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What Do Officers Need to Know about Civil-Military Relations?

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The central question of this essay: What do officers need to know about civil-military relations? is refined to ask (mostly): What do officers need to know about civil-military relations in their own society? The answer is framed around an assumption that officers must be educated to understand “the casual factors” and the “principles, norms, rules and decision- making procedures” that dominate and direct civil-military relations in their state.

What officers need to know about their place in civil-military relations depends on the usual state of that relationship in their own countries. If, for instance, a true dichotomy exists, then officers simply need to know the location of the boundary between the civil authority and the military. Such boundaries, however, are rarely physical barriers, but rather they are legal, customary structures separating the legitimacy of the civil authority from the power of the armed forces. In order to understand civil-military relations in this situation, officers would need to know a great deal about law and customs. When, on the other hand, civil-military relations are characteristically imperfectly formed and intermingled, subject to upheavals and raids across boundaries, then it is difficult to understand what it is that officers need to know, except perhaps to be prepared for quarrelsome times. In such circumstances, officers may spend a great deal of time defending or reinforcing their place which might include combatting the civil authority.

What officers need to know about civil-military relations, therefore, depends on the social, military, and political cultures underpinning the relationship. When relations are stable – without making any judgements about their intrinsic value – officers may be instructed in the principles, norms, and rules of the status quo. Often, in such situations, officers instruct other officers, passing on assumptions, concepts, and interpretations embedded in military institutions. Indeed, in some states where the armed forces are organized into service-based fraternities, civil-military relations may be perceived differently and may function variously depending on the relative power of the services and the traditions and beliefs of the dominant officers in the army, naval, and air force. Education, training, and socialization may produce different attitudes and expectations in the officer corps in each service.

Whether the civil authority is a prominent player in determining officers' education also depends on the nature of civil-military relations in the state. The civil authority may not have much influence on how officers are educated if the military is more or less autonomous. On the other hand, whenever civil control is tight, then civil standards influence military affairs and

education. Whether officers or civil authorities direct military education is related to the state of civil-military relations from time to time. When, for instance, relations are stable, the civil authority may have no interest and little reason to intervene in officer education.

However, whenever the standing relationship between the civil authority and the military is disturbed and settles into a new mode, then officers may need to be “reeducated.” If the rift is fostered by the civil authority and society, especially when the military is divorced from the process, then re-education invariably must be directed by the civil authority and society. Officers would want to understand their place in the new arrangement and they will depend on the reformers to describe it. History is replete with examples of this dynamic, and sometimes revolutionary, phenomenon.

Knowing what officers need to know about civil-military relations is confounded also by a confusion of theory concerning civil-military relations. Although scholars have advanced preferred arrangements, or “models,” of civil-military relations, relations in particular states are invariably formed around ideas, mores, traditions, and attitudes resident in their domestic society. Although civil-military relations in many societies are based on similar conceptual and social frameworks – in Western Europe, for instance – no model can be transferred from one state to another without being shaped by national circumstances. Therefore, even selecting which theoretical formulation to teach is problematic. An expansive academic literature acknowledges, but has not yet resolved, these related problems.¹

The question, “what to know,” therefore, may be too broad to be answered in a single essay; but simply because there are problems finding an answer is no reason to avoid the question. Often, theorists try to overcome the issue by proposing a curriculum based on abstract descriptions of what ought to be; or educators may decide to teach what they know and recommend that others follow the American, British, or Western way of handling civil-military relations. Both approaches have clear weaknesses when they are applied to officer education generally or to officers who live in states where history and culture are considerably different.

Civil-military relations everywhere invariably involve civilians and officers in some degree of shared responsibility for national defence policies and the control of the armed forces. Sharing is usually influenced by several related factors such as threat perceptions and national defence crises, but, generally, civil-military relations in every state are shaped by a standing politico-military consensus on authority and responsibility.

