Puzzles versus Problems: The Alleged Disconnect between Academics and Military Practitioners

Michael W. Mosser

In the halls of both academic and government buildings, the stories of the gap between theory and praxis are legion. Practitioners speak of misguided academics and armchair generals criticizing the creation of strategy and the conduct of operations from the safety of their universities. Moreover, and at a more fundamental level, practitioners are frustrated that academics just don't seem to "get" the policy world. Conversely, academics bemoan the fact that practitioners often fail to fully think through the problems they claim need to be solved. If they had, many scholars argue, they would understand that the "solution" to a "problem" either becomes a part of the problem itself, or creates a whole new set of problems. Whether one calls the gap between theory and praxis in international relations a difference, a disconnect, or a divide hardly matters. What matters is discovering whether or not it actually exists, and if so, what is being done to rectify it. I first describe and then challenge the conventional wisdom that irreconcilable differences separate the academy and military practitioners.

Comparing recent tables of contents of some leading academic international relations journals to those of prominent military professional journals might lead one to assume that members of the two professions really are from different planets. Military professionals are from Mars: their journals have articles with titles like "Structural Vulnerabilities of Network Insurgencies: Adapting to the New Adversary,"[1] and "Global Counterinsurgency: Strategic Clarity for the Long War."[2] On the other hand, academics are from Venus: their journals, even those ostensibly concerned with international relations and foreign policy, contain articles such as "Occupational Logics and Political Commitment: American Artists against the Iraq War"[3] or "Disaggregating Ethno-Nationalist Civil Wars: A Dyadic Test of Exclusion Theory."[4] Aside from the obligatory colon in the titles—a requirement for journal articles that appears to transcend any substantive issue divide—one would be hard-pressed to find similarities among these four articles. Insofar as these articles are representative of the policy and academic worlds, it appears that something has gone seriously wrong in the advice from the Quakers to "speak truth to power."[5]

Whether one calls the gap between theory and praxis a difference, a disconnect, or a divide hardly matters. What matters is discovering whether or not it actually exists, and if so, what is being done to rectify it. Here I first lay out and then challenge the conventional wisdom that irreconcilable differences separate the academy and military practitioners.

The conventional wisdom is powerful and the idea, if not the reality, of a gap is pervasive. Scholars and practitioners—more the former than the latter—have long decried the growing fissure between theory (the academic world) and praxis (the policy world), but it seems to have taken on a new sense of urgency in recent years. In 2005, Stephen Walt, the political scientist whose earlier work on the "balance of threat" helped to reinvigorate realism when it appeared to be declining in relevance to a world of complex interdependence, undertook another project: a call to arms for international relations theorists to make themselves more relevant to policymakers. IR theorists, he argued, have much to contribute to the world of policy ideas. Rather than pursuing pure theory, however, academics should

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pursue "policy relevant" knowledge. In other words, academia should inform practice.[6] The trend has accelerated in recent years. Indeed, the overall theme of the 2007 International Studies Association annual meeting was "Bridging the Divide." Scholars such as Joseph Nye (a former Carter and Clinton administration official) commented in a print collection of keynote speeches from that conference that the cultural mindsets of academia and the policy world are hardening, rather than coalescing.[7] For his part, Henry Nau, another keynote speaker who served in the Reagan administration, decried what he saw as the blanket condemnation of policymakers as partisan while the academy remains blame-free: "The claim that scholars are detached and policymakers are partisan is overstated."[8]

In the halls of both academic and government buildings, the stories of the gap are legion. Practitioners speak of misguided academics and armchair generals criticizing the creation of strategy and the conduct of operations from the safety of their universities. Moreover, and at a more fundamental level, practitioners are frustrated that academics just don't seem to "get" the policy world. Conversely, academics bemoan the fact that practitioners often fail to fully think through the problems they claim need to be solved. If they did, many scholars argue, they would understand that the "solution" to a "problem" either becomes a part of the problem itself, or creates a whole new set of problems.

