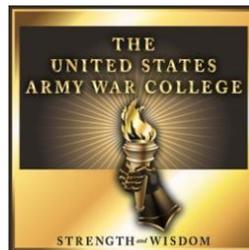# EXPANDING THE WAR COLLEGE FELLOWSHIPS: RECONNECTING THE ARMY TO AMERICA

by

Colonel Lawrence G. Ferguson
US Army

Under the Direction of:
Tim Nichols and Colonel Christopher Bado

While a Fellow at:
Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy

United States Army War College
Class of 2016

The military is the consistent recipient of respect and accolades from the American public, and polling indicates that the nation holds the military in high esteem.[1] Nevertheless, the disconnect between the military and the civilian population of America is growing dangerously wide. The percentage of Americans serving in the military is very small—less than .5 percent of the population (contrasted with 12 percent of the population that served during World War II).[2] The "military" has become something remote and alien to much of the American populace; something to be honored at sporting and civic events and through a variety of well meaning philanthropic undertakings. The growing disconnect indicates a divide that has dangerous implications for the US and the way it wages war. Indeed, effective civil-military relations are vital to ensuring that the world's most powerful military is employed effectively and responsibly and is then held accountable once employed.

Improving civil-military relations, therefore, needs to be at the forefront of our society's goals. Unfortunately, this is not a trend that can be reversed quickly, and there is little that society can do to rapidly effect significant change. Efforts must be focused instead on smaller initiatives that will produce high-potential dividends over time, and the responsibility for implementing these changes lies largely with the military. One method the Army can immediately implement to begin improving civil-military relations is through an expansion of the US Army War College Fellowship program. Expanding the Fellowship program will help bridge the civil-military divide by connecting senior army leaders to the future civilian leaders of America and to current experts who approach many of the same complex, strategic problems from a different lens. As Fellows build personal relationships with students, faculty, and interagency members the military can be demystified and the result can be a more educated public that better understands the capabilities and limitations of the military. In turn, this will help the public challenge lawmakers to make well-informed decisions regarding committing the military. Finally,

demystifying the military and promoting increased understanding about what it can and cannot do will encourage accountability of military leadership to elected officials and the nation as a whole.

This paper will demonstrate the potential of the Fellowship program regarding civil-military relations by first providing a snapshot of civil-military relationships today. Next the paper will provide a brief historical overview of both the original intent of the Founders vis-à-vis the military and some theoretical context concerning American civil-military relations. The paper will then address how perceptions of the military have changed with the advent of the all-volunteer force, and the policy ramifications resulting from less military experience among the population and elected officials. Finally, the paper will discuss how expanding the Fellowship program will help diminish the civil-military divide.

The Divide: The Civil-Military Relationship Today

The general public's lack of familiarity with the military (which extends to many of their elected officials) has created two parallel conditions. First, the military is not only often held above reproach, but is considered to be more capable than it likely is, at least with respect to phases beyond combat operations (e.g., "nation building" and "stability operations"). The second condition is a consequence of the first; elected officials—those whom the public entrusts to hold the military accountable—are often loath to question the military's capabilities for fear of alienating their constituency, that is, failing to "support the troops."

Ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan exacerbate these conditions. Were the United States in a time of relative peace the consequences would perhaps not be so dire. However, the US has been at war for 14 years, and world events do not portend any significant change to the status quo. The US faces daunting geopolitical challenges involving both state and non-state actors, and is engaged in complex,

strategic regional campaigns around the globe. Are America's goals realistic and achievable, and once reached, will they bring about the desired political objectives? Does the administration possess clear objectives? These are the questions American citizens must be asking themselves. Yet at a time when US foreign policy demands a shrewd, informed, and discerning public to make decisions regarding the employment of our military, the nation finds itself stuck in a cycle of perpetual admiration and naïveté regarding the military, its capabilities, and the rationale for its employment.[3,4]

Engaging in war is one of the most serious and important responsibilities of a nation-state. For a nation as powerful as the Unites States, that responsibility is even greater. The US Defense Budget (approximately $598 billion) is larger than the next seven countries' combined defense budgets; the US military is currently deployed to approximately 70 countries; and the US military is actively engaged in direct combat operations in Afghanistan (since 2001), Iraq (since 2003, with a brief hiatus from December 2011 until August 2014) and Syria, with intermittent combat operations in Libya.[5,6] American military power can kill tens of thousands in the blink of an eye, can overthrow regimes in a matter of days, and can completely reset balances of power across entire regions. Moreover, there is a butcher's bill on the home front; American lives will likely be lost, and many who survive carry physical and psychological scars for the rest of their lives. Yet despite all this, the military operates largely without accountability for its successes or failures and is largely devoid of criticism from the public and their elected officials.

