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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

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**“THAT’S NOT WHAT I JOINED TO DO, SIR” – UNDERSTANDING
MILITARY CULTURE AND ETHOS IS CRITICAL FOR THE CORRECT USE
OF THE MILITARY INSTRUMENT OF POWER**

by

Giles R. Harris

Lieutenant Colonel, British Army

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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21 May 2012

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Dr. Paul Melshen, Thesis Advisor

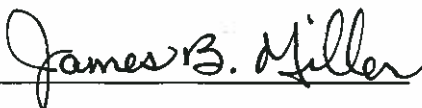
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ABSTRACT

‘The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.’¹

This thesis argues that an understanding of the culture and ethos of the military is critical to the correct use of the military instrument of power. Although warfare itself changes through time, the nature of war and those that fight it remain constant. It is why our military culture and ethos is designed for fighting and winning wars, and runs from the bottom to the very top of the military institution. Strategies that ask for anything else of the military court strategic failure; they ignore the military’s *raison d’etre*.

Sun Tsu says if ‘you know yourself and your enemy you will not lose a hundred battles.’ How well do we know ourselves?

¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*. ed. trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 100.

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INTRODUCTION

‘To be, or not to be?’ What next for the military man?

“Culture: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.”¹

“Ethos: the distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution.”²

Over the last decade Western strategies in Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed a failure to temper political aspirations with the realities of war and the limits of war-fighting armed forces. They are failures reminiscent of Vietnam. As the military continues to engage in unwinnable wars, one questions how such a cycle can be allowed to happen. Central to answering this question is an understanding of the culture and ethos of the military, in particular that of the rank and file, the military leadership, and their relationship with the political entity.

The Nature of War and the People Who Wage It

If political leaders who exercise the military instrument of power are not to be surprised or dismayed at the outcome they must understand the inherent nature of war and the people they ask to wage it. These natures endure regardless of any transformation or adaptation of the military in capability, doctrine, and structure. The nature of war does not change because neither does human nature. It is the culture and ethos of a military that dictates the way it is committed, its actions in conflict, and the

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica Company, “Merriam-Webster,” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary> accessed February 11, 2012).

² Ibid

lessons it wishes to learn. Understanding this basic tenet is critical when considering the use of military force.

Military Culture and Ethos

Because the nature of war is violent, our military culture and ethos is finely tuned to prepare servicemen and women accordingly. The result is a military that requires enough space within the national strategy for the second and third order effects of military action. The alternative is for the nation to redefine the purpose of the military, change its culture and ethos to match, and adapt other instruments of power to accommodate the shift accordingly. To do so would be to reverse centuries of accumulative military experience. The responsibility to understand this nuance lies between the senior military and political leadership as they make decisions that affect the nation's interests. In strategic thinking, and based on this central tenet, if the "problem" a government faces does not look like "a war," the employment of the military to address it may create a mismatch between Ends, Ways, and Means.

Ends, Ways, and Means

Within Henry C. Bartlett's strategy model of "Ends, Ways, and Means"³ the military is a means for exercising national power. The new challenges in the global security environment over the last ten years are re-defining the parameters of military responsibility. However, the change is happening faster than requisite changes in military culture. Militaries have been very quick to embrace new wars but extremely slow in adapting to win them. This juxtaposition has manifest in tactical shortcomings,

³ Henry C. Bartlett, G. Paul Holman, Jr., and Timothy E. Somes. *The Art of Strategy and Force Planning* (Newport, Rhode Island: Naval War College, 2004), 17-33.

as well as higher level inter-agency and coalition failures; examples of this are the failures to conclude both the Iraq and Afghanistan counterinsurgency campaigns on the original terms. These failures occurred, in the main, due to: 1) poor strategy on behalf of politicians, who underestimated the strategic challenges and over-estimated the capability of the forces; 2) poor self awareness on behalf of the military leadership, who accepted the burden too readily; and 3) the inability to transform military culture and ethos in a short enough space of time.

Referring to the future operating environment, Colin Gray sums up the issue by stating “such warfare may not conclude with the decisive victory that seems all but pre-programmed by U.S. military superiority.”⁴ The shifting definition of victory will be discussed later in the thesis as it is one of the underlying factors in understanding the relevance of military culture and ethos in strategic decision making, and how a misunderstanding can lead to strategic failure.

Relevance

The relevance today of this clash of roles for the military is undeniable. The U.S. military and its allies are about to undergo significant transformation as a result of respective governments’ policies to reduce national debt in the shadow of two faltering campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an emerging paradigm for 21st century warfare, recently showcased in Libya. Decisions that are made in forthcoming years about how the U.S. and its allies prosecute security strategy in a changing global security environment must be informed by the enduring nature of war and the professionals who

⁴ Colin Gray, *Another Bloody Century – Future Warfare* (Great Britain: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 208.

fight it. It is this tension between what politicians expect and the realities of what war and war fighters deliver that will be explored in this thesis as a basis for recommendations on how best to continue military culture and ethos in the 21st century.

Structure

The thesis will frame the issue by using Barlett's model of "Ends, Ways, and Means". It will establish "*What Liberal Democracies Want*" (the Ends), their "*Grand Strategy*" for achieving it (the Ways), and the current and projected use of the "*Military Instrument of Power*" (the Means). This will give us reasonable assumptions on the roles and expectations for the military in the future, and inform our analysis of mismatches with the military's current culture and ethos. The focus of this analysis will be on the rank and file ("*The Man with the Weapon*"), the military leadership ("*The Man with the Plan*"), and the political leader ("*The Man with the Power*").

The analysis will lead to recommended discussion areas for establishing the extent to which military culture and ethos should change in line with the changing demands on the military (a "*Revolution in Military Affairs*,") as opposed to being firmly re-aligned to the enduring nature of war (a "*Return to Hard Power*").

CHAPTER 1

What Liberal Democracies Want –‘Ends’

“Generations from now, when historians write about these times, they might note that by the turn of the 21st century, the United States had succeeded in its great, historical mission – globalizing the world. We don’t want them to write that along the way, we forgot to globalize ourselves.”¹

The U.S. and its allies view the ashes of two hard fought counterinsurgency campaigns with empty pockets and no fewer threats in the world around them. Diplomatic, Economic and Information levers of power are brittle after years of failed diplomacy in the Middle East, national debts in the trillions, and a significant downturn in credibility and popularity within the international system. The strategic communications initiative is no longer with the West.

The stated national interests of the U.S. reflect the challenge as it stands today. They are 1) the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners; 2) a strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity; 3) respect for universal values at home and around the world; and 4) an international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.²

¹ Fareed Zakaria, “The Rise of the Rest.” *Newsweek, International* (May 12 2008): 10.

² *The National Security Strategy* May, 2010.

Liberalism Versus Realism – establishing National interests

A country's view of itself in the world is the best place to start when analyzing how it regards the use of force. A government will have a foundation for international relations based broadly on either a realistic or idealistic standpoint usually underpinned by culture or religion. Whichever view is taken has a significant bearing on what a government's military will be asked to do in support, and the manner in which it must be done.

The instruments of power a government has to affect its place in the world fluctuate in nature and influence. None are a component part of the other nor are they completely devolved from each other and each rises and falls in utility. A nation may have a strong economy yet have large low-tech forces. It may have first rate niche military capability, yet be unable to afford a war, or an arms race. A nation may have both, yet lack the vital support of its people or an alliance for the military activity it desires. These fluctuations can span years, decades, or centuries and will never be by design of the ruling party of the day.

Therefore, rarely does an administration pursue the strategy of its predecessor, especially if that strategy has caused controversy in a fickle electorate. There is no set standard or strategy for any ruling government to pursue whilst navigating the vagaries of world politics. Global events, personalities, market forces or societal shifts all deny a government the control such a model as DIME³ suggests. For these reasons broader approaches are framed to give focus to a government's decision making. Governments may tend to use a founding narrative, rather than any detailed strategic plan, to inform

³ Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic instruments of power.

short-term strategic decisions. Historical examples of how Liberal Democracies have framed their approach to international relations have been “Isolationist,” “Containment,” or “Democratization,” all ways of addressing global environmental or security issues which affect the national interests. The approach taken by a Government is itself informed by either “Realist” or “Liberalist” theories on how best to implement national power.

There are several off shoots within these theories but for the purpose of this thesis it is necessary only to highlight the fundamental differences between Realism and Liberalism. The reason this is important is that the differential represents the nexus of two emerging roles for the military in the twenty first century, roles this thesis argues may be mutually exclusive given the timeless nature of war, and the culture and ethos of the military.

Realism

“A ruthless pragmatism about power can actually yield a more peaceful world, if not an ideal one.”⁴ There may yet be a resurgent realist movement in Western politics as fiscal crises and expanding security threats increasingly demand a refocus of what is in the vital interests of a nation. The Realist believes that the foreign policy of a nation should be determined by what measures accrue the most power for the nation in a competitive world. This does not preclude supporting other countries either in defense or economical terms as long as those actions can be directly traced back to a strategy of national self interest. The U.S. pursued an effective isolationist policy until the latter stages of the First World War, and again between the wars until Japan attacked the U.S.

⁴ Jack Snyder, “Fact One World, Rival Theories”, *Foreign Policy* Issue 145 (Nov/Dec 2004): 55.

fleet at Pearl Harbor. Given the dire economical straits of the U.S. before those wars, they were realistic positions to take and the scale of their armed forces reflected such policies.⁵ However, the motives for subsequently taking the U.S. to war were so compelling they were uncontestable; it was not in the U.S. interests to capitulate to an aggressive Japan and allow a fascist Europe. “Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples.”⁶ The Realist argues that a war is to be fought for ideals only if they challenge vital national interests. Measures that do not secure resources for the nation, or are punitive actions to honor practical alliances for example, are misguided and displaced from national interests.

What relevance does this have to the military? Notwithstanding the laws of armed conflict or the Geneva Convention, a military borne of realism need care less for the moral high ground when designing military strategy. It will be more objective-based with coercion or deterrence at its core, and not burdened by a strategic narrative calling for an entire shift in the enemy’s societal construct. This is significant because it is arguable that the other school of thought, Liberalism, by its nature assumes a higher moral ground which may be at odds with what a military can realistically deliver.

⁵ The U.S introduced a universal conscription on joining the war, having at the time too limited a standing army to provide and sustain sufficient numbers. The United States was almost completely unprepared to participate in the war. The manpower and supplies needed to field an expeditionary force were at their lowest numbers since the Civil War. Mitchell Yockelson, Prologue Selected Articles, “They Answered the Call - Military Service in the United States Army During World War I, 1917-1919,” National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/fall/military-service-in-world-war-one.html> (accessed 11 February 2012).

⁶ Lynn Montross. *War Through the Ages* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1960).

Liberalism

President George W. Bush illustrated the conflict between Realists and Liberalists when he said: “[skeptics] who call themselves ‘Realists’ have lost contact with a fundamental reality... that America is always more secure when freedom is on the march.”⁷ Since the Second World War the U.S. has emerged a superpower and with that status a more Liberalist view of the world emerged; once the Berlin Wall fell, the U.S. increasingly saw itself as the global policemen and counselor. To retain this role in today’s world of globalised media and the primacy of the narrative, the Liberalist must fight with a foot very visibly on the moral high ground.

“Freedom” can be a matter of opinion, however. In a world of civilizations with diverging cultures and religious bases, the “moral high ground” is very much contested territory. It is a far less secure footing on which to achieve success, certainly decisive victory, still the Holy Grail for military strategists. A Realist might invoke Jomini in warning that,

Wars of opinion between two states belong also to the class of wars of intervention; for they result either from doctrines which one party desires to propagate among its neighbors, or from dogmas which it desires to crush, - in both cases leading to intervention. Although originating in religious or political dogmas, these wars are most deplorable; for, like national wars, they enlist the worst passions, and become vindictive, cruel, and terrible.⁸

In very basic terms, a Realist would see its nations armed forces deployed only in defense of the nation’s vital interests; a liberalist sees the expansion of Western style values, culture and specifically government as the antidote to threats from competitors. It

⁷ Jack Snyder, “Fact One World, Rival Theories”, *Foreign Policy* Issue 145 (Nov/Dec 2004): 54.

⁸ Baron Antoine Henri de Jomini, *The Art of War* (London: Greenhill Books, 1992), 25.

is a way to mitigate conflictive tendencies through a desire for prosperity and liberal values.⁹

Of course, such clear comparisons between Realism and Liberalism assume clear existential threats to which either theory can be applied. This is less and less the case. Three years before 9/11, Richard N. Haas wrote “power is now in many hands and many places” and warned that “herding dozens is harder than herding a few.” He concluded that “the United States will no longer have the luxury of a ‘you’re either with us or against us’ foreign policy.”¹⁰ Haas was describing a return to Realism in a multi-polar world where the problem set for a Western Liberal democracy looks very different from those in the recent past. It would no longer be the case that a superpower could project its own societal norms on others through DIME instruments of power.

However, it was a “you’re either with us or against” policy taken by the Bush administration which created the “Axis of Evil” on which instruments of national power, primarily military ones, could be brought to bear. Thirteen years later, after OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and in the midst of an ongoing Global War on Terror (GWOT), Haas’s words still ring true. And so we return to the thesis. A Liberalist framework for international relations presents a very different problem set today than it did just twenty years ago. Governments are only now beginning to formulate different approaches to achieving national interests, although the military as a means remains broadly the same.

⁹ Stephen M. Walt, “International Relations: One World, Many Theories,” *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1998): 29-44.

¹⁰ Richard N. Haass, “The Age of Nonpolarity; What Will Follow U.S. Dominance?” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 87, Issue 3 (May/June 2008): 44.