One anecdote from anthropology, a field with a long and tortured history of interacting with the policy world, sheds light on this issue. In what many cynics see as a naked move to assuage its guilt over the field's perceived compliance with policymakers' actions taken during the Vietnam war, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) recently raised serious concerns with the concept of Human Terrain Teams (HTTs). HTTs, a military-led effort to embed social scientists with Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan, have as their purpose to map the human geography of a region and understand local contexts before undertaking tactical action.[9] While not forbidding its members from participating in HTTs, an AAA-sanctioned report noted that it "advise[s] careful analysis of specific roles, activities, and institutional contexts of engagement in order to ascertain ethical consequences."[10] Clearly, the AAA feels its members would be professionally, if not ethically, sullied by their interaction with military practitioners.

Anecdotes need not serve as the only evidence for the prosecution's case. Dozens (if not more) articles and books have been written about the perceived theory/praxis divide, especially in international relations and foreign policy/national security studies and particularly since September 11. The project of which this essay is a part owes its genesis to the lack of answers to such fundamental questions as whether the academy is asking militarily interesting questions, or even whether academics and military practitioners are speaking the same language.

Of course, as the AAA anecdote shows, not everyone agrees that the academy *should* be asking militarily interesting questions. And one may speak a language even if it is not one's native tongue. It is too much to hope, or even to expect, that policymakers and academics will ever have overlapping worldviews. Indeed, some distance between theory and praxis is necessary and healthy for both. But, assuming that there are at least some in the academy who want to engage military practitioners, and vice versa, there is room to maneuver the two closer together, as long as we understand the boundaries of the worldviews in question.

Those boundaries are best explained via the metaphors of "problems" and "puzzles," and the behavior associated with solving each of them. The terms themselves are elementary. The worldviews they represent, however, are radically different. I believe that one of the most compelling explanations of the gap between theory and praxis—operationalized here to "between academics and military practitioners"—is the oppositional nature of the worldviews that each community possesses. If the opposition to each other's worldview is absolute, then perhaps a fundamental dichotomy exists with no possibility for compromise. If, however, the opposition is one more of *degree* than of scope, there is a chance to utilize inherent but latent centripetal forces to pull the system together.

Traditionally, scholars see the world in the form of a series of interesting puzzles that require their personal attention. Importantly, in the academy, puzzles are not given to professors to solve; one seeks them out on one's own and attempts to structure a research agenda to solve (or at least address) them. Indeed, it is fair to say that the entire tenure process at research-intensive universities hinges on the establishment of an original research program devoted to explaining at least one puzzle that challenges the field. Importantly, the puzzle-solving requirement is tied to the discipline in which the scholar works, and the time-constrained nature of tenure means there is little occasion to be ecumenical in one's research. Further, interdisciplinarity is not encouraged: interdisciplinary programs at many universities are afterthoughts, populated with adjunct faculty who are not under the same pressures as their tenure-track counterparts. In many ways, university tenure-track faculty are faced with a conundrum. They are independent contractors, busily working to establish their academic *bona fides* to garner the professional respect and acclaim they need for tenure, but by doing so they wall themselves off from the rest of the world. They do so because the tenure process asks for understanding, a deep appreciation of the complexity of the puzzle the faculty member has chosen to address. With understanding comes wisdom, the thinking goes, and from wisdom comes enlightenment. Only then can knowledge be transmitted to students.

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Military practitioners, on the other hand, see the world in terms of problems to be solved, and the military instrument of national power as merely one tool in a bag to be employed only when and where necessary. They are constantly planning and wargaming "what-if" scenarios in order to be prepared to execute orders from a higher authority. Operating under the implicit assumption of strong civilian control, military officers at all levels are trained and operate to resist taking action until guidance from that higher authority is given. That guidance, once given, usually takes the form of asking for a military solution to a policy problem. Once that initial condition is met, the forethought of contingency planning pays off. The US military excels at executing military resolutions of tactical, operational, or strategic quandaries. While critics of such a worldview decry this mindset with the cliché that "when all you have is a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail," there are valid reasons why the military operates in the manner in which it does.

Puzzles are perfect for academics. They are interesting and challenging thought experiments that allow scholars to tease out the complexity of a situation and attempt to discern patterns within chaos. They do not cry out for solutions, nor do they demand quick action. Some scholars spend their entire careers working on only a few puzzles. Indeed, some may have only one that occupies them from the beginning to the end of their long careers. Puzzles do not have to be policy-relevant (although many are); they may be so esoteric as to defy easy categorization by literal-minded practitioners. What is more, "quick and dirty" solutions to puzzles often are derided as inelegant by colleagues and peers, establishing a precedent that a puzzle worth solving is worth solving perfectly. For this reason, ideal solutions abound; indeed, this is one of the key drivers for "ivory tower" syndrome that causes practitioners to scratch their heads in wonder at the world they perceive academics to inhabit.

