

The Evolution of the Civil-Military “Gap” Debate

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Introduction

After the second World War, a few observers wrote concerned analyses of the state of civil-military relations in the U.S. Some forecast disaster, others were more sanguine, but the debate crystallized with Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State* and Morris Janowitz's *The Professional Soldier*. The issue of civil-military relations was already well-known, but now the question of a gap between the two communities began to receive the attention of academics, politicians, and military leaders alike. This discussion, based around the differing normative interpretations of civil-military relations, military professionalism, and civilian control of the military which Huntington and Janowitz articulated, constitutes the first of three distinctive periods of literature on the civil-military gap.¹ The second period begins with the All-Volunteer Force (early 1970s), extends to the first post-Cold War presidency, and is colored generally by the experience of Vietnam. It examines how the shift to a volunteer force changed the military and its relations with society.² The third begins in the post-Cold War era, inspired by the changing security environment, the shrinking military establishment, and controversial civilian leadership. This era is characterized by conscious debates over the posited "civil-military culture gap," and how or whether changes in policy should be implemented to address that gap if it is truly a problem.³ Opinions on the gap subject fall into categories generally by their answers to four questions: what is the nature of this gap, if it exists? What has caused it? Why does it matter (how does it affect civilian control or military effectiveness)? And how are the problems, if there are problems, to be corrected?

World War II to the AVF

What is the gap and what has caused it?

Before the introduction of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973, the literature focused primarily on a theoretical debate over the nature of the relationship between the military and civilian worlds.⁴ That the two were fundamentally different was generally accepted. Samuel Huntington articulated the difference as the conflict between attitudes and values which the military possessed and those that civilians espoused.⁵ He attributed this

¹ Please see the Bibliography, pp. 17-19. This bibliography is not exhaustive, but it contains some of the most important literature from each period. Please note that the divisions are a convenient construct only and that these periods were not entirely distinct, but the emphasis of the predominant literature shifted. Some pieces which date at the interfaces have been cited for more than one period.

² Please see the Bibliography, pp. 19-21. Much of this research pertains to the conscript force as well.

³ Please see the Bibliography, pp. 21-28. This review is concentrating on the post-Cold War dialogue, as the earlier periods have been reviewed extensively before. However, while comprehensive, it is not exhaustive.

⁴ That is, the "gap" literature. Much commentary was also produced on the problem of the "military-industrial complex." While this idea is related to the gap, it will not be our focus here. Please see "Historical Works . . ." for more information.

⁵ e.g. Huntington (1957); Fox (1961); Karsten, et al. (1971); Hayes (1973). See also Binkin's (1993) notes pg. 34 ff.

conflict primarily to the fact that the military's function was irreducibly different from anything civilians did and thus developed, and required, a different culture.⁶ That difference was then reinforced and preserved by the natural conservatism of the military. Those who disagreed with Huntington did not dispute the idea that the military had a distinctive culture, but offered two criticisms. One school said that the distinctive military culture was inherently dangerous to (implicitly non-militaristic) liberal society.⁷ The others, led by Morris Janowitz, contended that the military's special mission did indeed lead to a unique culture, but that the changing demands of modern warfare and technology were changing the mission, and the culture would need to change with it.⁸ Since the military naturally resisted change, its culture was not adapting to the new world as rapidly as the more open and unstructured civilian society was, and would therefore benefit from outside intervention. Janowitz introduced "convergence theory," by insisting that, despite an extremely slow pace, the military *was* in fact changing even without that external pressure.

Convergence theory postulated a "civilianization" of the military and/or a "militarization" of society.⁹ This idea appeared to be borne out by several new developments. The peacetime military was beginning to have a larger ratio of support jobs (comparable to civilian occupations) to uniquely military combat-related jobs. The Department of Defense was adopting many functions that previously had been provided by the surrounding community, such as commissaries, banking services, social services, and so on. Military leadership itself was becoming more consensual and persuasive rather than arbitrary or authoritarian. Janowitzians hailed this as enhancing civilian control over a possibly alienated military. Some, however, saw the growing structural similarity of military communities to the civilian communities as increasing the military's independence of, and hence distance from, civilian society.¹⁰

A secondary theme of the period was dissatisfaction with the unrepresentative and possibly unfair nature of the selective service system.¹¹ This was blamed on the ability of the wealthy to avoid draft service, unlike those at the lower end of the educational and financial scale without the means to do the same. Although the perception of economic disparity was undesirable, at least one observer claimed that there was not in fact a significant problem with

⁶ e.g. Huntington (1957) esp. ch. 3 and pg. 144; Halperin (1972); Hayes (1973). Janowitz (1971) also notes the conservatism – i.e. the cultural inertia – of the military (see esp. the Prologue). The idea of cultural difference is implicit in nearly every work of this period.

⁷ e.g. Buck et al. (1949); Cook (1962); Horowitz (1963); Coffin (1964); Swomley (1964); Knoll and McFadden (1969); Hayes (1973).

⁸ e.g. Janowitz (1971), in Hayes (1973), and (1974); Lang (1970).

