

**Supporting Our Troops?
U.S. Civil-Military Relations in the Twenty-first Century**

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“Support Our Troops” decals – magnetic ribbons in yellow, green, and red, white and blue, among other colors – can be seen on the backs of the millions of American cars, pick-up trucks, minivans, and SUVs. Yet few Americans *really* support their troops insofar as paying higher taxes for funding the war effort, being willing to join the U.S. armed forces – in fact, U.S. Army and National Guard recruiters have recently had difficulty making their annual recruiting quotas – or having their children, other relatives, or friends join up. This paradox is but one example of the shift in civil-military relations in American society, where the military now exists in a radically altered political universe from its position during World War II and much of the Cold War.

Our purpose here is to revisit the argument made in “Limited Wars and the Attenuation of the State” (Sparrow 2002), which was based on a study of civil-military relations between 1940 and 1974, and to see if the argument has been made obsolete by the end of the Cold War and the advent of a global war

against terror and the war in Iraq – where the two are effectively identical for political and analytical purposes, even if they are factually distinct – and other evolutions of the role of the military in American society. Specifically, Sparrow argued as the American state grew stronger bureaucratically over the course of the post-war years, the American public became more distant from a U.S. military that was engaging in remote, limited wars in Korea and Vietnam. Sparrow considered several indicators of the declining affect that Americans had towards the post-war state: (1) the growing percentages and rising numbers of conscientious objectors in the years from the late 1940s to the mid-1970s; (2) the fact that fewer women were willing to join the military; (3) the fact that fewer and fewer individuals were investing in U.S. government securities for the sake of funding war efforts; and (4) the fact that the print and video media were becoming more critical of U. S. foreign and military policies, first in Korea and then in Vietnam.

If the strength of a state depends in large part on the intangible ties – identity, even – that persons have towards the state, then the indicators of the personal ties that individuals had to the American state, just like the public opinion survey data on Americans' trust in government, pointed to a lessening of the psychological attachment that Americans had to their government in the period between 1940 and 1975. Hence the paradox of the *attenuation* of the state with respect to the intangible ties that Americans feel towards the state, coupled with the growth of a bureaucratically and financially *stronger* state – one that

constituted a larger share of the Gross National Product and that was able to extract more resources from civil society.

Things seem very different now. The United States is now the sole superpower in the world, where China is at least a decade away from replacing the Soviet Union as a superpower rival. Furthermore, since 9/11 the United States is no longer waging a *limited* war in the sense of avoiding conflict on enemy soil or constraining its objectives with respect to terrorists or extremism; rather, the U.S. government now seeks the complete eradication of Al Qaeda and terrorists around the world (acknowledging, to be sure, the politics implicit in what or which organizations or states are labeled “terrorist” or “extremist,” and which are not). The war on terror is regarded as a national emergency, unlike the earlier limited wars in Korea and Vietnam, and the United States’ interventions in Panama, Somalia, Kosovo, and Bosnia.

In addition, the United States now has a professional volunteer military in lieu of the draft, and the United States is fully mobilized as far as its current practices of recruitment and deployment of active-duty and reserve forces allow. Although a wholly unlimited war would mean a return to the draft, higher taxes, and additional sacrifices in personal consumption, the current war on terror is certainly more unlimited – to think of “limited” and “unlimited” means and objectives in wars as gradients rather than absolutes (see Handel 2001) – with respect to personnel and budgets than have been any previous U.S. wars since Vietnam. Finally, the military seems to have become much more widely

accepted in the popular media and political culture – even as fewer politicians, journalists, and other elites have actual military experience – in contrast to the military of the mid-1970s, at the end of the Vietnam War.

In the pages that follow, we review the indicators of the attenuation of the state to see if U.S. civil-military relations manifest a weakening of the state, or whether the end of the Cold War and changes in the military's role in contemporary society have revitalized the American states and the ability of the U.S. government to rely on the American people in times of international conflict. We should put in a caveat. Because of the newness and the partial nature of the data that bear on the questions in which we are interested, we realize that this is necessarily a provisional and exploratory account of U.S. civil-military relations at the start of the twenty-first century.

