

Civil-Military Relations

The Postmodern Democratic Challenge

By **GREGORY D. FOSTER**

Civil-military relations have become an object of universal concern in the postmodern world in which we live. What militaries do and look like, where they properly fit in the societies of which they are a part, and how they are used and kept in check are enduring concerns that have acquired new life, form, and meaning in an age that is materially different from our modern past.

Today, as never before, civil-military relations must be judged in a larger strategic context, defined by the following four propositions:

1. Globalization—a process that suffuses virtually every aspect of our lives—is inevitable. Although common logic would deny that anything can be truly inevitable, with or without human intervention, globalization assumes so many forms and occurs at so many levels that it will not be stopped.¹
2. With the spread of globalization, global democratization—the process of democratizing the world through greater transparency, the multifaceted diffusion of power, the creation of expansive networks of interaction, and spontaneous empowerment—also becomes inevitable. Although the human tendency to seek advantage over others is unlikely to abate, and although those already possessing power will strive unwaveringly to retain it at all costs, the forces of equalization will ultimately prove too numerous and persistent to defeat.
3. The continued viability of the state—its ability to survive and function in a self-redefining world of new power centers and avenues of influence—will depend on how well the state meets the expanding needs of society.
4. The performance and legitimacy of the military, acting as both an arm of the state and an important institution of society, will be

instrumental in determining how viable the state remains.

A FUTURE GREATLY UNLIKE THE PAST

The future surrounding these developments will be characterized by pervasive global interconnectedness in all spheres of life, the dramatic compression of space and time, and expanding levels of media-driven transparency. It will be a future in which the effects of action or inaction will be magnified, in which the threshold of crisis (for decision makers and publics alike) will be lowered appreciably, response time for decision makers reduced, and the attendant potential for disaster multiplied. It will be a future marked by new subliminal forms of aggression and intervention, proliferating violence that attends the disequilibrating redistribution of power, an expansion of contingencies that demand immediate attention and action, a further profusion of undeclared internal “nonwars,” and accelerated technological obsolescence.

Three features of this generalized future, however, will be especially significant in determining whether and how governments in general and militaries in particular act. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these features will be the continuing convergence between the strategic and tactical domains of human and military activity. Because of the magnifying and accelerating effects of the media, the most obscure events and conditions in the most remote parts of the globe can and do have almost instantaneous strategic reverberations at many temporal and spatial removes from their point of occurrence. This forces the hand of decision makers, accelerates and distorts the normal deliberative decision-making process, and subjects those on the ground (military or not) to constant and intense scrutiny.

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Another significant feature of the future will be a growing intolerance for casualties among both publics and militaries skeptical about the uncertain stakes and risks worth bearing in an increasingly complex and ambiguous world order. Moreover, the future will add further confusion to established notions of sovereignty that have already been called into question. Most notably, we will be forced to ask, even more than at present, where sovereignty properly resides—in the state or in individuals. The antipodal tension between territorial integrity and humanitarian intervention, therefore, will assume added salience in the decision-making calculus of governments.

How will the evolving human condition figure in this future? Will humans the world over succumb to growing levels of ennui, anomie, and alienation (from one another and from their governments)? Will they become more atomized, distrustful, and uncivil? Will their expectations of government continue to rise dramatically, and will governments show themselves increasingly ill-equipped to fulfill these heightened expectations? Will there be growing levels of civic indifference, disengagement, and strategic illiteracy? And will humans and governments maintain their preternatural aversion to risk and resistance to change? The answer to all of these questions will assuredly be yes.

Finally, let us acknowledge the evolving nature of war itself. The surfeit of talk that we have heard for more than a decade now about the so-called “revolution in military affairs” that is at hand, about military transformation, is simply that: talk. Rather than being in the midst of sweeping, tradition-shattering revolutionary upheaval and overhaul, we are instead on the cusp of a grand evolution of war that has taken us from a prolonged historical period of “hot war,” dating to antiquity, in which the actual use of force was the central element of statecraft. From there, we moved to a highly compressed period of “cold war,” in which two overmuscled behemoths, more alike than not, sought the nonuse of force through the untethered accretion of military might and tacit threatmaking. Currently, we find ourselves in a period of “new war,” where nonmilitary instruments of power and nontraditional uses of the military promise the best results abroad, even if intellectually calcified decision makers remain largely ignorant of the efficacy of such measures.