The Problem Set – 2011 and the Years Ahead

The World Stage

“While we argue over why they hate us, ‘they’ have moved on, and are now far more interested in other, more dynamic parts of the globe. The world has shifted from anti-American to post-Americanism.”¹¹ The U.S. has enjoyed its status as the Unipolar entity of the late 20th century and now must re-orientate itself in a more globalized world. Shifting economic power bases and dwindling natural resources create new dynamics between nations, and act as a backdrop to ideological battles that continue to rumble across time, a “Clash of Civilizations,” as Samuel Huntingdon put it.¹²

Over the past three decades, since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet Communism, U.S. hegemony has gradually declined in all but military power. U.S. concerns have shifted from balancing bi-polar nuclear powers to achieving regional stability between emerging nuclear powers and non state actors with the potential and intent to use weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In addition the U.S. watches from the sideline as Asian actors such as China and India fill the relative vacuum left by U.S. economic power. In this sense the US. liberalist strategy over the 1990’s and early 2000’s has been successful; it has spread relative prosperity. In his article “The Rise of the Rest” Fareed Zakaria argues that this “post-American world is naturally an unsettling prospect for Americans, but it should not be. This will not be a world defined by the decline of America but rather the rise of everyone else.”¹³

¹¹ Zakaria.

¹² Samuel Huntingdon, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Shuster Paperbacks, 1996).

¹³ Zakaria.

However the era of U.S. hegemony has come at a cost, being the harbinger of new threats. Huntington argues that “a West at the peak of its power confronts non-Wests that increasingly have the desire, the will and the resources to the shape the world in non-Western ways.”¹⁴ In an information revolution, such disparity of ideology is exacerbated and the Liberalist narrative becomes potentially explosive rather than the “freedom march” described by President George W. Bush.

Understanding this world is the focus for national strategists as they formulate national interests and write the documents from which myriad Departments of State will take direction. The latest Joint Operating Environment (JOE) document describes alternative futures out to twenty five years as a basis for military force development and planning. In addition to the themes described above, two significant deductions emerge from the trend analysis: the state is less powerful in relation to non-state actors as it once was, and the U.S. in particular is becoming less powerful in relation to the rest of the world.¹⁵

The JOE goes on to describe several significant factors that may affect the future in which our armed forces will operate. An increasingly urbanized world population will continue to be influenced by religion and mobilized by an exponential rise in media, a phenomenon recently seen in the Arab Spring. Natural resources will become the focus for competition as increasing populations demand more energy; security over key terrain such as shipping routes become critical as scarce resources become the target for piracy or blockade. Potential climate change will alter human geography as sea levels affect coastal areas or water scarcity affects agricultural bases. Furthermore, growing young

¹⁴ Huntington, 22.

¹⁵ Joint Forces Command. *Joint Operating Environment: Towards 2035* (Suffolk, VA: Headquarters, Joint Forces Command, 2010).

populations in unstable countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Pakistan, and Yemen, generate migration of disaffected populations. This dilutes receiving states' identity and increases domestic security issues; organized crime and international terrorism may become bed fellows within this context.

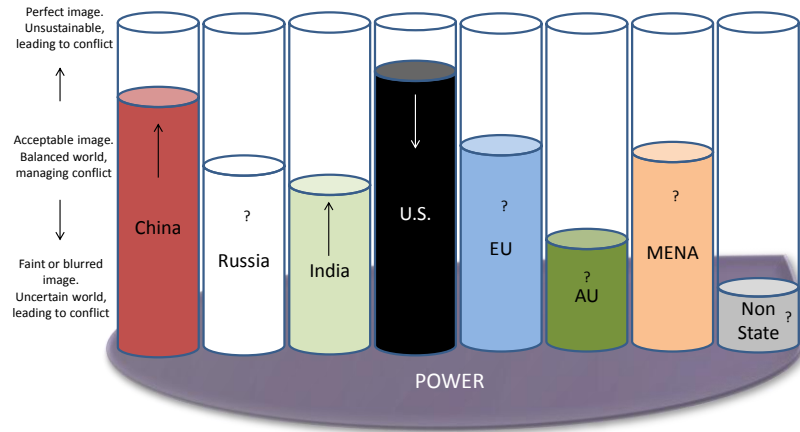
The effects of globalization on economies are significant as fiscal crisis can spread in days; the events in one country can rapidly affect others with no geographic or cultural connection. National internal conflicts such as the "Arab Spring" will remain likely as perceptions of inequality are fueled by an increasing global awareness of the international imbalance of power. The same factors may also drive inter-state conflict. Finally, wealthy nations or non-state actors will have access to technological weaponry that challenges traditional warfare and forces.

International Relations – Balance of Power

The JOE's broad summary of 21st century warfare describes adversaries that will continue to examine and circumvent how the U.S. wages war and will adapt military practice to mix conventional, irregular, and even nuclear threats within a politicized campaign that blurs legitimate dialogue with military action.

Given such an assessment of the global security environment, it is clear that the balance of power is more complex in a multi-polar world. A "Colorjet" model for considering the multiplicity of the world environment is shown below.

Black and White to Color Jet – a new balance of World Power.
Recalibrating for an acceptable picture quality in the Multipolar world



Note: groupings/countries and levels are illustrative

The model, which is illustrative, shows a variety of rising or falling national, transnational, or alliances’ levels of power, represented as ink colors. The inks are different colors because each entity has differing requirements or expectations for power based on its culture, geography, demographics, or ideology. The combination of ink levels dictates the quality of a picture of the world and therefore the attendant potential for conflict. An acceptable picture does not necessarily imply balanced levels of ink; indeed it is probable that in a constantly changing world dynamic, the ink levels required for an acceptable balance of power will also change.

The current U.S. Grand Strategy might be described as one of “Recalibration” of the international system due to changes in the world environment over the last twenty years, and recalibration of the U.S. instruments of power to support it. Recalibration is the process by which a system, given a change in environment, is re-adjusted to deliver the previously accepted norm or standard. In the case of the U.S., the norm or standard is in essence the continued delivery of the tenets of the U.S. Constitution.

However, as we have seen, the U.S. must achieve this standard within a changing world system:

The end of the Cold War has seen a questioning of the role of the state in relation to international security and society. Whereas democratic developments legitimized opposition movements to mobilize and oust authoritarian regimes, the related notion of self determination unleashed ethno-nationalism and secessionism. Hence the picture has become one of fewer inter-state conflicts but more intra-state ethno-political conflicts. At the transnational level, globalization is mounting further challenges to the state, under influences of deepening trade and investment driven by multinational corporations, movements of people, and transnational civil society, as well as criminal gangs, terrorist networks and militias.¹⁶

Unfortunately, adjustments to U.S. foreign policy, and the role of the military within it, should have been instigated before now in order to account for these new trends. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did not account for them and have served to further weaken the economic strength of the U.S. during a Western fiscal crisis, as well as the Liberalist strategic narrative that supported the spread of Democracy around the world. Between the mid and late 20th century the world environment was a post WWII bi-polar contest between the U.S. and the Soviet bloc and U.S. instruments of power were calibrated accordingly. However, given the JOE, such traditional controlling mechanisms for a superpower are no longer as effective to meet national “Ends” in 2012.

For example, U.S. interests or “Ends” are reliant more than ever before on the actual or perceived wealth, prosperity, and personal freedoms of other peoples. “The international community has become more sensitive to human conditions worldwide.”¹⁷ The “Ways” and “Means” required to sustain the U.S. Constitution, such as traditional military superiority, ideological outreach, and economic punch, are less tenable in an

¹⁶ Giacomo Luciani, “Armed Conflicts and Security of Oil and Gas Supplies,” *CEPS Working Document – Thinking Ahead for Europe*, No 352, (June 2011).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

increasingly multi-polar, globalized and resource driven world environment. “These trends [also] mean that, while conventional military means are still heavily relied upon (e.g Iraq and Afghanistan) these are seen to be ill-equipped to deal with conflicts marked by rebellion, terrorism and crime.”¹⁸

The delivery of current norms or standards for the U.S. citizen is therefore challenged by a new environment and U.S Grand Strategy must adapt accordingly. A recalibration is required, both of strategy and how the U.S instruments of power contribute to it. The “Ends” of the U.S comprise a new and acceptable picture of the world based on a recalibrated international system that accounts for the new environment we have described above while sustaining the Liberalist narrative that seeks to carry forward what was begun in 1787.

This is Obama’s paradigm. It is one of achieving national interests by retaining America’s premier place in an increasingly complex world, despite the shadow of huge national debt, two failing counterinsurgency campaigns, and attendant challenges to the Liberalist strategic narrative. These, in essence, are the “Ends”.

¹⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

The Grand Strategy – ‘Ways’

‘War is a grave matter; one is apprehensive lest men embark upon it without due reflection.’ Sun Tzu.¹

“To quote a famous American, ‘War is hell.’ And once the dogs of war are unleashed, you don’t know where it’s going to lead.” President Barack Obama.²

The previous chapter outlined the problem set facing the current U.S. administration, based on an assessment of the global environment, emerging threats and competitors over the next few decades, and the current fiscal crisis in the West. It also established that, broadly speaking, a government uses either a realist or liberalist framework in which to make short to medium term strategic level decisions on foreign policy, and this affects the way the military instrument of power is to be used. In order to establish reasonable assumptions on the future role of the military, this chapter will examine what that strategy is for the U.S.

It is a challenge for the U.S. that international leadership is hard without a welcome narrative, economic strength, and the desire to go to war. To that end, U.S. grand strategy will seek to regain the strategic internal and external communications initiative by re-engaging the world with a narrative suited to a multi-polar global dynamic. The U.S. must also regain its economic strength through paying off debt, balancing revenue and expenditure, and securing long-term alliances for access to natural

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Translated Samuel B Griffiths (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 63.

² Bob Woodward, *Obama’s Wars* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

resources. It will seek to do this while avoiding large scale military interventions. The recently refreshed U.S. National Security Strategy lays out these objectives.

National Security Strategy of the United States of America

The recent publication of the U.S. Government's New Defense Strategic Guidance – “Sustaining U.S Global Leadership: priorities for 21st Century Defense,” states that “The Joint Force will need to re-calibrate its capabilities and make selective additional investments to succeed in the following missions:

- Counter Terrorism and Irregular Warfare
- Deter and Defeat Aggression
- Project Power Despite Anti-Access/Area Denial Challenges
- Counter WMD
- Operate Effectively in Cyberspace and Space
- Maintain a Safe, Secure, and Effective Nuclear Deterrent
- Defend the Homeland and Provide Support to Civil Authorities
- Provide a Stabilizing Presence
- Conduct Stability and COIN operations
- Conduct Humanitarian, Disaster Relief, and Other operations”³

The guidance describes a global security situation that is increasingly complex with the USG primary loci being in the Middle East and South Asia, demanding all elements of U.S. national power to address in concert with key allies and partners. The main emerging ally and regional anchor for this shift will be India, with the main

³ United States President, *Sustaining U.S Global Leadership: priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, Jan 2012).

potential regional adversary or competitor being China. The U.S. stance in the Levant and Europe will remain unchanged but will seek refinement to burden share military presence in those regions. U.S. commitment to counter WMD and access assurance is growing in all domains including the global commons, cyber and space.

This represents an uplift in military objectives within a broadening mission set. A central mitigation theme throughout the guidance is the investment in technical niche capabilities, Inter-agency cooperation and alliance and partnerships as force multipliers. In this sense, the “shopping list” of military effects grows whilst the need to be able to war fight remains, to “Deter and Defeat aggression.”⁴ However, the reliance on increasingly specialized forms of military operations and the need to operate within a growing international consensus heralds a rationalization of the joint force to create more agile and leaner Services. The fiscal crisis and the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan have led the USG to a security policy that sees a withdrawal from large scale, enduring operations toward more integrated and niche military activity more tightly woven into both domestic inter-agency and overseas allied operations.

Such an approach to international relations and national security is an inherently liberalist framework for seeking global influence. It seeks to extend stability as a means to mitigate the perceived negatives of globalization on the integrity and power of the U.S., using democracy as the model of choice. It hopes that by a long-term global campaign of democratization the U.S. will secure its national interests for the foreseeable future. This process will be driven through all instruments of national power, with the military role centered round assuring homeland defense and defense of allies, and

⁴ Ibid.

economic prosperity through access to the global commons. The approach will not be one of large scale military action to coerce competitors but rather a holistic “all of government” effort to shape the global environment to suit U.S. interests. The term used by the current U.S. administration to describe this approach is “Smart Power”.

Smart Power

Speaking about the U.S. approach to the current crisis in Syria, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has said: “So I think this is smart power, and I talk a lot about smart power, where it’s not just brute force, it’s not just unilateralism; it’s being smart enough to say: ‘you know what? We want a bunch of people singing out of the same hymn book. And we want them singing a song of universal freedoms, human rights, Democracy – everything we have stood for and pioneered over 235 years. That’s what I am looking for us to achieve.”⁵

Joseph Nye first coined the phrase “Smart power”⁶ as a combination of “hard” and “soft” power in which all national instruments are incorporated. In layman’s terms, it describes the idea of “getting more for less” by using all means at a government’s disposal, civilian as well as military, kinetic as well as non-kinetic. “Soft power” is influence over someone without any form of coercion, but rather through their latent respect for your values and way of life, and desire to share them. “Hard power” is traditional coercion through combat operations or violent means.

⁵ Remarks by Secretary Clinton and Secretary Panetta at National Defense University, Fort McNair, Washington DC, 16 Aug 2011 (<http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4864>)

⁶ Joseph Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004) 32.

