

ter because it "requires a keen insight into state policy in its higher relations."

The subordination of the political point of view to the military would be unreasonable, for policy has created the war; policy is the intelligent faculty, war only the instrument, and not the reverse. The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible.

A minister of war need not have a detailed knowledge of military affairs, and soldiers often make poor ministers. The military viewpoint will inevitably, of course, interact with the political objective, and policy must take into account the means at its disposal. Clausewitz voices the military warning to the statesman to note carefully the limits of his military strength in formulating goals and commitments. But in the end, policy must predominate. Policy may indeed "take a wrong direction, and prefer to promote ambitious ends, private interests or the vanity of rulers," but that does not concern the military man. He must assume that policy is "the representative of all the interests of the whole community" and obey it as such. In formulating the first theoretical rationale for the military profession, Clausewitz also contributed the first theoretical justification for civilian control.

*The Military Mind: Conservative Realism  
of the Professional Military Ethic*

THE MEANING OF THE MILITARY MIND

The unique or functional aspect of the military has often been discussed in terms of the "military mind." This chapter attempts to define this concept precisely enough so that it may serve as a useful tool of analysis. The military mind may be approached from three viewpoints: (1) its ability or quality; (2) its attributes or characteristics; and (3) its attitudes or substance.<sup>1</sup>

Writers employing the first approach have normally emphasized the low caliber of the "military mind." The intelligence, scope, and imagination of the professional soldier have been compared unfavorably to the intelligence, scope, and imagination of the lawyer, the businessman, the politician. This presumed inferiority has been variously attributed to the inherently inferior talents and abilities of the persons who become officers, the organization of the military profession which discourages intellectual initiative, and the infrequent opportunities which an officer has actively to apply his skill. This general approach deals with one feature of the military mind, but it does not help to define the peculiarly "military" aspects of that mind. The mere fact that the military mind occupies a particular point on the intelligence scale says nothing about its distinctive characteristics. The point might well be the same one occupied by the engineering or dental minds.

The second approach holds that the uniqueness of the military mind lies in certain mental attributes or qualities which constitute a military personality. Military and civilian writers generally seem



to agree that the military mind is disciplined, rigid, logical, scientific; it is not flexible, tolerant, intuitive, emotional. The continuous performance of the military function may well give rise to these qualities. Intuitively one feels that these descriptions, also intuitive, come close to the mark. But until more knowledge is accumulated about the personality traits of military men and other politically significant groups and also about the relation between personality, values, and behavior in social situations, this approach will not be very useful in analyzing civil-military relations.

A third and more fruitful approach is to analyze the substance of the military mind — the attitudes, values, views of the military man. This has customarily been done through one of two techniques: to define the military mind in terms of content, or to define it in terms of source. The former method describes certain values and attitudes as military in content, and then asserts that these values and attitudes are widely prevalent among military men. Emphasis has generally focused upon two sets of attitudes assumed to be characteristically military: bellicosity and authoritarianism. The military man is held to believe that peace is stultifying and that conflict and war develop man's highest moral and intellectual qualities; he favors aggressive and bellicose national policies. He is also thought to be opposed to democracy and to desire the organization of society on the basis of the chain of command. Irrespective of whether these conclusions are accurate, the method used in arriving at them is both subjective and arbitrary. The *a priori* assumption that certain values are military and that military men therefore hold those values may or may not be true, but there is nothing in the procedure which requires it to be so.

An alternative approach is to define military values by source. This is to assume that any expression of attitude or value coming from a military source reflects the military mind. But the difficulty here is that everything which comes from a military source does not necessarily derive from its character as a military source. Military men are also Frenchmen and Americans, Methodists and Catholics, liberals and reactionaries, Jews and antisemites. Any given statement by a military man may not reflect his attitudes *qua* military man but may instead stem from social, economic,

political, or religious affiliations irrelevant to his military role. This difficulty could be overcome if it were possible to cancel out these accidental characteristics of military men by surveying a broad, representative sample of communications from military men from all walks of life, all countries, and all times. The magnitude of such an undertaking, however, makes it desirable to find an alternative path to the military mind: to arrive at the substance of *l'idée militaire* by defining it as a professional ethic.

