THE PUBLIC AND THE MILITARY

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The Present Strain in Civil-Military Relations

The end of the Cold War has, like the end of most wars, brought several surprises in its wake. Among them has been an evident increase in the tensions surrounding civil–military relations in the United States. While not as dramatic as the collapse of the Soviet Union nor as tragic as the ethnic conflict that plagues the Balkan states, it remains worth asking what accounts for this unexpected tension and whether its present high level is likely to be a lasting or fleeting phenomenon. While the tension itself is almost palpable, current descriptions of the problem have not adequately addressed these questions.

A number of academics, who are close students of military, have noted what they think is an unhealthy shift in the balance of civil-military relations. Richard H. Kohn (1994a, 1994b) has suggested that the military is more alienated from its civilian leadership now than "at any time in American history," a sweeping claim. He provides a long list of incidents that are symptomatic of the crisis, among them public displays of disrespect by officers directed toward President Clinton in the first year of his administration, the homogeneity of partisan political outlook within the officer corps, and the growing power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to form foreign policy. The underlying problem, he thinks, is an erosion of civilian influence over civil–military relations. At stake is the strength of the military's tradition of political neutrality which, Samuel Huntington (1957) has argued, is the bedrock for healthy civil–military relations in democratic societies. We should not be misled—Kohn is not—by supposing that the difficulty is only recent, reflecting strained relations between President Clinton and the Pentagon. Charles Moskos (1993) noted that the presidential election campaign in 1992 was the first he could recall in which retired officers of flag rank entered into campaigning, actively endorsing a candidate. Earlier still, the Bush administration supported the argument that only the military could judge whether homosexuals should be allowed openly to perform military service, an argument which has yet to be overturned (Burk 1993a). Indeed, Kohn (1994a) and others (Commager 1993, 70-93;

Janowitz 1960) would trace the emergence of these tensions to the development of the national security state following the Second World War to deal with the prolonged strain of Cold War. Based on his perceptive overview of civil–military relations in America since the Civil War, Russell F. Weigley (1993) doubts whether the present generation of military leaders will be as faithful to the tradition of civilian supremacy as its predecessors were. Since the MacArthur crisis during the Korean War, civilian leaders have been unable to count on the silent support of military leaders for policy decisions that lie "at the intersection of policy, diplomacy, and strategy."

Yet, it must be said, doubts infect both sides in this debate. While military elites in democracies often feel misunderstood, the military elite at present are especially concerned about whether they are supported by the people. The current elite was deeply wounded by the conduct and outcome of the war in Vietnam and by the evidently negative reaction of the larger society to their part in the conflict. Reflecting on these events, they have built a military organisation and supported doctrine that limits the ability of political leaders to conduct large-scale or prolonged force deployment without high levels of public support (see Summers 1984). Even so, military leaders are skeptical that the public will support deployments to conduct even relatively small–scale operations other than war. They remember that public opinion was enthusiastically in favor of the military's undertaking a humanitarian mission in Somalia in December 1992. Only ten months later that support evaporated virtually overnight after six Rangers were killed and seventy–two were wounded in a firefight in Mogadishu (Saad 1992; Moore 1993). A volatile public opinion makes it difficult for military leaders to know whether they can count on domestic support through the course of a conflict. The situation is not helped by the extensive but adversarial nature of political journalism which, since the 1960s, has more likely increased than decreased levels of suspicion between the public and the military (cf. Janowitz 1978). The negative aspects of these tendencies have been exacerbated in the 1990s by the downsizing and reorganisation of the armed forces. It may be true that a smaller military establishment is needed in the absence of Cold War. Nevertheless, what military personnel across the ranks experience now is an increase in the number and kinds of missions they are asked to perform while resources for doing the job are withdrawn (Dandeker 1994). According to one social survey, soldiers who remain in the force are disillusioned by the experience (Wong and McNally 1994).

A common theme unites these concerns of civilians and the military, namely, that the military and the public are somehow out of touch with one another. The problem apparently, to use sociological terms, is that the "social distance" separating the military and the public has increased. With the connection between them no longer as close as it was during World War II, misunderstandings, contention, and distrust become more frequent and intense.

To some degree, when there is peace, increased distance or isolation and the tensions which result may be expected in a liberal democracy. After all, the military style of life emphasizes group discipline, a hierarchy of ranks and distinctions, and calls for self–sacrifice. It is a lifestyle that does not rest easily with the liberal democrats' celebration of voluntary action, leveling of social status, and individual self–asssertion. If the two lifestyles are reconciled, it is most likely when the political community is clearly under siege, at war or under threat of war. At such times, the loyalty and commitment of free people to their country is a source of military strength. Even then the ambivalence of liberalism toward the military and war does not entirely disappear. Without war or the threat of war, democratic civil–military relations are often openly strained.