By contrast, problems—especially policy problems—*demand* solutions, and not merely for the practitioner's personal welfare. Policymakers, short on time and information, require a satisfactory, but not necessarily ideal, solution. As another hoary military truism has it, "perfect is the enemy of good." It is for precisely this reason that the US Army's military decision-making process (MDMP) was developed and honed over time to become an excellent problem-solving tool. Much of its power comes from its stringency: there are seven steps and 117 substeps in the process, and while not all need to be followed every time, key steps must be followed, and in the correct order.[11] For this reason, once begun, MDMP will give the decision-maker a solution. The solution will satisfy the guidance given to the planning staff by a higher command, who in turn received guidance by policymakers. Military practitioners ask for explanations: the MDMP is good at giving them. Whether or not that explanation or that solution is "correct" or "right" remains an open issue.[12]

So, it would appear that the Mars/Venus divide exists in both mindset and reality. The gravitational fields of the planets pull too strongly on their inhabitants to easily achieve escape velocity. The question comes down to this: to what ends and for what purpose is scholarship undertaken? The puzzle-solving mentality of the academy is driven by the need to find and address puzzles for tenure. The problem-solving mentality of military professionals is driven by the planning and decision-making processes the profession has put into place to limit extraneous information from contaminating the issue at hand. However, as I mentioned earlier, the gap between puzzle and problem need not be a chasm. There are certain counterpoints that bear specific mention. Each of these, in its own way, sheds light on what I see as the artifice of the divide between theory and praxis.

The first point is there has always been some interaction, when and where possible between the military and the academy, in what might be called "applied academics." Academics serve on special staffs of commanders around the world. Academic experts are either consulted or brought on board in "white cells" during planning exercises to provide planners with the benefit of their subject-matter expertise and experience. And military officers, especially those stationed at posts near universities, constantly engage in outreach to faculty and students, in an attempt to disabuse many in the university community of their preconceptions.

Moreover, not all disciplines forbid their members from working with military practitioners. While it may be true that certain academic disciplines have resisted the call to more tightly integrate academic scholarship with praxis, others have embraced it, at least in the sense of setting up a "revolving door" between the academy and the policy world. While law is the classic example, the social science disciplines have also long had a close relationship with the policy community. In the field of economics, Franklin Delano Roosevelt combed the academy for scholars with radical ideas to pull the nation out of the Depression, while John F. Kennedy had his "Whiz Kids" from East Coast universities. And recent administrations have been packed with scholars with policy-relevant knowledge. Indeed, George W. Bush's second Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, is an IR scholar and a former Stanford University provost. President Obama's administration continues this trend: aside from numerous faculty from Yale and Harvard Schools of Law and various public administration schools across the country holding positions within the administration, President Obama himself has the distinction of having served on the faculty of the University of Chicago School of Law. In political science, Joseph Nye, Graham Allison, Stephen Krasner, John Ruggie and many other scholars have served in positions of authority

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in both Democratic and Republican administrations. Returning to the academy after their tenure in government has allowed them to write incisive, policy-relevant works that transcend the divide and serve as reference points for younger scholars.[13]

On the military side, examples abound as well. US Army Central Command (CENTCOM) Commanding General David Petraeus has a doctorate in international relations from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton. Lt. Colonel (retired) John Nagl, the head of the Center for New American Security in Washington, is a Rhodes Scholar. Australian Army Lt. Col (retired) David Kilcullen has a doctorate from the University of New South Wales (Australia), and is now a senior advisor in the US State Department. Together with other academy-trained officers such as Brigadier General HR McMaster (Ph.D., UNC Chapel Hill), Nagl and Kilcullen were instrumental in assisting General Petraeus to change the US Army's attitude toward twenty-first-century warfare from a strategy of annihilation of an enemy's armed forces to one of counterinsurgency (COIN) via its re-write of Field Manuals (FMs) 3-0 "Operations," 3-24 "Counterinsurgency," and 3-07 "Stability Operations."[14]

There are indications that the willingness to embrace applied academics has expanded to the institutional Army.[15] Another encouraging sign that the chasm is less yawning than pundits or cynics in either camp believe is the renewed emphasis in military circles on education, as opposed to mere training. While training is still a key task for any military organization (especially one as large and technically sophisticated as the US Army), service schools of all levels from cadet to flag rank across the country have hired large numbers of classically-trained professors (most with Ph.D.s from major research universities) to bring academic rigor and scholarship.

