



POSTMODERN SOCIETY AND ITS IMPACT ON ARMED FORCES

Challenges for indirect military leadership¹

It is important to recognize variables of social evolution that have an impact on armed institutions and their implications in military leadership. In light of this, armed forces must be “flexible” to adapt to new transformation criteria, economic changes and domestic and international contexts which will allow them to comply with war and non- war missions without losing the essence of their role.

KEY WORDS: POSTMODERNISM / SOCIETY / WOMAN / DYNAMICS / LEADERSHIP / VARIABLES / PERMEABILITY

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INTRODUCTION

In his treaty on the nature of war, Clausewitz² explains the existence of a paradoxical trinity composed of a physical and spiritual force that arises from the will of fight of people that are part of a nation, aspects of military conduction inherent to armed forces and their subordination to the political reason of their use decided by the government. The balance of these three components will be essential to get the desired end in an armed conflict.

These three trends are like three different judicial codes closely related to their field of study but they keep very variable relations. A theory that ignores any of them or that aims at establishing among them an arbitrary fixed relation would be in conflict with the reality that, for this reason, would not be useful³.

A hundred years later and on the other side of the world, Mao Tse Tung⁴, in the context of the Japanese invasion to China (1937-1945), would say: The Army must be one only

thing with the people and must be considered by them as theirs. It would therefore be unbeatable.

In a similar sense to what has been expressed by Mao Tse Tung, this article would try to get closer to the relation “society- armed forces” in postmodern times, trying to think about a topic that is not present in the agenda of military institutions normally focused on specific topics of the profession.

Society supports with taxes and people the effort to defend a nation; consequently, the existence of a harmonic relation between it and its armed forces would be essential. In light of this, it is important to recognize variables of social evolution that have an impact on armed institutions and their implications in military leadership of higher levels.

In light of the many existing approaches to the concept of postmodernism, we will use the one of the Royal Spanish Academy which defines it as:

Artistic and cultural movement of the end of the 20th century featured by its opposition to rationalism and prevailing worship of shapes, individualism and lack of social commitment.

A SCIENTIFIC INPUT TO THE SUBJECT

In the research *The Postmodern Military*⁵, there are five important characteristics of these times:

- 1) The increasing permeability between civil and military contexts
- 2) Reduction of differences between different hierarchies and combat and support weapons.
- 3) Extension of duties of military men.
- 4) Increase of operations legitimated by international bodies.
- 5) Increasing internationalization of military organizations (combined forces).

In order to think about the relations between society and its armed forces, the authors of the research propose a comparison of the evolution of eleven variables in twelve western countries throughout three periods:

In the same idea and three years after the two hundred anniversary of the *Exodo Jujeño*, it is worth remembering this as an inspiring model of an integral concept of a national defense that relates the people of a nation with their armed forces.

The group of the Commander in Chief (Belgrano) is clear and energetic. This document summarizes the sacrifice that no other province has made for independence and this is why all generations must bear it in mind as an example of what love to one's country can do. Let's think about those hundreds of souls... all of them or almost all of them were born within those walls. Leaving everything for an idea that had only caused disruption and deception” (Bidondo, 1968, pages 133-134)



El Éxodo Jujeño – Museo Histórico Provincial de Jujuy

1. For leadership levels, see Podestá, Miguel, “El liderazgo militar y sus niveles”, revista *Visión Conjunta*, Year 3, Volume 3, Escuela Superior de Guerra Conjunta, Buenos Aires, p. 13.

2. Clausewitz, Carl von, *On War*, Ministry of Defense of Spain, Madrid, 1999.

3. Clausewitz, Carl von, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

4. Tse-Tung, Mao, “Sobre la Guerra Prolongada”, in *Obras Escogidas*, Volume I, Platina, Buenos Aires, 1959, p. 433

5. Done by professors related to the Interuniversity Seminar Society – Armed Forces of the Loyola University, Chicago, United States. Available at <http://www.iusafs.org/>

- 1) Modern: from the Treaty of Westfalia (1648) which coincides with the recognition of the principle of national sovereignty to the end of World War II.
- 2) Late modern: From 1945 to the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- 3) Contemporary: From 1990 to nowadays. Results in the case of the United States (considered in the research as witness) may be observed in Table 1 updated (2014) by students of the Master's Degree in Military Strategy of the Joint Staff College. Among the relevant conclusions of the study⁶ we can mention that there is a prevailing trend to the dissolution of lines that distinguish civil from military society, both in structure and culture, that we are in times when forms of social organization may be more relevant than the level of military technology⁷ and, last, movement to military fully into postmodernism will not necessarily continue in the future.

