

THE U.S. MILITARY MUST FIND ITS VOICE

by Sam C. Sarkesian

To say that the strategic landscape remains unsettled would be an understatement.¹ In the brief period since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. military has fought one major war (Iraq), performed numerous “nontraditional” humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, struggled to adjust to a variety of social demands such as the full integration of women and gays in the ranks, and at the same time attempted to prepare for the twenty-first century. What is more, the armed services have been asked to do all this within the worst budgetary environment in fifty years. As a result, the U.S. military faces a dilemma: how to respond to the uncertainties of the new domestic and strategic landscapes, maintain a healthy relationship with American civil society, and yet retain its core *raison d’être*, which is to deter or win war against the nation’s enemies.

The American military faced similar dilemmas after the Civil War and World War I, for a brief time after World War II, and following the Vietnam War.² At least one lesson clearly emerged from those experiences: the military profession dare not withdraw into an ethical cocoon and take on a defensive posture. Instead, it must make a prudent and positive response to the travails imposed on it and not shrink from articulating its views in the public square. In short, senior military officers must reshape the very notion of military professionalism by candidly admitting the impact of politics on the military’s ability to do its job and daring to practice constructive political engagement. This would appear to violate the sacred code of silence by which the U.S. military is strictly apolitical, offers technical advice only, and goes out of its way to honor the principle of civilian control. But only through constructive

political engagement can military professionals legitimate their role in policy debates, mark a clear boundary between defense policy and merely partisan politics, and provide the American public with a clearer understanding of military life and culture. Nor are constructive political engagement and loyalty to the country, civilian leadership, and the Constitution in any way incongruous. Indeed, such constructive political engagement, far from threatening to make the military an independent actor, presupposes that the military is dependent upon a variety of political actors and the public at large. It is *because* the U.S. military is under such tight civilian control that it needs to make its voice heard in civilian councils.

Any number of issues might fall within the scope of constructive political engagement, but the two most critical are the so-called democratization of the military (the convergence or divergence between the military and society) and the problematical utility of military force in the foreign policy contingencies of the century to come. These issues are interconnected and have a profound impact on the military’s operational effectiveness.

To be sure, it has been an article of faith among military professionals and civilians alike that a wall exists in America between the military and politics. But that faith is not only historically invalid, it denies current reality. The American domestic landscape and the international strategic landscape are, and have always been, politically and militarily inextricable, while the use of military force has always been shaped by political considerations. If the skill, wisdom, and experience residing in our officers corps are to be tapped by our national leadership, the military profession itself must be philosophically broadened and encouraged to involve itself judiciously in the policy arena.³ This would include the development of a more comprehensive view of politics, greater sensitivity to the realities underpinning the American political system, and more assertive presentation of the military viewpoint within the parameters of American democracy.

Nothing makes the point more eloquently than the Vietnam War, the mismanagement of which forced military professionals, especially in the army, to go through an agonizing reappraisal of the meaning of the military profession.⁴ In the broader policy

³The study of the military profession and civil-military relations addressed here takes its cue from graduate education and military professionalism as reported in Sam C. Sarkesian, John Allen Williams, and Fred B. Bryant, *Soldiers, Society, and National Security* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995).

⁴See, for example, Sam C. Sarkesian, *Beyond the Battlefield: The New Military Professionalism* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981).

¹This essay originally appeared in slightly different form in *Orbis*, Summer 1998.

²See, for example, C. Robert Kemble, *The Image of the Army Officer in America: Background for Current Views* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973); Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, rev. and enl. (New York: Free Press, 1994); and Peter D. Feaver, “The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control,” *Armed Forces and Society*, Winter 1996, p. 157.

arena, the failure of senior military leaders to speak out with a realistic military perspective on that war provides an enduring lesson for military professionals.⁵ Recently, the role of the chiefs of staff in the decision to go to war in Vietnam and in its conduct has been studied by H. R. McMaster and found wanting, precisely because these “five silent men” did *not* give voice to their professional doubts, but instead submerged themselves under a cloak of political deception.

As American involvement in Vietnam deepened, the gap between the nature of that commitment and the president’s depiction of it to the American people, Congress, and members of his own administration widened. Lyndon Johnson, with the assistance of Robert S. McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had set the stage for America’s disaster in Vietnam.⁶

Commenting on the internal shadowboxing and cover-ups during the Vietnam War, one member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff remarked, “Maybe we military men were all weak. Maybe we should have stood up and pounded the table. . . . I was part of it and I’m sort of ashamed of myself, too. At times I wonder, ‘Why did we go along with this kind of stuff?’”⁷

Whether or not they were weak, the military brass in the 1960s was *not* following an American tradition when they kept their silence and followed the civilians’ lead. For as recently as the decade before, General Matthew Ridgway had this to say to his peers in uniform:

[T]he professional soldier should never pull his punches, should never let himself for one moment be dissuaded from stating honest estimates [of what] his own military experience and judgement tell him will be needed to do the job required of him. No factor of political motivation should excuse, no reason of “party” or political expediency could explain such an action.⁸

Ridgway went on to note that: “Since George Washington’s time, no top soldier has forgotten that he is a citizen first and a soldier second, and that the troops under his command are an

⁵There are any number of books on the impact of the Vietnam War on the military, in general, and the ground forces, in particular. An excellent starting point is Lt. Gen. Harold G. Moore (Ret.) and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once . . . And Young: Ia Drang: The Battle That Changed the War in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1992).