The traditional means for managing this strain, as Samuel Huntington (1994, 28) has observed, have been either "to reduce the military to the lowest level possible or to

civilianize it." These means were effective during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, when the logic of war permitted military establishments to mobilize on a large scale for war and then demobilize when peace was restored. The situation since the end of the Second World War has been qualitatively different. Entangled in the Cold War, the United States was unable to demobilize as hoped in the late 1940s, but rather maintained a large permanent military establishment for the first time in its history. Even now, with no Cold War, to demobilize the present force as was done, say, after World War I seems a risky strategy. The demands of globalism and global power put limits on downsizing. In the contemporary situation, every major power is a "continental power" and requires a permanent, professional military establishment of some size.

The current situation is a novel one. The public and the military have to coexist without a focal enemy or conflict to bridge the distance that separates them. Yet, precisely because the situation is a novel one, we must hesitate before concluding that the present strain in civil–military relations results from the traditional conflict between liberal and military values. That interpretation assumes that the public **is** indifferent to the military and military affairs and that the military **is** isolated from American society and its civilian leaders. In this paper, I argue that these assumptions are not warranted, that the social distance presently separating the military and the public at present is not as great as some think. They are plausible hypotheses about the quality of public support for American military engagement abroad and the structural isolation of the all–vounteer force. But there is little evidence to support them. Under the circumstances they operate, for want of a better word, as myths that cloud understanding. Nevertheless, civil–military relations are strained. Since, if my argument is correct, they are not so because of increasing social distance, I shall try at the end of the article to indicate what has made them so.

The Myth of an Indifferent and Fickle Public Opinion

Political leaders and academics have long believed that public opinion, especially with respect to foreign affairs, is likely to be ignorant, unorganized, unstable, and without much influence on public policy (Page and Shapiro 1992, 37–66). While the formulation and execution of foreign policy could sometimes be obstructed by public opinion, as it was during the Vietnam War, policy making in this arena was a matter for economic, political, and military elites to settle. Related to the military, this traditional belief shows up in two ways. First, the public is thought to be volatile, overreacting to enthusiasms of the moment; the public is a fickle ally, whose support is needed for military interventions, but cannot be counted on (Dunlap 1992–93). As a practical matter, this means that the public may sometimes clamor for the military to perform missions with limited prospects for success. It also means that the public might quickly reverse its support for foreign deployments, most likely because of a sudden infliction of American casualties, as it did in Somalia. Such reversals of support may ignore long–range goals of foreign policy, jeopardize the accomplishments of the mission, and underestimate the logistical difficulties or political costs of rapid withdrawal. Often the mass media are held responsible for volatile shifts in public mood about what the military ought to do. (A joke told in Washington, DC was that CNN got us—the United States—into Somalia and CNN got us out.) The image is of a public that has no consistent or stable beliefs of its own but is highly susceptible to manipulation through the mass media. Without media stimulation, the public is thought to be largely indifferent or apathetic to military affairs. The indifference shows in the rapidity with which the public turns its attention away from the military once war or the threat of war is ended. This certainly happened in American society following the end of the Persian Gulf War (Mueller 1994). The indifference shows as well in the limited willingness to provide resources for the military during periods of relative

peace and in the apparent unwillingness of youth to join the military for even short periods of service (Moskos and Burk 1994).

Nevertheless, there is a considerable body of evidence to suggest that this traditional belief requires revision. Surveying long-term trends in public opinion over a large number of issues, current studies of public opinion have recently documented that, however erratic individual opinion may seem, in aggregate, public opinion is highly organized and responds rationally to the available information (Page and Shapiro 1992; Yankelovich 1991). Contrary to what was earlier thought, once a public judgment is reached, it tends to be stable for long periods of time. When it does change—sometimes dramatically and independently of elite attempts to control it—it is usually as a reasonable response to changing circumstances. When we focus attention on military issues and the role of the United States in foreign affairs, public opinion seems to be anything but fickle and indifferent. On the contrary, a number of long-term trends in public opinion reveal strong and stable support for the military establishment and its role as an instrument of an activist foreign policy.

