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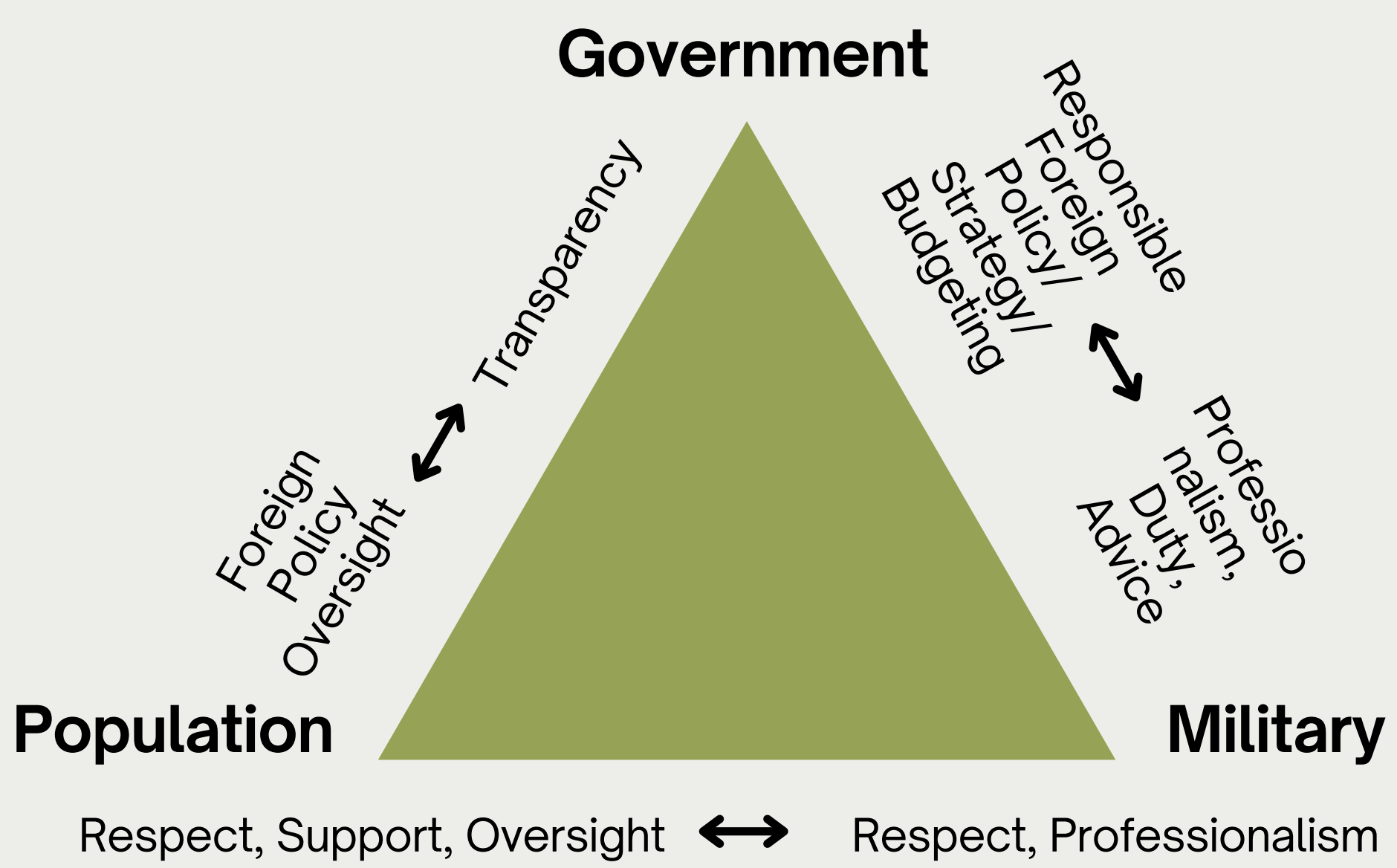
Defending Democracy: Civil-Military Relations and Influence in Politics

Background

What are "civil-military relations"?

Civil-military relations study how the civilian components of a country and the military relate to one another. The three key relationships are:

- between the civilian political and senior military leadership
- the citizens and the military
- the government and the citizens.



Source: Blankshain, "A Primer on US Civil-Military Relations"

Why does it matter?

Maintaining healthy civil-military relations is essential to democracy. The military needs to be able to act effectively when called upon by the civilian political leadership to carry out tasks, but cannot be too powerful - for example by engaging in political activism - so that it can challenge the government and the power of elected leaders.

Methods

We carried out qualitative research by looking at several countries' civil-military relations. We looked for evidence of specific types of activism within countries' national politics.

Sources

We have analyzed both primary sources, such as government military reports and news reports, and secondary sources, such as scholarly articles, previous international security research, and defense journals.