⁹ e.g. Lyons (1961); Horowitz (1963); Wool (1968); Knoll and McFadden (1969); Shoup (1969); Hayes (1973). Janowitz's (1971, 1974) belief in convergence was asymptotic: even with greater reliance on technology, the military would retain essential differences.

¹⁰ e.g. Segal, Blair, Newport, and Stephens (1974).

hugely disparate numbers of disadvantaged poor being forced to serve while the rich did little. There was some representation across all social classes, although social ties seemed to be strongest in the middle of the social scale, rather than at either end.¹² David Segal demonstrated that even under the draft, very few people seemed to know anyone currently serving, and when civilians did know service-members or veterans, they were not very likely to discuss military issues with them. Most civilians, in other words, were not likely to know anything about the military even from second-hand experience.¹³ It is important to note, however, that Huntington's work (*inter alia*) focused almost exclusively on the officer corps, while Segal's dealt with enlisted men.

Why does it matter?

Because the culture gap was considered the inevitable result of the divergent natures of a war machine and a free society, it was treated more as an ongoing management challenge than a crisis. If the gap grew too large, some worried, civilian control might be undermined by a recalcitrant or insubordinate military.¹⁴ On the other hand, a large gap might mean that the military would be mismanaged by ignorant or indecisive civilians.¹⁵ Huntington and his followers worried that the gap would cause civilian control to become more dependent on the relative power of civilian institutions and the officer corps, making civilian control both more difficult and less reliable.¹⁶ Some denounced the civilianization of some aspects of the military because it led to a dilution of military culture - a culture they considered essential to the effectiveness of the armed forces.¹⁷ Janowitz and others tended to be more concerned about the military simply losing touch with the society it was meant to serve and protect.¹⁸ Some were afraid that a too-large gap would reduce military effectiveness because the military would be sent on missions that were inappropriate, and would not know either how to caution their civilian leaders or how to handle the mission.¹⁹ Yet others foresaw a situation in which the civilian government could not trust the advice or reports of a military whose values

¹¹ e.g. *Report of the President's Commission* (1970); Glick (1971); Barber (1972); Moskos (1972); Kohn (1974). Baskir and Strauss (1978), Califano (1999), and Cohen (1985) discuss it in retrospect.

¹² Segal (1975b).

¹³ e.g. Segal (1975a,b); Segal et al. (1978); Baskir and Strauss (1978).

¹⁴ e.g. Fulbright (1962); Horowitz (1963); Knoll and McFadden (1969); Janowitz (1971), esp. pg 221; Karsten et al. (1971); Halperin (1972); Hayes (1973). Those believing that militarism was inherently bad fall into this category, although not in the same sense: their fear was the civilian officials who, having acquired a "military mind," would formulate policy driven by military preference and capability rather than shaping capability to policy. The *Report of the President's Commission* (1970) discussed the concern that volunteer military personnel might become estranged, but dismissed it.

¹⁵ e.g. Huntington (1957); Fox (1961); Ginsburgh (1964); Yarmolinsky (1971).

¹⁶ Huntington (1957), pg. 85 ff. In his terms, Huntington was concerned that a gap would encourage civilians toward subjective control, which seemed easier but was not effective against a professional military - especially an alienated military. However, in *The Common Defense* (1961), Huntington presents a somewhat different picture of civil-military relations (see pp. 378-381).

¹⁷ e.g. Huntington (1957); Ginsburgh (1964).

¹⁸ e.g. Brogan (1957); Fulbright (1962); Janowitz (1971) and in Hayes (1973); Karsten et al. (1971); Hayes (1973).

¹⁹ e.g. Huntington (1957); Fox (1961); Fehrenbach (1963).

differed so markedly from their own.²⁰ A few said simply that some gap was normal, but that it should not be allowed to grow too large.²¹

How to correct the problem?

The methods prescribed for averting the danger of a large gap depended largely on how one perceived the gap to be a problem. Huntington suggested that civilians move towards the military culture – partly because effective control depended on a certain amount of mutual understanding, but also because he believed that military culture possessed values objectively superior to those of civilian culture. Janowitz took the opposite tack, insisting that the military's first duty was to society, and if society changed and altered its strategic goals, the military must adapt to them. The moderate "fusionists"²² thought that the military should be better trained to integrate the political into its strategic advice.²³ Many added that civilian officials ought to be more familiar with or supportive of military culture, and more expert in military technical matters to enable them to make informed policy decisions.²⁴ Meanwhile, the anti-militarists advocated large reductions of the defense budget and drastic curtailment of the number of officers and former officers placed in public office.²⁵ As it happened, the experience of Vietnam altered the terms of the debate.

The AVF and the End of the Cold War

What is the gap?

Interest in civil-military affairs was understandably high in the immediate wake of Vietnam and the abolition of the draft. Many who had already been interested in the issue deliberately tracked what effects the AVF would have on the character of the military and civil-military relations. Predictions that the switch to a volunteer force would weaken the links the military had with civilian society appeared side by side with claims that, nonetheless, certain aspects of the gap would narrow. Both expectations were to some extent borne out.