In recent speeches and articles, both Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and General Petraeus have emphasized the importance of civilian graduate education for military officers. In an online article published in 2007, General Petraeus notes that "the most powerful tool any soldier carries is not his weapon but his mind," and brings up in print something that he had been discussing among his officers for some time: the concept of the "pentathlete." In General Petraeus' mind, a pentathlete is more than a jack-of-all-trades. Rather, that person is an individual who exhibits flexible, adaptive, and creative thinking but at the same time is "comfortable not just with major combat operations but with operations conducted throughout the middle- and lower-ends of the spectrum as well."[16]

General Petraeus developed many of his ideas on the need for civilian training of military officers while serving in Iraq in 2003 and then at Fort Leavenworth as Commander, Combined Arms Center (CAC), where he oversaw the training of US Army and sister service senior NCOs and field-grade officers. Distilling his insights from these postings into a general-interest publication, General Petraeus sees at least six benefits of graduate education for military officers, ranging from the removal of officers from their intellectual comfort zones to increasing the diversity of thought to improving communication skills.[17] While beyond the scope of this article to address these six benefits fully, it is worth noting his conclusion:

> The future of the U.S. military requires that we be competent warfighters, but we cannot be competent warfighters unless we are as intelligent and mentally tough as we are aggressive and physically rugged. We will become that way not merely by observing the differences between the military and the civilian academic world, but by experiencing them first hand.[18]

What was perhaps the most important initiative to come out of the military side of "applied academics" was designed specifically to address the perceived shortcomings of homegrown military education. The Minerva Initiative, a "[Department of Defense]-sponsored, university-based social science basic research program initiated by the secretary of defense" focuses on

> areas of strategic importance to U.S. national security policy and seeks to increase the department's intellectual capital in the social sciences, improve its ability to address future challenges, and build bridges between the department and the social science community.[19]

Secretary Gates outlined the Minerva Initiative in an April 2008 speech to the Association of American Universities in Washington, DC.[20] In so doing, he compared Minerva to the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which increased funding for universities at almost every level in the late 1950s but which came at a price: university support for the American Cold War effort against the Soviet Union. A major part of the NDEA, Title VI, created National Resource Centers (NRCs) to promote the study of less-commonly-taught languages (such as Russian) and funded graduate student acquisition of these languages through Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships. Ostensibly, scholars trained in these languages would be able to use their expertise to further American national security goals through a deeper understanding and appreciation of the cultures from which these languages came.

Today, National Resource Centers (known throughout the country as "Title VI centers") and FLAS fellowships are fiercely guarded by the universities that have them, and jealously coveted by the universities that do not. Since their inception, both the NRCs and FLAS fellowships have broadened their scope considerably beyond any Cold War notion of national defense, but the core principles remain embedded in the purpose of the Act. The US government itself, in its 1998 reauthorization of the National Education Act, recognized the *plus ça change* nature of the relationship between education and security when it noted that "the security, stability and economic vitality of the

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United States in a complex global era depend upon American experts in and citizens knowledgeable about world regions, foreign languages, and international affairs, as well as upon a strong research base in these areas."[21]

But something interesting happened on the way from the Cold War to the present day: rhetoric and reality have diverged. Despite the deep connection in the civilian academy between education and national security via the origins of Title VI, it is not too much of a stretch to posit that the genesis of this funding stream has been (conveniently?) forgotten by faculty members and university administrators who use the funds for the broadest possible interpretation of national defense or "the security, stability and economic vitality of the United States." Indeed, *sotto voce* conversations with scholars, especially in the social sciences, reveal their frustration that NRCs have become one of the last bastions of financial support for language departments, who use the funds to support their graduate students and maintain departmental viability. And even when FLAS fellowships are used to support research into contemporary issues, they tend towards the esoteric. To cite but one specific example, at the University of Illinois, "a graduate student in the College of Medicine received a FLAS fellowship to study advanced Portuguese in order to learn more about emerging infectious diseases."[22] The puzzle of emerging infectious diseases in Portuguese-speaking countries is important and timely, to be sure. Whether or not it is a *problem* for US national security is another question entirely.

