conclusion, the State Defence Modernisation Plan was well-conceived and logically structured but unfortunately came too late to significantly influence military operations or political decisions following the events of 1 September 1939.

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Michael Calmeyer: A Dutch Infantry Officer Contemplates Modern War, 1935–1940

Wim Klinkert

In the 1930s, Michael Calmeyer, a Dutch infantry officer, extensively studied the current military developments of the time and the war of the future. He based his conclusions on thorough analyses of numerous international publications, primarily in French, German and English. He concluded that modern technology, particularly tanks and aircraft, had reintroduced mobility in warfare, while also increasing its speed. Consequently, classical manoeuvre warfare was making a comeback, with the infantry still playing a leading role. While he considered extreme and one-sided views such as those of Douhet, Fuller and Liddell Hart to be impractical, he acknowledged that elements of these views did influence major powers. Calmeyer saw this view confirmed both in contemporary conflicts, and within the professional publications of Morretta and Alléhaut. Notably, Calmeyer was, between 1937 and 1939, the only Dutch officer seconded to Wehrmacht units and the Kriegsakademie in Berlin. He advised the Dutch army leadership to focus primarily on building strong defences against motorised and mechanised attacks, as well as maintaining high morale and commitment among the soldiers. After all, modern warfare would demand the utmost from every individual soldier.

Introduction

Although the Netherlands possessed a vast colonial empire, it was a small power in Europe, and its military and political leaders therefore considered strategic security issues from that perspective. In practice, it meant that the Dutch government based its national

security on both international law – the development of which it emphatically supported – and armed neutrality. The country had come through World War I more or less unscathed, but the chances of such a lucky escape being possible again, in a subsequent European conflict, were low.[1] Nevertheless, armed neutrality remained the cornerstone of Dutch thinking on security, although from 1920 onwards this came within the collective security system of the League of Nations. Only in 1936 did the Dutch government decide to return to its pre-1920 stance of neutrality based only on the Hague Rules (1907)[2]. This gave the Dutch government a great deal of freedom to shape and implement armed neutrality. In practice, it meant that deterrence – guarding neutral borders – was one of the prime tasks of the Dutch armed forces, but so was actively fighting an invader. Moreover, it also gave the government complete freedom to join an alliance. So, if its neutrality was violated, the Dutch armed forces could side with one of the warring parties in order to give the country a voice in any eventual peace negotiations. This way, the government wanted to prevent major powers from being the ones to decide the fate of the Netherlands.

For some, the fact that the major powers had respected Dutch neutrality in 1914–18 was proof of the view that the territory of the Netherlands was so important strategically for the European balance of power that none of the surrounding great powers would allow any of the others to possess this area. Therefore, allowing the Netherlands to survive would be in their interest. This way of thinking, which had developed in the course of the 19th century, seemed to become much less persuasive, especially in the interwar years. The speed and scale of modern warfare made it increasingly unlikely that Dutch

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[1] See for the Netherlands in the WWI: Marc Frey, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die Niederlande. Ein neutrales Land im politischen und wirtschaftlichen Kalkül der Kriegsgegner* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2006), Wim Klinkert, *Defending Neutrality* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013) and https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/regions/western-europe/.

[2] Hague Convention respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers in case of War on Land.

territory would be respected. As early as 1930, speculations about the next war between Germany and France included the violation of the southern Dutch provinces by the armies of these powers. In the process, Dutch cities would probably be bombed. Given the limited distances, the size and material power of its major neighbours, and the speed of modern warfare by land and air, the Netherlands was highly vulnerable.[3]

Nevertheless, neutrality remained the basic premise, even after German rearmament under Nazi rule began. For the Dutch politicians and military, an alliance with Nazi Germany was unthinkable in any scenario. It went against the traditional thinking on neutrality, in which any of the great powers could be either friend or foe. Nevertheless, even after 1933, making operational arrangements with France or Britain remained a no-go, even in secret. The fear was that it could provoke a German attack, so neutrality was the only option.

This political stance made Dutch military preparations difficult. It prevented the General Staff from working out military cooperation with potential allies in advance and it gave the armed forces the dual task of first deterring large neighbouring states and second resisting an invasion. When allied help would arrive, how substantial that help would be would only become apparent at that moment, while the war was already raging. This would make effective and coordinated efforts with allies highly problematic. The Dutch reluctance to engage in prewar coordination was all the more frustrating because it was clear for all to see that its eastern neighbour posed the only and most imminent threat. A German invasion of the Netherlands could even occur, in the worst case, "out of the blue" through a combination of armour and airplanes. Against this background, Dutch military planners were faced with an almost impossible challenge. Considering the limited operational depth of the Netherlands, time worked to the disadvantage of the Dutch defenders. Therefore, well-prepared inundations, defensive lines and the destruction of bridges and other infrastructure were considered the main means to slow the invader's

[3] Wim Klinkert, *Dutch Military Thought, 1919–1939* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2022), 208–220.

advance.[4] But could they win enough time for Britain and France to come to the rescue?

This chapter will focus on the ideas of one of the most talented Dutch experts on modern land warfare in the 1930s, Michael Calmeyer, who was certainly aware of his country's complicated military situation.[5] It will provide an analysis of Calmeyer's ideas on modern war, gleaned from three sources: first, the series of articles he wrote in 1935–37 in *Militaire Spectator* on the war of the future; second, his reflections on his period in Germany 1937–39, during which he visited the major exercises in Mecklenburg as an observer; and third, his comments on current conflicts in 1935–40. These analyses and comments shed some light on ideas from a small country, a category that is less studied when it comes to the interwar discussion among military professionals.[6]

Michael Calmeyer (1895–1990)

In 1919, as a 24-year-old lieutenant, Calmeyer, the son of a naval officer, published his first article in a professional military journal.[7] He discussed trench warfare and his analysis focused on the interaction between tactics, modern weapons and morale. This triad, in Calmeyer's eyes, reflected the essence of modern warfare: the use of technologically advanced weapons combined with thorough tactical thinking and the realisation that the battlefield of the future would require fighters with high morale. This line of thought would remain a constant in his later writings. It also reflected, in a more

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4 Piet Kamphuis and Herman Amersfoort, *May 1940* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 35–88, and Jeffery Gunsburg, "*La grande illusion*: Belgian and Dutch strategy facing Germany", *The Journal of Military History* 78, no 1 (2014): 101–158.

5 Calmeyer's memoirs were edited and annotated by Jan Hoffenaar and published in 1997 under the title *Herinneringen*.

6 *An der Schwelle zum Totalen Krieg*, edited by Stig Förster (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), and *The Shadows of Total War*, edited by Richard Chickering (Cambridge: CUP, 2003).

7 Michael Calmeyer, "De strijd in de loopgraven", *Mavors* 13 (1919): 107–110.

Captain Calmeyer in 1935. Source: J. Hoffenaar Herinneringen *(1997), 80*

general sense, the lessons that the Dutch officer corps had drawn from the Great War: that technology would continue to develop at an ever-faster pace, and that the future battlefield would be more deadly and complex than ever before. New weapons such as war gases, armour and the airplane would contribute significantly to these developments. How could small states keep up and find answers? In Calmeyer's view, small countries should at least keep up intellectually with the military, technological and tactical developments of the great powers, which could become either allies or enemies. This intellectual challenge would lead to a large number of specialist publications to deal with the rapid and complex developments in the field of land warfare during the interwar period.

Although Calmeyer published his first article in 1919, his intellectual career did not begin until a few years later. At first, the lieutenant wanted to experience military life for himself, and for a Dutch officer, there was only one option: he requested to be posted in the Dutch

East Indies (Indonesia), where military service was constant and often harsh. Hoping that this experience would improve his career prospects, Calmeyer served overseas from 1920 to 1925. He then studied at the Netherlands Hogere Krijgsschool (1926–29) and in 1932 became editor of the *Wetenschappelijk Jaarbericht*, an annual scientific publication on all the latest international developments in warfare, as well as the *Militaire Spectator*, the leading Dutch professional military monthly. In 1935, he was appointed a lecturer at the prestigious Hogere Krijgsschool (War College) in The Hague. All in all, his was a rapid intellectual career. Within a short period, he had become a leading Dutch thinker on modern land warfare. It was no surprise, therefore, that in 1937 he was sent to the Kriegsakademie in Berlin to continue his studies, but also to brief the Dutch General Staff on the German army. His two-year stay included, among other things, several assignments with German units. When the Dutch army was mobilised in August 1939, he returned to the Netherlands. In May 1940, when the German army invaded, Calmeyer served as a captain and company commander. He saw action near Rotterdam, for which he was decorated. Few captains in the Dutch army in 1940 could look back on such a career path and few were as well-versed in international military journals as Calmeyer was. After the war, within a decade, he was a lieutenant general, a member of parliament and secretary of state for defence.[8]

The development of modern war

In November 1935, Calmeyer's first article on tomorrow's war appeared in the *Militaire Spectator*. The publication was probably linked to his recent appointment as lecturer in tactics and staff procedures at the Hogere Krijgsschool. Calmeyer supported a fairly widespread view that the First World War had been a turning point in the

[8] Jan Hoffenaar, *Herinneringen. Memoires van een christen, militair en politicus* (Den Haag: Sdu, 1997), 209–325.

development of warfare. It had made war "total", in the sense that it was a struggle not between armies but between nations, in which the population was both a victim – through air raids or economic blockades, for example – and a force, as long as morale remained high. The weapons system that fascinated Calmeyer the most was the tank. In his eyes, it had been the decisive factor that had both ended static trench warfare and made it highly unlikely that the tactic would be used in the future. The tank brought back movement and manoeuvrability, combined with firepower and protection.

Calmeyer rejected what he saw as radical theories about the nature of modern war developed by thinkers such as Giulio Douhet and J.F.C. Fuller. He found their belief in technology monomaniacal and even threatening. Such thinkers were extreme, and he saw their ideas as dangerous fantasies. What they were advocating was no longer the classical art of warfare, but an irresponsible belief in technology as a panacea. The only comforting thought, he wrote, was that such ideas had not yet been put into practice anywhere in their full extent. Calmeyer considered Douhet's ideas of air supremacy, or the achievement of a decisive strategic victory through air power alone, to be completely unrealistic. While he recognised elements of Douhet's thinking in the air forces of France, Italy, Germany and Russia, he felt that the defences against aircraft were simply too numerous and too effective for Douhet's ideas to succeed in practice. And for small states, Douhet's ideas were of little relevance anyway. Calmeyer therefore recommended an air fleet strong enough to inspire awe and capable of providing substantial support to an ally, so that this potential additional resistance would deter an enemy. Calmeyer rejected the idea of an independent air force. Land and air operations must always be combined, he held.

Fuller's idea of a fully mechanised land army received the same reaction: unworkable in practice. Calmeyer pointed to the many terrain conditions that made mechanised operations impossible. The huge amounts of fuel needed for armoured operations were also an Achilles' heel. How could the units be resupplied if the advance was long and fast? Finally, operating in darkness would be

a problem. The viable war of the future was therefore a combination of a traditional mass army supplemented by mechanised units. He pointed in particular to France, which was developing tanks meant to serve both as armoured artillery and as independently operating armoured units. He saw similar developments in Britain, Germany and Russia. Tanks could restore the historic role of heavy cavalry on the battlefield.

In Calmeyer's view, what applied to tanks and bombers was equally true for chemical weapons: They would be used, but they would not fundamentally change the nature of warfare. Like with airplanes, there were also many effective countermeasures against chemical weapons, both on the battlefield and in cities. But they required continuous training and had to be kept up to date, if only to maintain morale. In addition, the use of war gases was highly dependent on weather conditions, which greatly reduced their effectiveness. If city dwellers had anything to fear, it was conventional bombs and shells that could cause serious and massive suffering.

Calmeyer found support and inspiration for this middle ground on the nature of modern war (mass armies with high-tech additions) from his French colleague and First World War veteran Émile Julien Alléhaut,[9] who, like Calmeyer, was active in military education and also tried to get a sense of the war of the future. He had publications on infantry–artillery cooperation, the role of the tank, motorisation and all sorts of tactical problems, but also on issues of morale and psychology on the battlefield, which were also topics close to Calmeyer's heart. Like Calmeyer, Alléhaut sought to combine new developments with established ideas about warfare, while explicitly taking the human factor into account. And like Calmeyer, he rejected Charles de Gaulle's ideas of professional, high-tech armies as too radical and one-sided. The army of the future would continue to

[9] Bruno Chaix, "Le Général Alléhaut, un théoreticien militaire ignoré de l'entre-deux-guerres", *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 184 (1996): 69–83; Daniel Marc Segesser, "Nur keine Dummheiten: das französische Offizierskorps und das Konzept des Totalen Krieges", *An der Schwelle zum Totalen Krieg*, edited by Stig Förster (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 113–178.

rely on conscripts, but they would be better trained and equipped with modern technology.

Another influence on Calmeyer was the Italian officer Rocco Morretta, whose work Calmeyer regularly mentions in positive terms. He probably knew the German translations of books written in Italian. The German translation of *Come sera la guerra di domani* (1932) was even reviewed in several Dutch magazines. Morretta also doubted whether the ideas of the well-known "prophets" of modern war were feasible. Rather, he expected a repetition of a battle similar to 1918, when World War I entered its final phase, involving mobile, motorised and mechanised warfare. And like Calmeyer, he saw the next war as one involving nations and peoples, not high-tech armies. Notwithstanding rapid and impressive technological developments, Calmeyer, like Morretta, thought morale and other psychological factors were of decisive importance in the outcome of a war.[10]

In his articles, Calmeyer also gave his views on a number of other points. He recognised that, due to motorisation, wars in the near future would be fast paced. For the Netherlands, this was a very relevant point. A strategic raid, in which the enemy would launch a surprise, massive attack on Dutch territory without prior mobilisation, seemed an increasingly realistic scenario. It would cripple the Dutch defence capabilities already in the first hours of war and would result in a *fait accompli* in no time. As early as 1934, such an attack was already a "hot topic" in the Dutch press and politics. Only a good information position and continuous high preparedness would give small states any chance of surviving such an attack. But that was easier said than done.

In his final contribution, Calmeyer concluded that modern war would begin with an overwhelming attack by land and air. Infrastructure, along with economic and military targets, faced the greatest risk of destruction. A large state might still survive this, but for a small one, it could be the death knell. Perhaps anti-tank artillery and mines could slow the advance somewhat. Calmeyer substantiated this opinion using articles by Heinz Guderian, but he also pointed

[10] The book is summarised in *Die Umschau* 38 (1934): 665–667.

to statements by Philippe Pétain[11] and Hans von Seeckt about such a "lightning" start to a war. This highly offensive operation would also involve the use of battle gases and all kinds of propaganda designed to weaken the morale of the civilian population. But all things considered, the decision would fall on land during the battle, with air power in a supporting role. Classical manoeuvre forms, executed with modern weapons, would lead to that outcome. Warfare did not undergo revolutionary change, it evolved into a form where the armed forces acted in coherence and attunement, and mass merged with modern firepower and speed. Calmeyer reassured his infantry colleagues that the infantry was and would remain the queen of the battlefield and its quality would determine the final outcome.

Reflections on the German army

On 21 September 1937, under the command of Generalfeldmarschall Werner von Blomberg, large-scale exercises of the German army, navy and air force began in northern Germany and the Baltic Sea. In retrospect, this is considered a breakthrough in terms of the role armoured units played in the German army.[12] The Dutch press reported on them extensively, repeating German assurances that this was not a scenario directed against any particular enemy, but that the main aim was to practise cooperation between all branches of the armed forces. The exercise was to conclude with a grand parade for Hitler and Mussolini. Calmeyer was able to attend the exercise as an observer, along with many other foreign officers. For the Dutch officer, it was an excellent opportunity to test his ideas about the role of tanks and modern infantry action. The following month, he started his studies at the Kriegsakademie.

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[11] Pétain had said in 1934 and again in 1935: "La guerre éclatera comme un coup de foudre", predicting a German surprise attack on France. This had attracted a lot of attention in the Netherlands, where the "attaque brusquée" (strategic raid) was discussed widely in the press. From 1937, the term "Blitzkrieg" also came in use.

[12] *Warfare in Europe, 1918–1938,* edited by Geoffrey Jensen (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 34.

Adolf Hitler with Field Marshall Werner von Blomberg and his Adjutant Colonel Hossbach, speaking about manoeuvres of the Wehrmacht in Neustrelitz, Mecklenburg, September 1937. Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Heinrich Hoffmann/Studio of H. Hoffmann

The scale of the exercise was huge, especially from a Dutch perspective. And the joint nature of the exercise, including civil air defence, was also something special. Calmeyer could not have come closer to modern warfare, at least in peacetime. For the first time, he saw the integration of paratroopers and independently acting armoured units in a comprehensive scenario. The large Soviet exercises, especially the one in May 1935, were well known in the Netherlands, but no Dutch observers had actually seen them.

In the German exercise, Red (West) attacked Blue (East), with Berlin more or less on the dividing line. The opening was a major air attack on the German capital by Red, in which Calmeyer recognised the idea that the morale of the population and the troops was also a war objective. In the next phase, the air force was used, mainly in support of the ground forces. Calmeyer praised the flexibility with

which this air support was alternately centralised and decentralised. Red, in turn, deployed an independently operating armoured division on the flank of the main force. The flat terrain of northern Germany lent itself well to mechanised action, but the lakes channelled the attack routes. Calmeyer noted how well-coordinated action by anti-tank artillery, minefield laying and infantry could parry attacks by armoured units. The strengths and weaknesses of such units became clearer, and the losses were considerable. Blue also practised armoured action at night, combined with air support. Calmeyer considered the effect on Red's morale to be very significant.