The logical extension of this historical pattern into the future points to an as yet only dimly imagined end-state of “no war” marked

by the essential irrelevance of militaries as we have traditionally known them and by the cessation of large-scale collective violence—between or within states—as a meaningful or even attractive means of resolving disputes. The achievement of this end-state, however seemingly unrealistic in light of history, will depend on the intellectual capacity of governments and publics to appreciate its desirability and to take necessary action, unbound by the stultifying constraints of historical precedent, toward its realization.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING STRATEGIC

Faced with a future of such proportions, democracies both mature and inchoate will have little choice but to pursue a state of civil-military relations that aspires to the following normative ideal:

- a strategically effective military
- whose leadership provides strategically sound advice
- to strategically competent civilian authorities
- representing and answering to a civically engaged (and strategically aware) public
- all complemented by (a) a critical free press, (b) a viable civil society, and (c) a military-industrial complex that occupies a properly subordinate (rather than dominant) role in society.

To establish the substantive importance of the strategic in this ideal scheme of civil-military relations, and to counteract the image of rhetorical pretense, it is important to explain the reasons for such terminology. Strategic effectiveness, like the measurement of effectiveness in other realms, is principally a function of the extent to which the aims that one seeks—or, to be more precise, the aims that one ought to seek in a democracy—are achieved.

Before we explore these aims, let us acknowledge the other sense in which strategic effectiveness is given special meaning. In the media age in which we live, such effectiveness also is a function of the effective management of perceptions—the creation and projection of images, the manipulation of symbols, the construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of reality. This is not a crass call for duplicitously manufacturing truth or altering facts to shape public opinion. Rather, it is an endorsement of sophistication in appreciating the measures that others use to judge one’s performance and standing in the international

sphere—competence, consistency, reliability, responsiveness, resolve, and the like. These are all fundamentally mental constructs that help determine how much credibility one commands. The perceptual sphere is also where one's credibility can be undermined even more easily, where strength can be inadvertently (and almost effortlessly) turned into weakness by projecting an image of hypocrisy, arrogance, bellicosity, and greed.

But let us return to the strategic aims that a democracy, any democracy, ought to seek. There are three such aims: assured security, the prevention of crisis, and the preservation of civil society.

Assured security is predicated on the recognition that security is something more encompassing and robust than mere defense. Its essence is embodied in the preamble to the U.S. Constitution, which talks not only about providing for the common defense but also about forming, and presumably sustaining, a more perfect union (national unity); establishing justice; ensuring domestic tranquility; promoting the general welfare; and securing the blessings of liberty for ourselves and for future generations. All of these things collectively constitute assured security and transcend the narrow protective parameters of defense.

Viewing security in this way demands that we come to grips with the question of where national security fits—whether it is an autonomous condition of intrinsic importance or simply a way station that mediates between individual (human) security on the one hand and higher-order levels of regional and global security on the other.

Preventing crisis is the second overarching strategic aim of democracy. Where crisis occurs—that is, unwanted crisis not contrived and orchestrated by politicians for their own ulterior political motives—strategy has failed. A crisis is a time-sensitive threat to something of value that demands immediate response and diverts time, energy, attention, and vital resources from their primary purposes. The situation, not the decision maker, is in control, and the decision maker's task is simply to get rid of the situation as quickly and painlessly as possible. Similarly, the symptoms of the moment are in control. Any thought of underlying causes, or any inclination to deal with them, is essentially superfluous.

The third strategic aim of democracy, rarely recognized, is to preserve civil society. Rather than referring simply to the existence and activ-

ities of nongovernmental organizations, civil society here means the interactive constellation of institutions, both public and private, and the values (rights and obligations) embedded in those institutions that give democracy its name and permit society to function with civility.

