

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**HUNTINGTON REVISITED: IS CONSERVATIVE REALISM
STILL ESSENTIAL FOR THE MILITARY ETHIC?**

KATHLEEN A. MAHONEY-NORRIS, LT COL, USAFR
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PROFESSOR:
DR. JANET BRESLIN-SMITH

FACULTY ADVISOR:
DR. MARK CLODFELTER

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The military ethic is thus pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist, and instrumentalist in its view of the military profession. It is, in brief, *realistic and conservative*.¹

One of the most widely accepted truisms about the military concerns its supposed preference for a conservative perspective. More specifically, on national security matters the military professional is assumed to espouse a conservative, realist viewpoint. Samuel P. Huntington has provided perhaps the classical exposition of this viewpoint in his work *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (as illustrated in the quotation above). Furthermore, Huntington has developed what appears to be a powerful argument as to why conservative realism should be considered a fundamental component of the professional ethic of the military officer.²

I disagree with Huntington's position linking the military to conservative realism on national security matters. In this paper I will demonstrate that Huntington is mistaken in assuming that conservative realism is the only rational mindset for the military professional, especially in the world of the 21st century. A diversity of factors from globalization to failing states to technological advances, as epitomized by the "Revolution in Military Affairs," increasingly suggests that this type of mindset is often inappropriate. In the worst case, a conservative realist approach may ultimately endanger rather than protect the security of the state. For example, realism's preoccupation with the state blinds it to the importance of nonstate actors and transnational or asymmetrical threats, which may actually pose the greater danger to national security. At the least, realism may not inculcate the mindset necessary to actively seize opportunities for engagement and cooperation that may enhance the security of the state, in light

of its near-exclusive focus on threats. Mounting evidence attesting to the existence of the democratic peace thesis (essentially, the notion that democracies do not go to war with one another) may imply that the U.S. should actively engage other states to promote democracy. These limitations of realism are magnified by the conservative bent of realism, which suggests an inability to view trends and events in a novel and positive light. Yet creativity and the flexibility to move beyond the status quo are qualities that are critically necessary to enhance U.S. security in today's complex and fluid international system.

These concerns are particularly germane in the year 2001 as a new American Administration attempts to fundamentally reassess national security and military strategies, along with accompanying roles, missions, and force structure for the U.S. armed forces. We are still floundering to define ourselves in this nebulous "post-Cold War period." The military's view of the international system with its threats, challenges and opportunities will certainly under gird the estimates made and advice offered about the military's role in national security. Does the professional military possess the most appropriate perspective to provide the best advice possible to the civilian leadership in these circumstances? I am convinced that conservative realism does not provide an adequate guide.

In this paper I will first expand upon the concept of conservative realism as Huntington views it, along with implications for the military and national security. I will also consider both conservatism and realism separately, in order to better draw out certain ideas. Next, I will compare the relevance of this perspective for the Cold War period by contrasting that time to our current post-Cold War era. Have the threats changed? Has the role of the military evolved in ensuring national security? I contend that the answer to both of those questions is yes, and that conservative realism does not provide an adequate basis for the professional military to reorient

its thinking. Furthermore, there is increasing evidence in military writings to indicate awareness of the need for a changed perspective. I conclude with speculation about an alternative perspective of “globalization” that I believe might provide for better defense of the nation, both now and in the foreseeable future.³

Huntington and Conservative Realism

Huntington’s concept of the military rests on the central premise that the modern military officer is a professional. Thus, there is a “military mind,” and a “professional military ethic” which is based on a “constant standard by which it is possible to judge the professionalism of any officer corps anywhere anytime.”⁴ For the military, that ethic is based upon a set of values, attitudes, and perspectives that best enables military members to carry out their fundamental function of enhancing the military security of the state. Huntington believes that this professional military ethic is unchanging, further assuming that the inherent nature of the military function remains unchanged. This is an assumption that Huntington does not question to any extent, because he accepts that conflict between mankind and between the organized entities that mankind lives in (states) is a universal pattern for a number of reasons. Most prominent among these reasons is the belief that human nature is selfish and greedy, even evil. The insecurities and fears that this generates are just as evident in our time to Huntington and other realists as they were to Hobbes and Machiavelli.⁵ That is because classical realism also assumes that this pattern is unchanging, cyclical, and ultimately does not allow for progress.

