
THE MILITARY IN TRANSITION NEW TASKS FOR THE MILITARY

Conferência incluída no Ciclo de Conferências para individualidades estrangeiras, proferida no âmbito do Curso de Defesa Nacional (CDN95), no Instituto da Defesa Nacional em Lisboa e na Delegação do Porto, respectivamente, em 22 e 21 de Dezembro de 1994.

Johan Galtung

THE MILITARY IN TRANSITION NEW TASKS FOR THE MILITARY

Dear friends in peace, *war has been given a bad name as of late*, and it is not that often that a peace researcher/educator/worker is invited to address a military academy. I interpret this as a sign of another Cold War receding, another dialogue opening, and have accepted the invitation with gratitude and with an open mind. My basic thesis is that peace is too important to be sacrificed at the altar of unnecessary conflict between those struggling for peace with and without uniform, not thereby saying that everybody, in uniform or not, is equally devoted to peace. And we may split over whether peace is obtainable by peaceful means or by violent means. I would be optimistic about peace as the road to pace, to quote Gandhi, and skeptical about violent approaches. For the latter I have two obvious counter-arguments, two versions of the old adage that violence breeds violence. Violence tends to become addictive; in the vanquished who dreams of revenge, as also in the victor who dreams of more victories.

But let us leave that aside, and focus on the military in transition. My talk is divided into three parts, maybe in the evangelical tradition of the country in which I was born, Norway: – if the military is in transition, then why, what went wrong? – separating sin from the sinners, what are the military virtues? – what are the new tasks for the military, using those virtues? You do not have to accept the words used to define the enormous issue I am trying to explore; the tripartite division may still be helpful to reach some conclusions, however tentative.

What went wrong was already clear at the time of the First World War (1914-18), perhaps also during the American Civil War (1861-65). War had been given a bad name: the losses were unacceptable for both winner and loser⁽¹⁾. Moreover, the civilian losses were increasing; the idea of fighting to

⁽¹⁾ There is much material about this in John Keegan's excellent *A History of Warfare*. New York, Vintage Books, 1993.

protect the civilians became meaningless. There was massive protest toward the end, desertion, revolts, soldiers' strikes; the kind of thing also known from superpower warfare in Viêt Nam and Afghanistan. Nothing of his prevented the Second World War from being even worse; and for this cruel century as a whole the percentage of civilian casualties increased from a low 10% toward 90%.

The Clausewitzian war as a means, using the *Regimenten* to achieve the political goals of the state, was a catastrophe. This presupposed a high level of civilian control of the military in order to make them fight against their better instincts, presented to the naive as «democratic» control. It also presupposed an *esprit de corps* more easily developed when war was also sport and a way of displaying courage and gaining honor, not massive butchery of everything between the means and the goal.

So the military became a way of obtaining what the political elites wanted. Being destructive, they could order the military to destroy other countries or other social classes, as opposed to just having violent encounters, deciding who was stronger, assuming that God was on the side of the winner and that's it. The winner takes all that was at stake, and the conflict is over. This is an important reason why submission to a democratically elected parliament is an insufficient guarantee. And why defense intellectuals are the most hawkish. They risk nothing.

And a reason why they search for ever higher levels civilian legitimacy to launch a war: a NATO/WEU-EU/OSCE/UNSC decision to go ahead, even «with all necessary means» as in Security Council resolution 678, the Gulf War. Ever higher up, a desperate search for the Father-Sky somewhere who is a *causa sua* and does not have to worry about legitimation: He is His own.

To say that *meso war*, the classical war between states with middle range weapons, has been given a bad name is not the same as guaranteeing it is on its way out. But these wars are rare, and they are not increasing. *Macro war*, with major genocide, such as Auschwitz, Hiroshima-Nagasaki and other Second World War enormities have *ispo facto* a bad name; which again does not insure us against them. The real problem today is obviously *micro war*, fought with hand guns and land mines, with machete, with the bombs of the terrorist and the electro-shocks of the torturist. To take only one example: if only 20 of the 2000 nations in the world have realized the dream of a multi-national nation-state, and there are about 200 countries in the world, then there are 1980 wars still to go in 180 countries, mainly micro wars, except when «mother countries» enter. Obviously, other solutions must be found, and I am coming to some of them.