Far from being indifferent or apathetic, the American public presently holds the military in high regard and has done so for the last twenty years. When asked to say how much confidence they have in a list of major social institutions, they rank none higher than the military, not even the church or organized religion (Moore and Newport 1993).[1] Sixty-eight per cent claim to have either a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the military as against only eight per cent whose confidence is "very little." This positive judgment is not simply a reflection of the dramatic success of the military in the Persian Gulf War. That success did affect these ratings. In March 1991, immediately after the war's end, American confidence in the military soared to eighty-five percent of those responding; but by October 1991, the war euphoria was past and the percent who were confident in the military (sixty-nine percent) was at about the same level as in 1990, before the war began. In comparative terms, this level represents a relatively high degree of public confidence. Since 1986, Americans have expressed greater confidence in the military than in any other institution. Before that, from 1975 through 1985, it was ranked second, just after organised religion, and even then the level of confidence was quite high, ranging from a low of fifty per cent in 1981 to a high of sixty-one per cent in 1985.

Confidence in other private and public institutions over the twenty year period registered below fifty per cent and typically declined over time (***Public Perspective*** 1993).[2] Over the long-term, these different trends in public opinion reveal a growing gap in confidence in the military as compared with confidence in other social institutions. Compare, for instance, the trends in people saying they have a "great deal" of confidence in the military, the Congress, and the executive branch of the federal government. In 1973, the responses cluster. Twenty-four per cent had a great deal of confidence in Congress, twenty-nine per cent had a great deal of confidence in the executive branch, and thirty-two per cent had a great deal of confidence in the military. The difference between the high and low level is only twelve per cent. Twenty years later there was no cluster at all. In 1993, those having a great deal of confidence in the military rose from thirty-two to forty-two per cent, while those expressing confidence in the Congress fell from twenty-four to seven percent—a very low figure, down from eighteen per cent in 1991. Meanwhile, those expressing confidence in the executive branch fell from twenty-nine per cent to twelve per cent—again a very low figure, down from twenty-six per cent in 1991. Over the twenty years, the gap between confidence in the military and confidence in these central political institutions increased from twelve to thirty-five per cent (or to twenty-four per cent, if the 1991 data are used).

Of course, expressions of public confidence do not necessarily indicate well-informed

support of the military. A major theme in Charles J. Dunlap's (1992–93) recent assessment of contemporary civil–military relations is that the public may have too much faith in the military, especially if it is disillusioned with civilian government. That faith might lead the public to ask the military to perform a wide range of missions other than fighting wars. Yet expanding the military's missions, Dunlap argues, is ruinous to military effectiveness because time and resources are spread too thin and it is dangerous to democracy because nontraditional missions incorporate the military into the political process to an unprecedented degree. Alternatively, one could argue that the public has confidence in the military but does not support an activist foreign policy that would put the military at risk. It is well known for instance that opposition to both the Korean and the Vietnam War grew in direct relation to the growth of casualties (Mueller 1994). The question is whether there is evidence to show that Americans do not understand the military's primary mission or that they have adopted a neo–isolationist attitude toward foreign affairs.

Alvin Richman (1993) has recently surveyed poll data about public support for American involvement abroad, and his survey casts doubt on both claims. He documents that the public remains highly committed to active American involvement in world affairs. Since 1945, sixty to seventy per cent of the population have rejected isolationism in favor of an activist stance. The stability of this commitment over nearly half a century is noteworthy. It does not represent either a snap judgment or a judgment easily shaken by the vagaries of world events. Moreover, the judgment is relatively sophisticated for comprehending that the United States cannot simply act on its own in the world. Over the thirty years since 1964, about two–thirds of those responding have rejected the statement that the United States should simply go its own way in international matters, not worrying what other countries may think, because the United States is the most powerful nation in the world. A smaller majority over the same time period, but still a majority, have rejected the statement that the United States should simply mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along as best they can. A larger number believe that the United States should concentrate on domestic problems. But the question wording on this item is somewhat ambiguous. The respondents are agreeing with the statement that "we" in the United States should "concentrate more on our own national problems and building up our strength and prosperity at home." It is certainly possible that for many of these respondents an active foreign policy and a strong defense are necessary elements in a program for building national strength and prosperity. Most importantly, there is substantial agreement, typically over eighty per cent, that the United States should take the views of its major allies into account when forming its foreign policies. Support for cooperating with the United Nations is not as strong, but it is still quite high and higher than any "America first" alternative. On balance, these data suggest that the public has a refined understanding of the importance of foreign policy to the well–being of the country and is reasonably sensitive to the high level of interdependence among countries, which limits the autonomy even of a superpower. Moreover, the public understands that this position entails military involvements. From 1974 to 1991, well over eighty per cent of those responding believed it was an important goal of American foreign policy to protect weaker nations against foreign aggression. (Eighty–one per cent agreed with this statement in 1974, immediately after America's unsuccessful and divisive involvement in the Vietnam War.) Considering responses to a question asked since 1986, a slight majority believe that the president should send troops into combat abroad even when public opinion opposes the action.