It is important to separate out the strands of conservatism and realism in order to highlight several points which demonstrate weaknesses in Huntington’s argument. In fact, just removing the “conservative” adjective from realism might allow for the latter to still serve a useful role in shaping the military perspective. Omitting this label removes the moral, or value-

based, aspects of realism—essentially, the idea that man is evil and grasping by nature.⁶ Updating the classical realist perspective⁷ to that of what is often termed “neorealism” or “structural realism”⁸ might be useful. This updated perspective does not attribute conflict in the international system to the weakness of human nature or even to individual actions. Rather, conflict is presumed to occur because of the anarchy that characterizes the international system, which means that each state is on its own in an insecure world. Thus, states must always look to not only hold, but to enhance, their security, particularly by military means. Accepting this version of realism would allow for a more nuanced view of the current international system. It would enable military professionals to still envision the international system as prone to conflict, but to also appreciate the growing importance of economic power, and of institutions and other nonstate actors. With this perspective it is further possible to postulate that states may cooperate and that both may gain in certain kinds of circumstances (as opposed to a classically zero-sum view of interactions). Clearly a modified view of realism on this order would encourage at least a modicum of adaptive thinking.

Another limitation of the specifically conservative emphasis in Huntington’s argument relates to his analysis of the lack of change in the military ethic. According to Huntington, it is due to the inherent nature of the military function—ensuring security in the face of threats—that no change occurs in the content of the professional ethic.⁹ He carries this idea further to argue that the prevailing military outlook on foreign affairs has differed hardly at all in modern times, attributing this to the fact that “the decisive influence shaping the military outlook was not the actual state of world politics, but rather the level of professionalism achieved by the military.”¹⁰ For Huntington, “the constant nature of the American military perspective reflected the constant character of American military professionalism,”¹¹ regardless of whether the date was 1870 or

1930. He even puts forth the claim that by the 1930s the international system had come to reflect the view that the American military had always had about the world.

The fact that the military perspective on the international system that Huntington portrays was reflected in the events of the interwar period is purely fortuitous. If the Wilsonian ideas of freedom and democracy proclaimed with the close of World War I had borne some fruit, would Huntington still come to the same conclusion? If World War II had resulted in a continuing, cooperative relationship between the wartime allies of the United States and the Soviet Union, thus reducing the security threat, should the military perspective have remained the same? My point here is that it is not wise to adhere to an unvarying viewpoint when fundamental changes may be occurring in the international system. Thus, having a military that holds a regimented perspective is not advantageous for maximizing military security, and therefore it does not meet Huntington's own test of fulfilling the functional imperative. Comparisons of the two eras that follow reinforce this conclusion.

Comparing the Cold War and the Post-Cold War Eras

As Huntington stresses, it was the continuation of the Cold War, and of the nuclear rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, that necessitated large standing American military forces: "Military requirements thus became a fundamental ingredient of foreign policy, and military men and institutions acquired authority and influence far surpassing that ever previously possessed by military professionals on the American scene."¹² This had obvious implications for the military's role in ensuring security. In Huntington's view, those implications were negative to a large extent, as they meant the increasing influence of the military in society, and the concomitant exposure of the military to civilian and political views. Both of these trends militated against military professionalism in his estimation. It made it very

difficult for the military to remain aloof from liberal society and maintain its professional conservatism, while the civilians actively attempted to supplant military conservatism with the liberalism of American society.

Huntington's belief that realism was the necessary perspective for ensuring national security during the Cold War might have had some merit in this period; a time characterized by a relatively stable bipolar balance of power between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. However, the realist perspective has not been very successful at explaining the end of the Cold War, let alone predicting that end in the first place. This is a serious detriment when we consider that the aftermath of the Cold War has meant the biggest changes for U.S. national security and the military's role since World War II. Realism has not been able to deal adequately with the aftermath of the Cold War or outline a new security approach that is comprehensive and addresses the variety of novel threats now proliferating.

Even a cursory review of academic or policy studies related to the current security environment reveals extensive use of adjectives like "uncertain," "dynamic," "fluid," "unpredictable," "unknown," "turbulent," "asymmetric" and "complex." While attempts have been made to define and categorize the variety and level of threats to U.S. national security, there is no consensus similar to the one that prevailed about the Soviet threat during the Cold War, even among realists. The U.S. Congress has been so concerned about the implications of this new international system that they chartered the bipartisan United States Commission on National Security/21st Century (also known as the Hart-Rudman Commission) in 1998 to examine the entire range of U.S. national security policies and processes.

