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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

The All-Volunteer Force Contribution to the Civil-Military Gap and the Rise of an American
Military Caste

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: The All-Volunteer Force Contribution to the Civil-Military Gap and the Rise of an American Military Caste

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Thesis: As public sentiment for the military eclipses the trust in public institutions, the military influence grows, and the foundational principles of republican government erode or are replaced by the rise of a dominant militarized class.

Discussion: The all-volunteer force is an effective instrument in raising the capability and professionalism of the military but comes with a cost. This cost is the disunion between military service and society. A gap has developed and continues to grow between the society and the military that has reached a point where decisions to use military force no longer generate public discourse or dissent. Instead, the military is facing rising popularity that transcends adoration and manifests itself in key policy decisions through increased deference to military points of view. This is highly evident in the administration of President Donald Trump and the formation of his cabinet. Increased reliance on military power when coupled with adoration of society and deference from the civil authority that is supposed to exercise control, indicates the ascendancy of a military caste in the United States. This elite military caste is a threat to republican government.

Conclusion: The power and influence of the military establishment will continue to grow as the gap between society and the military remains unchecked. This rising militarism will upset the principle of military obedience to civil control and needs to be debated and challenged by the government and the military to prevent destruction of republican values and preserve government institutions.

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Preface

I am interested in the relationship the United States population has with their standing military organization and what I perceive to be a growing gap. I perceive future misfortune when the population and leadership become indifferent to the use of military force as an instrument of national power (the citizens have no skin in the game). Has the all 'volunteer' force created a sub-population which is drawn to service and duty that is no longer reflected in the larger population they serve? What are the ramifications of this? Has our heavy reliance on a professional body of soldiers created a new caste in society with a different set of rights and privilege? What impacts does this have on the balance of power within the state? In exploring these questions, I am grateful for the continued support and mentorship of Dr. Bradford Wineman and the Command and Staff College Leadership and Communications Skills Center.

A standing force, therefore, is a dangerous, at the same time that it may be a necessary, provision. On the smallest scale it has its inconveniences. On an extensive scale its consequences may be fatal. On any scale it is an object of laudable circumspection and precaution.¹

-James Madison, The Federalist Papers, Number 41

Introduction

James Madison, an American founding father and the architect of the Constitution, understood the necessity of a military in preserving the security of the United States as well as the threat this same military represents to the institutions of government. There is a constant tension between the power that resides in the military and the state that is supposed to exercise control over that military. This relationship is especially important in a republic that holds the exercise of liberal values and personal freedom as integral to the relationship between society and those who govern them. Madison's remarks remain prescient today when American militarism threatens to eclipse the system of checks and balances that keep military power subordinate to the state and the critique of that growth is either silent, indifferent, or ineffective.

Madison's view about the relationship of military institutions to civilian control is echoed in the writings of Carl von Clausewitz, who reasons "the subordination of the political point of view to the military would be contrary to common sense, for the policy has declared the War; it is the intelligent faculty, War only the instrument, not the reverse. The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible."² Today, the balance that keeps the military instrument of power subordinate to the political is threatened. For the past eighteen years the United States has been in a protracted state of war and the gap between those that serve and those they serve continues to grow. Amidst this growing gap, Americans exercise less participation in the military and therefore have a diminishing personal investment in the decision to employ military force. When force is employed, Americans compensate for their guilt from a lack of participation by elevating service members to heroic

status in society. This status is part of a reinforcing loop that generates elevated trust in military elites, which in turn leads to deference to military viewpoints and decision making. As public sentiment for the military eclipses the trust in public institutions, the military influence grows, and the foundational principles of republican government erode (Figure 1).