It is difficult to measure public support for military operations in the abstract, when no particular threat is looming. Against the data found in Richman's survey of the literature,

others may point out that Americans rarely favor spending more money on defense, suggesting they are unwilling to provide resources for the policies they say they want. While true, perhaps more important is that the largest number of those polled have said the level of defense spending was "about right." Their response is probably not a thoughtless one. Support for the status quo is not automatic. For example, when asked about spending on foreign aid, about seventy per cent believe too much is spent on foreign aid and fewer than ten per cent believe more should be spent (Wood 1990, 701-708). Still others may note that the apparent attention and support for military involvement and an active foreign policy are shallow. Immediately after the shooting stopped in the Persian Gulf War, the American public no longer felt that foreign affairs or defense matters were the most important problem facing the country; domestic economic problems took priority (Mueller 1994). Or, as noted earlier, as soon as Americans sustained casualties in Somalia, the public withdrew its support from that deployment (Moore 1993). But such data require careful interpretation. They do not clearly imply either the absence of public support for the military or prove that support for the military is fickle or unreliable.

Arguably, once the Persian Gulf War ended, the primary problem facing the country was the recession. The shift in public attention was a reasonable response to the changing circumstances, and capable of being reversed if circumstances warranted. That capacity was shown by the public's strong support for military mobilization to face down Saddam Hussein's renewed threat to invade Kuwait in October 1994. Public attention cannot be focused everywhere at once. Turning to Somalia, it is important to recall that public support for that deployment was conditional from the beginning. In 1992, the public wanted the military's role there limited to providing humanitarian aid, and it believed that that role carried with it relatively little risk of casualties (Saad 1992). President Clinton changed American policy in Somalia in the spring of 1993 to include an active peacekeeping effort. This policy change entailed risks the public had not bargained for. Only when casualties were sustained in October 1993 did the public withdraw its support for the deployment, favoring an early withdrawal of troops. Even then, it is misleading to suggest that the public's response was fickle or that its support of the military was unreliable. Despite the casualties, only thirty–seven per cent of those responding favored an immediate withdrawal, fifty-eight per cent did not. Indeed, almost as many as those who favored immediate withdrawal (thirty–one per cent) thought the military should remain in Somalia until it completed its humanitarian mission. Clearly opinion was divided. But divided opinion on a complex issue is not the same as fickle public support.

In sum, there is little evidence in public opinion poll data to warrant the conclusion that the public is either indifferent to military affairs or unreliable in its support of military deployments in pursuit of the country's foreign policy interests. What is remarkable is that the poll data reveal a strong, stable, and relatively sophisticated understanding of the requirements of American foreign policy, of the military commitments that policy requires, and of the restraints on both which are imposed by the need to cooperate with other nations in the world and to take their views and interests into account. The same poll data reveal, however, that the experience of military service is increasingly rare. According to data in the General Social Survey, since the all–volunteer force was established in 1974, fewer than five per cent of those between eighteen and twenty–three years of age have performed military service (Wood 1990, 108). For some, this lack of experience may indicate that the military is increasingly isolated from the public and that over time, without direct knowledge to draw on, the public's ability to judge military affairs may decline (see, e.g., Odom 1994).

The Myth of the Military's Social Isolation

In the 1960s and 1970s, sociologists worried that the end of the draft would cause the military to become less representative of the society it was supposed to defend (Janowitz and Moskos 1979). Despite political controversy over the fairness of the draft in the 1960s, it was clear that conscription allowed the armed forces to resemble the composition of the population as a whole. This was thought to be beneficial because military service on balance contributed positively to the civic education of youth, the burden of service could be legitimated only when it was equally shared, and contact with citizen–soldiers would make professional soldiers wiser about the domestic political constraints on security policy. What, if anything, would compensate for the loss of these benefits? Given what is known about the forces of self–selection, the all–volunteer force was likely to become very different from American society as a whole, with its lower ranks filled by the relatively disadvantaged members of society who served from economic necessity and with all ranks filled by those who tended to more politically conservative than the rest of society. The result would be a military establishment that was relatively isolated from and out of touch with the public.

