

DEMOCRATIC CIVIL- MILITARY RELATIONS

A Framework for Analysis

ANNETTE SEEGER

University of Cape Town

Abstract

Political thought has long nurtured three fears about armed forces: that the people will make war on each other; that the government will make war on the people; and that the soldiers will make war on government. The democratic tradition has typical responses to these fears, among others by commercialising society; limiting and weakening the state empowering the legislature; encouraging professionalism; and punishing partisanship. When viewed from a behavioural or practical angle, many of these responses are deeply flawed.

Introduction

What does a democracy expect of its armed forces¹ at home? Some would say that satisfactory answers to this question have already been given by civil-military relations scholars such as Cottey, Edmunds and Foster (2002); Huntington (1957, especially pages 80 to 97) and Kohn (1997), as well as democratic peace-theorists to the likes of Brown, Lynn-Jones and Miller (1999). Theoreticians of Security Sector Reform, such as Fayemi and Ball (2004), and the principles developed by the UK's

1 Consisting of military bodies specialising in maximum force; police forces that include maximum force components, often housed in paramilitary units; and intelligence services, operating independently of military and police bodies, and whose activities include covert action which includes the use of maximum force.

Department for International Development (n.d.) have contributed as well. And true, the existing answers are powerful, especially those given by Huntington. Yet, there are also persistent weaknesses.

First is the relative indifference to armed forces other than the military. One such armed force is autonomous intelligence force(s). Stepan, for example, has insisted that autonomous intelligence organisations are critical to democratisation in the Southern Cone and that the intelligence forces' often covert use of armed force makes them a problem equal to that of the military (Stepan, 1988). Another armed force is paramilitary or militarised police forces. These are found even among older democracies, France for example, but also in younger democracies such as Portugal and Spain.

Second is the reification of methods and techniques such as the formulas of Security Sector Reform: the legislature must control declarations of war and the military budget; the military must be professional; civil society has watchdog duties; etc. By turning methods into ends-in-themselves, advocates avoid the question whether a method really works in the presumed manner. 'Oughts' may have nothing to do with actual behaviour. And what should be done in situations where the requisite institutions are either absent or feeble?

Third, it is impossible to escape the impression that the existing scholarship's understanding of democracy is thoroughly anglophilic. Whereas American and English notions of democracy drew on the historical fight to limit monarchical power, the French experience, for example, can be understood as emboldening the state. The French Revolution's legacy soaks democracy in the heady waters of societal transformation. After 1789, the state's power provided the leverage for massive changes in the French economy and society.²

The French Revolution was, in large part, informed by the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau about the general will, a notion that asserted the popular will was a moral entity that consisted of more than the sum of its parts. French revolutionaries directed "the nation as though it were no longer composed of a multitude but actually formed one person ... it was the theoretical substitute for the sovereign will of an absolute monarch" (Arendt 1965:156). Although the nation was indivisible, the Revolution's politicians were divided, thus making France vulnerable to invasion. Eventually Napoleon came to the rescue. This story was to end at Waterloo, but in the process Bonapartism was born: The French military were the guardians of the general will created by the Revolution, and thus have the right and duty to guard against betrayals of France by civilian politicians and bureaucrats. Soldiers have the right to disrupt political authority because the "Army takes responsibility for the People" (Horne 1984:92; see also Arendt 1965:163-183, 190-191; De la Gorce 1963).

2 My interpretation is based on Furet (1981) and Skocpol (1979).

French soldiers have not been reluctant to claim the role once played by the absolute monarch.³ And the French have not kept Bonapartism and the social revolution to themselves. Mamdani, for example, has shown how the Rwandan state, after the social revolution of 1959 started to define the military as a nation-in-uniform, defined the nation as an indivisible entity, and dedicated the state to completing the revolution started with the uprising against colonial masters. These notions smoothed the road to mass participation in state-organised killing designed to rid the Rwandan nation of any trace of political pluralism (Mamdani 2001:103-131, 184-233).

In the post-1970 era of democratisation, understandings of democracy have shied away from the ambitions of the French and the Anglophone love of freedom and liberty. Minimalist understandings of democracy are currently much in favour, described by Shapiro as a system of managing conflict by means of procedures and rules. Beliefs, preferences and values are left intact (Shapiro 2003:10-34). The pioneer of this school is Joseph Schumpeter (1942), although Isaiah Berlin follows the same line (Berlin 1992:10-13), as do Conflict Management-scholars such as John Paul Lederach. North American Conflict Management-scholars tend to believe in managing diversity so that it does not escalate into violence. A negative peace or the absence of war is triumph enough (Lederach 1997).