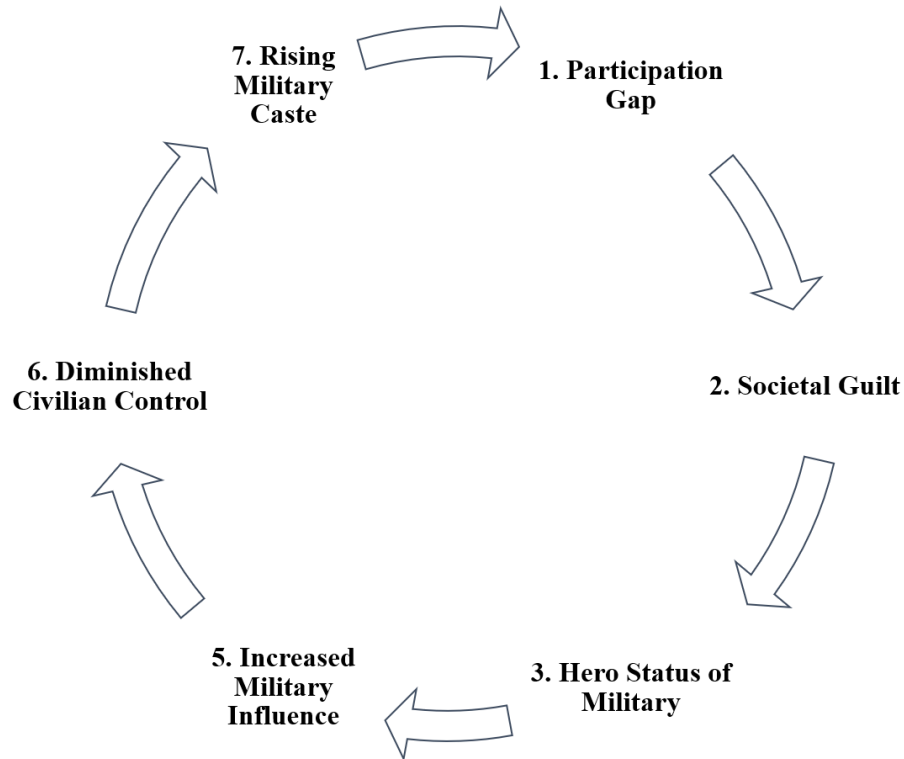


Figure 1. Reinforcement Loop

This reinforcing feedback loop begins with an understanding of the growing civil-military gap. Thomas Ricks states, in *Making the Corps*, “the idea of a gap between the military and American Society is hardly new.”³ Though his comment was written in 1997, over two decades ago, it resonates after the addition of a protracted state of war such as the one that has embroiled America for the past eighteen years. The American military has been an all-volunteer force (AVF) since the termination of the draft in 1973. This means that service is no longer an

obligation for all citizens but a duty for a select few who self-select. With today's reliance on technological sophistication and specialized training, the mass armies of the past have given way to forces that no longer require mass mobilization of citizen soldiers to meet the needs of the nation. Reductions in manpower requirements inversely coincide with greater capability and capacity in the hands of fewer warfighters. This professionalization of the force has enabled the United States to achieve unparalleled success on the battlefield, yet increased capability has also come with hidden costs as the military has become the default tool for achieving national interests abroad.

The Evolution Toward the All-Volunteer Force

In George Washington's *Sentiments on a Peace Establishment*, he captures a dichotomy that faces American democracy from foundation to present day, "...a large standing Army in time of Peace hath ever been considered dangerous to the liberties of a Country, yet a few Troops, under certain circumstances, are not only safe, but indispensably necessary."⁴ The relationship between freedom and liberty stands in contrast with the need for national security and the military that guarantees it. It was George Washington who established the tradition of civilian control over the military in the fledgling republic when he intervened in a plot by many of his officers to strongarm the Continental Congress in Newburgh in 1783.⁵ He again manifested the republican virtues that the new nation attempted to represent when he turned down the opportunity to assume the powers of a monarch and when he demonstrated the peaceful passage of power from one elected President to another. Washington's many precedents laid the groundwork for how a new experiment in government should work. Since this firm foundation the United States has built and disbanded armies as needs arose and maintained forces only to fulfill the security interests that required them. The constant re-balance

of needs and awareness of the dangers in achieving that balance was carried forward by future presidents who understood the inherent danger of a militarized state to democratic institutions.

One of the chief grievances that the colonies of America maintained with Great Britain was the presence of a standing army.⁶ Such an army represented the oppression and subjugation of the people at the hand of an otherwise neglectful government. This professional army was an extension of the state's power over the people. In contrast, the militia present in all the colonies reversed this distinction. A militia represented the people giving power to the state. With this understanding the political leadership must have a convincing cause that meets a threshold for citizens to give up their primary trades and enter military service. Absent of a cause that would elicit volunteerism, there must be a legitimate threat to sanction compelled service in the militia forces. This arrangement represented the ideal of republican values; subordination of the individual to the needs of the whole. The militia fulfilled the needs of the colonies throughout their existence and were variously called upon to fight Native Americans, quell uprisings, and when necessary, augment British regulars during protracted campaigns. This arrangement of part-time soldiering was sufficient to fight the small wars that spilled over into the Americas as European powers quelled over territorial ambitions and aspirations. In the War for Independence from Britain, popular enthusiasm in the 'Rage militare' movement that engulfed the Americans following engagements at Lexington and Concord that initiated hostilities between colonial subjects and British rule, served to augment the rank-and-file. As Martin and Lender point out in *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*, this popular enthusiasm quickly waned and the militia forces that were once satisfactory to counter the threats facing the colonies required a different form. George Washington and the Continental Congress responded by creating a standing Army of regular soldiers. The Continental Army was pivotal in sustaining

a war that surpassed the initial enthusiasms of part-time patriots and continued through years of struggle.⁷

These two concepts - the professional soldier and the militia - remain dual traditions in the relationship that Americans maintain with military service, principally the values each of these institutions represent. A nation founded on individual freedoms and consent of the governed is diametrically different from the strict, obedient, disciplined, and collective nature of military service. The citizen-soldier as a construct is no longer the ideal with the adoption of an AVF. Americans who took pride in their own defense and believed in the 'minute men' premise of a universal call to arms have been replaced by the AVF. Rather than a universal obligation of all citizens, the AVF represents less than one percent of the population in the United States. As a compromise to the social unrest that erupted in the face of the Vietnam War, the United States discontinued compulsory service and ended the draft. This action successfully allowed for increases in military recruitment standards and removed a principle grievance that the people had with the government in compelling them to engage in unproductive wars abroad. The unintended consequence of this act has been the breakdown between society and the military. In effect, creation of an AVF divorces citizenship from military obligation. The result of this disunion is a highly capable military establishment under the direction of political leadership that faces reduced political costs in the decision to use military force. Society has become indifferent to the employment of the military because these decisions no longer directly influence the lives of most citizens. This rift becomes even more troubling when coupled with the growth of military power as the dominant instrument of national power. This trend is also compounded by extended conflicts and the social phenomenon of military adoration.

