

CIVILIAN CONTROL OVER THE ARMED FORCES UNDER TWO CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

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Abstract: In a context marked by democratic backsliding worldwide and the additional pressures that hybrid warfare linked with the war in Ukraine places on democratic governance in European states, the foundations of military subordination to civilian authority warrant renewed scrutiny. Such strains can put pressure on defining characteristics of liberal democracy, not least civilian supremacy in civil–military relations. This principle found its paradigmatic expression in Samuel Huntington's concept of objective civilian control. Over the last decades, however, criticism of his approach has been increasingly voiced on the grounds of its inadequacy in the face of the changing pattern of civil–military relations, with some extreme positions even calling into question the absolute character of civilian supremacy in cases of flagrantly wrong political decisions. This paper undertakes to examine Huntington's objective civilian control and an alternative to it proposed by William E. Rapp, through the lens of Schumpeter's procedural democracy and of what Schumpeter terms the classical doctrine of democracy. This approach makes it possible to identify the epistemic and axiological assumptions, together with their implications in educational terms, underpinning the conceptions of both Huntington and Rapp on civilian control over the armed forces, and to assess on these grounds the degree of theoretical change entailed by departing from the Huntingtonian approach. No evaluative preference is expressed for either of the two competing approaches, the sole aim of the comparative analysis being to establish the theoretical distance between them in terms of the meaning of democracy corresponding to each.

Keywords: *procedural democracy, classical doctrine of democracy, civilian supremacy, objective civilian control, civil-military relations, Samuel Huntington, Joseph Schumpeter, William Rapp*

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Introduction

The Democracy Report 2026 by V-Dem Institute, indicates a dramatic reversal of the democratic trajectory of the past half-century (Nord et al., 2026, p. 4). It is mentioned herein that, by the end of 2025, the average level of democracy experienced by the global citizen has receded to where it stood in 1978, effectively undoing nearly all the gains of the third wave of democratization that began with Portugal's transition in 1974. According to this report, autocracies outnumber democracies in 2025 - 92 to 87 - and approximately three quarters of the world's population, some six billion people, lived under autocratic regimes, while only seven percent (around 600 million people) inhabited liberal democracies. The decline is assessed as broad rather than localized given that nearly every component of democratic governance has eroded over the past decade. The year 2025 is also considered in the mentioned report to stand out for its scale: never before have so many countries been autocratizing simultaneously.

In case of the European Union, to this general background is added the sustained hybrid warfare that the Russian Federation is considered to conduct against EU member states, including by targeting their democratic systems. Thus, in a statement from 18 July 2025, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, accused the Russian Federation of increasing since 2022 its hybrid campaign designed to undermine the democratic foundations of the EU members (Council of the European Union, 2025) while the European Parliament, in a resolution adopted on 23 January 2025 (European Parliament, 2025) emphasised that the democratic process in EU member states was affected by the Russian Federation through means such as disinformation and manipulation of information, including with respect to European history.

For democracy, particularly liberal democracy, effective civilian control over the armed forces is considered a key characteristic (Kuehn & Croissant, 2023, pp. 1–2; Kohn, 1997, pp. 140–141; Diamond, 1999, p. 11). As Peter Feaver (1999, p. 223) argues The conventional wisdom holds that the age and robustness of the democracy are important in determining the country's pattern of civil-military relations. At least where civilian control of the military is concerned, success breeds success and failure breeds failure. Conversely, an erosion of civilian control significantly undermines the functioning of democracy, making this issue particularly relevant in light of the current pressures on democratic states.

Over the last two decades, the academic literature on civilian control over the armed forces suggests that the changing pattern of interaction between military leaders and senior civilian officials makes it necessary to move beyond Samuel Huntington's highly influential framework advanced in his 1957 book *The Soldier and the State*. Huntington's paradigm established a firm safeguard against the involvement of high-ranking military officers in the process of political decision-making and thus against any form of military disobedience arising from disagreement on political issues between civilian leadership and military leadership. Moving beyond this framework has opened the space for political disagreement between these two actors, albeit one

that is, in the ordinary course, strictly circumscribed by the principle of uncontested civilian supremacy, a principle also fundamental to Huntington's framework. However, the idea — contrary to Huntington's position — that high-ranking military leaders possess political expertise in matters pertaining to national security has given rise to the extreme position that they are justified in not complying with political decisions when these are manifestly wrong, and thus that civilian supremacy should not be absolute. Given that civilian control over the armed forces, as canonically formulated, admits no exceptions, such an extreme position stands in direct contradiction to a fundamental component of democracy.