The understanding of democracy as the absence of war is quite popular among democratising African countries, especially those of Africa's southern regions. Here countries have embraced democracy after devastating experiences of war. During the war, elites came to understand they were caught in "hurting stalemates" (Zartman 1989), and then embraced democratic ideas and procedures because they offered a way to end the war. Constitutional democracy and proportional representation, for example, ensured that outvoted and vulnerable (but spoiling and potentially violent) groups could be accommodated (see Bratton 1999; Bratton & Van de Walle 1997). This type of democracy and democratisation has its critics: it is said to be elitist, superficial, and top-down. This criticism is not entirely fair as high voter turnout (when outcomes are not in doubt) and other bottom-up indicators suggest that people in these types of African democracies are deeply committed to making democracy work. People behave around democratic procedures as if their very lives depended on it, as it probably does (Little & Logan 2009; Logan & Machado 2002).

Acknowledging different meanings of democracy is not to dilute the conception. By democracy we refer to a system with universal franchise, genuine and regularly-held elections, and accountable governance. Democracies may vary in, for example, their executive systems, voting systems, and legislative structures; yet variation should not disguise the central purpose of a democracy, which is to serve individuals, collections of individuals, and/or communities (Dahl 1956:1). We use the term 'democratic

3 It challenged the leaders during the Franco-Prussian War; senior soldiers fought with Clemenceau because he was too radical for their taste; De Gaulle disobeyed a legally elected Petain; the Algerian coup-makers challenged De Gaulle; and so on to the rift with Mitterrand over his communism. It is only with the Fifth Republic (post-1958) that a more confident civilian control over the military has been established. See Martin (1981).

tradition' to refer to these necessary components but the term also includes other components of democracy that have developed over centuries in different contexts.

Armed forces, however, do not always fit in comfortably with the democratic tradition. Political thinkers have long nurtured three fears about armed forces: that the people will make war on each other; that the government will make war on the people; and that the soldiers will make war on government. The purpose of this article is to (a) identify and explain these fears and (b) to discuss the typical means by which the democratic tradition has responded to these fears.

The fear of a warlike culture and society

Theorists argue that economic, cultural and social (that is, societal) conditions can make or break democratic government. Much of the recent writing in the so-called Third Wave of democratisation has framed this argument as being about either the preconditions of democracy or conditions affecting the consolidation of new democracies. If a societal foundation remains weak, democratic governance will not survive (see, for example, Huntington 1991; Putnam 1993).

For our purposes, one societal condition is important: a warlike or militarised culture and society.⁴ However, how do we recognise a militarised culture and society? What are its causes? And cures? A militarised culture and society can derive from minority rule, the fear of insecurity or because a democratic society loses its commitment to democratic values. The cure has traditionally been economic in nature. When it is not found, the people of a militarised society will always be "either at your throat or at your feet."⁵

One of the earliest descriptions of a militarised society is Thucydides's description of Sparta in *The Peloponnesian Wars*: Spartans are calculating even when they do the right thing; ungenerous and deceitful in their dealing with others; xenophobic; they think education should cultivate military spiritedness; and believe individual initiative and talent had to be sacrificed to the greater good (Thucydides 1972:142-144, 161-164). Sparta's slave population was large and because of limited assimilation into Spartan society, also restless. A love of freedom, equality and commerce was going to be of no help in war, and worse, quelling a slave revolt during war. Therefore Spartans required of themselves to love discipline, hierarchy and inequality: they needed to produce warriors.

4 The term culture will here refer to beliefs and ideas about what is fitting and proper for human beings to do in one context. Beliefs and ideas are abstract but they also can be materialised in art, entertainment, letters, and practices. The term society here refers to more than a collection of individuals but also to societal formations such as families, ascriptive and associational groups, classes, communities and regions. Neither culture nor society is static; change is permanently in motion but it is rarely dramatic or sudden.

5 Said by Churchill of Germans but also commonly cited as an "old European" saying. See Germany: Cops and robbers (1945) and Germany: Last call for Europe, 1950.