There were good grounds for these fears, especially in the late 1970s. The quality of the enlisted force was low; there was a disproportionately high number in the service who were drawn from minority groups; and the dominant group members who joined were among the least well prepared for military service. Only a growing number of women in uniform moved the military toward greater social representativeness. Even now, the Army has a disproportionately large number of African Americans serving in its enlisted ranks, which may prove socially divisive in the event of large-scale ground combat. And there is some evidence that the political views of members of the armed forces have become less reflective of (and more conservative than) those of society as a whole (Burk 1993b). But, as usual in these matters, simple judgments made before an event, even when well informed, often require modification afterwards.

On balance, one **cannot** say that the all–volunteer force is more isolated from society than the armed forces under conscription. On the contrary, an open market for military labor and the ongoing need to recruit large numbers of youths into the service has made the military (sometimes reluctantly) more sensitive to new social trends, especially with respect to race and gender issues. In a peculiar way, it has drawn the military more closely into the life of society than would otherwise be the case. This is not to deny that recruiters and military leaders operate as a filter, and in recent years as a highly selective filter, affecting who is able to enlist in the military and who, once enlisted, is able to remain in the military. Yet military leaders cannot perfectly control market forces. Many factors which affect the propensity to enlist—the unemployment rate, alternative educational opportunities, and demographic trends to name a few—are beyond their reach. They may and do adapt (Gilroy, Phillips, and Blair 1990). But adaptation to market forces is one means, and an important means, by which the all-volunteer force maintains contact with, and in fact must to some degree conform to, changes in civilian society.

Other factors operate in the same direction. The all-volunteer force is one in which the number of married personnel is much higher than in previous eras. Military leaders are not able to keep career soldiers from marrying. Rising military marriage rates in the post–world war era has led the military to adopt an expanding program of family support, which is difficult to sustain under present fiscal strain. But the issue is not just a problem of federal budget policy. Increasingly, spouses of both sexes are employed outside the home. This makes the traditional pattern of relatively frequent base rotations difficult or in some cases impossible for military families to accept. Increasingly also, many families

have only one parent. If that person is in the military, it is important that reliable and effective child-care arrangements are in place. Otherwise the stresses associated with deployment for field training or for war are magnified many times. Under these circumstances, there is much to be said for a home–basing system and for encouraging military families to live off–base in civilian communities where they may, as long–term residents, build the networks of social support that modern families require. The military cannot divorce itself entirely from the business of family support. But should this change to home–basing occur, it would forge still stronger links between the military and society, keeping it from becoming an isolated institution as it might have done to some degree when assigned to frontier service in the nineteenth century after the Civil War.

Less direct, but still important effects are felt from new institutional arrangements that, while made for their own purposes, nevertheless serve to sustain the ties between the military and society. Among these are the military organizational reforms of the 1970s and 1980s, often imposed by fiscal stringency, that have made it impossible to conduct any large–scale mobilization of the military without calling up national guard and reserve forces. Divisions have been created to include both active duty and reserve units. The social consequences of these arrangements became evident during the Persian Gulf War. Whether the reserves were adequately trained to undertake their assignments is an important and perennial question, but not relevant here. The point is that this mobilization required popular support to succeed to the degree it did, just as popular support was required to call up reserves for combat in Korea. Continuing pressure to reduce military spending suggests that reliance on reserve forces may increase rather than decrease over time. Their integration with active duty forces may be restructured to emphasize combat support as opposed to combat roles. That hardly makes their mission less important. And it does not affect the general point that the military maintains close ties with the people through its dependence on part–time citizen–soldiers.

Quite apart from changes in military organisation, Congress has aroused itself since the Vietnam War to exercise increased oversight over military affairs. Barry M. Blechman (1990) has supplied the necessary documentation in his recent study, ***The Politics of National Security.*** He shows how Congress expanded its control over defense budget expenditures from 1961 to 1983. In 1961, only two per cent of the Defense Department budget was subject to annual authorization by Congress. That two per cent dealt with construction, a matter directly affecting constituency interests. Congress had effectively abdicated its powers of authorization, delegating them to the Department of Defense. But during the 1960s, Congress began to recall its powers, due in part to the public controversy over the Vietnam War, but also to the restructuring of the committee system that decreased the power of the committee chairs in favor of the committee members. Beginning with increased reviews over the procurement budget and then over expenditures for research and development, by the end of the 1960s, Congress increased its annual control to one–third of the defense budget. In the 1970s, the movement for expanded control continued until by the end of the decade virtually the entire defense budget was subject to annual congressional review. There are other more subtle indicators of the growth of congressional influence (Lindsay 1994). What is important for present purposes is that the military has not become isolated from civilian institutions over the last twenty years. If anything, the frequency and intensity of its contacts with civilian society have increased.

