

1976

The Military and the Problem of Legitimacy

Henry E. Eccles
U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Gwyn Harries-Jenkins

Jacques van Doorn

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Recommended Citation

Eccles, Henry E.; Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn; and van Doorn, Jacques (1976) "The Military and the Problem of Legitimacy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 29 : No. 4 , Article 15.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol29/iss4/15>

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He has followed his own advice in the writing of *Rebels Under Sail*. Not only has he successfully avoided bicentennial hyperbole and cant, but he concludes with forlorn solemnity that "the story of the Continental Navy reveals itself as a rather drab and unimportant sideshow of the Revolution." In doing so, he is not attempting to "debunk" anything for even so great a naval enthusiast as John Adams wrote in 1780 that "recollecting the whole history of the rise and progress of our navy, it is difficult to avoid tears."

The sad truth is that the oceangoing Continental Navy never really got off the ground—or rather out to sea—except in the minds of a few proto-Navalists in the Continental Congress and its Marine Committee. The result is that the history of the Continental Navy is one redolent with administrative infighting, professional bickering, and political wheeling and dealing, but little accomplishment. This history Mr. Fowler has chronicled faithfully and has at the same time managed to present in an interesting and readable package.

Since very little of the history of the Continental Navy concerns victories at sea, Mr. Fowler has spent considerable energy in recounting those vital aspects of naval history that are so frequently ignored by battle-oriented historians: administration, organization, financing, construction, and, altogether too briefly, the daily lives of the officers and sailors who manned the ships. He has approached these intertwined subjects topically which on the one hand helps to spotlight them, but which on the other forces him to abandon the chronological narrative. As a result, the nonspecialist may become confused as the book jumps about in time, backtracking to events already described elsewhere in order to examine their influence on a different aspect of the struggle to build, fit out, man, and fight a Continental Navy. There is another pitfall awaiting the nonspecialist.

Though Mr. Fowler has provided definitions for some naval terms (a trunnel, for example), he has not done so for others (such as tumble home).

Rebels Under Sail is an engaging volume despite its sorry tale of frustration and defeat, and it is really the only serious single-volume history of the Continental Navy that is available. It does not supplant Gardiner Allen's 1962 two-volume history, *A Naval History of the American Revolution*, but it does provide a briefer portrayal—one that is accurate, readable, and honest—of the American Navy during the Revolution.

CRAIG SYMONDS
U.S. Naval Academy

Harries-Jenkins, Gwyn and van Doorn, Jacques, eds. *The Military and the Problem of Legitimacy*. London: Sage, 1976. 217pp.

Normally a collection of 10 papers from the 1974 Eighth World Congress of Sociology at Toronto would not be expected to interest many outside of the group of scholars who were sharpening their techniques and perceptions at one of their periodic meetings. But when one considers the nature and magnitude of the worldwide cultural change of the last 25 years and when one realizes that military professionals and high-level institutions have apparently not fully appreciated the implications of such change, then this expression of intellectual concern not only becomes important, but it becomes a matter of serious interest to the thoughtful military professional.

The editorial introduction by Harries-Jenkins and van Doorn defines the issue clearly. "In short the germinal issue is whether the traditional legitimacy of the military is still acceptable in a situation where armed forces are increasingly alleged to be a dysfunctional element within society."

Later van Doorn states: "... legitimacy is the capacity of a social or

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political system to develop and maintain a general belief that the existing social order and its main solutions are generally appropriate."

As Harries-Jenkins points out in his essay, "Legitimacy and the Problem of Order," the models or concepts of legitimacy do not have sharply defined boundaries; rather they form a continuum. These concepts are related to the fundamental concepts of the state itself; whether they be "organic" or "liberal democratic," with their inherently different views as to the use of force or coercion.

As a consequence, in a free society which by definition welcomes and stimulates diversity of opinion, we can expect the public view of military legitimacy to fluctuate widely. This fluctuating public perception of military legitimacy is an inherent and important part of the great process of cultural change taking place throughout our society. This process of change insures that tension and debate will continue, with the balance shifting back and forth from strong public support for the military profession at one time to bitter opposition at another time. The professional can keep his balance, his perspective, and the effectiveness of his people only if he understands the nature and strength of the forces at work in the society. He should not expect stability! He should not even expect "fair play" from the news media.

This little book makes no pretense of standing alone. Its provocative contents can be evaluated only in the context of the previous and continuing work of scholars such as Janowitz and van Doorn as represented in their published books and in journals such as *Armed Forces and Society*, published by the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society.

We can be sure, however, that the matters discussed in this book will continue to interest the sociologists and perplex the governments of the world.

It is therefore appropriate to comment on their significance, particularly in the free societies.

There is a great difference between the language of the sociologist and the language used in the media and in the public discussion of policy and events. In the free societies, public discussion must be conducted in simple terms and be relatively brief or else the public lose interest and turn their radios and television sets off or to more glamorous programs.

In Communist states, however, and in some other authoritarian states, the language of public debate is frequently abstruse. In addition, the public and legislative groups and public officials are accustomed to speeches of from 2 to 4 hours.

In the Communist states, as indicated in Nagy's discussion "The Role of Mass Communications in the Political Socialization of the Hungarian Armed Forces" and particularly in Michalik's article "Normative Linkages Between Civilian and Military Sectors of Polish Society," the armed forces are themselves carefully indoctrinated in moral and in political matters and are expected to set high moral and ethical standards for the society itself.

The idea that the military forces of the United States should be deliberately used to improve the moral perceptions and standards of the society as a whole and that American communications media should be used for this worthy purpose would certainly be met by raucous laughter by our legislators, editors, and news commentators.