Although Athens was not a democracy, as we would understand the term,⁶ Thucydides's description of the Athenian manner is meant to illustrate democratic attitudes and behaviour. The Athenian manner is "daring, permissiveness ... [and shows] generosity without pettiness and calculation, freedom, generous gaiety and ease, courage in war which stems not from compulsion, dictation, and harsh discipline" (Thucydides 1972:142-151). Athenians are energetic, individualistic, self-assured risk-takers, tolerant of differences, and welcome foreigners because they would like to trade with them.

Hobbes thought warlike behaviour flowed from a naturally equal human condition. For Hobbes, human beings had equal capacity to kill each other and because of that capacity, were equal. Our equality – the sameness of our human desires and fears – makes us fight others, and fighting requires both force and fraud. With the human character dominated by the love of force and fraud, life is grim: "No arts ... no letters, no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Hobbes 1977:98-99).

An escape out of the warlike condition is possible and lies in giving up a portion of freedom in exchange for gaining protection from violence. But yet once again, how does this escape come about? Hobbes thought it happened when a sovereign or power beyond our ordinary, fearful selves emerged with the capacity to overawe us and provided us with a life free from the fear of an early death. We are therefore obliged to subordinate ourselves to the creator of that order and safety, the sovereign. Yet regression into a condition of war and/or the resurgence of force and fraud are always possible. We fear such a return to war, something that the leviathan can of course exploit (Hobbes 1977:80-112; 166-167).

De Tocqueville is no more convinced that a democratic society will always remain democratic: a regression is possible when "the laxity of democratic mores combined with the restless spirit of the army" (De Tocqueville 1969:735). Regression results in, among others, societal militarisation. Military things become an ideal that all society should imitate. Hierarchy is ranked higher than equality; force higher than consent; and discipline and order higher than freedom: "... the people would become a reflection of the army, and societies would be regimented like barracks" (De Tocqueville 1969:735).

The list of cases illustrating cultural and societal militarism is unfortunately not a short one. Besides Latin American political cultures, a popular citation is the case of Germany, not least because German militarism was connected to frequent wars against its neighbours and because of the horrors of the Nazi era (Calleo 1978:1; see also An 2006; Larres 2002).

6 In Athens power was not in the hands of a minority but the majority and, although Athenians owned slaves, the slave population was small and relatively well-integrated into society.

The commercial cure

How do democrats act on the fear of a militarised culture and society? Since the days of the Peloponnesian wars, the major corrective has been seen to lie in commerce. Hirschman (1977:4) explains how early capitalist thinkers addressed the twin problems presented by warrior ideals and military elites devoted to seeking glory.

The love of glory was challenged on the grounds that it lacked realism about human nature. A more realistic interpretation, a host of capitalist theorists argued, was an individual motivated by interests, not glory, and the dominant interest was avarice, action in accordance with your economic interests, and/or the love of profit. This “acquisitive drive” would result in commerce, banking and industry. Commerce would make the ways of men gentler and more polite because commercially-minded people realise they need others. Barbarian ways would be polished and softened.⁷

The early capitalist thinkers did not expect the glory-loving elite to disappear; it would be counteracted, however, by the rise of a “middle rank of men”, an elite based in trade and industry (Hirschman 1977:82-83). Of course this middle rank of men presupposed the institution of private property. Locke told how labour would privatise nature’s bounty (Locke 1952:16-30). For De Tocqueville, too, the devotion to property was important. He adds:

The ever-increasing number of men of property devoted to peace, the growth of personal property which war so rapidly devours, mildness of mores, gentleness of heart, that inclination to pity which equality inspires, that cold and calculating spirit which leaves little room for sensitivity to the poetic and violent emotions of wartime – all these causes act together to damp down warlike fervour, among civilized nations warlike passions become rarer and less active as social conditions get nearer to equality. (De Tocqueville 1969:646)

While the majority of the early capitalist thinkers were at pains to show that the acquisitive drive was somehow natural, later thinkers started to think more historically about human motivations. What historical conditions or factors will thus foster or cultivate a commercial temperament? Religion is one condition or exposure deemed to foster a commercial disposition.