⁶H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), p. 322. See also Robert S. McNamara with Brian Van DeMark, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995).

⁷Adm. David Lamar McDonald, *The Reminiscences of Admiral David Lamar McDonald, U.S. Navy (Retired)* (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1976), pp. 390, 393, as quoted in McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty*, p. 262.

⁸Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway (Ret.), *Soldier: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 271.

instrument of the people’s will.”

In the turmoil following Vietnam, General Fred Weyand rediscovered that wisdom. “The American Army,” he wrote, “is really a people’s Army in the sense that it belongs to the American people who take a jealous proprietary interest in its involvement. . . . The American Army is not so much an arm of the Executive Branch as it is an arm of the American people.”⁹ Hence, Weyand’s advice was:

As military professionals we must speak out, we must counsel our political leaders and alert the American public that there is no such thing as a “splendid little war.” There is no such thing as a war fought on the cheap. . . . The Army must make the price of involvement clear *before* we get involved, so that America can weigh the probable costs of involvement against the degree of noninvolvement.¹¹

Most recently, General Colin Powell has echoed the directions laid out by Ridgway and Weyand. He told an audience of military officers at the National Defense University that modern military officers must understand politics and the media and stated that “politics is fundamental.”¹² The same account reported the following: “Often accused of being a ‘political general,’ Powell responded, ‘there isn’t a general in Washington who isn’t political, not if he’s going to be successful, because that’s the nature of our system.’”¹³

It seems clear that the American military belongs to the American people, and military professionals have the duty and obligation to insure that the public and its political leaders are counseled and alerted to the needs and necessities of military life. This cannot be done by adhering to a notion of the military profession as a silent order of monks isolated from the political realm.

Enlightened Advocacy and Education

Constructive political engagement entails, above all, enlight-

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹⁰Gen. Fred C. Weyand from “Vietnam Myths and American Realities,” *CDRS CALL*, July/Aug. 1976, as quoted in Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1981), p. 7.

¹¹Weyand, “Vietnam Myths,” pp. 3, 4, italics in original, as quoted in Summers, *On Strategy*, p. 25.

¹²Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), p. 155.

¹³*Ibid.* See also Colin Powell, John Lehman, William Odom, Samuel Huntington, and Richard H. Kohn, “Exchange on Civil-Military Relations,” *National Interest*, Summer 1994, pp. 23–31.

ened advocacy and education.¹⁴ Military professionals must offer intellectually sound advice to inform and instruct those in the policy-making arena about the military implications of specific policies, and, if necessary, recommend and defend the military perspective in public forums. To prepare themselves for these tasks, officers must receive a realistic political education focused on the nature and principles of America's democratic system, its evolution into a modern nation-state and superpower, and the nature of the international landscape. For "it is the man who is both liberally and professionally educated who will be the better soldier."¹⁵

Civilian graduate education is a key factor in developing the knowledge and acumen needed to engage in enlightened advocacy. Happily, many military professionals have access to formal civilian graduate education, and the latter has been an important consideration for promotion and assignments throughout the military services since the 1970s.¹⁶ In addition, officers should be encouraged to participate in professional associations such as the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society, the National Strategy Forum, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the International Institute for Strategic Studies, as well as scholarly organizations in any number of academic disciplines. The purpose of such education would be to raise the political sensitivity of military professionals, broaden their political horizons, expand their political experience, and help them create an informal network of military, academic, and political contacts. At the same time, such networks will enhance the opportunity for civilians to develop a deeper understanding of military professionals and military life in an era when fewer and fewer Americans have any military experience of their own or contact with the uniformed services.

Harold Lasswell's view of politics is "who gets what, when, and how."¹⁷ Although written decades ago, this terminology reflects a realistic view of American politics: The "how" must be within the orbit of the American system and congruent with democratic principles. As one group of scholars observed, "[I]t is important to remember that politics can be conducted in either an

¹⁴See Sarkesian, Williams, and Bryant, *Soldiers, Society, and National Security*.

¹⁵Josiah Bunting, "The Humanities in the Education of the Military Professional," in *The System for Educating Military Officers in the U.S.*, ed. Lawrence J. Korb (Pittsburgh, Pa.: International Studies Association, 1976), p. 158.

¹⁶Sarkesian, Williams, and Bryant, *Soldiers, Society, and National Security*. See also Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York: Free Press, 1971), p. 426.