Currently there is little appetite among elected officials to criticize the military. There are a variety of factors that contribute to this reticence. First, few members of Congress have any military experience, which means they have little context from which to judge the military. As mentioned earlier, public opinion regarding the military as an institution remains high, while public approval rates for Congress are perennially low—

which puts any Congressman who wishes to criticize the military in a very awkward position. Finally, there is little demand from the public for Congress to hold the military accountable; this is perhaps the most alarming of the three trends presented here. It demonstrates an overall lack of appreciation that the military—its vital and perhaps noble mission notwithstanding—is an instrument of public policy that must be held accountable and serves at the discretion of the public.[7]

Instead of a public that somewhat blindly admires the military, the US needs an informed public—one that is reasonably familiar with and comfortable with the military. An informed citizenry will be more likely to demand that their elected leaders rigorously debate the merits and drawbacks of committing the military to conflict. Moreover, they might be more willing and able to hold the military accountable through their elected leaders once forces are committed.[8]

With so few Americans serving in the military and the inherent esteem that the military's self-sacrificial mission engenders among the public, the US finds itself in a precarious position. On the whole, the public and their elected leaders are not only dissuaded from criticizing the military and demanding accountability of it, they are so detached from the reality of military service that they have little context on which to base their judgments. Retired LTG David Barno succinctly captured this phenomenon last summer in a *War on the Rocks* article:

> While the nature of modern prolonged conflicts and the demise of conscription have sharply eroded the personal exposure of the American people to their wars, their ultimate responsibility for this most consequential of national decisions remains. Civilians have a responsibility to understand their military and have an essential role in decisions to commit it to battle — regardless of how removed they may be from personal participation or connection to our warriors. Wearing yellow ribbons and saying "thank you for your service" are simply no substitute for active engagement with U.S. military personnel and the political decisions to send them into harm's way.[9]

The Constitution and Civil-Military Relations

Fundamental to any discussion of American civil-military relations is a grasp of what the Founders intended. The men who drafted the Constitution were confronted with a difficult balancing act: they understood that the new nation required a military powerful enough to protect it from outside threats and insurrection but sufficiently constrained to remain subordinate to civilian control. History provided the Founders ample reason to simultaneously respect and fear military power. After all, it was through force of arms that the British Empire attempted to subjugate its most prized possession, and it was through force of arms that the colonies subsequently wrested their self-determination from the King. The Founders understood that military power would be vital to the continued survival of the fledgling Republic. However, the laws as laid out in the Articles of Confederation were clearly insufficient in providing for the national defense.[10] Thus the focus of the Constitution was balancing the ability to actually have a dynamic military while simultaneously putting checks into place to ensure subordination to civilian government.

The civil-military relationship in the United States is somewhat unique in that from the founding of our nation, civilian control of the military has been a fundamental precept—one that the Founders integrated into the Constitution among several specific checks against military power. Indeed, arguments over the control of the military during the Constitutional Convention began with the assumption that the military would be subordinate to civilian control, so discussion primarily centered on the degree and scope of civilian authority. This concept of civilian control was not new; it had been established in the Articles of Confederation.[11] In drafting the Constitution the Founders were more concerned with the "distribution of power between executive and legislative [branches]…than between civilian and military [institutions]."[12] Specifically, while the Founders understood that the Executive must have the ability to command and control the military, they checked his power by giving the Congress both control of the purse

and the ability to declare war.[13] The Founders clearly understood that obtaining the

votes required for a war declaration would likely be challenging. Thus they implemented

an obstacle that would inherently slow down the process of embroiling the new nation in

conflict and prevent the Executive from abusing his power as Commander in Chief.[14]

Ultimately the Founders created a system that empowered a strong Executive to direct

war, thus resolving the inherent national security flaws of the Articles. But they also split

authority between the branches by making Congress responsible for funding and

declaring war in order to check the Executive's ability to seize power through the military.

Ultimately, the Founders created a novel system that provided: a robust system

of national defense; a strong executive who could effectively wield military power during

crises; a methodology whereby military power could be committed with the full backing

of the nation through the nation's elected representatives; and—every bit as important—

a system that prevented the executive from exercising military force with the caprice that

the Founders had witnessed in Europe. But critical to all of these provisions was the

Founders' assumption that the Legislative Branch would continue to understand the

gravity of their responsibility in making decisions to commit the military. Making a

declaration of war contingent on a vote within Congress was a master stroke but

necessitated that Congress fully embrace their role as the military's masters by striving

to understand the military's capabilities, limitations and leadership. Perhaps most

importantly, the Founders understood that Congress must appreciate its responsibility to

control the military even when its efforts might clash with popular opinion.[15]

American Civil-Military Relations: Theory and Reality

A vital aspect of bridging the civil-military gap is ensuring the American public

and their governing officials accept their responsibility to hold the military accountable.

The Constitution provided the appropriate mechanisms to ensure the military could be

held accountable but the experience of the Founders likely prevented them from

foreseeing a circumstance such as exists in US society today wherein the military is widely respected and simultaneously relatively free of accountability for their strategic decisions and actions. In fact, it can be argued that the evidence indicates that many of the military's decisions should demand more accountability from the public, not less. While it is certainly fitting that the public recognize and respect the military for its role in the defense of the nation, balancing that respect with a shrewd demand for accountability is at the heart of civil-military relations.

Grasping the theories that have driven modern American civil-military relations is essential to a complete understanding of the civil-military challenges the US faces today. Much of that theory is built upon the foundation laid by Samuel Huntington in his "monumental" monograph *The Soldier and the State*.[16] *The Soldier and The State* emerged as the subject's most significant work and "set the terms of debate about civil-military relations" in the US.[17] Huntington's argument centers on the inherent paradox in American civil-military relations: the reality that the nation has to "reconcile a military strong enough to do anything the civilians ask them to with a military subordinate enough to do only what the civilians authorize them to do."[18] To resolve this dilemma Huntington advocated for what he termed "objective civilian control" as the mechanism that most effectively reconciles the civil-military paradox.[19] He characterized the concept of "objective civilian control" as a "sharp division between civilian and military roles" and based it upon "efforts to increase the professionalism of the officer corps, carving off for it a sphere of action independent of politics."[20] Indeed, the maximization of military *professionalism* is the core of Huntington's premise.[21] Specifically, Huntington states that professionalizing the military renders it "politically sterile and neutral" and ensures the military "stands ready to carry out the wishes of any civilian group which secures legitimate authority within the state."[22] The opposite condition, which maximizes civilian control at the expense of the efficacy of the military, is "subjective civilian control;" this