It is this disconnect between rhetoric and reality, between puzzles and problems, that the Minerva Initiative seeks to redress. In his speech to the AAU, Secretary Gates outlined the crux of the matter:

> As was the case at that time, the country is again trying to come to terms with new threats to national security. Rather than one, single entity—the Soviet Union—and one, single animating ideology—communism—we are instead facing challenges from multiple sources: a new, more malignant form of terrorism inspired by jihadist extremism, ethnic strife, disease, poverty, climate change, failed and failing states, resurgent powers, and so on. The contours of the international arena are much more complex than at any time during the Cold War. This stark reality—driven home in the years since September 11th—has led to a renewed focus on the overall structure and readiness of our government to deal with the threats of the 21st century.[23]

Secretary Gates sees Minerva as a crucial element of American "soft power": the unquantifiable but essential element of US national power that relies as much on diplomacy, economics, and information as it does on the more traditional "hard" power instrument of the military. For him, Minerva is a way to leverage the intellectual horsepower of the American academy in support of US national security goals. Universities, with their tradition of openness and inclusivity, not to mention their ability to conduct basic research via their faculty and graduate students, are already educating students with skills that serve them well in private industry or business. There is no reason to think that those skills could not be harnessed in support of US national security objectives as well.

The Minerva Initiative got underway in December 2008, with seven schools receiving funding for the initial five-year grant period. These schools—a full listing of which can be found on the Minerva Initiative website under the Department of Defense —are pursuing research on topics ranging from the relationship between technology and national security in China (University of California, San Diego) to terrorism governance and development (Princeton University) to the security implications of climate change in Africa (the University of Texas at Austin).[24]

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the reaction of the academy to smaller military initiatives such as the HTT program, reaction to the Minerva Initiative has been mixed, to say the least. While institutions of all stripes from across the country submitted applications for funding—and the seven chosen represent a nice cross-section of the American higher education landscape—there was a great deal of discussion in the academy on the merits of both the program and the larger meta-issue what might be called the "militarization" of academic research.[25] Secretary Gates, in his AAU speech, saw this more as a problem of *perception* rather than of reality:

> Despite successes in the past and present, it is an unfortunate reality that many people believe there is this sharp divide between academia and the military—that each continues to look on the other with a jaundiced eye. These feelings are rooted in history—academics who felt used and disenchanted after Vietnam, and troops who felt abandoned and unfairly criticized by academia during the same time. And who often feel that academia today does not support them or their efforts.[26]

Whereas Secretary Gates saw a problem of perception, many in the American academy saw at least the potential problems of cooptation and misappropriation. To attempt to reconcile these ideologically conflicting positions, the Social Science Research Council stepped in to play the role of intellectual mediator. In 2008, as the Defense Department was reviewing the submissions in preparation for the announcement of the grant recipients, SSRC sponsored an online colloquium on the "Minerva Controversy," where it noted the "concerns about the appropriate relationship between university-based research programs and the state, especially when research might become a tool of not only governance but also military violence."[27] Commissioning a series of essays both in support and in opposition to the initiative, SSRC was interested in moving the dialogue beyond a binary "love it or hate it" argument. The essays, written by scholars from across the country as well as by practitioners in the Bush administration, reflect the kind of thoughtful dialogue-in-print that is the goal of academic discourse. While it is fair to say that no author's opinions changed radically from

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one position to the other as a result of this dialogue, the ability of SSRC to bring together scholars and practitioners to discuss the merits and drawbacks of the Minerva Initiative should be commended as a clear first step toward the bridge-building endeavor that I advocate.

Moving from the meta-issue of *should* there be cooperation between to the academy and the military to the more micro-level issue of *how* cooperation can be achieved presents its own set of problems and prospects. First, the prospects.