¹⁷Harold Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1936).

ethical or unethical way."¹⁸ That is, "playing politics" need not have a negative connotation, but can be a legitimate, credible, and honorable process by which individuals, groups, and institutions advance the national interests of the United States. Such "politics" is, in fact, an essential ingredient of American democracy and a critical aspect of constructive political engagement.

The numerous interconnections that already exist between senior military officers (such as the Joint Chiefs, Service Chiefs, and senior staff officers) and civilians at the national level are well known. These range from linkages with Congress and key members in the national security establishment and the National Command Authority to the Washington press corps. Numerous military professionals are also involved in "politics" in the nation's capital, ranging from linkages with the National Security Council staff and congressional staffs to a variety of think tanks. Likewise, commanders in chief of regional and functional commands have similar contact points that permit them to articulate their views on issues affecting their commands. Military professionals beyond the Beltway and in operating units at local bases and posts have, or should have, linkages with local civilian groups and the media. Equally important, opportunities exist in the normal course of their duties for military professionals to express their views through the chain of command—active espousal of the military perspective, admittedly with a degree of prudence.

Finally, a wide-ranging coalition of political-military networks exists among those that are involved in political activity focused on military issues. For instance, the Military Coalition, an advocacy group of twenty-four associations representing "five million current and former uniformed service members plus their families," includes the Association of the U.S. Army, Air Force Association, Fleet Reserve Association, Navy League of the United States, Marine Corps League, Retired Officers Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, Reserve Officers Association, and National Guard Association.¹⁹ In addition, the Federal Reserves and National Guard provide unique linkages between the military profession and the civilian sector. Such networking among military personnel and civilians within various organizations and associations also creates a synergistic effect, multiplying the channels available to the military for

¹⁸Robert L. Lineberry, George C. Edwards III, and Martin P. Wattenberg, *Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy*, 6th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 6.

¹⁹Madilee Wnek, "Team Power," *The Retired Officer*, Nov. 1996, p. 30. For a complete listing of organizations, see pp. 33–34.

effective and legitimate political involvement. Through such channels, military officers can have ample opportunity to offer their perspectives on issues ranging from concerns about present deployments to information-age warfare to the defense budget.

Military views about the involvement in Bosnia are a case in point. At the national level, the Joint Chiefs or Service Chiefs of Staff can and should clarify military concerns about the U.S. peacekeeping mission there and about so-called nontraditional missions in general. At some point, the wise, professional, and patriotic course may be for high-ranking officers to insist that such missions simply cannot be done with the present resources and structure. Indeed, such a view may be a refreshing change from the “can do” syndrome that seems to paralyze open military debate.

Most important, the military brass should feel no hesitancy about providing the commander in chief with its specific and clear opinion on issues such as Bosnia. Disagreements that arise among the military, the president, and members of Congress should not be stifled, as was the case during the Vietnam War, but should be aired honestly and without prejudice to the military’s obedience to, and implementation of, civilian directives. Nor should the armed forces wait until a debate occurs before presenting its perspective and objections to a given policy line. Military professionals ought to be as free to make known their technical judgments as engineers, scientists, or doctors without conjuring fears that they are trying to escape civilian control. The alternative, after all, is to perpetuate the timidity, extreme defensiveness, and fear of criticism from the public and Congress that seems to pervade the military today.

Constructive political engagement does not mean that the military can or should embroil itself in partisan politics or engage in media campaigns for political purposes. It merely means that the military must not remain passive and allow misjudgments and misguided policies and strategies to emerge from the political arena absent an airing of the military perspective. For such passivity not only harms the nation at large but can erode the military’s own legitimacy and effectiveness. As Fotion and Elfstrom conclude:

[I]t does not follow that the proper level of involvement by the military in political matters must be total abstinence. The military establishment deserves a fair hearing in the political arena as do other

establishments . . . since each provides services to the community that need to be explained and funded.²⁰

A more salient objection to constructive political engagement than the bugaboo of military independence is that such advocacy may lead to heated disputes within the military profession itself, thus damaging professional unity and cohesion. The military profession is not a monolith, and a diversity of views surely exists. But the ethos of the military profession itself tends to bind most officers to a common set of principles and values. As Paul Christopher observes:

Military officership is a profession, not simply a vocation. Part of what it means to be a member of a profession is having a deep commitment to a set of abstract values and principles that define the profession. This means that members of a profession accept certain values that are specific to their profession as being more fundamental than other values.²¹

Walter Millis agrees:

Military service stands by itself. It has some of the qualities of a priesthood, of a professional civil servant, of a great bureaucratized business organization and of an academic order . . . it has something of each of these in it but it corresponds exactly to none. . . . Again (the military professional) is set apart, therefore, from those who have followed other walks of life.²²

This is true with respect to not only the officer corps but also the noncommissioned officer corps throughout the services and down to the level of small units, whose cohesiveness was poignantly illustrated during the Gulf War. When ABC correspondent Sam Donaldson interviewed a young African-American soldier in a tank platoon on the eve of Desert Storm and repeatedly asked him to speak to his fear of the impending battle, the young soldier just as persistently repeated his answer: “This is my family and we’ll take care of each other.”²³

The Civil-Military Cultural Gap

The relationship between the military profession and

²⁰N. Fotion and G. Elfstrom, *Military Ethics: Guidelines for Peace and War* (Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 87.