On the other hand, in the analysis of the evolution in Argentina of the variables mentioned carried out by the master's degree mentioned, there were trends that are similar to the features of the social, cultural and historical context. Some examples of this are:

“The basic form tends to a force of volunteers with a mission of multiple forces increasingly androgynous in the manners and ethos and greater permeability with civil society”.

C. Moskos, D. Segal and J. Williams

- › Distinction of concepts of national defense and domestic security.
- › Movement from compulsory military service to voluntary military service.
- › Abolition of the Military Justice Code (Law 26394/2008).
- › Promotion of gender equality.
- › Tendency to combined forces with the creation of the Task Force “Cruz del Sur” with the Republic of Chile and the

THE ARMED FORCES IN THE THREE AGES: THE UNITED STATES CASE

TIME VARIABLES	MODERN (PRE COLD WAR) 1900- 1945	MODERN LATE (COLD WAR 1945- 1990)	POST MODERN (POST COLD WAR) SINCE 1990	UPDATE 2014
THREAT	ENEMY INVASION	NUCLEAR WAR	[ILLEGIBLE] ETHNIC VIOLENCE, TERRORISM, ETC.	COUNTRIES WITH MASS DESTRUCTION WEAPONS, GROWING INFLUENCE OF CHINA AND RUSSIA
FORCE STRUCTURE	CONSCRIPTION MASS ARMY	GREAT PROFESSIONAL ARMY	SMALL PROFESSIONAL ARMY	TREND TOWARDS LIGHT, MULTI PURPOSE AND VERSATILE FORCES
"GREATER MISSION DEFINITION"	TERRITORY DEFENSE	ALLIANCE SUPPORT	NEW MISSIONS (PEACE FORCES, HUMANITARIAN)	GREATER MISSION KEPT HIGHLIGHTING RELEVANCE OF SUBSIDIARY TASKS
DOMINANT MILITARY PROFESSIONAL	COMBATANT LEADER	ADMINISTRATOR OR TECHNICIAN	STATE SOLDIER, STUDENT MILITARY MAN	HIGH VALUE IN INDIRECT LEADERSHIP OF JOINT AND/OR COMBINED EXPERIENCE AND POST GRADUATE STUDIES
PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS MILITARY MAN	SUPPORT	AMBIVALENT	INDIFFERENT	THEIR INTERVENTION GENERALLY GETS SOCIAL RESPECT AND ATTENTION
RELATION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA	[ILLEGIBLE]	MANIPULATED	COURTED	FOCUSED ON SHOWING ASPECTS THAT BREACH LAW
CIVIL EMPLOYEES	MINOR COMPONENT	MIDDLE COMPONENT	COMPONENT	"TREND TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY NON- GENERATIVE ACTIVITY INCREASE OF OUTSOURCING"
WOMAN'S ROLE	SEPARATED OR EXCLUDED BODY	PARTIAL INTEGRATION	TOTAL INTEGRATION	IN 2016, ALL COMBAT ROLES MUST BE CAPABLE OF INCLUDING WOMEN
MILITARY MAN'S WIFE	INTEGRAL PART	PARTIAL INVOLVEMENT	NO INTERFERENCE	EACH WIFE DECIDES AS TO THEIR LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT
HOMOSEXUALITY OF MILITARY MEN	PUNISHED	TOLERATED	ACCEPTED	[ILLEGIBLE]
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION	LIMITED OR PROHIBITED	PERMITTED [ILLEGIBLE]	INCLUDED IN OTHER CIVIL SERVICES	ACCEPTED AND INCLUDED IN ALL SERVICES

Adaptada de Moskos, Charles, Segal, David y Williams, John. (2000). The Postmodern Military. New York: Oxford: University Press. Tabla 2.1 de la página 15.

Nota: la actualización 2014 fue realizada por el Equipo de Trabajo de la Maestría en Estrategia Militar: integrado por Bravo, Luis (FAA), Dalle Nogara, Marcelo (ARA), Gunther, Steve (USNAVY), y Torres, Federico (EA).

Engineers Team “General San Martín” with the Republic of Perú.

› Significant participation in peace missions.

The first of them is included in the objective⁸ of promoting dialogue and cooperation with civil society to keep a defense policy with high level of agreement.