manifests in the form of "the maximization of the power of particular governmental institutions, particular social classes, and particular constitutional forms."[23] "Subjective civilian control" can most easily be visualized in the form of "aristocratic armies" that attempt to "tame the military in various ways, chiefly by joining military and civilian elites…rendering it politically aware and possibly active, but also a self-conscious extension of the body politic."[24] Put another way, *subjective* civilian control contrasts with *objective* civilian control in that under subjective control, power is maximized from the perspective of each distinct policy maker or policy making body, e.g., maximum control from the perspective of the Secretary of Defense, Congress, National Security Council, etc.[25]

While Huntington has had his detractors over the years, it is important to comprehend how profoundly his work shaped the civil-military dialogue in the US—especially among members of the military. Indeed, the "Huntingtonian conception of military professionalism remains the dominant view within the US defense establishment."[26] Moreover,

> …the Huntingtonian concept was most clearly vindicated in debates leading up to the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which substantially increased the power of the Joint Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the expense of the military services and even, to some extent, the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Not only did the originators of that legislation explicitly endorse Huntington's reading of American military history; they saw their responsibility as one of providing more and better centralized autonomous military advice to civilian leaders.[27]

But the question remains whether reality bears out Huntington's thesis—that a professional military, given the freedom to act unmolested within its sphere, will best serve the nation. Prior to the series of conflicts that began in 2001 with the Al Qaeda attacks on the homeland, the "Huntingtonian view of civil-military relations [was] reinforced by the popular reading of the Vietnam and Gulf Wars." In that interpretation, Vietnam was "characterized by civilian interference in the details of war making" while

the Gulf War was seen as a model of benign operational and tactical neglect by an enlightened civilian leadership."[28] A more thorough examination of the record reveals that the vindication of the Huntingtonian premise was not quite so clear. The most glaring and oft-referenced example of "civilian interference" in Vietnam is President Lyndon Johnson's personal control of the "selection of targets in North Vietnam."[29] But the conduct of the war in South Vietnam received very little scrutiny from politicians and largely military leadership, not civilians, drove the tactics there.[30]

Since the Vietnam War the majority of the nation's experiences in conflict tend to counter certain aspects of Huntington's thesis rather than support them. When the Kosovo air campaign began in 1999, some military commanders complained about political interference and their arguments gained additional momentum from media reports contrasting the senior leader relationships of the day with those during the Gulf War. There were certainly political restrictions that significantly limited allied freedom of maneuver in the Kosovo campaign. However, despite these restrictions the campaign was ultimately successful in ousting the Serbian leadership it targeted.[31] Moreover, military commanders made decisions that deserve scrutiny.   The most egregious of these decisions resulted in the first shoot-down of an F-117 "stealth" fighter. Despite questionable conditions and lack of typical air support, commanders launched an F-117 flight on a bombing mission into Kosovo and lost one of the aircraft. This was the first use of the F-117 without significant suppression of enemy air defense systems in the target area; the mission also repeated a previously traveled flight path to the target area. Both of these circumstances resulted from command-level decision and made the F-117s much more vulnerable. Fortunately the pilot survived and rescue personnel recovered him.[32]. However, little was made of the decision to commit the F-117 flight despite the circumstances surrounding the incident.

Events since the advent of the War on Terror have further tipped the scales against Huntington's argument by continuing to demonstrate that military leaders must be held accountable for their decisions. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and now in Iraq and Syria again, Huntington's concept of the separate military "sphere" in which military professionalism will prevail has been somewhat sullied by reality. That reality is a combination of multiple factors including military capability, the political purpose behind military action, national will (manifested in the degree of support for a conflict), and finally the indigenous culture, politics, and religion of the regions in which the nation finds itself embroiled. While the military goals in Afghanistan and Iraq may have initially seemed clear—defeat of Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and Saddam Hussein's regime, respectively—the reality of accomplishing those objectives was much more nuanced. Waging war against the Taliban for their tolerance of AQ proved to be a complicated endeavor that involved combat and stability operations among a population whose culture and politics are so foreign that the military has struggled for almost 15 years to make sense of it. After years of war and multiple different strategic approaches, there is still arguably no clearly definable military objective vis-à-vis Afghanistan and under what circumstances the US will no longer be committed there. Indeed, the National Security Strategy is open-ended, calling for "a sovereign and stable partner in Afghanistan that is not a safe-haven for international terrorists."[33] Likewise in Iraq; the successful toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime ignited a sectarian conflict for which neither the administration nor the military were prepared, unleashed a multi-faceted terrorist insurgency that ripped Iraq apart for eight years, and sowed the seeds of one of the most vicious terrorist organization in modern memory. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, military commanders formulated plans that called for swift defeat of the enemy, employing all the capability they could to minimize US casualties and assure expeditious victory. But in both those instances, once the initial "military objective" was achieved the

real difficulty began. Now the military was called on to promote stability, oversee the restoration of basic services, and help establish new governments that could effectively fill the power vacuum created by US military success. The record in both countries speaks for itself. While there have certainly been successes—primarily at the tactical level—the question remains whether or not the military actually acheived their own stated strategic objectives in either case