The draft was not a social equalizer as many political theorists portend. The idea of conscription to compel citizens to fight on behalf of national interests also serves to motivate the citizenry to critique frivolous wars that levy the potential waste lives and material. This is only true when the manpower necessity requires leveraging citizens to serve in great numbers and the source of that manpower is shared equally amongst those that wield influence in government. In the case of Vietnam, the draft did not serve this requirement and failed to compel participation by all socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those that became political elites later in life. The AVF became essential in repairing the damage the draft had upon the military and society, and enabled the United States to repair a rift created by an enduring limited war. However, this victory is overshadowed by the apparent divorce that has occurred between the nation's political masters and the society they serve in the decision to go to war and the execution of that conflict. In a strange paradox, Americans love their military, hate their politicians, and have become apathetic to long-term conflicts. If war is a clash of wills and the common perception about Vietnam is that America lost because it did not have the will to succeed, then politicians have created a new paradigm with an AVF where the will of the people is no longer relevant to prosecute a war, use force, or even declare war.

Cause for Concern

The existing theories of civil-military relations begin with Carl von Clausewitz and hinge around his statement in *On War* that, "War is merely the continuation of policy by other means."⁸ This linkage between political objectives and the conduct of war becomes a foundation in understanding the relationship between a military and the government it serves. Clausewitz goes on to develop the idea of a trinity with three parts: the people, the army (military), and the government.⁹ The Clausewitz trinity depicts three primary relationships. First, the relationship

the military has with the people. Second, the relationship the people have with the government. Third, the relationship the government has with the military. Each element exhibits tension relative to the others with a balance achieved that reflects the strength and influence of each element within the nation. As government institutions fall in the perception of society while military institutions grow in esteem, the careful balance of power and influence in the state shifts from the government to the military. These conditions create opportunities to circumvent government institutions and expand military control as seen in the example of Germany during World War I.

In 1914, Commander of the Field Army, General Paul von Beneckendorff und Hindenburg and his Chief of Staff Erich von Ludendorff successfully wrested control of the German government away from civilian leadership and established a military dictatorship. Their control of the government allowed them a free hand in strategic decisions on policy issues deemed intrinsic to the war effort including unrestricted submarine warfare, policies on the Eastern front regarding Poland, and annexation of territories from the receding Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Each of these decisions ran counter to civilian authorities and from the perspective of hindsight had deleterious effect on the outcome of the war for Germany and directly contributed to subsequent defeat.¹⁰ This case does not illustrate the foregone conclusion that military men are unsuitable for government. It illustrates a system of checks and balances that has been corrupted by the overwhelming influence of a military establishment. A failure of civilian control is apparent when the military dominates decisions and the civilians consistently defer or are over-ridden in strategic decision-making.¹¹

As American military might has grown to meet a global security environment with broad national interests, the relationship between the state and its military is no longer one that can be settled through disbanding the force or retracting foreign missions. America must instead embrace a standing military and simultaneously fight to sustain control over this body in the face of the dominant and forceful exertions of a military establishment. This reality presents a new set of problems. In John Shy's chapter, "Jomini," published in *Makers of Modern Strategy*, he makes the following statement, "Conservatives no less than liberals feared a military so professionalized that it would be alienated from state and society, and the military in turn sought means to avoid external controls that these fears might impose."¹² This passage is used to describe the perennial conflict between the forces of government and the military. Though Shy refers to Napoleon Bonaparte's military coup to seize power over France in 1799, these words remain relevant to the current discussion of civil-military relations. Regardless of partisan divisions on key policy decisions an unchecked military establishment is predisposed to seek insulation from attempts to reign it in and direct its actions as was seen in the example of Germany's usurping militarism in World War I.

Participation Gap

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has been fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria with a track record of failure, near success, and unknown results, respectively. As of this writing, only one of these wars has been ended with the ensuing peace of Iraq crumbling into the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) necessitating further armed conflict. Amidst this backdrop Americans actively thank those who serve, offer discounts on services and goods, and celebrate the military as an organization in high esteem.¹³ This presents a fundamental problem. American support for warfighters is superficial and does not coincide with

a sense of obligation to serve themselves. This conundrum is the result of a Faustian bargain that succeeded in separating the obligation of military service from citizenship with the rise of an AVF.¹⁴

While discontent with the outcome of these wars, society engages in a form of adoration for those that volunteer to fight on their behalf. This public sentiment does not extend to the act of service itself. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates captured this sentiment when he remarked that, “For a growing number of Americans, service in the military, no matter how laudable, has become something for other people to do.”¹⁵ To be a citizen of the United States does not require military service. In fact, the United States no longer needs as many citizens to serve in the armed forces as technology and the changing character of modern warfare reduce manpower requirements. Most Americans enjoy private lives unburdened by a need to defend or participate in the government or its many manifestations. Aside from the nuisance of jury duty there is a detachment from the need to be active in or serve the community at large. Payment of taxes funds services that others will perform.

