

AIR WAR COLLEGE

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**TO RESIGN OR NOT RESIGN...THE USE OF SENIOR  
OFFICER RETIREMENTS AS A POLITICAL TOOL**

by

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## **Biography**

Lieutenant Colonel Daniel E. Lee is a Health Services Administrator assigned to the Air War College, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. He earned his undergraduate degree in Political Science in 1994, and a Master's degree in Business Administration from the University of Illinois in 1995. He graduated from Air Command and Staff College with a Masters degree in Military Operational Arts and Sciences in 2007. A board-certified fellow in the American Academy of Medical Administrators, Lieutenant Colonel Lee has held a variety of positions at the clinic, hospital, MAJCOM, and Headquarters Air Force levels and is a graduated squadron commander.



## Abstract

This paper looks at current literature and models for military dissent through political retirements and then applies these to case studies of Gen Ronald Fogleman, GEN Eric Shinseki, and GEN Stanley McChrystal. Based on the application of these cases, the paper illustrates senior military leaders should not retire for purely political reasons; rather other forms of dissent should be utilized.

The background of civil-military relations is briefly discussed summarizing Samuel Huntington and Eliot Cohen's pre-eminent models. The subject of military dissent is then presented considering the "Traditionalist" model, Lt Col Andrew Milburn's individual moral decision model, and Don Snider's trust relationship dissent model. Using Snider's dissent model, case studies of current senior military leader retirements are analyzed using the factors of gravity of the issue, relevance to expertise, degree of sacrifice, timing of dissent, and authenticity of leader. Based on this model, a determination is made on each retirement regarding whether the actions or inactions each took were proper.

The idea that today's senior military leaders can retire quietly is an unreasonable notion. After analyzing senior military leader political retirements, this study recommends continuing the civil-military structure to promote US democratic values. Further, future leaders should utilize GEN Shinseki's retirement as a model to dissent within the civil-military system. Additionally, military education at all levels should teach dissent models such as Snider's to keep pace with today's military leader concerns. Finally, senior leader impact on junior leaders is often overlooked, and has more impact than most realize. Political retirements are the ultimate form of dissent, and show a clear divide between civilian and military leaders. If the US wants to maintain the rich civil-military tradition, senior military leaders should not politically retire.

## Introduction

My values and sense of loyalty to our soldiers, sailors, Marines, and especially our airmen led me to the conclusion that I may be out of step with the times and some of the thinking of the establishment. This puts me in an awkward position. If I were to continue to serve as chief of staff of the Air Force and speak out, I could be seen as a divisive force and not a team player. I do not want the Air Force to suffer for my judgment and convictions.

Gen Ronald Fogleman, July 1997<sup>1</sup>

The decision to end one's career is one of most difficult decisions a leader can make.

This decision is often very personal and takes into account family situation, work satisfaction, and financial status among other factors. For military members this decision means a complete change in lifestyle and the separation from a community most have been a part of for their entire adult life. This decision becomes more complex when the impetus to exit the service is based on policy or political reasons. Several recent policy differences between military and civilian leaders resulted in senior military members deciding to retire when civilians did not follow their military advice. Based on an initial interpretation, some see these retirements as dangerous to the civil-military relations within the United States. These retirements appear to be the ultimate dissent tool for the military: either heed my advice or I will retire and everyone will see you did not follow my advice.

Military dissent is a rich topic with many models to help determine when proper, how it should occur, and ultimately when an officer should utilize ending their service as a dissent option. This paper looks at current literature and models for military dissent and then applies these to case studies of Gen Ronald Fogleman, GEN Eric Shinseki, and GEN Stanley McChrystal. Finally, based on the application of these cases, the paper will illustrate senior military leaders should not leave for purely political reasons; rather they should utilize other forms of dissent.

## US Military Dissent Background

Any discussion regarding military dissent and the United States must first look at the US Constitution. The founders of the US structured the Constitution to place the military under civilian control of both the legislative and executive branches.<sup>2</sup> This design created a natural check and balance to those with the direct ability to impose force (the military). The fundamental question of civil-military relations is how to keep the military docile enough so they do not challenge the state's legitimacy, while maintaining a strong military to deter enemies from challenging the state's sovereignty. Modern US civil-military literature has two models that attempt to address this dilemma--Huntington's objective control and Cohen's civilian supremacy.

In 1957, Samuel Huntington wrote the pre-eminent work on U.S. civil-military relations, *The Soldier and the State*. He analyzed the civil-military relationship and developed a model called objective control where he divided civil-military relations into two realms -- the political and the operational military. He argued for successful relations, civilians should stay in the political arena where they decide policy objectives and military limits. The military then takes these objectives/limits and converts them into military operations. Huntington stressed the importance of a professional military officer corps who have an obligation to the state and who remain apolitical because of this professionalism. Additionally he argued, civilians should stay out of military operations or risk undermining this professionalism--the realm the military spends careers preparing for and building an expertise. GEN Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, and the way he fought and controlled the Gulf War, best exemplifies objective control. GEN Powell strictly funneled information through his office and expected civilian leaders to respect his authority over military operations. Huntington stated objective control is the

preferred method to control the military and have a successful civil-military relationship.