People who act the same way over a long period of time tend to develop distinctive and persistent habits of thought. Their unique relation to the world gives them a unique perspective on the world and leads them to rationalize their behavior and role. This is particularly true where the role is a professional one. A profession is more narrowly defined, more intensely and exclusively pursued, and more clearly isolated from other human activity than are most occupations. The continuing objective performance of the professional function gives rise to a continuing professional *weltanschauung* or professional "mind." The military mind, in this sense, consists of the values, attitudes, and perspectives which inhere in the performance of the professional military function and which are deducible from the nature of that function. The military function is performed by a public bureaucratized profession expert in the management of violence and responsible for the military security of the state. A value or attitude is part of the professional military ethic if it is implied by or derived from the peculiar expertise, responsibility, and organization of the military profession. The professional ethic is broader than professional ethics in the narrow sense of the code governing the behavior of the professional man toward nonprofessionals. It includes any preferences and expectations which may be inferred from the continuing performance of the military occupational role.

The military mind is thus defined abstractly as a Weberian ideal type in terms of which the beliefs of actual men and groups can be analyzed. Obviously, no one individual or group will adhere to all the constituent elements of the military ethic, since no individual or group is ever motivated exclusively by military considerations. Any given officer corps will adhere to the ethic only to the extent that it is professional, that is, to the extent that it is



shaped by functional rather than societal imperatives. Few expressions of the ethic by an officer corps indicate a low level of professionalism, widespread articulation of the ethic a high degree of professionalism. The professional military ethic, moreover, is "non-dated and non-localized" just like the profession of which it is the intellectual expression. So long as there is no basic alteration in the inherent nature of the military function there will be no change in the content of the professional ethic. Simple changes in military technique, such as developments in weapons technology or the increased importance of economics in military affairs, do not alter the character of the military ethic any more than the discovery of penicillin altered medical ethics. The military ethic consequently is a constant standard by which it is possible to judge the professionalism of any officer corps anywhere anytime. For the sake of clarity, this ideal model may be referred to as the "professional military ethic." The views actually held by a concrete group of officers at some specific point in history may be termed the "nineteenth-century German military ethic" or the "post-World War I American ethic."

In the sections that follow an attempt will be made to elaborate the professional military ethic with respect to (1) basic values and perspectives, (2) national military policy, and (3) the relation of the military to the state. The accuracy of this definition of the ethic depends upon the extent to which the views stated are necessarily implied by the performance of the military function. These deductions as to the nature of the ethic will be illustrated by occasional references to typical expressions drawn from military literature. Since the historical evolution of the military ethic in the United States will be described in some detail in later chapters, the citations from American sources will purposely be limited. These references, moreover, are just examples; they do not prove that the views expressed are part of the professional military ethic any more than a completely contradictory statement from a military man would invalidate their inclusion in the ethic. The sole criterion is relevance to the performance of the military function.

#### THE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY ETHIC

MAN, SOCIETY, AND HISTORY. The existence of the military profession presupposes conflicting human interests and the use of

violence to further those interests. Consequently, the military ethic views conflict as a universal pattern throughout nature and sees violence rooted in the permanent biological and psychological nature of men. As between the good and evil in man, the military ethic emphasizes the evil. Man is selfish. He is motivated by drives for power, wealth, and security. "The human mind is by nature one-sided and limited."<sup>2</sup> As between the strength and weakness in man, the military ethic emphasizes the weakness. Man's selfishness leads to struggle but man's weakness makes successful conflict dependent upon organization, discipline, and leadership. As Clausewitz said, "All war presupposes human weakness, and against that it is directed." No one is more aware than the professional soldier that the normal man is no hero. The military profession organizes men so as to overcome their inherent fears and failings.<sup>3</sup> The uncertainty and chance involved in the conduct of war and the difficulty of anticipating the actions of an opponent make the military man skeptical of the range of human foresight and control. As between reason and irrationality in man, the military ethic emphasizes the limits of reason. The best schemes of men are frustrated by the "friction" existing in reality. "War is the province of uncertainty," Clausewitz said; "three-fourths of the things on which action in war is based lie hidden in the fog of greater or less uncertainty." Human nature, moreover, is universal and unchanging. Men in all places and at all times are basically the same.<sup>4</sup> The military view of man is thus decidedly pessimistic. Man has elements of goodness, strength, and reason, but he is also evil, weak, and irrational. The man of the military ethic is essentially the man of Hobbes.