The answer was that a conversion to Protestantism stimulated capitalist thinking and behaviour. Protestant thinking differentiated itself from Catholic thinking by arguing that an individual could have a relationship with God without the intervention of the Roman Catholic Church. Another major differentiation from the Catholic thinking was the stress on human activism and energy in this life on earth. No longer accepting of the quietude that flowed from arguing that the City of Man was inferior to the City of God, Protestant thinking argued that the purpose of the individual in this life was to show devotion by cultivating God’s creation. Christians should work and work hard, and they deserved to own the fruits of their labour. They were not supposed to flaunt their wealth or become materialistic. The

⁷ The phrases are those of Montesquieu (in *Esprit des Lois*) as cited in Hirschman (1977:12, 51-52, 66).

material plenty that was produced, testified to the great- and goodness of God. One should approach the fruits of one's labour in the spirit of asceticism, piety, and self-denial – not pride and vanity (Weber, Parsons & Tawney 2002).

Can the commercial path be taken by every country and community? To the writers of *The Federalist Papers*, the answer was 'no' and the reason was more complicated than not being a Protestant. James Madison envisioned a dynamic societal base for democracy: since money was constantly being made *and* lost, classes and groups would never consist of the same members. Dynamic commerce and industry required an "extensive republic" or wide swaths of territory with abundant natural assets. Such commercial and class mobility was unlikely to occur in small, agriculturally-based countries (*The Federalist Papers* 1961:77-84; see also Smith 2003).

By the nineteenth century, the reasoning that militarism flourishes when there is not enough commercial dynamism, started to fray. One critic was Lenin. Too much capitalism, he said, would produce militarism or, more precisely, finances from capitalism's workings would produce a surplus that had to be got rid of, among others by spending on military things, foreign military adventures, militarism, and war-mongering (Lenin 1971). Lenin was undoubtedly influenced by the arms race between Britain and Germany and it is the same combination of military build-up and economic growth that prompted later critics within the democratic tradition to sustain the argument. These critics used the concepts of a "garrison state" or a "military-industrial complex" to capture the essential failure of the highly developed capitalist cure (Lasswell 1941; Mills 1956).

One of the problems of this line of reasoning is that it focuses too heavily on the state and state-driven militarism (see Berghahn 1981). That the state or government can cultivate, even demand, militarism in society, is historically obvious. Yet culture and society may be militarised without the state requiring and/or stimulating it.

The fear that government makes war on the people

Here the fear is that government will seek foreknowledge of war by spying on people; will arrest and detain people in preparation of the killing; and will then kill people. Democratic scholars are divided about why armed forces and politicians make common cause of their attack on people and how one addresses the problem:

Some scholars believe the faults will be the creation of the elite, party or person who monopolises power (Dahl 1989:49, 348 [fn 8]). Their solution to this problem is to limit the power of the state and to require of the state to obtain the consent of the governed for their actions. Government is only allowed to perform a narrow range of functions, thus limiting the reach of political rulers.⁸ Another group of scholars, described as representing a republican tradition,⁹ believe the problem does not derive from who holds power in government; the fault lies in the very nature of government power, which tends to become more concentrated.

8 For full explanations of the logic, see Locke and Nozick (1974).

9 From Pocock (1975).

But how does the democratic tradition act on this fear? I mention only three avenues of action: limiting and weakening state power, an instrument of the people and a civilianised military.

Limiting and weakening state power

One form of limiting state power consists of reducing the range of state functions or responsibilities. Functions are still supposed to be properly performed but these functions are few (De Tocqueville 1969:690-695). Another form of limiting state power is the separation of powers (SOP) or, more accurately, the sharing of powers by separate institutions, which will stimulate competition among institutions, and thus keep the state divided against itself. Because humans are by nature jealous, the inhabitants of any branch will guard its own powers while envying those of the other branches. By encouraging “ambition to counteract ambition” (*The Federalist Papers* 1961:322) it is impossible for any party or person to dominate the state (*The Federalist Papers* 1961:320-325).

Contemporary democratic thinking extends the idea of limiting and weakening state power to the political marketplace. Politicians’ competition for votes, for example, stimulates political participation, which can check the power of incumbents. Politicians’ need to market themselves discourages politicians from behaving like pigs and rascals. And voters need to be provided with alternatives about which political product to buy. The contemporary division of power, in other words, needs a good deal of political participation and a strong opposition (see Schumpeter 1942).