DYNAMIC OF VARIABLES

Possible variables of the relation between society and armed forces do not have fixed features that have a dynamic for each nation and historical period of time. In order to prove this, we will focus on one of them that is the role of women in armies. Today, the debate (finished in most aspects) focuses on the presence of women in near land combat roles.

Perhaps due to the favourable impact that the news⁹ had about the fact that Margaret H. Woodward, a 50-year-old brigadier with 3800 hours of flight commanded the Operation¹⁰ Odyssey Dawn over Lybia (2011), making her become the first woman in the history of the United States that controlled an operation of air attack over a foreign country, in that country at the beginning of 2013, the rule of the year 1994 that prohibited the presence of women in direct combat roles, infantry, armored vehicles and special forces was abolished.

In the opinion of MacKenzie¹¹, some events promoted this decision: fourth generation wars in which the front line mitigates validity, opinion surveys of the American society, support of defense authorities and studies referring to impact of these tasks over the cohesion of units or physical abilities of women to comply with those roles.

The main obstacle for women who want to serve their country is a group of old biased assumptions about their place in society¹².

However, there were different ideas, such as the opinion of the captain (US Marines) Katie Petronio¹³: I can say, based on my direct, personal experience in Iraq and Afghanistan rather than only on an impression, that we have not started to analyze and understand specific issues of gender health and physical damage to women caused by continuous combat operations.

In a careful position, the Ministry of Defense of the United Kingdom¹⁴ announced on July 3, 2014, a new revision (the

“The best armies of old times were not those that opposed to habits of that time but those that found the manner to exaggerate and exploit wishes of their soldiers. The best generals of old times did not oppose to main trends of their time but let themselves be carried by the deepest waters”.

J. E. Lendon

previous one was in 2010) on the current exclusion of women in near combat roles.

Without questioning individual capacity of women to hold some positions, concern lies mainly in the impact that their incorporation would have on the cohesion of small groups that have both male and female members, for example in case a woman is seriously injured: would standards established be complied with? Or acting according to pre-existing cultural standards, men will neglect fulfillment of their mission to deal with that? Or will they give priority to a man injured who requires urgent assistance?

It is also interesting to know how society can react when women act in direct combat. We could imagine the social impact of an image of a combatant in Afghanistan injured who is the mother of two children who are with their father in their country.

These subjects are very complex and they imply interdisciplinary approaches rather than only military approaches. On the other hand, this topic has become relevant in the last years as small units, due to their versatility, have become the most proper ones for many conflicts of our times (low intensity or stabilization operations).

6. Moskos, C., Segal, D. & Williams, J., *The Postmodern Military*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, p. 11.

7. With respect to this, we can observe the difficulty to interpret the meaning of the new state in creation called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) as social organization.

8. Ministry of Defense of the Argentine Republic, Management objectives. Available at http://www.mindef.gov.ar/institucional/politica_nacional_de_la_defensa/objetivos-de-la-gestion.html, 2014

9. Pisani, S., “Una mujer a cargo de una campaña aérea”, *La Nación*, March 24, 2011.

10. Authorized by Resolution of the Security Council UN 1973.

11. MacKenzie, M. H., “Let Women Fight”. *Foreign Affairs*, January 2013

12. MacKenzie, M. H., *op. cit.*

13. Petronio, K., “Get Over It! We Are Not All Created Equal”, *Marine Corps Gazette*, Volumen 97, Issue 3, 2013

14. United Kingdom Government, Ministry of Defense, July 3, 2014. Revision of the issue of women in land near combat roles. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/review-of-women-in-ground-close-combat-roles>



Dynamics that we observe in this topic and that has been used as an example would be applied to most variables analyzed in chart 1.

WARNING

Results of the so-called socialization processes intensified in some European armies since the fall of the Berlin Wall and, consequently, the appearance of a two-pole world were questioned by the former Allied Supreme Commandant in Europe, John Sheehan¹⁵. He stated that it may be said that the failure of the Netherlands Battalion in their mission to protect refugees in the city of Srebrenica (1995) within the framework of the UN UNPROFOR¹⁶, who indirectly with their inaction, made it possible for eight thousand Muslim-bosnians to be executed by Serbian forces from Bosnia in what has been considered the greatest massacre in Europe after World War II.