²¹Paul Christopher, “Unjust War and Moral Obligation: What Should Officers Do?” *Parameters*, Autumn 1995, p. 8.

²²Walter Millis, “Puzzle of the Military Mind?” *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1972, p. 144.

²³Colin L. Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 611. For excellent analyses of social cohesion and the military, see Morris Janowitz and Roger W. Little, *Sociology and the Military Establishment*, rev. ed. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1965); and Wm. Darryl Henderson, *Cohesion: The Human Element in Combat* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1985).

American society can be summarized succinctly:

The values and beliefs that form the substance of military professionalism determine in no small measure the role of the military in society, establish the boundaries and criteria for military behavior, provide norms for the military subsystem, and establish the professional posture vis-à-vis civilian elite. . . . The character of military professionalism places the military subsystem in its "orbit" within the political system and, in so doing, establishes the reference point from which civil-military relations evolve.²⁴

Civil-military relations in turn are shaped by four interactions: (a) between the military leadership and the military system; (b) between the military leadership and civilian elites; (c) between the military leadership and the socio-political system in general; and (d) between the military system as a whole and the American socio-political system. The aggregate of these interconnections complicate civil-military relationships and make it extremely difficult to "fix" a clear civil-military demarcation.²⁵

It has always been difficult to discern clearly the relationship between society and the military.²⁶ It is even more difficult and complicated now because the American system is in flux. Demographic, social, and economic changes, combined with lowered expectations about major wars, have focused the attention of many Americans on the domestic political-economic environment. At the same time, issues of race, gender, and diversity have become major concerns in American society. As a result, questions are raised again about the degree to which the military should reflect society at large—questions that define a large part of modern American military history.

A case in point is the hesitancy with which the military profession responded to issues of gender relationships, sexual scan-

²⁴Sam C. Sarkesian, "Military Professionalism and Civil-Military Relations in the West," *International Political Science Review*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1981), p. 285. An excellent assessment of civil-military relations is Don M. Snider and Miranda A. Carlton-Carew, eds., *U.S. Civil-Military Relations in Crisis or Transition?* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995).

²⁵See Sam C. Sarkesian, "Civil-Military Relations in a Liberal Society: The United States in a New Security Era" (unpublished paper presented at the Ohio State Mershon Center conference on civil-military relations, Dec. 4-6, 1992). See also Don M. Snider and Miranda A. Carlton-Carew, "The Current State of U.S. Civil-Military Relations: An Introduction," in *U.S. Civil-Military Relations in Crisis or Transition?* pp. 5-8.

²⁶A number of scholars have addressed the issue of civil-military relations, including Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964); Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*; Franklin D. Margiotta, ed., *The Changing World of the American Military* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1978); Charles Moskos, "Armed Forces and American Society: Convergence or Divergence?" in *Public Opinion and the Military*, ed. Charles Moskos (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1971), pp. 271-94; and John Allen Williams, "The New Military Professionals," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1996, pp. 42-48.

dals, and homosexuality within the ranks, including the navy's Tailhook affair, the air force's Lieutenant Kelly Flinn story, the murder of a presumed homosexual soldier by another soldier at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and the sexual harassment allegations made in 2000 against Major General Larry Smith by Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy, the highest-ranking woman in the U.S. Army. Regardless of civilian perspectives and criticisms, the failure of military professionals to articulate clear principles did little to encourage faith in the profession. Only in the first months of the new century has there been some effort by senior Department of Defense officials and military professionals to respond to such matters and articulate clear guidelines.²⁷ One exception was General Ronald R. Fogelman, who resigned as air force chief of staff in 1997. Being "dedicated to the most basic ideals that forge a coherent force, he found it necessary to explain to U.S. lawmakers why disobedience and lying by a commissioned officer cannot be tolerated."²⁸ In contrast to the hesitancy displayed by most other senior officers with regard to the Kelly Flinn affair, Fogelman spoke out.

Despite the overwhelming record of obsequiousness on the part of U.S. military professionals, a vocal body of opinion in the civilian sector still believes the military is "out of control" with respect to imposing its views on civilian policymakers.²⁹ This has its roots in the fear that America may succumb to a "Prussian-style" military that longs to shape the civilian culture and political system. Reinforcing such views are those who believe that the American military has already become politicized, as suggested by the fact that a large majority of military personnel openly

²⁷See A. J. Bacevich, "The De-Moralization of the Military: Why the Kelly Flinn Story Matters," *Weekly Standard*, June 9, 1997, pp. 24-25; Stephanie Gutmann, "Sex and the Soldier," *New Republic*, Feb. 24, 1997, pp. 18-22; "The Military and the Women," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 21, 1997; Walter A. McDougall, "Sex, Lies, and Infantry," *Commentary*, Sept. 1997, pp. 43-47; Charles Moskos, "Smart Rules for Soldiers and Sex," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1997; and Richard J. Newman, "Army Sex Ed. 101," *U.S. News and World Report*, Aug. 11, 1997, pp. 50-52; Department of Defense, Office of the Inspector General, *Report on the Military Environment with Respect to the Homosexual Conduct Policy*, report no. D-2000-101, Mar. 16, 2000 (<http://www.dodid.osd.mil/autid/reports/00-101.pdf>); and Jane McHugh, "Murder in the Barracks," *Army Times*, Aug. 23, 1999, pp. 12-13.