²⁰ e.g. Fox (1961); Karsten et al. (1971); Segal et al (1978).

²¹ e.g. Fox (1961); Ginsburgh (1964); Janowitz in Hayes (1973) and (1974); Segal (1974, 1975a,b). *The Report of the President's Commission* (1970) insisted that the move to a volunteer force would not change the fundamental composition of the armed forces. That they addressed it at all indicated not only that this was a public concern, but also that the responsible officials did not believe - or did not wish others to think - that concern well-founded.

²² "Fusionist" includes all who think that the military and society ought not to be separate or different to any great extent. Moderate fusionists would be those believing there should be no legal or official barriers between the military and political or civil society. Radical fusionists would argue that there ought to be no difference at all (e.g. only a civilian militia system for home defense, or military and civilian roles indistinguishable at the senior policymaking level).

²³ e.g. Lyons (1961); Fulbright (1962); Sarkesian (1972). Janowitz's recommendation is slightly different: not that military men should be specifically trained as military politicians, but that they should simply be brought into line with civilian society.

²⁴ e.g. Huntington (1957); Brogan (1957); Fox (1961); Knoll and McFadden (1969) Glick (1971); Hyman (1973).

²⁵ e.g. Buck et al.(1949); Cook (1962); Horowitz (1963); Coffin (1964); Swomley (1964); Knoll and McFadden (1969).

In the beginning, when the force still consisted primarily of a drafted cross-section of the male population, the divergence did not seem too great, but appeared to be growing.²⁶ Fewer and fewer high-school students showed an interest in joining the military.²⁷ At the same time, budget cutbacks began reducing the opportunities for those in the military to be educated at civilian institutions, or for veterans to remain connected to the military establishment by reserve service or their benefits packages.²⁸ Vietnam left a palpable animosity between the social and academic elite and the military.²⁹ On the other hand, the new volunteer force was beginning to seem less like an institution, where the people in it identified with the mission and felt a sense of obligation and belonging. It now looked more like a civilian office job: a nine-to-five occupation which paid the bills and provided substantial benefits.³⁰ “Convergence theory,” based mostly on this observation, stated that the military was growing more like civilian society and that civilians were attempting to emulate aspects of military society.³¹

One issue that provoked a great deal of discussion was the role of women in the military and the latter’s attempts to recruit them; feminist and other literature bulged with debate over military culture. The feminists fell into two groups: those who denounced the military as a purely masculine institution dedicated to (anti-woman) violence and death, and who sometimes called for the abolition of the military;³² and those who denounced the society which had defined power and violence as exclusively male attributes, and called for the full and unrestricted participation of women in the military as a right of equal citizenship.³³ Feminists and most others who denounced military culture as such tended not to make analytical distinctions between officer and enlisted, either because they were not aware of the

²⁶ e.g. Janowitz (1973); Kohn (1974); Segal (1975a,b); Cohen (1985); Hadley (1986); Shields (1990).

²⁷ Kohn (1974); Bachman (1983); Binkin, (1993) esp. pg. 92 ff. Goodpaster (1977) notes that the recruiting difficulties initially faced by the AVF changed only with the rise of unemployment and resultant pressures on enlistment-age people to find secure work.

²⁸ Benoit (1973); Kohn (1974); Russett (1974); Segal et al (1978).

²⁹ e.g. Kohn (1974); Goodpaster and Huntington (1977) pg. 54; Menard (1977); Hadley (1986); Previdi (1988); Shields (1990).

³⁰ e.g. Segal et al, (1978); Cohen (1985) pg. 181; Tasker (1990). Charles Moskos wrote about the Institutional/Organizational dichotomy in (1970, 1988). Binkin (1993) notes that the American public seemed very surprised when the military was actually called on to go to the field - endangering single moms, mothers of young infants, and a large proportion of young black men. His implication is that the military had become, in public perception, just another job. Even legislators were astounded that the military would consider sending the mothers of young children to the field: Congresswoman Beverly Byron introduced legislation to prevent single parents from being deployed. When that failed, she altered tactics and tried to exempt only mothers of young children. Kohn (1974) argues that the convergence trend which had been true for the post-War period was actually reversing itself by the early '70s.

³¹ e.g. Segal et al. (1978); Cohen (1985) pg. 181. Some commentators believed the greater openness and ethnic/gender representation of the AVF strengthened the ties between the military and society which the Vietnam conflict had threatened: see e.g. Binkin (1993) pg.2. On the other side, the diminishing influence of the NCO and the increasingly civilian look of military barracks and dining facilities are cited as evidence of the military becoming “less military.” Goodpaster and Huntington (1977) note that the trend towards more education for both officers and enlisted reflected the general societal trend at the time (pg. 51).

³² e.g. Brownmiller (1975) does not specify any attempt to reform the military, but does insist that rape is a fundamental part of the military’s essentially masculine psyche. See also Kelly (1976), Leonard (1980, 1981).

³³ e.g. Radical Feminists' Organizing Committee (1984); McAfee (1992); Mariner (1993, 1994); Strossen (1994). For a critique of their position, see Moskos (1990a).

possibly significant differences in culture, or because from their point of view, the differences were not significant.