With this in mind, national security policies are shifting in emphasis toward smaller high-tech forces rather than large and low-tech ones. Greater inter-agency coordination will be a force multiplier in the face of service cuts and perceived reduction in capability. Precision weapons and surveillance assets will deliver discreet, collateral free battle. Combat units will train as much for Gendarmerie activity than they will for closing with and killing the enemy, an echo from the 1960s of Morris Janowitz's "Constabulary Force" theory, yet it will be a "reversible" structure that can return to conventional war-fighting if necessary.⁷

Delivering effect "upstream" of any conflict through capacity building or civil-military influence operations is the nirvana of U.S. security strategy. Politicians preach "smart power" as a way to steer global events without recourse to the use of a traditional, volatile, and expensive military instrument of power. They look to "Soft Power" to shape the necessary alliances for future U.S. security and prosperity. The danger of relying on "Soft Power" as a tangible policy goal to further national interests is that it presupposes that Soft Power can be generated or controlled, whereas it is in fact the uncontrollable hinterland beyond the definitive actions of "Hard Power". If "Soft Power" is brought into the realm of warfare it can place restraints on military use that are at odds with its ultimate design. Warfare becomes applied ethics or "Lawfare," which is inevitably an illusion because war is essentially political, not ethical.⁸

⁷ Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier* (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

⁸ Colin S. Gray, "Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century", *Strategic Studies Institute* monograph (April 2011): 27.

The Role of the Military in Smart Power

If the nation can no longer afford large scale traditional warfare both in terms of fiscal and strategic communications costs, then what is the role of the majority of the military in the next twenty years? Speaking of the ensuing defense budgets, Secretary Clinton conceded that “it [the cuts] does cast a pall over our ability to project the kind of security interests that are in America’s interests. This is not about Defense Department or the State Department or USAID. This is about the United States of America. And we need to have a responsible conversation about how we are going to prepare ourselves for the future.”⁹ Part of this answer will undoubtedly affect the military and its means to fulfill its role in “smart power”.

The danger of a “smart power” approach is that the military may squeeze itself into structures that produce Jacks-of-all-trades but masters of none; military leaders will be unwilling to lose long-standing capabilities yet determined to be seen as forward thinking. And despite the notion of conventional ground operations, especially east of Suez, being as abhorrent as pressing the nuclear button, the military will still feel obliged to retain the ability to fight large scale traditional warfare.

Above all, the men and women who join the Armed Forces will do so for very much the same reasons as their forefathers a century ago. Few will day dream of conducting Soft Power related activity, or indeed wish to fight a ruthless opposition without the freedom to pull the trigger. They will likely join the military for *la vie militaire*, notions of heroism and adventure, or less noble incentives such as employment and free education. Their training will continue to harness these motives with a

⁹ Ibid.

heightened state of patriotic fervor designed at the very least to ensure discipline and in extreme to motivate servicemen to sacrifice their lives for their Nation.

This places the capability of Western militaries today in an unprecedented position. Their very foundations are borne from Napoleonic warfare, the *levee en masse*, itself the professionalization of centuries of essentially Hoplite warfare. Yet, their employment is increasingly constrained to that of a policeman and counselor for the majority of servicemen or women, or a ruthless precision striker for the hallowed few.

As a result of the expensive and humbling experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, Western political leaders now seek a type of military power that is at odds with the motivations of the men and women they comprise. Furthermore, history dictates that, despite the lessons of the past, a Nation can still ask its military to win unwinnable wars.

It is worth providing a short case study of the counterinsurgency fight in Afghanistan; it highlights the central problem facing our joint and combined forces in delivering “What a Liberal Democracy Wants” in an environment where “decisive victory” is not possible. It also provides a basis for a discussion on whether the military is suited to nation building tasks beyond its core competencies and adds context to the direction given in the recently published new Strategic Guidance, and the administration’s wish to use “Smart Power”.

Afghanistan – a Case Study

In Afghanistan today, regardless of an increased effort to adapt force structures to new operational requirements, coalition forces struggle to deliver a successful counter-insurgency campaign. The enemy is a militarily unsophisticated force for whom violence

or the threat of violence offers little disincentive. Stabilization and development projects continue to be hampered by fighting between the soldiers tasked to deliver them and a seemingly un-ending army of insurgents drawn to the fight. Faced with stark choices, the population caught between these opposing forces are necessarily fickle, as are the publics of the Coalition itself.

It is evident that despite great efforts, both conceptually and physically, the military has not been able to deliver mission success as first envisaged. They have been unable to undermine the insurgent by delivering adequate protection and re-assurance to the population and stabilization organizations alike. Whilst superior to the insurgent tactically, at the operational and strategic levels the military has struggled to achieve its goals. Carl Von Clausewitz wrote that “if the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make,” and goes on to state that to do this “you must make him literally defenseless or at least put him in a position that makes this danger probable.”¹⁰ In Afghanistan this equates to denying the Taliban internal and external support. When it became clear to Coalition forces that military victory alone was not enough to achieve success, the military had so much ownership of the campaign it was inevitable they would continue to carry it forward as a military campaign, albeit within a coalition.

It is arguable that this is because the military is the instrument of power a government has most control over in pursuing national interests. In this respect it is unique from other instruments of power such as Diplomacy, Information and Economics,

¹⁰ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 85.

which are more susceptible to external influences and have a longer saturation period to have effect. A government inherits no certainties within the international stage other than the unchanging nature of humankind, its greed, and preponderance for conflict. It is for this reason that the military instrument of power is so often relied upon to bring order or equilibrium to the chaos. However, it is not currently sufficiently integrated with the inter agency to execute complex campaigns much beyond its core competencies of war-fighting.

In an article titled “Superpowers Don’t Do Windows,” John Hillen compares the role of the U.S. military in the world to that of the Mayo Clinic in health affairs or the FBI in law enforcement: “that is, the United States should take the lead in the hierarchy of global security, but within a cooperative system in which allies play supporting roles. The Mayo Clinic and the FBI undertake only those essential duties that are in keeping with their unique talents and resources, leaving routine health care and law enforcement to local hospitals and police. For otherwise, those elite agencies would not only drown in minutiae and waste their resources, they would soon lose their capacity to perform the challenging task for which they were formed.”¹¹ Writing in 1997 Hillen had as his context the Balkans campaign. Of U.S engagement in that conflict he said “these requirements are literally wearing out men and materiel, and former Pentagon planner Robert Gaskin has noted that the military is ‘approaching burnout.’” His metaphor still holds true today in respect to OEF and, preceding it, OIF.

The problem becomes greater still when one considers Colin Gray’s assertion that “the only certainty is that there will be another war, that the nature of that war will be

¹¹ John Hillen, “America the Vulnerable – Superpowers Don’t Do Windows,” *Orbis* (Spring 1997).

unchanged, and that we will not be perfectly prepared to fight it.”¹² The military is called upon to conduct too broad a canvas of activity despite the nature of war supposing a relatively defined requirements. Because, like the wars they are designed to fight, militaries also come with unchanging natures, there is a mismatch not just between *capacity*, as Hillen reminds us, but also the very *ethos and culture* of our military machine. If the military are to be the executors of policy within the new international framework, they should only be employed for activity that is consistent with their capacity, culture, and ethos.

To illustrate this point, it is worth noting that two nations that committed to and then withdrew from OEF proclaimed themselves, in 1996, as peace-keeping Armies rather than war-fighting ones: Canada’s then new defense minister stated, “I am a peace keeper, not a warrior” and his Dutch counterpart commented “the draft no longer fitted with the army’s role in a world where peacekeeping has taken over from combat.”¹³

Like many strategy theorists, Arthur F. Lykke, Jr reiterates that “in our definition of military strategy, the ultimate objectives are those of national policy,”¹⁴ and echoes the Clausewitzian mantra that “war is merely the continuation of policy by other means.”¹⁵ However, Clausewitz also identifies something that is less oft quoted: “We can [therefore] take the political object as a standard only if we think of *the influence it can exert upon the forces it is meant to move*...Between two peoples and two states there can be such tensions, such a mass of inflammable material, that the slightest quarrel can

¹² Colin S. Gray, “War – Continuity in Change, and Change in Continuity,” *Parameters* (Summer 2010): 5-6.

¹³ John Hillen, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., “Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy,” *U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy* (February 2001): 181.

¹⁵ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. (New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 99.

produce a wholly disproportionate effect – a real explosion.”¹⁶ Clausewitz’s observation is timeless: the political extent or “standard” of an objective may not dictate the second or third order effects of a war to achieve it. With Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” as context, the deployment of a Western occupying force into two Islamic nations was always likely to cause Clausewitz’s “real explosion.”

It is this tension between what a government wants and how the military can be involved to achieve it that should be at the heart of every policy decision involving national security. The nature of war and its actors will often dictate the outcome of conflict more than the intent of the politician who initiated it. Therefore decision makers must fully understand not just the nature of war, but those responsible for waging it. It is arguable that Osama Bin Laden understood this relationship better than the Bush administration.

We have seen that a government’s paradigm, based on its ideology and the global environment around it, will dictate its grand strategy, and that in turn will dictate the way in which the military will be used within that strategy. We have seen how in Afghanistan a failure to understand what a military can achieve led to strategic shortcomings. The following chapter will complete the contextualization of this thesis by contrasting the core culture and ethos of the military to its emerging roles in line with the new strategic guidance as outlined above. It will end by summarizing reasonable assumptions on what a Western liberal democracy demands from its military today.

¹⁶ Ibid. Emphasis added.

CHAPTER 3

The Military Instrument of Power – ‘Means’

“This inner craving for a clear decision, despite the carnage, will not fade; it cannot since, as the Greeks discovered, it resides in the dark hearts of us all.”¹

“Military force is not under threat of obsolescence because of the availability of “smart” soft power alternatives, but its utility to Liberal Western societies is menaced by the imprudent measure of their imprudent enthusiasm for placing constraints upon their use of it.”²

The U.S. Joint Publication 1-0 (JP 1-0) states that “The use of the military to conduct combat operations should be a last resort when the other instruments of national power have failed to achieve our nation’s objectives.”³ It implies that the appearance of military forces in the territory of another is the point where diplomacy ends, and hostilities begin, and is based on the assumption that the military is an essentially violent organization. President George W. Bush summed up this premise when he said “the purpose of the Armed Forces is to fight and win the Nation’s wars.”⁴

The U.S Joint Publication 1-0 gives as clear an impression as one needs on how the military regards its role within the National Security Strategy. Notably, it is strongly mechanistic in explaining the traditional role of force yet general and opaque with regard to any other use of the military. On the former, JP 1-0 states that “war is socially

¹ Victor D. Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989) 13.

² Colin S. Gray, “Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century”, *Strategic Studies Institute* monograph (April 2011): 48.

³ U.S Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Operations, Joint Publication 1-0, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 20 March 2009), Ch 1, 3b.

⁴ *Ibid*, 3e.

sanctioned violence to achieve a political purpose. In its essence, war is a violent clash of wills. War is a complex, human undertaking that does not respond to deterministic rules. ... As a nation, the United States wages war employing all instruments of national power – diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. The President employs the Armed Forces of the United States to achieve national strategic objectives. Decisive unified action ensures unity of effort focused on those objectives and leading to the conclusion of operations on terms favorable to the United States.”⁵

Here JP 1-0 is clear. Decisive military action can be tied directly to the objectives set down by the President of the United States, and set within a timeline for achieving success. The U.S. has a history of such wars and therefore good reason to base its doctrine on the assumption of more in the future. The U.S. Marine Corps Small Wars Manual, written in 1940, reminds us of this legacy: “Small wars represent the normal and frequent operations of the Marine Corps. During about 85 of the last 100 years, the Marine Corps has been engaged in small wars in different parts of the world. The Marine Corps has landed troops 180 times in 37 countries from 1800 to 1934.”⁶

On the latter subject of irregular warfare JP 1-0 says this: “Warfare that has the population as it’s ‘focus of operations’ requires a different mindset and different capabilities than warfare that focuses on defeating an adversary militarily. When engaged in irregular warfare, the U.S. response will vary according to established national and coalition objectives, the specific type or combination of operations required (such as

⁵ Ibid, 1e.

⁶ United States Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual*, (Washington DC: U.S Government Printing Office:1940), 2.

counterinsurgency and counterterrorism), and other situation-specific factors.”⁷ Here JP 1-0 is less clear. Whilst JP 1-0 and other Defense publications do speak extensively about irregular warfare they do so generally and in terms which suggest they are very much operations outside core competency. Joint Doctrine is still heavily geared toward delivery of time sensitive decision or victory within a wider political strategic plan.

In this sense, the militaries of the West are still broadly designed to fight linear, combined arms warfare in order to defend the nation and its interests, notwithstanding considerable advancements in space and cyber capabilities as well as sophisticated and networked special forces operations. It is a form of warfare validated in the World Wars, the Cold War, and the successful conventional actions in Kuwait and Iraq since 1990. However, the traditional war fighting militaries of the West have been comparatively ineffective against the ideologically driven insurgent.

A recent U.S. Joint Forces Command paper titled “IDF Hybrid Threat Discovery Seminar – U.S. White Paper on Critical Concepts for Campaigns against Hybrid Threats” identified the tension between military ethos and the contemporary operating environment:

The predilection for victory is a strong dynamic among the U.S. military forces. The prevalence of these notions, despite the obvious changes to operating environments, may be attributable to the inflated charters the services and joint forces set for themselves. Take the U.S. Army’s view of their pre-eminent mission to “fight and win the nation’s wars” as an example.⁸ This self-characterization of their purpose may be useful to sustain service ethos. However, it has no basis in assigned missions or U.S. law where roles and missions are formally established.⁹ This is not dissimilar to the Air Force’s view of their mission... The joint force’s key futures concepts echo these service sentiments in their identification of victory as the primary expected outcome in war. The

⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1-0 (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 20 2009), Ch 1, 3b.

⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Field Manual 1-0: The Army* (Washington D.C., June 2005) 1-1.

⁹ U.S. Congress, *Title 10 U.S. Code* (Washington DC: U.S. G.P.O., 1956).

Capstone Concept for Joint Operations offers that: “*Winning the Nation’s wars* remains the preeminent challenge and primary justification for maintaining capable and credible military forces.”¹⁰ However, the logic of contemporary operating environment may argue that “winning” and keeping the peace may now be the best justification for our joint forces.¹¹

The Role of a Modern Western Military

If this is to be the case, what challenges does this pose to the military? During the last decade the responsibility of the military has broadened to include the facilitation of coherent stabilization and development operations, or “nation building.” Efforts to adapt have focused at the strategic and operational level in the guise of greater civil-military and inter-agency co-ordination at Brigade, Division, and Corps level. In the most part, such measures have been instigated after forces have been committed to battle, yet expectation of subsequent success has been high. Military leaders have leant into this transformation, both through necessity and a culturally inherent desire to lead the fight, but continue to struggle to achieve the level of cross governmental and multi-national cohesion deemed necessary. The experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that “winning” the peace is not as simple as a phased operation which transitions from kinetic to non-kinetic, a kind of “you break it you fix it” approach to military intervention. It is clear that the manner in which a military becomes first involved is both physically and conceptually linked to the way in which it has to subsequently operate.

Robert Birkenes observes that “Human relations and behavior — not the technology and organizational mechanics of coordination — are the real barriers to

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations, Version 3.0* (Washington D.C.: 2009) 7.

¹¹ Col J F Dickens, Col J B Miller, “U.S JFCOM IDF Hybrid Threat Discovery Seminar,” *U.S White Paper on Critical Concepts for Campaigns against Hybrid Threats* (15 Feb 2010).

interagency integration.”¹² Speaking of the qualities needed in the Foreign Service to underpin institutional change he highlights the key issue of this thesis. It is culture and ethos of individual institutions and their leadership which ultimately prevails in the way servicemen and women conduct the business of foreign policy, whether it be soft or hard power.

For example, the training and military education of the majority of Western militaries is based in the main on learning the skills required to defeat an opposing force through the direct application of violence, or threat of violence. One only need look at some current unit mottos and missions to understand the psychology behind today’s fighting units. The U.S Infantry motto is “Follow Me!” and its stated mission is to “close with the enemy by means of fire and maneuver in order to destroy or capture him or to repel his assault by fire, close combat, and counterattack.”¹³ The British Army Infantry’s symbol is a bayonet, and regimental mottos have included “Death or Glory,” “Everywhere, Where Right and Glory Lead.” The motto of the British Army itself is “Be The Best,” the Royal Navy “The Team Works,” and the Royal Air Force “Rise above the Rest.” The USAF slogan is “Aim High” and “Fly, Fight, Win.” These are phrases intended to encourage an exclusive sense of unequalled strength and subordination to no-one but the chain of command and the mission. It is still the irreducible minimum for the profession of arms and is the common ground of all ranks regardless of the evolutions in warfare over the last hundred years. The servicemen and women in the ranks are motivated today as their forefathers were centuries ago. In this sense, state-sponsored

¹² Robert M. Birkenes, “Focus on Diplomats in Conflict Zones. Interagency Cooperation: The JIATF in Iraq,” *Foreign Service Journal* (September 2009).

¹³ U.S Army, *Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad*, Field Manual 7-8.

patriotism, and romanticism, continues to combine with adventurous youth; today, such motives may be compounded by an increasingly media aware YouTube and gaming generation. They provide potent fuel for a military machine which is arguably unsuited to anything other than decisive operations against an enemy.

In addition to the motivations of the junior ranks, the successful career progression of Officers is arguably counter intuitive to the needs of today's operations. Short periods of command on complex and drawn out missions hinder the cohesiveness and continuity of the campaign. The career mechanisms which launch officers to stardom, and the motivations they create, and are inconsistent with the nature of the last two campaigns. The Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have demanded longevity and the subordination of military effort to civilian leaders and their strategy. This has been hampered by innumerable changes in military and political command, in stark contrast to the continuity of leadership provided during WWII.

The pressures of the impending budget cuts have also placed senior military leaders in a difficult position. Their desire to preserve the Services conflicts with the need for rationalization into greater inter agency and joint structures. In this sense, the motivations of the military man and his General are less complex than the environment in which they find themselves. Not only do the "military means" not altogether match the "strategic ways," but the guardians of the force may also be losing relevance in a political world that has little respect for process or linear chains of command. Historically, loss of trust between military and political leaders has far reaching consequences.

A stark view might be that if the lessons taken from the last two campaigns are that we must strive to do multi-national and inter-agency better in order to “win,” and that the military must become better at keeping the peace, we lose sight of a broader truth: such constructs fail and should not be employed at all. As Sun Tzu foretold, “victory is the main object in war. If this is long delayed, weapons are blunted and morale is depressed. When troops attack cities, their strength will be exhausted. When the army engages in protracted campaigns the resources of the state will not suffice....For there has never been a protracted war from which a country has benefited.”¹⁴

It is telling therefore that U.S. military doctrine continues to hedge around the issue. A study of contemporary hybrid war planning shows that military endstates are usually conceptual or based on non-military objectives. It is commonly accepted that the endstate in Afghanistan is far removed from any solely military objective. The JFCOM paper concludes “perhaps this lack of consistent and objective utility of the term [victory] explains why, despite the term’s importance to the military ethos, concepts for victory and decision remain undefined by U.S. joint doctrine.”¹⁵

Today, the U.S. military prevails at the tactical and operational level in an extremely tough operating environment; yet it is certain they will never see their flag raised over ground covered with their blood and the scattered treasures of their nation. The culture and ethos that allowed them to prevail in such a fight demands a decisive victory that will not be forthcoming. The psychological impact that this dichotomy will have on the military is yet to be seen, but it has echoes of Vietnam and again begs the question: is the

¹⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Translated Samuel B Griffiths (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), ix, 73.

¹⁵ Col. J. F. Dickens, Col. J. B. Miller, “U.S JFCOM IDF Hybrid Threat Discovery Seminar,” *U.S White Paper on Critical Concepts for Campaigns against Hybrid Threats* (15 Feb 2010).

culture and ethos of the military suited for the “Long Wars” demanded by the Liberalist narrative, for example, or more suited for the short punitive actions of a more realist nation? As Hanson reminds us in his commentary on the Western Way of War and Greek infantry battle: “It is essential to remember its [battle] moral imperative is to end the fighting quickly and efficiently, not simply to exhibit brave resolve.”¹⁶

Assumptions

Having scrutinized the current international security situation and how the West, in particular the U.S, sees itself in the world it is possible to establish reasonable assumptions about the emerging role of a modern Western military. This is possible both in terms of explicit policy and what we have seen as implicit given observations of the global security environment and what Liberal Democracies wish to achieve within it.

Throughout the ages the shadow of persuasion has always looked like a weapon, whether a halberd or a hellfire missile, both for regular and irregular warfare. However, we will continue to pursue a desire for the non-kinetic fight, the war of limited consequence, the new way to win wars. Over the centuries militaries have grown to understand this fundamental axiom of power and shaped doctrine accordingly. The culture and ethos of a modern Western military is one centered on the delivery of decisive victory in combat. The prevailing purpose of a Western military remains to defend sovereignty and the resources required to sustain it. Their construct remains broadly to deliver decisive victory in wars by having the overwhelming capability to defeat or deter an enemy on land, the sea, in the air, in space and, increasingly, in cyber

¹⁶ Victor D. Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989), 13.

space. Whatever the limits of political intent, military power involves violence or coercion and militaries expect to use it. In the simplest of terms, when soldiers march there will be fighting regardless of the wishes of the distant politician.

As many Western defense forces prepare to re-size due to acute national debt, programmers will re-visit what an armed force can realistically achieve given the nature of war, the current operating environment, and fiscal constraints. Foreign policy and the use of other instruments of power will be adjusted in concert with transformation within the military based on the model of “Smart Power” and validated by the perceived success in Libya. Governments will seek militaries for short clean wars or discretionary nation building, underpinned by principles of restraint and acceptability. They will look to the military to continue to transform in order to meet these demands and the military will be unable to resist such change, through necessity to meet current political goals and a desire to retain relevance.

Critically, however, a culture and ethos geared toward major conventional warfare is likely to remain within the military, despite its desire to refine the way in which it fights war. This culture and ethos risks being counter intuitive to the posture implied by current security strategy and could represent a mismatch between what a liberal democracy wants and the military means it has to achieve it. The following chapter will explore further this notion of military culture and ethos and examine in greater detail how the motivations of the military are a factor in understanding the limits of the military instrument of power.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis: the Nature of War and its Actors

*'If the experience of the centuries teaches any enduring lesson about war, it is that the heart of man has never been changed by any weapon his mind has conceived. There is, in short, no reason to believe that the hydrogen bomb has affected Napoleon's famous dictum, "The moral is to the material in war as three to one."'*¹

The willingness of politicians and generals alike to wage war remains. Only the horror of nuclear exchange has acquired the status of "unthinkable." All other forms of warfare remain well within the Western view of what is acceptable in defense of a nation and its interests; the notion of the Just War can legitimize political objectives which are regularly at odds with the human cost of implementing them. John Keegan wryly observes: "might the modern conscript not well think, at first acquaintance with the weapons the state foists on him, that its humanitarian code is evidence either of a nauseating hypocrisy or a psychotic inability to connect actions with their result?"² As we have already seen, JP 1-0 of the U.S Armed Forces states boldly that "war is socially sanctioned violence."

The reality of war is that it is violent, it escalates, it feeds off passion and once engaged in becomes unpredictable and creates its own momentum and dynamic. Death comes to combatants and non-combatants alike, injustices are done, feuds created, honor betrayed, and dignity lost. It creates consequences or collateral effects which cannot be

¹Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1960) xiii.

² John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 330.

controlled in nature or in longevity. Generations are traumatized and cultural bridges burnt within a very short space of time, wholly disproportionate to the time needed to recover. However, history has shown that conflict will always occur regardless of mankind's development of increasingly destructive weaponry such as the hydrogen bomb. WWI was not to be the "war to end all wars." To prevail in such an environment Armies, have called upon a particular type of man or woman and prepared them accordingly.

Western military personnel are still trained and nurtured to fight wars. They are blunt, aggressive, forward leaning institutions fit for the purpose of violence; their ranks are filled by people willing to deliver it. As long as conflict is designed to terminate disagreement by coercion when dialogue or reason fails, our armies, navies, and air forces will remain equipped, trained and postured to engage in these sorts of kinetic, violent fights.

However, although the line between diplomacy and conflict remains relatively un-blurred in the minds of the fighting man, in reality it is increasingly blurred. U.S. Forces thinkers in 1989, who prophesied so-called "Fourth Generation of Warfare," argued that significant changes in the operating environment over the last century requires Western military culture to shift accordingly.³ It "has become contradictory to the modern battlefield." Whilst the geography of war remains critical in a resource driven world it is less the limit of battle than it once was. Battlefields are now virtual as well as actual, with the battle of the narrative becoming increasingly important within the operational

³ William S. Lind, John F. Schmitt, Joseph W. Sutton, Gary I. Wilson, "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 1989): 22-26.

and strategic designs. Extremist propaganda through the media incites subversion or terrorism without being fixed in one geographical area. In the “global village” nations are vulnerable to asymmetric attack in the home base as well as in overseas bases, spawning conflicts or confrontations such as the “global war on terror.”

Sir Michael Howard has explored the central issue of whether today’s “war on terror” is in fact a war at all, and discusses the role of the military therein. He emphasizes that the notion of “freedom” is essentially a Western one that seeks to de-tribalize the world – a direct challenge to nations, especially Middle East and near Asian ones. His argument is simple and clear: “Whatever we call the conflict, whether war or confrontation, it is certainly likely to be long. The use of armed force offers no short cuts, and unless it is used with skill and restraint it may do more harm than good.” He concludes, “the military may protest that this is not the kind of war they joined up to fight, and taxpayers that they see little return for their money. But as I have said earlier, it is the only war we are likely to get: it is also the only kind of peace. So let us have no illusions about it.”⁴

With this in mind, the words of the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, seem wholly ill informed on the potential impact of large scale intervention and occupation of a Middle Eastern country: “the outcome of this issue will now determine more than the fate of the Iraqi regime and more than the future of the Iraqi people, for so long brutalized by Saddam. It will determine the way Britain and the world confront the central security threat of the 21st century; the development of the UN; the relationship between Europe and the US; the relations within the EU and the way the US engages with the rest of the world. It will determine the pattern of

⁴ Michael Howard, “A Long War?” *Survival*, vol. 48 (Winter 2006-7): 7-14.

international politics for the next generation.”⁵ He was certainly right but not, perhaps, in the way he thought. The debacle that followed the initial invasion of Iraq, and the legacy that remains today, is a vindication of Howard’s views and a useful commentary on the gap between political rhetoric and detailed cultural understanding of what war can unravel.

The security challenges of the next few decades will likely be approached with less application of force and more attempts at strategic patience and the non-kinetic battle of the narrative. If the West is wooed by the concept of maintaining the trappings of a superpower but without the moral collateral damage, then what of the military man who must operate within this paradigm? Will the Generals be drawn in by the new “Smart Power” approach despite the culture and ethos of men and women asked to deliver it, and the motivations of the adversary they face? Will our political leaders be allowed to drift further from the enduring truth that war cannot be altered, nor controlled, and involvement of military force must be the last resort? The following chapters will analyze these questions by looking at the human element of the military instrument of power, the element Napoleon referred to as “three to one” over the material. It will illustrate how today’s rank and file are still suited only to military action in war, and the way in which tensions within and between the military and political leadership can allow this truism to be forgotten.