The dynamics of “sharing” can be explained by borrowing notions from theories of international relations, the dynamics of civil-military relations in states can be observed and explained according to a “nationally evolved regime of principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actor expectations converge in matters of civil-military relations.”² Regime differences between states account for the particular national character of civil-military relations much as “like-minded” regimes account for cross-cultural similarities in civil-military relations. In other words, civil-military relations regimes form around certain basic causal values and it is these values and their consequences on the civil and military authorities and relationships between such authorities that ought to be at the centre of the education of officers in civil-military relations. Officers need to be educated so that they can understand the particular national character of civil-military relations in their state and their place in that relationship.³ Thus,

the education of officers in matters of civil-military relations must be mostly particular and state-centric.

There are, however, transnational influences on officer education. Officers, and senior officers especially, should know something of civil-military relations in other states and types of polities. A broader education in the field is essential if officers are to serve as representatives to states or as staff members in organizations that hold to different regimes. This wider education of officers is also critical when states seek to ally themselves and their security policies with nations with a different civil-military tradition, for failures in this regard may seriously degrade the officer corps' value and responsibility as advisers. The obvious example of this process is, of course, the "reeducation" of officers from former Warsaw pact Treaty Organization states which now seek membership in NATO.

The Liberal Way In Civil-Military Relations

This paper, in attempting to answer the question: What do officers need to know about civil-military relations?, takes a broader, transnational focus. That is to say, it asks, what do officers need to know about the causal factors and principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures, the regime, that governs civil-military relations in liberal democracies?

Three sentinel reasons promote this approach. First, insofar as liberal democracy is becoming the dominant national ideology in so-called emerging democracies, civil-military relations as practised in liberal democracies will also become the governing civil-military regime in these states. Obviously, officers in these states must be taught and convinced to accept their place in this type of regime, otherwise there is a risk that officers will rebel against it. Second, the link between the principles, norms, rules and procedures evolved from and embedded in liberal democracies and civil-military relations in such polities is critical and must be understood by officers lest they think not much has changed fundamentally. Moreover, they provide a sound conceptual base from which to address matters such as national laws governing armed forces, levels of authority, responsibility and accountability mechanisms, the structure of ministries of defence, and shared responsibility for the control of the military by officers and the civil authority.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for basing officer education on a regime approach to civil-military relations is that sound regimes provide a firm foundation for building workable solutions to the many problems that to a degree continually plague civil-military relations in every state. The intrusive interference by the military in the governance of the state is an ancient and persistent problem in many parts of the world. But mature liberal democracies have passed the point where their first concern is "to curb the political power of the military establishment."⁴ But even where the threat of a coup has been removed from the game, it does not mean that the game is over. The lesson from mature democracies is that leaders in both old and new democracies need to recognize their responsibility to actively manage civil-military relations even after the power of the military has been curbed. Moreover, they need laws and institutions that allow the civil authority to address effectively the other problems of civil-military relations.

After the coup, there are three other critical problems that excite debates and crises in civil-military relations in most states and they are so closely related that one aspect of civil control cannot be managed without affecting the others.⁵ Maintaining "good order and discipline" in the armed forces is a constant civil concern in most states. Liberal democracies fear armies, not just because they are inherently dangerous to liberty but also because they can be a burden to a

peaceful society. Certainly, even today, an undisciplined army might be a danger, but trying to support an efficient and effective force as defined by military leaders may empty the treasury. The second problem of civil-military relations (after the coup), therefore, is ensuring that this “armed and disciplined body” behaves in ways that safeguard the state without causing harm – through indiscipline, misadventure, or the exaggerations of threats – to the people who employ it.

The third, and often neglected, dimension of civil-military relations concerns protecting the armed forces from political partisanship. It is what Michael Howard called the “double problem [of civil-military relations], of the subordination of military force to the political government, and of the control of a government in possession of such force.”⁶ In many countries, and in some emerging democracies, the unrestrained use of armed forces by politicians and political parties for their own partisan purposes is an ever present threat to democracy. Controlling the armed forces in democracies, therefore, means more than the simple, unquestioning obedience of the military to its political masters because the employment of the military by politicians to enhance their own power can be as great an abuse of civil control as a military coup. The third problem, managing the cleavage between political and military spheres and the power over the military entrusted to governments of the day, may be unique to democracies, but it cannot be ignored.