Understanding the gap that has grown between the civilian elites and the military elites can be done in the context of changing demographics in who serves within the military. In World War II, 453 Harvard graduates died compared to 488 graduates of West Point, the Army’s service academy.¹⁶ These figures represent a shared burden between a primary institution of higher learning for political elites and one for military elites. According to West-Point.org, an alumni connections page for the Academy, just over 100 West Point graduates have been killed in the War on Terror since September 11, 2001.¹⁷ According to the Harvard Veterans History Project, only two graduates lost their lives in these same conflicts.¹⁸ The disparity and contrast between these two sets of figures is stark. Harvard is not the only elite institution in America, but

the marked difference in shared sacrifice speaks to the societal gap between those that serve and those that do not. This disengagement, as noted civil-military relations theorist Andrew Bacevich puts it, corresponds to a loss of public outcry in decisions to go to war or the conduct of those wars by the body of citizens best placed to provide necessary critique and political influence, the political elites. Bacevich argues, “As an immediate consequence, Washington’s penchant for war has appreciably increased, without, however, any corresponding improvement in the ability of political and military leaders to conclude its wars either promptly or successfully.”¹⁹ Indifference has forfeited the consent of the people in matters of military affairs, and the forcing function of shared sacrifice has removed chief motivations for dissent.

The primary arguments against the AVF have several themes. First, the AVF divorces citizens from military affairs. This includes decisions in war and when to go to war. Protest and critique of military affairs remains, but it is marginalized by the lack of a public outcry as was seen in other unpopular conflicts like Vietnam, where there were wide demonstrations and acts of civil unrest as youth and activists pushed back against government policies that were undergirded by compulsory service. The second theme of AVF critics centers around the idea that military service builds a better citizen. These arguments look to the military to impart republican values on the citizenry. A republican in this context is someone committed to the idea of liberty and rule of law. Historian Bernard Bailyn describes the republican ideal embodied in the nation’s founding as “faith... that a better world than any that had ever been known could be built where authority was distrusted and held in constant scrutiny; where the status of men flowed from their personal qualities, not from distinctions ascribed to them by birth; and where the use of power over the lives of men was jealously guarded and severely restricted.”²⁰ In other words Bailyn describes a model citizen and a government that is judicious in the application of

violence. The school of the nation theme appears widely and can be linked to perceptions of cultural degradation or corruption in greater American society. From this perspective the creation of the AVF has eliminated the principal democratizing characteristic of the military in building invested citizens by limiting participation in the primary institution that imparts these civic virtues, military service.

Service is not the exclusive monopoly of the Armed Forces. Citizens can also serve the state as firemen, police officers, and civil servants who administer the government, make legislation, and support the rule of law. Private citizens fulfill the needs of building and expanding the economic base of the country and are thereby justified in their pursuits. The military by virtue of its profession accept great risk and hardship in the execution of foreign policy, but today this seemingly unjust demand for sacrifice is not levied on the individual without a precluding acceptance of this risk. The AVF serves to nullify the argument of unequal burden or bearing of the costs of pursuing national interests abroad. In return for such service the nation offers competitive salary, education, training, full health benefits, and retirement benefits. To solicit volunteers requires competition with the civilian sector for both pay and benefits. The vision of open squad bays, meager salary, and involuntary sacrifice has given way to a new military that puts primacy on family readiness, individual privacy, and personal development. The dominant virtues of a military lifestyle such as stoicism, self-sacrifice, discipline, and courage remain integral to the profession but are modified by an AVF that must adapt to compete with the private sector to attract recruits or maintain talent.²¹

Geography and Familiarity Gaps

The civil-military gap between society and those who serve also reflects in the separation that exists geographically. The military is an insular community. Service members largely live in

remote communities with separate housing on military installations with limited public access and their own hospitals and medical facilities, schools, and grocery stores. These provide adaptive and flexible capabilities to the unique needs of military families and subsidize quality of life. They also act as a barrier between military families and the greater society at large. Integration occurs readily in this community, but by and large, American military servicemen and their families are not sprinkled throughout the community. They are instead concentrated aboard a base or within a short distance of it. Base realignment and closure initiatives further aggravate this geographic separation as communities of military families that were once spread across multiple states and regions are increasingly centralized into common locations. The result of this is that the inconvenience of military affairs such as deployments, continuous permanent change of station moves, and other facets unique to military life are not played out in the intimate settings of everyday citizens. This lack of direct exposure makes the prospect of war and its many costs a hidden or easily overlooked expense to most American citizens. They are, in turn, only subjected to the indirect exposures through media. War in this context is an abstraction rather than a cold reality. Gold Star mothers and spouses are not neighbors or friends, they are statistics and acquaintances through Facebook feeds or public interest stories that do not register as immediate or alarming. This gap is designed to distance citizens from the cost of exercising power abroad and serves to limit dissent when these expeditions prove to be poorly conceived or executed endeavors.

The other aspect of this perceived divide is seen in the interaction between civilian elites in government and the military. The lack of understanding of the military amongst this population leads to a barrier in communication and understanding. Jim Golby, Lindsay P. Cohn, and Peter Feaver refer to this phenomenon as the ‘familiarity gap.’²² As an example of the

cultural differences that inhibit communications, within the military codified definitions are found in publications that outline the exact and objective nature of a task or phrase. This has application in the military realm. To contrast this, civilian political elites consider words and statements as subjective and open for interpretation.²³ This speaks to the nature of their discourse when operating a realm of compromise. It would seem these fundamental differences could be resolved through dialogue, and indeed they form the nucleus of interactions between the military and civilian leadership. What compounds this, however, is the lack of familiarity with military processes, capabilities, or limitations. A staffer in the White House reaching out to a peer in the Pentagon does not have the concept of strict hierarchy, chain of command, or the depth and degree of what a simple request may entail. If the staffer had this appreciation, then the staffer would perhaps have more realistic timelines for response or be more precise in making requests.