²⁸John G. Roos, "Fogelman's Departure: He's No Tragic Figure," *Armed Forces Journal International*, Sept. 1997, p. 2. Also see Richard J. Neuman, "A General Salutes by Quitting," *U.S. News and World Report*, Aug. 11, 1997, p. 5.

²⁹F. G. Hoffman, *Decisive Force: The New American Way of War* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1996), p. 128, in which the author writes, "To some observers, the military is 'out of control' and a scandal exists because the military is vocally reluctant to employ force in pursuit of vague foreign policy objectives." The author refers to Richard Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations," *National Interest*, Spring 1994, pp. 3-17.

identify themselves as Republicans.³⁰ The fact is that the military has usually been a conservative institution and naturally tends to identify with issues and groups that support the military ethos, regardless of political party. Moreover, “politicization” tends to connote an interest group that is totally absorbed with political issues, is dogmatically focused on political channels to achieve its objectives, and shapes all issues in “political” terms. The U.S. military is not such a group today, and no one proposes it turn into one.

But even if those who fear an “out of control” military are unduly alarmist, few would deny the widening gap between the values of the all-volunteer military and those of American society.³¹ Either way, it appears that the armed forces cannot win. If the military is involved in politics, it conjures fears of a politicized military. If the military remains isolated from society, it conjures fears that its own (implicitly dangerous) value system is divorced from the civil society it is meant to protect. Confusing the issue even more are the distinctions that need to be made between career military professionals and those who serve for one hitch, and between those involved in basic and advanced training and those who have gone beyond the recruit phase and are assigned to a line unit. Finally, civil-military relationships are complicated further by the emergence of a new generation of elected government officials, few, if any, of whom have had military experience.³² While this may not necessarily lead to damaging political-military policies, it may create an environment in which decision makers lack all sensitivity to the realities of military life. As one observer has written, “An uncertain grasp of military affairs is likely to characterize policy making for the foreseeable future.”³³ It is also the case that fewer civilians—especially among our “elites”—will have served in the military, creating a large civilian populace with little or no experience with military life.³⁴

³⁰See Eliot A. Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations,” in this volume, p. 85 (from *Orbis*, Spring 1997, p. 178). See also Thomas Ricks, “The Widening Gap Between The Military And Society,” *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1997, pp. 66–78.

³¹Ricks, “The Widening Gap”; Amy Waldman, “Military-Civilian Schism Widens, Posing Danger,” *USA Today*, Nov. 26, 1996; Clarence Page, “Soldiers vs. Civilians: A Widening Gap,” *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 16, 1997; and Samuel G. Freedman, “The Few, the Proud,” review of *Making the Corps*, by Thomas E. Ricks, *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 14, 1997. See also Cohen, “Civil Military Relations.”

³²See, for example, Waldman, “Military-Civilian Schism”; and Adm. Stanley R. Arthur, “The American Military: Some Thoughts on Who We Are and What We Are,” in *Civil-Military Relations and the Not-Quite Wars of the Present and Future*, ed. Vincent Davis (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Oct. 30, 1996), pp. 15–24.

³³Ricks, “The Widening Gap,” p. 76.

³⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 68–69, in which the author writes, “Today’s fragmented society is at odds

The wide range of civil-military contacts adumbrated above would seem a basis for challenging the notion of a widening gap between the military and society in the United States. But to the extent the military and society do exist in two worlds, such a “gap” would only seem to underscore the need for a more politically streetwise military, one attuned to certain values and institutions. Indeed, to ensure that the needed equilibrium between the military and society is not thrown out of balance, military professionals must engage the political process. Such engagement would lead to a clearer civilian understanding of military culture and help to correct the distorted views and unrealistic images that currently threaten the effectiveness of the military. For the real danger today is not military dominance of civil government, but rather a civilian policy elite dominating a military of which it has only the most superficial understanding, and thus imposing on the military frivolous “reforms” and imprudent overseas commitments without regard to long-term consequences. As Johnson and Metz observe, civilians are the potters, the armed forces the clay:

[T]he array of tools held by civilians more than counterbalances the military’s more coherent method for cultivating individual skill. Civilians control the military’s budget, can fire individual military leaders, and must approve senior-level promotions and assignments. The equilibrium between the military and civilians thus reflects an asymmetry of resources where military acumen is matched by the civilians’ wide array of tools.³⁵