Even before Minerva, military schools had begun to understand that the open-mindedness of academics, their incessant need to question everything, is not necessarily detrimental to military education. For instance, the US Military Academy at West Point, the starting place for many of the US Army's officers, has greatly increased its civilian education component. The West Point EECS website has a FAQ that asks and answers the question of why there are civilian faculty members at a Military Academy:

> The second word of the USMA mission statement is "educate." The USMA faculty is a professional team dedicated to cadet education. Our civilian faculty members are the professional educators who form the core expertise and continuity of this mission. They also provide a model for cadets of dedicated civilian service to the Nation and the exceptionally high ethical, professional, and personal standards of the worldwide community of educators and scholars. Our civilian faculty members are every as much a part of the Army as our military ones. Working side-by-side with a wide range of wonderful, talented people—civilian and military—is one of the best aspects of a military faculty tour.[28]

Similarly, the US Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC) at Fort Leavenworth has set a goal of 70 percent civilian faculty in order to meet the needs of educating an Army at war.[29] CGSC now conducts universal intermediate-level education (ILE), which means that every major in the Army either attends a yearlong, graduate-level course of study in residence at Fort Leavenworth or achieves ILE certification through branch campuses at Fort Belvoir or Fort Monroe.

At Fort Leavenworth, the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) has embraced applied academics since its origin in 1983. Starting with 16 student officers and two civilian faculty (one military historian and one military theorist), and challenged with the mission to bring the Army out of its post-Vietnam malaise, SAMS began on a high note: rewriting the Army's operations manual to incorporate the doctrine of AirLand Battle. This doctrine, used to spectacular effect in Desert Storm and the initial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom, was developed as much from a deep academic understanding of operational art as it was through the refinement of tactical exercises.[30] In effect, SAMS was created to force the Army to challenge its own preconceptions, much as traditional academics problematize everything. Since the mid-1990s, SAMS has expanded both its student body and its faculty to incorporate strategic studies, international relations, area (Middle East) studies, and complexity theory. Unlike CGSC, SAMS students are selected. Like CGSC, SAMS majors take classes at the graduate level, but they differ in that they all write a scholarly monograph and leave with a Master of Military Arts and Sciences (MMAS) degree.

There are indications that "Big Army" is learning from the example set at SAMS. Notably, the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) has since 2005 incorporated into Unified Quest, its long-range strategy exercise, a radical new way of thinking to solve problems likely to be faced in a world of growing complexity. This mode of thinking, known by various names depending on its orientation but called "Art of Design" by SAMS, comes close to accommodating the academic puzzle-solving mentality within the military's problem-solving framework. Coupled with Secretary of Defense Gates' call for increased interaction between the academy and military professionals, design applies insight from various academic disciplines to ask searching questions before the planning process even begins.

The design process as applied to a school that trains field-grade military officers for general staff activities is not one that replaces the planning process entirely, nor should it. Rather, it attempts to guide the staff and the commander, through discursive interaction, to come to a better understanding of the situation as it currently exists. Once some common understanding between the commander and his staff is achieved, the planning process begins. In many ways, the design process turns military problems into academic puzzles, asking meta-questions (e.g., asking "what do we mean by 'win'?" instead of "how do we win?"), challenging preconceived notions (e.g., asking whether the military instrument of national power is right for fomenting democracy), and problematizing formerly uncontested concepts (i.e., getting a better understanding of who we are, as seen by others). Design, at least in its ideal form, pushes the military closer to the "understanding" end of the spectrum, away from the "explaining" pole.

These examples of positive steps toward integration are encouraging, but should not be overstated. There are substantial challenges to tighter integration. One of the most difficult and entrenched is the security clearance process. Much of what military professionals do is classified for national security purposes, and few in the academy hold security clearances. What is more, there is a strong bias in the academy that a security clearance restricts academic freedom, since research conducted with classified material, under the aegis of a security clearance, generally is no longer releasable in the public domain must stay behind the walled garden.

And military education is still *military* education. The Army, at least, is still trying to wrap its institutional head

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around the requirements of educating student officers while encouraging faculty development via research and conference attendance. Military education takes place within tightly constrained boundaries, the better to push out to students across the United States and around the world. Courses are developed and deployed in teams: course authors and course instructors are not necessarily the same person. In large facilities like CGSC, where there are 1,000 students in residence, the course development and course deployment teams are entirely separate. Moreover, unlike traditional students, CGSC and SAMS students are on a timeline. They *will* graduate in one year, and struggling students do not have the option to drop out. In keeping with the Army tradition of leadership, the burden to bring struggling students along is as much on the faculty advisor as it is on the student. Since education takes priority, civilian faculty often sacrifice professional development to ensure that every student graduates with at least a modicum of academic respect.