What has caused the gap?

Although most of the changes observed were attributed to the nature of the AVF, few sources appear to have discussed that change in detail: for instance, why military service appealed to a declining number of people, or why the upper strata should wish disproportionately to avoid serving – even as officers – during peacetime. The common "explanation" was a one-sentence reference to the educated elite objecting to Vietnam and, by association, military service in general. The self-selecting nature of the service and the military's need to appeal to a wide pool of applicants were obvious correlates of the shift to a volunteer force, and both were cited as possibly problematic.³⁴ The argument that the military's mission was unique and formed a uniquely non-civilian culture was still widely accepted,³⁵ but the mission component had begun to weigh less than the demographic make-up of the military. That compositional change was attributed mostly to the end of the draft.³⁶

Why does it matter?

Feminists argued that the existing gap between the military and society should not exist – either because the society should not need a military or because the military should be more like society.³⁷ Most other commentators said that some cultural gap was inevitable (some thought that the social evil of demographic disproportion in the military was more than offset by other social benefits of the new system)³⁸ but that the gap must not be allowed to reach the point where it caused problems. Clear articulation of where that boundary lay was elusive, but the problems that people anticipated remained much the same as those that had pre-dated the AVF. Those were: a civilian society ignorant of and therefore unsympathetic to the military's special needs and uninterested in electing officials who would be militarily prudent,³⁹ a military – increasingly isolated from and by indifferent civilians –

³⁴ e.g. Janowitz (1973); Kohn (1974); Cohen (1985) esp. ch. 8; Shields (1990). Binkin (1993), though, says the greater participation of women (a positive) was made possible only by the (negative) fact that a volunteer force could not attract enough qualified men.

³⁵ e.g. Hayes (1973); Sarkesian (1975); Goodpaster and Huntington (1977); Menard (1977) pg. 82; Cohen (1985). See also the feminist writings, e.g. Brownmiller (1975) ch. 3; McAfee (1992); Schneider (1995).

³⁶ e.g. Janowitz (1973); Kohn (1974); Cohen (1985); Louv (1988); Shields (1989); Moskos (1990b); Tasker (1990); Binkin (1993). Davis (1974) cites industrialization as the key factor in the cultural gap (pg.100).

³⁷ The feminists advocating abolition of violence and the military are represented by Kelly (1976) and Leonard (1980, 1981). Those promoting equal participation of women in violence and the military are represented best by the Radical Feminist Organizing Committee's position paper (1984), but also by later writers Strossen (1994), Schneider (1995) and Watson (1998).

³⁸ Tasker (1990) and Binkin (1993) cite the end of the draft itself as a social benefit; see also Overbea (1985) – the feeling here, as with many treatments of minorities in the military, is that the negative of disproportion is offset by the positive of unique opportunity for otherwise disadvantaged groups.

³⁹ e.g. Yarmolinsky (1973/74); Russett (1974); Garfinkel (1977); Hadley (1986).

which ceased to regard its obligations to society and may turn hostile,⁴⁰ a military whose size or effectiveness might decline,⁴¹ and civilian officials with so little military understanding as to be uniquely *unqualified* to make intelligent military policy.⁴² The convergence theorists disagreed over whether the convergence was positive (the military ought to conform to liberal democratic society)⁴³ or negative (military culture is necessary and it is being attenuated).⁴⁴

How to correct the problem?

Some prescriptions from this period focused on funding: the military should be adequately funded to keep its members connected, and to allow social interaction programs like service-members being educated in civilian institutions and base “open houses” for the surrounding communities.⁴⁵ Another popular idea – even among many who disagreed over the problem – was to increase the proportion of officers drawn from ROTC programs. This, it was believed, would mean officers with more civilian values and connections, who were less authoritarian than those educated at the Academies or who graduated from OTS and OCS.⁴⁶ The feminist solutions were, on the one hand, to boycott the military until it crumbled, and on the other, to remove all formal restrictions on women and push them into all aspects of the military, forcing it to be more demographically representative. Other suggestions included the possibility of lateral entry into the military for civilian specialists, connecting the military to civilian society at higher levels,⁴⁷ or broadening academy curricula to emphasize American civics.⁴⁸ Talk of a return to the draft surfaced, where before such an idea had been politically unmentionable.⁴⁹

⁴⁰ e.g. Hayes (1973); Kohn (1974); Previdi (1988); Dunlap (1993). The *Report of the President's Commission* (1970) discussed these concerns but rejected them.

⁴¹ e.g. Janowitz (1973); Kohn (1974); Sarkesian (1975); Alford (1980); Tarr (1981); Cohen (1985); Louv (1988).

⁴² e.g. Hadley (1986); Shields (1990); Fallows cited in Eitelberg and Little (1995). Cohen (1985) does not expressly say that the lack of interest in military service in the societal elites leads to bad policy, but in his “possible solutions” he makes clear that a concern raised by an AVF is the absence of elites in uniform. Goodpaster and Huntington (1977) are not as harshly critical of the civilian officials' lack of military experience, but are explicit that the tendency of the civilians toward the ideal rather than the practical is a weak point in their relations with the action-oriented military (pg. 45).