This project explores challenges to civil-military relations in democracies, focusing on the increasing **influence** in domestic roles and its **involvement** in politics.



The role that military forces play in democratic countries has been transforming, especially as a result of their growing involvement in the recent Covid pandemic. Militaries are also very **popular** in societies around the world. It is therefore crucial to prevent the military from gaining new **influence** and **interfering** in politics, thereby endangering the state of democracy.

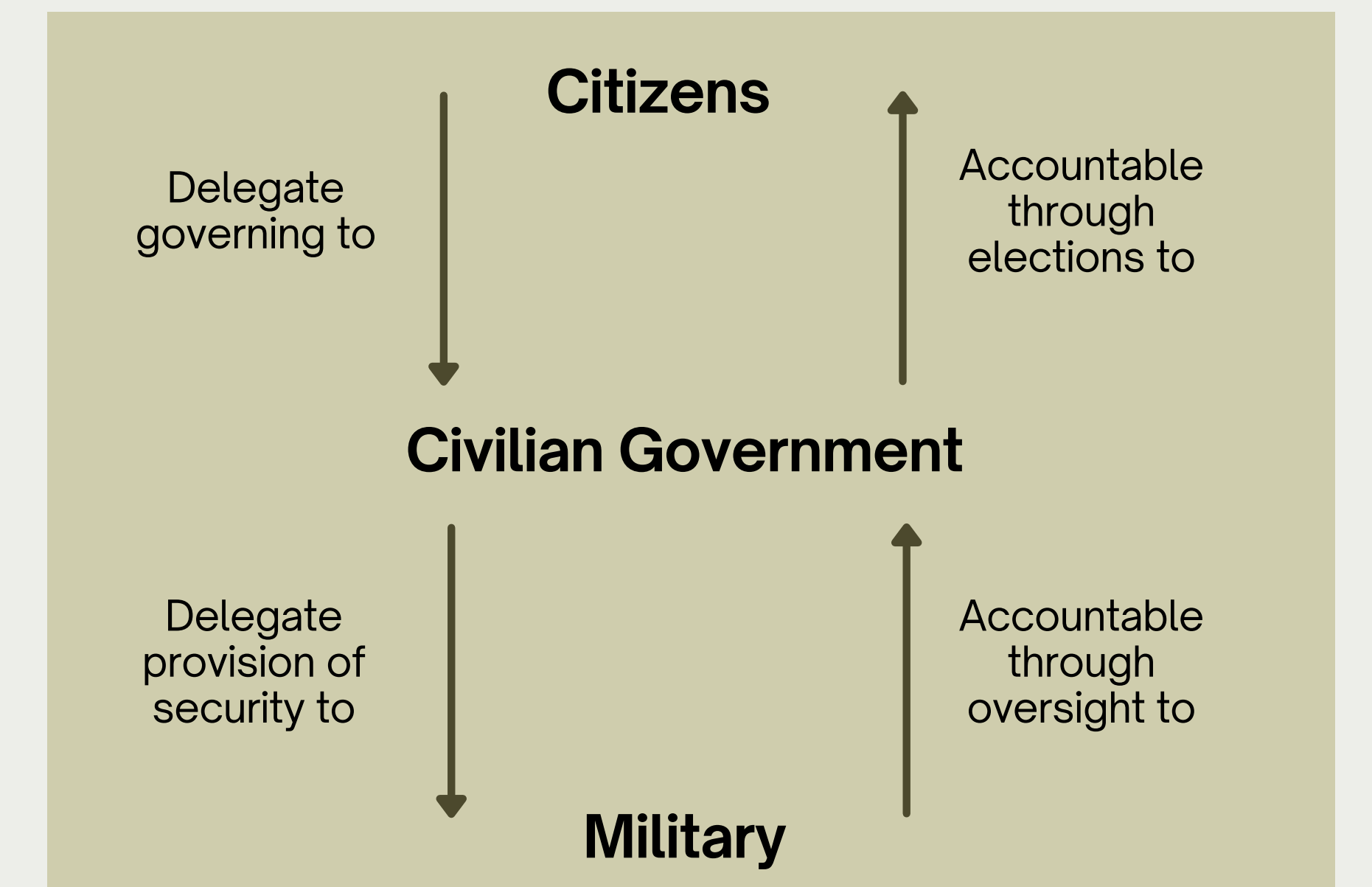
In our research, we have been analyzing instances in established democracies (such as **Italy**, **France** and **Australia**) in which militaries have been acquiring new prerogatives or engaging in political activity that undermined the authority of the elected civilian leaders and government.



