One of the chief principles of military engagement has been the rhetorical and causal elements of an ancient and still persistent ethic--the imperatives of martial honor. Its corollary is the determination of leaders to avoid honor’s polarity--the peril of being publicly shamed. To demonstrate weakness and indifference to gross provocation or assault not only diminishes world repute for valorous national action but lowers the self-confidence of the nation itself. No army can long survive without inculcating honor’s principles, but ambitions for personal glory have often proved divisive and demoralizing. In our history, untrained volunteers seeking notice for bravery quickly became disenchanted with war’s horrors and drudgery. Moreover, authorities have sent men to their death without seriously anticipating the heavy risks or unintended consequences. Yet, how little has been written or thought about this phenomenon. Honor has, however, influenced American foreign and domestic policies, past and present. The lectures will explore the issue from the Revolution to the Iraqi fight.

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