Elevation of the Armed Forces in Social Status and Military Deference

The idea of an elevated military caste in society is not new. It reflects a sense of superiority amongst those that serve over those they serve. With service comes a sense of entitlement and moral elevation over those that fail to hold this same sense of duty. Society reinforces this flawed identity by granting additional liberties and status to those that serve relative to those that do not. Precedence in seating on airplanes, discounts at the local home improvement center, and genuflecting toward veterans at the start of sporting events all serve to develop the construct that there are those that are better than average citizens and thereby rate more than just appreciation but also cultural deference as a caste apart from the rest of society endowed with greater virtues.²⁴

For the most part, those that participate in the AVF enjoy their status as symbols of patriotism and champions of freedom. It is akin to a member of the champion football team in

high school; gawked at from afar, jealously regarded, and worshipped by a rabid fan base. This arrangement appears to be working to the mutual benefit of the nation and those who serve. If society and the body of men and women who choose to serve are satisfied with this arrangement then no problem exists in the current construct of civil-military relations, at least in the sphere of civil-military relations that is focused on society at large and the military. The issue instead stems from the other relationships that exist in Clausewitz's trinity. The problem exists in the relationship that society has with politicians and government in one realm and finally the relationship the military has with the government. As trust in the military climbs relative to government institutions, the military exudes greater influence over political leadership. The ability of the government to reign in this influence through punishment mechanisms is thereby diminished disrupting civilian control.

In an essay titled "Thanks for your Service," Jim Golby, Lindsay P. Cohn, and Peter Feaver analyzed the results of the 2014 survey conducted by YouGov to empirically measure the attitudes of four populations: Military elites, civilian elites, veteran masses, and non-veteran masses. One of their key findings is a high degree of deference by civilians toward the military and a growing sense of entitlement amongst military members. The public confidence in military officers showed that military judgment was factored in greater consideration relative to the judgement of civilian leaders. Furthermore, this phenomenon incentivized partisan leaders to use military leaders as salesmen for their own political goals.²⁵ The result of this trend is the disruption of the military's attempts to remain apolitical and an increasing sense that uniformed servicemen are more trustworthy than civilians in issues of national security. This phenomenon was further explored in another essay published by the Center for a New American Security titled "Listening to the Generals: How Military Advice Affects Public Support for the Use of

Force,” by Jim Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver. This article analyzed survey data that demonstrated that military elites hold significant influence over public opinion on the use of force and this political leverage can become either a powerful aid or powerful hindrance to policymakers.²⁶ Essentially this article identifies a public trend of special trust and confidence granted to military elites that can be politicized. This trend was put on display after the election of President Donald Trump and his selection of key cabinet members for his administration.

Diminished Civilian Control

In 2016, the President of the United States selected numerous General Officers, both active duty and retired, to serve in key cabinet positions. Secretary James Mattis, Chief of Staff John Kelly, National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, and his immediate successor Herbert Raymond McMaster all filled key posts in the administration. Their presence, even in the capacity as retired officers, should be questioned by all Americans. This mass entry of military elites into the Executive branch is a possible harbinger of praetorian militarism; the assertion of the military establishment over domestic policies and affiliation of the military establishment with a single political party. The President and his press secretary consistently referred to these men as Generals despite their current positions and titles that took precedence. This is a symptom of a society that exhibits a trust bias toward military leadership in matters of the state.

The selection of former military leaders as a means of galvanizing credibility and respect for the administration also stands in contrast to the lack of military records for those elected to fill office. Of the last four Presidents of the United States none have served on active-duty in the armed forces. President William Clinton avoided the draft through educational exemptions and ran against Senator Bob Dole, a veteran of World War II. President George W. Bush served as a pilot in the National Guard avoiding military service in Vietnam and faced former Vice President

Al Gore, who enlisted in the Army after graduating from Harvard in 1969. In the next election President Bush also defeated Senator John Kerry, who served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. President Barrack Obama never served and ran against noted Vietnam Veteran and former prisoner of war, Senator John McCain. The current President, Donald Trump, received a medical deferment for bone spurs during the Vietnam War and avoided any service in the Armed Forces.²⁷ Each of these Presidents represent different manifestations of political elites achieving positions of power in government. In triumphing over those with military credentials it appears that civilian control of political office is retained within the Executive branch. However, the participation and familiarity gaps that exist between these Presidents and the political elites that comprise their cabinets become artifacts of a growing gulf between the military establishment and policymakers. Veteran status may not be necessary to win popular support in an election, but upon winning veterans recruited into the administration do disrupt the opportunity for political opponents to leverage dissent due to a presumption of apolitical competence in affairs of state that cloud public sentiment.