Finally, governments of every shape and style face what Samuel Huntington called the modern problem of civil-military relations, “the relationship of the expert to the minister.”⁷ What real control exists, even over policy, when a minister is dependent on the advice and council of those he or she would control? Implicit in these questions is the suspicion that officers (and increasingly, career Defence civil servants) who offer advice and manage the armed forces may be in a conflict of interest whenever they advise ministers. The basic question is how are ministers to control the armed forces when they (usually) lack the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to do so effectively?

Most liberal democracies have found ways to control these complex and interrelated problems of civil-military relations. Furthermore, they have, over a long period of sometimes painful experience, established certain principles and norms governing civil-military relations that have become interwoven in the definition of a liberal democracy. Similarly, because civil control of the military and the broader defence establishment requires the active intervention of the civil authority – civilians elected to parliaments – liberal democracies have constructed rules and practices to facilitate this intervention. Officers need to understand this complexity of principles, norms, rules, and procedures if they are to play an appropriate part in national defence policy planning and the use of force at home and abroad.

Planning for and managing national defence are inevitably gripped by persistent and incurable uncertainty. Therefore, reasonable people with the best of intentions can disagree, sometimes dramatically, over which course to follow in the nation’s interest. But every disagreement between the civil authority and military officers is not a crisis in civil-military relations. Recognizing problems in any relationship before they become serious is difficult. Mistaking minor, but not necessarily trivial, problems for major concerns or vice-versa may cause individuals to overreact, to react too late, or even to address the wrong problem. Negotiations are always difficult when parties bring different interpretations of the issue to the table. Mistaking problems can lead to a “crisis in civil-military relations” that might otherwise be simply an

adjustment to a longstanding consensus. Quite naturally, therefore, civil-military relations are confounded whenever the civil authority and the military lack an agreed means to differentiate between a crisis and the normal day-to-day tensions that must always exist in a relationship constructed around an implicit sharing of responsibilities for serious matters.

The regime theory of civil-military relations suggests ways to make this differentiation plainer if not obvious all the time. “Although a regime may be stable for long periods, it can change as basic causal factors such as values, issues, interests, personalities *and threats* change. Alterations of rules and decision-making procedures account for the dynamic nature of civil-military relations, while alterations of norms and principles account for conflict in civil-military relations.”⁸ Once officers (and the civil authority) have a framework such as this to order their thinking in matters of civil-military relations, then problem definition, day-to-day management of the civil-military relationship and negotiations – finding policies – and consensus-building will become easier. Consequentially, cooperation in civil-military relations should be more easily managed in most circumstances.⁹

Patterns In Liberal Democratic Civil-Military Relations

If the main emphasis in officer education in matters of civil-military relations is to be constructed around a liberal democratic regime of civil-military relations, then this regime must be spelt out in terms that can be taught to officers in junior and senior ranks. The regime, however, is more than a mere list of attributes. It provides the conceptual and normative framework for the structure for managing civil-military relations and reinforcing the civil authority’s control of policy and the armed forces. This second facet of the liberal democratic regime for civil-military relations will be addressed presently.

The education of officers in civil-military relations as practised in liberal democracies rests on a few assumptions and definitions. A *liberal democracy* is a political arrangement in which the people are sovereign, where legitimacy for any action or decision of government rests with the people, where human rights are paramount, and where the rule of law provides the fundamental basis for relationships between people and between citizens and the government.

This paper accepts Krasner’s classic terms concerning regimes: *principles* are “beliefs of fact, causation and rectitude”; *norms* are “standards of behaviour defined in terms of rights and obligations”; *rules* are “specific prescriptions or proscriptions for actions”; and *decision-making procedures* are “prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choices.” While “principles and norms provide the basic defining characteristics of a regime,” rules and decision-making procedures provide the main operating features of the regime.¹⁰

The civil authority is defined as elected civilians who by constitution, law, and custom represent and are responsible and accountable to the sovereign people. The civil authority may be assisted by appointed public or civil servants, but these civilians are not the civil authority. On the other hand, *the military* means any and all persons enrolled by the state in any unit or element of the armed forces.