In terms of civil-military relations, this means that while retaining and reinforcing the notion of civil control and supremacy, the military cannot remain a passive partner. It must move closer to the political system and yet retain enough distance to insure that it preserves the culture and virtues suited to its unique mission. There is no magic formula for determining the proper balance, but the “lifeblood of this equilibrium is constant adjustment shaped by open, informed debate from all segments of the national security community. . . . [I]t is time to ‘let a hundred schools of thought contend.’”³⁶ Once again, General Ridgway may have said it best:

[C]ivilian authorities must scrupulously respect the integrity, the intellectual honesty, of its officer corps. Any effort to force unanimity of view, to compel adherence to some politico-military “party line” against the honestly expressed views of responsible officers . . .

with the classic military values of sacrifice, unity, self-discipline, and considering the interests of the group before those of the individual.”

³⁵Douglas Johnson and Steven Metz, “American Civil-Military Relations: A Review of the Recent Literature,” in *U.S. Civil-Military Relations in Crisis or Transition?* p. 217.

³⁶*Ibid.*

is a pernicious practice which jeopardizes rather than protects the integrity of the military profession.³⁷

Constructive political engagement offers a means by which the realities of military life and the essence of military culture can be presented to the public and elected officials as well as to the mass media. This is particularly important in the information age with the expansive information technology capabilities available to the general public as well as to the military.

Warfighters or Peacekeepers?

The U.S. military is well prepared for conventional wars and wars of a lesser order that are configured in a conventional format. However, the strategic thinking and operational doctrine to respond effectively to conventional conflict may be irrelevant to unconventional conflicts and “operations other than war” (OOTW), for which U.S. forces are not configured or trained.³⁸ While the superpower era demanded a particular global political-military capacity and strategic thinking, the new strategic landscape demands a different strategic mind-set and operational doctrine. The transition from one to the other has resulted in an ad hoc mixture of strategic and operational guidelines and political-military doctrine. Most troublesome is the phenomenon of wars of conscience in which policy is driven by moral indignation and a “do something” mentality, such as occurred in Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia. The plethora of peacekeeping missions distracts the military from its primary task, which is preparing for combat, even as budget constraints and domestic priorities shrink the means the U.S. military has at its disposal. It is asked, in short, to do more with less.³⁹

There is no denying that the U.S. military cannot dwell solely on its battlefield mission in the post-Cold War environment. As one authority has argued, there is a pressing need today for “diplomat warriors in operations other than war. The unpolitical soldier—the pure warrior—cannot fulfill the requirements for leadership in operations other than war.”⁴⁰ But there is an underlying fear within the profession that wholesale involvement in OOTW diminishes the effectiveness of the military to perform its

³⁷Ridgway, *Soldier*, p. 270.

³⁸See *U.S. Intervention Policy for the Post Cold-War Period: New Challenges and New Responses*, final report of the Eighty-Fifth American Assembly (Harriman, N.Y.: American Assembly, Apr. 7–10, 1994), p. 5.

³⁹See Les Aspin, *The Bottom-Up Review: Forces for a New Era* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, Sept. 1, 1993).

⁴⁰Rudolph C. Barnes Jr., *Military Legitimacy: Might and Right in the New Millennium*

primary task.⁴¹ Such concerns were well expressed by some in the enlisted ranks. As one private serving in Kosovo said: “You are trained for one thing as an infantryman: war. You are a little bit rougher than most people and you have to come down here and be nice to people. That’s not what we are trained for.”⁴² An enlisted man serving with the 82nd Airborne Division in Kosovo, who spent part of the day guarding Albanian children and another part guarding Serbian children, stated simply, “I wasn’t trained to do day care.”⁴³ The concerns of the military about its employment in the new strategic landscape must be spelled out clearly and unequivocally lest the impact of heightened operational tempo and personnel deployments on military readiness and the quality of military life be glanced over or totally ignored.⁴⁴ In the case of Bosnia, for example, the changing deadlines for U.S. withdrawal, the clouded political objectives, and the absence of an articulated exit strategy should be a cause for concern within both military and civilian circles.

Some military professionals have indeed warned about the negative impact of OOTW commitments. General Gordon Sullivan and Lieutenant Colonel James Dubik lamented as early as 1993 that the U.S. civilian leadership was requiring the military to

contract in both size and budget, contribute to domestic recovery, participate in global stability operations, and retain its capability to produce decisive victory in whatever circumstances they are employed—all at the same time. . . . [I]nternational and domestic realities have resulted in the paradox of declining military resources and increasing military missions, a paradox that is stressing our armed forces. The stress is significant. It requires fundamental changes in the way the nation conducts its defense affairs.⁴⁵

Testifying before a congressional subcommittee the same year, a

(London: Frank Cass, 1996), p. 114. But contrast Daniel P. Bolger, *Savage Peace: Americans at War in the 1990s* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1995), who argues that “in all their guises, however, OOTW are wars—pure and simple” (p. 381).