Rather than demonstrating that war should be left to the generals, American conflict has more often indicated that civil-military relations require a much more artful approach. The degree of complexity involved in the American application of military force continues to increase. In the ongoing conflict against ISIS, the US must navigate waters strewn with obstacles: the terrorists themselves, relations with the Iraqi government, Kurds in both Iraqi Kurdistan and Syria, tension with the Turks over US involvement and integration with the Kurds, Russian intervention, the desired endgame for the Assad regime; the list goes on. Yet despite the complexities encountered throughout 14 years of war and the military's sometimes-dubious record in traversing those complexities, there is remarkably little call for accountability from the military's civilian leaders. The military certainly does not bear the blame for all the errors of the last decade's combat experiences; nevertheless, the US seems to be following the "particularly dangerous" precedent that grew out of the common understanding of the conduct of civil-military relations surrounding the 1991 Gulf War.[34] Instead, the nation needs a clear appreciation that while the military may be in some ways distinct from civilian society, it does not own a separate "sphere" as Huntington advocated. This is the fundamental flaw in Huntington; military decisions and actions cannot be unfettered from civilian interference. Indeed, the political/military spheres are intricately interconnected at continuously varying points, based upon the nature of the conflict in

which the nation finds itself involved. On that basis, the American public needs to

understand that their civilian leaders must

> …immerse themselves in the conduct of war no less than they do in great
> projects of legislation; that they must master their military briefs as
> thoroughly as they do their civilian ones; that they must demand and
> expect from their military subordinates a candor as bruising as it is
> necessary; that both groups must expect a running conversation in which,
> although civilian opinion will not dictate, it must dominate; that that
> conversation will include not only ends and policies but ways and
> means.[35]

What then, should American civil-military relations look like? The purpose of this

paper is to highlight ways in which the US can begin to bridge the divide between

civilians and their military through a significant expansion of exposure between civilians

and senior military officers. It is therefore imperative that both sectors understand how

they should relate to each other and the foundation for that relationship. The shortfalls

of Huntington's thesis now made clear, a more workable model of civil-military relations

is in order. While the full articulation of that model is beyond the scope of this paper, an

understanding of some of the more important concepts of it is fitting. On the one hand,

the professionalization of the military as Huntington articulates it has been largely

successful in the United States. The idea of the US military entangling itself in *domestic*

political affairs today is so far-fetched as to be laughable; and the fact that that concept

is far-fetched is a testament to the largely professional, apolitical nature of the military.

However, Huntington's concept of professionalism provides an incomplete solution to the

civil-military problem. The military may be professional in many respects but still fail to

provide "best military advice," especially as political and international affairs become

increasingly complex. While military members writ large understand that it is their duty

to follow the orders of their civilian masters, often neither they nor the public fully grasp

the intricacies of their relationship. The "day to day business of civil-military relations…is

a game of strategic interaction, with civilians monitoring their military agents and military

agents determining whether to work or shirk based on expectations the agents have about the likely consequences."[36] Huntington's concept of professionalism, while not a complete solution, is still important as civilian leaders must be confident that military leaders are sincere in their motives when they provide military counsel; that is, they are not going to merely "shirk" when ordered to carry out courses of action with which they do not agree. Civilian leaders may inherently trust the military that the military will follow orders and not attempt to overthrow the government, but the deeper trust required for the development of sound political and military strategy demands time, shared experience, and a mutual understanding of the complexities of the civil-military relationship. Unfortunately, the dynamics that serve to widen the gap between the American citizenry and the military continue to complicate the establishment of these affiliations.   Moreover, the military's civilian masters bear a substantial burden in that they must not be tempted into using the military as a tool to garner domestic political favor—a maneuver that will likely at the least produce "shirking" in the implementation of policy or at worst potentially lead to outright insubordination by military leaders.

Dynamics Affecting Civil-Military Relations in the US Today

Fluctuations within American civil-military relations are not new; they have occurred throughout the course of American history. But the implementation of the all-volunteer force after the Vietnam War has resulted in decreasing the exposure of most Americans to the military profession. During World War II, approximately ten to twelve percent of the US population served in the military.[37] For the ensuing decade "many American families had at least one member in uniform."[38] That dynamic has drastically changed over the past four decades since the implementation of the all-volunteer force. Now the military is largely "exotic territory to most of the American public."[39] The effect has been alarming. When most Americans had at least some understanding of military life, they saw it for what it was—a human undertaking with all the contradictions, tragedy,

and comedy inherent in any human endeavor. After all, the military was nothing more than " 'an expression of the nation'."[40] While the profession was treated with respect, it was "not above criticism and lampooning."[41] The military was treated as was any other "American institution…that [runs] on taxpayer money."[42] Television shows such as "Sergeant Bilko," "McHale's Navy," and even "Gomer Pyle" all poked fun at the foibles of military life with which so many Americans, formerly servicemen and women themselves, were familiar.[43] Those same former service members, many of whom were draftees who kept the military "on the straight and narrow," returned to civilian life with a realistic understanding of all the strengths and limitations of the military.[44] They shared their views and experiences with their immediate family and friends and that education better prepared American citizens to relate to military matters.