The existence of the military profession depends upon the existence of competing nation states. The responsibility of the profession is to enhance the military security of the state. The discharge of this responsibility requires cooperation, organization, discipline. Both because it is his duty to serve society as a whole and because of the nature of the means which he employs to carry out this duty, the military man emphasizes the importance of the group as against the individual. Success in any activity requires the subordination of the will of the individual to the will of the group. Tradition, *esprit*, unity, community — these rate high in the military value system. The officer submerges his personal in-



terests and desires to what is necessary for the good of the service. As a nineteenth-century German officer put it, the military man must "forego personal advantage, lucre, and prosperity . . . Ego-tism is beyond all doubt the most bitter enemy of the qualities essential to the officer-corps."<sup>5</sup> Man is preëminently a social animal. He exists only in groups. He defends himself only in groups. Most importantly, he realizes himself only in groups. The "weak, mediocre, transient individual" can only achieve emotional satisfaction and moral fulfillment by participating in "the power, the greatness, the permanence and the splendour" of a continuing organic body.<sup>6</sup> The military ethic is basically corporative in spirit. It is fundamentally anti-individualistic.

The military vocation is a profession because it has accumulated experiences which make up a body of professional knowledge. In the military view, man learns only from experience. If he has little opportunity to learn from his own experience, he must learn from the experience of others. Hence, the military officer studies history. For history is, in Liddell Hart's phrase, "universal experience," and military history, as Moltke said, is the "most effective means of teaching war during peace." The military ethic thus places unusual value upon the ordered, purposive study of history.<sup>7</sup> History is valuable to the military man only when it is used to develop principles which may be capable of future application. The military student of history constantly tries to draw generalizations from his study. Yet the military ethic is not bound to any specific theory of history. While it rejects monistic interpretations, it also emphasizes the importance of force as contrasted with ideological and economic factors. The permanence of human nature makes impossible any theory of progress. "Change is inevitable. Progress is not inevitable."<sup>8</sup> Insofar as there is a pattern in history, it is cyclical in nature. Civilizations rise and fall. War and peace alternate, and so also does the supremacy of offensive and defensive warfare.<sup>9</sup>

**NATIONAL MILITARY POLICY.** The military view toward national policy reflects the professional responsibility for the military security of the state. This responsibility leads the military: (1) to view the state as the basic unit of political organization; (2) to

stress the continuing nature of the threats to the military security of the state and the continuing likelihood of war; (3) to emphasize the magnitude and immediacy of the security threats; (4) to favor the maintenance of strong, diverse, and ready military forces; (5) to oppose the extension of state commitments and the involvement of the state in war except when victory is certain.

*The Primacy of the Nation State.* The existence of the military profession depends upon the existence of nation states capable of maintaining a military establishment and desiring to maintain such an establishment because of threats to their security. There is no necessary reason why nation states should be the only socio-political groups maintaining professional forces. But with a few peripheral exceptions, this has been true. The military man consequently tends to assume that the nation state is the ultimate form of political organization. The justification for the maintenance and employment of military force is in the political ends of the state. The causes of war are always political. State policy aimed at continuing political objectives precedes war, determines the resort to war, dictates the nature of the war, concludes the war, and continues on after the war. War must be the instrument of political purpose. The purpose of the state cannot be its own destruction. Consequently "total war" or "absolute war" is to be avoided if it is likely to produce the mutual devastation of the combatants.<sup>10</sup>

*The Permanency of Insecurity and the Inevitability of War.* In a world of independent nation states, the problem of military security is never finally solved. Competition among the states is continuous, and war is only an intensification of this competition which brings to a crisis the ever present issue of military security. War is always likely and is ultimately inevitable. Its immediate causes spring from conflicting state policies, but its fundamental causes lie deep in human nature where exist the sources of all human conflict. "To abolish war we must remove its cause, which lies in the imperfection of human nature."<sup>11</sup>

If the causes of war are in human nature, the complete abolition of war is impossible. Consequently, the military mind is skeptical of institutional devices designed to prevent war. Treaties, international law, international arbitration, the Hague Court, the



League of Nations, the United Nations are of little help to peace. The decisive factor is always the power relation existing among the states. "In the last analysis the action of States is regulated by nothing but power and expediency."<sup>12</sup> Diplomacy itself only provides a superficial covering for the existence and uses of power. Treaties and other international agreements have meaning only insofar as they reflect the realities of international power. A state can achieve little by diplomacy unless it has the strength and the will to back up its demands with force. As Nelson once said: "A fleet of British ships of war is the best negotiator in Europe."

*The Magnitude and Immediacy of the Security Threats.* The military man normally views with alarm the potency and immediacy of the security threats to the state. As Lord Salisbury once remarked: "If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome: if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent: if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe." The military man recognizes the continuing character of threats to the state, but he also stresses the urgency of the current danger. The goal of professional competence requires the military man to estimate the threat as accurately as possible. But the military man also has a professional interest and a professional duty to stress the dangers to military security. Consequently the objective realities of international politics only partially determine the military estimate of the situation. The military man's views also reflect a subjective professional bias, the strength of which depends upon his general level of professionalism. This professional bias, or sense of professional responsibility, leads him to feel that if he errs in his estimate, it should be on the side of overstating the threat. Consequently, at times he will see threats to the security of the state where actually no threats exist.