In February 2001 the Hart-Rudman Commission published the third and last of its series of three reports, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change*. As the title implies,

the commission concluded that the U.S. faces distinctly new dangers, which requires rethinking fundamental assumptions from the Cold War period.

The key to our vision is the need for a culture of coordinated strategic planning to permeate all U.S. national security institutions. Our challenges are no longer defined for us by a single prominent threat. Without creative strategic planning in this new environment, we will default in times of crisis to a reactive posture. Such a posture is inadequate to the challenges and opportunities before us.¹³

The criticism here of a reactive posture calls to mind the status quo nature of realism and its limitations in fashioning new policies for the future. Similarly, the Commission stressed that national security could not be narrowly defined any more, but that it had to be broadened and integrated to include economics, technology, and education, among other aspects.¹⁴ However, broadening national security beyond standard military and defense concerns would be an uncomfortable fit for realists.

Many issues raised by the Hart-Rudman Commission have been evident in studies produced under the auspices of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) 2001 Working Group. This group was sponsored by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) specifically to serve as an independent and unbiased group, with the objective of building intellectual capital for the QDR mandated for 2001. In *All Possible Wars? Toward a Consensus View of the Future Security Environment, 2001-2025*, primary author Tangredi noted that the group had analyzed 36 existing studies on the future security environment to identify points of consensus and divergence.¹⁵ Among many other items, the group agreed that there would be more nonstate threats to security and a greater threat of asymmetric attack. Significantly, the group also made a concerted attempt to include dissenting viewpoints because, as Tangredi noted, these viewpoints “lead to plans that can also cope with alternative futures. The dissenting viewpoints are tools against complacency.”¹⁶ An example of such an alternative viewpoint was the notion that it

might be possible to develop cooperative defenses with potential military rivals. This led to the following interesting conclusion.

Perhaps prudent defense planning requires a blend of the two views in order to deal with a sudden change in circumstance—sort of a cooperation-plus-containment approach that seeks to encourage our fondest hopes at the same time it retains the means of prevailing in our worst nightmares.¹⁷

I cite these points in order to underscore that any security perspective that tends to have a static and narrowly-based approach to the international system is likely to endanger U.S. national security. As the first report of the Hart-Rudman Commission noted, “the very facts of military reality are changing and that bears serious and concentrated reflection. The reflexive habits of mind and action that were the foundation for U.S. Cold War strategy and force structures may not be appropriate for the coming era.”¹⁸ Conservative realism and the mindset it perpetuates for the military professional fit this straight jacket and does not provide the flexibility necessary to entertain alternative ideas.

The security perspective employed is significant because it affects not only strategy but also force structure, roles, and missions. All of these issues have achieved prominence under the new Bush Administration and a number of related studies are underway, some official and some not. Yet even prior to the presidential election, knowledgeable observers and sectors within the defense arena itself were attempting to come to grips with these issues. In “Defending America in the Twenty-first Century” Eliot Cohen pointed to not only failings in U.S. strategy (essentially Cold War derived) but also in military organizational structures, still adapted mainly to a bipolar world.¹⁹ He called for a move from the “two major theater war” (MTW) strategy to one based on American predominance in an international system characterized by “the consequent ambiguity and uncertainty of the circumstances in which the United States will use its military power.”²⁰ In Cohen’s view the new strategy should have four components, including defense

against weapons of mass destruction, conventional dominance, short term-contingencies, and peace maintenance. Note that the last component of peace maintenance—a concept advocated in numerous studies—would find short shrift from a realist perspective.

The Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) Working Group at the National Defense University found similar concerns, including the need to move away from the two MTW equation. In a report of November 2000, the group identified twelve strategy decisions that it felt the next Administration needed to make, established four broad strategy alternatives based on different world views, described alternative approaches to sizing the U.S. military, provided a methodology for assessing risk, examined strategy-driven integrated paths, and concluded with findings and recommendations.²¹ The underlying premise of this analysis is the absolute requirement to question our common assumptions and entertain alternative views and strategies for ensuring national security in this complex environment.