Military credibility with the American public was exploited on 20 October 2017, when White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders shut down a question about comments made by President Trump's Chief of Staff, John Kelley, a retired Four Star General in the Marine Corps. Sanders stated that, "If you wanna go after General Kelly, that's up to you, but I think that — if you want to get into a debate with a four-star Marine general, I think that that's something highly inappropriate."²⁸ The context of this rebuke to a reporter is not nearly as important as the implications for the relationship between civilians and military leaders. Deference to the latter is not simply implied it is outright stated as a matter of fact; Chief of Staff Kelly was fulfilling a civilian role in government, and it is the duty of an engaged media and civil society to critically

assess his actions. This attempt to extinguish debate and invoke both infallibility and deference to military leaders in matters of the state signals an alarming inertia. First, it undermined the principle of civilian control and signaled clearly that militarism has infected the highest office of the United States. Second, the overwhelming presence of military officers in key staff positions removes the veil of an apolitical military. Third, it suggests that the military stands apart from regular citizens as a class above, as a new 'estate' recalling the hierarchical class divisions of pre-revolutionary France.²⁹

Samuel P. Huntington describes the professional military ethic in *Soldier and the State* and goes on to develop what has come to be referred to as the 'normal' theory of civil-military relations that advocates objective civilian control. Since this formative work many other theorists have debated this idea and countered the notion that there exists a pure division between politics and warfighting. What is common to all the theories is that they attempt to identify problems in the decision and execution of war and the ability of the state to establish effective policy and achieve intended outcomes.

Huntington's theory emphasizing autonomous military professionalism and objective civilian control advocates for a clear division between politics and the military profession. In the case of John Kelly, it can be assumed that he was fulfilling the role of a civil servant vice military officer as a continuation of his sense of duty and obligation to the republic. This assumption neglects Kelly's extensive military background and ties that continue to bind him to the military community as a veteran in a position of power and influence in the President's administration. This is also alarming because Sarah Sanders continues to identify him as a General and further remarks that this makes him above reproach. Huntington argues that a "garrison state required the centralization of power in the hands of the few."³⁰ The few in this

case would be the military elites composing the cabinet of the President. This incident clearly speaks to an overly powerful military exerting indirect control over political decisions and an institutionally ingrained disdain for attempts at accountability by the society it is supposed to serve. Huntington also argues that military professionals who get involved in politics abandon a pure military mindset and adapt a more liberal viewpoint. Huntington states that “the popularity of the military professionals depend[s] on the extent to which they become men of the people rather than men of the military.”³¹ This presumption is true only when the means for achieving accountability over these veteran politicians act against the conservative bias that served them in their former profession. In the absence of control mechanisms such as public outcry or opportunity for debate, these shaping forces fail to convert the military mindset to a civilian one. In effect, without the gauntlet of public pressure or accountability mechanisms, military elites can remain representatives of the military establishment despite their new role as civilian leaders.

This case can resemble Harold Lasswell’s concept of the ‘Garrison State.’ In 1937, Harold Lasswell, while studying the Sino-Japanese conflict developed the construct of the ‘Garrison State’ and warned of an inherent danger to the state when engaged in perpetual war. Lasswell was concerned with “a world in which the specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society.”³² As this military perspective grows it usurps civilian institutions and control mechanisms. Essentially, there is a competition between the civilian-controlled state and the military-controlled state, which impacts the freedoms and liberties of society and threatens democratic held ideals of governance. The idea of a militarized state seems incompatible with republican values and American democracy today. The concept seems to apply more to the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany or the former Soviet Union, governments that failed and

are regulated to the past. However, this construct remains relevant in analyzing the United States after eighteen years of conflict in the War on Terror.

The influx of military elites into civilian roles within government is not a new phenomenon. Huntington points out that from 1946-1948 there was a large transition of military personnel into the government.³³ Congress, in turn, refused three of these appointments under President Harry Truman's administration and heated debate revolved around the fear of a loss of civilian control. Since this period the scale of the military has dramatically decreased, and the nature of service has gone from compulsory to the AVF. Consider that in contrast to this previous period, President Donald Trump appropriated the overwhelmingly positive public opinion of the military through his political appointments of popular and well-regarded generals. Congress even went so far as to waive requirements of extended military separation for James Mattis to assume the post of Secretary of Defense, an action that achieved bi-partisan support.

Growing Leverage of the Military in Key Policy Decisions

Michael C. Desch provides empirical evidence of this growing deference to military opinion and decision making in *Civilian Control of the Military*, where he analyzes major United States civil military conflicts over key policy decisions on the use of force. Desch states, "the best indicator of the state of civilian control is who prevails when civilian and military preferences diverge."³⁴ From 1989 to 1999, Desch qualifies a series of twelve issues in which the President and his administration were in contest with military elites. Resolution is categorized by who prevailed in each case. During this period the military viewpoint prevailed over civilian leaders on seven occasions, the civilian viewpoint prevailed on four occasions, and only a single incident received mixed support of both. This is a sharp contrast to the same categorization of issues that occurred from 1950 to 1989. During this period, thirty issues were raised with civilian

positions prevailing in all but three cases, with one of those being mixed support of the military.³⁵ Since 1990, the military viewpoint has shown a marked trend in eclipsing the views of civilian leadership indicating the growing dissent over civilian control within the military organization.