⁵ Blair, Tony. Debate on the Iraq crisis in the house of Commons, as released by 10 Downing Street (18 Mar, 2003): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2003/mar/18/foreignpolicy.iraq1> (accessed 12 Sept, 2011).

The Man with the Weapon

“No great dependence is to be placed in the eagerness of young soldiers for action, for fighting has something agreeable in the idea to those who are strangers to it.”
*Vegetius.*⁶

*“It remains the unique responsibility of the armed forces officer to ask other people’s children to do very dangerous things. These traditions, those of the warrior, must be inculcated, nurtured, and embodied in all officers, so that the armed forces never lose their essential reason for being – the ability to achieve just victory in combat.”*⁷

Vegetius reminds us that the ranks of our military are filled with servicemen or woman who either have not experienced war, yet wish to, or have experienced war and therefore will require motivation to do so again. The current military ethos and culture, so explicitly portrayed in the U.S. Department of Defense’s book, *The Armed Forces Officer*, provides for both and is the result of many centuries of tradition surrounding the profession of arms. In his book, *The Face of Battle*, John Keegan highlights the personal nature of battle: “all infantry actions, even those fought in the closest of close order, are not, in the last resort, combats of mass against mass, but the sum of many combats of individuals – one against one, one against two, three against five.”⁸ Today, a young military man or woman is still trained to understand and accept the basic concept of killing an enemy and being prepared to be killed themselves. Whilst there is little doubt that they are capable of extraordinary achievements in all types of operations, it is naïve

⁶ Montross Lynn, *War Through the Ages* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1960), 48.

⁷ U.S Department of Defense, *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, Potomac Books, 2007): 17.

⁸ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 100.

to think that within a non benign operational environment such young men or women will not give recourse to this basic training: the application of violence in order to succeed in battle, driven by the potent motivation of fighting for comrades in arms. After all, the very cause of conflict is primarily hostile feeling or hostile intent toward another, an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.⁹ The majority of modern service personnel do not have either the capacity or the motivation to exercise anything beyond the limits of their training.

Capacity

The critical thinking required to comprehend the complexity of nation building operations is beyond the competency of most young service personnel today; it is certainly not their core competency. For example, it is not uncommon to have poor literacy within infantry battalions. In 2007, a BBC report revealed that within the British Army “up to half of the 12,000 recruits each year are at or below levels expected of 11-year-olds.”¹⁰ Demanding the capacity within such servicemen or woman for learning languages and appropriate levels of cultural understanding for complex counter-insurgency or hybrid warfare seems optimistic in the extreme. The “Culture Cards Afghanistan and Islamic Culture” issued to U.S soldiers states “Soldiers must understand how vital culture is in accomplishing today’s missions” and goes on to say “Military personnel who have a superficial or even distorted picture of a host culture make enemies for the United States. Each Soldier must be a culturally literate ambassador, aware and

⁹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York, London, Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993) 83.

¹⁰ BBC News website, “Army Has Poor Literacy”, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6418683.stm, (accessed 11 February 2012).

observant of local cultural beliefs, values, behaviors and norms.”¹¹ It is no argument that an understanding of culture is not critical to effective counterinsurgency. However, the Culture Card contains a vast amount of detailed and at times esoteric material which is beyond the competency of an illiterate eighteen year old rifleman: “VBBN (Values, Beliefs, Behaviors and Norms), the basic Army Acronym of what makes up culture. It includes a peoples’ history and religion, their use of body language and personal space, power distance between superiors and subordinates, time orientation, individualism, formality, perceptions, use of reason, belief in cause and effect vs. fate, as well as other variables. Try to understand the local differences in values and beliefs within the context in which you observe them.”¹² Regardless of how commendable such military efforts are, they are nevertheless all but an indication of how great the gap has become between what political ends now demand from the military and the military’s ability to deliver it. In simple terms, there is a mismatch between the very culture and ethos of the present day military and the types of wars it is keenly attempting to adapt to.

In the heat of battle, or the battlefield, it is the people that change and create events, not plans, capabilities, equipment, “cultural awareness” or even doctrine. No amount of rhetoric about “thinking soldiers” will fix bad strategy where it unfolds on the battlefield. In a fire-fight cultural awareness quickly becomes an irrelevance, and soldiers become governed by a wholly separate set of rules. In his book, *Reading Athena’s Dance Card – Men Against Fire in Vietnam*, Russell Glen reveals the motivations of men in battle: “One personal factor was survival: Du Picq’s observed

¹¹ FAS, Graphic Training Aid 21-03-022 “Culture Cards – Afghanistan and Islamic Culture”, <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/culture.pdf> (accessed 11 February 2012).

¹² Ibid.

desire to kill the enemy before he was himself killed. Another was the soldier's need to demonstrate his ability to perform, what some called a 'gut check.' A soldier knew his job was to confront and kill other men; completing the act was confirmation of his warrior status."¹³ If a strategy puts the military in a non permissive environment yet demands permissive actions, then it is flawed in its assumptions on the nature of war and those currently sent to fight it. If one considers that the military win the hearts of minds of its own recruits through unrelenting indoctrination, rigorous kinetic orientated training, and unashamed mantras of honor, gallantry, and national pride, it is easy to conclude that such a force is unsuited to winning the hearts and minds of a foreign civilian non-combatant population. After all, "it is the warfighting mission that determines how they [the military] are organized, equipped, and trained."¹⁴ A counter argument would be that the projected rise in Special Forces requirements to address increasingly diverse and dispersed threats *in lieu* of more clumsy, blunt conventional forces, will make this factor less significant. However, it is inevitable that the call to arms for conventional troops will come again. In the meantime it will be a challenge to avoid the creation of a two-tiered Armed Force, with one tier stripped of high quality individuals to bolster the ranks of the other.

Motivation

The "warrior code" and "war fighting ethos" are the foundations of the U.S. and U.K. military respectively. British Defense Doctrine is very clear on the mindset it requires from its personnel: "every member of the Armed Forces must be prepared to

¹³ Russell W Glenn, *Reading Athena's Dance Card: Men Against Fire in Vietnam*. (Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 46.

¹⁴ U.S Department of Defense. *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, Potomac Books, 2007): 12.

fight and die for whatever legitimate cause the U.K. is pursuing through military endeavor. It follows that doctrine must have at its core a warfighting ethos... Importantly, by its very nature, military activity is about confronting risk and managing it. It is emphatically never about avoiding risk; the military is not a profession one for those who are risk averse.”¹⁵ These words were drafted during September 2001 and published in October that year as the UK prepared to join the U.S in operations in Afghanistan and later Iraq. Whilst British Defense Doctrine recognized the wider requirement of the military for peace support operations, it very firmly expresses warfighting as the foundation for all components of fighting power – the moral, the physical, and the conceptual.

Critically, current doctrine connects this ideal to the notion of legitimate cause. In the U.S. Department of Defense publication *The Armed Forces Officer*, a similar notion is expressed. Having described the brave actions of Lieutenant Commander John Waldron during the Battle of Midway in June 1942, it goes on to say “armed with an uncommon sense of conviction and patriotic zeal, he was committed to the principle of doing the right thing for the right reason. He embodied the Constitutional ideal of self sacrifice, finding the resolve to lay his life on the line to promote the welfare of the nation. Waldron demonstrated that for citizen-soldiers, heroism is a function of our faith and conviction to give all we have for something we believe in.”¹⁶

Esprit de Corps

It is ironic that we have come to exercise romanticism when setting up the Armed Forces as a mirror to the heart of a nation and the executors of just and legitimate ideas.

¹⁵ British Defence Doctrine, *Joint Warfare Publication 0-01*, Second Edition, (Oct 2001).

¹⁶ U.S Department of Defense. *The Armed Forces Officer* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, Potomac Books, 2007): 5.

We do so today, perhaps, to create a justification or motive for an activity which is a hard business yet not one always bedded in the survival of the nation. This was not the case for our Greek ancestors of the Phalanx; “the plumed general, the armchair tactician, and the be-medaled retiree were virtually unknown – left only to the imagination of their Hellenistic and Roman successors. Battle was seen only as the domain of those men who actually experienced the carnage of the spear and sword thrust, and these had no desire to make anything else out of it than the acknowledgement of unavoidable and unnecessary killing.”¹⁷ Battle was a function to protect what was yours, your farms and crops; it held no glamour or attraction beyond that and was exercised with those specific aims in mind.

A guide to how modern militaries view themselves can often be found in the units they choose to first deploy on operations. Rarely will a nation deploy anything other than its “lead” or “elite” units at the outset of conflict, units whose ranks are understandably keen to justify the exclusivity of their club. However, given the JOE these units and the skills they provide may not always be suited to the strategic objectives required. In his book, *Losing Small Wars*, Frank Ledwidge recounts how the UK’s political decision in 2006 to deploy the newly formed 16 Air Assault Brigade with its “shock troop” 3rd Parachute Regiment and newly procured Apache helicopters, ignored the critical need to understand the nature of the conflict they were entering, and the nature of the men they were sending. “If one were asked to choose the most appropriate British brigade for a peace enforcement mission, one would be hard pressed to think of a less likely candidate than 16 Air Assault Brigade.”¹⁸ The Commanding Officer of one of its battalions stated:

¹⁷ Victor D Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1989) 18.

¹⁸ Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars – British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 72.

“3 Para felt that their combat talents had been wasted” in past deployments to Iraq, and that “all they wanted to do was to go on operations and be tested in combat.”¹⁹

It seems, therefore, that the West today evokes patriotism and romanticism in relation to military service while forgetting its essentially practical nature and how this has been the key motivating factor for those called to fight it. The military domain is so closely entwined with the political that this truth seems forgotten. It is possible that political leaders fail to appreciate that if a soldier is not fighting for the survival of his family, village or country, then his motives for fighting will be either unsavory, selfish or based on the artificial construct of *esprit de corps*; the first two do not nest neatly with how modern day service personnel are expected to operate within conflicts seemingly far removed from home, and the latter can be potentially destructive if applied arbitrarily, as the example of the UK’s choice of 16 Air Assault Brigade to deploy to Helmand Province shows.

Representing the Nation

This becomes a challenge in an age when governments look to Soft Power to achieve leverage in the world rather than the expensive and destructive act of war, yet the nature of the armed forces remains essentially the same. We should be mindful of who our servicemen really are. Joseph Nye reminds us that popular culture leaks from combat troops into the populations amongst whom they fight: “In the Vietnam era, for example, American popular culture often worked at cross purposes to official government policy. Today, Hollywood movies that show scantily clad women with libertine attitudes or fundamentalist Christian groups that castigate Islam as an evil religion are both (properly)

¹⁹ Ibid.

outside the control of government in a liberal society, but they undercut government efforts to improve relations with Islamic nations.”²⁰

Nye is suggesting that a government can somehow devolve responsibility for the culture of its nation, reflected in the behavior of its servicemen, to a reality out-with its design, one which does not reflect the aspirations of a more pure national ideal. This is a fallacy that reinforces the notion that the nature of warfare can be somehow separate from the pure intentions of its arbiters. The actions of a soldier in Afghanistan which may offend a Muslim with an iPhone, and therefore offend a global internet readership, are, whether the soldier’s government likes it or not, actually the actions of that government. A clear example of this is the recent violence in Afghanistan against coalition forces in reaction to the accidental burning of Qurans by U.S. troops.

Responsibility cannot be devolved when it comes to cultural affairs. Mao identified that the Republic was the Army and the Army was the People. It is precisely this dynamic that a government must recognize before it sends its troops to another land. In the eyes of the world they are in essence exporting their culture in the guise of military men whose conduct reflects the motives of their government. The notion that war simply needs fighting better, or in a cleaner and more politically correct manner, is tantamount to institutional wishful thinking on a grand scale.

Joseph Nye is correct when he explains this tension between how modern democracies view conflict and what conflict entails: “the absence of a prevailing warrior ethic in modern democracies means that the use of force requires an elaborate moral justification to ensure popular support, unless actual survival is at stake. For advanced

²⁰ Joseph Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 15.

democracies, war remains possible, but is much less acceptable than it was a century, or even a half century ago. The most powerful states have lost much of the lust to conquer.”²¹

Critically, the military is detached from such leanings and herein lays the crux of the thesis and a return to the Realist versus Liberalist debate. There is a direct correlation between the view a government takes on how force is used to retain its country’s place in the world, and the manner in which that force must be applied. If that view is an apologetic one, then the force is likely to carry the burden of operational restraint and under-resourcing through protracted and self conscious campaigns. The more “elaborate” the moral justification required the less decisive a military is likely to be; planners must temper operational activity to allow for its founding liberal narrative.

It is clear therefore that there are two critical tensions between the military “man with the weapon” and current and future trends of political aspirations for war fighting. Firstly, the majority of military personnel is ill disposed to operating with restraint, and lacks the ability to understand the complexity of a battlefield that is anything other than violent, bloody, and requires the defeat of an enemy. In this respect, the military ranks are still indoctrinated in a manner that does not always fit the manner in which they are expected to operate. Secondly, the military embody the nation they fight for. It is they who are exposed to the enemy, the populations amongst whom they fight, and an increasingly connected public at home and away. Therefore, not only can actions not be devolved from the strategic narrative but neither can the very appearance, behavior, and attitudes of the servicemen themselves, regardless of any public relation effort to the contrary. Given the increasing importance of strategic communications, no troops should

²¹ Ibid 19.

be committed unless even the worst outcome of a tactical event cannot expose or threaten the strategic narrative and logic behind deployment. The USG position on the recent scandal of U.S. Marines urinating on dead Taliban fighters was to totally disown the actions as an aberration within an otherwise justified campaign. Such universal condemnation loudly ignores USG complicity through its decision to go to war in the first place.

