

Bringing the War Home: Force Multipliers and Domestic Policy

History demonstrates that the military has been the greatest force for social progress in American society. No matter the issue, the armed forces have consistently shown themselves able to negotiate difficult circumstances and to craft compromises acceptable to all parties involved. This is no surprise, as the awful immediacy of war makes prejudice and cant a fatal luxury. America's civilian leadership, on the other hand, has time-and-again proven itself unable to resolve even the most simple of predicaments. While individual incompetence is partly to blame, fault for this failure lies primarily with the democratic process. Hamstrung by the need to appease campaign contributors and, to a lesser extent, the voters, our elected officials too often find that the best course of action—that is, the one least likely to offend any interested faction—is none at all.

Until recently, this state of affairs, while unwieldy and imperfect, did not directly threaten the long-term security of the Republic. The military's exceptional handling of its duties, and the positive effects this success had upon civilian life, more than compensated for the shortcomings of the democratic system. Unfortunately, recent events have made the status quo untenable. America now faces a combination of threats unlike anything it has ever confronted before; the line between military and social matters has been blurred beyond recognition and America's survival, once solely a question of military might, is now equally dependent upon the skillful handling of social affairs. For this reason, our future now depends upon a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between civilian and military authority.

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Race:

While racial matters have vexed the civilian government since the nation's independence, the armed forces have had little trouble with this issue. Our military leaders long ago recognized the colorblind nature of warfare, and they have shown a striking pragmatism in their treatment of minorities. Take the case of black Americans: the military's progressive stance towards blacks was demonstrated during the Civil War when, over the objections of the civil authority, the Army employed black soldiers in both combat and non-combat units. These troops were deployed without regard to their color, and were subject to the same discipline and training as their white counterparts. Admittedly, black troops were assembled into segregated units, but it is important to remember that this was done out of expediency: the Army leadership, sensitive to the civilian resistance to integration of the military, concluded that a short-term, politically feasible solution was better than no solution at all.

This progressiveness was reflected in other wartime policies, as well. Free from civilian interference during his march to the sea, General Sherman promised 40 acres and the use of a military mule to every black man willing to join the Union army. Many historians believe that this campaign shortened the war by several years, and there is almost unanimous agree-

ment that Sherman owed his success to the manpower and knowledge provided by these recruits. And just as important as any military benefits were the social and economic consequences of the program. In the months following the war, beneficiaries of Sherman's pledge assembled themselves into numerous self-sufficient communities, with each family possessing the tools to provide for itself and the dignity that accompanies self-sufficiency.

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The Union's military leadership recognized that freeing the slaves was only the first step in the black race's integration into American society, and in Sherman's pledge they identified an opportunity to empower all Southern blacks. When the success of the Shermanville population by former slaves became apparent, the generals issued directives to extend the offer of land and a mule to every black household in

the South. Unfortunately, the civilian leadership's response to this initiative began a pattern that continues to this day, with each advance made by the military being conspicuously dismantled by the politicians. The federal government pardoned the slaveholders and returned seized land to its original white owners, leaving the former slaves homeless and with no means of supporting themselves. In a short time both blacks and whites understood that the federal government remained an ally of the Southern white racist elite. Slavery was replaced with even more onerous forms of racism and institutional oppression, and these measures became the basis of the segregation effort that continued for more than a century thereafter.

The military's foresight on matters of race has not been confined to black-white relations; Native Americans have benefited, as well. During the early nineteenth century, peaceful relations prevailed between white settlers and native tribes. But as the trickle of westward migration became a flood this balance was upset, and with increasing frequency white settlers resorted to violence in order to gain what they couldn't achieve by negotiation. When possible, the army intervened to protect the rights of the Indians, primarily by forcing the settlers to adhere to treaty limitations. Political pressure from unhappy settlers was eventually felt in Washington, and the politicians ordered the military to support the immigrants regardless of the circumstance. Sheriffs and other representatives of civil authority began encouraging settlers in their illegal activities—land seizures, raids on native settlements, and other noxious assaults became the norm. The justifiably aggrieved Indians struck back, and the resulting massacres provided the civilian leadership with the cover it needed. Congress declared that entire tribes would be held accountable for the actions of their dissident members, and within a short time, the civilian government had opened a war front spreading from Texas to the Pacific Northwest.