These statements replicated in the western northern hemisphere, apart from the great controversy they caused and its immediate rejection by Dutch authorities made it possible to consider the difficult balance implicit in the slogan “as civil as possible, as military as possible, which, in some manner¹⁷ inspired in this country the defense policy

towards the search for an integration of armed forces with their society in a complete and quick manner.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIRECT MILITARY LEADERSHIP

Going from a uniform and slightly changeable staff management context to a diverse and changing one, from the necessary formal discipline in a mass army to conduct an army of professionals and apply lethal force in an unrestrictive manner to do this with the principle of proportional response to aggression received are, among others, changes that impact on leadership.

In subjects such as management of diversity to obtain from each person the best of their capacities, the search for answers to complex problems with deep

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“Social time includes phenomena that take place at different speeds, overlapping and getting confused with each other. Leaders and institutions are a navigation charter in the confusing sea of society and history”.

E. Fianza

professional knowledge and the use of interdisciplinary approaches that do not exclusively come from the military environment.

Also in the idea that in the use of force there is a slight limit between application of violence in self-defense of the victim, even if it is a national state, and social perception which, generated by an excess in the use of violence, make Armed Forces be perceived as murderers affecting national will to support them or their legitimacy before international community¹⁸.

As regards competences required, those related to knowledge and action, inherent to direct leadership, there are those related to being and knowing how to be, relating with other people at higher levels of the institution and/or interacting with government and non government organizations (a common circumstance in peace missions) keeping standards that correspond to ethics of people that serve in public institutions¹⁹.

Knowing how to be implies a high power of persuasion and communication in which respect for other people's thoughts given by knowing how to listen and one's own argument based on deep knowledge rather than superficial of the problem to be dealt with and the capacity to arrive to summaries that contribute to achieve the purpose sought will be the most valued skills.

The character of war as social phenomenon is changing, understanding implications of that change is a responsibility of that leadership level.

For this, it is not enough to know military specialty, but it is necessary to have a general culture according to responsibilities that allows to correctly consider complexity of problems that will normally be presented as a combination of ambiguity, mutability and uncertainty and, in some cases, they are tried to be resolved with pre-existing concepts separated from reality or capacities of means actually available.

Military aptitude requires a large general culture fund to be ruled. Methods to organize and apply violence at any

time in history are closely related to any cultural scheme of society.

As it happens with its limits, law is confused with history, politics, economy, sociology and psychology, the same happens with military aptitude. Even more, military knowledge also has borders with natural sciences, such as chemistry, physics and biology.

In order to understand this function, the officer has to have an idea of his relation with other fields of movement and the manner in which this may contribute to their purposes. Also, it is not possible to really develop their analytical capacity, comprehension, imagination and judgment if he is only trained in vocational disciplines²⁰.

A FINAL CONCLUSION

In an increasingly changing world that depends on commerce, communication, energy and transport in which borders lose their meaning, Argentine Armed Forces have the main mission of invoking and repelling any state military external aggression, in order to guarantee and save in a permanent manner vital interests of a Nation, such as sovereignty and self determination, territorial integrity, life and freedom of their inhabitants.

In a post modern society that values exaltation of manners, diversity, freedom, rights and extols individuals, Armed Forces promote in their operating units austerity, uniformity of procedures, order, responsibilities and cohesion of the group to fulfill their mission.

Understanding their dynamics and achieving balance among these variables in permanent tension is a hard and delicate goal for military conductors.

Not knowing the first terms of the equation would mean to be far from reality and social demands of a certain historical period of time, doing this with the second ones would mean to leave capacities that allow for the effective use of force when government decides.

15. Services Armed, Committee, 18 de marzo de 2010, Hearing To Receive Testimony Relating to the "D-ont ask, D-ont tell" Policy. Recuperado de www.senate.gov, p. 13.

16. UnitedNationsProtectionForce.

17. Van Der Meulen, J., The Netherlands: "The Final Professionalization of the Military". En C. Moskos, & D. a. Segal, The Postmodern Military, Oxford University Press, New York, 2000, pp. 101 - 120.

18. Be it observed that the impact the knocking down of a comercial aircraft by the Russian forces of the provinces of that country has had on the perception of the Ukraine conflict received a unanimous sentence.

19. Established in Law 25188, 1999, Ethics in the exercise of public function.

20. Huntington, S., El Soldado y el Estado, Circulo Militar, Buenos Aires, 1968, p. 28.

21. Guidelines for Organization and Functioning of Argentine Armed Forces.