It can certainly be argued that while the military experience of previous generations made them more familiar with military life that familiarity did not necessarily produce a more educated, informed, and capable public regarding the proper conduct of American civil-military relations. This is true to a certain degree. Service as a lower enlisted man in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam did not necessarily prepare those citizens who served to understand the nuances of civilian control and the military's responsibilities underneath civilian leadership. Nevertheless, this perspective misses the crucial value that previous generations' military experience conveyed: the understanding that the military was not some separate sphere comprised of only the noblest of citizens, but was simply comprised of civilians who had either chosen a military career or had been conscripted into short term military service. Many of the citizens upon whom the nation depended for its defense and for effective civil-military relations had themselves previously served. Moreover, they understood the weaknesses and shortcomings of military professionals firsthand—especially the "can-do" attitude that prevails throughout the military, which often obtains despite the reality

15

on the ground. That underlying understanding is paramount to effective civil-military

relations, and the more separate Americans are from military service and those who

undertake it, the greater the challenge becomes. The nation's continual involvement in

conflict over the past decade-and-a-half, with all the sacrifice and heroism inherent in the

conflict, has exacerbated this problem, as disconnected citizens seem to feel un-patriotic

and ungrateful if their sentiments regarding the military involve anything less than praise

and admiration.

The fact is that most Americans' connection with the military today is more

remote than in previous generations. In contemporary American culture, the military has

become more of a glorified, almost infallible institution that may make some isolated

mistakes but is viewed overall as capable of almost anything. Pre-arranged

homecomings on TV, news reports of casualties and deployments, and sporting and

civic events often highlight military service and personnel but rarely is military capability,

competence, or strategy called into question; moreover, none of these venues provide a

tangible connection to the military. Instead it can be argued that they often continue to

perpetuate the idea of the "the military" as a separate and distinct group of Americans.

While well intended, these events do no more to provide personal connections to most

Americans than professional sporting events do to provide a connection to professional

athletes.

Further, the manner in which the last two administrations have chosen to pursue

America's wars has only served to amplify the civil-military divide as America's

leadership has encouraged Americans to get on with business as usual while the military

continues deployment after deployment. As an anonymous military wit allegedly

quipped during Operation Iraqi Freedom, America is not at war, the military is at war

while "America is at the mall."[45] Indeed, "at the mall" is exactly where the Bush and

Obama administrations have encouraged the public to be. A recent *Parameters* article

attributes this condition to the United States' desire to continue to prosper as a:

> Market security state…by invoking the moral language of great national
> wars, while in other ways resisting the status of being 'at war' as a
> political condition, that is, not declaring war, not making material
> demands of the people directly, and going to great lengths to insulate
> [the] populations from the conflict.[46]

Rather than encouraging the population to identify with the conflict and engage in the

effort underlying it,

> this contradictory condition helps bring about a situation in which the state
> applies military power continuously in the name of an existential struggle,
> but [tries] to do so "on the cheap" while encouraging "the people" to look
> on as passive consumers—or to look away.[47]

Indeed, in the "market security state" the citizen is merely a "passive consumer of

security" while the government applies "force regularly and globally…choosing both the

extraordinary powers of formal wartime while desiring the undisturbed—and un-

mobilized—civilian life of peacetime."[48] Rather than being stirred to self-sacrifice in the

interests of the common cause, today's citizenry is called to self- or collective

gratification. In the past, "rationing and taxes brought the war home in a tangible way"

but today's struggle is "not…the property of the nation as a whole."[49] The US now finds

itself in a situation where "a small fraction of the population" deploys to fight while the

rest of society is encouraged to "get on with their lives as consumers." Other than taxes,

the government demands little of them and in turn "encourages political inattention from

the ruled and an alarming lack of civic supervision."[50] While society and government in

20th century America both encouraged and expected civil commitment, support, and

sacrifice, our current dynamic offers "war without politics and [the population] is

encouraged not to engage the political purpose of the conflict with what Clausewitz

called 'passion.'"[51]

Without a concrete connection to the "real" people that make up the military, Americans find themselves uncomfortable thinking critically of those who are often risking their lives on their behalf. The frequent use of the term "hero" illustrates this point. From news reports to philanthropic support programs, the use of the term "hero" has become commonplace in referring to military personnel, regardless of their deployment history, their job in the military, or their personal attributes. Merely serving in the military at all seems to qualify one to be referred to as a "hero;" this does not necessarily jibe with the classic sense of the term, which evokes bravery, great courage and illustrious acts.[52] The result is the contradiction wherein *The Economist* recently questioned

> America's ability to hold to account a military sector its leaders feel bound to applaud, but no longer competent to criticise…sanctified by politicians and the public…the army's top brass have been given too much power and too little scrutiny, with the recent disastrous campaigns, and similarly profligate appropriations, the almost inevitable result.[53]

The dangers of an increasing civil-military gap are two-fold. First, an unrealistically glowing view of the military by the civilian populace (and their leaders who answer to them on election day) can lead to a dangerous lack of scrutiny regarding military spending, capabilities and employment. Second, a military that is remote and somewhat alien may be easier to send off to war. This second condition is perhaps the most disconcerting as it emerges from the confluence of several factors. First, American's high esteem for the military can influence their belief that the military is more capable than it actually is, or at least confuse successes in certain arenas as indicators of better capabilities in other, unrelated arenas. Additionally, the disconnect resulting from fewer Americans and their elected officials having direct family connections to the military means they could lack the personal investment that would cause them think twice before committing troops. Finally, the years since the Vietnam War, in which 58,000 American soldiers died, "led to a quarter-century of push-button, almost

bloodless wars…each conditioning the American people to expect less bloodshed than the previous conflict…[t]his, in turn, conditioned political and military leaders to deliver more push-button, bloodless wars."[54]