⁴¹See, for example, John G. Roos, “The Perils of Peacekeeping: Tallying the Costs in Blood, Coin, Prestige, and Readiness,” *Armed Forces Journal International*, Dec. 1993, p. 17.

⁴²Matthew Cox, “You call this soldiering? Walking the beat with KFOR’s warrior cops,” *Army Times*, Mar. 27, 2000, p. 14. See also the response of Gen. Gordon Sullivan (ret.), “A soldier’s work,” *Army Times*, Apr. 10, p. 52.

⁴³James O’Shea, “Why are we using crack troops on safety patrol?” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1999.

⁴⁴For an excellent study of readiness issues see Richard K. Betts, *Military Readiness: Concepts, Choices, Consequences* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

⁴⁵Gen. Gordon R. Sullivan and Lt. Col. James M. Dubik, *Land Warfare in the 21st Century* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Feb. 1993), p. 8.

number of retired officers insisted that constant involvement in peacekeeping operations saps combat readiness. The late General Maxwell Thurman complained that “after a peacekeeping mission, soldiers have to go through an extensive training program to regain the level of operational proficiency which they held at the outset of that duty.”⁴⁶ And in 1995, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General John Shalikashvili, made the same point:

If we are selective and only engage when our interests are very clear, when we have agreement on the limits of our involvement and the conditions of our withdrawal, and we go in when we can make a difference and have the support of an informed public, then maybe in time we will view such missions as supportive of our interests and not as damaging to our security.⁴⁷

In no case, however, were these earnest professional judgments even noticed, much less acted upon, by the civilian government or media, even though they clearly address issues of profound national interest rather than the armed services’ narrow self-interest. General Shalikashvili even iterated his concern to several reporters shortly before his retirement, but again his remarks fell on deaf ears.⁴⁸

As the Clinton administration came to an end, it was obvious to many that it had viewed the U.S. military as an arm of the Department of State, that is, as a tool of foreign policy to be employed in peacekeeping operations under the rubric of OOTW. As a result of the controversy surrounding the Clinton administration’s military policy, the next administration’s handling of the military is sure to come under close scrutiny. The controversy over such missions was aptly described by General Colin Powell:

My constant, unwelcome message at all meetings on Bosnia was simply that we should not commit military forces until we had a clear political objective. . . . The debate exploded at one session when Madeleine Albright, our ambassador to the UN, asked me in frustration, “What’s the point in having this superb military that you’re always talking about if we can’t use it?” I thought I would have an aneurysm. American GIs were not toy soldiers to be moved around on some sort of global game board. . . . I told Ambassador Albright that the U.S. military would carry out any mission it was handed, but my advice would always be that the tough political goals had to be set first.⁴⁹

For many in the military profession the “Albright syndrome”

⁴⁶Roos, “The Perils of Peacekeeping,” p. 17.

⁴⁷Remarks by General John M. Shalikashvili, in the Cantigny Conference Series, “Humanitarian Crises: Meeting the Challenges” (Chicago: Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation, 1995), p. 58.

⁴⁸John G. Roos, “Last Call; General ‘Shali’ Shares His Take on the Past Four Years,” *Armed Forces Journal International*, Oct. 1997, p. 2.

⁴⁹Powell, *My American Journey*, pp. 576, 577. Gen. Powell has also spoken about

threatens to undermine military culture and deny the very purpose of the military. It is also the case that no useful purpose is served if military professionals adhere to the “can do” syndrome (regardless of the threat, mission, or contingency) without clearly indicating the likely costs involved, including the impact on combat readiness, quality of military life, and the military’s primary purpose. Such matters must be placed in the public arena.⁵⁰

American history offers important lessons about the use of the military in nontraditional missions. For example, during the post-Civil War period between 1870 and 1890, the U.S. Army went through what has been described as the “Dark Ages.”⁵¹ During this period, the military officers functioned as governors, police, and judges throughout most of the old Confederacy, suppressed domestic labor strife, and pacified and administered Indian tribes in the West. In reality, wrote a colonel in 1895, “the Army is now a gendarmery—a national police force.”⁵² Between 1898 and the 1930s, the army and the Marine Corps participated in numerous missions other than conventional conflict in Latin America. Likewise, after World War II, U.S. Army armored units in Germany were reorganized into constabulary squadrons whose purpose was to function as a national gendarmery, taking the place of the German police in the American zone of occupation. These units were trained and equipped to maintain law and order and to deal with the German civilian populace and displaced persons. But such constabulary squadrons quickly lost their preparedness for conventional battle.

Such experiences would seem to supply U.S. military professionals with ample evidence about the costs and consequences of such OOTW. Yet, such evidence has so far had no impact on the prevailing “Albright syndrome.”