Finally, because of the distinct constraints imposed on civilian faculty in military education, it is generally a one-way street from a traditional university to a military education facility. Military educators, when they do publish, often publish in professional military journals with direct operational or strategic relevance to the military. While recognized and valued by the superior authorities in their institutions, these articles are generally not well received (or even understood) in traditional academic circles. Thus, a CV of a faculty member at a military education institution, however well filled out with publications and presentations, may not, and most likely will not, satisfy the tenure requirements of a traditional civilian institution.

There are ways for both sides to come closer together. Academics, especially those with policy-relevant knowledge, could serve as "on-call" experts to military practitioners in planning exercises. If the Army moves to a design-oriented philosophy as opposed to a strictly linear planning process, such academic expertise is doubly important. For their part, practitioners could more fully embrace the notion that the academic predisposition to challenge everything does not mean they challenge *everything*. For example, the famous "disrespect" that drives military practitioners to apoplexy is explained when put into context. Many academics challenge authority figures not because they personally despise them, but more because they challenge the institutionalized authority structures that those figures represent.

Fortunately, much of the groundwork needed to create a viable link between theory and practice has already begun. Organizations such as the MacArthur Foundation and Ford Foundations have funded grants to study ways to bridge the gap between practitioners and academics. The US defense community, through the Minerva Initiative, has reached out to the academic research community to harness its expertise in addressing (and hopefully solving) pressing issues relevant to US national security.

Practically speaking, there are some easy steps that research centers and institutes could pursue that would require little additional expenditure but which would bring substantial benefits. One of the most simple requires only increased communication between educational institutions on both sides of the divide. With nothing more than the cost of bandwidth, lectures presented at either university-based research centers or military educational institutions could be virtually "attended" by audiences of the other. In addition, research center fellows should regularly reach out to military educational institutions to promote their latest scholarship. The opportunities to present such work in person should not be neglected. CGSC, at Fort Leavenworth, has the Army's premier auditorium facility in its state-of-the-art Lewis & Clark Center, and has a speaker budget that could be utilized by speakers who quite frankly challenge students to think outside of their comfort zone.

Another, though more complicated, step that could be taken is for academic research centers to market their experts and expertise directly to the military community. Military contractors, who have established productive relationships with operational headquarters such as CENTCOM, Africa Command (AFRICOM) and Special Operations Command (SOCOM), have already set the precedent for such initiatives. The imprimatur of the university communities in which research centers are embedded adds academic luster to the relationship. SOCOM, for one, is always looking to expand its knowledge base to move from "unknown unknowns" to at least "known unknowns." AFRICOM may be the most fruitful location to employ this strategy, as it is the first military command set up from the beginning to incorporate civilian experts directly into the command structure.[31] The substantial challenge for research centers will be to avoid being caught up in the all-but-inevitable backlash against the increasingly tight relationship between the military and private military companies. University-housed research centers and think tanks must maintain their academic integrity at all costs.

A research center such as the Robert S Strauss Center for International Security and Law at the University of Texas at Austin, with its mission of "promoting policy-relevant scholarship," is ideally positioned to operationalize these initiatives.[32] One could say that the Strauss Center is practicing applied academics in ways similar to military educational institutions like SAMS, but without the institutional overhead imposed by the military educational system. This initial advantage can be magnified with little additional effort. By their very selection, Strauss Center Distinguished Fellows have already shown their ability to produce policy-relevant work. It is a small step for the Center itself to harness and direct that general-purpose ability to address militarily relevant issues. Moreover, the Minerva-funded Climate Change and African Political Stability (CCAPS) project is directly germane to the subject

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at hand in this article. The project has many of the elements of the kind of policy-relevant knowledge advocated here, such as social science research on the effects of climate change on political stability and the appropriateness and relevance of aid disbursement programs in Africa. Importantly, it also has a military-education "transmission belt" where a designated military/education liaison is tasked with disseminating the research done by the social and hard scientists to Department of Defense military education institutions such as the US Army War College and SAMS. The result of this interaction is to allow those institutions to inject research findings into their educational and planning processes.