The defence establishment is a broad term meant to include any military person, public or civil servant, or scientist or others (but not members of the civil authority) who are primarily employed within the armed forces or government departments and ministries and who are directly

responsible for commanding and controlling the military and/or managing defence policy and resources.

Patterns in civil-military relations reflect particular state regimes which arise from various "basic causal variables," such as warfare and crisis, political and military cultures, social expectations, and from such national history and myths as are believed in by individuals, groups, and institutions. Arguably, ideas, "*beliefs held by individuals*" and by sub-cultures like the military, are the most important type of basic causal variable underpinning regimes. "Once ideas become embedded in rules and norms – that is, once they become institutionalized – they constrain public policy," for instance by influencing policy choices. Moreover, "ideas have a lasting influence on politics through their incorporation into the terms of the political debate" especially in civil-military relations when the beliefs of the political and military sub-cultures are passed from generation to generation within institutions. In this sense, civil-military relations are built on particular ideas that evolve into principles, norms, and rules. They become embedded in institutions and are reinforced by history, experience, and prejudice.

Civil-military relations in liberal democracies are a particular class of relations, evolved from "certain broad trends in western civilization generally during the past one hundred and fifty years, the period in which the subordination of the [military] appeared on the way to becoming an established fact among practically all important peoples." If the liberal democratic way is to become "an established fact" in an officer corps, then officers need to know and trust this broad history as well as the liberal democratic regime of civil military relations, outline in the following terms and definitions.

The Principles

The people are sovereign and responsible for national security and defence.

The civil authority, elected civilians who by constitution, law, and custom represent and are responsible and accountable to the sovereign people, is the only legitimate source for decisions in matters of national defence and the entity from which the military draws all authority for its actions and decisions in peace and war.

The military is but an instrument for national defence and is unconditionally responsible and accountable to the civil authority.

Every action and decision of both the civil authority and the military must be based on national laws specifically delineating, and where appropriate, limiting the authority and powers of each.

The civil authority is solely responsible for enacting and administering the laws and regulations that govern the military, the defence establishment, and the government of the day that controls the military.

Every action and decision of both the civil authority, the military, and the defence establishment are subject to independent public audit.

The Norms

Civil control is broadly conceived and, therefore, the civil authority, usually in the person of a civilian minister of defence, has the right of unrestricted access to every document, institution, plan, and decision within the defence establishment. Furthermore, the civil authority can, according to law, amend any policy, plan, or decision taken by military leaders or members of the defence establishment.

The civil authority usually appoints a civilian member of the government “minister of national defence” and vests in that position responsibility for the direction and management of the armed forces and the defence establishment.

The military is separated from the political process and from political associations, although members of the armed forces, because they are citizens, have the right to vote in elections.

The civil authority retains unto itself all matters dealing with the roles and missions of the armed forces, the allocation of resources to national defence, the national disposition of military units and entities, decisions related to the use of force by the military, and decisions concerning international commitments and obligations.

The military usually is allowed a degree of “rightful authority” over technical military matters including those dealing with doctrine, tactical operations, training, discipline, military personnel policy, and the internal organization of units and entities of the armed forces.

The civil authority according to its own criteria appoints the chief of defence who “serves at the pleasure” of the government of the day.¹

The chief of the defence staff – or the chiefs of independent services where they are established – is the formal, professional military adviser to the civil authority and the sole link between the civil authority and the military chain of command. Usually, all orders and directives from the civil authority to the military will be issued to the military by the chief of the defence staff.

The chief of the defence staff recommends to government officers for promotions and appointments to general or flag rank and the civil authority approves or disapproves these recommendations. However, the civil authority is restricted by law from selecting and promoting any member of the military to any rank or position except on the recommendation of the chief of the defence staff.

1. In nations where the “services” are legally independent, the civil authority alone would appoint service chiefs of staff who would serve at pleasure.

The chief of the defence staff is allowed within regulations to promote and appoint members of the military to any rank or grade below general or flag officer without reference to the civil authority.

Members of the military swear to diligently discharge their duties according to the law and they make this pledge to the civil authority (i.e., the head of state or the constitution) and not to any military leader or institution.

The Rules

The law is the instrument that subordinates the civil authority to the people and the military to the civil authority. Ultimately, every politician, officer, soldier, and public servant must be loyal to the rule of law.