The threat to civil society, then, is that which, in the process of providing for the common defense, creates or feeds injustice; foments civil unrest; diminishes the general welfare; infringes on civil liberties; or aggravates tensions, instability, and militarism. When these things occur, civil society is undermined, and the result is the opposite of that intended: insecurity rather than security.

The complementarity of goal attainment and perceptions management in determining strategic effectiveness becomes clear when government succeeds in fulfilling (or at least making demonstrable progress toward) these grand strategic aims: assured security, crisis prevention, and the preservation of civil society. When this occurs, the result is public well-being, which contributes to enhanced trust and confidence in government, which, in turn, creates a sense of community, broad-based consensus, and unifying cohesion among the members of society. All of this produces the unity—unity of purpose, unity of effort, and unity of action—that is the hallmark of effective perceptions management.

Why be strategic? The answer should be self-evident. First, being strategic—taking the long view, looking at the big picture, anticipating conditions and events before they occur, understanding the second-, third-, and fourth-order consequences of action or inaction—is a moral obligation of government. It is what government should be expected to do in fulfilling its assumed mandate from the people. Second, being strategic inoculates us against crisis. It provides the intellectual antidote to the self-absorbed, inward-looking tunnel vision that precipitates crisis and nurtures the crisis mentality. Third, being strategic is the basis for sustainable consensus, the provision of purpose, coherence, and priorities so necessary to galvanize the people in common cause, especially in the face of ambiguity and complexity. Fourth, being strategic is at the heart of strategic leadership, the inherently intellectual enterprise that should be what those at the pinnacle of government practice. Strategic leadership is about persuading equals with minds of their own, not about directing subordinates who are expected to follow obediently (if not altogether mindlessly). Finally, being strategic enhances

civilian control of the military, the heart of civil-military relations. A strategically oriented military, operating within a strategically oriented governmental apparatus and societal climate, is a military that is both more controlled and more controllable than it otherwise would be.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT OF CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

In approaching the subject of civil-military relations, it is instructive to remember that the

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purpose of the state is to govern society. What, then, is the purpose of government? Is it simply, in circular fashion, to preserve the state? Is it to do what the people can't—or don't want to—do for themselves? Is it perhaps to serve society—to be servant and steward rather than master? Or is it, as America's founders instructed us, and as Enlightenment thinkers instructed them, to secure the natural, universal, unalienable human rights that all human beings deserve to enjoy simply by virtue of being human?

And what of the practice of government itself? What are the imperatives that guide the conduct of democratic governance? First, of course, there must be public accountability, an acceptance of the public's natural right to know what their government is doing for (and to) them. There must be popular consent, the consent (and dissent) of the governed. There must be neutral competence, the normative principle of behavior applied to civil servants, who are expected to be competent in performing their jobs on behalf of the people without being subjected to or swayed by political pressures that would undermine their performance or objectivity. There must be bureaucratic efficiency, the canonical measure of bureaucratic performance idealized by German sociologist Max Weber early in the past century. There must be a firm reliance on meritocracy—the selection, promotion, and retention of personnel based on how well they perform, not, in the manner of patronage, on who they are. And, perhaps the

flip-side of public accountability, there must be administrative discretion, the discretionary authority that professionals expect and require to administer the operations of government without undue external meddling or interference (presumably by outsiders who are unqualified to do so).

Such principles should prompt us to recall that democracy is based on a social contract of mutual rights, obligations, and expectations that binds those who govern to those who are governed. There also is such a tacit compact that binds the three parties to the civil-military relationship to one another: the people, the civilian officials who represent the people and oversee the military, and the military itself.

What, as part of this social contract, is the military's proper role? Is it to serve itself, in the manner of a self-interested interest group? Few but those in uniform, convinced of the supernal sanctity of their mission, would subscribe to this narrow view. Or is the military's proper role to serve a particular regime in power or to serve the state, as perhaps all too many of us have come to believe and even accept? Or is the military's role to serve something higher—society or even humanity, as pretentious as that might sound? To choose these more elevated objects of military purpose is to raise the bar of public expectations well beyond where it traditionally has been set and to bring into question the sense of identity common to most militaries.