For Calmeyer, the conclusions were clear: tanks were an indispensable part of modern land warfare and the Netherlands should concentrate on them, but the infantry remained the main weapon – nothing had changed in this regard. With approval, Calmeyer quoted von Blomberg: "Ein Heer ist so gut oder schlecht wie sein Infanterie",[13] but then solid training, preferably for two years, was necessary. In Calmeyer's view, the exercise emphasised the need for longer and more intensive forms of military training, as well as greater attention to mental resilience. Soldiers needed to be better prepared, both physically and mentally, for the rigours of modern warfare, something that was still sorely lacking in the Netherlands. In terms of self-confidence, skill and endurance, there was still a world to be won in the Netherlands.[14]

Calmeyer must surely have hoped that especially the political but also the military leadership in The Hague would take war preparations more actively in hand. There had been hopeful beginnings, but many years of budget cuts had led to a serious neglect of the army. In February 1935, the then chief of the General Staff, General Isaac Reynders (1879–1966), had brought the government's attention to the matter in a detailed memorandum highlighting the dangerous shortcomings

[13] In *Deutsche Infanterie,* 15 November 1937; this quote by von Blomberg could be translated into English as "An army is only as good or as bad as its infantry".

[14] M.R.H. Calmeyer, "De Duitsche Weermachtsmanoeuvres 1937", *Militaire Spectator* 107, no 1 (1938): 2–6.

of the Dutch armed forces: too small, too few modern weapons, and inadequate training of officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers alike. Now, with Germany rearming underway and reintroducing conscription, this state of affairs had to end quickly, Reynders argued. At the same time, there was growing public awareness of the need for air defence and the possibility of a sudden, overwhelming German attack. The press pointed these dangers out, sometimes in graphic detail, stressing that the country was still far from having the defensive capabilities required in modern war. The military leadership also now expressed unequivocally that a repeat of 1914, when Dutch territory had been respected by the great powers, was highly unlikely.

However, the military felt the steps the government took towards improvement were agonisingly slow. It did not come up with a comprehensive plan to modernise armaments until February 1936. The first investments were mainly defensive in nature, reflecting the neutral stand: an expansion of air defence with anti-aircraft guns (1936) and airplanes, anti-armour guns (from 1937), and different means of protection of bridges and infrastructure against a motorised invasion (1935). Only in 1938 did the government significantly increase the number of conscripts to be called up annually and extend the length of military service. By 1940, these measures would produce an army of about 300,000 men.

But despite this increase and the investment planned by the government, there remained a serious quantitative shortage of weaponry. Money was not the problem, the increase in the defence budget after 1936 was enormous. The problem was how to spend it. As Dutch military production was fairly limited, the country depended on foreign producers. This was a bottleneck, as the arms industry was getting far more orders internationally than it could handle. Buying new weapons systems proved difficult. Additionally, export bans imposed by several countries hampered purchasing opportunities even more. Finally, a lot of money went into building defensive bunker lines, while the development of the Dutch field army, which Calmeyer considered more important, lagged behind. Only small-scale experiments were made with armoured vehicles and only a start was made with building

a partly motorised light division as an operational reconnaissance unit. It was not until the summer of 1936 that 12 Swedish armoured cars (not tracked) were added to this light brigade.[15] In 1938–39, two regiments of Hussar motorcyclists were raised. The result was that the Dutch defences relied heavily on fortified lines. The mobile field army was closely tied to these lines, and operational manoeuvres were out of the question. This was a far cry from what Calmeyer had seen in Germany.

Calmeyer had sent detailed information on German reconnaissance units and panzer divisions to The Hague, but it is not very clear what was done with it.[16] While Calmeyer enthusiastically welcomed the modernisation of the Light Brigade, he disagreed with the reconnaissance role assigned to the motorcyclists. In his view, they should be able to provide rapidly transportable firepower, just as Guderian had advocated in *Achtung Panzer!* and *Die Panzertruppen*[17]. They were too weak for reconnaissance, as they might come under enemy fire. The heavier and faster armoured vehicles (*Panzerspähtruppen*) were primarily for reconnaissance, and their numbers had to be increased, Calmeyer noted. Only a handful of armoured cars of Dutch design were built by the DAF car factory, and a Dutch tank was still on the drawing board when the Germans invaded.[18]

While in Germany, Calmeyer had continued to write for the Dutch *Wetenschappelijk Jaarbericht*, which discussed and interpreted recent military developments on the basis of an analysis of the international literature. In these articles, he further developed his ideas on modern warfare, including its mental and economic components. There was certainly concern within the Dutch army leadership about

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15 In 1939, it turned into a Light Division.

16 Dutch military attaché in Berlin to the General Staff 1938, National Archives, The Hague, 2.13.16 HQ Field Army inv. nr. 1058.

17 Heinz Guderian, *Achtung Panzer! Die Entwicklung der Panzerwaffe, ihre Kampftaktik und ihre operativen Möglichkeiten* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1937) and Heinz Guderian, *Die Panzertruppen und ihr Zusammenwirken mit den anderen Waffen* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1939).

18 Piet van der Trappen, "De hedendaagsche stand van de pantserwagentechniek", *Militaire Spectator* 105, no 6 (1936): 241–246; Piet van der Trappen, "Militaire verdedigings-voorbereiding op motortechnisch gebied", *Militaire Spectator* 107, no 1 (1938): 14–21, and no 2 (1938): 55–59.

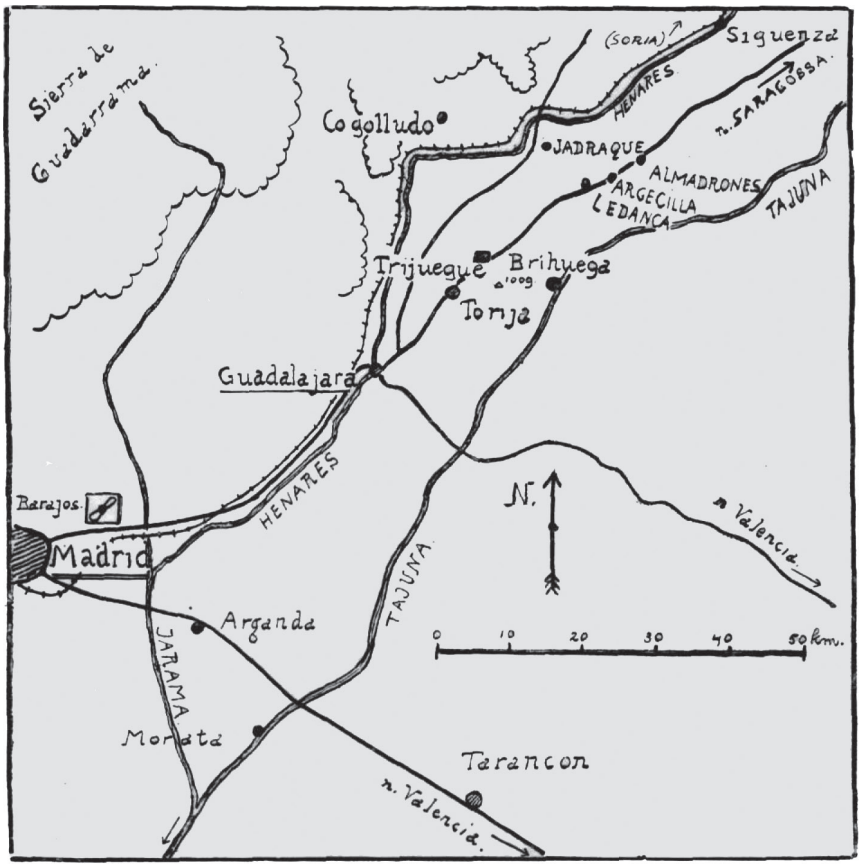
the toughness and morale of the Dutch soldier. In fact, this had been a subject of reflection and concern throughout the interwar period.[19] Would the Dutch soldier withstand the rigours of modern warfare? The rebellion of the conscripts who refused to obey their cancellation of leave in October 1918 was regularly cited. In part, this rebellion was blamed on the poor leadership of the (non-commissioned) officers, many of whom were conscripts themselves. During his posting to a German unit, Calmeyer had seen how things could be different. He pointed to the good relationship and mutual trust between the men and their leaders. Comradeship could go hand-in-hand with discipline in all ranks. Calmeyer wished Dutch officers could receive such German training.

For the Dutch situation, in his opinion, the unifying factor had to be loyalty to the House of Orange. The Dutch-Orange bond was the spiritual foundation on which Dutch society rested. For a conservative Protestant like Calmeyer, this was a logical and natural argument, but it did not apply to everyone. Remarkably, when Calmeyer reflected on the reasons for the Dutch defeat in May 1940, he attributed it primarily to a lack of stamina, morale and physical strength. In the end, the human factor had been crucial. Calmeyer was less clear on economic resilience, but shortly before the outbreak of war, a bureaucratic structure had been built up by the Dutch government that allowed the state to direct the war industry and the supply of the civilian population in mobilisation or wartime. The quick defeat could not be attributed to failed logistical preparations.

Abyssinia, Spain, Poland and Finland

In his analyses of the wars from 1935 onwards, Calmeyer sought to understand the nature of modern warfare, but also, it must be said, to confirm his previously published ideas. According to the Dutch officer, the wars in Ethiopia (1935–36) and Spain (1936–39)

[19] Klinkert, *Dutch Military Thought, 1919–1939*, 66–98.



Map from Calmeyer's article on the war in Spain "De gevechten in Guadalajara 8–23 maart 1937", Militaire Spectator *106, no 6 (1937), 223*

demonstrated the dominant role of technically modern weapons systems, especially armour and air power. On the other hand, both conflicts demonstrated how problematic the terrain could be and how vulnerable modern equipment was to air attack. In Ethiopia, for example, artillery proved to have little mobility, and in Spain the concentrated, large-scale deployment of armour that Guderian had envisioned was hardly possible. In June 1937, Calmeyer published in the *Militaire Spectator* a detailed analysis of the Battle of Guadalajara three months earlier. Drawing on German, French and

English sources,[20] he presented a detailed tactical and terrain analysis, showing how limiting the terrain could be for motorised action and how vulnerable the assault and logistics columns were to air attack. He praised the effective cooperation between the International Brigades and Russian combat vehicles and air support. These heavier fighting vehicles proved more effective than the light Italian ones. The Russians also demonstrated effective coordinated tank–air action. Russian air support proved successful in destroying command posts and equipment. However, it was less effective in the mountainous areas.

The Nationalists operated with motorised divisions, infantry came to the front in trucks, and artillery was motorised. The combat vehicles were dependent on the terrain but provided the infantry with essential fire support for the advance against machine guns. But infantry and artillery proved vulnerable from the air. For Calmeyer, the air force had the power to destroy both morale and material. One additional problem for air power was the availability of nearby landing sites.

Calmeyer's lesson to his colleagues was that being aware of the danger from the air was more important than ever. In addition, the Netherlands needed to acquire its own combat vehicles as soon as possible, if only to gain a better understanding of how they could be used on Dutch terrain. What was clear, however, was that the infantry was the decisive weapon, capable of operating in all weather conditions, day and night. The infantry had, as Calmeyer could not repeat often enough, the hardest but also the most honourable job on the battlefield, "which no other weapon can do". The rhythm of attack and counterattack was set by the infantry; its position determined the outcome of the battle. In essence, the quality of the infantry determined the quality of a military unit. Calmeyer was pleased to see that the Dutch Field Service Regulations also gave the infantry a prime position in combat.

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[20] Including books and articles by Rudolf von Xylander, Otto Welsch, Frédéric Culmann, Raymond Duval and Paul Armengaud.

The German attack on Poland (1939) was, in Calmeyer's eyes, the fulfilment of both his own ideas and those he had acquired during his stay in Berlin. He incorporated them into a lengthy article on panzer divisions published in October 1939, in which he reiterated the limitations (terrain) and the need for good cooperation with the infantry. The German performance had lived up to expectations. Manoeuvre warfare had returned, and with it the classic art of warfare.[21] The secret lay in the combined use of large armoured and motorised units with dive bombers, supplemented in places by paratroopers as a vertical containment weapon. The control of these mobile units had been made possible by the development of radio technology.

The application of these means from the arsenal of modern technology made it possible to revive the ancient principles of the art of war and to increase the power of attack by combining mass and speed. This had given the German leadership the opportunity to surprise the enemy in time and place, to break through the enemy's front, to cut the enemy's links with a deep thrust and to continue the operation until the enemy's destruction was achieved. It was not a new process – the campaigns of the Mongolian cavalry of Gengis Khan in the 13th century used the same strategy – what was new was the development and application of means that once again enabled the rigid martial arts to carry out such operations.

It is worth noting that in both the Polish and the Western (1940) campaigns, non-motorised troops, moving at the speed of a pedestrian, played little part in the actual outcome. Moreover, the Polish troops were far too scattered and still too poorly motorised. Calmeyer said that this proved Morretta's points: First, if the attacker's freedom of movement is not controlled, the attacker wins. Second, it confirmed that the time-honoured principle of concentration of forces, as defined by Jomini and based on Napoleon's battles, still applied in modern warfare. Third, it showed that the Germans had good land–air cooperation, which greatly enhanced the effectiveness of their ground forces.

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[21] M. Calmeyer, "De Pantserdivisie", *Militaire Spectator* 108, 10 (1939): 409–414.

Calmeyer concluded that the Polish defeat was brought about by the Germans using all the right ingredients. For this, he referred to two works by German officers that were published in 1939. Hermann Foertsch argued in wrote *Kriegskunst heute und morgen* that war could never begin "out of the blue" and denied Douhet's idea that the air force could win a war single-handedly.[22] Waldemar Erfurth, known at the time for his analysis of the Finnish–Russian war, wrote *Der Vernichtungssieg*, in which he explained his ideas on surprise attacks (*Die Überraschung im Kriege*) and the fundamentals of joint warfare.[23] Calmeyer stressed that both officers had predicted the German conduct of the war and victory in Poland perfectly. When discussing the Russian advance into Finland (1939–1940), Calmeyer emphasised the use of air strikes to bring down civilian morale and the use of armoured units. According to the Dutchman, the fact that Finland was able to maintain an effective defence for so long, despite its numerical inferiority, was due to "the qualities of the Finnish people". "As the Olympic Games have repeatedly shown, the Finns are one of the most physically developed peoples in the world. Uncontaminated by the luxuries with which the peoples of Western Europe have been able to surround themselves for centuries, they are ideally suited to endure the rigours of a campaign." Physical strength and high morale were essential. In addition, the Finnish terrain, especially in winter, was not conducive to the effective use of armour. According to Calmeyer, the final defeat of Finland was due to Russian superiority in numbers and weapons. However, it was an honourable defeat. Perhaps Calmeyer wanted to express the hope that when German troops overwhelmed the Netherlands, the Dutch would show some of the same toughness that the Finns had done, making the unavoidable honourable, but he could not say so explicitly.

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[22] As Foertsch was head of the press office of the German War Department, some Dutch newspapers concluded that he reflected the official government view.

[23] See *Preemption: Military Action and Moral Justification,* edited by Henry Shue and David Rodin (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 33–35.

Conclusion

Calmeyer's ideas circulated mainly in small military circles. Some of his public lectures were discussed in the press, but that was all. He did not choose to present modern warfare in works aimed at a wider audience. In the Netherlands, this role was played by Basil Liddell Hart (1895–1970), whose books and commentaries were translated from British newspapers and received wide publicity. For the Dutch public, Liddell Hart was by far the most important interpreter of modern war as it unfolded in the late 1930s.

For Calmeyer, modern war had three distinctive elements. The first was the return of tactical and operational manoeuvres to the battlefield, in which the tank played an essential role, but only in combination with massed infantry. In modern war, the classical principles of movement and concentration of force were given new life through the combination of mass, motorisation and mechanisation. He remained convinced that it was the infantry that ultimately decided the outcome of a war. The second element was the speed of modern operations through aircraft and motorised units, and the third was the role of morale, the psychological element. The modern battlefield would test the resilience of soldiers, but also of civilians living in fear of aerial bombardment. Alléhaut and Morretti agreed with Calmeyer on all these points.

But what did this mean for a small country like the Netherlands? Was an honourable defeat the best that could be achieved? Obviously, it was becoming increasingly difficult for small states to respond to rapid technological developments, new weapons systems and a way of waging war that was increasing in speed and scale. On the one hand, the Dutch preparations for the war reflected and even reinforced the country's neutral stance; on the other hand, the Dutch knew exactly who the enemy was and what resources it had at its disposal. The only thing the Dutch army could win was (a little) time. It chose not to follow Calmeyer's suggestion to do this by operational manoeuvres, and instead used static lines of defence, or trenches.

When Calmeyer discussed the Dutch defence, he focused on ways to limit the effects of a "lightning attack". But the operational means he discussed were not available to the Dutch army. They had to come from allies, a subject he could not discuss publicly. He refrained from analysing possible alliances altogether. The strict policy of neutrality did not allow for this discussion, and behind the scenes there was little preparation or coordination with Britain and France in case of an invasion by the German army, the probability of which became clearer as the 1930s progressed. The Dutch government did not want to give the Germans even the slightest pretext to take military action. The strictest neutrality itself had to be its shield against war. It had made neutrality an act of faith, and alternatives were not seriously discussed, either politically or militarily. This made Calmeyer's thinking typical of how Dutch military analysts interpreted modern war: They were well-read, possessing an impressive knowledge of international military developments and they analysed current conflicts professionally, but they did not openly discuss strategic and operational options for Dutch defence. The concern raised by some of them in 1918 that modern war might no longer be feasible for small states was no longer under consideration, maybe because the most likely response would require a fundamental shift in Dutch security policy. The only element almost everyone seemed to agree on, including Calmeyer, was that modern war demanded greater psychological, mental resilience from soldiers and civilians alike. Here, in the end, lay the real Achilles heel of the Dutch defensive strength. Calmeyer was definitely the only one blaming the fast and disastrous defeat of May 1940 on lack of training, warrior spirit, willpower and toughness among not only the soldiers, but also the population at large.