In estimating the security threats the military man looks at the capabilities of other states rather than at their intentions. Intentions are political in nature, inherently fickle and changeable, and virtually impossible to evaluate and predict.<sup>13</sup> The military man is professionally capable of estimating the fighting strength of another state. But judging its policies is a matter of politics outside his competence. Human nature being what it is, a stronger state should never be trusted even if it proclaims the friendliest intentions. If a state has the power to injure one's own security, it is

necessary to assume that it will do so. Safety requires attributing to other powers the worst intentions and the shrewdest abilities. It is a military responsibility to be prepared for any eventuality. The military "opinion must never be coloured by wishful thinking . . . The military man will be dealing with military fact, hard figures, grim realities of time and space and resources."<sup>14</sup> Military planners of one country may prepare elaborate plans for a war with another country without necessarily indicating that it is the purpose of the first country to attack the second.

*The Level and Sources of Military Strength.* The concern of military men with the dangers to national security leads them to urge the enlarging and strengthening of the military forces available to protect the security of the state. The most common manifestation of this is the demand for a larger share of the national budget. The same concern also leads the military to desire the conversion of military resources (the economic and human potential of the state) into actual military strength. The military man typically prefers regular troops to reserve forces and stockpiles of weapons to factories capable of building weapons. He wants force in being, not latent force. He also desires forces capable of meeting virtually every possible contingency. The limitations of human foresight make it dangerous to assume that security threats will necessarily take one particular form. Consequently the military man favors maintaining the broadest possible variety of weapons and forces provided that each weapons system is kept sufficiently strong so that it is capable of dealing with the threat it is designed to meet. Since the state normally is incapable of maintaining forces to meet all or most possible threats, the military man is usually required to establish a ladder of military priorities. Theoretically he should do this in terms of the objective requirements of military security. In reality, of course, he tends to stress those military needs and forces with which he is particularly familiar. To the extent that he acts in this manner he becomes a spokesman for a particular service or branch interest rather than for the military viewpoint as a whole. No matter what hierarchy of priorities he establishes, however, his military instincts lead him to urge the state to go as far down the ladder as possible.

The military man also favors protecting the state through guar-



antees and alliances, provided that these arrangements increase the strength of the state more than they increase its commitments. Weak, unstable, and adventurous allies are a liability rather than an asset. Allies should be selected purely on the basis of mutuality of national security interests regardless of ideological and political concerns. "Alliances between States should be regarded entirely from the point of view of might [power] policy."<sup>15</sup> The author of this dictum was a German monarchist but he had no more compunctions about military cooperation with communist Russia in the 1920's than American military leaders had about cooperating with fascist Spain in the 1950's. National strength may also be increased by the expansion of national territory and the acquisition of foreign bases. Here too, however, it is essential that the expansion of territory result in a real increase in power and not simply an overextension of commitments. The military man has no desire to acquire isolated, overseas territories which are vulnerable to attack and difficult to defend.

*The Restriction of Commitments and the Avoidance of War.* The military man has no concern with the desirability or undesirability of political goals as such. He is, however, concerned with the relation between political goals and military means since this directly affects the military security of the state. The politician must beware of overcommitting the nation beyond the strength of its military capabilities. Grand political designs and sweeping political goals are to be avoided, not because they are undesirable but because they are impractical.\* The military security of the state must come first. Moral aims and ideological ends should not be pursued at the expense of that security. The political object is the goal, but in Clausewitz's words, it "is not on that account a despotic lawgiver; it must adapt itself to the nature of the means at its disposal . . ." The statesman furnishes the dynamic, purposive element to state policy. The military man represents the

\* "The duty of a professional military man obliges him to be a pessimist. He must be the 'no' man for idealism and wishful thinking. Unpopular as it makes him during periods of peace and prosperity he must assume that such conditions are transient, and that the pendulum of history will eventually swing back to the point where the country must risk its well-being and possibly its survival on the final arbitration of armed force." R. A. Hall (Capt., US), "The Peacetime Duties of the Armed Services," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, LXXX (June 1946), 781.

passive, instrumental means. It is his function to warn the statesman when his purposes are beyond his means.