The distinction, not mine, has been made above between the «political goals of the state» and the «military virtues of the *Regiment*». Clausewitz' formula for modern warfare was obviously to subordinate the latter to the former, with catastrophic consequences. This has then led to absurd consequences in what we might call postmodern warfare: the military killing civilian rather than military. The latter might be able to hit back.

Which are the military virtues we might like to build on for a more peaceful world? Here is a short list:

- *courage*, pure physical courage, even facing a superior enemy;
- *discipline*, ability to obey (but not blind cadaver discipline);
- *esprit de corps*, collective identification in an age of egoism;
- *organization*, with good logistics, punctuality, precision.

These four virtues turn into caricatures and vices when put at the disposal of very wrong and very violent policies. When used for the right purposes they are virtues indeed, something from which we in the peace movement, for instance, could learn a lot.

At this point a major discussion may open up: should the organization be *alpha* or *beta*, large, hierarchical armies or small, relatively autonomous units with horizontal command? The type of military I would believe most in for defense, defensive defense units, almost have to be of the *beta* variety as they may presuppose that occupation has already taken place. This is also the general trend in organization theory: smaller, more equality.

Of course the military are not alone in inculcating such virtues in the soldiers, at all ranks. No organization, profit or not profit, national or international, can do without something of the last three. So what is characteristic of the military is the physical courage, and the other three are in a sense subservient to that one. To walk into fire is not a natural human inclination. Discipline from without (commands, sticks and carrots) and within (inner motivation, honor) may be necessary. In addition, the «buddy principle», to help in order to be helped, to avenge in order to be avenged. And superb organization, with nothing missing at the critical moment.

Let us now imagine that we have these millions of military around the world, with dedication and organization, but in search of new missions, functions. Like an organization built to fight TBC (an infectious disease) turns to cancer (a modernization disease), the military will turn to something. To what?

Let us first examine some non-answers.

Countries Without Armies. Being a conscientious objector myself I of course welcome this trend, today including something between 23 and 28 countries, depending on how one counts⁽²⁾. But there are three major problems.

First, abolition of the military may solve a very important problem: the use of the military against other social classes, as *coup d'état* upwards in society, or as state terrorism, often combined with torturism, downwards. It also solves the problem of making the country incapable of attacking others. But it does not solve the problem of what to do if other social classes or other countries attack. Some alternative means of defense have to be put into place, both of the country and of the internal social order, provided they have legitimacy.

Second, if small countries abolish or do not acquire armies, they lay themselves open to «protection», by some Big Brother who would hate to see some other Big Brother doing the same⁽³⁾.

Third, abolition of the army does not solve the problem of how to use the capacities and virtues of the military for peace. Thus, in the debate in Switzerland fall 1989 about the referendum to abolish the Swiss Army by the Year 2000 (35.6% voted in favor, causing shockwaves in the Swiss Army) alternatives received scant attention, except for the idea of national service for all.

Conversion for civilian purposes. The conversion model differs from the abolition/non-acquisition model in being more gradual, and not necessarily ending with total abolition. In addition, this offers an approach more acceptable to bigger, even «great» military powers. The three problems above apply also here, but less so. But then there are some other problems.

Conversion, unless close to total, represents no break with the classical military tradition. The deplorable patterns of the past can be reinstated with no difficulty; there is no need to find new responses to problems of outer and inner security.

In addition, conversion may not weaken the military destructive capacity, and may even strengthen it. If what is converted is people, taken from the forces and put into the economy – assuming that to be possible given the

⁽²⁾ C. Barbey, *Pays sans Armées*, 1989, identifies 28 countries without armies, and 18 demilitarized territories. Edouard Dommen, UNCTAD, Geneva, has a slightly reduced list of 25 states, including Iceland, Andorra, Holy See, Liechtenstein and Monaco from Europe.

