

## ***Our Meetings as Professional Officers***

If I had written this section before 1959 I would not have used the term 'professional' officers. I would have used simply 'Army Officers' leaving to the reader whom I was talking about - Commissioned Army Officers whose business was fighting wars when called upon by the President - Commander in Chief.

But during the time after 1956 after I had my teaching duties well in hand, I began to meet in evenings with classmates who taught, like me, in other departments - Social Sciences, Math, Physics.

The subject was not about our duties at West Point, but our reflection on just who we were - as junior (Captains) officers who had already had one war, Korea, under all our belts. Where were we going? Where was the Army going, that we were part of?

The intellectual roundtable discussions, involving 4-6 Classmates usually, were held in the homes of the officers, all of whom were married, and like us, had minor children.

There were searching questions, especially in light of the Korean War - which was unlike World War 1 or 2 - interstate wars, with the reality of the nuclear weapons, a powerful deterrent to simple (intellectually speaking) Conventional, win/lose wars. The ambiguity of 'Limited

Wars' like Korea made us question what our role was, or should be.

During one of those sessions, one of my classmates brought in a newly published book by Harvard Political Scientist Samuel Huntington:

***The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations.***

*It covered the history of Civil Military relationships in American history, and the various ways both Politicians and Military men saw themselves and each other.*

*I will not go into the extensive depth of that study, but it had one powerful idea that grabbed my attention, and has been my touchstone all the rest of my years in Uniform.*

*That idea was that US Army Military officers are 'Professionals' in the sense that Lawyers and Doctors are professionals. Not just because they are 'good at' knowing and practicing either law or medicine. It is the idea that a Professional provides a Service to Society, both within the power and limits that society puts on those practices.*

*From another source of my study of my profession, a Soldier provides the Service of employing force or violence in the resolution of social (political) issues.*

*And while he uses Force and Violence, he also either curbs or modifies HOW he uses such force by the social, legal, cultural limits Americans put on such uses. Either explicitly by orders, or implicitly by cultural norms. While nuclear strikes can destroy an enemy's military power, it can also kill large numbers of civilians and irradiate millions more.*

*And to the extent that, for America at least, there is always an 'object' or goal beyond war. And for the US it is never the blind assassination of another people. Even the dropping of the two nuclear bombs on Japan, killing almost 200,000 Japanese civilians was a very carefully considered decision, against the alternative ground invasion of Japan which would have cost America as many soldiers and marines, and still killed large numbers of civilians as they fought to prevent being taken over.*

*In retrospect I did not permit my angry, tearful, vengeful 15 surviving soldiers who fought for the top of Hill 347 in Korea, to kill any or most of the 192 Chinese prisoners of war - less because of the Geneva Convention, than my sense that to do so would have been 'Un-American.'*

*And just as Doctors have codes of ethics and Lawyers*

*practice law as Professionals - they practice within the limits of a very American set of values. Values which slowly change, but which keep both professions within the boundaries of society. Ditto the US Military Professional.*

*So Huntington's book and thesis of 'Military Professionalism' helped me get a clear understanding of who I am, and, when asked by civilians right up to the civilian President as Commander in Chief, my advice always takes into account my perspective on my 'Professional' abilities and limitation. And that pertains just as much to my commanding my subordinates, as to my following the orders and missions given to me by my superiors.*

Through those meetings between we 'Professionals' we hammered out, at night and on weekends, our professional role as we rose in rank and responsibilities for the rest of our careers

Thus I learned at West Point, as well as Taught. As much from my fellow officer-instructors, as from the Academic lessons.