This brings us to the central question that must be asked if sound civil-military relations are to be achieved in any democratic society: How does an inherently authoritarian institution (which the military is) that employs violence on behalf of the state, subscribes to an ethos of obedience, cloaks itself in secrecy, and demands exclusivity (all of which the military does) achieve legitimacy?

The start of an answer lies in the four imperatives that ought to govern the military in a democracy. First, the military must be operationally competent—able to do the job expected of it, whatever that job might be. Second, the military must provide sound advice to decision makers. Third, as a major institution of society, the military must be socially responsible. Fourth, those in uniform must be politically neutral—not involved in or influenced by political activities or considerations that would compromise their objectivity and thereby bring the institution's credibility into question.

Some clarification is in order here—if only in the form of questions that need to be asked in the interest of deeper understanding. Does operational competence mean military effectiveness or strategic effectiveness? Is it possible to be militarily effective—able to perform successfully in combat—yet strategically ineffective, or even dysfunctional (by being, for example, exorbitantly expensive, overly destructive, or alienated from society)? And what should we prefer—a militarily effective military that manages violence on behalf of the state, or a strategically effective military that serves the larger aims of society and humanity? The importance of this question lies in the fact that in the cosmic pecking order that defines who stands where in the hierarchy of international politics, one of the key attributes in the future that will distinguish superpowers from great powers, major powers from minor powers, will be the possession of a strategically effective military.

Does sound advice to decision makers mean purely military advice, or does it also include strategic advice? Should those in uniform be permitted and expected to provide advice on matters that transcend purely military operational questions and that deal, for example, with national aims and priorities—especially if the civilian officials responsible for issuing strategic guidance show themselves less than capable of doing so?

This question is closely tied to the leading question associated with political neutrality. Does political neutrality refer to noninvolvement in low, partisan politics alone? Or does it apply as well to the high politics of statecraft—what we might consider diplomacy in uniform? And even if it is clear that the principal taboo is low politics, where should we draw the line in proscribing military involvement? Should those in uniform be permitted to vote (a right of citizenship that George C. Marshall foreswore when he served), be involved in political campaigns, endorse political candidates (as increasing numbers of senior military retirees in the United States have chosen to do), form trade unions, and publicly speak out in favor of or in opposition to government policies (as Colin Powell did as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but as lower-ranking personnel of less stature do at their peril)?

These questions raise important concerns about the scope of political neutrality. Does it, or should it, include ideological neutrality, religious neutrality, and cultural neutrality as

well—an injunction to remain free of prejudicial or discriminatory speech or behavior based on ideological preference (antiliberal or anti-environmental, for example), religious preference (anti-Muslim or anti-Jewish, for example), or cultural preference (ethnic or racial bigotry, homophobia, or sexism, for example)? A compelling case can be made that such forms of neutrality should be expected in the behavior of those in uniform, even if—especially if—they cannot, in their primal capacity as human beings, cleanse their minds of prejudicial attitudes.

And what about social responsibility? For starters, should the military be a reflection of society or distinct from and apart from society based on the uniqueness of what it does? If the military is to be a reflection of society, in what ways should it be representative—demographically, experientially, ideologically? Is there a danger if those in uniform are more conservative (or liberal) than society as a whole; if the composition of the armed forces is skewed toward particular groups or strata of society (minorities or the underprivileged, for example); or if civilians who exercise authority over the military are largely devoid of military experience?²

What would a socially responsible military be or do? For one thing, it would necessarily be affordable, although it is not clear just what that means: 2 percent of gross domestic product annually, for instance, or one-half of 1 percent, or 4 percent? What is clear is that as a matter of principle, an affordable military would be one that can be fielded and maintained without draining or diverting vital national resources from other key strategic aims (for example, education, public health and safety, infrastructure, environmental protection, and research and development).