⁽³⁾ Thus, Barbey, *op. cit.*, points out that 13 countries of the 28 have international defense treaties, 5 with the USA, 2 with New Zealand, 1 with France, 1 with Nepal, 1 with Papua New Guinea, 1 with Senegal, one with the UK, and one with NATO (Luxembourg).

present endemic unemployment – then the military will probably switch to more capital-intensive modes. If what is converted is capital, taken from the military budget and put into social welfare, or lower taxes – assuming that to be possible given the present endemic budget deficits – then the military will probably switch to more technology-intensive, or more labor-intensive, modes. And so on, like *actio* leads to *reactio*, conversion leads to reconversion.

An additional point, today particularly visible in Russia, applies to both approaches. The military is also a way of making a living, having a secure income, at least basic needs guarantees as a soldier. There is even a relatively secure pension, in the end protected by the military capacity to control the state. In addition, abolition or conversion does not inspire any great enthusiasm; any reader may try it out against his own profession.

The alternatives open to the military are in a sense obvious. I am not thinking of just any big project in need of a big, well disciplined organization, such as reconstruction and relief after natural (hurricane, tsunami, earthquake), social (internal and external wars), and ecological (erosion, deforestation, desertification) catastrophes. That kind of work can equally well, or much better, be done by well organized, dedicated people with no military training at all. I am thinking of alternatives having to do with the military as such.

NEW TASK I: DEFENSIVE NONOFFENSIVE NONPROVOCATIVE DEFENSE

If the military has been used offensively against other countries and social groups, then this is where defense has to be built. For the case of external attack a mix of conventional military defense (CMD), para-military defense (PMD) and non-military defense (NMD) may serve to make the country relatively immune to attacks⁽⁴⁾. One of them alone may not do; the three together may easily make a prospective invader hesitate: «I can take that country and occupy it, but it will lead to endless problems with short-range attacks, hidden attacks and the whole population noncooperating and disobeying». Micro instead of meso defense.

Obviously, the military will have very important roles to play in CMD and PMD; NM being more complex if we think of the moral commitment not

⁽⁴⁾ See my *There Are Alternatives*, Nottingham, Spokesman, 1984 for an elaboration of this concept, particularly Chapter 5, and the excellent newsletter *NOD & Conversion* from the Centre for Peace and Conflict Research, in Copenhagen.

to use violence. But the military are also mainly civilians. Why should their virtues not be made use of? Defensive defense is a commitment not to hit the civilian population on the other side, that is already a step toward nonviolence. Defensive defense may open for more commitment to non violence among the military, and thereby point to the future.

Let us play a little with these words. There is *offensive offense*, also known as aggression: just march on, march in, hit, grab. *Ministries of war* used to do that kind of thing earlier in this century. Today aggression is often considered not only immoral and illegitimate, but – even worse – outdated by history. At least some pretext has to be offered beyond lust for war and greed for booty, such as the need to pre-empt aggression by the other side. As the saying used to go, attack is the best defence. The result might be called *defensive offense*.

And yet it smacks of hypocrisy; moreover, it runs against the rule that the party that fired the first shot is guilty of aggression, regardless of rationale for doing so. Better wait for the other to start, and only then launch a full-scale attack. In other words, *offensive defense*; offensive capability inside a defensive posture. *Ministries of defense* are based on this.

However, even if the intention is fully defensive (which it usually is not), any offensive capability makes any other side wonder what is really going on. Intentions are cheap, only some words; capabilities are costly, lots of hardware. Others might draw the conclusion that offensive defense, or even offensive offense is being contemplated; a basic dilemma of the «forward strategies» of both parties in the Cold War.

Out of this predicament came the fourth possibility: *defensive defense*. If your intentions are purely defensive, then let your capabilities prove your words. And in that language the physical range and precision of the weapons systems (CEP), speak louder than soothing words from the vocabulary of defensive intent. Secret services are supposed to find the hidden truth.