Absent from Desch's original study are the policies and decisions from 2000 to the present day during the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations. However, Thomas Donnelly provides insight into the civil-military conflicts of the Bush and Obama administrations in his essay, "Testing the 'Flournoy Hypothesis'." Donnelly characterizes a contentious relationship between Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the Joint Chiefs of Staff over strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Donnelly further describes Rumsfeld's successor, Secretary Robert Gates, "browbeat[ing] the Pentagon into supporting the war effort more fully."³⁶ This clash between civilian control and military obedience demonstrates an unwillingness of the military elite to submit to objective control. Even as General Tommy Franks agreed to the heavy-handed conditions of the 2003 invasion of Iraq as dictated by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, the military community provided sharp dissent. Chief of Staff of the Army, General Eric Shinseki testified before Congress on the inadequacy of prescribed troop strengths.³⁷ In addition, numerous retired General Officers and Admirals openly spoke out against the policy positions of the administration representing a powerful lobby of military veterans that could be enlisted to influence civilian control over military matters.³⁸ Donnelly further analyzes Obama's approach to civilian control and the military response when he describes the military as 'jamming' or 'boxing-in' the President by leaking military preferred proposals to the press to undercut the administration in matters of policy and strategy.³⁹

In *The New American Militarism*, Andrew Bacevich echoes the fears put forward by Harold Laswell when he remarks that “those citizens that prefer an American republic to an American empire ought to view the changes under way in the U. S. armed forces as worrisome.”⁴⁰ An AVF, he argues, does not reflect society and enables an imperialist foreign policy akin to Victorian era Great Britain as opposed to the republican ideals that America espouses.⁴¹ These policies are enabled through the indifference of civilian elites who currently fail to sufficiently critique or check a president’s decisions on the use of force or employment of forces abroad. He does not, however, advocate for a return to conscription, acknowledging that such a choice is unrealistic politically and likely a non-starter.

Bacevich recommends incentivizing service through free college education or loan forgiveness to entice all Americans to serve across all classes of society vice just the underprivileged currently targeted for ‘voluntary’ recruitment. This broader base of participants would serve to infiltrate the current divide between the citizen elites through wider appeal and thereby create a society better situated to weigh in on issues of military employment or budgetary decisions.⁴² Bacevich also advocates reexamining the role of the National Guard and the reserve component as well as reconciling the American military profession to American Society. In summary, the existing institutions must dissolve the artificial constructs separating the military establishment from civilian institutions and thereby recruit a broader range of participants in the military system across all socio-economic backgrounds. Quota systems that focus on socio-economic diversity in recruiting could rectify this gap.

Regardless of which model of change is chosen the fact is change must occur to effectively align civilians with their military counterparts in government. Continued deference, worship, and abdication of responsibility by civilian elites fails to adequately meet the objectives

put forth by the nation and will only continue the trend of protracted warfare with imperfect outcomes. A cross-pollination of the one percent that serve the nation and the one percent who exert political influence and intellectual direction is the only hope for arresting the trend toward militarism that currently plagues the United States.

On 20 December 2018 Secretary of Defense James Mattis tendered his resignation to the President of the United States citing, “You have the right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours.”⁴³ This action followed an announcement by the President that the United States would be withdrawing from Syria and pursuing plans for a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan. What is clear is that the Secretary of Defense did not agree with these decisions and could no longer serve the administration in good conscience. In so doing, Secretary Mattis fulfilled the long-standing principle of America’s republican traditions and subordinated the control of the military to civilian authority. Even as a civilian Secretary, James Mattis carried the legacy of his military service. The administration still referred to James Mattis with his rank as a former General officer in the United States Marine Corps on numerous occasions. His resignation as a civilian undergirds a separate identity from his military status and bodes well only if the Pentagon falls in line with his successor in abiding with the President’s decree to leave Syria.

Mattis’ statement represents a central element of the principles governing civil-military relations and the longstanding traditions of military subordination to civilian control that has become a hallmark in American democracy from the very inception of the United States. From the Newburgh crisis in 1783 to today, the republican virtues of America’s political system have firmly held onto this precept. His departure effectively made him the last of the once full stable of former and acting General officers to leave President Trump’s administration. It can be said

that President Trump surrounded himself with military officers to give credibility to his administration but it can also be said that once members of the team they clashed with his world views and style of communication that effectively bypassed the normal channels of policy discourse and discussion and instead floated in the ether of the cloud through tweets and social media declarations. At the heart of this discussion is not the decisions of the President but the character of conflict between the military and civilian leadership that it represents.

Conclusion

Americans scoff at the notion of a military coup as unlikely and incompatible with democratic values and the republican virtues embodied in the military and upheld through a tradition of professionalism and obedience. This is the dilemma that currently faces the United States in the wake of wars that have lasted nearly two decades with outcomes that have been deemed less than victorious. Influence, power, and control are all similar terms and important to understand in the context of American civil-military relations. Control remains divided between the Commander-in-Chief and Congress. Power rests in the great capability and strength of the military with personnel and equipment. Influence exists in business, politics, lobbyists, and personalities. A growing military establishment uses these channels of influence to diminish and marginalize civilian control. The long-standing tradition of military subordination to civilian control that has existed since General George Washington's Continental Army is threatened by this growth.

There is a growing gap in civil-military relations in the United States. Perceptions of a growing gap may not yet be a threat to national security, but the civil-military gap exists and continues to grow. This gap does not manifest itself only between the population of the United States and the military and veterans drawn from their ranks. It also exists between political elites

and military/veteran elites. This divergence manifests itself in the formulation of foreign policy and debate over defense issues. It competes with a long-standing tradition of military subordination to civil control. As this gap widens, so too does the propensity for the United States to make policy decisions that damage the long term geo-political liberal order that has dominated international relations since the end of World War II.