The consequences for democracy entailed by how civilian control over the armed forces is conceptualised justify an examination of what the abandonment of Huntington's approach to civil-military relations entails for other elements of his broader theoretical framework bearing relevance for democracy. This chapter contributes to this direction by using Joseph Schumpeter's procedural democracy as a lens through which to read Huntington's objective civilian control, thereby exposing its underlying epistemic and axiological assumptions, while simultaneously bringing into view those that underpin an alternative developed to replace Huntington's framework. Thus, the investigation will make it possible to consider whether renouncing Huntington's model also entails renouncing the conception of democracy upon which it rests, thereby effecting a consequential departure in terms of political theory.

The argument pursued in this chapter is structured in three sections. The first is concerned mainly with presenting the central tenets of an alternative to Huntington's objective civilian control that preserves the absoluteness of civilian supremacy, though the extreme position that relativizes it is also touched upon. The second section analyses the rationale for and the meaning of procedural democracy as advanced by Joseph Schumpeter in the 1940s and explores how the relationship between experts and politicians is configured within this concept of democracy. The last section considers Huntington's objective civilian control as developed in his 1957 seminal work *The Soldier and the State* from the perspective of procedural democracy, examining whether procedural democracy underpins this form of civilian control in democratic states.

Challenging Huntington: Rethinking civil-military relations in the 21st Century

The still highly influential approach inaugurated by Samuel Huntington in his 1957 work *The Soldier and the State* (Owens, 2017; Nielsen, 2012; Brooks, 2020) conceives military expertise as strictly instrumental in relation to political decision-making, with the implication that military officers should concern themselves solely with the adequate means for implementing the ends determined by civilian officeholders, thus maintaining themselves entirely outside the sphere of politics; even when exercising

their advisory function, Huntington maintains, military leaders should confine their advice to matters pertaining to these means (Huntington, 1957/1967, pp. 72–76, 83–85).

Over the last two decades, scholarship on civil-military relations has called into question this strict Huntingtonian division, encapsulated in the concept of objective civilian control (Rapp, 2015; Rapp, 2016; Travis, 2017; Cohen, 2002; Feaver, 2003; Brooks, 2020; Coletta & Crosbie, 2021; Krupski, 2023.). Within this strand of thinking it has been argued, on ethical and practical grounds, that senior military leaders need to possess theoretical and practical political knowledge on national security issues and some authors acknowledged that this knowledge could be comparable to, or even exceed, that of civilian decision-makers (Feaver, 2003, pp. 66–67; Rapp, 2015, pp. 16–17).

One influential criticism of Huntington's objective civilian control was formulated by William E. Rapp (2015, 2016) who argues that military education should not be constrained by the limits imposed on military professional culture by the Huntingtonian tradition and should instead prepare future military leaders capable of engaging in argumentative and, when necessary, critical dialogue with civilian leadership on the best political decisions for national security, that is on the best political ends to be pursued in the realm of national security (Rapp, 2015, pp. 14–19; Rapp, 2016, p. 24). Rapp equally maintains that civilian decision-makers, who usually lack military experience, should thoughtfully consider the arguments provided by military leaders, engage in critical discussion with them, and, when these arguments are compelling, decide accordingly (Rapp, 2015, pp. 16–19; Rapp, 2016, p. 24). The decisions reached through this process are regarded by Rapp as enabling civilian leaders to best fulfil their moral and legal responsibility to citizens in the field of national security (Rapp, 2015, pp. 17–18).

For Rapp, consensus between military leaders and political leaders is possible because open, thoughtful and rational dialogue creates a middle ground enabling both parties to eventually acquire a similar understanding of national security policy (Rapp, 2015, pp. 16–19). Implicit in this rationally reached consensus is the operation of epistemic criteria for discerning between right and wrong decisions, criteria that are accepted by both military leaders and political leaders. It could be maintained that this consensus, including its underpinning criteria, is not conceived by Rapp as limited to the two actors at the strategic level but rather as one that could, in principle, be extended to rational citizens at large, given that it is formed on rational grounds and does not presuppose prior possession of advanced military expertise. This reading accords with the fact that Rapp's account is consistent with the idea that consensus on the best political decisions regarding national security is built around the rationally established general security interest of society as a whole.