I. A New Military

With the introduction of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973, the basis for military service has been utterly transformed. That transformation means that we have to find new indicators of public participation in the military. The incidence of conscientious objectors, which is one of Sparrow's indicators, has nearly vanished, not surprisingly, and the numbers for defections or those fleeing to third countries, such as Canada or Japan during the Vietnam War, has likewise become trivially small in a military where the personnel self-select. But we can look at Sparrow's second indicator of the attenuation of the state, women

agreeing to serve in the military. The other parts of this section address three other new features of contemporary civil military relations: the fact that gays and lesbians may join the military; the fact that the military has become increasingly separate from civil society; and the fact that the military continues to shrink in size as a percentage of the population of the United States.

Women in the Military. Women have joined the U.S. military to an unprecedented degree. Women now make up just over fifteen percent of the American military, whereas they constituted only a little more than one percent of the military personnel during the Vietnam War. Women are also now permitted to participate in nearly all areas of specialization, although a few areas still specifically bar women from participation.

In the Army 70 percent of positions and 91 percent of occupations (i.e., specializations) are available for women; in the Marine Corps, 62 percent of positions and 92 percent of occupations are available for women; in the Navy, 91 percent of all positions and 94 percent of occupations are open to women; in the Air Force, 99 percent of positions and occupations are open; and in the Coast Guard, all positions and occupations are open to women (U.S. Dept. of Defense, 1994). Women are not allowed to serve in Army and Marine Corps combat arms (i.e., infantry, armor, and artillery units) on the grounds that women are not to participate in direct combat (although the Army and Marine Corps train all personnel, women included, in the use of small arms and other close combat skills). As a practical matter, however, women already serve in combat units in

effect, since various units are normally brigaded into combat teams. This practice of combining disparate specialized military units with the traditional combat arms units so as to create more self-sufficient and flexible battle groups resulted in women being assigned to such units. Recent experience in Iraq shows that women can become combat casualties, then, even if they are not assigned to traditional combat arms units.

Women in the military now serve in much more than the traditional nursing and administrative duties. Women are assigned to nearly all occupational specialties and still outnumber men by nearly three-to-one in support and administrative positions, but they now also slightly outnumber men in technical, communications and intelligence, and service and supply specialties (U.S. Dept. of Defense 2002b). The numbers of women in the U.S. service academies have likewise been consistently rising over the last quarter century. In 1980 women made up between 5.8% (U. S. Naval Academy) to 10.9% (U. S. Air Force Academy) of midshipmen and cadets, respectively. By 2001, women constituted over a quarter (25.4%) of the graduating cadets at the U. S. Coast Guard Academy, 17.8% of the Air Force Academy graduates, 16.6% of the Naval Academy graduates, and 15.9% of the West Point graduates. Women also make up about a quarter of Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units. These numbers, in combination with rising opportunities for enlisted women in the military, indicate even higher participation by women in the future.

The upshot is that the percentage of women in the U.S. military exceeds that

in other militaries, where only New Zealand (14.7%), South Africa (14.4%), Australia (12.5%), and Canada (11.6%) approach the fifteen percent of the active and reserve U.S. forces made up of women. Israel stands as an exception. Israel is the only country in the world with female conscription, although about one-third of female conscripts are exempted, mostly for religious reasons (more than double the figure for men). Other than during the 1948 war, women have been restricted from combat. An Israeli High Court decision of November 1995, however, forced the Israel Air Force to open pilot training to women. All told, 88 percent of IDF positions are available to women (Hassid 2005). Notwithstanding these examples above, most western countries have only between 3 and 8 percent females in the ranks (IISS 2002; U.S. Dept. of Defense 2002a).

Women have, in short, a striking presence in the profile of today's U.S. military, a presence exceeded only by that of women in the Israeli Defense Force and approximated in just a handful of other countries. But it took the introduction of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973 and then the disbanding of the WAVES in 1973, the Woman's Air Force in 1976, and the Woman's Army Corps in 1978 for women to become the near equals of and to be integrated with men in the U.S. armed forces.

Homosexuals in the Military. Despite the divisiveness of the issue of homosexuals in the military, indicators suggest a change in attitudes – if slight and slow. Military officers are, and have been, overwhelmingly against gays openly participating in military service; civilians generally support gays openly

participating in military service, although males and females view the issue differently. Only 16.3 percent of male military respondents in the TISS survey supported gays in the military. This compares to just over half of the civilian male respondents in the same survey who would not object to gays or lesbians openly serving. Seventy percent of civilian women are in favor of homosexuals openly serving in the military, but fewer than half of military women support it (Davis, 2001, 116). Overall, public opinion polls suggest that over three quarters of the American population support homosexuals openly serving in the military (Gallup 2005).

