


Chapter 2

Military Enterprises and Entrepreneurship: A Critical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this chapter is to advance a structure for understanding the notion of military-run enterprise/entrepreneurship. The chapter appraises the macro-level of military entrepreneurship rather than the micro-level (e.g., veteran, military families, or military intrapreneurs) to uncover the paradoxes underpinning this genre of military entrepreneurship. Through a critical review of literature, the presence of “extrepreneurship,” which represents a crossbreed idea located between the concepts of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship, is revealed. Extrepreneurs manage/operate for-profit spin-off organizations on behalf of their non-profit parent organizations to generate incomes/profits, among other requirements.

INTRODUCTION

Several studies on entrepreneurship focus on the micro-level, i.e., the characteristics of individuals or the networks of associations those individuals are engaged in. Progressively, researchers have paid attention to the macro-level, i.e., group or institutional activities that support entrepreneurial behavior, and the broader ecosystem that serves to reinforce or hinder risk-taking behavior. This chapter follows this line of research in its review of studies on institutional aspects of entrepreneurship

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through the prism of the military institution. The chapter aims to appraise the role of the military, as an institutional actor, in the processes of nurturing entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial behavior. A broad view of entrepreneurship is adopted in this chapter. This view focuses on the creation of new business organizations and the generation of new organizational paradigms and procedures that change the direction and flow of the entrepreneurial organizational endeavor. In other words, the chapter focuses on how entrepreneurial activity is shaped and reshaped in existing institutions to create entrepreneurial entities that may, in turn, foster new entrepreneurship patterns. The chapter discusses how shifts in the institutional environment create opportunities for organizations to reconstruct existing behaviors and bring about new forms of organizing. In a similar fashion to Hwang and Powell (2006: 180), it is expedient to reiterate that an institutional perspective on entrepreneurship is more “constructivist” than “agentic”. With this distinction, this chapter assumes that while much entrepreneurial activity is purposive, it is not necessarily directly intentional. According to Hwang and Powell (2006: 180) “As organizational goals and missions are contested and reshaped, organizational participants often discover their interests “on the fly,” so to speak, as strategies and goals co-evolve”.

Against this backdrop, the chapter argues that entrepreneurship culture is well and alive in the military institution even though the design of military culture and traditions (e.g. firm hierarchy and strict bureaucracy) seem not to conform to popular tenets of entrepreneurship practice. In the military, entrepreneurship is demonstrated but its character and implications for the military system remain contradictory. The heterogeneity of activities and groups that make up the military - serving personnel, veterans, military families, and military-run enterprises - threatens to make the notion of military entrepreneurship a representation of incongruity. Hence, in the spirit of the tradition of critical entrepreneurship scholarship, (e.g. Steyaert & Hjorth, 2003; Steyaert & Hjorth, 2006; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2009), this chapter interrogates the notion of military entrepreneurship. The chapter sets to find out, through a review of literature, the nature, and organization of entrepreneurship in the military. In addition, the chapter will interrogate whether military entrepreneurship does indeed align or largely adhere to most forms of entrepreneurship in the civil society in its rules and norms of conduct. The overarching question at the heart of the paper is: To what extent does military entrepreneurship replicates entrepreneurship in the civil society? Other subordinate questions include: (a) What are the characteristics of military entrepreneurship? (b) What are the processes and procedures of military entrepreneurship? (c) What are the benefits and drawbacks of military entrepreneurship to the military in particular and the society in general? (d) How does the military establishment reconfigure entrepreneurial activity in its institution to create different entrepreneurial entities?

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