Rapp underlines that participation by military leadership in an open and critical dialogue should be governed by respect for civilian decision-makers and by bearing in mind the difference in authority in favour of the latter, an authority conferred upon them through the democratic process. (Rapp, 2015, pp. 17–18). Moreover, Rapp underlines

that disposing of theoretical and practical political knowledge by military leaders does not entail their engagement in domestic political competition (Rapp, 2015, p. 17).

The line of thinking followed by Rapp allows for an initial epistemic disagreement on political issues between high-ranking military officers and political leaders, one that can nevertheless be resolved through deliberation, since both parties share rational criteria according to which political decisions on national security can ultimately be rationally judged as either right or wrong, with right taken to mean best for the security interests of the state. In this logic, since it is always possible for military leaders and political decision-makers to rationally settle their epistemic differences and eventually reach the same conclusions, the degeneration of epistemic disagreement into an epistemic standoff - a situation in which each party claims epistemic superiority over the other and neither is willing to yield - can always be avoided. It remains possible, however, that military leaders provide the soundest arguments and political decision-makers nonetheless refuse to decide accordingly. Within Rapp's framework, such a situation cannot lead to military disobedience because civilian supremacy applies in absolute terms, with the effect that military leaders are to carry out that decision despite considering it epistemically wrong. Indeed, it could be maintained that it is in the spirit of Rapp's reasoning that military subordination to civilian authority should ideally proceed from agreement rationally reached between military leaders and civilian decision-makers, so that the former obey what are in fact epistemically right political decisions; civilian supremacy, ideally, is the supremacy of epistemic rightness.

Pursuing this logic further, when this ideal situation fails to materialise, it is not implausible for one to imagine that military leaders would invoke precisely epistemic grounds for morally justified resistance to what they regard as epistemically wrong political decisions unless an absolute principle of civilian supremacy exists. Absent such a principle, military leaders, by virtue of being epistemically right, would consider themselves morally right in resisting what is epistemically wrong - a logic that bears resemblance to the position advocated as early as the aftermath of the Second World War by S.L.A. Marshall and which, as Feaver (2003, pp. 65–66) documents, can still be encountered among experts in civil-military relations, a notable case in point being that of Andrew R. Milburn (2010).

Joseph Schumpeter's procedural democracy: rationales and meaning

In the 1940s, with his book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Joseph Schumpeter mounted a forceful critique of what he called the classical doctrine of democracy and advanced a highly influential alternative conception of democracy. Schumpeter maintains therein that this doctrine was rooted in eighteenth-century utilitarian philosophy and holds that there is a common good, namely right political ends to be pursued by society, which is readily discernible by reason - including in its embodiment in concrete circumstances - to every member of the political community through the exercise

of reason (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 250). Where individuals fail to acknowledge it, Schumpeter maintains, the failure normally stems not from any cognitive incapacity but from the pursuit of anti-social interests or mere ignorance, the latter being amenable to remedy through education (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 250). Consequently, the doctrine, as presented by Schumpeter, holds that any disagreement concerning the common good could be settled against rationally objective criteria, since those who reject what reason prescribes could be brought into accord with it through rational argument alone (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 250). Also, according to him, within the framework of this doctrine, the nature of the common good renders it morally commendable by virtue of its universality — that is, by encompassing the intersubjective interests of the political community as a whole rather than particular egoistic designs; consequently, political ends encompassed by the common good are right on both rational and ethical grounds (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 252).

Schumpeter notes that several defining features of the classical doctrine of democracy follow from this premise. Since all reasonable and well-intentioned persons are assumed to apprehend the same common good, a common will exists - the convergent desire of rational citizens for the same right ends (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 250-252). Each individual will that composes this common will is presumed to be definite, independent, and rationally grounded, so that the doctrine leaves virtually no room for psycho-techniques (arts) that appeal to the non-rational aspects of human psychology (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 253-254). There is, in this account of democracy reconstructed by Schumpeter, no peculiar knowledge of the right political ends that is accessible only to politicians, no epistemic privilege for them; the parliament, the prime minister, and the government at large are entrusted by the people with the task of translating their common will into practice - that is, of following the right political ends that are equally knowable by people and politicians alike - and not with the task of establishing those ends (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 250-251). Moreover, under this reading of democracy, the driving force for politicians is the realisation of the ends rationally established by society, not their personal quest for power (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 250-252, 282).