Congress passed a revision to Title 10 of the U. S. Code in November 1993 establishing what has generally been known as the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy (10 USC, 654). This law was ultimately in response to campaign promises by President Clinton to expand the role of homosexuals within the American military. Early resistance by senior military and some civilian leaders within both the executive branch and the Congress led to a retreat by Clinton from his initial position of open involvement by gays and lesbians.

The new policy marked a change in approach to homosexuality in the military. Prior to 1993, the policy was to ask, investigate, and then discharge if an individual was found to be homosexual. After 1993 the policy shifted to one solely of conduct. The policy as approved by Secretary of Defense Les Aspin in December 1993 stated that “sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter, and homosexual orientation is not a bar to service entry or

continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct” (U.S. Dept. of Defense 1993). Upon the replacement of Aspin as Secretary of Defense by William Perry, following a recommendation made by several U.S. senators, the Department of Defense eliminated the reference to homosexual orientation with the phrase, “A person’s sexual orientation is considered a personal and private matter, and is not a bar to service or continued service unless manifested by homosexual conduct...” (U.S. Dept. of Defense 1994). If homosexual conduct were discovered, the individual would be discharged.

Under the new policy, discharges of homosexuals in the military declined initially. In 1992, 730 personnel were separated as homosexuals, and in 1994, 617 personnel were discharged from the military. But discharges for reasons of homosexual conduct began to increase once more in 1995, and reached a high of 1227 persons in 2001. The past three years have seen declines in discharges, however, with 653 having been separated in 2004. No data are yet available for 2005 (CRS 2005).

Before 1993 investigators for security clearances were permitted to ask questions concerning the sexual orientation of any individual being considered for access to classified information. A positive answer was ground for denial of clearance. After 1993, such questions have disappeared and are no longer permitted. This was in response to the “don’t ask” part of the policy that had effectively caused a number of homosexual members of the military to lie about their sexual orientation. Later discovery that they had misrepresented

themselves was, in and of itself, grounds for denial of clearance and subsequent discharge.

In short, we can say that there is both an official shift and, it seems, more an informal acceptance of gays and lesbians in the military. Although this shift may not be revolutionary – and there is still discrimination against homosexuals, to be sure – the military appears to be becoming more of a mirror of American society and most Americans' increasing acceptance of homosexuals.

The Attitudinal Gap. A third aspect of the new military is the growing gap evident between the mores and ideals of military personnel and those of the general population of the United States. With the introduction of the AVF in 1973 came predictions that without the draft, ties between civilian society and the military force that defended it would weaken – i.e., resulting in an attenuation of the state. Other predictions, made at the same time, were that a reliance on volunteers would actually bring some of the separations closer together. Both, to some degree, proved true (Cohn 1999), but recent research seems to indicate the gap is growing wider.

Feaver and Kohn's Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS) study, based on surveys of military leaders, active reserve leaders, civilian veteran leaders, civilian non-veteran leaders, veterans, and the general public, contains number of notable findings. One was of the increased ideological self-identification of military personnel. A high percentage of military (82%) and active reserve (78 %) leaders identified themselves as politically moderate or

somewhat moderate, while veterans (69%) and civilians (53%) were more likely to self-identify as politically moderate to somewhat liberal. In 1976, the Foreign Policy Leadership Project survey found that 55 percent of military and active reserve respondents self-identified as “independents,” “other,” or “none”; twenty years later, a FPLP follow-up study of 1996 found that that number had shrunk to just 28 percent of active duty and 27 percent of reservists self-identified as political “independents,” “other,” or “none” (Holsti 2001, 33, 97-98). And today, two-thirds of the officer corps self-identify as Republicans as compared to about one third of the general population, whereas less than ten percent of the officer corps self-identifies as Democrats, as compared to about one third of the general population (Davis, 2001, 108).

The military and civilian populations also differ on the role of women in combat: 70% of female officers and 59% of civilian women favor increasing combat roles for women, whereas only 30% of male officers and just under half of civilian men (49%) favor women in combat. Still, military officers of both sexes are, as a class, “more supportive of gender equality in the services than are mass civilians, up to but not including women in combat” (Davis, 2001, 116).