The counter argument to such a premise – that militaries only know how to fight – would be that Western militaries have successfully conducted many humanitarian missions both worldwide and at home; these are non-conventional environments which are no less complex than a hybrid conflict or counterinsurgency. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, military units excelled in adapting to the extraordinary demands of the catastrophe, with very little guidance. A platoon commander, First Lieutenant Paolo Sica, noted that “the lack of established TTPs [tactics, techniques, and procedures] for this type of noncombatant operation was much less confounding than it was stimulating...All that we needed to bring to this ‘fight’ was our Army Values [sic] and the ability to adapt.”²² From this one might argue that the warrior ethos of the U.S. military is a true foundation for the full spectrum of military activity.

However, the critical difference between the Katrina scenario and a war or conflict amongst the people, where similar compassion and aid related activity may also be the central requirement of the military, is that during Katrina there was not a threat to life from an enemy. In the minds of the soldiers deployed, the Katrina effort may have played out as an opportunity to be the compassionate hero, free of the burden of violence.

²² James A. Wombwell, “Army Support During the Hurricane Katrina Disaster,” *The Long War Series*, Occasional Paper 29 (US Army Combined Arms Center Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Combat Studies Institute Press).

It was very clearly a “non-combatant mission.” A “trigger” to resort to core training and conventional TTPs did not exist. It is notable that U.S. Marines deployed to the mission were unarmed due to a fear that armed looters may create such a trigger event, thus revealing at least an institutional understanding that Marines are trained primarily for one purpose and forward leaning in delivering it.

First Lieutenant Paolo Sica’s words are therefore telling in three ways. Firstly they highlight the clear delineation in a soldier’s mind about what is war and what is not; First Lieutenant Sica commanded a National Guard Reconnaissance Platoon of the 2/112 Infantry Battalion, and would be used to established TTPs focused on ground reconnaissance in war, and the attendant warrior ethos required to fulfill such a task. That these TTPs were completely unsuited to his new challenge was not an issue as the situation was wholly divorced from war. Secondly, they demonstrate that regardless of the complexity of the environment servicemen are in, if they are doing something that is just, and they believe in, they are invariably motivated or ‘stimulated’. Thirdly, First Lieutenant Sica’s enthusiasm for his work demonstrates the inherent “can-do” attitude of the military. This should not be mistaken for an inherent ability to adapt to any situation, or to deliver any mission. There is little doubt that military personnel will hope they can achieve anything with enough will and determination, drawing on their warrior or war fighting ethos; however, this does not always mean they actually can.

These three factors, along with previous discussions, point toward a key deduction. The military will rarely fail to be forward leaning into any demands made of it. However, a reliance on the enthusiasm of the rank and file of the military may fail when they are asked to operate in the space between humanitarian aid and conventional

war-fighting, a space that is catered for by neither their core training nor their good will. Furthermore, when the cause is not unequivocally just, the operating environment contains both a population in need and a persistent enemy, and there is a lack of direction and core training for such a mission, then such an environment demands too much of an essentially young and indoctrinated force trained to war fight.

This nexus of political aspiration, the reality of conflict, and the capacity and motivations of those who wage it is where our senior military leaders hold the greatest responsibility in ensuring that the military instrument of power is used for what it is at the time designed and trained for; it is to the Man with the Plan that we turn next.

The Man with the Plan

“I believe if we had, and would, keep our dirty, bloody, dollar-crooked fingers out of the business of these nations so full of depressed, exploited people, they will arrive at a solution of their own. That they design and want. That they fight and work for... and the not the American style, which they don’t want. Not one crammed down their throats by the Americans.” (General David Schoup retired 1963)²³

“Ah! The generals! They are numerous but not good for much!” Aristophanes (450-388 B.C).²⁴

It is always easy to blame the Generals, but it rarely their fault when things go wrong. This section will examine the role modern military hierarchy plays in conflict resolution today, and argue that it is the mismatch between the military construct and the

²³ Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, “David M. Shoup,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_M._Shoup (accessed 12 Feb 2012).

²⁴ Montross Lynn, *War Through the Ages* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1960) 3.

wars they now fight which is to blame for campaign failures, not necessarily the individuals themselves left to design the plan.

Why does history reveal a cyclical trend of troops being committed to wars that history also shows are likely to be unwinnable? If one can assume that political leaders seek the advice of senior military leaders before committing the nation's military, and the economic base that provides for it, it is a question worth asking. It is especially so given the increasing mismatch illustrated in the preceding chapters. It is arguable that more so now than ever before should senior military leaders be fully integrated into the decision to go to war.

Like the people they command, military leaders traditionally do not avoid a fight when that fight is for a tangible purpose, clearly connected to the national interest, and broadly matches the capabilities the military have to deliver it. In essence, the military is a realistic and conservative organization.²⁵ The liberation of Kuwait is an oft cited example of where the task given was perfectly suited to the design of a military. It also fitted the warrior ethos and culture of those who took part. However, as we saw in Chapters One and Two, such a call is rarely made on the military today and future interventions are seen as increasingly unlikely. How do military leaders re-calibrate their "realistic and conservative" stand point given this new dynamic? Why are there so many examples of military leaders failing to temper decisions leading to conflicts which result in stalemate at best, or worse, defeat?

There are several cultural areas of weakness that have contributed to these failures. They included the current legal framework for policy making, the effect on

²⁵ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1985) 79.

decision making of a military's corporate experience or paradigm, military career management and norms, previous military experience of leaders, the nature of command and control in the modern battle-space, and Service loyalties.

The Law

Most Western militaries are by law subordinate to civil control. In the U.S the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the sole arbiter of military advice to the President via the Sec. of Defense, effectively the leader of the Department of Defence (DoD). He is the funnel through which all military advice flows to the President. The Chairman is served by Combatant Commanders and Service Chiefs, who are in reality the lowest level at which military decisions regarding deployment of troops are likely to be made. The Chairman is tasked as follows: "Title 10, United States Code, Section 153 requires the Chairman to submit to Congress through the Secretary of Defense a report providing an assessment of the nature and magnitude of the strategic and military risks associated with executing the missions called for under the current NMS. In accordance with Title 10, USC, Section 163, the Chairman is required to confer with and obtain information from the combatant commanders, and evaluate and integrate that information into his advice to the President and the Secretary of Defense."²⁶ In the UK, the Chief of the Defence Staff, his Joint Force Commander and three Service Chiefs have an identical role in advising the British government. The direction given to DoD by Congress is specific: "Further, they shall perform the following common functions: a. Develop concepts, doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures, and organize, train, equip, and provide land, naval, air, space, and cyberspace forces, in coordination with the other Military Services,

²⁶ U.S Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Strategic Planning System*, CJCSI 3100.01B 12.12.08, (Washington DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff 12 Dec 2008), enclosure B, para 2.

Combatant Commands, USG departments and agencies, and international partners, as required, that enable joint force commanders to conduct decisive operations across the spectrum of conflict in order to achieve the desired end state.²⁷” Such operations might involve the military to “Occupy territories abroad and provide for the initial establishment of a military government pending transfer of this responsibility to other authority.”²⁸

An ideal construct allows equilibrium between civil objective control and military professionalism, a balance affected by the compatibility of ideology between the government and the military ethic.²⁹ This model is resonant of a Clausewitzian trinity of the government, the military commander and the people, and indeed Mao’s assertion that “the Party is the Army, and the Army is the People.” It assumes correctly that harmony is required between the policy maker, the military, if they are to be the executors, and the country from whom the military recruit and to who the policy maker looks for support and materiel. Such adjustments require honest conversations between the Government, the Military Commanders, and the People. Does the current construct of decision making reflect this necessity?

The military interface with policy makers is very different than that of the electorate. Once in government, a ruling party has a mandate that lasts for a set term; they are generally free to exercise policy within that term without recourse to the electorate except through Parliament or Congress. However, in the case of military deployments such challenge from the public can only ever be retrospective. Congress, or

²⁷ Department of Defense Directive 5100.01, *Functions of the Department of Defense and its Major Components*, (Washington DC, 2010), enc 6, para 2.

²⁸ Ibid, enc 6 para 4 (6).

²⁹ Samuel P Huntingdon, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1985) 94.

Parliament, rarely decides by vote whether or not to go to war, and when such discussions do take place it is the words of the policy makers that persuade them, not the advice of military commanders. Military advice is given only to the democratically elected ruling party, rather than as part of a democratic process to vote for going to war. This is significant only in that it puts the military and its leaders in an extremely delicate position.

Military Experience

Military professionalism demands subordination to civil control whilst also striving to achieve the greatest military success possible. When these two motives conflict due to poor strategy, it is ultimately down to a handful of military individuals to decide how best to give military advice. In giving this advice they are subject to a series of influences. Invariably there is a time pressure to provide welcome advice. Their own ambitions, especially those “near the top” will be hard to suppress. Their military experience or paradigm will color their view of the problem as will the ambition and military experiences of those subordinate to them. In particular, it is likely they will transfer their last operational experience – if they have one – onto the current problem set, immediately setting unfounded benchmarks for yet unknown events.

Intelligence agencies will provide assessments to allow for calculated decision making regarding a potential adversary, but they are not always heeded. Broadly speaking, intelligence may focus primarily on military capabilities and intentions. Decisions to go to war are often based on a far wider set of factors and so the military advice is not the only advice relevant to the politician’s decision.

A vivid example of such a dynamic, one which sees military leaders allowing themselves to be drawn into a militarily unwise course of action due to their own paradigm, are the events prior to and following the invasion of Iraq in 2003. During the 1980s the U.S. Army had re-designed itself at the National Training Centre (NTC) into a new fighting force, set to bury the ghosts of Vietnam by inculcating its battalion commanders in “Operational Art.” The emphasis was neither on the tactical and gritty business of counterinsurgency, nor the strategic and holistic discipline of campaign planning. The NTC delivered a generation of battalion commanders set to win battles, not wars. Saddam Hussein was to fall prey to such a highly trained and poised military force in 1991. However, as Thomas Ricks points out in his book *Fiasco*, “for all the good it did, the NTC also planted some of the seeds of the flawed plan of 2003... the trainers at the NTC taught commanders how to win battles, not how to win wars. What came after the battle was someone else’s business.”³⁰

Career Progression

Significantly, exposure to such operations as OPERATION DESERT STORM will have been fleeting due to short rotation times in command and a need to get the best officers to the top quickly: “To enable the Government to profit by the best talent in the Army, rapid promotion, either by entering the staff corps or by selection, is provided for all officers who manifest decided zeal and professional ability.”³¹ Such zeal and professional ability is no longer required to be demonstrated in battle as once it was, not least because such battles are few and far between; Armies require managers between wars and so in peace generals must be promoted regardless of their lack of combat

³⁰ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 132.

³¹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1985).

experience. Such promotion is in the main not meteoric but deliberate, a steady progression through assignments designated for the ambitious and promising officer.

It is possible, almost probable, that until the Company Commanders of today's wars reach general officer rank, those leading the nation's wars will have never fired their weapon in anger, or manned their plane or ship in the face of the enemy, over any protracted period of time. The gap between the Vietnam War and OIF and OEF is large enough that today's leaders, less those with special forces experience perhaps, are relatively combat inexperienced. In addition, the lessons of previous campaigns can be lost. Thomas Ricks notes that as the U.S Army had re-modeled itself away from the Army that had "lost" the Vietnam War, it had thrown away nearly all it had learnt there. Ricks references Lt Col John Nagl's book, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lesson from Malaya and Vietnam*, in which he highlights that the Army produced an FM 100-5 in 1976 which did not mention counterinsurgency at all.³² FM 100-5 is the Army's core document. The challenge for the future leaders of the Armed Forces will be to avoid being slaves to their past also, a past which is being shaped now by experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chateau Generals

During a protracted campaign or operation, the military leadership do not have time or access to acquire the requisite situational awareness and implement changes to tactics and operational design that will sway strategic outcomes. There are two obstacles. Firstly, it is invariably too late to create a wholesale reversal of fortune in a campaign based on faulty strategic assumptions. Unless the assumptions can be reversed, the outcome is also unlikely to change, regardless of the force's effort to transform during the

³² Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 133.

conflict itself. The assumption that a liberated Iraq would rally around a newly generated government and armed forces under the wing of U.S. occupation remains a false assumption to this day, despite the successive, and partly successful, surges that paved the road to an exit strategy. Secondly, the military leader will remain further from the front line, even when deployed, than their forbearers, a trend initiated during the First World War. This was due mainly to developments in communications, and is exacerbated today by increasingly complex and multi-disciplined roles for commanders.

Clearly, this is a “fact of life,” yet given the critical importance of a military leader’s paradigm in providing advice to political leaders, it is an area that merits examination as we consider the importance of understanding the role of the personality when exercising the military instrument of power.

Leadership

“From the time of Alexander it had been an axiom that a commander could not hold the respect of his men without sharing to a reasonable extent their perils and hardships. So universal is this rule that no outstanding exception can be found in all military history down to 1870.”³³ It is certain that today “reasonable extent” is taken to be significantly less than it once was. This is due, in the main, to the increasingly diplomatic role the modern day general undertakes when he or she is on operations, and the communications advancements that allow them to direct proceedings from afar when battle does take place. It can be said that COIN operations since Vietnam have been “Company Commander’s wars,” formulated and led at that level alone with all higher command being purely coordinators of the process, and diplomatic envoys to indigenous government and forces for whom their subordinates fought.

³³ Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, 1960) 729.

Nonetheless, from the soldiers' perspective, and as we have seen already in this thesis, the leadership requirements on the battlefield remain unchanged because today, as in 1870, men are still expected to go out to meet an enemy knowing they may not return. The absence of senior military leadership from the battlefields may not have gone unnoticed, and much of the blame for operational and strategic shortcomings may yet be placed at their feet; weary Western armies may return from the Middle East surmising that their leaders allowed such campaigns to begin, and continue as they did, because they had not tasted the challenges on the ground themselves.