It is also indicated by Schumpeter that the classical doctrine of democracy holds that the knowledge distinguishing experts in various fields relevant to politics from both laypeople and politicians is only instrumental, pertaining to means rather than to ends (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 250-251). Under this reading, the right ends are accessible to everyone, since the special knowledge of experts bears solely on how best to secure these ends, not on the ends themselves - which are equally known to experts and non-experts alike (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 250-251).

The classical doctrine of democracy is rejected by Schumpeter as fundamentally flawed. He observes that the very existence of the common good rests on the assumption that members of a society fundamentally share the same values which find their expression in this good (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 251). He challenges this assumption by arguing that within societies there is a plurality of visions as to what is valuable, yielding divergent understandings of the common good (Schumpeter,

1942/2003, p. 251). Since values are not rationally constructed, Schumpeter argues, they are not amenable to revision through rational argument, and value disagreement cannot, therefore, be rationally settled. Schumpeter also emphasises the limits of reaching compromise between different values, arguing that it would prove impossible where these are separated by too great a distance, which is far from uncommon (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 251).

Even if we assume the existence of shared values that underpin a broad acceptance of a common good, Schumpeter observes, these common values would remain at so high a level of abstraction as to render the political ends they support virtually devoid of concrete content (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 252). This follows, he argues, from the fact that where individuals adhere to the same values, they do not attribute to them the same concrete meaning: adherence to a value does not entail its identification in the same circumstances. Shared values, in other words, could be shared only in the abstract, so that they cease to be so at the level of the concrete ends in which those values are to find their expression. The agreement, on Schumpeter's account, is one of principle, not of application - so that the abstract consensus produces, in effect, the same consequences as a fundamental dissension about values. In the absence of any rationally meaningful common good, Schumpeter further highlights, the very possibility of a general will is definitively undermined since the wills of the people would naturally be directed towards different and irreconcilable ends (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 252).

Schumpeter's criticism is not limited to the conception of values, but extends also to the formation of individual will as described in the classical doctrine of democracy. Thus, he observes that political matters - including political ends - and all the more so those pertaining to international affairs, are generally too remote from the daily interests and experience of ordinary people for them to devote sustained attention to these matters (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 260-263). As a result, Schumpeter indicates, individuals seldom hold firm opinions on such matters, independently formed and arrived at through sound rational deliberation. Schumpeter observes that this is what renders individual will in the political sphere highly amenable to the psycho-techniques (arts) employed in commercial advertising, which manufacture wills by appealing to constituents of human personality that lie outside the scope of rationality - subconscious impulses, irrational drives, extra-rational associations, and the persistent reiteration of assertions and pseudo-rational arguments (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 263-264). Political leaders, on Schumpeter's account, operate as artisans who manufacture the artefact of popular will by deploying techniques designed to produce psychological effects, and may be said to present to the wider public a political offer whose success consists in attracting sufficient votes to acquire the power to take political decisions (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 263-264, 270). The successful formulation of political ends and the building up of a popular will around them are for Schumpeter an expression of high craftsmanship, of a remarkable talent that could even reach the level of political genius similar to business genius, and which therefore bears the distinctive imprint of the individual politician (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 138, 399).

The manufacturing of popular will by politicians is acknowledged by Schumpeter as not being limitless but as taking place within a framework of more or less broad limits imposed by the degree to which the will of the people on political matters is already defined (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 264). Although these limits are considered by him as generally broad, given the diffuse nature of the will of the people on political issues, they become narrower in his view where a segment of society has already formed a definite will on matters that directly affect it — such as the unemployed who lack adequate financial support from the state (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 270-271). Yet even in such cases, Schumpeter indicates, these wills, albeit relatively numerous, cannot by themselves assert political force or attract sufficient support across wider society to become a political issue capable of producing the desired changes (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, pp. 270-271). Therefore, Schumpeter argues, it falls to a political leader to take up these wills, to articulate them into political ends, supplement them with elements capable of attracting support from other segments of society, and to draft a political offer that can be presented in elections with significant prospects of securing victory and thereby the power to translate it into political reality. However, Schumpeter indicates that it is the pursuit of power, not the achievement of the political ends they promote, that constitutes the primary motivation behind politicians' manufacturing of public will (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 282).