Military personnel and civilians differ, too, on how they perceive their political roles. While over 80 percent of the general public believes military officers should be permitted to express political views publicly, fewer than 40 percent of officers agree. And while a third of civilians believe it proper for the military to criticize senior civilians, only 12.4 percent of officers have the same

view. That is to say that civilians evidence more support for military outspokenness than do military officers themselves (Davis, 2001, 120).

While officers and civilians agree that illegal orders should not be obeyed – there is near universal condemnation of such orders, especially after Nuremburg and My Lai – civilians and military officers markedly differ on the question of whether to obey unethical but otherwise legal orders. Military officers are more likely than civilians to appeal or to seek confirmation of such orders, whereas civilians insist that officers carry out a legal order regardless of ethics. In response to the receipt of an unwise order, military officers are more likely to obey, however, while civilians seek other solutions. Gronke and Feaver suggest that this dichotomy may be explained in either of two ways: by different definitions of the word “unethical”; or, by the intensive (post-Vietnam) ethics education now common in all officer accession programs, such that officers apparently learn to draw little distinction between illegal orders and unethical orders, but learn to “salute and obey” unwise orders. When civilians face an order that is legal but unwise, however, civilians question the order. Civilians thus appear see more of a difference between illegal decisions, on the one hand, and unethical and unwise orders, on the other hand (Davis, 2001, pp. 158-160). Thus we see that military and civilian leaders seem to disagree as to what constitutes military obedience and insubordination (Gronke and Feaver 2001, 158-60) – a fact that could have considerable consequences.

In sum, Feaver and Kohn characterize military officers as persons who believe themselves to be neutral servants of the state, and who strive to carefully remain non-partisan in their public lives (even though privately eight times as many officers identify themselves as Republicans than Democrats). And while officers generally hold conservative political views, they are not as far to the right as some observers expected (Feaver and Kohn 2001, 461).

Notwithstanding the attitudinal differences between the two populations, the public retains a strong support and respect for the military. Public opinion survey data bear this out: the military receives the strongest support among U.S. institutions, 74% of Gallup respondents had a “Great deal/Quite a lot” of confidence in the military – as opposed to 63 percent expressing such confidence in the police, 53 percent in organized religion, 44 percent in the presidency, 41 percent in the Supreme Court, 37 percent in the public schools, 28 percent in TV and newspapers, 22 percent in Congress, and 17 percent in HMOs (Gallup 2005b). The military have enjoyed this status since 1985, when it was second to organized religion (66% to 61%), and it stood as the institution with the second-highest confidence of the American public since 1979, when it came in third (54%), behind organized religion (65%) and banks (60%).

Despite Americans’ confidence in the military, the very presence of the attitudinal gap existing between military personnel and civilians suggests that this confidence may be shallow. Since most Americans have not and are not likely to have future direct contact with the military, we can expect the gaps to

grow. Furthermore, ANES (American National Election Study) survey data on the larger category of “trust in government” points to the higher trust in government after 9/11 as being only a temporary phenomenon. Present levels (June 16-19, 2005) are virtually identical to levels of the late 1990s (Feb. 4-8, 1999, and May30-June 1, 1997): 4 percent trusted the government “Just about always,” 26 percent did “Most of the time,” and 65 did “Only some of the time.” But shortly after 9/11 (October 5-6, 2001), 13 percent of ANES respondents trusted the government “Always,” 47 percent trusted the government “Most of the time,” and 38 percent “Only some of the time.”

Thus we see continued confidence in the military among the public, but much less confidence in their civilian masters and directors. At the same time, we see the growing gap between how military personnel and civilians see themselves and their role in political society. We acknowledge, as do Feaver and Kohn, that we do not have data on the gap between civilians and enlisted military personnel. We might expect that the views of enlisted men and women, consisting disproportionately of ethnic minorities and poorer on the whole than other Americans of their cohort, to be more to the political center than the officers interviewed in the TISS study.

Incidence of Military Service. A fourth feature of the contemporary military is the continued decline of military participation among the American public. Although the total number of Americans participating in the military by serving on active duty has always been small, even in times of major wars

(where the American liberal democratic tradition has almost always distrusted the military and bred fears of a large standing army), less than one half of one percent of the U. S. population is currently (February 2005) on active duty. This is the lowest percentage since 1940, prior to the U. S. entry into World War II.