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lished liaisons with Indian communities and recruited scouts from some of the most powerful tribes, including the Apache and Sioux. These individuals were given full rank and wages, treatment that reflected the military's recognition of the valuable role they played in the war effort. The politicians eventually accepted that the military simply would not engage in the ethnic cleansing and 'total war' that the civilian government was demanding, and so, giving in to the advice of the western generals, the administration formally initiated a strategy of conquest by kindness, termed the "Peace Policy." Safe havens were created, and the military established rules of trade and a framework for power sharing between local tribes and representatives of the federal government. While a few tribes resisted, most came to accept the inevitability of assimilation on the generous terms offered by the military. A decade later, the West was safe for immigration and expansion.

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Sadly, the many gains won by this humanitarian policy were lost when responsibility for Indian matters was transferred from the military to the civilian-managed Bureau of Indian Affairs. The reservations, which until this time were functioning models of traditional native society, became death camps as bureaucrats robbed and starved their trusting wards. Conditions on the reservations became so horrific, in fact, that they later served as a model for the Final Solution: Hitler instructed his minions to model Germany's policies on America's treatment of its Native American population. Hitler's orders also made possible another of history's famously paradoxical turns, as the Nazis provided America's military another opportunity to demonstrate its respect for Native Americans. During World War II, Navajo code talkers showed themselves an invaluable resource in the campaign against imperial Japan, and other Indians were recruited for the battle against German fascism. Of course while these individuals were esteemed by the military, it was decades before the civilian government recognized their contributions to the war effort.

World War II also provided the military an opportunity to demonstrate its resistance to the sorts of prejudicial passions that frequently overwhelm the civilian sphere. The battle against Hitler was bolstered by the Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The unit served with distinction in eight major campaigns throughout the European theater, and was the most highly decorated unit of its size in history. At home, on the other hand, politicians were rounding up Japanese-Americans and detaining them in what can only be termed concentration camps. Farms and businesses were seized and basic civil liberties were ignored. Years later, the results of these dissimilar policies are still with us: proud Japanese-American veterans march in parades, while our civilian authority cuts checks to internment survivors in a wholly inadequate effort to atone for detention.

Women:

Race isn't the only issue on which the military has shown itself more liberal than the civilian leadership; it has led the way on women's issues, as well. During World War II the military, recognizing the need to enlist the whole population in the war effort, employed women in a wide variety of fields. Hired directly by the armed forces and defense industry, notwithstanding initial opposition by politicians, women were integral components of the war machine, serving as mechanics, medics and pilots, among many other roles. After the war's end, civilian pressure forced the release of these women from their positions, but this sexist triumph was a short-lived one, as the American woman had proven to the military leadership that she was the equal of the American male.

Within a few years changing social attitudes forced the civilian leadership to drop its opposition to women serving in the armed forces. The top brass were ordered to begin integrating female soldiers into the services, and they were quick to implement these instructions. While doing so, the generals demonstrated again their keen political sensibilities by being careful not to point out—in public, at least—that, since World War II, it was the civilian, not the military, leadership which had denied females the opportunity to serve their country.

Over the past three decades the military has steadily increased the number of positions in which women can serve. This process has been guided by one central principle, mainly, that no one's life should be placed in jeopardy by the effort to expand the role women play in defending the nation. The complexities of meeting this requirement are harrowing, but the military has done an excellent job of balancing needs, capabilities and morale issues. The politicians, however, having first been slow to take up the cause of women in uniform, are now pressing for too quick an integration; Congress has imposed numerous requirements which have proven disastrous to morale and combat readiness, directions that have placed our female soldiers in a no-win situation.

The civilian push to see women integrated into flight units is instructive. Left-liberal politicians, anxious to gain a symbolic victory in the gender wars, demanded that the navy have female pilots flying off of aircraft carriers by a specified date. Any resistance to this arbitrary timetable was discounted as misogyny when, in fact, those opposing the directive were always careful to explain that they didn't oppose women in the role of carrier pilots; rather, their commitment to a go-slow process arose from a desire to ensure that only qualified women were admitted into the training program, so as to avoid the problems long associated with race-based affirmative action efforts. The admirals whose careers were ruined when they noted that standards were being eased in order to produce female carrier pilots by the Congressional deadline took little comfort in seeing their views vindicated by the death of Lt. Kara Hultgreen, who died when the engine of her F-14A stalled during an otherwise routine landing on the aircraft carrier Eisenhower. Despite receiving low scores and four unsatis-

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factory evaluations during her training and qualification, Lt. Hultgreen retained her pilot position after the earlier fight to remove Lt. Shannon Workman, the first fleet carrier operations qualified female in the Navy, made it clear that male and female naval aviators were to be held to different standards of performance and competence.