⁴³ e.g. Hayes (1973); McAfee (1992); Watson (1998). Davis (1974) says a degree of convergence *ought* to occur.

⁴⁴ e.g. Deagle (1973); Cohen (1985). Huntington (with Goodpaster, 1977) is not a strict convergence theorist, but does argue that the AVF became more civilian for a few years after its establishment, then stabilized. At time of writing, he believed that the congruence trend had begun to reverse itself (pp. 22-26).

⁴⁵ e.g. Cohen (1985) pg. 181 n. 53; Binkin (1993). Goodpaster and Huntington (1977) suggest that careful civilian attention to military educational curricula and even broader military participation in designing and taking advantage of such education would serve to improve relations between military and academic societies (pg. 54).

⁴⁶ e.g. Karsten, et al. (1971); Hayes (1973); Yarmolinsky (1973/74); Kohn (1974); Cohen (1985) pg. 181; see also Glick (1971).

⁴⁷ e.g. Yarmolinsky (1973/74).

⁴⁸ e.g. Lovell (1970); Yarmolinsky (1973/74); Lovell and Kronenberg (1974); Goodpaster and Huntington (1977); Lovell (1979).

⁴⁹ e.g. Kohn (1974); Overbea (1985); Louv (1988); Moskos (1990b); Binkin (1993) esp. pp. 87-94 and notes. Cohen (1985) claims that a renewal of the draft is inevitable, given the weakness of the AVF.

The Post-Cold War World

What is the gap?

The coincidence in the post-Cold War period of a dramatically altered security environment, the downsizing occasioned by an anticipated “peace dividend,” and the Clinton presidency has produced heated debate over the military’s mission, strategy, and character. The hand-over of power from the relatively “liberal” Admiral William Crowe to the more “traditional” General Colin Powell served to highlight the tensions. The argument has become ubiquitous that increasing technological sophistication and the new security challenges change fundamentally the needs and goals of the armed forces.⁵⁰ Disagreement between the military and its civilian superiors flares into confrontation over questions like homosexual service and non-traditional missions, causing concern to academics and senior defense officials alike.

Those who speak of a gap classify it two ways. The first is the traditional culture (or “values” in modern parlance) gap - referring both to the traits that each culture cultivates and to the general world-views of civilians and military. This is the oft-stated idea that the military has a different set of values from society as a whole.⁵¹ This is of course in itself a rather weak statement, as breaking society down into subsets of any kind will reveal some differences. In recent years, though, this concept has acquired the added dimension of partisan identification: specifically the overt Republican identification of many officers and the declining number of independents.⁵² The second gap is not so much a substantive difference between the military and civilians, but a lack of contact and understanding between them,⁵³ echoing earlier concerns about a volunteer force with diminishing contact and social ties with the world outside its bases.

What has caused the gap?

⁵⁰ e.g. Toffler (1993); Burk (1994); Desch (1995, 1996); Gilroy (1995); Sarkesian et al. (1995); Snider and Carlton-Carew (1995); Levins (1996); Nye (1996); Bacevich and Kaplan (1998); Maynes (1998); Sarkesian (1998); Ricks (1998b, 1999a,d); Danzig (1999); Rosenfeld (1999). Note that this argument is not by any means new.

⁵¹ Few argue that there is no cultural difference at all, but there are also few who argue that the cultural difference is the primary danger. Maynes (1998) is concerned that a military made up primarily of lower-class people will be unlikely to sacrifice itself to policy made by the upper-crust. Tarr and Roman (1998) provide a counterweight, arguing that the growing *similarities* of high-level military officials to high-level civilian officials is politicizing those officers and is a dangerous trend. Chivers (1999) represents a small set arguing that the cultural differences are so small as to be invisible.

⁵² e.g. Kohn (1994); Desch (1995); Bacevich and Kohn (1997); Kreisher (1997); Ricks (1997d,1998b) esp. ch. 9; Holsti (1998). Snider and Carlton-Carew (1995) point out that partisanship cuts both ways: e.g. pg. 3. Hackworth (1997) and Tarr and Roman (1998) are more concerned with the politicization – i.e. the loss of neutrality – of the ranks.

⁵³ e.g. wire reports (1994); Eitelberg and Little (1995); McIsaac and Verdugo (1995); Sarkesian et al (1995) esp. ch. 4; Kreisher (1996); Levins (1996); Byron (1998); Maynes (1998); Danzig (1999); Moskos, Williams, and Segal (2000). Ricks (1999c) notes how some new technology is helping to blur the lines between civilian and military life, but that very stark differences still remain. Gen. Shelton ('98) denies that there is an understanding gap, and maintains that each community has a deep respect for the other. Chivers (1999) says that it’s only a few military people arrogant enough to consider themselves better than society at large who are afraid of a culture or understanding gap, and that there is no real danger in the current situation.