One criticism of the SOP is that the powers given to the legislatures and judiciary (to implement SOP) are superficial; it is really the executive who rules the roost. Judges and lawmakers do not have the power to leave a mark on substantial issues about the armed forces, such as their deployment, behaviour and interrogation. Lawmakers monitor action, for example, in asking for reports, because they want to see whether the executive has in fact done what they promised to do. Of course lawmakers do try to influence the executive, but the oversight function usually contains precious little power to act or to make policy.¹⁰ The accountability function of lawmakers implies greater activism as a legislature is, as such, able to forbid, sanction, insist that the executive answer questions, etc. But still, many, if not the majority of, substantive issues remain beyond reach. When the courts review matters, they tend to review whether standards have been correctly applied in principally two areas: staffing issues and military discipline, while avoiding questions of whether, for example, foreign bases are allowed or issues concerning interrogation (Murray & Stacey n.d.).

A second criticism is that, while the diversified authority of the SOP looks impressive from the top-down, from the bottom-up one can only see contradictory demands. The executive will demand efficiency from its soldiers but the judiciary wants, increasingly and even on the battlefield, constitutionality and legality. The executive

10 The American legislature is an exception to this generalisation: Congressional committees have a great deal of policy-making power.

insists that its spies maintain strict standards of secrecy, but the legislature, political society, and the public want transparency (see Lustgarten & Leigh 1994). These contradictory demands bring confusion, paralysis and, most of all, inefficiency. In many areas of policy, some measure of the inefficiency produced by democracy is tolerable. But when divided state power is at the core of events such as 9/11, or seen to be at the core, the tolerance dwindles.

A third criticism is that the executive dominates particularly the legislature because of legislative weakness or executive imperialism or because of both. In practice the legislature of an established democracy such as the USA, for example, may control legal declarations of war, but the use of force is firmly in the hands of the executive. Until 1999, the United States had been involved in five declared wars, one civil war, three undeclared wars (Korea, Vietnam, and the 1990 Gulf War) – as well as 244 lesser international military operations driven by the executive branch (Noonan 1999:1-2; Grimm 1999).

But the story of executive dominance is more complicated than imperial personalities and incompetent, foolish or timid legislatures. Executive branches have benefitted from structural shifts in power.

In the nineteenth century, democratic thinking successfully argued that the military was an instrument of the legislature. Clausewitz, for example, expresses the relationship as war being a “continuation of policy by others means”. How so? War, Clausewitz thought, contained a “remarkable trinity”: “the people”, “the commander and his army”, and the “government”, with the legislature declaring war, the commander and his army conducting operations, and the people supporting the war effort (Von Clausewitz 1976; see also Aron 1983; De Nooy 1997; Gat 1989; Keegan 1993). For Clausewitz, the legislature retains control of the military, while the executive branch functions as the legislature’s day-to-day managers of the military.

Until fairly recently, intelligence services in many democracies were merely provided by specialists housed within traditional institutions; the military, for example, would have a division specialising in intelligence. But steadily over the course of the twentieth century, intelligence services developed into independent institutions, such as MI5, MI6 and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Who would own these bodies? On the one hand, political ownership by the legislature has been actively opposed: a major reason for this is lawmakers’ lack of discretion and their inability to keep their mouths shut. On the other hand, many democrats say that giving the intelligence services to the executive branch would unfairly empower them, lead to domestic partisan abuse, and lead the executives into all sorts of foreign mischief.

By the end of the twentieth century, the debate seems to have been settled: intelligence is said to be an “executive function” or intelligence services exist principally to “serve

the needs of the executive authority”.¹¹ Executive branches have evolved to the point where they think it imprudent to keep every inch of this power to themselves; they share some – only some – of it with the legislature. The US Congress, for example, has not been understood to be entitled to intelligence; it receives what the executive branch thinks is “appropriate”.¹² In the UK, it was customary practice not even to officially or publicly admit to the existence of the intelligence services, although this has changed and intelligence-sharing with the Houses of Commons and Lords has now been established.

In other words, the SOP no longer divides power in a way that encourages institutional competition. The executive branch takes the lion’s share. In addition to its already substantial powers over the armed forces, it has now added the power to accumulate foreknowledge of war.

An instrument of the people

How can a legislature help prevent the state making war on people? For a start, the legislature has to hold genuine power over the armed forces, especially the power to declare war and spend money. In using these powers, the lawmakers will not turn on the people because, so the argument goes, the legislature consists of the people’s representatives. But these representatives inevitably have to decide, and when they do, majorities and minorities are produced. So the state may still make war on citizens, albeit a minority of citizens. Legislative majorities can indeed be tyrannical: outvoted citizens are at risk of being spied upon, intimidated, persecuted, and killed.