There are any number of additional, wide-ranging reports and studies I could cite here. What is important for purposes of this analysis is their near-unanimous conclusion that fundamental changes are needed to our current thinking about security and strategy, the use of force, roles and missions; and that we need to consider all alternatives. However, a conservative realist mindset finds it difficult to display the flexibility required for that type of analysis. To continue to urge our military to employ that perspective will handicap, rather than ensure, their ability to maximize the security of the United States.

Finally, another potentially serious problem in promoting conservative realism as the only appropriate mindset for the professional military is apparent when we compare the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war today. Huntington contends, “the ideal military man is thus conservative in strategy, but open-minded and progressive with respect to new weapons and

new tactical forms.”²² I believe that there is a fundamental disconnect between expecting the military to adhere to conservative realism at the strategic, or higher levels, and encouraging innovativeness at the lower levels. It is very difficult for the human mind to cope with the dissonance in moving from a conservative strategic approach to an innovative and adaptive operational or tactical approach, and vice versa. In addition, in our current era of near-instantaneous communication and information, the distinctions between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels become quite fuzzy:

Simultaneous revolutions in military affairs, technology, and information, and a reordering of the international system, have shattered traditional boundaries, merging the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war into a single, integrated universe in which action at the bottom often has instant and dramatic impact at all levels. Never in history have so many strategic burdens confronted the entire chain of command, ranging from the President in the White House all the way down to the individual rifleman at a security checkpoint in Macedonia.²³

Joint Vision 2020, which is meant to guide the continuing transformation of the U.S. armed forces, echoes this conclusion” “individuals will be challenged by significant responsibilities at tactical levels in the organization and must be capable of making decisions with both operational and strategic implications.”²⁴

It only makes sense to conclude that we want our professional military to be innovative and flexible. As Huntington himself says in another context:

Rigid and inflexible obedience may well stifle new ideas and become slave to an unprogressive routine. It is not infrequent that a high command has had its thinking frozen in the past and has utilized its control of the military hierarchy to suppress uncomfortable new developments in tactics and technology.²⁵

Unfortunately, this is precisely the type of thinking that conservative realism encourages at all levels. It is safe to venture that this status quo attitude would adversely affect the willingness, or ability, of the military to entertain fundamental changes to such things as strategy, roles and

missions that are necessary to meet a transformed international security environment. In fact, conservative realism could result in the worst type of “innovation.” The military might very well be eager to adopt new technologies and weapons systems--new “gizmos”--while still applying the same, dated military strategies and concepts. This could occur without any fundamental rethinking of how military strategy (the “conduct” of war) might evolve advantageously in line with new capabilities. For example, a service like the Air Force, which is wedded to the notion of planning an air campaign in a certain way to achieve military objectives, might be prone to continue to use newer weaponry in tactically-smart ways, without considering the implications and adaptations that should be made for strategic (or political) purposes.

For all of these reasons I contend that we need to move away from advocating a conservative realist mindset for the professional military. Huntington’s viewpoint that the military ethic depends upon realism as an integral part of military professionalism is mistaken today, if it ever was appropriate. The military can only fulfill their role of advancing national security with an appropriately updated perspective.

A New Security Perspective for the Military?

The professional military ethic would be best served by the adoption of what I will call a “globalization” perspective here.²⁶ I employ as non-ideological a term as possible for this perspective, as I do not believe that a political ideology is necessary, or even beneficial, for the military’s role of ensuring national security.²⁷ A globalization ethic implies that a professional military officer would be attuned to both threats and opportunities that arise at all levels of the international system. In other words, both threats and opportunities would be viewed in tandem to assess the security climate and to develop appropriate military strategies and concepts. A globalization perspective would further demand that, in assessing threats, the military would look

not only at capabilities of potential adversaries, but would also consider intentions. In other words, the level of threat would be based on an analysis of both capabilities plus intentions, versus the realist tendency to focus purely on capabilities. For example, while the United Kingdom and France possess nuclear weapons and ample military capabilities, it would be ridiculous to consider them in the same threat category as a state like China. Yet this is what realism would expect, as it acknowledges no permanent friends or allies in the international system.