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Examining the Indefensible: Guarding Estonia in the Interwar Period and the Future

Peter Mitchell, Tanel Tatsi

Estonia failed to take adequate lessons from World War I to defend itself from the looming threat of the Soviet Union, and instead spent its limited resources on acquisitions of marginal utility and failed to adequately reform its military. Its international position was further weakened by an inability to forge appropriate alliances due to infighting among the countries of Northern Europe. This paper will shed light on the complex interplay of geopolitical factors, internal dynamics and the strategic choices made by Estonia during that critical time and explore how these insights can inform current defence strategies. During the interwar period, Estonia sought to modernise and organise its military forces, facing constraints in arming its soldiers with a hotchpotch of equipment comprising leftover Russian and German arms, lend-lease British equipment, and other sundries. Despite these challenges, Estonia made efforts to establish a defensive line in the northeast of the country and pursued alliances with Finland, Latvia, Poland and other states. It made preparations for a southeastern defensive network along the Võru axis, but ground had not yet been broken by the time of the Soviet ultimatum. Both efforts ultimately failed, and Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940. Lessons from this failure can be applied to the current strategic situation in the Baltic region, given the continuing importance of NATO and the renewed military significance of deliberate defensive positions backed up by long-range precision firepower and anti-access/area-denial weapons.

"A ground defence of the [Estonian] borders would be impossible", author Ralph Peters, a retired US Army lieutenant colonel, told the Hoover Institution in 2015, echoing the blunt structural realist

tradition of Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, "a defence in depth impractical without geographical depth".[1] Peters' assessment, while harsh, is nevertheless accurate and not without historical precedent.

Estonia's small population lies in a flat headland jutting into the Baltic Sea, protected on its eastern flank by the relatively narrow Narva River and Lake Peipus. "Estonia's geographic situation makes her the most exposed of the three Baltic states to a sudden attack by Soviet Russia", wrote Frederik Coleman, American envoy to the Baltic states in 1929. "Her exposed position has naturally played an important part in shaping her foreign policy."[2]

The tactical reality of this immutable geopolitical situation demands clever strategic thinking to provide a practical state defence and turn what could be a tempting target for a marauding bear into a wasps' nest of stinging complications. This was the reality the newly independent Estonian Republic faced in 1918 as it emerged from its fiery birth in the First World War and its own War of Independence. This is also the reality faced by the present Estonian Republic in 2023, as it faces a similar foe across the Narva River. The Estonian Republic of the past failed to defend itself against the looming Soviet threat due to a failure to secure effective military allies abroad, despite attempts to form a Baltic Entente or secure a defence treaty with the United Kingdom; a weak economy preventing substantive national defence; and an ineffective domestic defence policy throughout the 1920s and 30s. Such harsh lessons have been thoroughly learned since the Cold War by the Baltic states in general and Estonia in particular. Upon regaining independence, gaining accession to the collective security provided by NATO was of the utmost importance. It remains paramount to examine these historical lessons from the interwar period to continue to secure the strategic situation of Estonia now and into the future.

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[1] Ralph Peters, "Defending the Indefensible: NATO's Baltic States", Hoover Institution, 12 May 2015, https://www.hoover.org/research/defending-indefensible-natos-baltic-states, 3 December 2024.

[2] Frederik Coleman, Report to the Secretary of State, 22 April 1929, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD, Record Group 59: Archives of the Department of State, RG 59.760n.61/32.

Historically, the defence of Estonia has been fraught with the challenges of defending against a numerically superior foe with the strategic initiative to strike anywhere along the multiple axes of advance towards Tallinn. In the few cases where the defender was able to hold Estonia even temporarily, it was due either to a disunited invader or to significant assistance from foreign allies – or both. The former factor is out of the defending state's control, but the latter is of the utmost political importance. This was the situation in 1558–60, where the Livonian Order was able to hold Reval [Tallinn] in the face of a Muscovite offensive and then launch a limited counterattack against Wesenberg [Rakvere] with assistance from Poland-Lithuania. The Order was further aided by the Russo-Crimean Wars distracting the tsardom and Ivan the Terrible's deteriorating mental state, which would lead to the start of the ruthless *oprichnina* in 1565.[3] The strain on the already teetering Livonian Order was too great, however, forcing its dissolution in 1561 and the final division of Estonia and Mainland Livonia between Sweden and Polish-Lithuania in 1582–83.[4]

Over 100 years later, Swedish king Charles XII brilliantly defeated a combined Russian-Saxon invasion of Estonian territories during the early phase of the Great Northern War. In 1700, he decisively routed a poorly disciplined Russian army besieging Narva. Prior to this, the Saxons had twice besieged Riga in Swedish Livonia. Following his victory at Narva, Charles invaded Polish-Lithuanian territories across Courland during 1701-1702, pursuing the Saxon forces there.[5] This victory proved to be short-lived, as the Russians captured Tallinn and annexed Estonia nearly unopposed in 1710, after the Swedish army was destroyed on the Ukrainian fields of Poltava, leading to two centuries of Russian domination.[6]

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[3] Isabel D. Madariaga, *Ivan the Terrible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 129–131.

[4] Michael Roberts, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden, 1523–1611* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 264.

[5] Robert I. Frost, *The Northern Wars. War, State and Society in Northeastern Europe 1558–1721* (London: Longman, 2000), 229.

[6] Ibid., 286.

Russian rule over Estonia was first loosened by the 1918 German offensive and then shattered by the collapse of the tsarist regime in the Russian Revolution. The occupying German forces were then forced to hand over power and their dreams of a German-dominated Baltic Duchy in November 1918 by the terms of the Compiègne Armistice. Taking advantage of the perceived power vacuum, the newly formed Soviet Red Army immediately attacked Narva and swept westwards towards Tallinn along two avenues of advance, north and south of Lake Peipus. The Estonian resistance was aided by considerable assistance from the British Royal Navy and Finnish volunteers, and more inconsistent support from the Russian Whites and German *Balten Battalion*.[7] The 1920 Treaty of Tartu ended the war favourably for the Estonian Republic, but the treaty was as much the result of the Soviet desire for peace as of the Estonian force of arms.[8] The raging Russian Civil War meant that destroying the White threat was the Bolsheviks' priority, relegating the reconquest of the Baltic to the "For Later" folder. The Treaty of Tartu also carried important diplomatic cachet for the Soviets as it was their first internationally recognised treaty with another state. This gave Tallinn additional leverage at the table, but irritated their Entente supporters, who would have preferred that the Estonians keep fighting to distract the Bolsheviks.[9]

Estonia inherited a primarily agrarian economy from the Russian Empire, with agriculture and livestock generating around 60% of GDP in the early interwar period, along with a fairly respectable textile industry.[10] Although the population in 1920 only numbered

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[7] Volunteers also came from Denmark and Sweden, though in limited numbers – a couple of hundred from each country. See further: *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu. I., Vabadussõja eellugu. Punaväe sissetung ja Eesti vabastamine* (History of the Estonian War of Independence. Prelude to the War of Independence. Invasion of the Red Army and Liberation of Estonia), koostaja ja toimetaja Lauri Vahtre (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 408–419.

[8] Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, 1917–1940* (London: Hurst & Co, 1974), 73.

[9] Karsten Brüggemann, *Eesti Vabariigi loomine ning "ühtse ja jagamatu Venemaa" lõpp* (The Creation of the Republic of Estonia and the End of "United and Indivisible Russia") (Tallinn: Argo, 2023).

[10] Zenonas Norkus, "The economic output growth of Baltic countries in 1913–1938: a quantitative cross-country comparison", *Journal of Baltic Studies* 50, no 2 (2018): 1–21.

around 1.1 million,[11] economic reform and a rebalancing of the export market away from the Soviet Union and towards the UK and Germany allowed the economy to rebound to its prewar GDP levels by 1922 – the fastest recovery in Eastern Europe thanks to minimal devastation from the war and Russian gold received as war reparations in the 1920 Tartu Peace Treaty. By 1929, the per-capita GDP was $2182.4 (GK$ 1990), with a total GDP of approximately $2.44 billion.[12] This allowed the Estonian Republic to field an army of 13,000 soldiers divided into three divisions, with another 100,000 military-aged men who could be mobilised from the reserves – approximately a third of the total available manpower that Finland mustered during the Winter War.[13] Tallinn was as acutely aware as it is now of the disparity between its strength and that of its belligerent neighbour to the east, and so immediately began forging diplomatic relations with its neighbours and potential powerful allies.

Estonian diplomatic efforts in the interwar period were plagued by the country's perceived lack of legitimate standing due to its newly won independence, as well as the lack of diplomatic cohesion between Estonia and neighbouring states such as Finland and Latvia. The Soviet threat overshadowed the borders of the Baltic Sea and drove the involved nations into negotiations with each other for mutual security cooperation. The most ambitious plan involved a federation of the Scandinavian and Baltic states in a sort of 20th-century Kalmar Union. When this proved unfeasible, the plans were steadily diminished into a defensive alliance of the Baltic Sea nations, to a federation of Estonia and Finland, to only a defensive alliance between Estonia and Latvia.[14]

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[11] For context, the population of Philadelphia, PA, in 1920 was 1.8 million.

[12] Jaak Valge, "Uue majanduse lätteil. Eesti sisemajanduse kogutoodang aastatel 1923–1938", *Akadeemia* no 10 (2003): 2202–2228. Figures given are in Geary–Khamis 1990 international dollars. By 1938, Estonia had surpassed the Soviet Union in GDP per capita. After independence in 1991, it only took Estonia four years to surpass the Russian Federation in the same metric.

[13] Hellar Lill, "The People's Own Force", ICDS, 6 August 2018, https://icds.ee/en/the-peoples-own-force/, 12 December 2024.

[14] Edgar Anderson, "Finnish-Baltic Relations, 1918–1940: An Appraisal", *Scandinavian Studies* 54, no 1 (1982): 55.

Despite these grand plans, nationalistic concerns took primacy over compromise and cooperation among the three Baltic states and their neighbours. Independence is a heady brew, especially for nations whose ruling class had been made up of Baltic Germans and Russians for several centuries. This is illustrated by the 1927 address to the Assembly of the League of Nations by Latvian Foreign Minister Fēlikss Cielēns, where he announced the consideration of a "Locarno Pact of the East" with Finland, Estonia and Latvia joining in a security agreement guaranteed by the USSR, Germany, Britain and France.[15] Despite this being a major international project, Cielēns had not briefed none of his Baltic counterparts about any of this. The preceding speaker, Estonian Foreign Minister Friedrich Akel, had made no mention of it whatsoever in his speech and appeared surprised at the ensuing development, while the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, offended by his country being snubbed in the plan, was critical of Cielēns in his own remarks the following day.[16] With these inauspicious proceedings and Britain's outright rejection of the plan, the "Locarno of the East" was dead in the water. Another illustration of Baltic non-cooperation, bordering on political rivalry, in the League of Nations was their respective plays for the rotating non-permanent positions on the Council – the League's equivalent to the current United Nations Security Council – where they refused to support each other's candidacies with the myopic enthusiasm of crabs in a bucket.[17] This bickering was actively encouraged by Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union in order to weaken Baltic autonomy.[18]

Limited regional security efforts fared little better. Poland's Chief of State Józef Piłsudski and other leading Polish intellectuals had drawn up plans for an Eastern European security bloc – led by Poland,

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[15] A series of agreements in December 1925 whereby Germany, France, Belgium, Great Britain and Italy mutually provided for peace in Western Europe, most significantly guaranteeing the borders of Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

[16] Rita Putins Peters, "Problems of Baltic Diplomacy in the League of Nations", *Journal of Baltic Studies* 14, no 2 (1983): 140.

[17] Ibid., 141.

[18] Anderson, "Finnish-Baltic Relations", 58.

naturally – decades before the Great War. "Polish force and its importance in the various parts of Russia emboldens us to set as our goal the splitting of the empire into its constituent parts and the freeing of the subjugated countries," Piłsudski wrote in 1904. "Russia, stripped of its conquered lands, will be so weak as to pose no threat."[19] This plan was backed by the French, who saw the Poles as the potential keystone of a *cordon sanitaire* stretching across Eastern Europe to contain Bolshevik Russia. The foundation for this grand *Intermarium* coalition was proposed in a limited form to the Baltic states and Finland on 17 March 1922 in the Warsaw Accord. By this point, the Poles had been forced to water down the concept so much to appeal to the other potential signatories that the Warsaw Accord amounted to little more than an agreement to not support aggressors against any of the involved states. Lithuania was still simmering over the 1919 Polish annexation of Vilnius and the condescending attitude of Warsaw regarding the historical Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.[20] Polish revanchism also alarmed the Latvians, who suspected the Poles of eyeing the province of Latgale with similar intentions. The Finns, secure behind the Gulf of Finland and the vast forests of Karelia, refused to ratify even the lukewarm Warsaw Accord, concerned that it might be used against Germany.[21] The backlash in Helsinki was so intense that the Finnish Foreign Minister Rudolf Holsti, who was an advocate of close defence cooperation with the Baltic states and Poland, was forced to resign. Finland held a warm opinion of Germany due to their assistance in the Finnish War of Independence and Civil War, while the Estonians tended to see the Germans as arrogant oppressors due to the historically privileged position of the Baltic Germans. These diametrically opposed views of Berlin would go on to play a significant role in Finno-Estonian relations.[22]

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[19] Józef Piłsudski, *Pisma Zbiorowe*, vol 2 (Warsaw: Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1937), 249–253.

[20] Prit Buttar, *The Splintered Empires: The Eastern Front 1917–21* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2018), 420.

[21] Antonius Piip, "The Baltic States as a Regional Unity". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 168 (1933): 174.

[22] Anderson, "Finnish-Baltic Relations", 53.

Thus, only the Estonians, far from the Polish Commonwealth's historical borders and keenly aware of the Soviet threat, showed any marked enthusiasm for the *Intermarium*. The Warsaw Accord was the high-water mark for potential Northern European security cooperation. One month later, in April 1922, none of the Baltic states joined Poland in protesting the Rapallo Treaty to normalise relations between Germany and the Soviet Union, instead using the opportunity to build trade relations with Berlin.[23] The fragmentation of these planned Eastern European security measures eventually led to the Estonians only being able to secure a defensive alliance with Latvia in 1923, in exchange for the Latvians relinquishing their claims on the island of Ruhnu in the Gulf of Riga.[24] The Lithuanians joined this agreement in 1934, forming the Baltic Entente, but it remained largely an alliance in name only.[25] Even after the rearmament of Germany in the mid-1930s, domestic pressure inside Latvia and Lithuania ensured that any consideration of Estonia upgrading the Baltic Entente into a full-fledged military cooperation pact remained a political fantasy.[26] The British and French saw no benefit in the Baltic and Scandinavian states forming an independent power bloc that could provide them security without needing Entente backing.

Estonia had very little success in seeking outside support from major military powers. The Scandinavian states – most notably Sweden, the largest economy in the region – embraced protectionist and isolationist policies that effectively left a vacuum in the Baltic Sea.[27] The French historical solicitude towards Poland did not extend

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[23] David Kirby, *The Baltic World 1772–1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change* (London: Routledge, 2014), 287.

[24] John Hiden and Patrick Salmon, *The Baltic Nations and Europe: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), 64.

[25] *The Baltic in International Relations Between the Two World Wars: Symposium Organized by the Centre for Baltic Studies*, November 11–13, 1986, University of Stockholm, Frescati, editors John Hiden and Aleksander Loit (Stockholm: Centre for Baltic Studies, 1988), 81.

[26] Eero Medijainen, "The 1934 Treaty of the Baltic Entente: Perspectives for Understanding", *Ajalooline Ajakiri*, no 1/2 (2012): 184.

[27] John H. Wuorinen, "The Efforts to Form a Union of Baltic States", *Current History (1916–1940)* 20, no 4 (1924): 613.

to a newly independent nation like Estonia, and British interest in the Baltic Sea was peripheral at best to their sprawling imperial domain. As Germany and the Soviet Union began to slowly climb out of the devastation wrought on their countries by the Great War, their geopolitical interests began to assert themselves as well, but there was no sense of urgency on the part of the Baltic states to put aside their individual national interests for the common good.

The only serious military assistance that the Estonians managed to secure in the 1930s was from Finland, which involved cooperation on the reconstruction of the abandoned Russian coastal artillery batteries between Tallinn and Helsinki, as well as a secret pact to block the Gulf of Finland with mines in the event of war with the Soviet Union.[28] This arrangement and the British-German naval agreement of 1935, whereby the British gave up their strategic interests in the Baltic Sea, led Estonia to approach Germany for security guarantees. However, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939 left Tallinn out in the cold, prompting Konstantin Päts and General Johan Laidoner to make the unilateral decision to surrender to the Soviet Union in September 1939. The failure of these interwar attempts to build solid alliances led to an increasing demand in Estonia and the other Baltic states for military reorganisation and rearmament to provide the deterrence that their foreign policies had failed to achieve. As contemporary historian John Wuorinen grimly remarked in 1924, "This military preparedness can hardly be considered as indicating a genuine belief in the adequacy of even the most elaborate war machinery that the relatively slender resources of these small countries could construct and maintain."[29] Unable to secure concrete defence assurances from abroad, the Estonians turned to their own devices and made a series of serious mistakes that critically undermined their national security.