The military man normally opposes reckless, aggressive, belligerent action. If war with a particular power is inevitable at a later date with decreased chances of success, the military man may favor "preventive war" in order to safeguard national security. Normally, however, he recognizes the impossibility of predicting the future with certainty. War at any time is an intensification of the threats to the military security of the state, and generally war should not be resorted to except as a final recourse, and only when the outcome is a virtual certainty.<sup>16</sup> This latter condition is seldom met except in the case of a powerful state fighting an isolated minor or backward nation. Thus, the military man rarely favors war. He will always argue that the danger of war requires increased armaments; he will seldom argue that increased armaments make war practical or desirable. He always favors preparedness, but he never feels prepared. Accordingly, the professional military man contributes a cautious, conservative, restraining voice to the formulation of state policy. This has been his typical role in most modern states including fascist Germany, communist Russia, and democratic America. He is afraid of war. He wants to prepare for war. But he is never ready to fight a war.

This pacifist attitude may well have its roots in institutional conservatism as well as concern for state security. The military leader is at the top of one of the great power structures of society. He risks everything if that society becomes engaged in war. Whether victorious or not, war is more unsettling to military institutions than to any others. A Tsarist officer once said that he hated war because "it spoils the armies," and American naval officers complained that the Civil War "ruined the navy."<sup>17</sup> This attitude reflects an orientation about means to the point where means become ends, to where, in Merton's terms, the latent function supersedes the manifest function. The military man in his concern with power may come to consider the accumulation of power as an end in itself irrespective of the uses to which it may be put. He may become most reluctant to dissipate that power in any manner.

The military man tends to see himself as the perennial victim



of civilian warmongering. It is the people and the politicians, public opinion and governments, who start wars. It is the military who have to fight them. Civilian philosophers, publicists, academicians, not soldiers, have been the romanticizers and glorifiers of war. Military force as such does not cause wars. The state which desires peace must be well armed to enforce its desire. Weak states invite attack. The tendency of the civilian politician is to court popular favor by curbing the arms budget and simultaneously pursuing an adventurous foreign policy. The military man opposes both tendencies. The military ethic thus draws a sharp distinction between armed strength and bellicosity, the military state and the warlike state.<sup>18</sup> The former embodies the military virtues of ordered power: discipline, hierarchy, restraint, steadfastness. The latter is characterized by wild, irresponsible excitement and enthusiasm, and by the love of violence, glory, and adventure. For the professional military man, familiar with war, this type of mentality has little appeal. Believing in the ultimate inevitability of war, he raises the strongest voice against immediate involvement in war.

THE MILITARY AND THE STATE. The military profession is expert and limited. Its members have specialized competence within their field and lack that competence outside their field. The relation of the profession to the state is based upon this natural division of labor. The essence of this relationship concerns the relative scope of competence of the military expert and political expert or statesman. Before the professionalization of military science in the nineteenth century, the same person could be simultaneously qualified in both fields. Now this is impossible. Napoleon embodied the old unity of military science and politics. He was replaced by Bismarck and Moltke who symbolized the new dichotomy.\* The exact character of the relationship which should exist between statesman and military officer cannot be defined precisely. But

\* "Interchangeability between the statesman and the soldier passed for ever, I fear, in the last century. The Germans professionalized the trade of war; and modern inventions, by increasing its technicalities, have specialized it. It is much the same with politics, professionalized by democracy. No longer can one man hope to exercise both callings, though both are branches of the same craft, the governance of men and the ordering of human affairs." Field Marshal Earl Wavell, *The Good Soldier* (London, 1948), pp. 27-28.

it is possible to state some of the principles which should govern that relationship.

Military science is an area in which specialized competence acquired by professional training and experience is necessary for decision and action. This field, which concerns the implementation of state policy by armed force, is divided into constant and variable components. This division was recognized only after the emergence of the military profession. The constant element reflects the permanency of human nature and physical geography. This may be called strategy, and so distinguished from the variable elements, tactics and logistics, or it may be formulated into a set of "fundamental," "immutable," "eternal," "unchanging and unchangeable" principles of war. Military historians differ as to the number and content of these principles but they do not question their existence as the fundamental core of military science. Their application, however, is constantly changing with changes in technology and social organization. The ideal military man is thus conservative in strategy, but open-minded and progressive with respect to new weapons and new tactical forms. He is equally expert in both the constant and variable aspects of military science. The essence of his art may indeed be defined as the relation between the two: "the unchangeable fundamental conditions of good generalship in their relation to changeable tactical forms . . ." <sup>19</sup> It is this area within which the statesman must accept the judgments of the military professional.