Endnotes:

- ¹ Alexander Hamilton, John Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter, introduction and notes by Charles R. Kessler (New York: New American Library, 2003), 245.
- ² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapoport (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968), 405. As quoted by Michael C. Desch *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 6.
- ³ Thomas E. Ricks. *Making the Corps*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 274.
- ⁴ George Washington, “Washington’s Sentiments on a Peace Establishment, 1 May 1783,” (*Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified June 13, 2018), <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-11202>.
- ⁵ James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender. *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Incorporated, 1982), 192-193.
- ⁶ United States. National Archives and Records Administration. *The Declaration of Independence*. (Milestone Documents in the National Archives. Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 1992.)
- ⁷ Martin and Lender, 30-45.
- ⁸ Carl von Clausewitz. *On War*. Edited by Michael Eliot Howard and Peter Paret. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 87.
- ⁹ Clausewitz, Ed. by Howard and Paret, 89.
- ¹⁰ Michael C. Desch *Civilian Control of the Military: The Changing Security Environment*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 77.
- ¹¹ Desch, 4.
- ¹² John Shy. “Jomini.” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, edited by Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 161.
- ¹³ Rosa Brooks. “Civil Military Paradoxes.” In *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*. Edited by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press/Stanford University, 2016), 22.
- ¹⁴ Faust was a literary protagonist created by J. W. von Goethe, that made a deal with the devil offering his soul in exchange for temporary satisfactions. In this context, the short-term gains of an AVF are outweighed by the long-term impacts of this decision in disrupting the republican ideals of an Army composed of citizens.
- ¹⁵ Robert Gates, as quoted by Rosa Brooks. “Civil Military Paradoxes.” In *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*. Edited by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press/Stanford University, 2016), 23.
- ¹⁶ Andrew J. Bacevich. *Breach of Trust: How Americans Failed Their Soldiers and Their Country*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, 2013), 21.
- ¹⁷ West-Point.org, accessed 22 March 2019, http://www.westpoint.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=81&Itemid=75
- ¹⁸ Harvard Veterans History Project, accessed 22 March 2019, <http://veterans.sigs.harvard.edu/article.html?aid=41>
- ¹⁹ Bacevich, *Breach of Trust*, 41.
- ²⁰ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 139, as quoted by James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender. *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789*. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Incorporated, 1982), 31.
- ²¹ Janowitz, Morris. *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. (New York: Free Press, 1971.)

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- ²² Jim Golby Lindsay P. Cohn, and Peter Feaver. “Thanks For Your Service,” in *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*. Edited by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press/Stanford University, 2016), 97-141.
- ²³ Rosa Brooks. “Civil Military Paradoxes.” In *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*. Edited by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press/Stanford University, 2016), 40.
- ²⁴ Bacevich, *Breach of Trust*, 4.
- ²⁵ Golby, Cohn, Feaver, p 134.
- ²⁶ Jim Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver. “Listening to the Generals: How Military Advice Affects Public Support for the Use of Force,” *Center for New American Security* (2013): 21, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep06380>.
- ²⁷ Steve Eder and Dave Philipps, “Donald Trump’s Draft Deferments: Four for College, One for Bad Feet,” *New York Times*, August 1, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/02/us/politics/donald-trump-draft-record.html>.
- ²⁸ Sarah Sanders as quoted by Jennifer Rubin. “Let’s not staff a White House with Generals ever again” *Washington Post*, October 23, 2017, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/commentary/ct-perspec-john-kelly-trump-generals-1024-20171023-story.html>.
- ²⁹ French class systems were the first estate composed of clergy, the second estate composed of nobility, and the third estate composed of free peasants and workers. In this context the military appears to exist on plain with a new form of social order that grants additional privilege of this new estate over regular citizens.
- ³⁰ Samuel P. Huntington. *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 349.
- ³¹ Huntington, 159.
- ³² Harold Lasswell. *Essays on the Garrison State*, ed. Jay Stanley (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 56.
- ³³ Huntington, 360.
- ³⁴ Desch, 4.
- ³⁵ Desch, 136-139.
- ³⁶ Thomas Donnelly. “Testing the ‘Flourney Hypothesis,’” In *Warriors & Citizens: American Views of Our Military*. Edited by Kori Schake and Jim Mattis (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press/Stanford University, 2016), 203.
- ³⁷ Bacevich, *Breach of Trust*, 97-99.
- ³⁸ Martin L. Cook. “Revolt of the Generals: A Case Study in Professional Ethics.” *Parameters* (Spring, 2008), <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/articles/08spring/cook.pdf>.
- ³⁹ Donnelly, 205.
- ⁴⁰ Andrew J. Bacevich. *The New American Militarism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 219.
- ⁴¹ Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 218.
- ⁴² Bacevich, *The New American Militarism*, 220.
- ⁴³ Vivian Salama. “Exit of Mattis, Last of Trump’s ‘Generals,’ Removes Voice of Moderation.” *Wall Street Journal*, 20 December 2018, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/exit-of-mattis-last-of-trumps-generals-removes-voice-of-moderation-11545361568?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=6>

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