Most probably, continuing close ties between the military and society enable people to have more confidence in the military than they would have if it was isolated, for whatever reason. (This does not explain the high level of confidence reported earlier.) But the ties which permit confidence to form cannot ensure that civil-military relations will be harmonious or stress free, no more than kin ties ensure harmony within the family. Conflicts

persist, most obviously over the defense budget and issues of recruitment and personnel allocation as they touch on race and gender relations, not to mention the conditions of homosexual service. What cannot be said, based on this review of the evidence, is that current strains in civil military relations are due to increased social distance or isolation between the military and society. On the contrary, for better or worse, what close ties ensure is that the military and the public remain a "community of fate," neither one able to proceed about its business without taking account of the needs and aspirations of the other.

Sources of Structural Strain

Perhaps current worries about tense civil–military relations represent nothing more than a "moral panic." As defined by sociologists, moral panics refer to public expressions of fear or concern about a social problem that is out of proportion to the threat actually posed (Goode and Ben–Yehuda 1994; Ben–Yehuda 1986; Cohen 1972). Such panics do not arise from nothing. They reflect genuine public uncertainties and fears about some important dimensions of social life—drug abuse, abortion, or the Renaissance witch craze—that seem somehow to be out of control. They represent fears about the society's capacity to govern itself, to regulate its conduct according to known principles and values. They are most likely to occur when these fears are coupled with the material interests of groups who have a stake in the outcome. In a democracy, the state of civil–military relations is always a likely object for moral panic; but it is especially so during a period of transition like the end of the Cold War.

A number of factors have converged over the last decade to make civil–military relations appear to be problematic. At least four deserve mention. First, the Goldwater–Nichols Act of 1986 considerably centralized and strengthened the power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and those who have occupied the post since passage of that act have been exploring the uses and limits of their new power. Second, given high federal deficits, the end of the Cold War has meant substantial cuts to the defense budget. The dollars spent on defense have declined by almost twenty–five per cent since 1990. In relative terms, defense spending is scheduled to drop below eighteen per cent of all federal spending, its lowest level since 1940.[3] Third, the number of missions the military has to perform has not declined, despite the decline in resources; meanwhile the variety of missions, especially in the area of peacekeeping and humanitarian aid has increased markedly, raising new questions about the appropriate roles and missions of the armed forces (Moskos and Burk 1994). Finally, the election of 1992 ended twelve years of Republican control of the White House, during which time the military was a favored institution; the new president was perceived by many to be inexperienced in foreign affairs and no friend of the military, if only because of his youthful opposition to the Vietnam War. Taken together, it requires no great imagination to understand how civil–military relations have become tense in recent years and perhaps an object of moral panic.

Nevertheless, there are at least two structural features affecting the present situation, that are capable of causing and sustaining prolonged tension in civil–military relations. Both relate to the organisation of power. There is, first, a long–term diffusion of political power over the military. Since the end of World War II, as we have see in the case of budget authorisations, the trend has been toward increasing congressional involvement in the oversight of military affairs. Congress is unwilling to defer to the president in military matters as it was once accustomed to doing. The reasons for this are many, and have their roots in the experience of the Vietnam War. The central factors can be briefly summarised. The great destructive power of modern weapons made the threat of global war a matter of increased importance in American politics, which before the Second World War

proceeded on the assumption (largely valid) that the United States was not subject to invasion by a foreign enemy. Disagreement over American involvement in limited wars, especially the Vietnam War, ended bipartisan consensus about the course of American foreign policy and the role of armed force in foreign affairs. (Partisan disagreement, however, never went so far as to threaten American commitments to Western Europe through NATO or to Israel.) Presidencies weakened by defeat in war and scandal encouraged Congress to increase its power. This movement was encouraged further by internal reorganisations of Congress which weakened the power of political parties to control appointments to committees and weakened the power of committee chairs. The result was to enhance the opportunities for individual members of Congress to act as political entrepreneurs, exerting new influence over military affairs. The number of studies and reports members of Congress requested from the Defense Department rose from 36 in 1970 to 719 in 1988 (Blechman 1990, 41). When we turn to the judiciary, we find a similar movement to diffuse power. James B. Jacobs (1986) has documented a gradual but definite trend for the courts to circumscribe the autonomy of military law in favor of a larger role for civilian law. Looking beyond the government, the rapid development of a global electronic media has imposed new levels of accountability and responsibility on the military. The new media intensify pressures on political and military leaders to respond immediately and publicly to what are often fast–changing environments; they must also be sensitive to certain strongly held civilian values about the just conduct of war (Dandeker 1994b). Altogether, civilian powers to whom the military must be responsive have increased markedly over the last fifty years. They have heightened the demand for strong military leadership and high levels of professional control.