One example: is the defensive defense posture of a democracy known as a reliable superpower client credible, or would even a dictatorial non-client be more credible? During the Cold War, was more threat to other countries emanating from Norway, or from Rumania? As the example indicates, there are many factors to take into account for anyone exploring defensive defense.

All these approaches have one thing in common: some kind of roll-back, hedgehog type of defense. Others should have no reason to worry, should not feel provoked (even if they say they are). But they should not doubt the

resolve to fight back, and from all cells in the social body so to speak, if the country is attacked.

Looking at the wasteland produced by twentieth century wars we find, as mentioned above, a compatible trend: the tendency for international wars to decrease, and intra-national wars to conquer, or to secede from, a government, to be on the increase. Wars, like telephone calls, can be short or long distance; but the short distance wars come with ample support from some long distance operators of Cold War fame. The compatibility becomes a two-edged, and not very defensive sword: on the one hand less long-range weapons for less long-range wars (ex-Yugoslavia, ex-Soviet Union, Africa); on the other hand, weapons that do not provoke peoples far away may be very lethal applied next door. A transarmament to short range weapons, hence, may be a recipe for short range violence; meaning only recommendable to countries with no major inner contradictions, be that class (revolution) or national (secession), or both. Defensive defense as CMD and PMD does not answer the objections raised by pacifists. NMD, as an integral part of defensive defense, is a better answer.

Defensive defense built on short range weapons systems runs into another problem. Rapid deployment forces associated with strong powers disciplining the weak are eliminated. But how about peacekeeping forces coming together from many parts of the world trying to do exactly that, keep peace? To the extent they are not (too) offensive, meaning violent, they are not ruled out by that concept. The general posture, the training, the verbal and nonverbal discourses matter. But long range logistic capacity for weapons' carriers is a good reason for a suspicion that could be assuaged by laying them open to international inspection.

Then a third somewhat promising trails in the wasteland, this time a bird's eye view of the history of warfare. From the distant past we sense *primitive warfare*, wild, disorganized, with much hue and cry till the first drop of blood or the first body is on the ground. War as conflict resolution mechanism. Not that far away we see the *traditional warfare* of warrior castes, disciplined, built around values of courage and honor. Then we can smell the trail of blood produced by efficient Clausewitzian *modern warfare* «with all necessary means», as mentioned above.

And more recently, maybe the last generation, a new phenomenon has come up that may be referred to as *post-modern warfare*. The parties are equipped with sufficient destructive capability for hundreds of years of warfare of the old kinds. But they do not unleash all of that against each other,

or more precisely, against the military on the other side. They hold back; but only in the sense of not meeting directly in battle. They may leave the fighting to others, eg., in the Third world, an appropriate name for the place where third parties live.

Or, even more cowardly: they may use their weapons to kill civilians, or the unprotected military, on the other side. The Indochina wars and the Gulf war offer good examples of how winning a war means having fewer casualties than the other side; paying little or no attention to the horrors suffered by the other millions, hundreds of thousands killed, wounded, bereaved. Unfortunately, this logic is compatible with defensive defense, as can be seen in the endemic warfare in ex-Yugoslavia, a country quite far advanced in (relatively) defensive territorial defense.

Hence, for internal conflict, today the normal, dominant type of violent conflict, the outlook is problematic. CMD and PMD above have as their condition that arms are distributed in the population in advance, but in smaller doses, like the Swiss army guns at home, as opposed to the big arsenals that can be conquered. The military would come in as the *ultima ratio regis* when all social order breaks down, the police is not capable of handling the problem and the nonviolent capability available in the population for NMD has been exhausted.

An alternative would be to give up the use of territorial borders for the internal/external distinction, knowing how out of touch with reality such borders tend to be. Even if inter-country conflicts decrease in relative frequency inter-nation conflicts certainly do not. Imagine that nations, and not only countries, increased their capacity for defensive defense, above all for NMD. Imagine that the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia resisted nonviolently, supported by volunteers from abroad, rather than simply leaving, escaping, becoming silent witnesses from afar to their own degradation short of physical death.