Opinions about the causes of these gaps vary widely. The cultural differences are still attributed to the nature of the military mission and organization, but in the face of what many feel ought to be a changing mission, the persistence of the culture is attributed to the self-selective and unrepresentative nature of the All-Volunteer Force.⁵⁴ The misunderstandings are still credited to the effects of Vietnam and sometimes to the aforementioned cultural differences,⁵⁵ sometimes to the declining size and resources of the defense establishment and the resulting lack of personal contact or experience with the military.⁵⁶ Often the explanation includes a combination of all of the above.⁵⁷ There is also a view, which does not fall neatly into either “gap” category, that a key difference between the military and civilian worlds is organizational structure.⁵⁸ Essentially this view assumes that organizational difference indicates a sort of cultural difference, and the argument follows the same logic.

Why does it matter?

Several of those arguing that there is a gap contend that the *cultural* gap is to be expected, and its existence *per se* is innocuous.⁵⁹ While it is possible for the cultural gap to become too wide or too narrow, there is an optimum middle ground. These commentators vary on where the current situation falls on that spectrum. Most think that the cultural gap is necessary and desirable because civilian culture is incommensurate with military

⁵⁴ e.g. Eitelberg and Little (1995); Muchow (1995); Bacevich and Kohn (1997); Duncan (1997) esp. pg. 224; Collins (1998); Maynes (1998); Webb (1998); Hillen (1998a,b, 1999); Freeman (1999); Towell (1999). Some commentators ascribe the opposite effect to the AVF, namely that its greater openness and ethnic/gender representation has strengthened the ties between the military and society which the Vietnam conflict threatened: e.g. Overbea (1985); Binkin (1993).

⁵⁵ e.g. Eitelberg and Little (1995); Snider and Carlton-Carew (1995); Stiehm (1996); J. Bowman (1998); Will (1998); Danzig (1999); Peters (1999); Truscott (1999). Included as “cultural differences” are the disagreements over appropriate mission.

⁵⁶ e.g. McIsaac and Verdugo (1995); Muchow (1995); Snider and Carlton-Carew (1995); Levins (1996); Duncan (1997); Hillen (1998a,b); Webb (1998); Cohen, Janet in Becker (1999); Danzig (1999); Freeman (1999). Byron (1998) weighs in on the other side, claiming that the benefits system is obsolete and cripplingly expensive.

⁵⁷ e.g. Desch (1995) argues that the external security environment is the key factor. Sarkesian et al (1995) discuss both cultural differences and tightening resources, and the AVF is described as having improved the quality of recruit but introduced occupational tendencies and diminished demographic representation. Bacevich and Kohn (1997) are primarily concerned with the politicization of the officer corps, and attribute it in part to the self-selection of the AVF and in part to the Republican defense build-up under Reagan. Sarkesian (1998) says that the cultural gap is due to the special mission of the military, and that the lack of understanding is due partly to how few people in public life have served and partly to the fact that the military has been *too* acquiescent and not represented itself well. Tarr and Roman (1998) are also concerned with the politicization of the highest-level military officers, and attribute it in part to the American political process. See also Kohn (1994); Segal (1995); Ricks (1997d); Skelton in House Congressional Record (1997).

⁵⁸ e.g. Kier in Katzenstein and Reppy (1999) argues that the unique organizational ability of the military to control the attitudes and actions of its members ought to be used to push ahead changes in societal norms (like the full acceptance of open homosexuals) which cannot be imposed on civilian society (see pg. 48). This position essentially follows Moskos's Institutional/Occupational dichotomy, where civilian society is occupational and the military either is or ought to be institutional. The dissenting opinion on this point would be the sort of argument given by Bernard Bass: essentially that leadership must be of a certain kind (transformational) to be successful, whether the context is civilian or military (Bass, 1996, 1998).

⁵⁹ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995); Segal (1995); Kreisher (1997); Simons (1997); Chapman (1998); Moore (1998); Sarkesian (1998); Hillen in Bracknell (1999). Most who claim that the cultural gap is not by nature dangerous concede that aspects of that difference lead directly to the problems of misunderstanding. Kohn (1994, with Bacevich 1997, cite in Bracknell 1999) considers the military culture of political conservatism and the shift towards partisanship not to be dangerous in and of themselves, but to be close to the point where they become dangerous: leading to disaffection, ineffectiveness, and deligitimization in the public eyes.

effectiveness.⁶⁰ If it *were* suitable, the military would be unnecessary. The danger of the cultural difference lies in the fact that the civilian officials may require a cultural change (like integrating open homosexuals) so provocative to the military's culture that its obedience becomes uncertain. A subset of commentators focuses on the recruiting problems occasioned by the cultural difference: the most desirable of those eligible are no longer interested in the intangible benefits that the military offers and are lured away by the more financially attractive private sector.⁶¹ On the other hand, the military's requirements for education and "character," and its intolerance of any form of deviance, tend to disqualify many who do seek to join.⁶²

Without exception, however, those who focus on a lack of understanding between the military and civilians, no matter what the cause, consider the situation unhealthy. Some point to the danger that the military will become contemptuous of civilian society and question the worth of defending that society.⁶³ Others worry that the civilian government might undermine the military through simple lack of experience, harming American security.⁶⁴ Many believe the gap problematic for both reasons.⁶⁵

How to correct the problem?