After Konstantin Päts seized power in 1934, General Johan Laidoner was given a free rein over the Estonian military as commander-in-chief in exchange for the army's support for the coup. Laidoner

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[28] Hiden and Salmon, *The Baltic Nations and Europe,* 65.

[29] Wuorinen, "The Efforts to Form a Union of Baltic States", 614.

proceeded to introduce a new strategic vision that was apparently never officially codified in doctrine but nevertheless had a significant impact on Estonian land manoeuvres and training. This "active defence" doctrine emphasised the advantages that Estonia had along its borders with Russia – the river Narva, Lake Peipus and the dense forests of Võru County – along with the disadvantage of Estonia's small internal dimensions, emphasising that not a single inch of Estonian soil was to be surrendered without a fight.[30] The Russian offensive could only be forestalled, said Laidoner, through offensive Estonian action, a sentiment seemingly far more in line with the exuberant pre-Great War French *attaque à outrance* than the sombre interwar "flexible defences" of the Finnish Mannerheim and Hungarian Árpád lines, to say nothing of the massive, in-depth defences of the Maginot.[31] Despite the tactical importance of localised counterattacks, this is not apparently what Laidoner was proposing. Instead, active defence appears to have been a call for a generally offensive strategic mindset in order to keep the expected Soviet attack on its heels. Urmas Salo remarks that these plans on the strategic level were overly optimistic at best, due to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Soviet side and the lack of allied support for the Estonian side.[32]

As Kaarel Piirimäe astutely points out, Laidoner's emphasis on the land domain drew strongly from his and Päts' experiences from the War of Independence, where Estonian troops were almost entirely dedicated to the land domain. The Baltic Sea had been easily secured by the Royal Navy, which dominated the Baltic after dispatching a light cruiser squadron in late 1918, capturing a pair of new but

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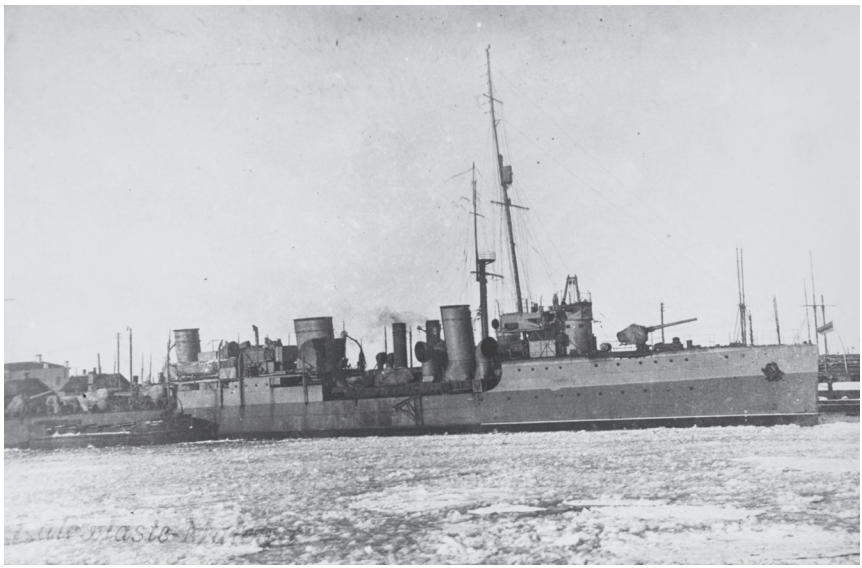
[30] Kaarel Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s: The myth of the Independence War and Laidoner's 'active defence'", *Estonian Yearbook of Military History* 7 (13), (2017): 119.

[31] For French doctrine pre-WWI see Eric W. Kaempfer, "Army Doctrine Development: The French Experience, 1871–1914", *Army History*, no 28 (1993): 11–17. For an in-depth examination of Finnish flexible defence, see Gordon F. Sander, *The Hundred Day Winter War. Finland's Gallant Stand against the Soviet Army* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

[32] Urmas Salo, "Estimation of Security Threats and Estonian Defence Planning in the 1930s", *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 12, no 1 (2008).



The Estonian Destroyer Vambola, photographed in Tallinn [Reval], Estonia, 1919. The Russian Orfey-class destroyer was launched in 1915 and entered service in 1917 as Kapitan I ranga Miklouho-Maclay. Following the Soviet takeover, it was renamed Spartak. The Royal Navy captured the vessel near Tallinn in December 1918 and subsequently transferred it to the Estonian Navy, in which it served until 1933 as Vambola. Estonia then sold the ship to Peru, where it was commissioned as the Almirante Villar, serving in the Peruvian Navy until 1954. Source: U.S. Navy History and Heritage Command Archives, NH 93632

poorly maintained Russian destroyers (Avtroil and Spartak) that they donated to the Estonians under the names Lennuk and Vambola. As for the air force, Estonia also received a handful of reconnaissance and fighter aircraft from the British that provided some limited utility, but the impact of aviation assets on the war proved to be modest at best.[33] After the Great War, the Royal Navy largely withdrew from the Baltic Sea due to pressing issues elsewhere in Britain's

[33] Eric A. Sibul, "Logistical Aspects of the Estonian War of Independence, 1918–1920", *Baltic Security and Defence Review* 12, no 2 (2010).

neighbourhood and in its sprawling empire. By the early 1930s, the Soviet Union began a large expansion of both its navy and air force that, combined with the rapid technological advances in aviation, meant that the enemy could potentially project air superiority over most of the Baltic region unless countered. Estonia, as previously illustrated, only had sufficient economic resources and manpower to cover one or at best two of the three domains (land, sea and air) as illustrated by the defence expenses of the mid-1930s.

Faced with the Gulf of Finland largely becoming void of a major power and with little confidence that either the Royal Navy or Kriegsmarine would protect Estonia's nearly 4,000 kilometres of shoreline, the Estonian government decided to focus primarily on naval acquisition and a close partnership with the Latvian Navy, trusting that Laidoner's active defence strategy could keep the Red Army at bay.[34] The destroyers Lennuk and Vambola were deemed unsuitable for coastal defence, and were sold to Peru in 1933 for $400,000 in gold (GK$ 3.1 million).[35]

Estonia hoped that the money raised from the destroyer sale, along with a general fundraising campaign across the country, would raise enough funds for a full-scale reform of the Estonian Navy, with plans to commission two coastal submarines along with some torpedo boats and minelayers. The Peruvian windfall was not as much as projected, however, and the Kalev-class coastal submarine project ran into serious cost overruns. Estonia contracted Vickers-Armstrong to build the submarines for £360,000 (GK$ 17 million), and went on to expend over 60% of its total military procurement budget for 1934–39 on Kalev and Lembit.[36] This sum could have been used to modernise the air force or air defence artillery, or to procure

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[34] Arto Oll, "Estonian and Latvian Naval Collaboration During the Interwar Period of 1920–1940", *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls*, Speciālizlaidums (116), 2022: 79–98.

[35] "Wambola and Lennuk," U.S. Navy History and Heritage Command Archives, NH 93632, https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-93000/NH-93632.html, 14 October 2023.

[36] Toe Nõmm, "Eesti sõjaväe varustus, sõjatööstus ja relvastuspoliitika", *Sõja ja rahu vahel. I. Eesti julgeolekupoliitika 1940. aastani,* peatoimetaja Enn Tarvel (Tallinn: S-Keskus, 2004), 233.

standardised infantry support weapons and radios for the entire Estonian Army.[37]

None of these requirements for modernisation or procurement could be ignored. As the Estonian authorities assessed correctly, keeping the Estonian coastline secure was of paramount importance, but it was even more vital to keep sea lines to other countries open – especially to Estonia's major maritime trade partners, Finland, Germany and the United Kingdom.[38] Considering the limited capacity of Estonian industry to support the armed forces for more than a few months, securing outside support was essential.[39] Without supplies from the outside, Estonia had no chance of winning a longer attritional fight, no matter how well its army fought to keep the Soviet offensive back. Despite this accurate assessment, the procurement strategy was flawed. The two brand-new Kalev-class submarines proved to be an expensive investment that pulled limited funds away from more pressing acquisition needs.

Neglecting the air domain meant an enemy air force would have free rein in the skies over Estonia. The republic was only able to muster 30 interwar airplanes of various fighter and reconnaissance configurations for the nascent Estonian Air Force. On the ground, Estonian air defences were woefully undermanned and underequipped in 1939, consisting of two batteries of mixed Russian 76mm and 37mm guns, along with some trucks and light machine guns.[40] The only significant air defence reorganisation and acquisition that Tallinn made in the interwar period was motorising the air defence cohort and purchasing a single battery of twelve new Bofors 40mm AAA guns that were acquired right before the Soviet ultimatum in the summer of 1939.[41]

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37 Ibid., 230.

38 I Diviisi kaitsepiirkonna kaitseplaani variant nr 1 (I Division's Area Defence Plan Version 1), RA, ERA.495.12.56, 1.

39 Nõmm, "Eesti sõjaväe varustus, sõjatööstus ja relvastuspoliitika", 253–254.

40 Urmas Salo, "Eesti kaitseväe valmisolek sõjaks ja vastupanuvõimalused 1939. aastal" (Military Readiness of Estonian Defence Forces and Possibilities of Resistance in 1939) (magistritöö (Master's thesis), Tartu Ülikool, 2005).

41 Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s", 119.

These limited means paled before the amount of protection required to protect the Estonian war economy in the event of an invasion. The meagre Estonian military industry was concentrated in the capital city of Tallinn and its suburbs.[42] The production of strategic commodities, particularly fuel from oil shale, was also vulnerable, being clustered in the eastern region of Viru county near the Soviet border.

Interwar Estonian lines of communication relied heavily on railroads, which had limited redundancy and heavily utilised the Tallinn–Tapa corridor. Seizing the Tapa railyard would cut off both Tartu and Narva from the rest of the country. The only alternative route to the southeast towards Võru was via a narrow-gauge track, requiring cross-loading to wide gauge through Tamsalu, which itself was similarly vulnerable. Eastwards land routes to the Narva front had no such alternatives and would have to rely solely on road transport if the Tapa railyard was lost. These are some simple examples of possible military targets aside from actual units on the frontline for an enemy air force operating without meaningful opposition. Naturally, all types of civilian targets could be included if the enemy chose to do so, necessitating the need for paved roads and rapidly repairable railroad lines.

Investing in the sea and air domains without proper investments in land defence would, naturally, be meaningless, as open sea lanes and contested skies are of limited strategic value when the enemy army can still seize key terrain. The numbers of the interwar Estonian Army were not bad, but its equipment, inherited from the War of Independence, was quite eclectic. Most of the resources in the decade after the war had been spent standardising, upgrading and repairing the mélange of leftover arms and materiel instead of in a deliberate effort to standardise equipment. The maintenance requirements for a very large equipment pool were a severe drain on the small nation's resources – resources that could have been spent on new procurements.[43] For example, the Estonian Army used a mixture of

[42] Nõmm, "Eesti sõjaväe varustus, sõjatööstus ja relvastuspoliitika", 259–260.
[43] Ibid., 227–228, 238–240.

Mosin-Nagants, Mausers and Lee-Enfield rifles, all of which used different ammunition. The British attaché observing the 3rd Estonian Infantry Division during manoeuvres in October 1938 noted that the wild diversity of obsolete weapons of all calibres was the largest problem facing the Estonian Army, rating the quality of armaments as "very bad", behind the "low" level of training and the "very low" overall quality of troops.[44]

Now, over a century from the interwar period, Estonia faces the same threat that it did after its newly won independence. In the event of a Russian attack, it is imperative to have a comprehensive defence strategy that prioritises a strong alliance system, active defence and the use of force multipliers such as fortifications to ensure Estonia's security and not repeat the mistakes of the past. Enough time must be bought for allied reinforcements to arrive, and enemy casualties must be inflicted to first deter, and if deterrence fails, defeat an invasion. The Estonian Army – supported by the brigade-sized NATO battlegroup – must prioritise a dynamic approach to defence that allows its forces to manoeuvre and counterattack effectively and avoid being trapped in a passive or static stance. In order to ensure superiority at the point of the attack, it will be necessary to reallocate resources from other sectors. To keep those sectors secure after pulling troops from them, Estonia must construct deliberate, in-depth defences, centred on fortified strongpoints, and prepare to lay anti-tank and anti-personnel minefields along likely avenues of approach.[45] These mines would have to also be projected via artillery into enemy territory to interdict troop movements. Long-range precision artillery would prevent the fortifications and minefields from being systematically dismantled.

Modern air defence systems and small unmanned aerial vehicles or drones should contest the skies and allow for surveillance, while

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[44] The British Attaché to the Foreign Secretary, 20 October 1938, FO 371/22226, NA, quoted in Piirimäe, "Preparing for War in the 1930s", 143.

[45] This would necessitate a withdrawal from the Ottawa Convention, which the authors strongly advocate for all European states.

in the Baltic Sea, maritime drones should keep the sea lanes open and allow for naval support along the Narva front. By employing these elements in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, Estonia can enhance its security and deter potential aggressors, ensuring its sovereignty and the protection of its citizens. This multifaceted approach would underscore Estonia's commitment to a proactive and adaptable defence strategy, informed by historical events, that meets the challenges of the modern security landscape.

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REVIEWS

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History of Estonian Military Thought

Toomas Hiio

Arto Oll, Taavi Urb, *Meresõda*, EMA occasional papers no. 17, October 2023, 173 p.

Igor Kopõtin, *Rahvusliku sõjakunsti otsinguil: professor Aleksei Baiov ja tema sõjateaduslik pärand*, EMA occasional papers no. 17, December 2023, 160 p.

In 2021, Dr Igor Kopõtin, currently Lead Research Fellow at the Estonian Military Academy, initiated the research project "Estonian Military Thought 1920–1940," based on research contributions from scholars of the Estonian Military Academy, the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner Museum, the Estonian Maritime Museum, and the University of Tartu. The aim of the project was to explore the factors that influenced the content and development of Estonian military theory and art of war. The work resulted in several studies on Estonian national art of war and theory of war, focusing primarily on analyses of research papers on warfare by Estonian higher and senior officers, written in the period between the two wars. Some studies were published in the "Occasional Papers" series of the Estonian Military Academy. Two of these are examined below.

Military thought in Estonian naval forces

The chapters written by Dr Arto Oll and Commander Taavi Urb in the collection *Meresõda* (Naval Warfare) are preceded by the article "Ääremärkusi meresõjalisest mõttest" (Remarks on Naval Thought) by Commander Ott Laanemets, providing a theoretical framework for the chapters and clarifying the position of Estonian military thought on naval warfare both in terms of geographical space and

the contemporary naval warfare theory. The author emphasises that, despite the widespread anti-intellectualism of the military – which tends to give a bad reputation to the word 'theory' in the world of warfare –, the practice of military decision-making has always included decisions based on theoretical notions about the future of warfare instead of relying merely on past experience. It is rare to find expressions of military thought that do not include quotes from Carl von Clausewitz. Remaining true to this trend, Ott Laanemets refers to Clausewitz's argument that theory is important for educating the mind of the future commander, so that he need not start afresh each time sorting out the material.

While the two principal questions of military thought and general war theory are "What is war?" and "How to win a war?," the thought and theory of naval warfare is mainly concerned with the second question – the strategy of a naval war. 'Maritime power', one of the main concepts in this field, refers to global naval dominance, and is also a geopolitical term. It has been a basis for Anglo-American theories of naval warfare for historical reasons, because the British Navy controlled the seas from the 16th to the 20th century – despite German attempts to undermine this dominance at the turn of the 19th and 20th century – and the US Navy, with its aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines, has stepped into this position since the period between the two world wars and particularly after World War II. The Estonian theoretical approaches to naval warfare in the inter-war period were based on foreign literature as well as the knowledge and experience of the few Estonian sailors who had served as officers in the Russian Navy, including Johan Pitka in particular. Estonian naval forces carried out several maritime operations in the War of Independence, from 1918 to 1920, including landings in the rear of the Red Army.

Naval fleet is one of the most expensive service branches and, being a poor country, battleships and cruisers were nothing more than a dream for Estonia that found it difficult, in the early 1930s, to maintain even the two destroyers that had been seized by the British Navy and handed over to Estonia. Being a maritime nation,

Estonia's efforts in naval warfare were focused on defending its long coastline against the enemy, i.e., the Soviet Russia and its Baltic Fleet, and keeping the seaways open.

The overview chapter[1] by Taavi Urb presents prominent representatives of the Western naval warfare theory and their positions from the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. US Rear Admiral Alfred Mahan (1840–1914) was the originator of the modern theory of naval warfare and sea power. According to his theory, it was important to concentrate forces for a decisive battle which, if won, would result in taking control of maritime communications and key positions. He believed naval blockade to be more effective than seizing the enemy's ships. Sea power was supposed to ensure military victory and economic prosperity of a maritime nation. Philip Colomb (1831–1899), one of the pioneers of British naval strategy, identified 'command of the sea' as the main objective in naval warfare, achievable by concentrating one's own fleet to destroy the main force of the enemy. This would be followed by a blockade of the enemy's coast combined with landing operations. Underestimating coastal defences, he believed that islands and coastlines can only be defended with a fleet. Another British naval strategist, Julian Corbett (1854–1922), was a civilian and naval historian. According to his main argument, a sea power cannot defeat continental power, but it can, in cooperation with allies, determine the course of the war and the nature of the future peace.