One should observe that Schumpeter does not regard the manufacturing of popular will as mere manipulation and considers that politicians perform an important function for society by enabling democracy to operate. It is to be mentioned that Schumpeter does not present reliance on psycho-techniques in exercising this function as reprehensible in itself, given that, against a background of value heterogeneity and an indeterminate will of the people on political matters, there is no other way in his view for a popular will - the indispensable ingredient of democracy - to emerge.

From his criticism of the classical doctrine of democracy, Schumpeter concludes that democracy functions in reality not as this doctrine prescribes but in a significantly different manner, one that must be captured in an alternative theory built around free electoral competition for political leadership — a conception that later scholarship often classifies as procedural (Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 15; Saffon & Urbinati, 2013, p. 443). In contrast to the classical doctrine, the procedural conception advanced by Schumpeter holds that the role of politicians is not to carry out the general will of the people - that is to attain objectively right ends established by reason - but to compete in free elections with the ends they propose and for which they try to manufacture popular will. It is to be noticed that Schumpeter is concerned only with the free election of politicians and with their removal from power through free elections on the grounds that people exercise control over the politicians by voting or not voting for them and not while they are in office and exercise power (Schumpeter, 1942/2003, p. 272); procedural democracy, in his account, is thus anchored in electoral competition rather than in the ongoing exercise of governmental authority. One could further specify these characteristics by pointing out that politicians win elections based on certain ends for which they had been able to attract votes and, until the next elections, they

are entitled to decide on the ends to be pursued by society; however, albeit not subjected to formal approval by popular vote, the ends decided upon during the mandate could be said to be retrospectively validated at the next elections, when incumbent politicians may seek to manufacture a popular will in favour of these ends as well as around new ends designed for the electoral campaign.

As we have seen, the period between elections is not a focus for Schumpeter's procedural democracy, but it is possible to consider this interval through the lens of his conception of democracy and in contrast with how it is framed by the classical doctrine of democracy. Specifically, consideration will be given to how each framework handles a disagreement over political ends between politicians in office and experts in fields that provide the means necessary for achieving these ends, high-ranking military officers included. Taking first the classical doctrine of democracy as a reference point, it should be noted that such a disagreement could be definitively settled by appeal to rationally established criteria, as any person is, in principle, capable of rationally demonstrating to politicians that they are wrong whenever this is the case. When proven wrong, politicians should comply with the rationally sound arguments and bring the political ends they pursue into full alignment with the common good, since their role is precisely to realise it, and this is the only rationale that should motivate their political action. An epistemic standoff between experts and politicians could not exist since any epistemic disagreement is rationally solvable if parties to it comply with the demands of reason. However, if politicians, despite pertinent arguments provided by experts, decide to pursue epistemically wrong ends, experts are furnished with moral grounds to resist such a decision, since it fails to advance the common good as it ought to and represents a departure by politicians from the function entrusted to them by the electorate.

A radically different picture emerges from procedural democracy as described by Schumpeter, since here the epistemic disagreement between experts and politicians in office on political ends is meaningless given that there is no such thing as right political ends established according to rational criteria and accepted by all rational and well-intentioned people, no common good. Experts could not rationally prove to politicians in office that they are wrong in this sense, simply because the ends they espouse have no objective rational existence but are elaborated by them, within certain social constraints, so as to enable the manufacturing around them of popular will. Epistemic disagreement, and a fortiori epistemic standoff, simply cannot exist within the framework of procedural democracy, where they are dissolved at their root by the denial of the very epistemic terrain upon which they could be constructed. According to procedural democracy, all political ends espoused by politicians in office are for them merely instruments through which they attempt to remain in power by winning the next round of elections, and therefore these ends are to be judged solely from this perspective and, moreover, treated as the expression of high craftsmanship, of a remarkable personal talent which produces, as it were, a political artefact; political ends in procedural democracy are not known but manufactured, and their validation is not epistemic but electoral. It is for this very reason that procedural democracy con-

fines the genuine knowledge held by experts to the adequate means of achieving the political ends decided upon by politicians in office, since only here does it make sense to speak of right and wrong according to objective standards recognised by those possessing expertise in the relevant field.

The political education of experts as part of their professional formation is a non-sensical proposition as far as procedural democracy is concerned, since there is no political knowledge about rationally objective political ends to be taught. By contrast, the political education of experts is perfectly coherent with the classical doctrine of democracy, which accepts the existence of such ends and turns their teaching into a relevant means of enabling their rational identification and, consequently, agreement upon them.