A range of suggestions to address the apparent social divide exists in the literature. Broadly, they are that the military must reach out to civilians,⁶⁶ that the civilian government ought to articulate a new mission and restructure the defense establishment around it,⁶⁷ and that the practical vehicle for better understanding is extensive bilateral

⁶⁰ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995); Segal (1995); Duncan (1997) esp. pg.xii; Kreisher (1997); Ricks (1997a,b); Chapman (1998); Moore (1998); Sarkesian (1998); Shelton (1998); Will (1998); Kohn in Bracknell (1999). On the opposing side see Korb (1996); Katzenstein and Reppy (1999): e.g. Kier argues that "structure and function do not determine culture . . ." (pg. 34 and notes).

⁶¹ This is, however, generally true only for blacks and whites. Hispanics, at least, are joining the Marine Corps in larger numbers than any other service, apparently because it appeals most to the intangible sense of being part of something extraordinary. Asians, too, are not likely to join out of pure economic necessity, although overall Asians join in very small numbers.

⁶² e.g. Tasker (1990); Levins (1996); Duncan (1997) esp. pg. 111; Ricks (1997a, 1998b); T. Bowman (1998); S.L. Myers (1998); Bracknell (1999).

⁶³ e.g. Maslowski (1990); McIsaac and Verdugo (1995); Bacevich and Kohn (1997); Chivers (1999); Feaver (1999); Hillen in Bracknell (1999); Rep. Carolyn Maloney in Harpaz (1999).

⁶⁴ e.g. wire reports (1994); Eitelberg and Little (1995); Kreisher (1996); Levins (1996); Duncan (1997) esp. pg. 210 ff.; Bacevich and Kaplan (1998); Moore (1998); Hillen (1998a,b, 1999); Roberts (1998); Sarkesian (1998); Tarr and Roman (1998); Webb (1998); Will (1998); Murchison (1999); Truscott (1999). Danzig (1999) is afraid that American society will become alienated from its military and cease to support it.

⁶⁵ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995) esp. pp. 136-137; Ricks (1997a,b,c); Bacevich and Kaplan (1998); Byron (1998); Holsti (1998); Williams (1998); Bracknell (1999); Burk (1999); Towell (1999).

⁶⁶ e.g. Gilroy (1995); Sarkesian et al (1995) esp. pg. 141 ff.; Levins (1996); Sarkesian (1998); Williams (1998); Borlik (1999); Bracknell (1999); Danzig (1999); Rosenfeld (1999). Shelton (1998) points out many ways that military bases and personnel are already involved in community outreach.

⁶⁷ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995) propose a rethinking of the military's place in politics and perhaps official political status and guidelines for the military. They suggest a three-part system: a civilianized support wing, the less civilianized ground combat groups, focused on traditional war-fighting missions, and the least civilianized special forces, focused on unconventional ops. Duncan (1997) proposes a small rapid-reaction force and a large, well-trained reserve. See also Toffler (1993); Desch (1995, 1996); Bacevich and Kohn (1997); Bacevich and Kaplan (1998); Maynes (1998); Williams (1998); Ricks (1998a, 1999b); Danzig (1999); Moskos, Williams, and Segal (2000).

education.⁶⁸ The military must educate itself especially in history and American civics, educate civilians about military culture and ethics and why they are necessary, and educate the civilian power elite both on military capabilities and needs, and on why a distinctive military culture is necessary.⁶⁹ Government leaders should be knowledgeable about American civics and history (both political and military), and must clarify for the military civilian society's expectations and culture.⁷⁰ The government must change obsolete or unacceptable military policies, and the military must implement the changes willingly and adapt to them.⁷¹

Some people suggest that the root of the problem is that the military is self-selecting, making the cultural divide self-perpetuating. They offer a reinstatement of the draft or a European-style national service obligation to force the military to be more congruent with society and civilians to have more experience with the military.⁷² Hope for such a solution is frustrated by recurring attempts to de-fund or scale back the Selective Service System, demonstrating lingering, bipartisan political antipathy for any kind of involuntary military service.⁷³

Common Positions

There do seem to be a few positions which appear more often than others in the literature: one is that there is a necessary cultural gap between the military and the civilian, and that particular gap is positive. The military needs its distinctive culture, and as long as it is dependent on the surrounding society for recruits, funding, and services, the cultural divide cannot become dangerously wide.⁷⁴ However, the lack of contact between military and civilian life – embodied in the dwindling numbers of veterans in the population and especially in government,⁷⁵ in the tiny numbers of people who have any knowledge of or significant intercourse with military personnel, in the growing numbers of service-members who come from military families, and especially in the blatant political disagreement between the

⁶⁸ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995); Nye (1996); Sarkesian (1998); Shelton (1998); Williams (1998); Rosenfeld (1999).

⁶⁹ e.g. Sarkesian et al (1995) pp. 67-69; Nye (1996); Duncan (1997) pg. 111; Sarkesian (1998); Will (1998); Williams (1998); Bracknell (1999).