Politics deals with the goals of state policy. Competence in this field consists in having a broad awareness of the elements and interests entering into a decision and in possessing the legitimate authority to make such a decision. Politics is beyond the scope of military competence, and the participation of military officers in politics undermines their professionalism, curtailing their professional competence, dividing the profession against itself, and substituting extraneous values for professional values. The military officer must remain neutral politically. "The military commander must never allow his military judgment to be warped by political expediency." <sup>20</sup> The area of military science is subordinate to, and yet independent of, the area of politics. Just as war serves the ends



of politics, the military profession serves the ends of the state. Yet the statesman must recognize the integrity of the profession and its subject matter. The military man has the right to expect political guidance from the statesman. Civilian control exists when there is this proper subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy.

The responsibilities of the military man to the state are three-fold. He has, first, a representative function, to represent the claims of military security within the state machinery. He must keep the authorities of the state informed as to what he considers necessary for the minimum military security of the state in the light of the capabilities of other powers. The extent to which he may carry the presentation of his views is difficult to define but he must recognize and accept the fact that there are limits. In general, he has the right and the duty to present his views to the public bodies, whether executive or legislative, which are charged with the apportionment of resources between the military and other claims. Secondly, the military officer has an advisory function, to analyze and to report on the implications of alternative courses of state action from the military point of view. If the state leaders are weighing three possible policies, the military man, of course, cannot judge which is the most desirable. He may, however, say that the first policy could easily be carried out with the military strength currently available, that the second policy would involve serious risks unless there is a considerable augmentation of military forces, and that the third policy is simply beyond the military capability of the state to implement effectively. Finally, the military officer has an executive function, to implement state decisions with respect to military security even if it is a decision which runs violently counter to his military judgment. The statesmen set the goal and allocate to him the resources to be used in attaining that goal. It is then up to him to do the best he can. This is indeed the meaning of military strategy in relation to policy: "the practical adaptation of the means placed at a general's disposal to the attainment of the object in view."<sup>21</sup>

Obviously a considerable area exists where strategy and policy overlap. In this realm the supreme military commander may make a decision on purely military grounds only to discover that it has

political implications unknown to him. When this turns out to be the case, considerations of strategy must then give way to considerations of policy. The military man must recognize that a wide number of conceivably purely military decisions, such as the selection of a theater of war, also involve politics, and he must be guided accordingly. As Clausewitz said, "the art of war in its highest point of view becomes policy, but, of course, a policy which fights battles instead of writing notes." The top military leaders of the state inevitably operate in this intermingled world of strategy and policy. They must always be alert to the political implications of their military attitudes and be willing to accept the final decisions of the statesmen. When required in his executive capacity to make decisions involving both military and political elements, the military man ideally should formulate his military solution first and then alter it as needs be on the advice of his political advisers.

The military profession exists to serve the state. To render the highest possible service the entire profession and the military force which it leads must be constituted as an effective instrument of state policy. Since political direction comes only from the top, this means that the profession has to be organized into a hierarchy of obedience. For the profession to perform its function, each level within it must be able to command the instantaneous and loyal obedience of subordinate levels. Without these relationships military professionalism is impossible. Consequently, loyalty and obedience are the highest military virtues: "the rule of obedience is simply the expression of that one among the military virtues upon which all the others depend . . ." <sup>22</sup> When the military man receives a legal order from an authorized superior, he does not argue, he does not hesitate, he does not substitute his own views; he obeys instantly. He is judged not by the policies he implements, but rather by the promptness and efficiency with which he carries them out. His goal is to perfect an instrument of obedience; the uses to which that instrument is put are beyond his responsibility. His highest virtue is instrumental not ultimate. Like Shakespeare's soldier in *Henry V*, he believes that the justice of the cause is more than he should "know" or "seek after." For if the king's "cause be wrong, our obedience to the King wipes the crime of it out of us."