A socially responsible military would be one possessed of enough prestige to be respected by society and to attract the members of society to its service without expectation of special privilege.

A socially responsible military would be one whose members demonstrate morally superior behavior without being morally arrogant, without adopting an attitude that they are better than society as a whole (a tendency quite common among those in uniform the world over).

A socially responsible military would be one that enjoys enough professional autonomy to perform effectively, but not so much as to alienate itself from society.

A socially responsible military would be one that engages in, and is expected to engage in, responsible dissent without crossing the largely indefinable line into disobedience.

Finally, a socially responsible military, like other institutions in a democratic society, would be part of the system of checks and balances—a check, when necessary, on the impetuosity of civilian officials given to precipitous action, and a balance against civilian strategic shortcomings where they exist.

UNDERSTANDING CIVILIAN CONTROL

It is a fundamental premise of democratic civil-military relations that civilian control of the military is clearly possible without democracy, but democracy isn't possible without civilian control of the military.³ Civilian control is, in fact, the governing concept most familiar to those who concern themselves with civil-military relations, but there are two other related notions that warrant explication here: civilian supremacy and civilian subjugation.

Civilian control is the provision of oversight and the issuance of direction to the military by duly elected and appointed civilian officials. Oversight implies supervisory vigilance, to be sure, but it also is an essentially responsive activity. Direction gives the concept of control a more proactive managerial connotation in which the military is strictly the executor of decisions issuing properly from civilian superiors.

Why is such control necessary and desirable? Because, considering the many instruments of coercion available to the state (the military, police, internal security and paramilitary forces, intelligence services, and the like), it is absolutely essential that the possession of such coercive means in the hands of those in power be given the authority and legitimacy that can only be conferred by the civilians who represent the people and deliberate on their behalf and that the use of such instruments be subject to rigorous restraint and justification. At least, that is the design.

The poles of debate on the meaning and importance of civilian control were clearly expressed more than fifty years ago by the two antagonists in the famous Truman-MacArthur controversy during the Korean War. President Truman, writing later in his memoirs, had this to say on the subject:

If there is one basic element in our Constitution, it is civilian control of the military. Policies are to be made by the elected political offi-

cials, not by generals or admirals. . . . I have always believed that civilian control of the military is one of the strongest foundations of our system of free government. . . . We have always guarded the constitutional provision that prevents the military from taking over the government from the authorities, elected by the people, in whom the power resides. . . . One reason that we have been so careful to keep the military within its own preserve is that the very nature of the service hierarchy gives military commanders little if any opportunity to learn the humility that is needed for good public service. . . . Any man who has come up through the process of political selection, as it functions in our country, knows that success is a mixture of principles steadfastly maintained and adjustments made at the proper time and place—adjustments to conditions, not adjustment of principles. These are things a military officer is not likely to learn in the course of his profession. The words that dominate his thinking are "command" and "obedience," and the military definitions of these words are not definitions for use in a republic.⁴

But here is what General MacArthur, the man Truman fired as commander of U.S. and UN forces in Korea, argued in vindication of his outspoken opposition to presidential policies at the time:

I find in existence a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance and loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the executive branch of government, rather than to the country and its Constitution which they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous. None could cast greater doubt upon the integrity of the armed services. For its application would at once convert them from their traditional and constitutional role as the instrument for the defense of the Republic into something partaking of the nature of a pretorian guard, owing sole allegiance to the political master of the hour.⁵

Significantly, both men invoked the Constitution to defend their positions—Truman to legitimize the very principle of civilian control as a bulwark of freedom, and MacArthur to justify insubordination to civilian political superiors (who, in his eyes, weren't actually superior). For Truman, the Constitution is clear and leaves no room for interpretation about the unequivocal authority of the civilian commander in chief. For MacArthur, there is no higher authority in the affairs of state than the Constitution—the ultimate embodiment of the principle that the rule of law supercedes rule by man in a democracy. The meaning of the Constitution, and thus the determination of

what is in the national or public interest, is best left, MacArthur suggested, to those who are most qualified to do so—professionals in uniform who have sworn to support and defend the Constitution, not amateurs who temporarily occupy high political office.