This would, however, be an unfair and misdirected accusation. There is no indication that generals have willingly stayed away from combat through fear for their own safety. It has been simply that the nature of operational leadership during COIN precludes it. It is not surprising that General Mattis's decision to be at the front during his times in command on operations is seen as the exception: "at a time of increasing reliance on sophisticated sensor and communications technologies to paint a 'picture of the battle space' to top generals far from the war front, a key Marine Corps commander last spring opted to lead his troops in Iraq the old-fashioned way: He went there. 'In two minutes at the front edge of the combat zone, you know if the troops feel confident, if the battle's going the way they want it to, [or if] they need something,' said Maj. Gen. James Mattis, commanding general of the 1st Marine Division. 'You can sense it. And you can apply something.'"³⁴ He was speaking about leadership during a large scale offensive operation in which he had freedom of movement within a clearly defined battle-space.

³⁴ Elaine M. Grossman, "News analysis, Marine General: Leading From Iraqi Battlefield Informed Key Decisions," *Inside The Pentagon* (October 16, 2003): 1.

Such excursions during a wide spread COIN reap less tangible and immediate feedback because the “battle” is more conceptual, and the feedback harder to “sense.”

Furthermore, any lack of respect for senior leaders is not likely to affect the outcome of a campaign. The issue is more that the generals absence from the battlefield over the last fifty years deny them critical experience of the “deliverability” of any possible future campaign they are asked advice on from political leaders. The nature of modern warfare, in particular COIN, has often precluded leaders from such sustained personal, frontline leadership. A general’s greatest contribution to a COIN campaign is likely to be more his ability to leverage support and coax decisions from allies and partners than an ability to design a brilliant military campaign. He has myriad staff for the latter; only his personality can achieve the former and such results require significant investment in time to achieve, and by virtue of necessity are likely to keep him far from the frontline.

Therefore, the nature of campaigns such as OEF and OIF create a gap between the Man with the Plan and the Man with the Weapon. This is an important irony to note, given the prominence in today’s warfare to the heralded “Strategic Corporal,” a metaphorical persona representing the essentially kharmic connection between the actions and decisions of the lowest ranks of the force to the outcome of strategic events. The armed forces fight on the ground, in the air, or at sea whilst general officers execute important and necessary diplomatic activities in the political realm to secure vital resources, treaties, and at times home based support. The void between the two is filled by multiple layers of staff headquarters designed to shepherd complex and dispersed operations through their course. Given that both can communicate with relative ease

through the chain of command, along increasingly broad band width, why should this be a problem other than to damage the moral component by having an absence of leadership on the ground?

The risk is that it can filter out the humanity – the nature – of war. In the simplest of terms, those leaders who require their foot soldiers to think and act strategically, and do so with little appreciable understanding of the circumstances in which such thought and actions take place, commit two significant errors. Firstly, they ask too much of the soldier who, as we saw in the previous section, is simply not equipped with the capacity to deliver such a standard consistently. In this sense alone, any plan predicated on junior ranks delivering anything other than conventional effects, is a fragile one.

Secondly, they expose themselves to the risk of relying on second or third hand sources for measurement of success. This thesis will not delve in to the dark side of military careerism, but it is fair to generalize that in today's military, and today's environment of the importance of the narrative, delivering the perception of success to one's commander can sometimes be at odds with reality. Likewise, it is also probable that during a campaign where no measures of success were set at the outset of operations, the military are able to decide themselves what success looks like. This is not a healthy form of self regulation when the generals are so far from the frontline. The former British Ambassador to Afghanistan, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, remembers being approached by a young Lieutenant in Helmand Province: "He said, 'Can I have a private word with you, Sir? The strategy isn't working, but whenever I try to report that up the

line, my superiors say I'm being defeatist and I must re-work my papers, because cracking on in Helmand is what it's about and success is coming."³⁵

It is not the fault of the military leadership that such a mismatch exists; that the last two campaigns have demanded their time away from the dust and blood of the villages and towns they were set to democratize is not a fact for which they can be blamed. The error lies before the fact, in the initial decision to commit to the campaign at all.

Service Bias

Another critical factor in the decision making process, and advisory process, of the military's senior leaders is the pressure they receive from individual Service agendas. Following most wars or conflicts a government is likely to oversee the drawdown of forces. It is a cycle evident from the First World War to today. Frank Ledwidge observes of the UK strategy in Afghanistan, "here we encounter the Byzantine politics of the British armed services. Within all services, there is a continuous bureaucratic fight for resources and equipment. The army had recently procured – at very great expense – several squadrons' worth of Apache helicopters, designed originally (like almost every other piece of army equipment) for exceedingly destructive, highly 'kinetic' anti-tank warfare on the plains of northern Germany. As instruments of the Cold War 'manoeuvre warfare' doctrine, they were formidable...The army was very keen to demonstrate the utility of this 'weapons system,' so the decision was taken to deploy that brigade...The institution and its preservation superseded any rational deployment."³⁶

³⁵ Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars – British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 87.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 73.

Ledwidge also makes the stunning point that the British armed forces has “no fewer than 500 general officers” which he points out could themselves crew three modern day destroyers or fill the billets of an entire infantry battalion, and amount to more than the number of helicopters, tanks, ships and air squadrons operating for the combined services.³⁷ When you consider such statistics it is easy to imagine how the employment of the force is tempered significantly by both institutional and single service bias of those in senior management positions, and an inherent inability to find consensus for change.

When General Starry took over the leadership of TRADOC after the Vietnam War, he initiated a period of change that would ultimately lead to a U.S. Armed Force expected to deliver quick decisive, low casualty victory. The transition took over a decade and was “like trying to stop a tank by throwing marshmallows at it. The military, like any huge bureaucracy, resists innovation – especially if the change implies the downgrading of certain units and the need to learn new skills and transcend service rivalries.”³⁸

Quality over Quantity

A top heavy organization may also be accused of generating quantity of leadership over quality. In another highly critical book, *AWOL – The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes from Military Services and How it Hurts our Country*, this accusation is implicit in the author’s argument that the U.S. military is not led by the country’s best educated and most promising talent due to a widening gap between the military and a society that rewards capitalist acumen over national service.

³⁷ Ibid, 111.

³⁸ Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Making Sense of Today’s Global Chaos* (New York, Little, Brown and Company, 1993) 57-58.

This then ripples into government which has fewer and fewer men of military experience. Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer argue: “We are certain of the fact that fewer and fewer civilian leaders and opinion makers have actual military experience, let alone a personal stake in our country’s military decisions, a ‘stake’ that stares back at them from their beloved child’s boot camp graduation photograph. We believe we are shortchanging a generation of smart, motivated Americans who have been prejudiced against service by parents and teachers...and the kind of ownership of their country that can give it a better future.”³⁹

When you consider all of the above factors, it becomes evident that there is a critical divergence between the reality of war and the expectations and pressures on both generals and political leaders, as well as a cultural and ethos gap between those that do the fighting, those in command, and the political leadership.

The following section will examine whether the political leader has the inclination, and depth of understanding of the military, and military strategy, to mitigate this imbalance. After all, it is the democratically elected leader that decides whether or not to send the nation’s troops to war.

The Man with the Power

‘And now you must make up your minds what you are going to do – either give way to them before being hurt by them, or, if we go to war – as I think we should do – to be determined that, whether the reason put forward is big or small, we are not in any case

³⁹ Kathy Roth-Douquet, Frank Schaeffer, *AWOL* (USA: Collins Paperback, 2007), 8.

going to climb down nor hold our possessions under a constant threat of interference.'

*Pericles to the Athenians, before the Peloponnesian War.*⁴⁰

'In the hour when decision is made possible through the attainment of a superiority in the striking (fire) power of the heavy weapons of war, they [the masses of men who fight on foot] must go forward to claim victory and beat down the surviving elements of resistance. There is no other way out. The society which looks for an easier way is building its hope on sand.' S.L.A Marshall⁴¹

On the 28th November 1984, the then Sec. of Defense, Caspar Weinberger, outlined his Six Tests which would become known as the Weinberger Doctrine. They were written primarily as a result of the recent U.S. withdrawal from Beirut because of a failure of U.S. policy makers to clearly define the role of the military in what was trying to be achieved. The significance of the Weinberger Doctrine is that it resonates very clearly today, yet has been seemingly ignored by successive administrations since 1984, as well as other nations such as the Soviets in Afghanistan, Israel or Syria in Lebanon, or NATO in Bosnia.⁴² The Six Tests are:

1. The United States should not commit forces to combat unless the vital national interests of the United States or its allies are involved.
2. U.S. troops should only be committed wholeheartedly and with the clear intention of winning. Otherwise, troops should not be committed.

⁴⁰ Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1972) 119.

⁴¹ S.L.A Marshall, *Men Under Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1978) 19.

⁴² Handel, Michael. *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

3. U.S. combat troops should be committed only with clearly defined political and military objectives and with the capacity to accomplish those objectives.
4. The relationship between the objectives and the size and composition of the forces committed should be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
5. U.S. troops should not be committed to battle without a "reasonable assurance" of the support of U.S. public opinion and Congress.
6. The commitment of U.S. troops should be considered only as a last resort.⁴³

Weinberger's doctrine highlights the importance of the relationship between a nation's leader and his or her senior military leaders, and how it is critical in ensuring any employment of the armed forces is relevant, measured and wholly in line with the national interest. As Richard Kohn robustly puts it in his paper "Building Trust," a breakdown in this relationship "can cause the United States to undertake unnecessary wars, prosecute them unwisely, and pile up hundreds or thousands of dead and wounded Americans, not to speak of many times that number of enemies and innocent civilians. Dysfunctional civil-military relations can undermine the position of the United States in the world and even endanger the nation's very existence."⁴⁴

This section will briefly discuss civil-military relations. It will examine Huntington's "objective" versus "subjective" civilian control model, which prescribes "objective" control by the civilian leadership as the best way to allow the military scope to exercise its expertise as it wishes in order to preserve the nation. The alternative, civilian "subjective control," monopolizes military expertise, thus sidelining military

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Richard Kohn, "Building Trust: Civil-Military Behaviors for Effective National Security." In *American Civil-Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 269.

decision making to the detriment of a nations security.⁴⁵ Two historical examples of clashes or tensions between politicians, their advisors, and military leaders, show how such tension can affect security policy and military strategic decision making: the years preceding the Vietnam War, and the lead up to OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. These are examples of how “subjective civilian control” results in poor military strategy. They are also examples of how military leadership’s failure to insist on a modicum of “objective” civilian control results in poor military strategy.

President J F Kennedy and L B Johnson

In his book, *Dereliction of Duty*, H.R. McMaster describes the tension between what he refers to as the Old Guard, represented by Eisenhower’s legacy and a very structural and narrowly focused National Security Council (NSC), and the New Frontiersmen, the cohort of Kennedy and his hand chosen secretaries, Robert Strange McNamara, Dean Rusk and McGeorge Bundy, all chosen for their academic and intellectual credentials. The New Frontiersmen would soon transcend the NSC as a decision making forum, not only because of what McMaster describes as Kennedy’s inherent “suspicion” of the JCS, but also because of the events of The Bay of Pigs in 1961 which caused Kennedy such humiliation and “shattered the sense of euphoria and hopeful aspiration that surrounded the New Frontiersmen during their first few months in Washington.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁴⁶ H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 5.

Therefore, following the Bay of Pigs debacle “the Old Guard in the Pentagon were soon relegated to a position of little influence.”⁴⁷ This in itself would have been surmountable over time, but very shortly afterwards Kennedy had to consider another security situation, in Laos, that would eventually lead to the Vietnam War, the first military campaign in which the U.S. would not be the victors. The relationship between the JCS and Kennedy’s leadership, forged from the Bay of Pigs and Laos crisis and aggravated by a bullish Nikita Krushchev over the Berlin crisis, was to be critical in the initial decisions prior to the Vietnam War “quagmire.” In his mind, the generals were to Kennedy “too formal, traditional and unimaginative.”⁴⁸ In the words of Bundy, he “would never feel secure” about the military until “young generals of his own generation in whom he has confidence” were his Chiefs.⁴⁹ In order to address the issue, Kennedy appointed a “Military Representative of the President”, General Maxwell Davenport Taylor, to bridge the gap. “After witnessing the ‘crisis’ that grew out of mutual dislike and distrust between the president and the Joint Chiefs, Taylor abandoned his previous view that the JCS should not ‘take into account the views and feelings of superiors,’ and supplanted it with an acknowledgement of ‘the importance of an intimate, easy relationship, born of friendship and mutual regard between the president and the Chiefs.’”⁵⁰

This understandably infuriated the JCS of the time for whom such a relationship would never exist, and inevitably Taylor would soon rise to be the Chief of the Joint Staff himself, despite having retired four years earlier. He would fulfill his model by forging a

⁴⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid 15.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 17.

lasting relationship with both McNamara and Kennedy. Ultimately, it was on McNamara and Taylor's advice that Kennedy concluded "Vietnam is the place" for making U.S. power credible against the Soviet Union, and the architect of the campaign would not be the Chiefs but McNamara himself.⁵¹

The ensuing Cuban missile crisis did little to persuade Kennedy that his Chiefs were anything other than military men who recommended military options. "The crisis ended with Kennedy thinking the JCS were 'mad' in their insistence on the use of military force...Kennedy vowed that 'the first advice I'm going to give my successor is to watch the generals and avoid feeling that just because they were military men their opinion[s] on military matters were worth a damn.'"⁵² And so it was that Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, was to stake his military strategy in Vietnam almost solely in the hands of McNamara, regardless of the objections or concerns of the JCS. "The Joint Chiefs argued that the United States was currently fighting the war on the enemy's terms...They sought the administrations permission to develop and execute plans designed to achieve outright victory."⁵³

There are myriad factors in the final analysis of how America failed to conclude the Vietnam War on its own terms. However, it is clear that much of what shaped decisions stemmed from the failure in civil military relations at the top of both Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations. In the epilogue of *Dereliction of Duty*, MacMaster concludes "When the situation in Vietnam seemed to demand military action, Johnson did not turn to his military advisors to determine how to solve the problem. He turned instead to civilian advisors to determine how to postpone a decision. The relationship

⁵¹ Ibid, 23.