Schumpeterian Procedural Democracy as an Underpinning of Samuel Huntington's Objective Civilian Control

Samuel Huntington explicitly endorses the procedural definition of democracy developed by Schumpeter (Diamond, 1997, p. 3), grounding his preference in its empirical precision, which enables it to serve as an operational standard for the comparative analysis of political regimes across countries (Huntington, 1984, p. 195; Huntington, 1989, pp. 15–17; Huntington, 1991, pp. 7–8). Huntington also accepts Schumpeter's criticism of what the latter termed the classical doctrine of democracy, particularly the rejection of the existence of the common good and of its correlative concept of the general will of the people (Huntington, 1991, p. 6). Moreover, he builds an even broader argument in support of Schumpeter's definition of democracy by maintaining that defining democracy in terms of its source and its purpose - of which the classical doctrine constitutes a particular instance - is flawed (Huntington, 1989, pp. 12–14). More specifically, Huntington argues that defining democracy by reference to who rules (its source) leads, in each of its three main forms, to the same democratically counterintuitive outcome: a few end up ruling over the many. Direct democracy, in which all people rule, cannot operate in large communities, where governance necessarily requires the designation of rulers by the people - a situation that effectively amounts to the rule of a few over the many. Defining democracy as the rule of a particular social class may likewise entail that a minority rules over the majority when the members of that class are not numerous. Finally, Huntington points, defining democracy, as the rule of the voting majority may result in rule by those who in fact constitute a minority of the population as a whole but who succeed in mobilising sufficient support at the ballot box. Huntington also rejects the definition of democracy in terms of purposes, arguing that either way of conceiving them - whether as identified with certain substantive ends such as human welfare, human dignity, equality, or justice, or as whatever ends those who rule choose to institute - generates such heterogeneity that virtually any purpose

could be considered democratic, thereby exposing the absence of objective criteria by which to classify political ends as democratic.

However, it should be noted that any reference to Schumpeter's procedural democracy is conspicuously absent from the foundational book on civil-military relations that Huntington published in 1957, namely *The Soldier and the State*. In this work, Huntington considers at length how a potential difference between military leaders and civilian decision-makers over the political ends set by the latter should be settled (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 76). Huntington approaches this issue from the standpoint of heterogeneity of political values at the level of society, which prevents the emergence of rationally objective criteria on the basis of which an assessment of political ends could be conducted and rationally demonstrated to every reasonable person (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 76). The absence of such criteria turns politics into an art (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 76). In describing the pre-professional era of military command, Huntington draws a parallel between the art of war and the arts of music and sculpture, arguing that, like them, military command was held to require inherent natural talent — an expression of genius in its highest accomplishments — and therefore possessed a markedly individual character that made it impossible to transmit through objective social institutions (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 30). Although Huntington does not explicitly extend these attributes to politics, his characterisation of politics as an art whose criteria are “indefinite, ambiguous, and highly subjective” (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 76) strongly implies that political expertise, too, rests on intuitive individual judgment rather than on transmissible objective knowledge. On this reading, the intuitive political knowledge Huntington attributes to politicians could not be regarded as epistemic in the strict sense: it is not grounded in objective criteria for evaluating political ends but rests on purely subjective judgments. That is why Huntington treats as entirely senseless for military leaders to dispute with political leaders the epistemic rightness or wrongness of the political ends they pursue, with the effect that, in relation to political decisions on national security, the only meaningful question military leaders can pose is whether politicians hold the legitimate authority to take these decisions (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 71).

For all these reasons, Huntington argues that military leaders are obliged by their professional ethics to obey the legitimate political decisions even when they consider them disastrous from the viewpoint of the military science and to offer their expert advice to politicians exclusively with respect to the means for attaining them; this relationship between the military and politicians in office is for Huntington the objective civilian control over the armed forces (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 76–77). The opinions formulated by high-ranking military officers, Huntington emphasizes, express scientific knowledge given that the military — which until the nineteenth century had, like politics, been an art — evolved into a science through the development of shared professional values and objective criteria underpinning the evaluation of military performance. Following this transformation, he indicates, ordinary people had the possibility of acquiring military knowledge through training and study, and the military profession could be constituted as such (Huntington, 1957/1967, p. 30–58).