Active participation in the military reached its peak in 1945 at 8.7%, when over 12.1 million were in uniform. Since that time, the percentage has steadily decreased with brief increases in 1952 during the Korean War (up to 2.3%) and in 1968, during the Vietnam War (back up to 1.8%). Since 1968, though, we found that the level of American direct participation in active military service has steadily declined. And when including reserve forces in the totals, the trend remains the same (U. S. Dept. of Defense, 2005; U.S. Census 2005). Even with the war in Iraq and the global war on terror, interestingly enough, military participation continues to decline.

Partly making up the shortfall between personnel needed and the U.S. government's recruits available has been the rising reliance of the U.S. military on contracted forces. One common estimate is that there are 25,000 armed men working in private security companies (PSCs) – soldiers and bodyguards for hire, essentially, or mercenaries – in Iraq, in addition to the fifty-to-seventy thousand non-armed civilian workers in Iraq (Bergner 2005). The Pentagon avoids discussing the PSCs and refuses to say how PSCs became so large and prominent in Iraq, Bergner finds, although the Pentagon does make the point of denying that they are performing “inherently military functions.” Bergner

attributes this silence to the Pentagon's sensitivity to charges that it didn't plan adequately and to the negative image that mercenaries have in the public eye, but we suspect that there's more to it than that: that the military and Bush administration, like preceding presidential administrations, seeks to downplay the actual costs of war in both financial and human terms. Thus the estimated 160 to 200 PSC deaths are not tabulated with official count of U.S. servicemen killed in Iraq, and the personnel and material used by PSCs in Iraq do not show up in numbers on the size and operations of the U.S. military, but only in aggregate financial figures.

II. The Military Budget

The percentage of U.S. government spending for national defense has now (in 2003 and in 2004) returned to levels not seen since the end of the Cold War (in 1990, 1991). Meanwhile, estimated spending on national defense is now, in current dollars, five times the level of thirty years earlier, in 1975. But the current Bush administration, like the previous Johnson and Nixon administrations during the Vietnam War and like the Reagan and Bush administrations throughout the 1980s and the first years of the Clinton presidency in the early 1990s (in large part because of the lag involved in changing defense spending) has sought to defer payment to subsequent administrations and to subsequent generations of taxpayers. In fact, current on-budget deficit spending, at almost \$600 billion (total deficit spending, which includes on-budget and off-budget

figures, comes to over \$400 billion) is by far the largest in U.S. history (and in either case), and is almost double the years of the early 1990s (which had a recession and also evidenced the lag-effect of the last of the Cold-War military spending).

More than any other administration in U.S. history, the current presidency and Congress are not having current taxpayers pay for the present war. And unlike during the Second World War, when there were also huge annual government budget deficits and also the most recent non-limited war, there are virtually no appeals or programs for everyday Americans to help save for the government by buying savings stamps or savings bonds. This is despite the national emergency and the global war on terror following the events of 9/11. This is not to say that the government is not borrowing from the American public, only it borrows as an artifact of decisions by investment portfolio, pension fund, and mutual fund managers – and therefore borrowing at the discretion of investment decisions by those with wealth and significant pension plans. More, these figures pose a stark contrast to the fiscal health of the late 1990s, which manifested continued improvement in government debt and relative reduction of military spending occurring in the 1990s and up to 2001.

III. The Military and Popular Culture

Whereas Sparrow found that the media were becoming increasingly critical of the military over the course of the post-war years (2002, 281-86), the

trend appears to have reversed itself – especially after 9/11. Not only does the military receive generally favorable coverage on issues in which there may be some open disagreement, but in the setting of the news agenda (which topics make the news) and in how the news is framed (i.e., how news is categorized and how it is connected to other information and particular problems and solutions) – the Pentagon and the executive branch more generally are overwhelmingly able to get their way. They are typically able to dictate what news the media communicate and how that news about politics, government, and international conflict is to be covered (Rojecki 2005; Dimitrova *et al.* 2005; Domke 2004; Hutcheson *et al.* 2004; Ravi 2005).

