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1 Theses on the military, security, war and women

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(With apologies to Martin Luther and Karl Marx)

Out of concern that issues related to war and security are narrowly construed, and believing that both moral and intellectual responsibility require an inclusive analysis, the following theses are offered for discussion.

I

In *Just and Unjust Wars* Michael Walzer asserts (Osama Bin Laden implicitly agrees) that, "In a democracy the citizen is responsible for the kind of military the state possesses and how it is used."¹ This means that if we can participate in choosing our government, we are accountable for the nature of our military and where and how it is deployed.

II

Holding no official position does not relieve one of responsibility. Being a non-combatant does not make one innocent, nor does ignorance, especially not deliberate ignorance. "Conscious avoidance" or "deliberate ignorance" is a legal term which diminishes or negates a claim of innocence. For instance, if an individual stops at a corner where her car door is opened and a package is placed on the car seat and she then proceeds to another corner where someone else opens the door and removes the package, her claim that she did not know the package contained drugs is considered "deliberate avoidance" and culpability can be inferred. Similarly, ignorance about one's military does not make a citizen innocent.

III

Governmental secrecy does not absolve a citizen. Citizens who accept the necessity for governmental secrecy are complicit. In time of war, operational secrets are permissible. However, citizens should insist that *every* member of Congress have access to *every* government file, and that *no* file be kept secret longer than ten years. Withholding information from citizens subverts democracy. Lying to them is criminal/treasonous.

IV

It is absurd that a foreign regime which a democracy is trying to destabilize or “change” may know more about the activities of a democratic government than do its own citizens. Do you know where your Special Forces are tonight?

V

Military personnel kill on behalf of citizens. If killing is truly necessary, citizens should stand ready to be conscripted. They should be ashamed of asking or requiring others to do that grim work for them. If it is not necessary, they should be ashamed that the military is killing in their name.

VI

In many developed countries military technology has created such impunity for its users that the moral question, “What is worth dying for?” has been replaced with “What is worth killing for?” Heroes risk their lives. Killing at a distance is not heroic. Camus has given us this test for honor in his pamphlet “Neither a Victim nor an Executioner Be.”²

VII

Army leaders are cautious about committing to force because their troops are likely to have to kill people they can see, because they are the most exposed to danger, and because they will be the occupiers of any invaded territory. Navy personnel and especially Air Force personnel kill at a distance. The advice of Army leaders should be given more weight by civilian leaders than advice given by the other services.

VIII

Republics (the United States is one) have for centuries proclaimed the value of a citizen army in contrast to that of a mercenary army. A citizen army can be a conscripted army if it is inclusive. However, conscription is rarely inclusive. Women are seldom conscripted, the upper class finds ways to avoid service, and in the US the lower class is largely ineligible, mostly because of educational deficiencies. (The most “over-represented” group in the US military is the Army’s African-American enlisted women. They are 40 percent of the Army’s enlisted women.)

IX

A “volunteer” army could be a citizen army but is likely to be a mercenary army because it recruits lower middle-class men and women with promises of benefits otherwise unattainable. In 2008, enlistment bonuses were as much as \$40,000.

X

A military that “outsources” is a military which makes war profitable. Contracts let without standard procedures because of an “emergency” are not only enriching but a likely source of corruption.

XI

Many, including Alfred Nobel of Peace Prize fame, have deplored the “standing army.” While described as preventing war, the availability of a standing army leads to its use. For example, US forces developed to deter a hot war with the USSR were immediately put to use in the Gulf when the USSR collapsed. Similarly, once NATO determined the USSR was not a threat, it sent forces into Afghanistan. Again, a standing army gets used.

XII

In democracies, the military is sent to war by civilian officials who are charged with protecting the citizenry. The role of “protector” leads officials to authorize actions they might not take even in self-defense. The problem is that those charged with protection know that they cannot guarantee it. Therefore, they are prone to seek ever more weaponry v. the “enemy” and ever more control of the citizenry whether through curfews, wiretaps, stops and searches, and/or preventive detention.

XIII

Security means both safety and well-being. It attaches to people not necessarily to the state, or to corporations, or religious or other institutions. Importantly, even “opponents” need to be and feel secure.

XIV

A crucial tool in diplomacy *and* in warfare is to be able to think as the person one is dealing with thinks. It is always possible that an opponent is evil and or a threat. However, historians have concluded that too often calamities occur because of misjudgments about others’ thinking. Therefore, security specialists must try to develop the capacity to think as a perceived opponent thinks. They must be slow to see others either as evil *or* as “just like us.”

XV

Security specialists might consider the value of the “golden rule.” If one does not want other countries meddling in one’s elections by organizing demonstrations and funding candidates, one should not charge governmentally supported organizations to do so in other people’s countries.

XVI

To think critically and to design a new security strategy citizens need to be familiar with documents like the US National Security Policy, the Department of Defense's (DOD's) Quadrennial Review, its Global Defense Posture Review, and the long-range strategy papers which support DOD budget requests.

XVII

The last US National Security Strategy document prepared by the Bush administration establishes a "no competitor" policy even though "competition" was the administration's mantra as applied to everything else.³

XVIII

That National Security Strategy also justifies "preemption." The most recent US preemption, Iraq, has been described as a "war of choice." "Fighting over there so we won't have to fight at home" is, in fact, a way of describing a war of aggression.

XIX

"Terrorism" has been used to justify preemption but terrorism is not special. It is experienced everywhere, including in democracies like England, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Spain. In fact, if the number of casualties in Northern Ireland during "The Troubles" were extrapolated to the United States, there would have been 600,000 deaths in the US.