The brief era of German Empire as a major sea power started with Grand Admiral Alfred Tirpitz (1849–1930), navy minister from 1897 to 1916. Relying on Mahanian ideas, he argued that command of the sea can be achieved if one side has a fleet that is a third larger than that of the enemy. Based on this, he concluded that if Germany would build a fleet that is two thirds the size of the British navy, the latter would not dare to start a war because, even if victorious, the losses of the Royal Navy would mean that British colonies become vulnerable to threats from Russia, France and the USA. Tirpitz saw Great Britain

[1] "Ülevaade Lääne meresõjalisest mõttest", 17–25.

more as an ally than an enemy. However, in order to be an equal ally – Tirpitz used the term *Bündnisfähigkeit*, 'alliance capability' – Germany needed a fleet. Both of these major powers peaked at the start of the 20th century – the Brits launched battleship Dreadnought in 1906 and heavy cruiser Invincible in 1907, forcing Germany to build equivalent ships. Eventually, Germany was defeated in this highly expensive naval race, even though the Brits suffered greater losses in the 1916 Battle of Jutland, the last major naval battle between large fleets. In the world war, Great Britain allied with France and Russia, and the German surface fleet did not play any significant role in the war, unlike their submarines.

Tirpitz's theories on naval warfare were opposed by Vice Admiral Wolfgang Wegener (1875–1956) who believed that sea power was based on fleet and strategic location, with the first being a tactical and the second a strategic component. In his opinion, a sea battle could only serve strategic purposes. The objective of naval warfare is command of the sea, not a combat against the enemy's fleet. Due to his opposition to Tirpitz, Wegener was disfavoured by the navy higher leadership, but found support among younger navy officers.

Turning his attention to the representatives of the new school – *Jeune École* – of French naval warfare theorists, Commander Urb presents the positions of Vice Admiral Théophile Aube (1826–1890) whose views were popularised by journalist and explorer Gabriel Charmes (1850–1886). The new school believed that it was impossible for France to equal Great Britain in terms of sea power due to the need to be prepared for a land war against Germany. Aube advised using smaller vessels against battleships and attacking enemy freighters with fast armoured cruisers. Aube and Charmes argued that cheaper weapon systems (naval mines, torpedoes and submarines) can increase the threat to large warships in coastal waters, thereby reducing the role of the latter in naval warfare. Later, French military theorist Raoul Castex (1878–1968) emphasised that, unless waged by an island nation, naval war should support joint operations and land force operations. Countries with a weaker fleet need to achieve their strategic objectives in a land war.

The positions of Western European naval warfare theorists influenced their colleagues in Russia whose views are presented by Arto Oll on the example of two Russian officers: Vice Admiral Stepan Makarov (1848–1904) and the Admiralty Major General Nikolai Klado (1862–1919).[2] **Makarov** was productive in several fields: In addition to holding high-ranking positions in the Russian navy, he was an oceanographer and polar explorer, worked on ship construction, and made improvements to the ammunition of naval artillery. In the Russo-Japanese War, he was assigned as the commander of the Pacific Fleet but was soon killed on the board of sea battleship Petropavlovsk, when it struck a mine. Makarov was critical of Mahan's and Colomb's views, arguing that the theorists supporting the open sea doctrine underestimated the impact of technological innovations and scientific discoveries on naval war. He distinguished between three levels in naval warfare – imperial policy, naval strategy, and naval tactics. Policy identifies the tools required to achieve an objective, strategy establishes the art of warfare, and tactics provides guidelines for defeating the enemy in the battle. His own primary focus was on tactics; his series of articles on naval tactics (1897) even attracted attention abroad.[3] Unlike Makarov, Major General **Klado**, who had been in training in the French fleet, supported the open sea doctrine and relied on it in his lectures at the naval corps. Klado believed that Russia needed to build a powerful fleet of battleships and cruisers, whereas naval fortifications had to cooperate with warships. In wartime, the fleet would ensure continuation of maritime transport and connections with allies. In his opinion, Germany was Russia's primary enemy, which is why Russia needed a strong surface fleet on the Baltic Sea.

Russia's naval strategic position was different from that of the other major powers. Its fleet was divided between multiple seas – separate

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[2] "Venemaa meresõjaline mõte", 26–46.

[3] For a more recent English edition, see Stepan Makarov, *Discussion of questions in naval tactics*, Classics of sea power (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990). The entire series of articles was published in a separate edition as Stepan Makarov (Степан Макаров), *Rassuždeniâ po voprosam morskoj taktiki* [*Рассуждения по вопросам морской тактики*; Reflections on Questions of Naval Tactics], ch. I–II, Biblioteka "Morskogo sbornika" (Petrograd, 1916). Reprints were also published in the Soviet Union during World War II.

Baltic, Black Sea and Pacific fleets, as well as the Arctic Ocean Flotilla established during World War I. The majority of ports in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Ocean froze over in winter, interfering with navigation for both friendly and enemy fleets. Ultimately, the Baltic and Black Sea fleets did not have access to the oceans, because it would have been easy for a potential enemy to close off the Danish straits and the Dardanelles for Russian ships. Eventually, the views of the open sea doctrine won out. After defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia launched a grand fleet-building programme while also establishing Peter the Great's Naval Fortress – a zone of coastal batteries and land fortifications on both coasts of Gulf of Finland, extending from the mouth of the gulf to St. Petersburg.

Arto Oll continues with a presentation of Soviet thought on naval warfare in the 1920s and 1930s. World War I, revolutions and the civil war resulted in a significant reduction of the military potential of the Baltic Fleet. Initially, Finland and Estonia were seen as potential enemies in a possible naval war, and theories of naval warfare were developed by Boris Zherve (1878–1934) and Mikhail Petrov (1885–1940), former 2nd Rank Captains (Commanders) in the Imperial Navy. **Zherve** had served in the headquarters of Peter the Great's Naval Fortress and then as commander of the coastal defence in the Gulf of Finland. After the Bolsheviks had seized power, he organised evacuation of the Baltic Fleet from Tallinn over Helsinki to Kronstadt and Petrograd in early spring of 1918. He was Commandant of the Naval Academy[4] from 1920 to 1921 and again from 1923 to 1930. He was imprisoned for a time in 1930 for political reasons, but taught later theory and history of naval warfare at the Naval Engineering Academy and the Political Academy of the Red Army. **Petrov's** last

[4] The Russian Naval Academy (i.e. main staff college) was established in 1827 as an Officers' Class at the Naval Cadet Corps. It operated under the name of the Academic Course of Maritime Science since 1862, then as Emperor Nicholas Naval Academy 1877–1917, Maritime Academy 1917–22, Naval Academy of the Workers and Peasants' Navy 1922–31, K. E. Voroshilov Naval Academy of the Workers and Peasants' Red Army 1931–38, and K. E. Voroshilov Naval Academy of the Workers and Peasants' Navy 1938–44. Currently, the institution is named the N. G. Kuznetsov Naval Academy.

position in the imperial Baltic fleet was deputy chief of the operations department at the headquarters. He was commander of the Naval Academy from 1921 to 1923, retired in 1924, but continued as a lecturer, was named professor in 1929 and was promoted to 1st Rank Captain (Captain) after institution of military ranks in the Soviet armed forces in 1935. He was arrested during Stalin's Great Purge and was shot in 1938.[5]

Both belonged to Klado's school, stressing the importance of battleships in a war at sea. They believed that the Soviet Navy had three main functions: attacking the enemy's freight routes while defending their own, attacking the enemy's coastline (artillery fire and landings), and taking part in joint operations to support the strategic objectives of the land forces. Arto Oll writes that the naval warfare doctrine promoted by Zherve and Petrov reflected the means available to the Soviet Union in the 1920s – the aging fleet, in cooperation with naval fortifications, was tasked with defending reinforced coastal positions. They assumed that any fighting in the Gulf of Finland would be against a joint Finnish, Estonian and British squadron. Fighting only against Estonia, the Baltic Fleet would have been able to secure command of the sea with its own ships.

In the 1930s, the younger generation took over the responsibility for developing Soviet thinking on naval warfare: 1st Rank Flag Officers (~vice admirals) Johan Ludri and Konstantin Dushenov, 2nd Rank Captain Aleksandr Yakimychev, and Rear Admiral Aleksandr Aleksandrov. They all had graduated from the Naval Academy in the Soviet period, after having fought in the Russian Civil War in the ranks of the Red Army and advancing quickly in their career. **Ludri** (1895–1937), an Estonian, studied at the Midshipmen School in Kronstadt, served as *komendor* (naval gunner) in the Imperial Baltic Fleet and later as naval artillery non-commissioned officer, while also completing upper secondary education as external student. He made a great contribution to consolidating the Bolshevist

[5] For biographies see *Rossijskij imperatorskij flot* [*Российский императорский флот*; The Russian Imperial Navy], http://infoart.udm.ru/history/navy/biogra15.htm (archived), 10 September 2025.

rule: In early spring of 1918, he participated in the evacuation of the Baltic Fleet from Tallinn to Kronstadt and, from 1918 to 1923, served as a political commissar in the Kronstadt naval base, the Onega Flotilla, the naval forces of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, and the Caspian Flotilla. After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1927, he was commander and chief of staff of the coastal defences of the Black Sea Fleet, was promoted to deputy commander of the Red Navy in 1932, and to the commander and military commissar of the Naval Academy in 1937. In the same year, he was arrested and shot for political reasons.[6] Like Ludri, **Dushenov** (1895–1940) served in the Imperial Baltic Fleet (on cruiser Aurora) and participated in the Bolshevik coup of 1917. During the Russian Civil War, he was commandant of the river ports of Astrakhan and Saratov, then, from 1921 to 1924, commandant of the military port in Sevastopol and later in Baku. After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1928, he served as chief of staff in the Battleship Division of the Baltic Fleet and was acting commander of the Naval Academy for a period in 1930. He was chief of staff of the Black Sea Fleet from 1930 to 1935, commander of the Arctic Ocean Flotilla from 1935 to 1937 and then commander of the Northern Fleet.[7] He was also arrested in 1938, accused of participation in a 'military-fascist conspiracy', and was shot.[8] After graduating from the Naval Academy, **Yakimychev** (1897–1938) served as assistant to the naval attaché in the United States (the attaché was Paul Oras, an Estonian, 1st Rank Naval Engineer, 1897–1943). He returned to the Soviet Union in 1936, served as assistant to the commander of the Naval Intelligence Department of the Main Intelligence Directorate, and as commander

[6] "Ludri, Ivan Martynovich (*Лудри Иван Мартынович*) (1895–1937)", *Polkovodcy. Velikaâ istoriâ* [*Полководцы. Великая история*; Commanders. The Great History], 16 April 2009, http://www.wargenius.ru/index.php/geroiflota/poslerevolution/2009-02-26-14-56-38, 20 January 2025.

[7] The Arctic Ocean Flotilla was reorganised in 1937 as the Northern Fleet.

[8] *Početnye graždane Severomorska: biobibliografičeskij spravočnik*, 12-e izd. [*Почетные граждане Североморска: биобиблиографический справочник*, 12-е изд.] (Severomorsk, 2024), 8–11; P. Klipp, "Flagman Severnogo flota: k 70-letiû dnâ roždeniâ flagmana 1 ranga K. I. Dušenova" [*Флагман Северного флота: к 70-летию со дня рождения флагмана 1 ранга К. И. Душенова*], *Voenno-istoričeskij žurnal* [*Военно-исторический журнал*], 7 (1965): 56–63.

of naval intelligence from 1937 to 1938, before being arrested, accused of espionage, and shot.[9] **Aleksandrov** (1900–1946) was member of the Red Guard since 1917 and rose to the rank of regiment commissar by 1920. Next, he served as investigator and member in a revolutionary military tribunal and chaired the Black Sea Military Tribunal; in 1921, he was member of the War Chamber of the Crimean Higher Tribunal. He studied at the Naval Academy from 1921 to 1927, before serving on some of the large warships of the Baltic Fleet. In 1929, he completed the higher command courses at the Frunze Military Academy. He was member of the teaching staff at the Naval Academy since 1931, head of the department of strategy and operational management 1932–1934, chief of staff of the Naval Academy 1934–1936, and commander of the Academy 1936–1937. In 1937, he was advisor to a flotilla commander in the Spanish Civil War, returned to the Soviet Union, was forced to retire, was arrested, and was under investigation for suspected treason until 1940, and again from 1941 to 1942.[10] He was chief of staff of the Ladoga Flotilla from 1942 to 1944, and commanded the Leningrad Naval Base in 1944. From 1944, he was assistant to the chairman of the Allied Control Commission in Finland, specialising in navy affairs, and was appointed chief of staff of the Baltic Fleet in April 1945. He died in January 1946 when his aircraft, heading to Berlin, crashed near Tallinn.[11]

While most of the naval officers in the Imperial Russian Navy came from nobility, the new generation that rose to the command positions in the navy in the 1930s compensated their gaps in general

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[9] Vademin, "Âkimyčev Aleksandr Mihailovič – pervyj rukovoditel' voenno-morskoj strategičeskoj agenturnoj razvedki SSSR" [*Якимычев Александр Михайлович – первый руководитель военно-морской стратегической агентурной разведки СССР*], https://huntcatcher.ru/yakimychev-rukovoditel-voenno-morskoj-razvedki-sssr/ , 20 January 2025.

[10] According to his service record, he "performed a special government assignment from April 1936 to June 1940" and was "available to the navy staff department" from October 1941 to January 1942.

[11] Aleksandrov, Aleksandr Petrovič (Barr Aron Pinhusovič) (Александров Александр Петрович (Барр Арон Пинхусович)) 1900–1946, *Internet project commemorating Jewish soldiers*, jewmil.com (n.d.) https://www.jewmil.com/biografii/item/272-aleksandrov-aleksandr-petrovich , 20 January 2025.

education with merits earned in revolutionary engagements and political management of Red Army units. The author writes that Ludri, Dushenov, Yakimychev and Aleksandrov criticised the vision of their predecessors – Zherve and Petrov – that relied on large warships, arguing instead that the development of submarines and naval aviation had made the concept of sea power obsolete. The naval officers of the new Soviet school believed that focus should be shifted to destroyers, submarines, torpedo boats and naval air forces. Relying on a study by Robert W. Herrick, Oll summarises Aleksandrov's arguments as follows: technological development will preclude the possibility of establishing command of the sea in the future; Great Britain, Germany and France were unable to establish command of the sea even in World War I; Zherve and Petrov are mistaken, because they represent an "imperialist bourgeois ideology"; following the concept of the old school would mean a defeat for the Soviet navy, because they would be unable to wage such a war at sea. By the 1930s, the Soviet military industry had attained the capacity for producing submarines, torpedo boats and destroyers; design plans for Kirov class cruisers were ordered from Italy, and some were launched even before World War II. The actions of the Soviet Navy in World War II were based on the doctrine of the new school. Arto Oll writes that strengthening economic power of the Soviet Union enabled Stalin to plan the building of a powerful fleet and a return to the naval warfare ideas of the open sea school. In 1937, the navy was separated from the Red Army structure and converted into a separate branch. The construction of battleships was started but none of them were completed; the projects were terminated after Stalin's death in 1953.

The chapter on naval warfare theory in the Estonian Navy during the interwar period was also written by Arto Oll.[12] In the War of Independence (1918–1920), Estonia was able to use ships that had been left behind by Russia's Baltic Fleet or by the withdrawing German occupation forces. Early on, Estonia was given two new Russian destroyers, Avtroil and Spartak (renamed in the Estonian

[12] "Meresõjaline mõte ja Eesti merejõud", 47–61.

navy as Lennuk and Wambola), that had been seized by a British naval squadron from the Baltic Fleet in the Gulf of Finland in December 1918. The author writes that Rear Admiral Johan Pitka, commander of the Estonian navy, while being an experienced ship captain and trained as a reserve officer of the Russian navy, was probably not very knowledgeable about the theory of naval warfare. Nevertheless, Estonian naval forces carried out landings and transport operations, supported the land forces with artillery fire, deployed and trawled mines, etc. This was all made possible by the British naval squadron that restrained the Soviet Baltic Fleet. A fleet is a very expensive service branch and there were even proposals to do away with the navy completely in the Estonian cabinet sessions in early 1920s. However, this path was not chosen. Furthermore, Estonia also inherited from imperial Russia the powerful coastal defence batteries of Peter the Great's Naval Fortress, parts of which around Tallinn were made operational in the 1920s and were included in the naval forces as naval fortifications.

The situation with trained naval officers was not much better in the Estonian Navy than the situation with ships. As the majority of Estonians had belonged to the class of peasants or townsfolk, they had no access to the elite Russian Naval Cadet Corps. While there were numerous Baltic German officers and even admirals from Estonia in the Russian navy, most of them did not join the navy of the young Republic of Estonia, with a few exceptions. In the 1920s, naval warfare theory was taught at the naval officers' advanced courses, the Navy Specialists' School, the Naval Cadet School, and the Military College by former officers of the imperial navy who had been educated before World War I under Nikolai Klado at the Naval Academy. None of them was an ethnic Estonian. Promoted to rear admiral in 1928, **Hermann Salza** (1885–1946)[13] had studied at

[13] In fact, Baron Hermann (von) Salza, but nobility titles were not included in names in the Republic of Estonia. His family came from Thuringia and lived in Estonia since the 17th century. Similarly, the commander of the Latvian navy from 1920 to 1931 was a Baltic German, namely Count Archibald Keyserling (1882–1951).