There are several reasons for this reversal in the declining relationship between the military and the media. One is the increased savvy of the Pentagon in handling the media. The history of the U.S. military-media relationships over the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s suggests that the U.S. government has become more adept at working with journalists to ensure favorable coverage. First, the military and presidential administrations tried to control the media (e.g., Grenada in 1983, Panama in 1989) after what had been perceived as the fiasco in Vietnam. The military then realized it would be more productive to loosen its explicit controls and rely on media cooperation instead. So the military guided media personnel through their war coverage – whether that of editors, anchors, cameramen and photographers, reporters, producers, etc. – and relied on both censorship and the self-censorship of news organizations in the first Gulf War,

Somalia, and Kosovo and Bosnia. The military also subsidize and channel political communication by providing their film footage and still pictures, and by briefing journalists with their public affairs officers. Most recently, in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the war against terror in the aftermath of 9/11, the military has sought and apparently been able to secure the active cooperation of almost all key media personnel so as to ensure favorable coverage of the U.S. in the national and local print and video media in the United States (Carpenter 1994; Sparrow 2005; Western 2005). To some degree, we can see this as a continuation and extension of the professionalization of the military, per Samuel Huntington's argument in *The Soldier and the State*.

Another reason for the media's turn away from critical reporting of the Pentagon and wartime presidential administrations has been the continued consolidation of the media. The result has been a fewer number of media firms and fewer privately held – that is, family-owned – companies. With the growth in the scale and diversity of media firms, even the New York Times Company and Washington Post Company are Fortune 500 firms that have a wide range of other commercial interests, both media and non-media, besides their own flagship newspapers. But the conglomeration of the media business means a corresponding conservativeness in news coverage: the larger and more successful the media firm, the higher the stake it has in the policies and ideologies of the present – especially with pro-business and neo-conservative presidential administration; privately owned and smaller firms, in contrast, are

more inclined to publicize discrepant or deviating news, and less beholden to the corporate interests of the major investment banks and their board members — who usually represent the interests of other companies as well. The structure in which media companies find themselves, then, predisposes them not to deviate from pro-government and pro-Pentagon positions. This is especially true of the largest television media companies such as Disney, Time-Warner, General Electric, Fox, and Viacom which own the broadcast networks and the dominant cable news channels (Bagdikian 2004; McChesney 1999).

A third reason for the greater favorability of the military in the media may be the increased popularity of the military in American society as a whole. One cause of this may be Hollywood. In Hollywood, the Pentagon has been active in using the carrot of low-cost and heavily subsidized the use of military facilities to support the production of films and television shows that put the military in a positive light. In addition, it has used the stick of disapproving of particular scripts and scenes to prevent the production of movies or television shows critical of the military. In particular, as David L. Robb points out with devastating effect, the Pentagon has been censoring Hollywood for decades; some producers have been particularly flexible, while only a few have withstood the Pentagon's censorship or subsidy. But this means renting uniforms, acquiring and painting military equipment, and, sometimes, filming outside the United States. The result is that the Pentagon, through the subsidy of reducing production costs to a fraction of what they would otherwise be, as well as

through its rejection or amendments of scripts it dislikes, is able to exert immense influence on Hollywood studios. Then, as with the military and journalists, there are the appeals to producers' and studio heads' patriotism and to national security interests (Robb 2004).

Another cause for the change in political culture may be the continued advance of technology and something as elementary as the popularity of video games (e.g. PlayStation, Xbox). Many of the popular video games are military games, whether about World War II (e.g., Medal of Freedom, which has sold about 3 million copies), Vietnam, the Middle East, or fictional countries. A good number involve individuals or small teams of individuals attacking terrorists. In 2004, realistic military games made up about 4.5 percent of video game sales, and war videos sales in total came to \$336 to \$366 million (Alexander 2004). Games based on Tom Clancy's highly patriotic and nationalistic novels are especially popular.

There are also games produced by the U.S. Army as well as one partially funded by the CIA. The U.S. Army's game, *America's Army*, combines Army recruitment with entertainment via a story that involves training, teamwork and strategy in fictional battles (Alexander 2004). *America's Army* also happens to be one of the five most popular action games for the PC downloaded an estimated more than 16 million times since the Army released it in July 2002; the Army released a PS2 version in 2004 (Downing 2004). The U.S. Army is the biggest game developer at work today, according to *The Guardian* (London), and

channels more than one billion dollars a year into software development. The Army, through the L.A.-based Institute of Creative Technologies, recently released Full Spectrum Warrior in June 2004, a “tactical decision-making trainer” which is intended to instruct the player in urban warfare (O’Hagan 2004).

These are games, of course, and they represent only a relatively small share of total video game sales and Internet games. Nonetheless, the games do represent a new inroad of a military sensibility into American popular cultures — and therefore, necessarily, American political culture.