⁷⁰ e.g. Nye (1996); Sarkesian (1998). Kohn (1994), and with Bacevich (1997) says the only way to prevent the officer corps from becoming fully political actors is for the government to clarify the boundaries of what is appropriate military speech and activity.

⁷¹ e.g. Desch (1995, 1996); Sarkesian et al (1995), esp. ch.s 3, 7, 9; Korb (1996); Byron (1998); Kier (1998); Tarr and Roman (1998); Williams (1998); Ricks (1998a, 1999b); Danzig (1999); Rosenfeld (1999).

⁷² e.g. Ricks (1997d); Simons (1997); Moskos (1999).

⁷³ Attempts of this kind crop up cyclically. The most recent was a bill/amendment by Rep. James Walsh (R-N.Y.) to cut all funding except that needed to shut the Selective Service System down. Shelton (1998) argues specifically that a draft would be the wrong solution to any perceived problems. See also Lee (1999).

⁷⁴ Military leaders, most famously Generals Powell, Shalikashvili, and Shelton, agree up to this point. They believe the military has a special mission that requires a special culture. They do *not* think that there is a troubling divide between the military and civilian society, or that the principle of civilian control is in any danger. They may express concern that so many civilian government officials have no military experience, but they insist that the military is essentially well-connected to civilian society as a whole. e.g. Shelton (1998). Some (e.g. Chivers, 1999) go even further and say that it is not a concern that government officials do not have military experience and that the military is at fault for thinking itself so high above the rest of the society.

⁷⁵ e.g. Dunlap (1993); Record (1995); McIsaac and Verdugo (1995); Kreisher (1996); Levins (1996); Danzig (1999); Ricks in Bracknell (1999); wire reports (1994). For a discussion of veteran voting behavior, see Eitelberg and Little (1995) pp. 53-59.

military and the civilian elite – is troubling. The divide is especially troubling because the military has developed a contempt for the society it is supposed to protect, and could possibly turn on or abandon that society in some way. Equally troubling are civilian officials who do not understand the military and its capabilities and limitations, and are apt to use it in inappropriate ways, straining it beyond what it can bear and threatening the national interest or security. The situation is troubling because it harms recruiting, leading to shortfalls in manpower, low morale, declining quality in the ranks, and reduced effectiveness.⁷⁶

Another side, tending to focus more on civilian social issues, believes that the military's stated mission of war-fighting has been overtaken by modern technology and by the unlikelihood of large-scale conventional war, and thus the arguments against "social experimentation" predicated on the necessity of cohesion and physical strength are less relevant. This side also accepts the idea that the military has a different culture from the civilian society, but argues that traditional military culture now serves a less essential purpose, if indeed its purpose was ever essential. Given, then, that civilians have legal authority over the military, and the military has no functional imperative to retain a culture contrary to the prevailing civilian values, the military ought to conform in values and beliefs as well as organizational behavior. If the directive is to operate on a tighter budget, or to allow homosexuals to serve openly, or to allow women into ground combat units, then it ought to happen – not because it will necessarily make the military more effective, but because it is the priority and the prerogative of the civilians who are the legitimate authorities over the military establishment.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The stances taken on the civil-military gap question are a series of permutations derived from only a few possibilities, one set empirical, one normative. Empirically, one can believe that military and civilian cultures are or are not different, that they are either converging or diverging, and that any differences are either purely cultural or not. Normatively, one can believe that military and civilian cultures *ought* to be similar or different, that (depending on one's answer to the empirical question) they *ought* to converge or diverge, that each culture is conditioned by and essential to the particular goals of that society or that they are simply constructs, and that the current trend (whatever it is) is good or bad. Crucial to the aggregation of these standpoints is the idea of mission: what one believes about what ought to happen will depend in great part on what one believes is the

⁷⁶ This position has been taken most notably by Ricks, who is joined in it to various extents by Byron ('98); Danzig ('99); Dunlap ('93, '94); Kohn ('94), with Bacevich ('97); Will ('98); and with reservations by Kreisher ('97) and Simons ('97). Sarkesian ('98) agrees with the empirical assessment, but says the danger is not an insubordinate military but an eviscerated one.

⁷⁷ See for example Kier ('98) and ('99); Korb ('96).

mission of the military. Because of the difficulty of measuring certain aspects of this problem, there is wide disagreement even over the empirical side of the question. One particular problem has been choosing the military sample, as some have focused exclusively on officers, some exclusively on enlisted, and some have tried to include both. These data sets can, when compared to civilian information, easily produce disparate results.

What is lacking in the existing literature is a thorough examination that addresses both the empirical and the normative issues. Systematic data are especially lacking. Currently, the literature relies to a great extent on anecdotes and reflections based on personal exposure to the military. The studies associated with this project are aimed at addressing these lacunae in the literature by producing such data. Collectively, they will provide the most comprehensive and systematic treatment of the issue to date, attempting to answer the question: what *is* the gap, or rather, what are the gaps, between the civilians and the military?

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