In addition, the ability to analyze intentions and to understand the perspective of potential enemies is essential to the concept of deterrence. Colin Gray rightfully points out that deterrence is much more problematic for the United States to achieve today than during the Cold War. Not only are we unsure whom we may wish to deter, but it is also much more difficult for the U.S. to understand the variety of motivations of state and nonstate actors that may pose a threat.²⁸ Yet realism makes no contextual allowance for the different motivations that may impel actors, an understanding of which is crucial to devise effective deterrence strategies. Nor does realism give much credence to the increasingly asymmetric threat arising from nonstate actors, all of whom are obviously much more difficult to deter. Again, a globalization perspective which places emphasis on an understanding of the variety of actors in the international system, regardless of their category, seems much more likely to provide us with the possibility to either preempt or co-opt potential adversaries.

Both joint doctrine and writings from U.S. military leaders increasingly demonstrate awareness of the necessity—indeed, responsibility—for a changing military viewpoint on security matters. The Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) provides specifically for a formal method for the U.S. military leadership to engage in “continuous study of the strategic environment to

identify conditions or trends that may warrant a change in the strategic direction of the Armed Forces.”²⁹ Concepts like “strategic agility” underscore the need for adaptation. Joint Publication 1, which serves as the capstone publication for all U.S. joint doctrine, specifically praises strategic agility as a desirable quality for the military, defining it as “the ability to adapt, conceptually and physically, to changes in the international security environment.”³⁰

At the highest strategic level, the current national military strategy (NMS) situates the military’s responsibilities in meeting national security needs under the rubric of “shape, respond, and prepare now.”³¹ The military realizes that it must have the ability to respond across the spectrum of conflict, which would be a standard realist understanding. However, just as important is the stated need to contribute actively to peace, which runs counter to realist ideas. *Joint Vision 2020*, which provides the template for the continuing transformation of the U.S. armed forces, emphasizes that the military must be able to “both win wars and contribute to peace.”³² The notion of shaping falls under the general U.S. security posture of peacetime engagement in the post-Cold War period. Almost every senior military officers who has addressed National Defense University students in the academic year 2001 has stressed proactive “shaping” and “engaging” as integral functions that the military must perform, and this theme is prevalent in military-related writings. The NMS advocates shaping because it “helps foster the institutions and international relationships that constitute a peaceful strategic environment by promoting stability; preventing and reducing conflict and threats; and deterring aggression and coercion.”³³ This underscores the point made above about deterrence and the importance of a multifaceted understanding of the environment and the actors within it, which a realist perspective does not promote.

One of the best illustrations of the military's role in proactively contributing to peace lies in theater engagement plans (TEPs). These aptly named plans, which the four regional combatant commanders are required to produce for their areas of responsibility, devote great attention to the concept of "shaping" the environment. What is particularly striking about this type of strategic approach is that this very active involvement of the military in engagement and cooperative activities in various regions of the world is contrary to standard realist understandings.

All of these instances demonstrate the truth that military security is a much broader concept than merely preparing to fight major or even limited wars. Thus, the professional military ethic demands that officers have a fuller understanding of security issues and the integrated use of all instruments of power (military, economic, political) in order to deal with the multifaceted threat environment.³⁴ A globalization perspective allows the military to act proactively on the nation's behalf to take advantage of opportunities to enhance national security rather than to merely respond to threats that have been allowed to mature, unhindered.

Note that these propositions run directly counter to Huntington's view of the professional ethic. He decries what he terms "fusionist theory" whereby the military are supposed to incorporate "political, economic, and social factors into their thinking;" and thereby "deny themselves in order to play a higher role [military statesman]."³⁵ Huntington even speaks disparagingly of the establishment of institutions like the National War College in the sense that not only would they "enable military officers to appreciate the complexities of national policy, but because they would also enable military officers to arrive at their own conclusions concerning political and economic issues."³⁶ His concern is that this would dilute the military officer's capability to effectively represent military security issues, their primary responsibility.

However, I believe that Huntington clearly has this wrong. While it is admittedly difficult, the complex international system demands that military officers possess a broad understanding in order to respond effectively to a spectrum of threats and opportunities. It is no longer possible, if it ever was, to separate out strands of putatively “military” issues versus “political” or “economic” issues. As General Chilcoat has convincingly argued, in order for military leaders to perform their role of advising on national security strategy, they must have a grasp of all the elements of national power.³⁷ If by engaging proactively the military is able to help forestall or resolve actual conflict or war, then surely that is a much better security situation for the United States.