One could observe that, in Huntington's logic, the classical doctrine of democracy - which he rejects - is the one that makes possible the existence of epistemically motivated military disobedience when civilian decision-makers adopt epistemically wrong decisions for national security because it admits of rationally objective criteria by which political decisions can be judged.

Huntington's understanding of politics is similar to that of Schumpeter in that society does not uphold the same values on the basis of which to groundrationally objective criteria for assessing political ends; this means that, for both Huntington and Schumpeter, no rational disagreement or standoff could exist on the issue of political ends between experts, military leaders included, and politicians. It is concordant with the conception of both authors that compliance of military leaders with political decisions cannot in any way relate to political decisions by political leaders being epistemically right, but could be grounded solely on the fact that politicians have been entrusted with the legitimate authority to take political decisions. In the case of Huntington and Schumpeter, it could be said that high-ranking military officers simply do not dispose of the epistemic justification to disobey political decisions on the grounds that they are epistemically wrong, just as they do not dispose of the justification to obey them on the grounds that they are epistemically right; there is no such thing as morally right resistance to epistemically wrong political decisions, with Huntington considering, on the contrary, that resisting political decisions on epistemic grounds amounts to a violation of the professional military ethic.

It is to be observed that, for Huntington, the justification he provides for military subordination does not depend on the democratic character of the regime as evidenced by Huntington's treatment of Imperial Germany between 1871 and 1914 as paradigmatic example of objective civilian control (Huntington, 1957/1967, pp.99-124). Thus, his justification applies to a range of political systems, provided that political authority is legitimately established within them. When this mechanism is applied to democratic states — where the source of legitimate political authority is the procedural mechanism of competitive elections — it could be said to correspond to Schumpeter's procedural conception of democracy.

With respect to political education, Huntington and Schumpeter again converge in that their conception of politics precludes the possibility for military officers to learn it, so that, as Huntington puts it, military education has to concern itself solely with military science, the determination of political ends not being amenable to teaching. However, the similarities between Huntington and Schumpeter cannot be taken so far as to attribute to Huntington an understanding of politics as the manufacturing of the popular will and of the politician as its artisan.

The similarities between Huntington and Schumpeter provide solid grounds for considering that Huntington, already in 1957, implicitly operated with the Schumpeterian meaning of democracy, albeit differences remain at the level of its theoretical justification with respect to the nature of politics. This reading gains further plausibility from Huntington's subsequent explicit endorsement of the Schumpeterian procedural democracy in his later works of the 1980s and 1990s.

Conclusion

When examined through the lens of Schumpeter's reconstruction of the classical doctrine of democracy and of his procedural democracy - the latter being implicitly assumed in Huntington's framework for civil-military relations - the alternative to Huntingtonian objective civilian control advanced by Rapp proves to incorporate predominantly elements distinctively associated with the classical doctrine of democracy, alongside a central element pertaining to procedural democracy. Consequently, Rapp's proposed departure from Huntington could be conceived as largely a departure from Schumpeterian procedural democracy in favour of the classical doctrine of democracy — that is, as representing a significant theoretical shift in civil-military relations, a move from one understanding of democracy largely towards its opposite.

Recognisable in Rapp's framework is the classical doctrine's premise that rationally objective criteria exist in the political domain against which political decisions on national security can be classified as epistemically right or wrong. Also consonant with this doctrine is Rapp's contention that epistemic disagreement between military leaders and civilian decision-makers can be rationally resolved, with the effect that an epistemic standoff between them is avoidable as long as both parties remain within the bounds of rational deliberation. A further point of convergence with the classical doctrine is that the national security ends rationally identified together by military leaders and civilian leaders are held to be in the best interest of society as a whole, thereby resembling what the classical doctrine conceives as the common good. Another parallel with the classical doctrine can be identified in the field of education, given that, for Rapp, military officers can undergo a political education enabling them to acquire theoretical and practical political knowledge of the type that is also possessed by politicians.

It should also be observed that Rapp does not address other foundational premises of the classical doctrine of democracy, namely the general will and value homogeneity. However, with respect to the latter, it could be argued that it can be derived, in a circumscribed form, from the logic of his framework. The very existence of rationally objective criteria accepted not only by military leaders and politicians but also, in principle, by rational citizens at large presupposes a sufficient degree of shared values to sustain such criteria — at least within the domain of national security. Without such convergence, rationally objective criteria for assessing political ends could not command broad acceptance. Value homogeneity, while not expressly articulated by Rapp and not necessarily coextensive with the comprehensive homogeneity posited by the classical doctrine, can thus be derived from his framework in this more circumscribed form.