An officer corps is professional only to the extent to which its loyalty is to the military ideal. Other loyalties are transient and divisive. What appeals politically one day will be forgotten the next. What appeals politically to one man will inspire the hatred of another. Within the military forces only military loyalty to the ideal of professional competence is constant and unifying: loyalty of the individual to the ideal of the Good Soldier, loyalty of the unit to the traditions and spirit of the Best Regiment. The most effective forces and the most competent officer corps are those which are motivated by these ideals rather than by political or ideological aims. Only if they are motivated by military ideals will the armed forces be the obedient servants of the state and will civilian control be assured. In the modern army the professional motivation of the officers contrasts with that of the temporary citizen-soldiers who are conscripted or who enlist because of economic or political appeals. The professional officer corps is the instrument of the state in insuring the obedience of the enlisted personnel. The latter, of course, can never develop professional motivation and the sense of professional responsibility characteristic of the West Point or St. Cyr graduate. Nonetheless, the difference between the professional officers and the enlisted personnel is minimized to the extent that the enlisted personnel become indifferent to outside motivations and influences. The professional army which fights well because it is its job to fight well is far more reliable than the political army which fights well only while sustained by a higher purpose. The United States Marine Corps and the French Foreign Legion serve their governments with unvarying and impartial competence whatever the campaign. The military quality of the professional is independent of the cause for which he fights.

The supreme military virtue is obedience. But what are the limits of obedience? This question arises in two separate connections. The first concerns the relation between military obedience and professional competence, the moral and intellectual virtues of the officer. The second concerns the conflict between the military value of obedience and nonmilitary values.

*Military Obedience versus Professional Competence.* The conflict between military obedience and professional competence usu-

ally involves the relation of a military subordinate to a military superior. It arises in two broad senses: operational and doctrinal. The former concerns the execution by a subordinate of a military order which in his judgment will result in military disaster. Assuming he has made his views known to his superior and the superior persists in his order, or assuming he does not have the opportunity to present his views, does the subordinate nonetheless obey? The purpose of obedience is to further the objective of the superior. If the subordinate is thoroughly acquainted with this object, and circumstances unknown to the superior make it possible to achieve the object only through a disobedience of orders, the subordinate may then be justified in disobeying. Only rarely, however, will this be the case. Normally the disruption of the military organization caused by disobedience to operational orders will outweigh the benefits gained by such obedience. The greater competence and knowledge of the superior officer must be assumed. In operations, and even more particularly in combat, ready obedience cannot conflict with military competence: it is the essence of military competence.\*

The second possible manifestation of the conflict of military obedience with professional competence involves nonoperational doctrinal issues. Rigid and inflexible obedience may well stifle new ideas and become slave to an unprogressive routine. It is not infrequent that a high command has had its thinking frozen in the past and has utilized its control of the military hierarchy to suppress uncomfortable new developments in tactics and technology. In a situation of this sort, to what extent may a junior officer be justified in disobeying his superiors to advance professional knowledge? There are no easy answers to this question. The authority of superior officers is presumed to reflect superior professional ability. When this is not the case, the hierarchy of command is

\* The classic instances of the disobedience of operational orders involve Lord Nelson, who justified his behavior in one case on the grounds that: "I find few think as I do but, to obey orders is all perfection. What would my superiors direct, did they know what is passing under my nose? To serve my King and to destroy the French I consider as the great order of all, from which little ones spring, and if one of these little ones militate against it, I go back to obey the great order." See A. T. Mahan, *The Life of Nelson* (Boston, 2 vols., 2d ed. rev., 1900), I, 56-63, 189-191, 445-451, II, 89-92, and *Retrospect and Prospect* (Boston, 1902), pp. 255-283.



being prostituted to nonprofessional purposes. Yet the subordinate officer must tread judiciously in pushing doctrines which seem to him to be manifestly superior to those embodied in the manuals. In particular, the subordinate must consider whether the introduction of the new technique, assuming he is successful in his struggle, will so increase military efficiency as to offset the impairment of that efficiency caused by the disruption of the chain of command. If it does, his disobedience is justified. Ultimately, professional competence must be the final criterion.<sup>23</sup>

*Military Obedience versus Nonmilitary Values.* The second set of problems concerns the relation of military obedience to non-military values. What is the responsibility of the officer when he is ordered by the statesman to follow a course which he knows will lead to national disaster? Or when he is ordered to do something which manifestly violates the law of the land? Or when he is ordered to do something which is an equally clear transgression of commonly accepted standards of morality? It appears possible to divide these issues into four groups.

