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### ***The Philosophical Demands of the Military's Social Relationships***

The theme for this conference is "*Civil-Military Relations and Social Issues in the Military.*" A more germane topic is difficult to imagine in times of extreme stress on our fighting forces. Seemingly endless deployments coupled with continuous wars and worldwide tensions require support from the community at large and demand the most effective leadership our society can produce. The philosophical foundation for this support and leadership is not new nor is understanding the foundation strictly an academic exercise fit for the halls of universities and "think tanks." The requisite philosophical underpinnings are both practical and obligatory for society and the military establishment if the forces are to have any possibility, in the long term, of sustained success. Well-grounded and time-honored philosophical arguments suggest any attempt to successfully develop either of the two prongs of the theme of this conference is problematic at best. First, civil-military relations, as they exist in the United States today, attenuate the effectiveness of our forces and, second, existing social dysfunction within the services is a seed that can lead to eventual internal disintegration of the forces. This paper argues the civic community required for successful military forces is fragmenting. Further, that fragmentation results from a two-fold assault by the military itself combined with a general disassociation of the populace at-large from the nation's fighting forces. While the

philosophical claims made in this essay are universal the illustrative evidence is intended to apply only to the military-social relationship within the United States.

The evidence for these claims relies conceptually on the writings of three political/social philosophers: Carl von Clausewitz, John Dewey, and James Madison. First, a brief analysis of military/political philosopher Carl von Clausewitz's descriptions of the *moral forces* required for an effective military demonstrates the necessity for strong bonds between the civilian community and the military forces of the state. The nature of those bonds necessitates a "buy-in" to the mission and culture of the military by the citizens of the state. Second, a short exposition of American pragmatist and social philosopher John Dewey's concept of meaningful *experience* posits the need for an active interaction between individual citizens and the military environment. This essay claims the most appropriate method of forging a strong link between the military forces and the people is to ensure a "critical mass" of the citizenry has served or been intimately involved with military life. Finally, parsing political philosopher and founding father James Madison's view of the dangers of *faction*, this essay establishes the essential requirements for cohesion within the military itself. Madison demands keeping factions at bay in order to keep a community intact and free from those influences that can divide and destroy the effectiveness of the fraternal (military) order.

Once the moral duties espoused by von Clausewitz are established, the requirements for appropriate experience of Dewey are fully understood, and the need to avoid faction are well grounded, this paper examines the current state of the military and civilian communities to see how well each alone—and both together—meet the demands of the three foundational requirements for a strong linkage between the two communities.

Von Clausewitz criticized those theorists who attempted to make war subject to rules. His classic, *On War*, addresses the question of whether war is an art or a science and, in so doing, answers those analysts and critics, such as Jomini, who saw war as subject to strict analysis. Von Clausewitz takes theorists to task for not delving into the *nature* of war but, also, for trying to analyze war through mathematical balances and formulas. (OW: 182) Book II, Chapter III, of *On War* is titled “Art or Science of War.” Therein, he concludes war is neither an art nor a science in the strict sense that those terms have been defined. If war is to be placed into either category, and that placement is used to construct an understanding of war, then not only will we be misled in our understanding but also we will have pigeonholed war into a limited and confined space that constricts full appreciation of war as the apex of human endeavor. Analyzing war as either art or science, the General believes, results “in a mass of incorrect analogies.” (HP: 149)

Since war transcends both science and art, von Clausewitz makes a bold claim. The General asserts “war does not belong in the realm of the arts and sciences; rather it is part of man’s social existence.” (HP: 149) This separation of war from art and science and war’s subsequent identification as a social endeavor underpins the theme of this conference. For the General, existence itself becomes a social construct.

This social nature is seen clearly in the “wonderful trinity” von Clausewitz cites as the structure of *all* war. The elements of this “paradoxical” trinity of war are “violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and, of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.” (HP: 89) The first leg of the trinity is the will of the people. The commander and the army represent

the second leg. The third leg consists of the political will of the state. Thus, the nexus of the people, military, and political structure constitutes the social milieu in which war is conducted. These forces continually interact to define a constantly changing environment and define the core nature of war. The commander is a player in the conduct of war but he or she does not act alone. The commander is a part of the larger society and, to a large extent, is defined by that society.