Whether Truman or MacArthur was more right is the question—an enduringly important, but also extraordinarily elusive, question. This selfsame debate goes on, will continue to go on, and should go on so long as there are men and women of ambition in positions of authority who seek to have their own way—either in the interest of, or at the expense of, the public.

There are innumerable mechanisms available for asserting control over the military. Laws and regulations are the most obvious, common, and ostensibly conclusive such mechanisms—especially in that they provide a tangible manifestation of the primacy of the rule of law in a democracy. National constitutions in particular represent the ultimate authority for such things as designating the head of state the commander in chief of the armed forces, specifically prohibiting political activities by those in uniform, or granting the legislature the power of the purse and the power to declare war.

Similarly, formal organizational arrangements—typically codified in law—also are a way to assert control. Having separate arms of the military (rather than a unified military), for example, each with its own operational and administrative apparatus, as in the United States, is a way to control by creating duplication and competition (what we in the United States have traditionally decried as interservice rivalry). Another common organizational mechanism is to place civilian secretariats manned by civilians with policymaking authority atop the military establishment itself and at the head of each of the armed services. The tradeoff—the conundrum—in such organizational arrangements is that the retarding and restraining effects of duplication and competition, like the inbuilt inefficiencies of democracy more generally, tend to work at cross purposes with the unity and responsiveness strategic effectiveness demands.

Budgets are perhaps the most fundamental form of control, for funding is the lifeblood of bureaucratic survival, functioning, and reach. For one thing, budgets are a means for conditioning behavior—for rewarding or punishing particular activities and thereby determining whether they continue or cease, expand or con-

tract, accelerate or decelerate. Where final budget authority resides, whether in the executive or legislature, figures largely in the control equation. Moreover, the very structure of the budget has dramatic implications for control—whether it is an annual or a multiyear budget, for example, or how specific and circumscribed spending categories are. A more detailed budget that specifies precise spending authorizations is more controlling than one that provides broad spending categories and considerable discretionary latitude for actual expenditures by the military. Finally, budget transparency, the openness of the budget to public view, is inextricably linked to control: the more open, the more controllable and controlling—but also the more threatening to the military, with its congenital penchant for secrecy.

Force structure, doctrine, and technology also are mechanisms for controlling the military, although such considerations rarely get the attention they deserve in fulfilling this function. Whether a force is predominantly heavy or light, combat-oriented or support-oriented, concentrated or dispersed in disposition, demographically diverse or homogeneous in composition; whether doctrine emphasizes offensive or defensive operations, unilateral or multilateral response, frequent or infrequent personnel rotation, early or late retirement for senior officers; whether technology is largely lethal or nonlethal, highly advanced or less advanced—these are all choices that can affect the ease with which and the degree to which control of the military is possible.

In the final analysis, however, mission and culture are undoubtedly the two most important determinants of military controllability. The mission of the military is seldom thought of as bearing on control because the military's mission is so rarely brought into question. The widespread assumption is that the divinely ordained purpose of any military is to prepare for and wage war, that preparing for war ipso facto prepares a military for any "lesser" mission, and that there therefore is essentially nothing to distinguish one military from another in terms of its essential nature. Such unexamined logic is fundamentally flawed.

There is every reason to believe that a military whose purpose is something other than warfighting—preventing war, for example, or providing for security, or securing and preserving peace—would be a qualitatively different military. One might reasonably postulate, in fact, that a military organized, equipped,

manned, and trained primarily for nonwarfighting missions—peacekeeping, nation building, humanitarian assistance, disaster response—would be inherently more amenable to effective control than a conventional warfighting military. On the other hand, it is just as reasonable to postulate that a military increasingly configured for special operations against terrorist-type threats, one that would expect out of necessity to be permitted to operate in total secrecy, regularly penetrate the sovereign territory of other countries, and frequently cross over into the domain of domestic law enforcement, could be much more difficult to control than a regular warfighting military.