The control of the military, the defence establishment, and the civil authority requires a clear set of national defence laws especially enacted for this purpose. The defence law should identify clearly the chain of authority linking the civil authority to the military command; delineate authority by identifiable position; prescribe military codes of conduct, courts-martial procedures, military offenses, and punishments; and provide the basis for regulations concerning terms of service, promotions and pay, redress of grievances, and other administrative necessities.

The military ordinarily has no jurisdiction in civil affairs or over citizens not members of the military. Whenever the military does act in civil affairs it may do so only at the specific request of the civil authority, for a limited period of time, and according to laws and regulations established by the civil authority.

Military and police structures and policies are usually separated and directed by separate civilian ministers.

Military codes must require subordinates to obey orders from their superiors under threat of severe punishment. However, this power must be conditioned by two principles: orders must be lawful and issued by an authorized superior.

A judiciary independent of the government of the day and the military must be available to resolve disputes arising from the law and regulations that may occur from time-to-time between these two entities and between them and citizens.

The national defence law linking superior to subordinate is intimately related to the principles of responsibility and accountability and the citizen's "right to know that the authorities, responsibilities, and duties . . . especially of leaders, are performed effectively and efficiently, and within the law."¹¹ Ministers, therefore, should ensure that national defence laws hold identifiable persons responsible for any actions and decisions taken within political, military, and defence establishments.

Any disciplinary action taken by the military against a member of the armed forces must be according to law and regulation and subject to review by the civil authority and/or the judiciary.

Neither the fact of enlistment nor any military necessity can deprive a citizen of his or her basic human rights, except as defined in law.²

The Decision-Making Procedures

Weak, inept, or divided political leadership, especially in a crisis, may tempt the military or senior public servants to usurp the powers of the civil authority. Therefore, the civil control of the military is dependent on the unity of the civil authority before the defence establishment and particularly on the support the minister of defence can summon from the prime minister or head of state.

Multi-party committees on national defence composed of civilian members of legislatures are established to assist ministers and governments to control the military and as a public forum for the open discussion of national defence issues.

The military will demand from government a clear policy set out in terms understandable to the military culture and supported by reasonable means. The government must develop its own competence to produce such a policy or at least a capability to critically assess policy recommendations provided by the defence establishment.

A ministry of defence is established to assist the civil authority, and defence ministers in particular, in the execution of their responsibilities. Such ministries are usually composed of three integrated, but not unified, sections: the political office of the minister, the military headquarters of the chief(s) of defence, and the departmental offices of the public service.

A high degree of transparency is imposed by the civil authority on the actions and decisions of the military and the defence establishment directly by, for example, the enactment of "freedom of information" statutes and the establishment of independent auditors and indirectly by encouraging the development of counter-expert, non-governmental organizations in the media, academia, and in the general public.

A consensus-building procedure involving the civil authority, military leaders, and senior public servants is the main mechanism by which complex defence decisions are made.

2. There is a fundamental contradiction between military service and a citizen's human rights most dramatically illustrated by the right of superiors to order individuals into situations where they will assuredly be wounded or killed, an act that deprives the individual of his or her most basic human right but for which the individual has no legal appeal.

A formal governmental and/or ministerial committee system should be used to support the consensus-building process and to allow actors to express and defend their interests and points of view. This system should descend from a committee chaired by the prime minister or president and his main advisers, to a central ministerial committee chaired by the minister of defence seated with the leaders of the armed forces and the head of departmental public service, to military, managerial, and functional committees throughout the defence establishment.

The consensus/committee system should permit military and public service leaders to develop coordinated advice for ministers and opportunities to express reservations about the government's policies and priorities without challenging directly and publicly the civil authority's right to decide. Shared decision-making also allows ministers to find policies that, once agreed, tend to command military support and loyalty.

Defence budgets must be "voted" by the civil authority for specific purposes and there can be no allowance for unaudited secret funds nor any assumption by the military that it has a right to some "share" of the national treasure.

Ministers should manage defence allocations and expenditures directly and hold officers and officials accountable to do with the funds what they have been told to do and what they have said they would do.

