

BE PREPARED

And Why You Should Be

Q & A

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*The bravest are surely those who have the clearest vision of what is before them,
glory and danger alike, and yet notwithstanding, go out to meet it*
Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War

Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet
Gen. James “Mad Dog” Mattis, USMC (Ret.)
US Secretary of Defense designate

If everybody is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking
Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. USA

Late last year the Swiss Army chief, Lieutenant General Andre Blattmann, warned his countrymen to be prepared for “social unrest” and seek to arm themselves to protect their homes and families. Isn't this extreme when addressing a free democratic country like Switzerland?

No, it is not. In fact, we should praise Switzerland for having developed a political system in which opinions of senior figures, with an established record of service, deliver the bad news just when warnings are necessary.

Liberal Western democracy approaches the concept of self-defense with disdain. By branding those who advocate preparedness, and brace to defend themselves, racist, bigoted, and borderline terrorist, our democracies undermine not only basic freedoms but also the collective will to meet both external and internal threats. “Progressives” invariably claim

warnings of impending trouble only help to create a “culture of fear,” a claim that is shortsighted and irresponsible.

Switzerland, a state of *true direct democracy*, honors the ancient tradition of the *armed citizen soldier* as the ultimate anchor of national security. Switzerland has not been involved in war since the 13th century. Mountains and “all people’s” preparedness discouraged potential aggressors including no other than Adolf Hitler. Switzerland’s record is verifiable proof that an armed society *without* a standing army can be both safe and secure.

To this day, the Swiss Army is organized around a ready citizens’ reserve which can be mobilized in a matter of hours; reservists keep their military weapons and kit at home. Conscription is mandatory and considered one of the main civic foundations of the Swiss state. Compare the Swiss condition with that of almost all “core” EU countries where citizens’ armies have been replaced by all-volunteer forces, an institution that remains under scrutiny and often attracts criticism.

Why did General Blattmann choose this time to issue this warning?

General Blattmann reads the relentless news just like most of us do. But he has also access to privileged information and ongoing intelligence. And he is willing, and expected, to identify these trends publicly, *without political interference*, and call for action to prevent the worst.

This is *not* accepted practice among Western leaders fearful of giving the impression they are not observing the Western “values” of avoiding war to lose the peace. General Blattmann admits fears exist and warns concrete steps must be taken to quell them.

As to his timing, the explanation is simple: between non-performing economies, stubborn unemployment, a monolithic morose EU bureaucracy, the rise of popular movements across Europe demanding accountability from “globalists,” and Islam’s onslaught, *anyone* claiming all’s well (or, it can turn out well) should perform some serious self-analysis. As Swiss, the general warns the citizen soldiers of what lies ahead.

Politically speaking, public forewarnings from the military aren’t common practice in the West, are they?

They are not. But, given the immense expansion of the online forum, many previously “confidential” streams of information have become public. And we have crossed into unprecedented territory in global security affairs, a fact our politicians continue to underestimate, misinterpret, or ignore. The strategic significance of 9/11 is still a subject of dispute -- and has led to disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to mention the confusion surrounding “the war on terror.”

Our politicians continue to act as if “liberal values” are omniscient, damage resistant, and beyond doubt. Politics though is confusing, and often, contradictory and irrational business. To make matters worse, modernity’s random cultural exchanges and uncontrolled movement of millions create unprecedented pressures which promote remarkable absurdities, self-censorship, and rejection of the obvious.

In contrast, the military has a narrow and well-defined role: armed defense. Despite changes since 1945, the core military activity is still the same: use of armed force to neutralize threats by destroying the enemy.

This core mission today includes preempting, attacking, and defeating both “conventional” and “unorthodox” threats which may arise *inside national boundaries*. Those who refuse to recognize this are setting themselves up for unpleasant surprises and expose their societies to deadly futures.

What domestic threats, other than external international terrorism, are we talking about and how do we describe them/define them?

Defining threats is a complex job based on many variables and constants.¹ The simplest method, popular with politicians, is “public perception.” If it happens before your eyes, and the result is bloody and awful, then the threat has been established. This approach, however, has been “updated” according to humanitarian standards and the fear of liberal leaders of appearing associated with “undesirable cultures”² and, even more keenly nowadays, with accusing “whole religions” of promoting violence. Religion-motivated mayhem automatically becomes an event of “unspecified motives” even if the attacker(s) screamed their faith in the faces of their victims before violating/killing them. Muzzling of dissenting voices is now widespread throughout European countries, when, for example, Moslem refugees become violent. “Best policy” in such cases, practiced at all levels of government, is for authorities and politicians to insist we must not exaggerate “isolated incidents” as Mrs. Merkel did recently.³

If we accept, for a moment, license for the military to speak as General Blattmann did, aren't we toying with [The Man on Horseback](#) scenarios in the making? Internal security isn't a military matter, it is rather in the hands of the police and other civilian law enforcement agencies.