Conclusion

To adjust to today’s uncertain domestic and strategic landscapes, the U.S. officer corps must transcend its purely military

the problems facing the military involvement in Bosnia. See Gen. Colin L. Powell, “U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead,” *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992/93, pp. 32–45. His views were not necessarily in accord with those of the Clinton administration, or those of any number of civil-military scholars. See also Harry Summers, “Leave the Military Alone, They Already Have a Full-Time Job,” *Army Times*, May 29, 1995, p. 54.

⁵⁰The disagreements over the use of the American military and the various arguments regarding decisive force are well examined in Hoffman, *Decisive Force*.

⁵¹Kemble, *The Image of the Army Officer in America*, p. 127. See also Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 167–71.

⁵²Millett and Maslowski, *For Common Defense*, p. 259.

notion of professionalism and practice constructive political engagement based on the recognition that the issues it faces have undeniable political dimensions. To be sure, there are limits to constructive political engagement as defined by the military professional ethos and the American democratic system. However, these limits do not proscribe military professionals' airing and articulating their views when policy and strategy (or lack thereof) pose significant dangers to the U.S. military's *raison d'être* and quality of life.

The inescapable fact is that an effective military system must be authoritarian and driven by the need for combat cohesion, unit effectiveness, discipline under a chain of command, subordination of individual rights to the group, and unity of effort. Not least, this unique military culture must be nurtured within the American democratic system. At the same time, within these parameters, individual dignity must be maintained.⁵³ This was never an easy proposition and it appears even more difficult today, at a time when the reigning ethos of the civilian culture appears increasingly hostile to the professional military ethos, places social agendas above military preparedness on its list of priorities, and embraces the notion that a technological "revolution in military affairs" (push-button warfare) makes possible "clean" wars and a kinder, gentler battlefield. But it has yet to be demonstrated that the information age and smart weapons have eliminated the need for soldiers "on the ground" or will allow killing to be done humanely and nicely.

The task before us should be obvious. It is to reinforce, not undermine, the military culture—a culture that remains rooted in the psychological and physical notions of killing the enemy—while maintaining its loyalty to the principles of democracy and civilian supremacy. At the present time, that task is not advanced by silence. On the contrary, the voice of the military profession must be heard if the military is to serve the nation effectively. It is particularly important for the military profession to respond to those who dogmatically and erroneously associate the U.S. armed forces with a particular political preference, bureaucratic interest group, or subversive conspiracy.

⁵³This approach attempts to synthesize some elements of Huntington's view of an authoritarian military with those of Janowitz's constabulary concept. See Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, and Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*.

In its highly successful program to improve race relations in its ranks, the army adopted what Charles Moskos termed a "race-savvy" approach—that is, an attitude that was neither blind nor preferential, but honest. What the military profession must master today is a mind-set that is equally gender savvy and politically savvy.⁵⁴ That means that the armed forces ought not to be blind to the undeniable differences between the sexes, nor obliged to give preferential treatment to women, but instead be free to make their personnel decisions on the basis of unit cohesion, morale, and combat preparedness. This applies as well to the issue of homosexuals serving in the military. The "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy remains in effect, although much debated. Some people call for major changes that would allow openly homosexual men and women to serve, while others see the current policy as the best way to ensure combat cohesion.⁵⁵ Being politically savvy means that the armed forces ought not to pretend that politics do not matter, nor engage in partisanship, but instead be free to counsel national leaders and the American public about the costs of a given policy or deployment in terms of preparedness and to educate them on the inviolable values of military life and culture. To be politically savvy is simply to recognize that the military is an arm of the American people, that military and political objectives are often inextricable, and that a public airing of military perspectives is indispensable to the making of wise policy. Only a politically savvy military profession can remind the public and its elected officials that the military's prime purpose is "to kill and break things" in the defense of their way of life. Perhaps, as so often is the case, John Keegan said it best:

Soldiers are not as other men—that is the lesson I have learned from a life cast among warriors. The lesson has taught me to view with extreme suspicion all theories and representations of war that equate it with other activity in human affairs. . . . War is fought . . . by men whose values and skills are not those of politicians and diplomats. They are those of a world apart, a very ancient world, which exists in parallel with the everyday world but does not belong to it. Both worlds change over time, and the warrior adapts in step to the civil-

⁵⁴David Gergen, "Becoming 'Race Savvy,'" *U.S. News and World Report*, June 2, 1997, p. 78. The notion of race savvy is attributed to Charles Moskos. See Charles Moskos and John Sibley Butler, *Be All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way* (New York: Basic Books, 1996). According to Gergen, race savvy "is not race blind" nor "is it racial preferences." Race savvy "demands absolute dedication to ending racial bias, it demands money for more training, and it demands aggressive leadership at the top. Race savvy—surely, an idea whose time is here."

⁵⁵See, for example, Charles Moskos, "Don't Knock 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 16, 1999; and John Allen Williams and Laura Miller, "Don't Blame 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,'" *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 30, 2000.

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ian. It follows it, however, at a distance. The distance can never be closed.⁵⁶

⁵⁶John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. xvi.