XX

"Terrorism" is not necessarily more heinous than the random killing of non-combatants as "collateral damage." Both involve the killing of non-participating civilians. In both cases the actor(s) know that will be the result.

XXI

Because terrorism is not unusual, breaking domestic or international law in reacting to it is not justified.

XXII

Instead of focusing on war's cost and its horror, attention should be given to whether or not the outcome of a conflict fulfills its stated purpose. World War I did destroy four empires (Russian, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Prussian),

but instead of making the world “safe for democracy” one of the new democracies launched World War II less than twenty years later. The United States has invaded Haiti numerous times. Though it is small and nearby, the US has not succeeded in creating either democracy or prosperity there.

XXIII

The US should make Haiti a demonstration project for how to democratize a country. If it cannot accomplish that goal, it should reconsider more ambitious goals in larger, more distant countries with cultures quite different from our own.

XXIV

The stationing of any country's troops abroad should be prohibited unless they are part of a United Nations sanctioned force. This particularly applies to the US which even before 9/11 had more than 250,000 troops at sea and in more than 30 countries. This includes troops now stationed in some former Soviet Republics.

XXV

Arguments that x dollars spent on the military could provide x number of schools, x number of hospitals, or support for x number of scientists have little effect. Nor do estimates of the costs of war like the analysis of the Iraq War by Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes.⁴ It is necessary to learn the content of the Department of Defense (DOD) budget and to then target specific offensive (in both senses of the word) military expenditures. Examples might include moneys now being spent for the development of new nuclear weapons, space weaponry, and a missile defense system. One might also want to consider the expense and efficacy of the 100,000 spies scattered through 16 agencies and budgeted at \$44,000,000,000.⁵

XXVI

Taking a stand against nuclear proliferation requires consideration of the countries which already have such weapons. It may be that the world was spared the routine use of nuclear weapons after 1945 precisely because the USSR obtained those weapons. If India and Pakistan are less likely to go to war because each now has nuclear weapons, isn't a country like Iran, which has a valuable asset (oil), safer, more secure, if it has a nuclear weapon given that it is surrounded by China, Russia, Pakistan, India and Israel all of whom (and the US too) can reach Tehran with a nuclear weapon?

XXVII

Article VI of the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty calls for nuclear disarmament. Even, if the US were to destroy (not mothball, destroy) 9000 of its existing nuclear weapons, it would still have enough left to destroy civilization.⁶ The goal of non-proliferation should be expanded to include the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons just as the treaty says.

XXVIII

“Gender” is a confusing concept. Usually when we talk about gender we actually mean either sex or sex role (behavior expected because of one’s biological sex). In practice, a policy of “gender mainstreaming” involves bringing females into an institution. It does not involve screening individuals for their gender, their deep-rooted sense of identity as feminine/woman or masculine/man.

XXIX

Scholars speculate that women’s gender (their deep-rooted identity) could bring new direction to Security Studies, but it may be more important to examine men’s gender because (mostly) men make and execute security policy. Is it men’s gender that leads to their belief in (1) the importance of dominance; and (2) the efficacy of force? Or is it only a matter of males acting out a sex role, something which is more malleable than is “gender”?

XXX

The government is said to have a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. If men have a near monopoly on force, what can we learn from how women manage in a culture where they are, essentially, unilaterally disarmed?

XXXI

Official militaries may be largely male, but during war sex roles are suspended. They are not reinforced nor are they changed. Irregular forces also regularly suspend sex roles whether those forces be Buddhist, Christian or Islamic or without a religious base.

XXXII

Conflict is a social leveler. Immediately after a conflict, women, minorities and the lower classes may win rights like the vote and immigrants may win citizenship. Soon thereafter, however, efforts to reconstruct the social order begin. In particular, peace often brings “remasculinization” to the dismay of some women who believed change had occurred.

XXXIII

When women focus on issues like rape in war, a military tactic, their energy and thoughts are diverted from the larger issue, which is replacing strategies which select force as a legitimate means to achieving a goal. The goal should not be to make war more humane but to eliminate it.

XXXIV

Women in developed countries who are concerned about the use of force focus on weapons of mass destruction and on terrorism. This is because these are the only forms of violence they perceive as threatening them personally, the one because of the scale of destruction, the other because of the randomness of victims. This limited view is not responsible. Most victims in today's wars are killed by small arms, mines and improvised bombs.

XXXV

Enforcement of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 which requires women's presence at all peace negotiations would serve as a useful reminder that women are participants in every conflict and have a stake in every conflict's resolution.

XXXVI

The world can be interpreted in various ways; the point is to change it.

Notes

- 1 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 184.
- 2 Albert Camus, "Neither a Victim Nor an Executioner Be," serial in *Combat*, Autumn 1946.
- 3 George W. Bush, "The National Security Strategy of the United States," *New York Times*, September 20, 2002.
- 4 Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, "The Three Trillion Dollar War," *The Times*, February 23, 2008. Available at: www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article3419840.ece, accessed April 7, 2009.
- 5 Mark Mazzetti, "Spymaster Tells Secret of Size of Spy Force," *New York Times*, 21 April 2006, p. A18.
- 6 The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* reported that as of January 2009 the US had reduced its operationally deployed strategic warheads to 2200 as agreed to by the Strategic Offensive Reduction (Moscow) Treaty signed in 2002. However, it also reported the existence of 500 operational, nonstrategic warheads, 2500 warheads "in reserve" and 4200 warheads awaiting dismantlement. See www.thebulletin.org/files/o65002008.pdf, retrieved April 13, 2009.