The underlying importance of culture to civilian control lies in the values and practices that define the military and its relationship to society. Here the distinction between objective control and subjective control comes into play. Objective control involves the largely tangible legal and structural measures that establish a formal apparatus for controlling the military. Subjective control concerns the more intangible attitudinal factors that reside in the mind or spirit of those in uniform and thereby can produce deeper, more conclusive levels of control. Put otherwise, objective control is about being a professional (a function of such things as specialized skills, expertise, and preparation, licensing, and standards of conduct), while subjective control is about *being professional* (a function of attitude).⁶

This distinction in turn brings into play questions about the effects of professionalism and professionalization on civilian control and civil-military relations more generally. Especially in Europe today among transitional societies seeking admission to NATO, professionalization is a matter of overriding concern (even if the concept is less clear than it appears to be). In one sense of the term, professionalization is associated with the replacement of conscript forces by volunteer forces. In another sense, professionalization is about force modernization and the associated introduction of more advanced (and expensive) technologies. Both connotations raise questions about whether the measures involved serve to move militaries and their societies closer together or farther apart and whether they therefore contribute to or detract from sound civil-military relations. Are volunteers more or less representative of society than conscripts? Are volunteers more or less likely to exhibit self-generated (attitudinal) control than conscripts? Does technological

modernization involve capabilities and know-how that are more or less conducive to accountability and effective oversight? Does professionalization inadvertently contribute to militarization and the progressive alienation of the military from society?

Such questions underscore how culture acts as a mechanism for control—specifically by raising the more fundamental question of whether the values reflected in the actual behavior of those in uniform are compatible with the military's own self-proclaimed institutional ideals and with societal values more generally. It is one thing to say that the military typifies and subscribes to such virtues as competence, courage, decisiveness, dedication, discipline, honor, and obedience. Where this ideal is the reality, spontaneous control of the military is a more or less foregone conclusion.

It is quite another thing, however, to recognize and acknowledge when these idealized values become distorted in practice, manifesting themselves in such actual military behaviors as alienation, arrogance, blind obedience, exclusivity, intolerance, parochialism, and secrecy—or, in the extreme, where they are totally subverted into corruption and crime, incompetence, profligacy, repression, and unaccountability. Where such deviations from the ideal become the norm, or even occur with some frequency, control has broken down and crisis is at hand, even if more alarming, overt signs of crisis—open refusals of orders, mass resignations, catastrophic operational failure, or threats of military takeover—are not present.⁷

SEEKING SUPREMACY, AVOIDING SUBJUGATION

Civilian supremacy is an occasionally used term attached to an underdeveloped concept. When the term is used, it tends to be equated simply with civilian control. True supremacy, however, if we are to give the term its due, connotes something qualitatively beyond mere control—"control plus," let us say, in which all parties to the civil-military relationship are involved in oversight: public oversight of legislative oversight of executive oversight of the military (which itself presumably is committed to stringent self-policing rather than self-promotion or protection).

General MacArthur himself, in the same 1951 speech quoted earlier, alluded to such a state of affairs when he said, "While for the purpose of administration and command the armed services are within the executive branch

of the Government, they are accountable as well to the Congress, charged with the policy making responsibility, and to the people, ultimate repository of all national power."⁸

Where civilian supremacy operates, it actually accentuates debate and may aggravate disagreement over who properly has the final say on a wide range of issues concerning the military's well-being and performance. Who should have ultimate authority—the military itself, executive civilian authorities, the legislature, or even the people—to decide what the military's mission is; how the military is organized, equipped, manned, and trained; what military qualifications and standards should be; whether, when, and how to use the military; whether and when to commit the military to hostilities; how much to spend on the military; who leads the military?