Some examples of prerogatives and **political activism** that we analyzed include:

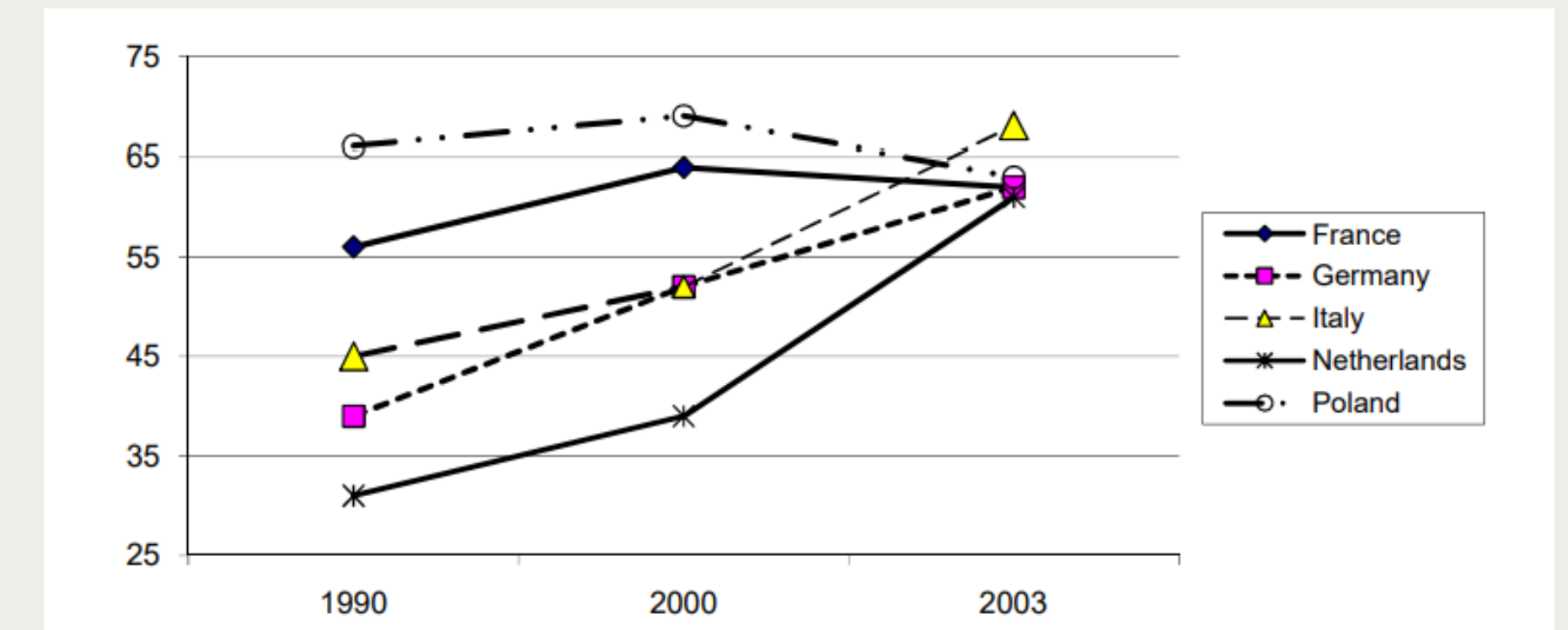
- Increasing law enforcement roles in domestic society (ex. taking over border control and other police functions due to the Covid pandemic)
- Taking over public health roles and other state functions
- Armed forces speaking out to the media and publicly contradicting or opposing the political leaders' views
- Mobilization of retired officers who speak-out about non-military issues

Delegation process in democratic civil-military relations



Source: Blankshain, "A Primer on US Civil-Military Relations."

Trust in the European Armed Forces, 1990-2003



Source: Caforio, "The Military Profession, Public Trust, and Public Interest."

Walter Biot and the Russian espionage



Source: ANSA, "Chi è Walter Biot, L'ufficiale Italiano Arrestato per Spionaggio - Cronaca."

French military's letter warning of impending "civil war"

The New York Times | <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/12/world/europe/france-letter-military-civil-war-warning.html>

New Military Letter Warning of 'Brewing' Civil War Prompts Outrage in France

The French Army's chief of staff called on soldiers who anonymously signed the letter to quit the armed forces.

By Constant Méheut

May 12, 2021

PARIS — The French prime minister and the chief of staff of the army have condemned an anonymous letter signed by people claiming to be active-duty troops warning about impending "civil war" in France.

Prime Minister Jean Castex told the newspaper Le Parisien that the letter was a "political maneuver" by the "extreme right." Gen. François Lecointre, the army chief of staff, said that the signatories should quit the armed forces if they wanted to freely express their political opinions.

It is unclear how many soldiers are behind the letter, the second such message from active-duty or retired military personnel to appear in the past month. The managing editor of Valeurs Actuelles, the right-wing magazine that published both letters, said that the latest was from "active military personnel" and that a bailiff would certify their signatures.

When that might happen was unclear.

Source: Méheut, "New Military Letter Warning of 'Brewing' Civil War Prompts Outrage in France."

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