One way of counteracting majority tyranny is judicial review. This option is available, provided that the country is a constitutional democracy. Another way is to hope that the majority takes an enlightened view of their own interests. Political majorities are rarely permanent and the fear that you will be paid back with interest is usually reason enough for self-restraint. But in some situations, such as the Roman Catholic voters of Northern Ireland, the outvoted are a permanent minority.

Legislatures in general fare poorly in their efforts to control the resort to force. “Presidentialism” creeps in (Linz 1990) and tends to erode the workings of a multiparty democratic imperative, the legislature and perhaps, in some cases, the desired democratic control over armed forces that could well marginalise the military as an instrument of the people.

11 One of the most important conclusions of the 9/11 Commission in the US was to confirm the principle of intelligence services as an “executive function”. See Chapter 13 of the final report (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 2007).

12 In 1992 the National Security Act (1947) was revised to include, among the duties of the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the obligation to provide intelligence “where appropriate, to the Senate and House of Representatives and the committees thereof”. What is appropriate, however, is for the DCI to decide.

A civilianised – not standing – military

Democratic thinkers have an acute dislike and suspicion of large standing militaries. In *The Government of Poland*, Rousseau observes:

Regular armies have been the scourge and ruin of Europe. They are good for only two things: attacking and conquering neighbors, and fettering and enslaving citizens

and

[Professional soldiers should never] ever be charged with any sort of policing of citizens ... Even the mildest police function you might entrust to them would result in acts of violence, irritations and abuses on a tremendous scale; in due course your soldiers and citizens would become enemies – a misfortune that accompanies regular troops everywhere (Rousseau 1985:80-82)

If the absence of a regular army were to lead to a sudden invasion, Rousseau says, this would undoubtedly be a calamity but “permanent chains are a far greater [calamity]” (Rousseau 1985:86).

Most democratic thinkers prefer a militia, a collection of armed citizens, usually only assembled in times of danger, as opposed to a permanently available body of (career) soldiers. Arguments about the citizen-soldier are consistent: the rights enjoyed by citizens require a complement of duties, including those of helping with defence; participating in defence inculcates appropriate democratic values, such as discipline and fraternity; because a militia exists only as need arises, governments are not tempted by the availability of an armed body; and defence by citizens is likely to show more courage and commitment because citizens defend their families, friends, and their home (Machiavelli 1950:44-55, 226-227; Rousseau 1985:81). The American Constitution illustrates the response to the threat posed by a standing army: arm the citizens so that they can fight back (United States of America 1789; see also De Tocqueville 1969:168-169; *The Federalist Papers* 1961:67-71).

In contemporary circumstances, however, most democratic scholars concede that a standing military is necessary, but then add that these soldiers need to be good soldiers but simultaneously be able to resist being used to fight fellow-citizens. How does one manage to have both obedience and democratic sensibilities in a soldier?

One path lies in educating and socialising the officer corps in the behaviour, ideas, relations, etc. that a democracy requires of its armed forces. The ideal outcome of the education/socialisation process is for the soldiers to exercise self-control: the soldiers themselves want to do certain things and refrain from others. The self-control ideal can be achieved by, for example, having civilians teach in military academies and schools and during training (Sarkesian, Williams & Bryant, 1995) and by professional penalties and rewards that tell the officers what roles to play. Critics of the educational/socialisation path claim that the efforts to inculcate the right values in career soldiers will be flawed or insufficient; sooner or later, they say, the soldier learns that his career will be unfulfilled without a war – and any war, even one against fellow-citizens, will do.

A second path lies in manipulating the social composition of the military: the military needs to include enough soldiers whose civilian-social origins discourage authoritarianism. The right mix of people is pursued through, among others, national service and recruitment practices. National service is often sold on the grounds that it is good for the servicemen and –women. It inculcates values useful to individuals, such as discipline, or it makes a national contribution by maintaining key ingredients of citizenship. But the presence of national servicemen in the military is also a useful counterbalance to career soldiers. How so? National servicemen come from a civilian world and their unmilitary relations, habits and values are carried into a world where hierarchy and obedience are the usual trump cards. De Tocqueville remarks:

They perform their duties as soldiers, but their minds are still on the interests and hopes which filled them in civilian life. They are therefore not colored by the military spirit but rather carry their civilian frame of mind with them into the army and never lose it. (De Tocqueville 1969:652)

Democrats are reassured when they see that a military is composed of people with familial and social ties to the citizenry; surely, the reasoning goes, brother will not fight brother. Securing civilian influence ensures that the military is not a dangerous “little nation apart” (De Tocqueville 1969:648). Probably the best example here is France. French soldiers and theorists have long defended the *levee en masse* ordered by the Revolution in 1792. The persistence of compulsory military service over the last two centuries partly explains why the French military, rather than developing separateness, has been a mirror of economy, society and politics (De la Gorce 1963; Horne 1984).