Homosexuals:

In addition to upsetting plans for integrating women into the armed forces, civilian interference has also ruined the military's carefully crafted—and effective—formal and informal policies towards gays. Homosexuals have always been and always will be present in the ranks. Generals know this; privates know this; even the Village People know this. Apparently, though, the executive and legislative branches never bothered to ask.

Soldiers and generals understand instinctively that morale and cohesion are the most important elements of any military unit. In consequence, any behavior that undermines these qualities is systematically eliminated, and for much of history, individual military units were free to determine and communicate, through implicit and explicit methods, their standards for acceptable conduct. President Reagan's decision to actively purge homosexuals from the military—offered as a boon to his conservative supporters—was a disastrously short-sighted policy. Outstanding service members were made the subject of witch-hunts that had nothing to do with operational readiness, and these investigations further demoralized a military already weakened by the Vietnam debacle.

As damaging as the Reagan-era investigations were, the transition from zealous prohibition to Clinton's "Don't ask, don't tell," only worsened the situation. Unit commanders now found themselves charged both with preventing anti-homosexual outbursts and behaviors, and with persecuting those service members suspected of being homosexuals. Under Reagan, the anti-homosexual purge primarily disrupted the lives of suspected homosexuals; with Clinton's policy, the entire armed forces became a confused battleground in which claims and counter-charges were issued and retracted. Theoretically, it was even possible for an individual to be tried for both expressing anti-homosexual sentiment and for suspicion of being a homosexual. Civilian meddling made the situation so bad, in fact, that more than one observer noted the parallels to the loyalty oath epidemic that brought American society to a halt during the early Cold War years.

Workplace Issues:

In addition to offering members of historically oppressed classes access to opportunities not available in the civilian world, the military has also provided these individuals with far greater workplace protection than is available in the civilian sector. For example, equal pay for equal work, a topic still being debated in the outside world, is the unquestioned norm in military circles. Within a job category, women earn, without exception, the same as their male counterparts. Though the military continues to struggle

with sexual harassment—a battle being fought just as vigorously in the larger society—there is no denying that, on the whole, women in uniform have far greater gender equity than their sisters in the civilian workplace.

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And while the military's fundamental mission may be, "killing people and breaking things," it typically manages to accomplish these objectives in a manner that minimizes the safety risks posed to its members. Certainly, death and injury are unavoidable during wartime, but in peacetime, the military's day-to-day record reflects a commitment to maintaining a safe work environment stronger than that shown by any comparable civilian-led industrial operation. The differences between the two worlds are most clearly reflected in the Uniform Code for Military Justice and its civilian equivalent, the regulations and procedures spelled out by

OSHA. The UCMJ specifies the rights and obligations of all members of the armed forces, and is binding on every service person, from the highest to lowest rank. It provides a framework for determining whether the risks associated with a particular workplace activity are acceptable, and it offers a mechanism for resolving grievances associated with controversial decisions and orders. OSHA, on the other hand, is widely regarded as a paper tiger offering little more than a set of guidelines that can be ignored at negligible risk to the offending firm.

Education:

Continuing education is a central element of the service person's experience. Soldiers are informed on their first day at boot camp that, while medals are helpful, education is the key to promotion. Every soldier is expected to finish his first tour with an Associates Degree, at a minimum, and graduate education is essential if one is to advance through the officer corp. In fact, it was the military that single-handedly brought about the marked increase in the level of education of the average American seen in the past century. The GI Bill, which guaranteed every member of the military access to higher education, was the most important component of this transformation. The success of the bill is undeniable; millions gained access to higher education and specialized training schools, and many experts contend that this bill, more than any other piece of legislation, cemented America's geostrategic position in the post-war era. But again, as with every other successful initiative crafted by the military, politics has undermined these programs and diluted their success. Over the past two decades, Congress has gutted the GI Bill, reduced and eliminated training budgets that ensured the continuing readiness of the armed services, and undermined the military's efforts to reach out to local school districts in which military bases are located. As a result, not only has there been a decline in the overall readiness of the military, but practically every benchmark of educational performance in the civilian sphere has declined, as well.