With no increase in taxes, often little risk to US troops (especially if the troops committed are highly trained, elite special operations forces), and no impact to US civilians there seems to be on downside to perpetuating these pushbutton wars. The US government benefits from appearing to "do something" at very little risk.   The result is what some have referred to as the "Jupiter Complex." In his book *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* Michael Ignatieff posited, "If war becomes unreal to the citizens of modern democracies, will they care enough to restrain and control the violence exercised in their name?"[55] Ignatieff's specific concern regarded the automation of war to the point that the human dimension is basically removed entirely, at least on the friendly end. But the question remains valid outside of the context of Ignatieff's concept: as the military and the effects of combat on military personnel become more remote to the people, how invested will they be in making decisions to commit or stop to military operations? While the "Jupiter Complex" grew out of the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II and the ability bombers provided to potentially bend the enemy to one's will without protracted ground combat, the analogy still applies to America's army as it continues to be employed in the manner it has over the past 15 years in a separate military "sphere," while the nation's civilians are encouraged to continue on with their lives as normal.

Proving the actual existence of a "Jupiter Complex" within the US is problematic; evidence is largely anecdotal and subject to a variety of interpretations. However, a "Jupiter Complex" *per se* is not a necessary precondition to a problematic civil-military divide that makes it easier for Americans to send their military off to war. Two specific events, one evoking the Vietnam era and one much more recent, provide significant indicators that Americans are comfortable with the *status quo* and neither overly

concerned with the current trends in military deployments nor agitated enough to force

an end to American involvement. First, while the Vietnam War was popular among

American citizens for the first few years of the war, by the end of the 1960s it was largely

unpopular and had stirred a major protest movement within the US. Many Americans

made it clear through their actions and activism that they did not believe in the US

commitment to Vietnam. That activism carried over into the political arena, where

elected officials shaped their platforms and policies based on American sentiment

regarding the war. In contrast, the war "in Iraq did initially generate opposition…as well

as political rancor, but did not create a sustained, energized counter-cultural movement

comparable to Vietnam."[56] The second example is much more recent: the futile

promulgation of the President's most recent Authorization for the Use of Military Force

(AUMF). On February 11, 2015, President Obama proposed an updated AUMF to

Congress to directly address the threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and *al Sham* (ISIS).

As of this writing, that proposal remains unresolved. While some Legislators have

recently proposed that the Congress embrace their role vis-à-vis the commitment of

American troops and act on the proposed AUMF, there has been no substantive action

thus far. Nor has there been any outcry from the American public regarding Congress's

responsibility in that regard—Americans seem content, as do their elected officials, to

allow the President to continue to deploy American forces under the auspices of his

Executive authority.

Potential Solutions

Faced then with a population that is "at the mall while the Army is at war" and

elected officials who do not seem enthusiastic about tackling the tough questions of

military power, the civil-military divide will likely continue to grow. The nature of the all-

volunteer force and the ongoing drawdown of the military will likely preclude any

significant influx of civilians into military service. The military's insular nature ensures

that those outside of the defense enterprise will have little contact with military members. Outside of "military towns" where military units are located and personnel are stationed, there are few venues that offer civilians the opportunity to truly interact with members of the military. This condition makes it very difficult for civilians to distill a true appreciation of the military, its capabilities, and the public's role in serving as the military's masters.

Complicating the challenge is the question of who principally bears the responsibility to implement the changes required to bridge the civil-military divide. Because of the previously addressed insular nature of the military, it will likely prove difficult for American society to develop insight into the military, except for those segments that already house significant military communities. Even in "military towns" many who are not involved directly with activities on the installation have only a rudimentary understanding of military life. Retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey recently addressed this particular question during an address at the University of North Carolina. One student raised the question of the civil-military divide to General Dempsey, and during the course of his reply he stated that he felt like the military owned the majority of the responsibility to rectify it, stating that the responsibility was likely split around 60%-40%.[57] Therefore, if the military hopes to begin to reverse this trend the onus is on the respective service branches to begin to offer options.

This paper does not attempt to offer over-arching solutions that can immediately reverse the widening civil-military gap; that undertaking will be substantial and will require Presidential, Congressional, and Secretary of Defense involvement. Rather, this paper will address something the Army *can* do now to immediately implement incremental change: expand the War College Fellowship program. By expanding the Fellowship program the Army can ensure that their best performers—senior, mature, and experienced military officers who are selected to go on to serve in advanced

leadership positions—are interacting with civilians outside the defense enterprise and helping shape civil-military relations both in the interagency and in Academia where many of those civilians are still forming their fundamental understanding of public policy and service to the nation. Many of these civilians will go on to serve in in upper tier, influential public and private positions. Interaction with senior Army officers during the early stages of their careers can provide them with invaluable and previously unavailable insight into the military community as well as their personal responsibility for oversight of the military.

This will, however, require a fundamental change in the Army's approach to the overall purpose of the US Army War College and Senior Service College in general. Established in 1901 by Secretary of War Elihu Root, the War College was originally intended to train staff officers and help the Army General Staff advise the President, devise plans, acquire information, and direct the intellectual exercise of the Army.[58] Over time, the War College's mission has changed somewhat and it was in fact shut down during both World Wars in order that officers could be sent forward to fight. Today, the War College defines its two-fold mission in this way:

> to produce graduates…who are skilled critical thinkers and complex problem solvers in the global application of Landpower. Concurrently, it is our duty to the Army to also act as a "Think Factory" for Commanders and Civilian Leaders at the strategic level worldwide and routinely engage in discourse and debate on ground forces' role in achieving national security objectives.[59]

The question of the validity of the War College's mission is not at issue here; there is certainly intrinsic value in providing senior Army officers the opportunity to pursue the goals laid out in the War College's mission statement. What is at issue is whether or not that purpose stands alone as the only requirement for officers at that point in their careers and whether there are other purposes that perhaps supersede the current War College mission. Moreover, could the Army and the nation be better served

by broadening the Senior Service College opportunities available in order to meet emerging requirements? Specifically, are there opportunities to employ Senior Service College attendees to address the widening divide between the military and the private sector? The War College purpose statement includes the important qualifier "at this point in our Nation's history," conferring that the War College and its mission have evolved over time and would adapt their mission as emerging requirements dictate. The fact that the War College shut down completely during the two World Wars is evidence that the College recognized the need to adapt to the most important requirements of the time. It is this author's assertion that the current environment in the United States requires another such adaptation.