First, there is the conflict between military obedience and political wisdom. We have already said that a military subordinate may be justified in forcing upon military leaders new developments which will increase professional efficiency. Should not the same relationship exist between the higher commander and the statesman? If the statesman is pursuing a course which seems to be sheer political folly, is not the military commander justified in resisting it by appeal to the standards of political wisdom? The subordinate officer "bucking" his superiors defends himself by appealing to professional wisdom. There is, however, a vast difference between these two cases. The criteria of military efficiency are limited, concrete, and relatively objective; the criteria of political wisdom are indefinite, ambiguous, and highly subjective. Politics is an art, military science a profession. No commonly accepted political values exist by which the military officer can prove to reasonable men that his political judgment is preferable to that of the statesmen. The superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact. If the statesman decides upon war which the soldier knows can only lead to national catastrophe, then the soldier, after presenting his opinion, must fall to and make the

best of a bad situation. The commanding generals of the German army in the late 1930's, for instance, almost unanimously believed that Hitler's foreign policies would lead to national ruin. Military duty, however, required them to carry out his orders: some followed this course, others forsook the professional code to push their political goals. General MacArthur's opposition to the manner in which the government was conducting the Korean War was essentially similar. Both the German officers who joined the resistance to Hitler and General MacArthur forgot that it is not the function of military officers to decide questions of war and peace.

Second, and at the other extreme, there is the conflict between military obedience and military competence when that competence is threatened by a political superior. What does the military officer do when he is ordered by a statesman to take a measure which is militarily absurd when judged by professional standards and which is strictly within the military realm without any political implications? This situation, provided that the last qualification holds and that it is completely removed from politics, represents a clear invasion of the professional realm by extraneous considerations. The presumption of superior professional competence which existed in the case of a military superior giving a questionable order does not exist when the statesman enters military affairs. Here the existence of professional standards justifies military disobedience. The statesman has no business deciding, as Hitler did in the later phases of World War II, whether battalions in combat should advance or retreat.

Third, and between these two extreme cases, there is the conflict between military obedience and legality. What does the military officer do when he receives an order which his civilian superior does not have the legal authority to issue? Presumably, the military officer as the servant of the state is the servant only of the legitimately constituted authorities of the state. If the statesman in ordering his action recognizes himself that he is acting illegally, then the military officer is justified in disobeying. If the statesman claims to be acting legally, but the action seems illegal to the officer, then the issue is one of the relative competence of the officer and the statesman to judge what is legal and illegal. Most modern states which have military professions also have a



group of specialized experts, the judiciary, whose function it is to decide such issues. If their judgment can be obtained, the military officer is bound to accept it. If this is not possible, either because of the urgency of the situation or because the legality of the judiciary itself is in doubt, the military officer can only study the law applicable to the situation and arrive at his own decision. The standards of law are generally far more precise than those of politics but less definite than those of military science. In any event, the officer is bound to give a considerable presumption of validity to the opinion of the statesman. If there are two governments in the state, each claiming to be duly constituted and to be deserving of military obedience, the military officer cannot escape the political choice between them.

Finally, there is the conflict between military obedience and basic morality. What does the military officer do if he is ordered by the statesman to commit genocide, to exterminate the people of an occupied territory? So far as ability to judge and apply ethical standards are concerned, the statesman and the soldier are equal. Both are free individuals morally responsible for their actions. The soldier cannot surrender to the civilian his right to make ultimate moral judgments. He cannot deny himself as a moral individual. Yet the problem is not as simple as this. For politics as well as basic morality may be involved here. The statesman may well feel compelled to violate commonly accepted morality in order to further the political interests of the state. That this is frequently the case, there is no denying. If the statesman rejects the private claims of conscience in favor of the *raison d'état*, is he also justified in implicating the military man too, in subordinating, in effect, the military man's conscience as well as his own? For the officer this comes down to a choice between his own conscience on the one hand, and the good of the state, plus the professional virtue of obedience, upon the other. As a soldier, he owes obedience; as a man, he owes disobedience. Except in the most extreme instances it is reasonable to expect that he will adhere to the professional ethic and obey. Only rarely will the military man be justified in following the dictates of private conscience against the dual demand of military obedience and state welfare.

SUMMARY: CONSERVATIVE REALISM. The military ethic emphasizes the permanence, irrationality, weakness, and evil in human nature. It stresses the supremacy of society over the individual and the importance of order, hierarchy, and division of function. It stresses the continuity and value of history. It accepts the nation state as the highest form of political organization and recognizes the continuing likelihood of wars among nation states. It emphasizes the importance of power in international relations and warns of the dangers to state security. It holds that the security of the state depends upon the creation and maintenance of strong military forces. It urges the limitation of state action to the direct interests of the state, the restriction of extensive commitments, and the undesirability of bellicose or adventurous policies. It holds that war is the instrument of politics, that the military are the servants of the statesman, and that civilian control is essential to military professionalism. It exalts obedience as the highest virtue of military men. The military ethic is thus pessimistic, collectivist, historically inclined, power-oriented, nationalistic, militaristic, pacifist, and instrumentalist in its view of the military profession. It is, in brief, realistic and conservative.