Navy Captain (Rear-admiral from 1928) Hermann Salza, Commander of the Estonian Navy from 1925 to 1932. Photo before 1928 by August Vannas. Source: National Archives of Estonia, RA, EFA.8.4.2108

the Emperor Nicholas Naval Academy from 1911 to 1914, served in the General Staff of the Imperial Russian Navy at the onset of World War I, was senior officer and commander of battleship Petropavlovsk from 1917 to 1918, and chief of the operational headquarters of the Baltic Fleet from July to October 1918, i.e., during the Bolshevik regime. He joined the Estonian Navy in January 1919 as 2nd Rank Captain, and served as chief of the navy staff from 29 January to 18 June 1919 and then from 20 January 1920 onwards. Salza was acting commander of the navy from 1924 to 1925, and commander from 1925 to 1932. At the same time, and after resigning command of the navy, he taught at various naval schools and the Military College.[14] In October 1939, he resettled to Germany, was imprisoned in 1945 under Soviet occupation in Germany, was deported to

[14] Service file of Hermann Salza, RA, ERA.495.7.5132.

Russia and died in 1946 in a Moscow prison. **Georg Weigelin** (Veigelin, 1886–1945) had studied submarine warfare at the Emperor Nicholas Naval Academy. In World War I, he had served as navigation officer of the 7th destroyer (mine cruiser) division of the Baltic Fleet, senior officer on minelayer Volga, and commander of submarine Tur. He came to Estonia as Lieutenant Senior Grade,[15] commanded destroyer Lennuk from 1918 to 1919, and then served in the Northern Corps of the Russian White Army. He acquired Estonian citizenship in 1921 and was assigned to the reserve. Later, as a civilian, he taught history and tactics of naval warfare at military schools. In 1939, he moved to Germany as a late resettler[16] and disappeared as member of the Volkssturm in early 1945 near Danzig (Gdańsk). Born in Kaunas, **Aleksander Malevitsch** (1887–1950) joined the Estonian Navy in January 1919 and served mainly as officer in mining, torpedo and naval artillery units until his retirement as Commander in 1930. He taught electrical engineering and mining at naval schools and signal operations at the Military College. He died in Türi, Estonia. Whereas Salza and Malevitsch started to teach in Estonian after a few years, Weigelin never learned to speak Estonian.

Salza's lecture notes on "Naval Warfare" at the Military College were published in several editions. He also wrote learning materials on "History of Naval Warfare: Beginning to 1914" and "Naval Tactics", as well as a description of "The Dardanelles Operation". Notes of his lectures "Военно-морское дело" (~Naval studies) for the General Staff Courses (predecessor of the Military College) were published in 1922. Similarly, Veigelin's notes "Программа по стратегии" (Programme on strategy) and "Программа по истории военно-морского искусства" (Programme on history of the art of naval war) were published.

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[15] In this article generally the designations of British navy ranks are used. Exception are the junior officers, because there are and were four ranks for them in Estonian navy: lipnik (Ensign), nooremleitnant (2nd Lieutenant), leitnant (Lieutenant) and vanemleitnant (Lieutenant Senior Grade).

[16] Service file of Georg Veigelin, RA, ERA.495.7.6572.

Both Salza and Veigelin had received their education at the Naval Academy based on the strategic open sea doctrine, writes Arto Oll. According to Salza, in a situation where the enemy had large battleships, Estonia's only hope would be aid from a major power because command of the sea would not be possible in any other way. Arto Oll writes, "Estonia's options included relying on the strategy of the open sea doctrine (taught by Salza and Weigelin), developing a new naval warfare theory to suit its particular situation, or borrowing certain aspects from existing theories and adapting them in a symbiotic manner to be suitable for a small nation."[17]

In a separate chapter, Arto Oll analyses the views of Estonian higher military commanders on the role of the navy in Estonian national defence.[18] Lieutenant General Laidoner, commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces during the War of Independence, retired in 1920. His former chief of staff, Major General Jaan Soots, was the minister of war from 1921 to 1923 and from 1924 to 1927. Soots supported modernisation of the navy because he acknowledged Estonia's dependence on support from the allies, which required a maritime connection with the rest of the world. Despite the decreasing strength of the Soviet Baltic Fleet, it had still enough resources to attack Tallinn or to dispatch strong landing parties. Soots believed that Estonia needed submarines and capacity for laying minefields. Similarly, Major General Juhan Tõrvand, chief of staff of the Estonian Armed Forces from 1925 to 1934, supported strengthening of the navy. He also believed submarines to be essential, as they would be able to threaten the enemy's large battleships, thereby interfering with the efforts to achieve command of the sea. Arto Oll writes that Tõrvand was one of the main figures who helped the Estonian government reach an agreement on the need to modernise the navy in early 1930s. The two Russian destroyers that had been received from the Brits during the War of Independence were sold to Peru and an order was placed for two modern submarines. It was also

[17] "Meresõjaline mõte ja Eesti merejõud", 61.
[18] "Suhted kõrgema sõjalise juhtkonnaga", 62–69.

envisaged that the submarines would play a role in Finnish-Estonian military cooperation, which aimed at having capacity to close off the Gulf of Finland to the enemy's ships between Tallinn and Helsinki, using artillery fire from the coastal defence batteries of the Naissaar and Mäkiluoto islands. In an ironic twist, the navy fleet spelled an end to Tõrvand's career, as he and the minister of defence, August Kerem, were accused of taking a bribe when selling the destroyers to Peru. Even though both men were acquitted later – it turned out that the Peruvian attaché in Berlin had profiteered from the deal, in addition to arms traders – Tõrvand was removed from the position of the chief of staff.

General Nikolai Reek, who was chief of staff of the Armed Forces from 1934 to 1939, was less interested in the needs of the navy. Arto Oll writes that Reek believed the naval fortification batteries around Tallinn to be sufficient and did not see the enemy's capacity to operate across the entire length of Estonian coastline as a major threat. At that time, the higher military command considered the navy to be important "mainly for the defence of Tallinn, which had to be achieved with stationary coastal defence batteries near the coast, not with military units on the sea," the author writes. According to him, alliance value for Finland was the main consideration in the context of naval defence, with the submarines also serving the same purpose. Less attention was paid to the development of the navy and general naval defences. Captain Valev Mere, who commanded the navy from 1938 to 1939 and had been commander on both Estonian destroyers, as well as commander of the naval fortifications and chief of staff of the navy, and the last commander of the naval forces, Lieutenant Commander Johannes Santpank, both believed that the enemy would not be able to block Estonia's entire coastline but might still have enough potential for that if Estonia had no fleet whatsoever. In conclusion, Arto Oll argues that procuring a fleet that would be capable of performing all the necessary functions was too expensive for Estonia in the opinion of the higher military commanders. Partially, this belief was supported by hope that a British fleet would come to the Gulf of Finland in case of a war threat. That hope proved

to be baseless after the British-German naval agreement of 1935, which demonstrated that the Royal Navy would no longer consider the Baltic Sea as part of its sphere of interest.

In his article[19] on **Hermann Salza**, Taavi Urb writes that Salza's writings reveal clear influences of the maritime power and command of the sea doctrine of Mahan, Colomb and Klado but the concept of 'alliance value', which he uses as well, comes from Tirpitz. While Salza's assessment of the Battle of Jutland is similar to Wegener's, Salza has included no references to his ideas and the author conjectures that Salza reached the same conclusions on his own. The three elements of naval strategic operations that were taught at the Russian Naval Academy were also included, in a simplified form, in Salza's learning materials: preparatory element (fleet organisation, management of bases, fleet concentration and deployment), main element (operational plan, marching manoeuvre, battle and monitoring) and supplementary element (rear of the fleet, provision of support bases and communication lines). In his lecture notes, Salza analysed mostly tactics, i.e., battles, the author writes. Salza's idea of a sea battle in a prepared position is closer to the notion of coastal defence, rather than the maritime power and command of the sea doctrine. In World War I, the German plan to engage in a decisive battle at the reinforced position of Heligoland and the Baltic Fleet's plan to establish a secure position in the eastern corner of the Gulf of Finland and fight a decisive battle on the Gulf both failed, because the Royal Navy did not enter the German Bight and the bases of the Baltic Fleet, with the exception of Kronstadt and Petrograd/Leningrad, were captured from land in both world wars alike. In his "History of Naval Warfare" he emphasises concentration of forces to achieve superiority, mutual support, surprise and taking advantage of a victory achieved as the principles of war. Salza stressed the importance of military history – older history is important to understand strategy while more recent military history needs to be studied to understand tactics.

[19] "Hermann Salza meresõjateoreetikuna", 70–97.

Salza described and analysed military history mostly from a general perspective. In the context of the Baltic Sea, he concluded that Western major powers have, for centuries, tried to prevent emergence of a single dominant power in the Baltic Sea. Even though Salza does not write much about the War of Independence, the above claim is linked to his generalisation about the naval battles of that war – "Our successful operations in 1918 and 1919 were facilitated by the mighty English fleet". Salza believed that the functions of the navy included securing free use of the sea in wartime, preventing the enemy's use of the seaways, protecting one's own coast and providing opportunities for engagements against the enemy coast. A strong fleet needs to lure the enemy to the sea and then destroy it in a decisive battle. A weaker fleet must strike at the enemy in sections. If Estonia's small fleet is unable to achieve command of the sea without allied aid, it must prevent the enemy from establishing a blockade.

Salza envisaged that artillery, with its increased range and more accurate targeting systems, as well as large battleships would play an important role in future naval warfare. This coincided with the vision of the major naval powers in the interwar period. He believed that submarines were important in naval warfare to pose a constant threat to surface vessels and that Estonian submarines would provide effective deterrence even against the large ships of the Soviet Baltic Fleet. Salza also predicted increased role for aircraft in long-range reconnaissance and bombing of moving ships. In Salza's opinion, coastal defence batteries – naval fortifications – were a difficult target for the navy because, even though they are stationary, it is difficult to monitor the hits of fired shells. Salza believed that establishing too many coastal defence batteries would be imprudent, because they need a lot of manpower for their crews but may never be involved in any battles. Taavi Urb observes that this point tends to be overlooked even today. However, naval fortifications and minefields alone cannot ensure security of a nation's freighters.

Salza approaches the issue of navy development and naval defence "from the outside in," Taavi Urb writes. Salza did not agree with

the authors who emphasised coastal defence as the main priority of the navy, and pointed out that Estonia's aquatic border, including Lake Peipsi, is much longer than the land border. In a 1924 memo to the minister of war, he listed defence of the capital from sea bombardment, defence of the coast against landings and maintaining maritime connections with the rest of the world as the primary functions of the navy. According to Salza's vision from 1924, the Estonian Navy would have required two additional guard ships and three submarines, whereas the naval fortifications would have needed two mobile batteries.[20] In a memo written in 1926, Salza added blocking seaways for the enemy's freight ships as the fourth function of the navy. Deterrence was also important for him. Taavi Urb quotes his argument: "Even though we would not be able to resist a serious offensive for long, we can reasonably hope to prevent such an assault by having our military preparation at a level where the sacrifice needed to occupy our state outweighs any potential benefits."

In the next chapter[21] Commander Urb writes about the use of the term 'coastal defence' in Estonian military literature from 1924 to 1940. His research is based on Estonian military periodicals: the journal *Sõdur* (Soldier; published 1919–1940), the Defence League journal *Kaitse Kodu!* (Defend your Home!; 1925–1940) and the publication *Merendus* (Maritime Affairs; 1933–1940) of the Naval Officers' Association. "A study of military thought requires an understanding of the terms used for its expression," the author comments. At the time when Estonian military terminology was still developing, it often happened that the same term was given multiple meanings by different authors or even by the same author, as illustrated by the examples that Taavi Urb provides. The adopted terminology could sometimes also indicate whether the respective author preferred the command of the sea doctrine or the coastal defence theory.

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[20] The Baltic Fleet used heavy rail batteries in Estonia in 1940 and 1941, whereas the German Army used towable motorised coastal defence batteries in 1941 and 1944.

[21] "Rannakaitse mõiste Eesti sõjandusajakirjades aastatel 1924–1940", 98–119 and 166–172.

Further differences emerged due to the specifics of different service branches – land, naval and air forces interpreted coastal defence from the perspective of the weapons, functions and needs of their respective branch. In articles, written by numerous authors over a period of 16 years, the terms 'shore defence', 'coastal defence' and 'naval defence' could be used as synonyms or alternatively as descriptions of specific sub-categories. The term 'coastal defence' itself has two subordinate meanings – a type of military actions and an organisation that executes them – which were not differentiated by some authors in their articles.

In 1932, captain **Harald Roots** (1905–1986) graduated from the Military College with a thesis on "The importance, functions, organisation and complement of the navy, especially in our situation" in which he defined coastal defence as "combined efforts that are concentrated in a particular coastal area and in the nearby coastal waters with the specific purpose of direct defence against an assault from the sea as the main direction, as well as from air and sometimes from land". As subcategories of coastal defence, he identified defending the coast against bombing, fending off landings, protecting naval bases, and other operations on the coast and in coastal waters. Taavi Urb notes that the breadth of territorial waters at the time was only three miles from the coast and, in principle, the coastal defence units were able to protect the entire maritime area of the territorial waters. According to Harald Roots, coastal defence was both a function and an organisation at the same time. He emphasised the need for a separate coastal defence organisation that should include, in addition to the coastal defence artillery as the main force, also a fleet of ships, an air force, and land units to enable other service branches to focus on their main functions.

In the last chapter[22] of the collection, Arto Oll presents reflections on the future of naval warfare and the Estonian navy, written in the 1930s by navy officers Johannes Santpank, Bruno Linneberg

[22] "Meresõjalised mõtlejad Eesti merejõududes 1930. aastatel", 120–156.

and Johannes Ivalo. Lieutenant Commander **Santpank**[23] had published his first writings, gun manuals for *komendors*, as early as the 1920s: "6-inch Canet Gun" and "75 mm Möller Gun" (both in 1925) and "4-inch/60 Cal. Semi-Automatic Gun" (1929). In the 1930s, his articles on naval strategy and tactics were published in the journals *Sõdur* and *Merendus*, and in 1939 he prepared a learning material on "Naval Tactics". In his graduation paper (1937) at the Finnish War College, he discussed the naval strategic importance of Estonian islands from the perspective of Estonia, the Soviet Union, Germany and other states.[24] Santpank believed that naval warfare consisted of theoretical naval strategy (operations) and naval tactics (use of weapons in battle), but the boundary between strategy and tactics had become less clear due to the development of military technology. Advancements in weaponry have made battles in smaller seas more precarious for larger ships and have given an advantage to smaller and faster vessels. However, Santpank did not underestimate the military potential of battleships. He believed that modern submarines, torpedo boats and mine layers were the most suitable types of vessels for the Estonian naval forces. According to him, only torpedoes could be used by a small country as viable weapons in a fight against the fleet of a major power. Notably, he proposed a new type of ship that

[23] Johannes Santpank (1901–54) fought in the War of Independence (awarded Cross of Liberty II/3), graduated from the Naval Cadet School in 1921, 2nd Lieutenant, course officer and adjutant at the school from 1921 to 1922. He studied in navigation, artillery and electrical engineering courses in England from 1922 to 1923, served as artillery officer on gun boat Lembit and destroyer Lennuk from 1922 to 1928, assistant commander on Lennuk from 1926. Promoted Lieutenant in 1925. Studied in higher artillery courses in England from 1928 to 1929, served as artillery officer of the Navy Base in 1929–37, Lieutenant Senior Grade in 1930. Studied at the Finnish War College from 1935 to 1937, navigation officer at the navy headquarters in 1937–38, Lieutenant Commander in 1938. Commander of torpedo boat Sulev from 1938 to 1939. Was editor-in-chief of the journal *Merendus*. In November 1939, after commander of the navy Valev Mere retired due to the escape of Polish submarine Orzeł that had been interned in the port of Tallinn, Santpank was appointed as his replacement. Soviet State Security (NKVD) arrested Santpank in 1941 and he died in a GULAG camp in Karagandy Oblast. (Officers' cardfile, RA, ERA.495.13.57; *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid*, toim. Jaak Pihlak (Viljandi: Eesti Vabadussoja Ajaloo Selts, 2016), 417).

[24] Kapteeniluutnantti J. Sandbank, „Viron Itämeren saariston merisotilaallinen merkitys". (Sotakorkeakoulu, diplomityö, 1937), National Archives of Finland, SKK-1:280.

would be suitable for the Estonian situation – a destroyer adapted to serve as a small minelayer/cruiser. From a strategic perspective, Santpank assumed that a new war would break out sooner or later in the Baltic Sea region, with the major powers being particularly interested in the North Estonian coast and West Estonian islands.[25] In many respects, Santpank's views were similar to those of Salza: he also believed that the functions of the Estonian navy included securing maritime transport and connections in wartime, protecting the coast and Tallinn in particular against attacks from the sea, and ensuring safe navigation of freight vessels.

Lieutenant Commander **Linneberg**[26] was about the same age as Santpank and they also had similar careers in the navy. They studied

[25] His prediction was accurate. In the autumn of 1939, the Soviet Union forced the Baltic states to accept establishment of Soviet military bases on their territory. For Estonia and Latvia, it also meant establishment of footholds for the Baltic Fleet, in addition to those of the Red Army. After the Baltic states were finally occupied in the summer of 1940, the Baltic Fleet rushed to build coastal defence batteries, airfields and defensive positions on the West Estonian islands to control navigation on the Baltic Sea and in the mouth of the Gulf of Finland and to close the Gulf of Riga, thereby controlling access to the port of Riga. In the summer of 1941, capturing the North Estonian coast and the West Estonian islands was also one of Wehrmacht's main objectives in order to force the Baltic Fleet to retreat to the eastern corner of the Gulf of Finland and to open safe seaways for supplying the Army Group North that was besieging Leningrad, while also ensuring secure transport of ore from Sweden across the Baltic Sea.