Conclusions

In today’s dynamic international environment where change and the unforeseen are the only givens, a conservative realistic perspective is likely to hamper rather than enhance the military’s ability to defend the United States. Because of its preoccupation with threats and maintaining the status quo, realism is far too constricting a mindset for our professional military to hold. Rather, for the reasons that I have presented above, a perspective such as globalization is a much more desirable component of the professional military ethic.

As Huntington himself has recognized, “the tensions between the demands of military security and the values of American liberalism can, in the long run, be relieved only by *the weakening of the security threat* or the weakening of liberalism.”³⁸ Writing in the mid-fifties, concerns over the threat posed by the specter of worldwide communism seemed very real. But times have changed; the security threat has weakened in the strategic sense of there being no peer competitor to the United States in the foreseeable future. In fact, current and proliferating threats demand a proactive strategy by military officers with a broad, geostrategic perspective.

END NOTES

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957, 79, italics added.

² Huntington develops fully the concept of the professional military ethic in his seminal work. The ethic consists of a set of values, attitudes, and perspectives, which allows military members to carry out their fundamental function of employing force on behalf of society, to protect that society's interests. While his analysis of the three fundamental characteristics of a profession—expertise, responsibility, and corporateness—is insightful, it will be addressed in this paper only to the extent necessary to advance the central argument.

³ Clearly many of these ideas touch upon another critical issue which was actually the focus of Huntington's book; that of civil-military relations. While not dismissing the importance of this issue in any way, the work here focuses on national security, only peripherally addressing civil-military relations.

⁴ Huntington, 62. Huntington carefully lays out the three fundamental criteria that constitute a profession: expertise, responsibility, and corporateness (7-18).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 62-65. While Huntington describes these tenets as part of the military ethic, his affinity for realism is evident in this work and many of his other writings.

⁶ It is important to note that I am only evaluating "conservative" here in terms of its relationship to national security. I am not analyzing the assumption that the military tends to hold conservative social values and mores, which forms the background for an entirely different debate than the one that I address here.

⁷ This is what Huntington labels "academic realism." See his discussion on 459.

⁸ Probably the classic treatment of structural realism is found in Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.

⁹ Huntington, 62.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹¹ *Ibid.*,

¹² *Ibid.*, 345, and also see 456-457.

¹³ The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *Road Map for National Security: Imperative for Change (Final Draft Report)*. Washington, D.C.: The United States Commission, January 31, 2001, iv.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵ Sam J. Tangredi, *All Possible Wars? Toward a Consensus View of the Future Security Environment, 2001-2025 (McNair Paper 63)*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, November 2000.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 141-142.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁸ The United States Commission on National Security/21st Century, *New World Coming: American Security in the 21st Century: Major Themes and Implications*. Washington, D.C.: The United States Commission, September 15, 1999, 57.

¹⁹ Eliot A. Cohen, "Defending America in the Twenty-first Century," *Foreign Affairs* 79, 6 (November-December 2000): 41.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

²¹ Michele A. Flournoy (Project Director), *Report of the National Defense University Quadrennial Defense Review 2001 Working Group*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, November 2000.

²² Huntington, 71.

²³ Richard A. Chilcoat, *Strategic Art: The New Discipline for 21st Century Leaders*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1995, 1-2.

²⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Vision 2020*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2000, 19.

²⁵ Huntington, 75.

²⁶ The fact that I am criticizing conservative realism in this analysis does not imply that I am advocating that the professional military adopt what might be considered its polar opposite—liberalism. In fact, the notion that the military might espouse liberalism as an ideology is one of Huntington's main concerns in *The Soldier and the State*.

This is related to his belief that the primary threat to U.S. military security has been the ideological one, “the American attitude of mind which sought to impose liberal solutions in military affairs as well as in civil life” (457). My intent in this paper is neither to dispute Huntington’s characterization of American society as liberal, nor to claim that liberalism is the preferable security perspective for the professional military.

²⁷ I disagree with Huntington’s contention that, out of the four major Western political ideologies that he analyzed in *The Soldier and the State* (Marxism, fascism, liberalism, conservatism), conservatism “alone has no political-ideological pattern to impose on military institutions” (94). Conservatism espouses the status quo and views change with suspicion. This reinforces tendencies toward hierarchy and continuation of the same policies and classes of people in power.

²⁸ Colin S. Gray, “Deterrence in the 21st Century,” *Comparative Strategy* 19, 3 (July-September 2000), 255-262.