Ministers can best manage their experts by holding them accountable for the advice they provide and the results they deliver. This technique, however, requires the active supervision on the decision-making process by ministers. Active supervision, therefore, is the primary "prevailing practice" by which the civil authority controls the military.

Not much will be accomplished, however, if officers simply learn to recite a catechism of civil-military relations. Rather, officers must understand how these principles, norms, and rules affect civil-military relations, the routine functioning of the relationship, and their place in the process.

The Officer's Place

The term "place" carries the notions of duty, responsibility, authority, and hierarchy. The officer's place in civil-military relations in a liberal democracy – a matrix of the people, parliament, and the armed forces – defines the officer variously as commander, agent, adviser, and partner to civilians elected to Parliament. But in all these guises, the officer is subordinate to the lawful direction of the civil authority, much as the civil authority is subordinate to the sovereign people. Although officers must clearly understand their place in this hierarchy, they also must learn how to behave appropriately as advisers and partners and how to exercise what Richard Betts called their "rightful authority" without threatening civil control of the armed forces.¹²

Officers need to be educated not only in the liberal democratic way in civil-military relations, but they also need to understand a great deal more about how this complexity functions

and their place in it. In other words, officers must learn how to play their role in the day-to-day routine of leading and managing the defence establishment in cooperation with political leaders (and increasingly with civilian bureaucrats). They especially need to know how to react to recurring and inevitable problems in this relationship.

These necessities demand that officers be educated in political theory and public administration, in limited ways as junior officers and in increasingly sophisticated terms as they advance in rank and responsibility. If officers are to advise ministers effectively, then they must understand the circumstances and factors that influence political choices. Officers need to be able to offer understandable advice to politicians which conforms to the facts of both national life and national defence as political leaders define them.

Military officers should understand that the democratic political process is a competition of ideas, wills, and interests – a process of arriving at decisions about who gets what from the wealth of the nation. They must accept that politics and policies invariably require compromises and choices if broad national interests are to be served. Whether they think the process is efficient is not the issue. Officers must be encouraged to see the political process as legitimate and its outcomes as valid reflections of the will of the people and not merely an arrangement meant to satisfy self-serving politicians.

Undoubtedly, at times, belief in the system will demand a “leap of faith,” an unhesitating expectation on the part of officers that the rough and tumble of politics will produce reasonable results, especially in matters of national defence. Although relations between politicians and military leaders may not be naturally harmonious, there is no reason to assume that they must be inevitably be hostile. Little will be gained and much harm could come to relationships if officers continually push forward choices that have little chance of fulfilment, if only because the government has other pressing issues to address. Perhaps only experience will convince officers of the value of the democratic way, but educators should try to build a hopeful attitude, for instance, by point to examples where the process has succeeded.

Liberal democracies have had their share of crises and conflicts between “brass hats and stripped pants,” as in the United Kingdom during the First World War and in France in the early 1960s, but relations in the mature democracies have been remarkably stable and successful through many years of peace and through many years of “cold” and “hot” wars. Arguably, this stability follows from an evolved, learned regime that permits each player to exercise appropriate influence on national defence decisions and provides a high degree of predictability about civil and military behaviour in most situations.

Consensus-building is the most common and effective way political leaders have to find policies amid diverse demands and opinions. Officers, who are usually comfortable in tight hierarchies where commanders seek order with or without consensus, must learn to understand and accept the political way of arriving at and maintaining policies. “Politics,” with its connotations of compromise, backroom dealings, dither, and incomplete and unfinished decision-making may be the antithesis of military command, but it is not necessarily a “dirty” business because of this difference. Officers, to hold their place and to advance issues they think are important, need to learn how to function in an arena where compromise and consensus-building are the normal way of decision-making, even in matters of military operations.

Leading and Managing National Defence Together

Officers personify “the expert problem”¹³ in civil-military relations that results from three main causes. First, since military officers usually have considerable technical expertise and operational experience, they are invited to participate directly in policy-making in areas concerning the development of and uses of military capabilities. Expertise also brings senior officers indirectly into other areas of public policy not obviously connected to military affairs, as when choices are made about whether to allocate national assets to guns or to butter.

