



## NDU Elective 6034

### U.S. Civil-Military Relations and Professionalism

*"The subordination of the political point of view to the military would be contrary to common sense, for policy has declared the war; it is the intelligent faculty. War is only the instrument, and not the reverse. The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible."*

– Karl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832)



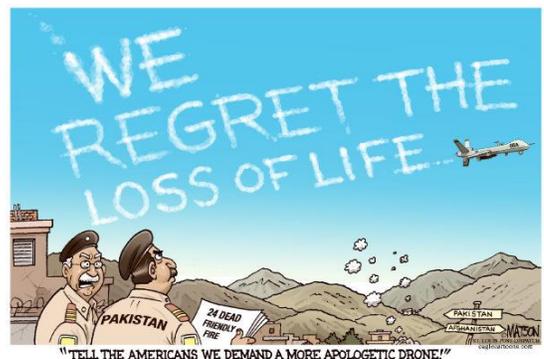
*"To leave a great military enterprise or the plan for one to purely military judgment and decision is a distinction which cannot be allowed, and is even prejudicial; indeed, it is an irrational proceeding to consult professional soldiers on the plan of war, that they give a purely military opinion upon what the cabinet ought to do. . . ."*

– Karl von Clausewitz, *On War* (1832)



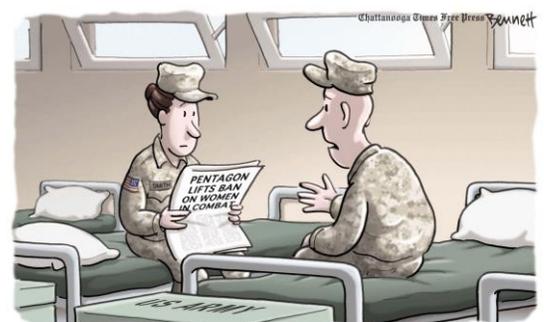
*"It is my conviction that the necessary and wise subordination of the military to civil power will be best sustained, and our people will have greater confidence that it is so sustained, when lifelong professional soldiers, in the absence of some obvious and overriding reasons, abstain from seeking high political office."*

– General Dwight D. Eisenhower (1948)



*"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 officials, not by generals or admirals. . . . 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. . . . 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."*

– President Harry S. Truman (1956)



*"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 praetorian guard, owing sole allegiance to the political master of the hour."*

– General Douglas MacArthur (1951)

'Congratulations... or condolences. Whichever.'

# National Defense University Elective 6034

## "U.S. Civil-Military Relations and Professionalism"

**Instructor:** Professor Greg Foster, Eisenhower School, Tel.: 202-685-4166, Email: [fosterg@ndu.edu](mailto:fosterg@ndu.edu)

**Course Description:** This course examines the nature and health of current civil-military relations in the United States against a normative ideal that calls for a *strategically effective* (operationally competent, politically neutral, socially responsible) *military* whose leadership provides *strategically sound advice* to *strategically competent civilian authorities* who are representative of and answerable to a *civically engaged, strategically aware public*, all undergirded by a *critical free press*, a *vibrant civil society*, and a *properly subordinated military-industrial complex*. Emphasizing the interactions between those in uniform and those in positions of civilian authority throughout the national security establishment, broadly defined, the course places due emphasis on interagency and intergovernmental processes and cultural imperatives that both facilitate and impede integrated, harmonious strategic outcomes.

**Class Dates/Time:** Tuesday, 0800-1130, Fall and Spring, online.

**Required/Recommended Texts and Other Resources:** There will be no required text. Assigned readings will consist of contemporary journal articles from such authoritative publications as *Armed Forces and Society*, *The National Interest*, *Parameters*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Naval Institute Proceedings*, along with recent reports from such organizations as the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Triangle Institute for Security Studies.

### Course Objectives:

- To understand the fundamental nature of civil-military relations in a democratic society such as the United States.
- To understand the historical roots of U.S. civil-military relations.
- To understand the mutual rights, obligations, and expectations of the three parties to the civil-military relationship: the military, civilian authorities, and the public.
- To understand and compare civilian control (of the military) with civilian supremacy and civilian subjugation.
- To establish criteria for judging the health of a democratic superpower's civil-military relations.
- To assess the current state of civil-military relations in the United States.

**Evaluation/Grading:** There will be two major components of the course grade, apportioned as follows:

- 60%: Individual Classroom Participation
- 40%: Individual Writing Assignments (2):
  - Paper 1: 750-word op-ed essay arguing that the state of U.S. civil-military relations is healthy and sound.
  - Paper 2: 750-word op-ed essay arguing that U.S. civil-military relations are in a state of crisis.  
**1<sup>st</sup> paper due Lesson 11; 2<sup>nd</sup> paper due Lesson 12.**

### Schedule:

<u>Lesson</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Civil-Military Relations: Definitional and Conceptual Foundations
2	Historical Roots: Constitutional and Contemporary
3	The Clinton-era Debates: The Crisis and the "Gap"
4	Military Culture, Professionalism, and the Ethos of Obedience
5	The Social Contract: The Requirement for Strategic Effectiveness & Strategically Sound Advice
6	Political Neutrality vs. Politicization
7	A Socially Responsible Military
8	The Social Contract: The Requirement for Strategically Competent Civilian Oversight
9	Civilian Control, Supremacy, and Subjugation
10	The Social Contract: A Civically Engaged, Strategically Aware Public
11	The Social Contract: A Critical Free Press, Vibrant Civil Society, & Properly Subordinated Military-Industrial Complex
12	Summary, Synthesis, and Review