Moreover, while the War College currently serves and should continue to serve as a "think factory" for strategic leadership regarding national security, the War College is only one among many "think factories" across the nation where these same issues are being discussed among the future strategic leaders of the US—often without any first-hand military input at all. While there is likely much to be gained from strategic level discussions among the Army's future leaders at the War College, the nature of the War College itself limits the audience to senior officials and civil servants who are either in the military or involved in national security already. Therefore, who is helping shape the strategic-level discussions being held at Universities all across the Nation, in which viewpoints and perspectives on national security and the military's role therein are being discussed every semester, often devoid of any direct military input? Absent military officers on their campuses, who is familiarizing students with military perspectives regarding planning, strategic design, and problem solving?

Finally, there is something of a "one size fits all" mentality to the curriculum of the War College. A different approach would be to account for the operational experience of senior officers and determine whether the Army will be better served by assigning

officers to different Senior Service College venues on the basis of that experience. At this point in the Army's history, given the vast combat zone experience of most senior officers, many officers have interacted with a much wider variety of high-level partner nation leaders and interagency partners than Senior Service College cohorts prior to 9/11. This provides many of today's senior officers with perspectives that are valuable not only to their peers in a War College venue but also to the future leaders of the nation in Universities nationwide.

The current Fellowship program only allows for approximately 80 to 90 Fellows, this number should at least be doubled and the number of institutions receiving fellows should be increased as well. Implementing these changes together will increase the Army's exposure to future civilian leaders across a broader cross-section of the American population.   The current Fellowship programs provide insight into the potential benefits of this concept, and the Fellowship in which this author is enrolled serves as an illustrative and compelling example. Affiliated with both the University of North Carolina and Duke University, the backbone of this Fellowship is coursework in the public policy arena. Throughout the year Fellows have close interaction with students and faculty who are thinking, writing, and even working in the national security arena. Many students have already interned with national security agencies as well as the DoD, professors have written and advised in the national security arena, and many of the students in the program are pursuing careers either in the military or the civilian sector of the national security enterprise. However, for most of the students, the first interaction they have with anyone in the military is through the Fellowship program. They typically begin interacting with Fellows during their junior year which gives them an average of two years during their academic career to continue to develop their understanding of the military and by extension, civil-military relations.

Throughout the Fellowship, Fellows have occasion to interact with students and faculty in a variety of forums outside the classroom: discussion panels, lecture series, conferences, simulations, and other events to include trips to nearby military installations where students are able to converse with an even broader cross-section of military personnel. While difficult to quantify, Fellows easily touch over 100 students in a given year, with the opportunity to develop more substantive, mentoring relationships with up to ten. All these relationships thicken the links between the military and civilians—providing students, faculty, and—in the interagency—decision makers, crucial insight into military life and experience, military thought processes, and the viewpoints of senior military officers. The Fellowships also provide prime opportunities for the Army to demonstrate the caliber of individual that achieves the senior ranks of the Army. Spending time with senior officers in varied environment allows young civilians to see Army officers as they truly are, with all the virtues, flaws and imperfections inherent in humanity. It also serves to "de-mystify" the Army and demonstrate to civilians early in their careers that Army officers are not "heroes" but rather professionals committed to the defense of the nation. Not least importantly, these relationships and interactions frequently serve to challenge the viewpoints of the Fellows themselves—achieving the War College's aim of an immersive "think factories" experience for Senior Service College students while arguably providing an even better venue as the Fellowship "think factories" are not populated by military officers. Finally, Fellowships can also build beneficial relationships with experts outside the public policy arena, e.g., economists, management professionals, etc., where each party can mutually benefit from sharing each other's perspective. As global markets and financial systems become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, experts in these other social science fields possess information that can prove extremely beneficial to officers as they analyze strategic challenges holistically, e.g., what do lower worldwide oil prices and Saudi Arabia's

decision not to cut production have to do with the Saudi's desire to economically punish Russia and Iran? While political scientists are certainly analyzing that issue, hearing an economist's take provides a unique perspective to a Fellow—those different types of perspectives are in abundance on University campuses and to a degree, in the interagency fellowships. But because of the limited curricula at the War College, those varied perspectives are more rare at the War College

The Army will need to assume some risk in expanding the Fellowship program. As previously discussed, there is an intrinsic value in senior Army officers interacting with their peers, sharing their experiences, and operating in the War College "think factory." That particular venue, more so than Fellowships, allows Army Colonels to exchange insights and perspectives specific to their career field with other practitioners as well as with experts in the national security arena. However, this author would argue that, at this particular point in our Army's history, years of continual combat deployments have offered unprecedented exposure to joint and combined operations. Many of the benefits sought in the War College's centralized methodology have been made available overseas on deployments, when officers have had unheard of occasion to interact with their fellow officers from a wide variety of branches. Officers selected for the War College have been so selected because the Army believes they have the potential to serve at the strategic level. Given the "broadening" experience of the past years of war, the Army assumes very little risk in making their War College experience one that reconnects the Army to America.