On a larger scale, the academic community should not punish scholars who choose to pursue fellowship or short-term research opportunities with the military or government service. Such work, especially in disciplines such as political science, international relations, or the other social sciences, provides invaluable real-world empirical (dis)confirmation of academic theories, and gives the scholar a large body of work to draw from upon returning to the academy. Works published in journals that appeal more to practitioners than to the academic community should be given greater credence in tenure decisions, and ideas that actually get translated into policy should not be the academic equivalent of a scarlet letter. Finally, the *entire* academic community needs to understand that the relationship between theory and praxis is not automatically a detrimental one. While the value of establishing a bridge should not be underestimated, and the effort wholly encouraged, the bridge-building needs to take place beyond policy schools. To have lasting value, the university *system* needs to value the interaction.

As just the few examples here show, it is clear that policy and the academy are not two entirely singular worlds, though they are most certainly different. Movement between the two is definitely possible, and in some ways even encouraged. The difference, however, is that these instances represent only a small fraction of practicing scholars, and an even smaller fraction of serving policymakers. Moreover, they may be more exceptions to prove the rule than anything else. At the end of the day, however, the alleged gulf between theory and praxis, is, as I see it, as much one of mindset as it is one of empirical fact. While that does not make the gap any less real, it does make it at least possible to bridge. After all, at least by some accounts, even Mars and Venus eventually reconciled.

Notes

1 Muckian 2006–07, 14–25.
2 Roper 2008, 92–108.
3 Roussel 2008, 373–90.
4 Buhaug, Cederman, and Rød 2008, 531–51.
5 The phrase "speak truth to power" is not nearly as old as conventional wisdom would suppose. It dates only to 1955, in an American Friends Service Committee document proposing a rethinking of the Cold War. See http://www2.gol.com/users/quakers/living_the_truth.htm
6 Walt 2005.
7 Nye in Tickner and Tsygankov 2008, 155–77.
8 Ibid.
9 Kipp et al. 2006, 8–15.
10 Glenn 2007. See also Peacock et al. 2007.
11 See FM 5-0 "The Operations Process" for a thorough description of the MDMP.
12 Indeed, almost from its inception the MDMP has faced critics who deride its "linearity" and solution-driven methodology. Much like Winston Churchill's definition of democracy as "the worst system of government on earth, except for everything else," however, unless and until a viable replacement for the MDMP comes along that satisfies operational and tactical commanders, it is likely that MDMP will remain the pre-eminent problem-solving tool in military practice.
13 Joseph Nye's *Bound to Lead* and *Soft Power* are just two of the myriad examples of knowledge gleaned from the policy world being used to facilitate academic discourse via published works; Nye 1990, 2004.
14 Not all academy-trained Army officers agree with the pendulum swing to "all COIN all the time." Many, such Dr. Antulio J. Echevarria, see the shift as having gone too far. See Echevarria 2005. Active duty officers also see problems with the strategy. For example, Gentile, 2008 argues against the hubris that comes with one unified doctrinal solution to all potential and actual problems.
15 I examine in detail only the US Army, the institution with which I have the most familiarity. It is quite plausible that the other services have undergone similar transformations in their recent modes of thought.
16 Petraeus 2007.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 U.S. Department of Defense 2008.
20 Gates 2008.
21 U.S. Department of Education 2008.
22 Center for Global Studies. "Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships." University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, available at http://cgs.illinois.edu/resources/FLAS_fellowships/index.html (last accessed May 10, 2010).
23 Gates 2008.
24 U.S. Department of Defense. "The Minerva Initiative: Funded Research," available at http://minerva.dtic.mil/funded.html (last accessed May 10, 2010).
25 See Weinberger 2008.
26 Gates 2008.

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27 "The Minerva Controversy," Social Science Research Council, available at http://essays.ssrc.org/minerva/ (last accessed 10 May 2010).
28 See http://www.eecs.usma.edu/hr/militaryfaq.htm.
29 For reactions to this proposal, see Kem 2008.
30 Of course, not everyone agrees that the "spectacular success" of AirLand Battle in Iraq was an unmitigated good. Many military officers see it more as a case of "catastrophic success" that led to the Army ignoring the precursors of the insurgency that would consume Iraq in 2006 and 2007.
31 AFRICOM is technically a "unified" as opposed to a "combatant" command of the U.S. military. It has a dual chain of command, with both military and civilian deputy commanders. See http://www.africom.mil/AboutAFRICOM.asp.
32 The Strauss Center mission statement can be found at http://www.robertstrausscenter.org/about/mission.

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