Of concern are the main moral or social elements of the army that make for success in war. Von Clausewitz lists the principal moral elements of the military as *“the skill of the commander, the experience and courage of the troops, and their patriotic spirit.”* (HP: 186) Note that each of these qualities is developed not in isolation but as the result of intense social conditioning and interaction. The army does not function alone as separate or disparate units or individuals. The commander’s skill is developed through continuous and intense interaction in combat and, eventually, at the highest levels of the political arena. This interaction within and between armies is intensely social. Similarly, the experience and courage of the troops can only be forged in a tight knit community of peers undergoing similar trials and hardships.

No peacetime community offers or demands the bonds similar to those required for members of a military unit. This bonding is an example of social cohesion *par excellence*. The demand for patriotic spirit is a function of the spirit felt by the members of the nation at large. The community spirit is the social glue that binds the members of the nation to the cause at hand; this function is purely a social phenomenon. Community spirit and the patriotic spirit of the military—both are socially determined—often govern the outcome of not only a battle but also a war. If one considers the national feeling of the populace in the

Allied countries during World War II and compares that with the national feeling in the same countries during the Vietnam War, the claim that outcome results from internal social conditions seems not only feasible but also demonstrable.

The underlying point of von Clausewitz's description of the military virtues required for success is that war is entirely a social phenomenon and that forces are not only defined by the social makeup of each military force in isolation but are products of the community from which those forces come.

Dewey's concept of aesthetics describes as its foundation a certain and fundamental way that individuals must undergo experiences if those experiences are to impart meaning in any robust sense. To have meaningful experiences one must be in a continual cycle of *doing* and *undergoing* in the relationship he or she has with the environment. To fully gain from any experience requires intense interaction with the environment until the cycle of change between the environment and the individual can go no further. Only when this consummation is reached can the individual claim to have had a meaningful experience. This essay claims that such experiences, as they relate to the military community, can *only* be had by service in the military. The oft heard phrase, "You cannot know what something is *like* unless you have been there," captures—if only obliquely—the sense of this Deweyan concept. Such experiences are necessary for the success of the community/military relationship because these aesthetic experiences shape the views of the citizenry toward the military. This is only possible if enough members of the populace have had these experiences so these individuals can effectively influence the remainder of the group in a positive way to ensure the community bonds with the military. Simple good will or armchair patriotism does not motivate individuals to act. Prior *meaningful* experience can

be a powerful motivator for action and the strengthening of the civilian/military relationship. Lacking this experience, the vast majority of our citizens does not, and cannot, form the strong emotional ties needed to forge the necessary linkage with the military.

In *Federalist #10*, Madison alerts us to the fatal dangers of faction. This danger is so strong that the Constitution of the United States was written, in part, to control faction. "Among the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. ... By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." (*Federalist #10*) Faction *within* any social group, especially the military, as Madison clearly notes, drastically weakens or destroys the effectiveness of that group.

Only two ways exist for controlling faction, (1) removing the liberty that allows for the factions to exist, and (2) inculcating everyone in the affected community to have the same ideas and beliefs as those who originally composed the faction. Madison asserts neither solution is acceptable; the first might quash faction but also smothers *all* free actions. The second is both impractical and unwise, "The diversity in the faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of government." (*Federalist #10*)

Concern for the destructive potential of faction within any organization demands eternal vigilance by the community to stop any budding sub-groups within its membership

from obtaining a power base that can lead to the loss of effectiveness of the entire group. In the military the force of faction leads to the inevitable loss of unit cohesion. Once cohesion is lost, the force is doomed to eventual failure.

The views of Madison, Dewey, and von Clausewitz coalesce into a coherent and synergistic demand on the military and the community. Von Clausewitz shows the link between the services and the civilian environment from which the fighting forces come must share a common sense of purpose and partake of a common bond. This bond fails when the community does not understand the nature of the business of military duty and sacrifice. Like any worthwhile and major endeavor the ability to truly understand the hardships, deprivations, and trials demanded regularly of the military requires either direct participation or close linkages to those who serve. This demand does not require everyone to have actually served in uniform but that the community contains a “critical mass” of those who have served (or been significantly involved with the service of someone who has). This critical mass must be made up of individuals whose experiences in, or with, the military have been of the appropriate or, rather, of the meaningful kind.