While bridging the civil-military divide will be neither easy nor rapid, the Army can act very quickly to begin to reverse the trend. Granted, the dynamics articulated herein will not change in the foreseeable future. The percentage of the US population that serves under the all-volunteer force will remain small and the Army will remain somewhat foreign to most Americans. Nevertheless, by expanding the War College

Fellowship program the Army can undertake a long-term effort to encourage interaction

with America's future leaders and begin to reconnect Americans to the military that

serves them.

ENDNOTES

[1] Gallup Poll, June 15 2015, 1. http://www.gallup.com/poll/183593/confidenceinstitutions-below-historical-norms.aspx (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

[2] Karl W. Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, "Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart," *The New York Times*, 26 May 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/opinion/americans-and-their-military-drifting-apart.html?_r=0 (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

[3] James Fallows, "The Tragedy of the American Military," *Atlantic Monthly*, January/February 2015, 4. http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/the-tragedy-of-the-american-military/383516/ (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

[4] Gary Hart, James Fallows, Andrew J. Bacevich, John Arquilla, & Norman R. Augustine, "Bending the Arc of Military History," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 28, 2014. http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/12/how-gary-hart-tried-to-change-military-history/384064/ (accessed 12 Jan 2016).

[5] Peter G. Peterson Foundation, "The US Spends More on Defense than the Next Seven Countries Combined," http://www.pgpf.org/chart-archive/0053_defense-comparison (accessed 6 Jan 2016)

[6] David Vine, "Where in the World is the US Military?" *Politico Magazine*, July/August 2015. http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/06/us-military-bases-around-the-world-119321 (accessed 6 Jan 2016).

[7] Hart et al, "Bending the Arc of Military History."

[8] David Barno and Nora Bensahel, "When the Yellow Ribbons Fade: Reconnecting our Soldiers and Citizens," *War on the Rocks*, July 14, 2015, http://warontherocks.com/2015/07/when-the-yellow-ribbons-fade-reconnecting-our-soldiers-and-citizens/ (accessed 12 January 2016).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Richard H. Kohn, ed., "The Constitution and National Security: The Intent of the Framers," *The United States Military Under the Constitution of the United States, 1789-1989* (New York: New York University Press, 1991) 63-64.

[11] *Articles of Confederation,* Article VI Section 5, http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=001/llsl001.db&recNum=128 (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

[12] Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 81.

   [13] *The Constitution of the United States of America*, Article I Section 8, Article II Section 2, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

   [14] Rachel Maddow, *Drift* (New York: Broadway Books, 2012), 32.

   [15] Barno and Bensahel.

   [16] Feaver, 158.

   [17] Eliot Cohen, "The Unequal Dialogue," *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security,* Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 433.

   [18] Peter D. Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz, and the Question of Civilian Control," *Armed Forces and Society*, Winter 1996, p. 149, 158.

   [19] Huntington, 84.

   [20] Cohen, 434.

   [21] Huntington, 84..

   [22] Ibid.

   [23] Huntingon, 81.

   [24] Cohen, 434.

   [25] Discussion with Dr. Peter Feaver, Duke University, January 27 2016.

   [26] Cohen, 435.

   [27] Cohen, 435 (US Congress citation needed)

   [28] David E. Johnson, "Modern U.S. Civil-Military Relations: Wielding the Terrible Swift Sword," McNair Paper No. 57 (Washington, DC: National Defense University, Institute for National Strategic Studies, quoted by Eliot Cohen in Soldiers and Civilians, p. 435.

   [29] Cohen, 438.

   [30] Cohen, 439.

   [31] Cohen, 436.

   [32] Benjamin S. Lambeth, "Kosovo and the Continuing SEAD Challenge," *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer 2002, http://www.ausairpower.net/APJ-Lambeth-Mirror.html (accessed January 15, 2016)

[33] *National Security Strategy*, February 2015, 9.

[34] Cohen, 457

[35] Cohen, 458.

[36] Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 284.

[37] Fallows, 1.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 5.

[40] Maddow, 30.

[41] Fallows, 5.

[42] Ibid., 3.

[43] Fallows, 8.

[44] David Hackworth, *About Face* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1989), 656.

[45] Anecdotally heard by the author on more than one occasion, attributable to various sources.

[46] Patrick Porter, "Soldiers Fighting Alone: The Wars of the Market Security State," *Parameters* Vol. 45, No. 3, Autumn 2015, 5.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., 6.

[49] Ibid., 8-9.

[50] Ibid., 11.

[51] Ibid, 10.

[52] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Online ed., s.v. "Hero," http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hero (accessed 22 Oct 2015).

[53] "Who Will Fight the Next War," *The Economist*, online edition, October 24, 2015, http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21676778-failures-iraq-and-afghanistan-have-widened-gulf-between-most-americans-and-armed (accessed 3 November 2015)

[54] Alan W. Dowd, "Drone Wars: Risks and Warnings," *Parameters* Vol. 42, No. 4, Winter-Spring 2013, 8.

[55] Micheal Ignatieff, *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond* (New York: Picador Books, 2000), 4.

[56] Porter, 10.

[57] CJCS Martin Dempsey Address Duke University

[58] US Army War College Web Site, http://www.carlisle.army.mil/history.htm

[59] Ibid.