[26] Bruno Linneberg (1899–1964) fought in the War of Independence (Cross of Liberty II/3), after which he graduated from the Naval Cadet School and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in 1921. He studied navigation, torpedo and electrical engineering in England from 1922 to 1923. In 1923–24, he served in naval fortification, and then on both Estonian destroyers, and was acting commander of gunship Mardus and guard ship Laine. Promoted to Lieutenant in 1925. Studied again in England in 1928 and 1929, completing a course on signalling. Assistant commander of destroyer Lennuk from 1929 to 1931, Lieutenant Senior Grade in 1930, senior warrant officer of the commander of the naval forces from 1931. Studied at the Finnish War College from 1935 to 1937, commander of the Tallinn naval communications region of the navy headquarters from 1936 to 1938, acting commander of the navy class at the Military School in 1938, Lieutenant Commander. Served as commander of precinct A of the 2nd department of the headquarters of the Armed Forces in 1939, commander of the navy headquarters in 1939–1940. Escaped to Germany as a late resettler in 1941, served in German military intelligence and navy in World War II, was promoted to Frigate Captain. Was captured in Oslo in 1945 and was a prisoner of war in Germany. Lived in Sweden from 1949 and worked as head of the archive department of the German embassy. (Cardfile of officers and military clerks L–P, RA, ERA.495.1.731; *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid*, 417).

together at the Finnish War College. Arto Oll remarks that the notes of research projects submitted in Linneberg's courses for naval officers have not been preserved. His diploma paper at the Finnish War College, "Estonia's dependence on maritime connections in wartime,"[27] discusses Estonia's strategic position and military defence; he relies, among others, on Wolfgang Wegener's views concerning the strategy of naval warfare. Linneberg concluded that Estonian economy is not independent in peacetime, and thus even less so during war, and maritime connections with Great Britain, Sweden and Finland play a decisive role in Estonia's defence. Estonia's security was completely dependent on the Baltic Sea and the Soviet Union was the most dangerous enemy for Estonia. He argued, following Wegener, that the strategic position of any country depends primarily on geography, which in turn will affect national military defence strategy. Therefore, Estonia's strategic objective was maintaining its current geographic position, including the West Estonian islands. Weaknesses of Estonia's position included a geographically narrow coast and few ports of strategic importance; it was relatively easy to disrupt Estonia's maritime connections with Great Britain, its main trade partner; access to the ocean was difficult and Estonian maritime connections passed through multiple hazardous seaways. Linneberg emphasised the importance of fortifying the ports of Tallinn and Pärnu, as well as that of Paldiski, to a lesser extent, and achieving at least temporary command of the sea in the Naissaar-Porkkala area to prevent the Baltic Fleet from accessing these ports. He concluded that Estonia must be capable of retaining its maritime connections in wartime. Considering Estonia's geographic position, preservation of maritime connections cannot be secured without modernisation of naval weaponry, and Estonian economic policy should move towards greater autonomy of supply. According to him, maintaining Estonia's strategic position would require joint exercises of the freight fleet, navy and air forces to train cooperation in the defence of strategic

[27] Kapteeniluutnantti B. Linneberg, „Viron riippuvaisuus meriyhteyksistään sodan aikana". (Sotakorkeakoulu, diplomityö, 1937), National Archives of Finland, SKK-1:281.

positions. Linneberg wrote that, in case of a war, Estonia's forefronts would be located mostly at sea, because a warring army and nation require food and supplies.

Johannes **Ivalo**[28] was one of the executive editors and author of numerous articles for the journal *Merendus*. Arto Oll highlights his notable series of articles on doctrinal principles of maritime warfare of a small country (small war), published in *Merendus* from 1935 to 1936. Ivalo saw the potential of a small navy in small ships that are faster than the enemy's vessels, a modern naval reconnaissance network, selection of ship types that are suitable for local coastal waters, a large fleet of small ships (submarines and motor/torpedo boats), at least two well-organised naval bases, a defined command structure, and well thought-out military objectives. He believed that a small nation should not use the doctrines of major powers as a model and should instead specialise on particular areas based on its needs. His suggested areas of specialisation for Estonia included torpedoes, mines and fogging. According to Ivalo, the concept of a small war at sea is "[---] a mode of warfare characterised, firstly, by the composition of the participating forces and, secondly, by the nature of operations carried out by these forces." Torpedoes and mines were the primary weapons in a small war, and the navy had to be supported by the air force. A skilful and consistent

[28] Johannes Ivalo (1902–2001) was born in Kihelkonna, Saaremaa, as a son to non-commissioned border guard officer Dmitri Ivashchenko, originally from Kiev Governorate, and a local lady. Before Estonianisation in 1934, his family name was Ivasčenko or Redlik-Ivasčenko. After completing the Saaremaa Upper Secondary School, he studied law at the University of Tartu in 1922–1925. Following conscript service, he completed the naval course at the Military School, 2nd Lieutenant in 1928. Commander of the training company of the Navy Equipage in 1928–1929, company commander and assistant mine/torpedo specialist on destroyer Lennuk in 1929–1931, assistant commander of guard ship Laine in 1931–1939, Lieutenant in 1932. Mine/torpedo specialist on torpedo boat Sulev in 1939–1940, Lieutenant Senior Grade in 1940, appointed commander of gun ship Mardus in April. At the same time, 1935–1940, worked as one of the executive editors of the journal *Merendus*. During the German occupation, commander of the Port of Tallinn platoon of the Harjumaa Home Guard, fled to Sweden in 1944. (Cadfile of officers and military clerks A–K, RA, ERA.495.1.730; Ivastschenko, Dimitri Ivani p. ja Johannes Dimitri p., RA, ERA.14.13.1261; Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis, https://www.ra.ee/apps/andmed/index.php/matrikkel/view?id=3857, 15 January 2025).

application of this concept would, Ivalo believed, force the enemy to forego the operational engagements that it had considered advantageous.

In a separate section, Arto Oll discusses the Estonian naval officers' ideas about the use of aircraft in a future war. Estonia had very few airplanes in the War of Independence, and they were rarely used in battles. During World War I, the Russian Baltic Fleet had established a modern – in contemporary terms – seaplane harbour at the Tallinn military port, and cooperation between aircraft and navy was not unprecedented in the Baltic Sea. However, development of naval aviation was held back by the limited number of aircraft in Estonia and by the ideas of the higher military command on the role of the air force in national defence. The important role of aircraft in naval reconnaissance had become clear by the 1920s. Lieutenant Commander Eustaatius **Miido**[29] compared the role of submarines and aircraft in coastal defence and argued that procuring 15 bombers would be preferable to buying a single submarine, as the former could be used for naval reconnaissance and for bombing the enemy's ships and naval bases if necessary. However, these aircraft would not be capable of attacking a larger squadron equipped with air defence guns. His paper was motivated by the debate, started in the United States in mid-1920s, on the increasing role of naval air forces in coastal defence. Lieutenant Senior Grade Santpank countered that airplanes cannot sink large, modern warships. The future vision for Estonian naval forces in early 1930s included military aircraft. When an order for submarines

[29] Eustaatius Miido (1893–1978). Studied at Liepāja Maritime School, reserve ensign of the Russian Fleet in 1916, midshipman in 1917; senior officer and commander on a mine trawler. Fought in the War of Independence on gun ship Lembit, Lieutenant in 1919 (Cross of Liberty II/3); acting senior navigation officer on Lembit in 1921–1922, Lieutenant Senior Grade in 1922. Assistant commander of the Naval Cadet School in 1922–1923, commander of torpedo boat Sulev in 1924–1937, commander of destroyer Lennuk in 1932–1933. Lieutenant Commander in 1925, Commander in 1933. Retired in 1937 and managed a farm. Was arrested by NKVD in 1941, deported and imprisoned in a GULAG camp until 1956. After that was employed in a collective farm in Estonia. (Cadfile of officers and military clerks, L–P, RA, ERA.495.1.731; *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid*, 467).

Senior Lieutenant Eustaatius (Evstafi) Miido, commander of the torpedo boat Sulev, 1924. Source: National Archives of Estonia, RA, EFA.272.0.167125

was placed in England in mid-1930s, the air force also hoped to modernise its air fleet. The Estonian air force believed that it had a role to play in naval defence, whereas naval officers saw the main use of airplanes in naval reconnaissance. Navy commander Captain Valentin **Grenz**[30] joined the debate in 1933, arguing that air force cannot replace the navy, especially in countries like Estonia that depend on maritime trade. In contrast, air force commander,

[30] Valentin Grenz (1888–1944) graduated from the Paldiski Maritime School as high seas helmsman. Served in the Russian Baltic Fleet from 1913 to 1918, naval ensign in 1914, commander of transport vessel Snarjad in 1915–1918, midshipman in 1917. Fought in the War of Independence on gun ship Lembit in 1918, on destroyers Vambola and Lennuk in 1918–1919, commander of Vambola from 1919 to 19 22, Lieutenant in 1919, Lieutenant Senior Grade in 1920 (Cross of Liberty II/3). Senior navigation officer at the navy headquarters in 1922–1925, Lieutenant Commander in 1924. Commander of the navy headquarters in 1925–1932, Commander in 1926, Navy Captain in 1930. Acting commander of the naval forces in 1932–1934, commander from 1934 to 19 38, then retired. Arrested by NKVD in 1941, died in a GULAG prison camp. (*Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid*, 186).

Air Defence Commander Colonel Richard Tomberg. A Portrait.
Source: Estonian War Museum, KLM FT 1060:1 F

Colonel Richard **Tomberg** (1897–1982) believed that it would be better for Estonia to buy 90 bombers or 60 torpedo planes instead of two submarines and three torpedo boats. This debate between the air force and the navy on the use of aircraft in naval defence resurfaced later as well. The navy officers did not deny the importance of the air force, but believed that airplanes cannot replace ships, especially submarines. According to Johannes Santpank, this belief was supported by weapons procurements of other countries that still invested in modernisation of their naval defence fleets. In late 1930s, Navy Captain Valev **Mere**[31] held lectures on naval warfare at

[31] Valev Mere (1893–1949) served in the Russian Navy since 1914, naval ensign in 1916. Served on mine trawlers in 1916–1918. Fought in the War of Independence from 1918 to 1920 as senior mine officer and senior officer on gun ship Lembit, Lieutenant in 1919 (Cross of Liberty II/3). Senior officer on destroyer Vambola in 1921–1922, Lieutenant Senior Grade. Commander of gun ship Meeme from 1922 to 1923, acting commander of destroyer Vambola from 1923 to 1924,

the Military College. He wrote in his lecture notes that the naval air force should be part of the navy and operate in close cooperation with the fleet, performing reconnaissance and attacking the enemy's warships and coastal structures, as well as opposing the enemy's aircraft. However, modernisation of the navy was a slow process – the country did not have enough money for everything – and Estonia has never been able to establish a dedicated naval air force.

Arto Oll concludes that the Soviet technical service branches in World War II were unable to defeat an inferior opponent, drive the Finnish air force to surrender, and disrupt Finnish economy and port operations.[32]

The chapters by Dr Arto Oll and Commander Taavi Urb provide a framework for the history of naval warfare theory in interwar Estonia, starting with an introduction to the history of naval warfare theory in Europe, the USA, the Russian Empire, and Germany. It is notable that, even though Estonia had almost no officers with higher naval education and the relatively randomly assembled navy was commanded in the War of Independence by men who had mostly trained in wartime ensign courses, they were able to establish a functional fleet with support from the British squadron. As early as January 1921, the government decided to allow the minister of war to send five officers from the general staff, two from engineering units,

Lieutenant Commander in 1924. Completed regular army officers' courses in 1925. Commander of destroyer Vambola from 1924 to 1927, acting commander of naval fortifications from 1927 to 1929, Commander in 1928. Commander of destroyer Lennuk from 1929–32. Acting chief of staff of the naval forces from 1932 to 1936, studied at the Military College from 1934 to 1936. Navy Captain in 1936, commander of naval fortifications in 1936–1937, chief of staff of the naval forces in 1937–1938, commander of the Naval Forces in 1938–1939. Forced to resign due to the escape of Polish submarine Orzeł that had been interned at the port of Tallinn, master of a freight ship in 1939–1941. During the German occupation, master of tug Steinort, fled to Germany in 1944. (Cardfile of officers and military clerks L–P, RA, ERA.495.1.731; *Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid*, 464).

[32] However, the air force of the Baltic Fleet played an important role in slowing the advance of Wehrmacht's infantry divisions in Estonia in the summer of 1941. The air force of the Baltic Fleet caused significant losses to the German forces in continental Estonia and on West Estonian islands. In August and September 1941, bombers of the Baltic Fleet carried out air attacks against Berlin from Saaremaa, even though they mostly had only propagandistic significance.

five from the artillery and three from the navy to higher military schools abroad to upgrade their knowledge and experience.[33] Before rising to the command of the Estonian naval forces in the second half of the 1930s, Johannes Santpank and Bruno Linneberg were among the first to study abroad. Later, they also graduated from the Finnish War College. Unfortunately, they were able to apply their knowledge as commanders of Estonian naval forces for less than a year. Estonia was occupied, Santpank disappeared in a GULAG prison camp, and Linneberg served in the Kriegsmarine during World War II. Their visions of the future of Estonia's naval forces were restrained by Estonia's limited financial resources for weapons purchases, as well as by the onset of the world war.

In addition to some minor errors, there are some regrettable inconsistencies in terminology. Arto Oll sometimes uses the term 'blue-water doctrine' instead of the 'open sea doctrine'; a better presentation of the connections between the terms 'maritime supremacy', 'supremacy on the sea', 'maritime power', 'maritime power in open sea', and 'command of the sea' would have been useful, even though the meaning of specific passages is usually understandable upon careful reading. There is also some duplication – both authors present a summary of Harald Roots' graduation paper at the Swedish Military College.

Professor Aleksei Baiov and his legacy in military sciences

Igor Kopõtin's book on Aleksei Baiov presents his biography and work in military sciences, while also providing an overview of the organisation of studies at the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy in St. Petersburg before World War I, the debates held there between different doctrines and schools, and finally his work as professor at the Estonian Military College. Dr Kopõtin raises two

[33] Decision of the Government, 14 January 1921, RA, ERA.31.2.1030.

research questions: What were Baiov's views on the theory of warfare and the factors that influenced them? How well did these views meet the needs of Estonian national defence and what was their impact on the development of Estonian military theory and research. While Nikolai Reek – proponent of development of Estonian military education and Baiov's student at the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy, also the first commander, from 1921 to 1923, of the Estonian general staff courses, which eventually became the Military College – later studied at a higher military school (École de guerre) in France and tried to cultivate Western European military thought in Estonia, Kopõtin demonstrates that even Reek was not free of influences of Russian military thought and of Baiov.

Lieutenant General Aleksei Baiov (1871–1935) was born to a military family. His father and older brother were also lieutenant generals and his younger brother was colonel. Baiov was born in Uman, Kiev Governorate, and his father was member of nobility in Poltava Governorate. The roots of the family go back to France and Sweden. The ancestor of the Baiovs, Swedish count Oskar Boev (in Russian at first Бёв, later Боэв or Боев) was invited in 1613 to serve in the Russian army by Tsar Mikhail I who gave him a manor in Voronezh Governorate. The family of Oskar Boev's father, Sigismund Boev, Count of Hauteville, had relocated to Sweden during the Hundred Years' War.

Baiov studied at Kiev Cadet Corps, 2nd Konstantin Military School, and graduated from the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy in 1896 with a 1st rank diploma, before being promoted to Captain of the General Staff. Then he served in the staff of the Vilno (Vilnius) military district (in the meantime completing practical training as company commander at the 105th Orenburg Infantry Regiment), was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1900 and was then chief of the staff formation department in the Brest-Litovsk Fortress. Served in the General Staff from 1901 to 1904. Was administrator of the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy from 1904 to 1914 and also associate professor of the history of Russian warfare in 1906 and ordinary professor from 1906 to 1914. Promoted to Colonel in

1905, was in training as battalion commander in the Life Guard Jäger Regiment from May to September 1908, and was promoted to Major General in 1911. Kopõtin writes that wartime duties of the teaching staff at the General Staff Academy had not been planned in advance by the Russian army, which is why all professors below the rank of general were appointed to serve as chiefs of staff at second-rate divisions. Generals had the right to choose their own service location. However, in the summer of 1914, Baiov was appointed as warrant general for Cavalry General Aleksei Brusilov, commander of the 8th Army, who then named him chief of staff of the 24th Army Corps. After that Baiov served for a while as quartermaster general for the 3rd Army staff and as chief of staff from 1915 to 1917. Allegedly, Baiov managed to make the army staff work at such a high level that it operated flawlessly for two years. He was promoted to Lieutenant General in 1915 and served as commander of the 42nd Infantry Division for two months in the spring of 1917. In the summer of 1917, Baiov returned as professor of the General Staff Academy and served then as commander of the 10th Army Corps and as commander of the 2nd Army at the end of the year.

Since January 1918, Baiov served in the Red Army and taught at the Military Academy. In 1919, he lived in Pavlovsk near Petrograd that was captured by the forces of General Nikolai Yudenich in October. Baiov had remained true to his monarchist views. For him, the capturing of Pavlovsk came as liberation. However, the position he was given in Yudenich's army – chairman of the army audit committee – did not correspond to Baiov's education and experience, Kopõtin writes. The Russian Whites only valued service experience gained in their army.