Second, commanders, especially in time of war, who conduct operations may have considerable freedom of action and authority and, consequently, a significant influence on important national policies. Moreover, commanders of high status can tower over their civilian leaders in public esteem, at least for a time. And third, because national laws usually give officers authority for training, organizing, disciplining, and administering the armed forces, these officers have a degree of independence from civil authorities that may limit the policy options available to politicians and the decisions they can take.

Officers have to learn how to wield their expertise in ways that support the government’s objectives without manipulating or usurping the politician’s right to make final policy choices. The expert’s duty is to help the ministers clarify their defence policies in terms that will enable soldiers and officials to administer them. This ability depends more on attitudes and bureaucratic skills than on laws, techniques, and organization. In other words, officers who understand their place in the policy process will offer unbiased, apolitical advice to the civil authority and then respect and support the politician’s choices. Failing this test, the officer should understand that because no public disagreement between military and political leaders can be allowed, their civil responsibility requires retirement from the role of adviser.

If, as proposed in this paper, “the civil authority, usually in the person of a civilian minister of defence, has a right of unrestricted access to every document, institution, plan, and decision within the defence establishment” and may “amend any policy, plan, or decision taken [within] . . . the defence establishment,” then the minister must be provided with a mechanism and supporting staff to exercise this right. In most Western societies, that mechanism is the integrated ministry of defence. An integrated ministry combines the minister’s political office, the civil service bureaucracy, and the military high command, and their separate but linked responsibilities in one establishment. An effective integrated ministry facilitates the exchange of ideas and information between these three branches and aids consensus-building. Thus, the management of defence issues is made easier and more effective than would be the case in a separated civil ministry and a military command headquarters.

Officers need to learn to appreciate this structure and to work in it. The education of officers, therefore, must include explanations of defence decision-making where political, not military imperatives prevail. Officers must become accustomed to techniques derived from civilian practice and public administration. They also should understand that the purpose of the ministry is not only, or even, to direct the armed forces but to facilitate the business of government and to unite the defence establishment with the broader national interest. If officers are to play an effective part in this system, then they will need to develop skills in consensus-building, defence economics, intra- and interdepartmental committee work and so on.

Certainly, many of the skills and lessons from military staff colleges would be useful to officers working in a ministry, but the maturation of useful attitudes and adaptation to diverse techniques demand a particular education. An important institution for this purpose is a type of national defence college that purposefully joins senior officers, bureaucrats, and selected citizens in a collective educational experience. These institutions have successfully managed the principle of blending non-political architects and advisers on national defence into a harmonious community that continues well beyond the time spent in college.

Finally, officers should understand that the ministry of defence is the minister's bureau. It ought to be designed and to function in order to enhance the minister's dual roles as society's agent responsible for controlling the armed forces and as the chief operating officer of the defence establishment. Ministers are accountable for the efficient and effective functioning of national defence and they will (if they are wise) insist that the ministry provides the instrument to perform these duties. Officers should educate themselves and direct their military subordinates toward this end.

"The key to civil direction of the military is an effective accountability mechanism that enables the civil authority to hold military officers to account and to scrutinize, interrogate, and, ultimately, to commend or sanction their behaviour against agreed standards. Where the accountability mechanism is strong and effective, control is strong and effective."¹⁴ It is accountability that "provides the vehicle for preventing, or at least controlling, the abuse of state power by individuals or groups from either [the military or political] entity."¹⁵ The subordination of the armed forces to the civil authority and, ultimately, to the public, demands that every officer, along with every other rank, account to the civil authority for their responsibilities, decisions, and actions. This concept is perhaps one of the most difficult and controversial topics that officers must come to understand and to support.

It is important, nonetheless, that officers accept that they must account to the government for their responsibilities and for the faithful execution of the government's policies. They should aid ministers in building an accountability mechanism that is as open as national security will allow, which means that *in-camera* accounting will be the exception. This type of accountability will not only serve the minister's needs, but it will reassure the public that the military is acting under political direction and according to the government's policies. Public accountability also serves the armed forces when errors can be clearly attributable to political decisions. Military leaders would then be in a position to retain public support when the source of adverse decisions becomes known.