In distinct contrast to civilian supremacy is civilian subjugation, a largely unrecognized but very real condition in which civilians in positions of authority over the military abrogate their responsibility—consciously or not, knowingly or not, willingly or not—for providing sound oversight and direction. When civilian officials are so ignorant of military affairs (as sometimes happens) that they in essence relinquish their decisions de facto to those in uniform; when such officials become advocates for, rather than overseers of, the military, oftentimes to curry favor and gain acceptance; when they, on the other hand, are more militaristic even than the military itself, opting reflexively for military solutions to strategic problems, choosing force as a first rather than a last resort; when any of these things obtain, these officials have subjugated themselves to the military.

Under any circumstances, but especially in light of the surpassing complexities and uncertainties of the postmodern world, effective civilian control of the military will be more essential than ever to effective democratic governance. But control will be only the minimal precondition for success. The higher ideal to be sought will be civilian supremacy, while the failed condition will be civilian subjugation.

After all is said and done, the soundness of civil-military relations ultimately will be a function of the literacy of those involved in the process. For those in positions of civilian authority, it will be a matter, in the first instance, of military literacy—achieving sufficient knowledge of military affairs to make discerning, critical judgments about the military activities under their purview. For those in uni-

form, it will be the even more important matter of civic literacy—achieving a thorough understanding of their constitution and its philosophical underpinnings, the nature and functioning of popular rule, and the democratic rule of law more generally. For both parties, as well as for the society they represent and serve, it will be a larger matter of strategic literacy—achieving the intellectual sophistication and capacity to appreciate the larger purposes and ramifications of sound civil-military relations.

The principal vehicle for achieving such literacy must necessarily be education—not so much in the form of formal schooling as in the form of transparent collaborative dialogue among all the parties to the civil-military relationship. The nettlesome pair of chicken-and-egg questions attending this challenge, of course, will be which comes first: strategic literacy or civic and military literacy, strategic literacy or transparent collaborative dialogue.

NOTES

1. As used here, "globalization" refers to the process of integration between and among the various state and nonstate entities that constitute the international system. Globalization occurs in varying degrees—from mere interconnectedness to interaction to interpenetration to interdependence—across a wide range of domains or contexts—political, economic, technological, cultural, ideational, military, and environmental. The claim here that globalization is inevitable is an acknowledgement of its variety and complexity and a reasoned descriptive judgment of its likelihood, not a normative assessment of its goodness or badness.

2. These were among the major questions that were part of the running debate that took place in the United States throughout the 1990s over whether a gap had developed between the U.S. military and American society. See Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, "The Gap: Soldiers, Civilians and Their Mutual Misunderstanding," *National Interest*, no. 61 (Fall 2000): 29–37, for a good culminating summary of that now-dead debate.

3. Richard H. Kohn makes this self-evidently clear in "How Democracies Control the Military," *Journal of Democracy* 8, no. 4 (October 1997): 140–53.

4. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 444–45.

5. This statement is from a contentious July 25, 1951, address by MacArthur to the Massachusetts Legislature in Boston. Reproduced in Richard H. Rovere and Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *General MacArthur and President Truman: The Struggle for Control of American Foreign Policy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 318.

6. This distinction between objective and subjective control differs markedly from the same terminology that Samuel P. Huntington used to introduce the terms in his classic *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1957), especially

pp. 80-85. I use the terms here in their intellectual sense—objective being outside the mind, subjective being of the mind. Huntington used the terms to refer to the military's political involvement or non-involvement. Subjective control to Huntington pre-supposed military involvement in politics, and objective control came from militarizing (and thus professionalizing) the military. Aside from the substantive contradiction of a more militarized military being considered more professional and more controllable, such usage seems both semantically and conceptually misleading.

7. Invoking the virtuous ideal as the actual norm of military behavior is a common fallacy among those who argue that the military properly subscribes to different, arguably higher, values than society. For an example of this tendency, see John Hillen, "The Civilian-Military Gap: Keep It, Defend It, Manage It," *Naval Institute Proceedings* 124, no. 10 (October 1998): 2-3, and Hillen, "Must U.S. Military Culture Reform?" *Parameters* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1999): 9-23.

8. Rovere and Schlesinger, *General MacArthur*, 318-19.

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