⁵² Ibid 28.

⁵³ Ibid, 65.

between the president, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs led to the curious situation in which the nation went to war without the benefit of effective military advice from the organization having the statutory responsibility to be the nation's 'principal military advisors.'⁵⁴ MacMasters argues that statutory responsibility demanded the JCS give unequivocal advice; where this function is omitted or stepped back from senior military leaders become culpable by association. *Dereliction of Duty* is but one side of the story, but it nevertheless highlights in pointed fashion the way motivations of men at the highest levels of defense are wholly relevant to the outcome of foreign interventions. MacMaster's final assertion is a scathing, and cautionary, challenge to future leaders, political and military alike: "The disaster in Vietnam was not the result of impersonal forces but a uniquely human failure, the responsibility for which was shared by President Johnson and his principal military and civilian advisors. The failings were many and reinforcing: arrogance, weakness, lying in the pursuit of self-interest, and above all, the abdication of responsibility to the American people."⁵⁵

President G W Bush and Donald Rumsfeld

In a series of books, Bob Woodward describes the events within the Bush administration leading up to the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. His unique insight provides vivid proof of how the role of advisor, in this case the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, to the national leader is the single most important dynamic in military decision making and one that hinges on the quality and manner of advice from the military leadership. The account of how Rumsfeld set about changing the U.S. military and

⁵⁴ Ibid, 326.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 334.

placed himself at the head of even the most detailed military planning is reminiscent of the friction between McNamara and the JCS during the Vietnam War. Like McNamara, Rumsfeld was “hired” for his drive and intellect and desire to achieve results regardless of protocol or convention. Rumsfeld was to drive a wedge between himself and the senior military leadership through his persistent and almost evangelistic desire to transform the Pentagon and ensure he was the sole interface between the Commander-in-Chief and the military decisions and actions of the armed forces. This put him in direct conflict with the CJCS and NSC, creating a level of distrust and mutual disregard that was to result in a breakdown of trust during the planning for the invasion of Iraq.

Woodward describes the politics behind the appointment of Air Force General Richard Myers as the CJCS, a man whom competitors feared would not stand up to Rumsfeld. Myers himself confided to a senior aide that sometimes he wondered why he [Myers] was even there.⁵⁶ It is an irony that Rumsfeld’s desire to drag the Pentagon into the 21st century by re-thinking and writing all of its contingency plans, and re-examining its plan concerning major peer competitors such as Korea and Iraq, in fact resulted in a Pentagon that was paralyzed by the gulf created between the Secretary and the Joint Staff. “Strong, forceful military advice was bleached out of the system. The uniformed military was now just staff, it’s voice a polite whisper. Rumsfeld thought he had won. He was in control.”⁵⁷

Critically, this control was to manifest itself in his micro management of the plan to invade Iraq, one which saw the Joint Staff’s military advice, for 500,000 troops to do the job, ignored. General Tommy Franks, the man tasked to deliver the invasion, would

⁵⁶ Bob Woodward, *State of Denial* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 72.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 74.

openly refer to the Joint Chiefs as “the Title Ten Motherfuckers”⁵⁸ and continue to refine his war plans to suit Rumsfeld’s wishes for a smaller, economical force. In the final analysis, General Franks would be the military individual guilty of allowing the U.S. to bring about the downfall of Saddam Hussein knowing that the force was too small and lacking plans to manage the aftermath.

Woodward contrasts this dysfunctional three way relationship between the Joint Chiefs, the Combatant Commander and the Secretary for Defense with that of Powell, Schwarzkopf and Cheney during the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. “Powell had then told Bush and Cheney they needed an additional 200,000 troops...The first President Bush said, ‘if that’s what you need, we’ll do it. In 2001 things were very different.”⁵⁹

Both examples demonstrate the way in which personalities can dramatically affect the manner and outcome of policy making. Similar clashes exist in the heart of every large business corporation, but in the warfighting domain the consequences of civil-military dysfunction are so far reaching that it is not good enough to relegate the issue to the long list of “facts of life.” It is surprising that time and again administrations fall foul of inadequate symbiosis at the senior civil-military interface. It is the worst start to a war if no mutual understanding exists between those who have the “*Power*,” and those military who own the “*Plan*.”

⁵⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

Recommendations

Three main areas of military culture and ethos merit further analysis. They fall out of the thesis's study of the current paradigms of the man with the weapon (the rank and file), the man with the plan (senior military leadership), and the man with the power (political leaders), and are as follows:

Revolution in Military Affairs

The shifting definition of “victory” and “decision” in the contemporary operating environment should change the way we indoctrinate our force. Change must balance against the risk of fighting another conventional war. The left of arc for such a review might see a Revolution in Military Affairs, a wholesale reconstruction of the military culture and ethos to create a force equipped, trained, and indoctrinated as arbiters of smart power as a core competency, focused on national building or sustaining activity – in essence the professionalization of generating “Soft Power.” Training and indoctrinating service personnel to fight kinetic battles would be by exception and confined purely on niche military CT capabilities, access assurance, and nuclear deterrent. This would impact the age and qualification criteria for the majority of servicemen and likely exclude most of the military's traditional recruiting base. The average servicemen would be a highly motivated and qualified humanitarian. A Western Liberal Democracy would be able to prosecute large scale military campaigns only of national survival where the draft, combined with an enduring volunteer cadre of war-fighters, would generate the appropriate fighting force trained and motivated to conduct

it. Anything short of it would be addressed through “smart” application of a “softer” military, other instruments of power, and allies.

This thesis has aimed to demonstrate that such a construct would ignore historical precedent of cyclical returns to war, and that the very nature of war and those drawn to it precludes the “softening” of warfare and the culture and ethos of those involved. As with all Revolutions in Military Affairs, such a change may yet occur, despite ourselves, and be judged as a revolution only in hindsight. There is, however, nothing in recent history, or our projections for the future, that suggests in 2035 our military will look back and see such an RMA having occurred.

Return to Hard Power

The right of arc would see a return of the military to its traditional hard power role, one for which it is currently equipped, trained, and indoctrinated. “Victory” in the traditional sense would be sought through decisive action whether through niche military capability or large scale intervention. Either way, the culture and ethos of the military would remain tuned to producing highly motivated war-fighters to operate within a clearly defined moral and legal justification for violence. Policies that required greater finesse or “softening” of the use of force would look to other instruments of power.

If the model of a “return to hard power” was to be reinforced then some critical mitigating measures should be considered to account for the gap between military culture, ethos and capability, and the emerging demands for national security:

- This thesis has raised concerns about the capacity for the average serviceman or woman to deliver complex stabilization or counterinsurgency tasks in order to conduct nation building. It has also illustrated that the military are currently the

default setting for such tasks. Given the strategy of “Smart Power,” significant investment must be made in other Departments or institutions that would generate the capacity and skill sets to conduct “Soft Power” activity outside core military competency. The culture and ethos of those institutions, as well as the military, must be firmly geared toward better inter-agency cohesion.

- This thesis has highlighted several instances of senior military leadership not understanding the ramifications of their military advice. Measures should be taken to ensure that where the use of the military is concerned, the “means” and “ways” match the “ends.” For example, military advice should demonstrate sufficient scrutiny of the *nature* of a potential conflict, and an appraisal of the military’s ability to deliver victory, in traditional terms, to resolve it. The Weinberger Doctrine could be a useful model for measuring such advice.
- This thesis has illustrated the seemingly cyclical occurrence of strategic short sightedness within political administrations where it concerns the use of military power. Whilst the political-military interface must generate a proper understanding of the military’s limitations prior to committing them to a campaign or operation, as described above, measures must also be instigated to better educate or steer political leaders in the best use of the military instrument of power, independent of military advice. Critical to this is a clear understanding on what the moral limitations are on a modern Western Liberal Democracy’s use of force, and how that will affect the military’s freedom of action to achieve victory.

CONCLUSION

Know Yourself

“If not in the interests of the state, do not act. If you cannot succeed, do not use troops.”

Sun Tzu, The Art of War.¹

The nature of war remains unchanged and Western military ethos and culture remains finely tuned to the demands war places on those who wage it. The underlying culture and ethos of warfighting still acts as a foundation for most Western militaries, with inter-agency, joint and combined activity remaining enigmatic. If a government uses the military for anything else other than seeking a decisive victory, they court a mismatch between ends, ways, and means.

The military’s attempts to address this mismatch, by adapting its doctrine and construct to better conduct “Long Wars,” wars of perception and “Soft Power,” are moving at a slower pace than the change in the nature of modern warfare. The shift in the definition of victory is also moving faster than the changes in military ethos and culture to address it. This is partly due to the pace of change in the security environment, but also due to the inherent challenges in adapting military institutions. This creates increasing risk within any strategic decisions that result in the use of the military instrument of power.

The U.S. and its allies must, of course, continue to seek global influence, and the attendant prosperity it generates at home. However, the liberalists’ thirst for the moral

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Translated Samuel B Griffiths (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963).

high ground constrains the conduct of the military in support of their goals. In a resource constrained environment, where the strategic narrative is as much a prize as territory once was, a military is operating from a position of weakness.

The moral high ground is now greatly contested; the conduct of campaigns, and of those who execute them, are under increasing scrutiny as part of a wider grand strategy to seek “Soft Power.” The military’s very foundation, the warrior code or war-fighting ethos, is becoming seemingly less relevant; Western states are become increasingly risk averse as traditional interventions provoke volatile and uncontrollable reactions, Clausewitz’s “explosion,” from adversaries unlike the peer competitors of the past.

In conducting non-conventional warfare within this context, the traditional mechanisms of the military are becoming exposed as outdated. The man who carries the weapon, who is at the point of delivery of military effect, remains a professional of arms and heir to centuries of fighting experience and years of training based upon it. He or she may be young, illiterate, and culturally insensitive despite institutional measures to change them. Like their Greek phalanx forefathers, their motivation is patriotic when their homeland is at real risk; alternatively, they are humanitarian when no enemy is to their front. They are disinclined, reluctant, and ill prepared to operate in the twilight zone between the two, where the moral high ground is less defined and where elaborate moral justifications are required. However, it is precisely here that we now ask our forces to operate; Sun Tzu reminds us that in such campaigns our troop’s weapons are blunted, and morale is depressed. Devolving strategic responsibility to the “Strategic Corporal” may be, therefore, more likely to result in strategic failure than success.

The leaders of the armed forces, the men with the power, must face these issues as they advise their political masters on the use of the military. The lessons of the last two campaigns, in Iraq and Afghanistan, should not be that we can do such campaigns better but rather that they should not be done at all. However, such direction is hampered by the senior leadership's paradigm, one that includes narrow and sometimes brief operational experience, their forced absence from the new battlefields of hybrid warfare, and single service bias towards capability and future programming which drive them to compromise and politicized advice.

Nor can their advice reach the public, unless in retrospect, as it is the political leadership, the men with the power, that retain sole responsibility for justifying military action. In this sense, the realities of the use of the military instrument of power are diluted further. A lack of military experience in the polity, markedly different from the post World War and Vietnam eras, creates more risk in the ability of the Government to understand the realities of conflicts they consider, and increases the imperative for good civil military relations. However, Weinberger's Six Tests have been noticeably ignored since 1984, being applicable only to rare successes such as the liberation of Kuwait.

All of the issues above are cultural or ethos-based problems, borne from the gap between the constants of war and the essential requirements for fighting it, and the broadening role of the military in activity unrecognizable as war. "What Liberal Democracies Want" exacerbates this widening gap. Warfare is becoming "Lawfare," a battle of ethics, one which is currently being played out in the mountains and plains of Afghanistan.

The West is not standing still in the face of these challenges. A re-calibration is underway, one that keeps the military at the forefront of national foreign policy as arbiters of “Smart Power” – an all-of-government approach to security that draws on all instruments of national power and demands greater inter-agency and alliance cooperation. The military must fit within this construct, either as a re-modeled and integrated force designed primarily for generating “upstream” effects, or as a finite warfighting capability one, around or alongside which other instrument of power are brought to bear. The former requires “a Revolution in Military Affairs” that fundamentally changes the nature of the military institution not just in size and shape, but in its very culture and ethos. Changing this dynamic within the military, and between the military and the political leadership, will be like “throwing marshmallows against a tank.” The latter requires a re-evaluation by political leaders of the part the military plays in National Security policy, and who else could take off the military the nation building tasks they have inherited over the last ten years. Both approaches will require something to actually change, and will take significant leadership from senior military commanders.

This thesis has established a clear link between an understanding of the culture and ethos of the military instrument of power and its correct employment in support of national interests. As the West re-calibrates its grand strategy in light of accelerating globalization and the attendant security threats, whilst catering for fiscal restraints and a domestic desire for peaceful solutions to securing national interests, these issues are timely and important. They are related to the humanity of war rather than simply the processes or capabilities, and therefore should be at the heart of any decision on the purpose and use of the military instrument of power. At the very least, those who make decisions

that may send, or draw, a country into war, must be under no illusion about the nature of what they embark upon and the nature of the men and woman to whom they give the task.

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