For experiences to be meaningful, per Dewey, a continuing cycle of *doing* and *undergoing* must persist until a *consummation* is reached. Any change in the operative environment again restarts the cycle. For this cycle to have meaning for both the community and the military services, the bond between the two environments must be strong and persistent. This Deweyan demand for meaning and von Clausewitz’s requirement for community/military bonding and sharing entails some minimal, yet proportionately large, portion of the civilian population to have served or been directly linked to those who have served.

For many reasons, this minimal condition does not seem to be met in the United States. Less than one percent of our population served in uniform during the recent operations in the Middle East. The civilian community has little connection to those who did or are serving and, as time goes by, this number is shrinking. No demands are placed on the communities to support the war efforts or to support the men and women in uniform. Without demands for service on individuals, the future of the Clausewitzian bond looks dim. An all-volunteer force will invariably keep the chains weak unless a particular military undertaking is such that the entire wrath of the nation is driven by von Clausewitz's trinitarian tendencies of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity. Short of an all-encompassing conflict, such as World War II, with an hated enemy viewed as a direct threat to national survival, no requisite community-military bond seems likely unless a forcing function exists that requires service from the population at large. The only such forcing function would seem to be universal conscription or a demand for national service. Voluntary service drives inevitably to a fracturing of the populace into an ever less involved and caring community.

Madison warns the military itself of the insidious methods, which, if allowed to fester, can destroy the institution from within. For a faction to destroy an institution, a necessary, but not sufficient, condition is that the faction be powerful enough to work at odds with the core values of the institution. For example, the rise of gang membership within the military may threaten readiness but gang membership *per se* is unlikely to permanently damage the services or threaten the services' bonds with the community unless that membership can succeed at the expense of the services' core values.



On the other hand, if a faction arises and has the *imprimatur* of the establishment itself then that type of faction, Madison tells us, is sufficient to destroy the organization. These factions are somewhat rare within the military and, to the military services' credit, are usually brought under control through leadership and command action. On the present horizon, however, lurks a budding threat that has all the earmarks of Madison's faction. This threat is the embrace by current ranking military leadership to either directly proselytize or allow for fundamental Christian evangelical conversion activities within the ranks by subordinates or non-military religious missionary entities.

This faction passionately attempts to "evangelize" the troops beginning at the time of their induction and continuing throughout one's military career. This practice is neither benign nor positive but is destructive of unit cohesion and military effectiveness. Attempts to indoctrinate the forces with a particular religious view drive a wedge between segments of the forces and inhibit full integration of some members into "the club." The concept of a "Band of Brothers" (and sisters) becomes a mere chimera. More importantly, such a faction makes the call for competent leaders unrealizable. Any commander viewed as part of the proselytizing movement loses his or her perceived authority and will be looked at with disdain among those troops who are not favorably affected by the religious fervor of the commander. Factions, such as those engendered by specific religious indoctrination programs, whether clandestine or overt, subvert effectiveness.

Associations such as the Navigators, the Christian Embassy, Cadets for Christ, and other creatures of such stripes represent the archetypical threat Madison sees as destructive of the organization. Direct participation in these activities by commanders and "leaders," such as Generals Boykin, Weida, and Catton, drive a wedge into the chain

required to link the disparate parts of the military into a cohesive fighting force. Madison directly warns of the destructive nature of such men. "A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good." (*Federalist #10*)

In sum, forces work both within and without of the military that have the potential for destruction of bonds required by Dewey and von Clausewitz between the community and the military and also those bonds required by Madison for the internal cohesion within the military services. Externally, these threats can be seemingly be met, short of a true all enveloping national emergency not seen since World War II, only through conscription or national service. This seems the best hope for renewing the requisite military/community bond. Internally, only strong, concerted leadership can meet the threat of any sanctioned attempt by a small group to co-opt the mission and ideals of military service. Such a threat, a true Madisonian faction, is real and exists in the movement to "Christianize" our fighting forces. Other such factions may develop in the future. The only antidote to self-destruction will remain the swift and concerted effort of strong commanders and leaders to keep the wolves of faction away from the military's doorstep.

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