All these features of the classical doctrine of democracy that can be associated with Rapp's proposed alternative to Huntington constitute as many points of divergence from the latter and mark a clear theoretical distance from his approach.

However, Rapp's approach parts ways with the classical doctrine of democracy on a critical point: the latter implies that experts — in this case military leaders — are

morally justified in resisting epistemically wrong political decisions adopted by civilian leadership contrary to the rational evidence mounted against them. This incompatibility results from Rapp's conferring an absolute character upon the principle of civilian supremacy, a character that corresponds to Schumpeterian procedural democracy insofar as the authority to take decisions, once democratically conferred upon politicians through elections, operates without exception. A key tenet of Schumpeter's understanding of democracy thus prevents the premises of the classical doctrine of democracy recognisable in Rapp's vision from entailing the consequence of justifying military disobedience in the face of political decisions established as wrong on rationally objective grounds. However, it could be argued that, Despite this single tenet of procedural democracy standing against a preponderance of tenets drawn from the classical doctrine, it plays a prominent role in Rapp's framework, given that it sustains absolute civilian supremacy - a principle that is itself foundational to his entire vision of civil-military relations.

On all these grounds, one could maintain that within Rapp's alternative to Huntington there is an inherent tension generated by the simultaneous presence of elements reflecting the classical doctrine of democracy, on the one hand, and procedural democracy, on the other.

It must equally be emphasised that recognising these affinities between Rapp's position and the classical doctrine of democracy does not entail attributing to Rapp an acceptance of the philosophical principles of eighteenth-century utilitarianism upon which the classical doctrine was originally grounded. The claim advanced here is narrower: that Rapp's framework draws predominantly on the classical doctrine of democracy while retaining a single but pivotal element of procedural democracy. Furthermore, this interpretation pertains specifically to Rapp's position and cannot be presumed applicable to other authors who have criticised Huntington's objective civilian control, albeit it could be tentatively employed as an analytical framework for examining their positions.

The choice between maintaining and abandoning Huntington's objective civilian control in favour of the alternative proposed by Rapp is not, therefore, merely a technical adjustment in the pattern of civil-military relations but operates at a deeper theoretical level, for it entails renouncing some key epistemic and axiological assumptions of procedural democracy and adopting their opposing counterparts belonging to the classical doctrine of democracy, thereby effecting a substantial shift in the domain of political theory as well as in the area of military education.

It is beyond the purpose of this analysis to take sides in this debate; accordingly, the argument advanced herein favours neither Huntington's approach to civilian control over the armed forces nor the alternative proposed by Rapp, but seeks simply to highlight the depth of the theoretical change presupposed by the transition from one to the other and to signal that this depth ought to be incorporated into the teaching of civil-military relations at military educational institutions.

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Summary

In a context marked by democratic backsliding worldwide and the additional pressures that hybrid warfare linked with the war in Ukraine places on democratic governance in European states, the foundations of military subordination to civilian authority warrant renewed scrutiny. Such strains can put pressure on defining characteristics of liberal democracy, not least civilian supremacy in civil–military relations. This principle found its paradigmatic expression in Samuel Huntington's concept of objective civilian control. Over the last decades, however, criticism of his approach has been increasingly voiced on the grounds of its inadequacy in the face of the changing pattern of civil–military relations, with some extreme positions even calling into question the absolute character of civilian supremacy in cases of flagrantly wrong political decisions. This paper undertakes to examine Huntington's objective civilian control and an alternative to it proposed by William E. Rapp, through the lens of Schumpeter's procedural democracy and of what Schumpeter terms the classical doctrine of democracy. This approach makes it possible to identify the epistemic and axiological assumptions, together with their implications in educational terms,

underpinning the conceptions of both Huntington and Rapp on civilian control over the armed forces, and to assess on these grounds the degree of theoretical change entailed by departing from the Huntingtonian approach. No evaluative preference is expressed for either of the two competing approaches, the sole aim of the comparative analysis being to establish the theoretical distance between them in terms of the meaning of democracy corresponding to each.

Keywords: *procedural democracy, classical doctrine of democracy, civilian supremacy, objective civilian control, civil-military relations, Samuel Huntington, Joseph Schumpeter, William Rapp*

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