However difficult it might have been to meet these demands, the task has been made more difficult by a second factor which is no less important to consider. That is the general decline of deference to institutional authority and the elevation of the ideal of individual choice. These trends are illustrated, in part, by the tendency to turn difficulties in civil–military relations into contested issues to be resolved in the courts. The best recent example concerns the desire of homosexuals to serve in the military without having to hide their homosexuality. The issue is not whether homosexuals should or do serve in the military. The issue is under what conditions they serve. Court cases on this policy question remain to be resolved. As sociologists, we must avoid being overwhelmed by particular policy struggles. We must work instead to clarify the pattern of social relations these struggles represent. The key issue in these cases is that the exercise of authority (or judgment) by military professionals will not be accepted without public justification, debate, and consent. This is a problem faced by all professionals, not just the military. Still, it entails a significant redefinition of the nature of military leadership. It is a continuation of the trend, that Morris Janowitz (1960) first observed, away from authoritarian domination to greater reliance on persuasion. Yet one may question whether the present climate is one in which the arts of persuasion will have much effect. Speaking generally, the present generation has highly developed analytical and critical skills (Rosenau 1990). People today are much more likely than their grandparents were to question traditional authority, to demand proof that authorities have in fact performed effectively, and to extend their political loyalties to groups and movements beyond the nation–state. Or, as Samuel Huntington (1994, 28) has noted with direct reference to the military, "the now dominant group in American society . . . is more antagonistic to and questioning of the fundamental assumptions of the military approach than any previous generation."

In sum, at the very time the demands on military professionals have increased, the general social power of the military professional, along with other authorities, has declined. Together these two features of American society establish a structural strain that goes

beyond the political pressures and personalities of the moment. They give reason for supposing that the present strain in civil–military relations will not ebb of its own accord as we become more familiar with the post–Cold War world. Nor is the present concern about civil–military relations nothing more than a "moral panic." The issues raised here strike at the heart of how power and authority are (or ought to be) organised in liberal democratic societies.

How will these increased political pressures affect the role of the military professional in a societal context which is cynical about the exercise of any professional authority? What alternative paths might military professionals follow to ameliorate the strain?

More than one response is possible. Military professionals may respond by abandoning their traditional stance of political neutrality in public affairs. They may become more aggressively partisan in their support or opposition of particular policies or whole political programs. There is some concern in the current writing on civil–military relations that the military is drifting in this direction. A second more bureaucratic response is simply to give greater weight to the public relations role of the military officer. The point would be to use public relations to preserve professional autonomy and control over military affairs. The emphasis would be on creating and maintaining a positive public image and on preventing or contesting any negative publicity. Some support for this response is found in the statement by Admiral William Crowe that few officers rise to the highest ranks "without a firm grasp of international relations, congressional politics, and public affairs" (quoted in Kohn 1994, 8). One may question whether public relations not based on genuine communication and consent can sustain professional authority. Attempts merely to manipulate public opinion are not likely to be productive over the long–run. Finally, the military professional may assume the role of a soldier–scholar (Moskos and Burk 1994). Without abandoning requirements for effective leadership within the military setting, military professionals might speak frankly to the public about the needs of their institution and its claims for public support. Developing their expertise as teachers, they would articulate for open discussion and debate the various alternative defense policies from which the public has to choose. Unlike either the political partisan or the specialist in public relations, they would not be advocates of any particular choice. This last role would require exceptional self–discipline, but there is precedent for it in the role played by university–based scholars whose research informs, without deciding, public policy debates. It might seem to be too risky, naive, or self–defeating. If there was great social distance separating the military from the rest of society or reason to suspect the public was indifferent or fickle in its attention to military affairs, perhaps it would be. As we have seen, however, neither condition is true.

I prefer not to speculate which response is most likely to be taken; the conditions favoring adoption of one over the other are not so clear. But if truthful and disinterested communication is critical to sustain trust between people and institutional elites, then the soldier–scholar model may hold greater promise than the other two as a means to overcome the present strain in civil–military relations.

Notes:

1. The data cited in this paragraph are taken from the Gallup Poll. The precise question wording was as follows: "Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little."