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Necessitamos una mano dura

America now faces a set of challenges unlike any it has met before: foreign and domestic terrorism, threats to public health, and illegal immigration are simply the most pressing. Individually, each of these issues poses a grave threat to the nation; together, they will bring the collapse of the American system—unless something is done. Clearly, the future of American democracy depends upon a rethinking of the relationship between our political and military leaders. Of course, America's unique tradition of uninterrupted civilian rule makes direct military oversight an unlikely (no matter how desirable) alternative; barring such a possibility, the time has come to identify those policy realms in which the civilian authority has shown itself incapable of arriving at consensus, and to turn responsibility for these areas over to the military leadership.

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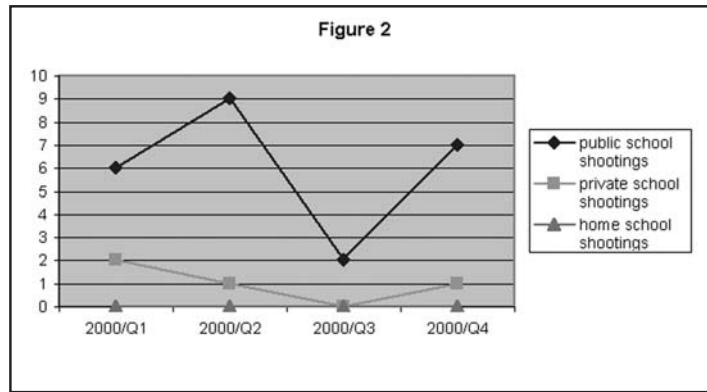
Several of the issues already described—race, sex, and workplace rights—are obvious candidates for consideration, as are those matters, like biotechnology, which, though not yet pressing, are certain to present challenges in the near future. To avoid a hodgepodge of overlapping authorities and conflicting bureaucracies, a simple rule may suffice for determining whether an area of discussion should fall within civilian or military administration: let the military hold sway in any area in which long-standing prejudices, irrational beliefs, or heated passions have play. Let the civilians govern where they serve best, in those fields where impartial judgment and reasoned debate are possible.

And just as we recognize the need for careful military intervention in matters traditionally reserved to civilian authority, we must also be willing to accept the undesirability of civilian interference in military affairs. History shows that the civilian leadership's efforts in military-related matters are almost always counterproductive, and so the policy of civilian oversight over internal military policies must be, if not eliminated, at least severely curtailed. One promising possibility is the creation of criminal penalties that would apply to members of the civilian leadership who force the military to adopt policies that are later shown to have been detrimental to the nation's security and readiness. Among its many advantages, a program of this sort would introduce a previously unknown sense of rationality into the Congressional debate over the military budget. Knowing that they face the threat of personal sanctions, our elected representatives would be far more likely to champion those line-items that are in the best interest of the country, rather than those charges that would benefit only a particular district or state.

There's nothing revolutionary about these proposed changes. In fact, many democracies have encountered exactly the same sorts of problems that now confront the United States, and have addressed them in just

these ways. Argentina, for instance, instituted the Process for National Reorganization in 1976, and in just a few years, a country torn by internal strife and wracked by economic crisis was transformed into a model democratic state, a favored client of the IMF, World Bank, and other leading institutions of the international community. Given a similar level of commitment, there is every reason to believe that the United States could achieve comparable returns.

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The disproportionate rate at which shootings occur in public schools suggests only one conclusion: these institutions act as incubators for violence, providing society's disturbed with a motive for mayhem and access to the tools of bloodshed. The public schools are America's killing fields, a free-fire zone in which our youth risk their lives in pursuit of a by-all-accounts mediocre education. Who is responsible for the sorry state of our schools? One of the chief opponents of education reform is Senator Edward Kennedy. His longstanding opposition to meaningful change has puzzled analysts and pundits, and may be related to the facts revealed in figure 3 on page 56.