From 1920 to 1926, Baiov served as lecturer at the Estonian Military School and general staff courses, the predecessor of the Military College. More on this below. His resignation from the Military College was caused by conflicts with Nikolai Reek and a desire to focus on the politics of Russian emigrants. In 1926, he attended the Paris Congress of Russian Emigrants, representing Russian emigrants in Estonia. In Estonia, he chaired the veteran associations of the Life Guard Jäger

Regiment and Chevaliers of the Order of St. George. He was also the actual publisher of Russian emigrants' newspapers *Ревельское время* (Tallinn Times) and *Ревельское слово* (Tallinn Word). Baiov's activity as a leader of Russian emigrants was of great interest for Soviet intelligence agencies. When the Red Army occupied Estonia in the summer of 1940, five years after Baiov's death, the NKVD arrested Baiov's adopted son Sergei Zharkevich in Tallinn already in June. The NKVD investigators were mainly interested in his relation to Baiov, Baiov's contacts with Russian emigrants in other countries and the location of Baiov's archive. Indeed, Zharkevich did testify that the archive was located in bookshop Vene Raamat (Russian Book) in Tallinn, which the NKVD believed to be an emigrant espionage centre. Whether the NKVD actually found the archive is unknown.[34]

At the **Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy**, Baiov was professor of the history of Russian warfare. The department of the history of Russian warfare was established only in 1890 and its first professor was Dmitri Maslovski who emphasised the importance of Russian national warfare. He was among the people who shaped Baiov's worldview. In 1906, Baiov took over this professorship from general Aleksandr Myshlaevskij who had also argued that warfare always has a clear national character and that Russian warfare was not inferior to that of the West and could sometimes even surpass it. Similarly, at the start of his professorship, Baiov promised to fight against "cosmopolitanism of the army"; according to him, the time when Russian warfare was based on war experiences of Western nations was now over.

There were several competing schools in Russian military sciences at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Infantry general Genrikh Leer (1829–1904), commander of the Emperor

[34] On this, see *Estonia 1940–1945, reports of the Estonian International Commission for Investigation of the Crimes against Humanity*, edited by Toomas Hiio, Meelis Maripuu, Indrek Paavle (Tallinn: Inimsusvastaste Kuritegude Uurimise Eesti Sihtasutus, 2006), 312. Investigation file of Sergei Zarkevich, RA, ERAF.129SM.1.28198.

Nicholas General Staff Academy from 1889 to 1898, was a very productive military theorist who claimed in his works on strategy that the laws (principles) of warfare are timeless. His contemporary, Infantry General Mikhail Dragomirov (1830–1905), who had commanded the Academy from 1878 to 1889, was an expert in tactics and effectively denied the existence of military theory, considering war to be more like art. Kopõtin writes that Dragomirov prioritised the training and education principles attributed to Generalissimo Aleksandr Suvorov, while ignoring the realities of modern warfare (such as ever increasing firepower and the use of telephony and telegraphy). Kopõtin argues that Baiov tended to support Dragomirov's ideas – he was a nationalist and a traditionalist Slavophile, but in his worldview he was able to combine the assault tactics of Suvorov and Dragomirov with Leer's beliefs on academic military sciences and warfare, based on the experience of the Western civilisation.

After the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, the school of 'Young Turks' gained traction at the General Staff Academy – they looked to Western military sciences and blamed the defeat on the lack of knowledge about modern warfare in the Russian army. Kopõtin cites US historian John W. Steinberg who argues that Nikolai Mikhnevich (1849–1927), commander of the Academy from 1904 to 1907, appointed Baiov as administrator of the Academy specifically because he wanted to reinvigorate the nationalist school and retain their position of power at the Academy.

The Russo-Japanese War was followed by a reform of the Russian armed forces, spearheaded by Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich (1856–1929) who was popular among officers and became commander of the Russian armed forces at the start of World War I. His plans included reorganisation of teaching at the General Staff Academy. However, the reform soon petered out, partially because of opposition from general Vladimir Sukhomlinov, the reactionary minister of war. Nevertheless, neither party completely discarded the opponents' claims. Nikolai Golovin (1875–1944), professor of the general staff service at the General Staff Academy, believed to be the representative of the 'Young Turks', acknowledged the integral effect

of using moral factors and firepower ("fire and movement"). Kopõtin writes that, according to Baiov, moral factors surpassed firepower because fire was only supposed to create conditions for a decisive infantry attack, whereas Golovin believed that it would be wrong to see moral factors and firepower as opposites because integration of both is required for victory in a modern battle.

As professor, Baiov preferred traditional lectures, or the lecturer's monologue, to active learning methods because the content of teaching was more important than the form. Many graduates of the General Staff Academy have rated the teaching in that period as tedious. Kopõtin writes that in their memories, Baiov was a bland and monotonous teacher who showed no interest in modern warfare and focused only on the 18th century, which was his own research interest. He presented his subject, the history of Russian warfare, by reciting the text of his notes, with only a few additional explanations. And his notes were mostly copied from the works of other authors. Professor Boris Gerua, a supporter of Golovin, wrote that Baiov sincerely believed that applied teaching methods would transform military higher education into a regimental training commando.

Kopõtin summarises: Before World War I, the debate on Russian military doctrine returned to the classical issue of war theory, i.e., whether warfare is science or art, or Clausewitz versus Jomini, and it was associated with a clash between the nationalist and academic schools. Being a leader of the young nationalist generation, Baiov not only adopted Leer's beliefs on timeless principles of warfare and military science but also his position that a scientifically justified unitary doctrine of war was necessary. Baiov seems to have agreed with the idea of two doctrinal models: defensive (France) and offensive (Germany) that had to be adapted to the Russian situation. However, Baiov rejected the thesis that modern principles of war are identical for all nations.

Aleksei Baiov as teacher at the Estonian General Staff Courses and the Military College. During the War of Independence and in the early 1920s, there were fewer than a dozen Estonian officers with higher military education. They were also rather young, having graduated from the General Staff Academy in St. Petersburg shortly

before World War I like general Johan Laidoner (1912) or during the war, or whose studies had been interrupted by the war. The General Staff Courses were established in 1921 to train Estonia's own staff officers. From 1920 to 1926, Baiov was lecturer at the Estonian Military School and General Staff Courses, the predecessor of the Military College. He was invited to serve as professor for the General Staff Courses by Major General Jaan Soots, who was minister of war at the time. Baiov wrote the statute and the first curriculum of the courses and recruited the teaching staff. As he was one of the more prominent members of the local Russian expatriate community, it was easy for him to find suitable people. As a temporary solution, several Russian staff officers and generals were invited to teach, including some former members of the teaching staff at the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy. While a quick transition to Estonian language in military (higher) education was considered important, this generation of Estonian officers had no problems understanding Russian – they had been raised in the period of Russification when Russian was the language of teaching in city schools and upper secondary schools, not to mention the military schools of the Imperial Army.[35]

Teachers in the general staff courses included, in addition to Baiov, Major Generals Gleb Vannovski[36] (cavalry tactics and staff services) and Vladimir Drake[37] (artillery and artillery tactics). The author does not mention acting professor of tactics, Major General Dmitri

[35] Systematic efforts to develop Estonian military terminology started during World War I and increased after Estonian national units of the Russian Army (founded in 1917) switched to Estonian language overnight after declaration of Estonia's independence in February 1918. See, e.g., *Eesti Kamandu sõnad jalawäele, koostanud I jalaväe polgu oskussõnade komisjon* (Orders for Infantry in Estonian Language, Compiled by the Terminology Committee of the 1st Infantry Regiment), toimetanud Karl Tulmin (Tallinn: s.n., 1918).

[36] Before the Russo-Japanese War, Gleb Vannovski (1862–1943) was Russia's military attaché in Japan. In World War I, he served as commander of the 5th Don Cossacks Regiment, then commanded two army corps one after other in 1917, was appointed commandeering officer of the 1st Army in July, was dismissed in September for supporting Lavr Kornilov's attempted coup, and was in prison for a while. Served in the Russian Volunteer Army in 1917–1918. Left Estonia at the end of the 1920s and died in Cannes, France.

[37] Vladimir Drake's (1874–1932) last position in the Imperial Army was artillery inspector of the 49th Army Corps. After retirement, he was a shareholder of the Kohila Paper Factory in Estonia.

Lebedev,[38] who arrived in Estonia a little later. Other Russian emigrants who taught the courses[39] included Lieutenant Senior Grade Ivan Golenishchev-Kutuzov[40] (airplanes and armoured equipment), Commander Aleksandr Malevitsch[41] (signalling), Professor Nikolai Erassi (1871–1930, taught geodesy and landscape photography), Pjotr Marisev who taught military engineering, and finally General Staff Colonel Arthur Salf, an Estonian.[42]

Baiov and Major General Drake relied on the experience of World War I and thought of the Russian Civil War and the Estonian War of Independence as exceptions rather than a rule. Kopõtin writes that, in opposing them, officers of the younger generation, incl. Nikolai Reek, tended to put too much importance on the experience of the War of Independence. Kopõtin assumes that, in addition to Baiov's traditionalism, Nikolai Reek also disliked his Russian nationalism and his thesis about distinctly Russian warfare. Baiov's notes on the evolution of warfare included many topics dedicated to Russian warfare. Reek who commanded the General Staff Courses from 1921 to 1923, studied at a French higher military school since 1923. After he returned to Estonia in November 1925 and was appointed Chief of the General Staff, he proposed

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[38] Dimitri Lebedev (1872–1935) was born in Estonia as a son of an Orthodox priest. He taught at the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy from 1911 to 1914 and in 1917, and at the Red Army Military Academy since 1918. In 1917, he was briefly editor of the Russian military journal *Voyennyi sbornik* and the newspaper *Russki Invalid*. He came to Estonia in 1922 and was later active as arms trader.

[39] According to the book *Kõrgem sõjakool 1921–1931* (Tallinn, 1931), 54–65. Biographic details: *Russkaia Estoniâ* [Russian Estonia], http://russianestonia.eu; Database of Estonian officers 1918–1940, http://prosopos.esm.ee/; *Russkaia armiâ v Pervoj mirovoj vojne* [Russian Army in the First World War], Kartoteka proekta [Project Card Index], http://www.grwar.ru/persons/list, 10 January 2025.

[40] Ivan Golenishchev-Kutuzov (1885–1948) served in the Imperial Navy where he tested the use of hydroplanes as torpedo carriers. Emigrated to Brazil in 1927.

[41] Aleksandr Malevitsch's (1887–1950) last position in the Russian Baltic Fleet was senior mine officer of Peter the Great's Naval Fortress. He continued his service in the Estonian army and died in Türi (see p. 185).

[42] The last position of Arthur Salf (1873–1937) in the Imperial Army was acting chief of staff of the 19th Army Corps; he worked at the Estonian Military College until retirement.

Lieutenant General of the Russian Tsarist Army and former lecturer at the Estonian General Staff courses, Aleksei Baiov, August 1931. Photo by Parikas. Source: National Archives of Estonia, RA, EFA.272.0.49113

a reorganisation of teaching at the Military College following the French model, which would entail a reform of the curriculum and methodology. The Estonian military command had set the objective of disengaging from the heritage of Russian warfare and setting a course towards the West. However, the conflict between Baiov and Reek was not absolute. Kopõtin writes that Reek borrowed from Russian traditionalists, possibly through Baiov himself, the Leerian notion of timeless principles of war and analysed characteristics of Estonian soldiers from a national perspective, like Russian nationalists.

Baiov did not leave the Military College because of his outdated methods but because of his political activity as a Russian monarchist. The Estonian military command did not want to dismiss him and offered a choice: remain a member of the teaching staff at the Military College or focus on the politics of Russian emigrants. Baiov opted for political engagement.

There were debates in the General Staff Courses and in the Military College on the desirable share of military history and history of warfare in military education. Baiov saw military history as the most important part of military education, but its relative share decreased after Reek's reforms. In addition, Reek suggested focusing primarily on recent military history – World War I, the War of Independence, and the Russian Civil War. A broader question concerned the nature of Estonian military education as such: should it be offered by a military university or by a vocational school for professionals? According to Kopõtin, Baiov preferred the university model whereas Reek was more inclined towards professional and practical education. This dilemma in Estonian military education was never completely resolved – it was attempted to apply vocational training principles to the development of the Military School and university education principles to the Military College.

Aleksei Baiov's work. His principal works are thought to be the book *Russian Army in the Age of Empress Anna. War against Turkey 1736–1739*[43] in two volumes that won the General Leer Award of the Emperor Nicholas General Staff Academy, and *The Course in the History of Russian Warfare*[44] in seven volumes that received the Akhmatov Award of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. The first book was based on Baiov's dissertation that examined the work of marshal Burkhard Christoph von Münnich. Baiov's novel approach to the history of Russian warfare was evident in the fact that he did not start with Peter the Great nor with the 1380 Battle of Kulikovo, but went back to the 9th century wars of Kievan Rus. Baiov wrote that his work is based on studies by previous heads of the department of Russian warfare. In addition, Baiov's views can be gleamed from his shorter treatises, *Notes on the History of Warfare in Russia*,[45]

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[43] Aleksej Baiov, *Russkaâ armiâ v carstvovanie imp. Anny Ioannovny. Vojna Rossii s Turciej v 1736–1739* [*Русская армия в царствование имп. Анны Иоанновны. Война России с Турцией в 1736–1739*], 2 vols (St. Petersburg, 1906).

[44] Aleksej Baiov, *Kurs istorii russkogo voennogo iskusstva* [*Курс истории русского военного искусства*], 7 vols (St. Petersburg: Printing House of Gr. Skačkov, 1909–1913).

[45] Aleksej Baiov, *Zapiski po istorii voennogo iskusstva v Rossii* [*Записки по истории военного искусства в России*] (St. Petersburg: I. Trofimov's Printing House, 1908).

History of Warfare as Science[46] and *Significance of Klyuchevsky for Russian War History*[47]. In his lecture notes for the audience in the Estonian General Staff Courses, Baiov defined war as an armed clash of nations over matters that affect vital interests of the parties and in which parties attempt to achieve victory with weapons in order to force the adversary to recognise the priority of their interests. Kopõtin assumes that Baiov's definition of the art of war was inspired by Clausewitz. Baiov wrote that both material and mental powers and resources need to be applied skilfully to achieve victory, and the art of war means the ability to combine these resources in practice. According to Baiov, warfare is subordinated to the laws and principles of war, which stem from its nature and form together the theory of warfare. A systematic collection of the laws of war and the modes of their application in different situations amount to a science that is called strategy. Kopõtin writes that here Baiov reiterates Genrikh Leer's idea of strategy as being not primarily a level of warfare but rather in itself a science about war.

Baiov concluded that the laws of warfare can be expressed in formulas determined by warfare theorists and practicians (military commanders) from Xenophon, Aleksandr Suvorov and Napoleon (as interpreted by Clausewitz) to Leer and Mikhnevich (neither of whom had won a single war or campaign) and finally also Marshal Ferdinand Foch. Among them, Suvorov was the most important figure, he believed. However, by appraising Napoleon and Foch, he synthesised the Suvorov-Napoleon-Foch formula. According to him, a war consists of campaigns, strategic operations and battle engagements, which are related to the overarching objective of the war. As the strategic objective of a war can be difficult to achieve, intermediate objectives should be established and the collection of military efforts to realise such an objective was called a 'military

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[46] Aleksej Baiov, *Istoriâ voennogo iskusstva, kak nauka* [*История военного искусства, как наука*] (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin's Printing House, 1912).

[47] Aleksej Baiov, *Značenie Vasiliâ Osipoviča Klûčhevskogo dlâ russkoj voenno-istoričeskoj nauki* [*Значение Василия Осиповича Ключевского для русской военно-исторической науки*] (St. Petersburg: A.S. Suvorin's Printing House, 1911).

campaign'. Baiov viewed the positional warfare of World War I as an unnatural way of waging a war, but did not offer a description of how it could be avoided. He believed that manoeuvre warfare reflected the true nature of war. According to Baiov, the future of warfare required professional armies. The reserve army – "armed people" – had to be replaced by a small and high-quality regular army, perfectly trained, highly manoeuvrable, capable of being in the right place at the right time in any war theatre or battle. A mass army, conversely, is unwieldy, poorly trained and with weak moral preparation, struggles with manoeuvrability, is difficult to motivate and can be unreliable in battle.

Suvorov's role as a great military theorist was truly highlighted by count Dmitri Milyutin, war historian and Russia's minister of war from 1861 to 1881, at a time when Russia had been soundly defeated in the Crimean War and started to look for positive examples from its military history. Suvorov's only theoretical treatise, *The Art of Victory*, was conceived as a textbook on tactics for non-commissioned officers, writes Kopõtin. Suvorov's victorious campaigns and his manual for non-commissioned officers inspired the nationalistic school of Russian war historians to emphasise supremacy of moral power over the material. Kopõtin observes that Baiov went further than his teacher at the department of Russian warfare by discovering Russian art of war even in early medieval Russia. He argued that its timeless principles were encapsulated in the following theses by Suvorov: always acting on the offensive, quick manoeuvres and decisive bayonet attacks, less methodology and more situational appraisal, absolute authority of the commander-in-chief, attacking and striking the enemy in an open field, avoiding sieges and passing fortifications, not splitting forces to hold territory, and concentrating them for manoeuvres.

Kopõtin notes in summary that Baiov's Suvorovian Russo-centric approach to warfare was based on the idea of ethnic uniqueness of the Russian nation. The Estonian military command wanted to shake off the Russian influences and turn to European, particularly French war experience and theory. But even Nikolai Reek thought of Suvorov as

a great commander and emphasised the advantages of his offensive action over defence, gaining initiative, surprise, decisiveness and ultimately also direct command in the midst of the battle. Kopõtin concludes: "Can a small nation have its own unique military thought, or art of war, or is it something that belongs to a civilisation? [---]. [W]hat kind of military thought can be cultivated by small nations such as Estonia that have always found themselves at the boundary between civilisations? Similar questions may have risen in Estonian officers listening to Baiov's lectures in the 1920s."

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