NEW TASK 11: BROADENING OF PEACE-KEEPING FORCES

A conflict has come to the stage of physical violence. The parties seem unable or unwilling to bring the violence under control. People suffer, outside intervention looks like the only way out, preferably invited, if needed also uninvited. Screams from the neighboring apartment, a woman battered by a man, children by the parents, are also calls for outside action, into the privacy

of the home. There is a doctrine of limited sovereignty, depending on how power is exercised; in the family, so also in the nation.

The question is what to do, and how to do it.

That the peacekeeping role has been given to the military does not necessarily imply that they are adequately suited or trained for that purpose. They may simply have been available, particularly from democracies with internal peace surplus so that armies can leave not fearing a coup back home in the meantime. Or there is a post Cold War military surplus. When violence is involved, experts on violence, knowledgeable of the ways of acting and thinking of people of violence, will be called upon.

There is something to that, in the same way as police often ask for the advice of criminals to understand a crime better. But police do not limit themselves to this source of insight. So let us think in terms of ways of expanding the range of training, and thereby adequacy, of peacekeeping forces, accepting fully that *knowledge of means of violence is necessary* to understand better violent parties, and for limited self-defense. Obviously, the kind of training needed to fight a war only coincides with what is needed to keep peace if the parties to the conflict are seen as enemies, and that is not a suitable point of departure.

How about *training in police methods* for, for instance, crowd control? The classical «bobby», not the national security police acting as local rapid deployment forces, or the village police who trusts his own authority more than the hand-weapon hanging from his belt? Also, older of age, with more experience than a freshly minted soldier? Could the police and the military work together in such forces, or would it be better to impart the two sets of training to one of them? In that case, is it obvious that the military are better suited than, local police forces more trained in solving quarrels than in keeping parties apart, and failing that to shoot at one, or both, or withdraw?

How about *training in nonviolence*, not so much in acts of noncooperation and civil disobedience as in positive nonviolence, constructive action, if sometimes mainly symbolic? At the risk of sounding naive, how about training peace-keepers in being humanly nice, not only correct, to the perpetrators of violence, thereby hoping to elicit more human action from them? How about trying to understand them? How about helping rebuilding immediately, trying to negate their violence?

How about *training in conflict mediation*, like knowing what to say in a room with the fighting parties present, filled with entirely justifiable hatred

– not merely being a sentry? Why should not such skills be combinable also in the rank-and-file peace keeper, not only in the higher ranks, if at all?

How about *half of the peace-keepers being women*, assuming women on the average to be better suited for building better human relations, less obsessed with the hardware of peacekeeping and abstract principles, and above all less trigger-happy?

But would that not change the idea of peace-keeping completely, away from keeping to also making and building peace? The answer is probably that any strict division like that old one breaks down in practice anyhow, that the best would be to combine these activities, that peace is best kept if also made and built.

Here are two possible approaches.

Let 10 000 dialogues blossom. The true experts on a conflict are the inside participants, but their visions may be clouded by their stakes in the conflict. Outside participants, diplomats, peace-keepers, peace workers, are the amateurs. They may learn, but their visions may also be clouded by their stakes in the conflict, such as the national interests of the country or group of countries they come from, or their personal interests in power or a Nobel Peace Prize? How do we resolve that dilemma?

One way might be to let people speak, and listen to them. People speak anyhow; in Yugoslavia there must be thousands of dialogues every day about how to transform the conflict. This enormous creativity is wasted: the world, including the inside participants, has been trained by media to listen to a handful of people from the outside only and some leaders from the inside. Democracy is based on the idea that everybody has something to contribute, and a right to be taken seriously: all brushed aside.