The fear that soldiers will make war on government

The military’s coup-making ability or their praetorianism is usually seen as “*the* central challenge, of civil-military relations” (Cottey, Edmunds & Forster 2005:2). This centrality is for very good reasons. In Central and South America, praetorianism is ubiquitous (Collier 1979; O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead 1986; Stepan 1988). African militaries, especially in West Africa, are notorious for their coup-making taste, which derives from their corporate self-interest rather than devotion to their country’s modernisation. Middle Eastern militaries are not far behind. Even in Western Europe, Greece, Portugal and Spain have seen long periods of military rule, not to speak of the several French coup-attempts in the twentieth century alone (Perlmutter 1977; 1980).

Why do so many militaries do this? Democrats usually argue that it is not due to personality, although an authoritarian personality certainly will help. One reason is that the military necessarily has a hierarchical mindset and organisation, which can easily slide into contempt for civilians and their representatives. Another reason is that, having chosen a career of specialising in violence, a soldier must be deeply disappointed with a professional life without a war. If soldiers are true to themselves,

in other words, there is a natural tension with civilian government. Even democratic armies have a “restlessness of spirit”:

... all the ambitious minds in a democratic army ardently long for war, because war makes vacancies available ... honors within the reach of all, causes soldiers to dream of battlefields. (De Tocqueville 1969:647)

Today’s Praetorianism, understood as the armed forces’ domination of political and other societal realms and not just the literal replacement of civilian rulers, is not confined to the military. Intelligence services also have a well-deserved reputation for manipulating policy and politics, including in established democracies.

How do democrats act on the fear of praetorianism? I mention only four avenues of actions: external orientation, representative state control, non-partisanship and professionalism.

External orientation

Until roughly the nineteenth century, most countries saw the military used domestically, as a type of police force. This orientation became increasingly unacceptable as democratic development accelerated during the nineteenth century. The new ideal was to give the soldier no cause to develop political interests, asking certain political questions, for example, “How well is the incumbent doing?” or “Is government as efficient as it should be?” The new ideal was made practical by externalising the military: the military fought the militaries of a foreign country. The soldiers’ eyes were thus redirected to what might arrive from across the border, and the soldiers were given space to develop an attitude of indifference to the political process in their own country.

Representative state control

This set of action is comparable to Huntington’s subjective dimension. Both executive and legislature are given powers to maintain their power over armed forces (Huntington 1957, especially pages 80-83), and they are entitled to do so because of their electoral base of representivity. The civilian state is superior not because it is civilian but because its power rests on genuine elections or other devices of representation (Fayemi & Ball 2004:Chapter 3). The purpose of the civilian state’s powers is to find evidence of disobedience and, worse, plotting.

Legislatures (for example) have powers of oversight, that is, the right to ask questions, and powers of accountability, meaning the lawmakers can penalise, forbid, or sanction actions. Money is an important tool for the legislature. Armed forces are obliged to spend money as instructed by the legislature; if the lawmakers do not like what they see, they simply take the money away.¹³

13 In the context of the fear of soldiers replacing elected civilians, oversight and accountability function to discover praetorian conspiracies in the armed forces. The purpose of oversight and accountability in the context of the fear of government making war on the people is to counteract the power of elected civilians and the armed forces they have at their disposal.

Civilian control can never be presumed to be entrenched, regardless of whether the sky is darkened with constitutions and laws. Power struggles of some sort are always in motion. And it is sobering to see how many attempts at regaining or strengthening civilian control are ineffective or counterproductive. In the early 1970s, for example, the Church Commission revealed details about American covert actions in Chile and elsewhere, some hilarious but others striking in their mindless venality. Congress imposed stricter control over the intelligence agencies, for example, the Clarke Amendment banning all covert aid related to Angola. Less than a decade later, it was obvious that these measures had resulted in driving the intelligence agencies deeper underground. The Tower Commission Report of 1987 revealed arms transfers to Iran, support for the Contras of Nicaragua, etc. (Draper 1991). Because the legislative financial backing was suspended, the armed forces simply retreated deeper into the shadows and sought money by illegal means, while the National Security Council's staff filled vacuums created by Congressional prohibitions applied to the CIA. The intelligence agencies had become more secretive and less accountable than they had been before Congress acted so assertively (see Persico 1990; *Tower Commission Report* 1987; Woodward 1987). Certainly during the Reagan Administration, armed forces dominated American foreign policymaking about Central American and Southern Africa (see Crocker 1992).