Overall, we see that the decline in the quality of in media-military relations that Sparrow found from the 1940s through the early 1970s has seemingly reversed itself. The changes in the size and ownership of the U.S. print and video media, developments in how the military handles the media, Hollywood’s greater sensitivity to the Pentagon’s influence, and the rise of video games has allowed the military to penetrate American culture and to become popular to an unprecedented degree — just as the ANES polling data on confidence in U.S. institutions suggest.

Conclusion

We are very much in uncharted waters. In some ways, the attenuation of the state has been reversed. With women and homosexuals allowed to serve in the military, with the current confidence in and popularity of the military (thanks to improvement in military-media relations, an increasingly video-driven culture

where movies and television are produced that favor the military, and the rise of video war games), and with a military that has become much more adept at working with Congress, media personnel, and other major political interests, the military has closer ties to the hearts and minds of the American public. And military officers who do not have the social polish and political skills necessary in Washington and in today's political world very simply now don't make it to the top. So if there are still pronounced differences between the military and the rest of society as "the attitudinal gap" suggests, then those in the military and civilians are much more aware of each other and on much better terms than during the Cold War.

That same attitudinal gap, however, points to a darker side of contemporary civil-military relations: the level of military participation and the extent to which civilians are willing to pay for the current global war on terror (the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan included) show that Americans are *not*, at least at a fundamental level, committed to supporting their troops or, by implication, willing to endorse the current administration's version of U.S. hegemony given the costs that follow. But this is less the fault of individual Americans and more the result of policy decisions by the Bush administration after 9/11: there was never a serious attempt to broaden military participation through military service or other mandatory national duty; there was never a serious attempt to get Americans to sacrifice consumption and to pay more in taxes so as to guarantee the security of the United States; and there was never a serious

attempt to have serious discussion about what 9/11 signified and why so many of the bombers came from the United States' longstanding ally, Saudi Arabia.

In other words, the government might very well have been able to take advantage of the fear Americans felt and the trust Americans placed in the national government and the military in the aftermath of 9/11 by opening up participation and grappling with the failures of predicting 9/11 as well as of previous U.S. policies that resulted in such determined animosity on the part of Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda. Instead, the data suggest that the opportunity was lost, and that subsequent actions and policies on the part of the executive and legislative branches have returned the government to a new permanent war – one now on terror and ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the possibility of later conflicts in Iran or North Korea in lieu of the Cold War.

Meanwhile, high levels of skepticism on the part of the American public have returned in full, despite the horrors of 9/11. Or at least this is what the ANES data suggest, with American's (low) confidence in the presidency (44 percent), Supreme Court (41 percent), media (28 percent), Congress (22 percent), and big business (22 percent). And this is also what the enlistment data suggest. After 9/11, applications rose for enlistment in the armed forces. Although the services could not gain an immediate increase in authorized end strength (since only congressional action can authorize that), applications for enlistment increased by 3% between Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002 as compared to only 1.2% between Fiscal Years 2000 and 2001 (U. S. Dept. of Defense, P&R 2001, 2002). But

then applications dropped, from 380,996 in FY 2002 to 352, 839 in FY 2003, a decline of 7.3% to a level below even that in FY 2000 (365,348) (U. S. Dept. of Defense, P&R 2002, 2003).

So is there an attenuation of the state?

For the months and first year or two following 9/11, it appeared not, that the earlier argument of the attenuation of the state was made obsolete by the renewed confidence in government and patriotic spirit on the part of the American public – e.g., the spike in trust in government, the increase in U.S. military enlistments – in combination with the new military and the ever stronger presence of the military in American culture pointed to closer ties, more affect between individual Americans and the state. Then, too, the state has grown stronger in terms of absolute government spending, state-building in terms of the establishments new departments (e.g., Homeland Security), reorganized agencies (intelligence community), increased government personnel, stronger surveillance and police powers (e.g., the PATRIOT Act), and other measures.

But the return to politics of usual – policies favoring particular commercial/corporate and clearly partisan ends – has eroded the confidence Americans have in the U.S. government and its foreign policy, and has further weakened the chief ties Americans might have to the state: financial support and the dedication and possible sacrifice of self. And just as the polls showed waning confidence in the government, so, too, have enlistments fallen off. As

during the first thirty years of the Cold War and the incidence of limited war, we again see the dichotomy between a stronger state, consistent with the United States as a global hegemon, and indicators of a weakening of the state.

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