Arguably, officers who are accustomed to the idea of accountability as a normal part of military command and discipline, will find it easy to transfer this idea to their relations with the civil authority. One way to instill respect for openness and accountability between officers and politicians is for senior officers to insist on a strong ethic of accountability in the military chain of command. Where adherence to the rule of the military code of discipline and custom of the service is strong, it is possible that habits thus established may become routinely acceptable to officers in their dealings with the civil authority in different contexts.

For the Good of the Service

A strong military within a strong democracy is a powerful instrument for national defence. Officers might be convinced of this aphorism if they were educated in the history of democracies at war. A cardinal lesson from the history of the democratic way in warfare is that once the people, the government, and the armed forces are united in what they believe is a just cause, victory is not far off. Unity, however, seems to depend greatly on the people's conviction that the armed forces are acting in their interest and according to their rules. In other words, effective, verifiable civil control of the armed forces reinforces the connection with the people and bolsters, rather than detracts, from military strength and the efficacy of national defence.

Liberal democracies have not always enjoyed a comfortable relationship with their armed forces, but they have found ways to manage the cardinal problems of civil-military relations and maintain effective national defences. Much of this stability is owed to the officer corps in each state. Officers have learned to value the implicit power that flows to their interests and to national defence when civil-military relationships stand on a consensus constructed corporately with the civil authority. This lesson may be difficult to learn outside an experience in crisis. If, however, there is one thing officers need to know about civil-military relations it is this: effective national defence requires social, political, and military harmony, but harmony is unlikely unless "civilian and military leaders base their thinking and action on common basic concepts."¹⁶ In liberal democracies the basic concepts that define civil-military relations are, indeed, those few essential ideas that define such democracies in the first instance.

1. For various critiques of current theories and teaching see, for example, Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962); Russell Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell," *The Journal of Military History*, 57, 5 (1993): 27-58; Donald Snider and Miranda Carlton-Carew (eds.), *U.S. Civil-Military Relations: In Crisis or Transition?* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1995); Rebecca Schiff, "Civil-Military Relations Reconsidered: A Theory of Concordance," *Armed Forces and Society*, 22, 1 (1995); Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society*, 23, 2 (1996); Andrew J. Bacevich, "Tradition Abandoned: America's Military in a New Era," *National Interest*, 48 (1997): 16-25; and Douglas L. Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations," *Armed Forces and Society*, 26, 1 (1999) 7-26.
2. Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations."
3. Few officers, excepting those who teach in the field, need to understand these theories of civil-military relations in great detail so long as they grasp the essential features of the relationship as it affects their states and their armed forces.
4. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 231.
5. For a comprehensive survey of the many problems of civil-military relations, see Sir Michael Howard, *Soldiers And Governments: Nine Studies In Civil-Military Relations*, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), pp. 11-24.
6. Howard, *Soldiers and Governments*, p. 12.
7. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, p. 20.
8. Bland. "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations," p.10 (Emphasis in the original).
9. As an example of this notion, the 1994 disagreement in the United States about the policy regarding homosexuals in the armed forces prompted in some minds a crisis in civil-military relations. However, arguably the crisis never existed because American "principles" of civil-military relations were not at stake, though "rules," on homosexuals in the military were undoubtedly being adjusted from pursuit to "don't ask, don't tell."
10. Stephen Krasner, "Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables," in Stephen Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp 2-4. For a similar construct taken from public administration, see G.B. Doern and R.W. Phidd. *Canadian Public Policy: Ideas, Structures and Process*. Toronto: Methuen, 1983.
11. Canada, Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of the Canadian Forces to Somalia, *Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair*, Volume 2 (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1997), p. 389.

12. Richard Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (New York: Columbia University Press) pp. 7-8.

13. See, for instance, Douglas Bland, "Managing The 'Expert Problem' In Civil-Military Relations," *European Security*, 8/3, (Autumn 1999) 25-43.

14. Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations," p. 20.

15. Canada, *Dishonoured Legacy*, p. 380.

16. Henry Eccles, *Military Concepts and Philosophy* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1965), p. 192.