No, we are not. Civil-military relations in the West, despite inevitable “systemic” strains, are stable and an integrated part of national policies. Today, we meet *The Man on Horseback*, as a looming threat to civilian-dominated democracy, only in extremist left-wing anarchical political screeds whose tenor has not changed for the longest time.

Despite improved tactics, weapons, and equipment, police forces are still *public safety armed organizations* without the capabilities required to counter large scale terrorist attacks.

¹For a broad discussion of the subject see, for example, “[Adversaries, Threats, and Enemies in the Operational Environment](#),” “[Maintaining Full-Spectrum Capabilities in an Operating Environment of Hybrid Threats: The Army's Future Requirements](#),” “[Thoughts on Unconventional Threats and Terrorism](#).”

²These “undesirable cultures” are the cultures by which wars have been fought since antiquity. In a broad sense today, war cultures, in the liberal interpretation, are considered diseased byproducts of friction and, thus, should not be studied by those seeking policy options but, rather, by those who labor on finding “non-violent” solutions for “co-existence.”

³A glaring example of struggling with “acceptable” motives is the Orlando nightclub mass shooting by the Afghan Omar Mateen. For days, officials, media, “activists,” and the online arena bubbled with conflicting theories attempting to disassociate Mateen from faith-based criminal thinking. Eventually, law enforcement [decided](#) Mateen was “self-radicalized through the Internet” and that “he consumed a hell of a lot of jihadist propaganda” on the Internet. Soon, however, other more ingenious [theories](#) surfaced refuting the claim of Islamic terror.

And here we need to distinguish between incident and operation as levels requiring different tactics and weapons. *Police are geared mainly toward incidents. Anything more complex, involving possible multiple contacts, unconventional weapons, and threat of escalation, will require a tactical military response. For example, deploying armed troops in preventative domestic roles (e.g. high visibility security in airports, public places, communication hubs, etc.) is already routine practice in many European countries.* In the United States, thinking about revision of the Posse Comitatus Act began shortly after 9/11 and continues as we speak.

In a broader sense, how should we approach the role(s) of the modern military in an era of increasing domestic threats?

In a liberal democracy, as mentioned, civilian cooperation with the military is not without its stresses. With few exceptions, politicians have an instinctive skeptical reaction to the military's "non-liberal" ways and its demands for discipline and secrecy. Quarrels between national leaders and the military occur frequently, the most prominent recent example being the friction between the White House and the US military over Iraq and Afghanistan. Coincidence of opinion between civilians and soldiers is often labored, unless the nation exists in permanent mobilization as with Israel.

The modern Western military, whether all-volunteer or on conscription, is not separate from the society it serves. It must respond and adapt to changing societal conditions, circumstances, and developing threats. *Today, Islamic terrorism is a huge challenge, for example, when deciding when to mobilize military forces to counter potential domestic attacks.* Urban unrest such as the November 2005 French riots repeated in October 2006, showed the limits of the police in containing the trouble and averting damage to property worth EUR 200 million. Critics at the time complained about not sending troops out to quell the riots.

Political quarrels aside, the military's involvement in *domestic security* has become a key issue of the overall national defense concept. *Mobilizing troops as the ultimate backup force of the police and other civilian-controlled law enforcement agencies is becoming a reality.* In Western democracies, this mobilization, while accepted occasionally, promises continuing differences and disputes. European scholars frown, for example, at past American experience with race riots in the 1960s and 70s, when army troops deployed in force in many American cities where whole neighborhoods were destroyed. US state governors to this day do not hesitate to send out Army National Guard troops to control riot flash points.⁴

Complex factors, including national traditions, social attitudes, perceptions of threat, and political imperatives, form the background of any decision "to go domestic" with military troops. Fears of "militarizing" law enforcement as an inevitable corollary of giving the army domestic missions is the subject of heated debate.

Ultimately, military involvement in domestic peace-defender roles are connected to questions of political transformation and the willingness of the civilian leadership to recognize existing weaknesses in domestic defense. Without converging interpretations on the latter issue, democracies will continue to underutilize the military when warfare

⁴In August 2014, the US Army issued a specific instruction manual on how to control civil disturbances.

“asymmetries” carry on in transforming the “outside” and the “domestic” into one unified battlefield.