Throughout this collection, save for the comments on the Hungarian and Polish armed forces, there seem to be two implicit assumptions:

One is that the "managerial" approach of business is both necessary and desirable in a democratized military force.

The other is that strict discipline is required only in case of actual combat

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and that when a "war" is being waged with a high degree of public approval, this discipline will be achieved automatically. In this connection, Ger Tietler's discussion "Conscript Unionism in the Dutch Army" comes at a particularly appropriate time when the cities of the United States are in a state of financial crisis wherein the responsibility of the powerful unions of municipal employees is a point at issue and when Senator Thurmond has introduced legislation to forbid such military unionization (S. 3079).

For centuries the utility and the legitimacy of military power were taken for granted. Now, in the free societies, these concepts are being challenged. However, in the two largest authoritarian societies—the Soviet Union and China—these concepts are being reaffirmed and reinforced by the nature and intensity of the political indoctrination and control of the armed forces.

These are the critical factors! They are a challenge to both the scholar and the operator in the United States of America!

In recent years, the Naval War College Forums on Strategy, on Professional Ethics, and on the Military and the Media have made little or no reference to this challenge to the legitimacy of the military profession. In retrospect, however, this challenge has been an unspoken, un verbalized, implicit cause of many of the fundamental differences which, from time to time, have disturbed the surface appearance of "objective free inquiry" in these meetings.

Civilian-military relationships have two major aspects: (1) the relationship between the members of the armed forces and the people in the civilian society; and (2) the distribution and assignment of authority and responsibility between civilian officials and military professionals in the command and administration of military policy

and affairs and in the command and control of combat forces.

The first is a blend of human perceptions and attitudes; it is largely an intangible matter. The other is a matter of law and administrative regulations, a tradition which involves both very specific procedures and the essential lubrication or give and take of mutual trust and accommodation which always has political connotations and attributes.

Military power will not suddenly evaporate or otherwise disappear, nor will it and its use change in a sociologically normative manner. The names, labels, or euphemisms applied to the organized use of force to accomplish political purposes in a world of continuing human conflict will, of course, change. In many instances these labels will be semantic distortions deliberately chosen to conceal an ulterior motive or else to give such motive an odor of sanctity.

The stark realities of power and force will remain.

The proper question, therefore, is how to insure that such power and force are controlled and how they are used in a responsive and effective manner to accomplish a political purpose.

This control requires a responsible reciprocal understanding and relationship between the political and military authority.

Finally, the issues which are in the background of this scholarly discussion of legitimacy deserve mention:

Is there any significant difference between a free society and an authoritarian society?

What is the attitude in the authoritarian societies as to the legitimacy and usefulness of military power?

Does this attitude have any significance for the welfare and survival of the free societies?

How are the concepts of nationhood, nationalism, and national sovereignty changing and, if so, does this

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change have any influence on the use of power and force in the conduct of world affairs?

What political leaders and their legislative supporters implicitly assume or take for granted on these matters will largely determine the ultimate decision to use military force.

HENRY E. ECCLES
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Harriman, W. Averell and Elie Abel.
Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946. New York: Random House. 1975. 595pp.

With World War II now 31 years old and already into its third writing—the first flash histories, the serious studies including the beginnings of revisionism, and the current spate of works revealing dramatically the cryptological successes of the British in being able to read Hitlerian and Nazi General Staff traffic, there now appears a significant memoir from the thinning ranks of senior participants. Averell Harriman, a distinguished American by any measure, sets forth his experiences and views concerning the crucial wartime years during which he served as President Roosevelt's personal emissary first to Winston Churchill and later as U.S. Ambassador in Moscow where he spent as much time with Joseph Stalin as any American living or dead.

It is a story of *noblesse oblige*, of service, of dedication to the commonweal. It is also the story of a patriot who quietly cared and who was not afraid of dissent or controversy. There is one immediately apparent lesson in Harriman's memoir. He was no bureaucrat. He walked the world stage.

The outline of the memoirs covers familiar terrain—the era of the late 1930's and the war. What is significant in this well-written account by Columbia Journalism School Dean Elie Abel is the Harriman insight. He covers with precision his "Mission to Moscow" with

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the suspicions, the delays, the grudging respect shared by Stalin and Harriman for each other. There are excellent chapters on the Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences. There is a direct challenge throughout to the revisionist theories on the cold war. Harriman's perceptions are, of course, those of America's wartime leadership, and through his eyes one sees the emerging and tragic confrontation of East and West.

The book must stand as a basic reference on the period. Not only do we have Harriman's memoranda and notes, but the book is supported by quite adequate research and documentation. This last of the great World War II memoirs should be of use and interest to all students of strategy and diplomacy.

ROBERT F. DELANEY
Naval War College

Healy, Davis. *Gunboat Diplomacy in the Wilson Era—The U.S. Navy in Haiti, 1915-1916*. Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976. 268pp.

On 28 July 1915, American marines and bluejackets from the armored cruiser *Washington* were landed in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, for the purpose of "preventing further rioting and for the protection of foreigners' lives and property and to preserve order." Thus began a military occupation of nearly 20 years duration.

It is impossible to justify or to understand this action by the administration of Woodrow Wilson without adequate knowledge of those years of Haitian history immediately preceding the intervention, years known by the Haitians themselves as the "*Epoque des Gouvernements Ephemeres*"—the Era of the Ephemeral Governments. On 17 December 1908, Antoine Simon was elected to the Presidency for the constitutional term of 7 years. In the 7 years following that election, no fewer than