²⁹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Strategic Planning System*, CJCSI 3100.01A. Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff, 1 September 1999. This document stresses throughout the importance of the military leadership—the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), the Joint Staff, the CINCs (commanders in chief of combatant commands), and other key defense agencies—continuously reassessing the strategic environment for global changes, especially emerging issues, threats, risks, capabilities, and technologies.

³⁰ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*. Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff, 14 November 2000, x.

³¹ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *National Military Strategy of the United States: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now: A Military Strategy for a New Era*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1997.

³² *Joint Vision 2020*, 1.

³³ *National Military Strategy of the United States*, 12.

³⁴ These ideas are articulated persuasively by Chilcoat.

³⁵ Huntington, 351-352.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 352.

³⁷ Chilcoat, 4.

³⁸ Huntington, 456, italics added.

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL KATHLEEN A. MAHONEY-NORRIS, USAFR

Lieutenant Colonel Kathleen A. Mahoney-Norris, United States Air Force Reserve, is currently a student at the National War College, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, D.C.

Lt Col Mahoney-Norris spent much of her childhood living in foreign countries due to her father's civil service and Air Force Reserve careers. She was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force in 1980, after attending Officer Training School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Lt Col Mahoney-Norris was a distinguished graduate from that school.

After completing the air intelligence officers course at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado (as a distinguished graduate), Lt Col Mahoney-Norris served as an intelligence analyst at Headquarters United States Air Force, Europe, Ramstein Air Base, Germany. She then moved on to serve as the Chief of Operational Intelligence for the 10th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at RAF Alconbury, United Kingdom. Upon her return to the United States, Lt Col Mahoney-Norris served as a Master Instructor and Instructor Supervisor for the Air Intelligence Applications Officer course at Lowry AFB. During that tour she was recognized as the "outstanding" officer instructor by the visiting Management Effectiveness Inspection team.

In 1987 Lt Col Mahoney-Norris became an Air Force Reserve member, and has served in numerous assignments since that time. She performed most of her initial Reserve duty supporting Headquarters Strategic Air Command (SAC,) and was recalled for active-duty during DESERT STORM. She served there as the Team Leader for the Unit Support Facility of the 544 Strategic Intelligence Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska. She performed several other tours as an intelligence analyst supporting Strategic Command. In 1994 Lt Col Mahoney-Norris transferred to United States Space Command, where she served until 1997. She was a member of the CINCSpace Command Intelligence Briefing Team, a Combined Intelligence Watch Commander supporting North American Aerospace Defense Command, and also served as acting Reserve Affairs Officer for the command's intelligence directorate.

Since 1997 Lt Col Mahoney-Norris has served as an adjunct professor in the Department of International Security Studies at Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. During that time she has taught several electives and was the academic advisor for the regional trip to Central America and the Caribbean in academic year 2000.

In her civilian career Lt Col Mahoney-Norris is Assistant Professor of National Security Studies, Department of International Security and Military Studies, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, AL. She is Course Director for the National Security Studies Course.

Lt Col Mahoney-Norris holds a Ph.D. in International Studies, along with a M.A. in International Relations and a B.A. in Political Science. She is a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College (in residence). She has published an edited book and several articles, and has presented numerous papers at professional conferences. Her military awards include the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal (with cluster), the Air Force Commendation Medal (with cluster), and the Joint Service Achievement Award.

ABSTRACT

In his classic work *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Samuel Huntington provided a widely accepted argument as to why conservative realism should be considered a fundamental component of the professional ethic of the military officer. In this paper I demonstrate why I disagree with Huntington's position linking the military to conservative realism on national security matters. I believe that Huntington is mistaken in assuming that conservative realism is the appropriate mindset for the military professional in the world of the 21st century. A diversity of factors--from globalization to failing states to technological advances--suggests that the limitations of conservative realism may even endanger national security. Realism's preoccupation with the state blinds it to the importance of nonstate actors and transnational or asymmetrical threats, which may actually pose the greater danger to national security. Further, realism does not inculcate the mindset necessary to actively seize opportunities for engagement and cooperation. Yet creativity and the flexibility to move beyond the status quo are qualities that are critical for the military officer to enhance U.S. security in today's complex and fluid international system. I advocate a "globalization" perspective here that would allow the military professional to most effectively carry out the responsibility of providing informed military advice to the civilian authorities. Unlike conservative realism, this perspective will ensure the optimum military component of national security in the twenty-first century.