2. The data in this paragraph are taken from the General Social Survey, administered by the National Opinion Research Corporation. They question and response categories are different from those used in the Gallup Polls cited above. The question in this case was: "I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?" The difference in

question wording between the two sources of data affect the number who express a lot of confidence in these institutions, with more expressing confidence in the institutions (Gallup) than in the people who run the institutions (NORC). But these differences are relatively constant over the twenty–year period and so make no substantive difference in the analysis offered here.

3.The budget for fiscal year 1995 estimates total defense outlays to equal $206.6 billion in constant (fiscal year 1987) dollars as compared with $272.5 billion in 1990. See table 6.1 in *Budget of the United States Government, Fiscal Year 1995: Historical Tables* (1994).

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JAMES BURK

JAVNOST IN VOJSKA

POVZETEK

Vrsta raziskovalcev v sodobnosti ugotavlja spremembe v civilno-vojaških odnosih, zlasti povečevanje "socialne distance", ki ločuje javnost in vojsko oz. med njima ustvarja napetost. Ta argumentacija, ki predpostavlja indiferentnost javnosti do vojske in izolacijo vojske od ameriške družbe in civilnih voditeljev, je močno problematična. Empirične raziskave v ZDA kažejo, da je javno mnenje kljub zmotljivosti posameznikov močno organizirano, da racionalno reagira na razpoložljive informacije in da je dokaj stabilno v daljšem časovnem obdobju. Tudi v odnosu do vojske ni indiferentno in apatično; nasprotno, raziskave po letu 1986 kažejo izrazito zaupanje v vojsko, ki je celo mnogo večje od zaupanja v katerokoli drugo družbeno institucijo. Zaupanje v vojsko je tesno povezano s podporo ameriški zunanji politiki. Toda po drugi strani ima le zelo malo ljudi neposredne izkušnje z vojsko. Manj kot pet odstotkov mladih v starosti med 18. in 23. letom je po podatkih iz General Social Survey (1990) služilo vojsko po letu 1974, ko je bil odpravljen vpoklic. Po mnenju nekaterih pomanjkanje izkušenj kaže, da se povečuje izolacija vojske od javnosti, s tem pa tudi sposobnost javnosti, da presoja vojaške zadeve. Poleg tega naj bi odprava vpoklica bistveno oddaljila strukturo vojaškega osebja od strukture ameriške družbe, kar je nedvomno veljalo v sedemdesetih letih. Edina ugodna posledica uvedbe svobodnega trga vojaške delovne sile naj bi bila povečanje deleža žensk v vojski. Toda v resnici, in zlasti po sedemdesetih, se je morala prostovoljna vojska vsaj do določene stopnje prilagajati civilni družbi, npr. zaradi naraščanja števila vojaškega osebja z lastnimi družinami se je zmanjšala možnost rotacije, povečala se je skrb vojske za otroško varstvo. Bistveno zmanjšanje prostorske mobilnosti vojaškega osebja je povečalo povezanost vojske z družbo, s tem pa se je tudi povečalo zaupanje ljudi v vojsko. Sodobno pretirano zaskrbljenost za odnose med vojsko in družbo bi morda lahko označili za nekakšno "moralno paniko". Ob tem pa vendarle obstajata vsaj dve strukturni značilnosti, ki dejansko povzročata napetost med družbo in vojsko. Obe zadevata organizacijo moči. Prvič, obstaja dolgoročna razpršitev politične moči in nadzora nad vojsko med predsednikom, kongresom, obrambnim ministrstvom, sodstvom in mediji. Povečal se je civilni nadzor nad vojsko, kar zahteva večjo

odzivnost vojske in s tem močno vojaško vodstvo. Drugič, zmanjšala se je podložnost institucionalni avtoriteti, v ospredje pa je prišel ideal individualne izbire. Ta trend se na primer izraža v razreševanju problemov v civilno-vojaških odnosih pred civilnim sodiščem, kar pomeni, da je avtoriteta vojaške oblasti omejena z nujnostjo javnega utemeljevanja svojih odločitev. Najboljši novodobni primer je zahteva homoseksualcev, da imajo pravico služiti vojsko, ne da bi skrivali homoseksualnost, ki še čaka na sodno odločitev. Medtem ko se je splošna družbena moč vojske zmanjšala, so se zahteve, naslovljene nanjo, povečale, in to je temelj strukturne napetosti v civilno-vojaških odnosih, ki zadeva vprašanje organizacije moči in oblasti v liberalnih demokratičnih družbah.