Opportunities and power of representative state control are just that; they are no guarantee of success. In established democracies, as we saw above, lawmakers' efforts to assert themselves may be counterproductive, maladroit and superficial. Certainly the new democracies have their work cut out for them: their efforts to expose bad soldiers and spies may well leave them very dead indeed.¹⁴ Yet there is no alternative: if bad soldiers and spies are to be exposed, high risk political battles need to be fought repeatedly and skilfully.

Non-partisanship

Civilians under pressure may well dream of prohibiting political thinking in the minds of members of the armed forces but abolishing politics is, of course, impossible. However, one can get quite far by making punishable any display of partisan loyalties. Soldiers and spies' political views are defined as private business severed from professional lives. They should not lend their services to a political party or group or manipulate the political process to their own ends. If members of armed forces do so, their careers must suffer. Looking at the problem from a different angle, opposition politicians must not seek sympathetic ears in the military.

Professionalism

As noted above, Huntington saw that the political subordination of the military is, to a large extent, a matter of self-control. Soldiers seek to be professional rather than political; they want political neutrality or do not want to govern the political

14 Guatemala's recent history is a graphic illustration of how the soldiers can strike back at civilians. See Goldman (2007) and Schirmer (1998).

realm (Huntington 1957:80-97).¹⁵ The mechanisms by which professionalism is produced are very similar to those producing a civilianised military: education/socialisation and manipulating the social composition of the officer corps.

Although perhaps once a single vision about improving the quality of strictly military action, professionalism today varies according to context. The French have fought over professionalism for centuries. French officers and civilian leaders have very few values in common, with the soldiers usually taking up extreme positions on the right, while many politicians are inclined to leftist beliefs and opinions. Among Latin American security forces professionalism extends traditional roles so that a soldier has legitimate duties other than war, including a duty to ferret out domestic enemies of the state. Latin security forces have been encouraged to believe such role extension is legitimate, among others by national security doctrines and training in such places as the School for the Americas (Shafer 1988). No specialist of Latin politics has doubted that national security is the major culprit in sustaining praetorian habits (Enselaco 1995; Pion-Berlin 1989; Stepan 1988). This praetorianism is not temporary intervention to accomplish limited goals; it is structural intervention, which creates for the coercive forces permanent roles at the centre of the economy, politics and society (Barros & Coelho 1981).

Conclusion

The three fears about armed forces have been matched with how the democratic tradition has addressed those fears. In my discussion, fears and means and methods are not idealised but presented as they have happened or in actual behaviour; that is, warts and all.

The result is a framework that can be applied to study civil-coercive relations behaviour in old as much as new democracies, as well as to democracies in times of peace and war.¹⁶ And it applies when democracy is associated with freedom, with transformation, or, as most contemporary theorists and southern Africans would argue, when it means the absence of war.

The first fear is of a warlike culture and society. The traditional democratic cure for this condition has been commerce, either by arguing that the acquisitive drive was natural or by noting that some historical conditions, notably Protestantism, produced the acquisitive drive.

The second fear is of state power, of which the armed forces form part. When state power is concentrated, a large standing army is available, and legislatures are powerless. The fear is that politicians and armed forces will spy on their own people, arrest and detain them in preparation of the killing, and then kill them.

15 Huntington refers to the self-control as the objective dimension of civilian control over the military.

16 For a contrary view, see Cohen (2003:271).

And finally, out of a third fear of soldiers replacing elected and representative government, democrats have punished partisanship while externalising the military function, strengthening representative state control and relying on armed forces' professionalism.

It remains now to illustrate in greater detail especially how the new democracies of the last few decades have acted on each of these fears. The framework is thus not another set of 'oughts'; its real test is in whether the fears do exist and how these are addressed in actual behaviour.¹⁷

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17 See my longer *Democratic civil-coercive relations: A framework for analysis* (forthcoming).

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