Imagine thousands of volunteers from the outside coming to the conflict area to organize and monitor people's dialogues. They would have to be trained in how to do it. The dialogue does not have to be spoken, written depositions may also be made, as long as people contribute, both to the diagnosis of the conflict, the prognosis, and to the general fund of ideas about therapies.

The protocols of such encounters should then flow together, electronically for speed, at some central point, and be made publicly available to the world at large. There will be much noise, but also many gems, jewels. The proposals will be highly contradictory, as is to be expected in a conflict. But there will be insights much above what outside participants can come up with, often more distant from reality the higher the level of the outside «mediators», as clearly seen in Somalia and Yugoslavia.

To organize this is no small task. We are not talking about something relatively simple and mechanical, and yet problematic, like elections and election-observation. The outside organizers will have to be sensitive enough to the issues to be able to stimulate people's creativity, yet careful not to distort their messages. Ideally they should have crash courses in languages, or learn how to work through interpreters with the additional problems this entails. Moreover, they must know how to handle the networks, harnessing the flow of ideas, letting the small creeks from distant villages flow into the rivers that have to combine into a pool of conflict insights, available to all.

But could this not be done in a much simpler way by hiring a polling agency? Definitely not, that would only tap a person's thinking in isolation. The point is the dialogue, with different sides of the conflict present, so as to have the thinking exposed to the arguments of the other side; and nevertheless guided, by gentle prodding, toward a brain-storming on possible remedies. To argue that this would also serve the function of «letting off steam» is an insult when only said about common people, not also of those higher up. The best is to take people seriously.

Hostages for peace. One experience from Nicaragua during the *contra-sandinista* fighting was that villages with foreigners living as hostages for peace were spared: people out to do violence do not want the world to witness what they do, nor do they want to be held accountable for killing foreign witnesses. The approach carries risks, but probably not much more so than participation in the almost unarmed UN peacekeeping forces, which in turn is much less risky than participation in UN Chapter 7 type enforcement action.

So, imagine 100 000 such hostages, densely settled in conflict areas, so densely that there is almost no space left for fighting, which after all is a territory-intensive activity.

There would have to be life-lines of support, like for the 39 000 UN troops stationed in Yugoslavia. Needless to say, at the same time as being hostages they could also do peace work through dialogues, as indicated above. The two tasks would actually reinforce each other.

The problem is where to find these 100 000. Volunteerism would produce only small numbers of people and money; the state would have to come to the aid of civil society in this matter. One possibility is conscientious objectors, now about 20% in Italy, and much above that number in the conscript cohort in Germany. They have a right to work for peace, not only to be shunted aside in «civil service», more or less meaningfully.

Another possibility would be military, but not in uniform – at most some standard highly civilian clothing with white as the dominant color; more like doctors than like soldiers. And the very best would be the two together, blurring that distinction.

However, regardless of how that is done there is one basic point to be made in this connection. When human beings lived as hunter-gatherers it looks as if the men did most of the hunting, and the women most of the gathering. There is a clear lineage here to the military in traditional, modern and post-modern societies: they are predominantly male, the country at present trying to break even the taboo against women in combat roles being the USA. As a consequence, when soldiers are male, so are the conscientious objectors; the implication being that basing these important conflict work roles on soldiers and conscientious objectors only would be one more expression of patriarchy.

Hence, *for every male recruited into such roles efforts should be made to recruit one female*. One way of doing so may be through a general national service, the valid objections being:

- [1] this is compulsory and extends state power, and
- [2] this would mainly be for the young who might have insufficient life experience to be suited for conflict work.

Another model would be the peace corps model, like in the USA or Norway. People volunteers, both genders, all ages: the state covers the expenses. The name is already a good one; as a matter of fact, conflict work as indicated above might give that name substance. In addition, the development functions so far associated with the peace corps could also be useful here. There is always development work to do, including for the rebuilding of war-torn societies. And there would be no distinction between those who reject any form of violence, and those who, like the present author, believe in peace by peaceful means; including defensive defense and broadly based peacekeeping.

Johan Galtung