Huntington also addressed dissent and the military in his book. He believed, “loyalty and obedience are the highest military virtues,” and, “when the military man receives a legal order from an authorized superior, he does not argue, he does not hesitate, he does not substitute his own views; he obeys instantly.”<sup>3</sup> While this seems rather black and white, Huntington did make an exception in regards to what Huntington called, “non-military values,” or civilian control where he divided his thoughts into four areas: political, military competence, legal, and moral. He felt the military should obey civilian leaders when political disagreements occur since the political arena was outside military professionalism in his objective control model. In areas where civilian superiors question military decisions, the military could disobey the civilian leaders, since this intrudes on the military’s professionalism and civilian leadership should focus on political and strategic realms. Huntington stated on moral issues, military professionals should obey civilian leaders and only in the rarest circumstances use their “private conscience” since the military leader may not understand external factors involved.<sup>4</sup> Finally, Huntington stated the judiciary should resolve all legal disagreements.<sup>5</sup>

As the U.S. progressed through the Cold War, thought on the U.S.’s civil-military relations continued to evolve and Eliot Cohen’s book, *Supreme Command*, expanded Huntington’s theories. Cohen argues the rigid objective control realms as defined by Huntington do not exist, and in reality civilians must, “meddle or interfere”<sup>6</sup> to perform their duty as leaders. Cohen argues that civilians who took these unpopular actions saw the greatest success on the battlefield. He dismisses Huntington’s premise that military professionalism eliminates the need for civilians to be involved in the military’s traditional arena. Leaders who simply defer to military advice without properly questioning and probing, perform a disservice, in Cohen’s

model, since civilians are just as capable of being right as their military counter-parts, and have a wider perspective on political constraints and implications. The Eliot Cohen civilian supremacy model is a second way to look at U.S. civil-military relations.

Recent times have seen an increase in civilian power within military-civilian relations. Cohen's model had a tremendous acceptance with President George W. Bush's administration<sup>7</sup>, and one could look at relations under Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld as an extreme application of the Cohen model of civilian supremacy. This civilian presence led to an increase in military dissent literature since military leaders were seen as being overruled by civilian decision makers. To deal with this recent dissent, the literature is divided into three models.

Richard Kohn and General Richard Myers, former CJCS, best represent the traditionalist model. These gentlemen state while there is inherent "friction and distrust,"<sup>8</sup> within the civil-military relationship, "Nothing would undermine that relationship more than a resignation by a senior military officer. The role of the military is to advise and then carry out lawful policies and orders, not to make them. To threaten resignation -- taking disagreement public -- directly assaults civilian control of the military"<sup>9</sup> They further argue a threat such as resignation would lead civilians to select military leaders based on loyalty to the civilian leader not, "competence, experience, intelligence, candor, moral courage, professionalism, integrity, and character."<sup>10</sup> This viewpoint--a strict obey in public / disagree in private--is the traditional military dissent model.

A second model, brought forward by Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Milburn, states the recent participation in wars highlighted the blurred realms of the military and civilian leaders. He argues in these murky times, the military has an obligation to challenge openly policies similar to the obligation Cohen assigns to the civilian leaders in his book.<sup>11</sup> Milburn



states true military professionals will dissent when they believe the policy is wrong, and “Allowing him moral autonomy to dissent benefits the process of policy execution overall.”<sup>12</sup> Further, “‘Silent’ resignation is likely to accomplish little to divert the decision maker from his course. Criticism of policy from the haven of retirement lacks the same force as public dissent backed by the publicly announced tender of resignation.”<sup>13</sup> The Milburn model is an argument for senior military officers to dissent when disagreeing with policy, and stresses an obligation to do so based on military professionalism. The release of this model brought considerable critiques from the civil-military relations community—most notably Richard Kohn. Kohn argues Milburn’s model empowers each officer to evaluate orders and justifies willful disobedience, not lawful dissent. Kohn states, “What Milburn proposes would not only destroy all trust between the military and its bosses – elected and appointed civilian leaders – and its client: the American people.”<sup>14</sup>

Bridging the gap between these previous models is retired US Army Colonel Don Snider. Col Snider viewed dissent as a very rare act that should be carefully considered. To guide leaders in determining what falls into this narrow dissent window, he believed one must consider the impact to others, not just the individual. To look at this external impact, Snider recommended looking at the trust relations with the American people, civilian leaders, and junior leaders. These trust relations should then be looked at in regards to five factors: gravity of the issue, relevance to expertise, degree of sacrifice, timing of dissent, and authenticity of leader. When these items are integrated, a framework to analyze the concern comes forward.

The first concepts Snider felt leaders needed to address was the trust relationship and how dissent can affect this relationship. One type of trust military leaders have is to the American people where the profession of arms is a “social trustee” as Huntington explained.<sup>15</sup> A second

type of trust is to junior leaders. As Huntington, stated in the *Soldier and the State*, “for the profession to perform its function, each level within it must be able to command the instantaneous and loyal obedience of subordinate levels. Without these relationships military professionalism is impossible.”<sup>16</sup> The final trust relationship the military has is with civilian leaders. This relationship is essential to ensure military leaders give advice, represent the military profession, and implement national security decisions properly. A fracture of this relationship erodes the foundations of civilian control of the armed forces.<sup>17</sup> Snider believes there are five factors each of these trust must be evaluated against.

The first of these factors is gravity of issue. Snider states the issue must be of significant national security importance to consider upsetting the civil-military relationship.<sup>18</sup> A second factor is the relevance of the dissenter’s expertise. The issue in question must fall within the responsibility and authority of the potential dissenter for their actions to be potentially justifiable. An action of dissent from someone that is unqualified should not be considered legitimate.<sup>19</sup> A third factor Snider presents is the timing of dissent. “If something is worthy of an act of dissent, then it is worthy...the act should follow immediately. Any separation of months or years between the cause and the act is grounds again from suspicion of lack of moral agency and for a search for ulterior motives.”<sup>20</sup> A fourth factor is the degree of sacrifice by the individual considering the dissent action. If they have other motives that could be, “for the true professional, a right understanding of one’s loyalties always places loyalty to self dead last.”<sup>21</sup> The fifth and final factor Snider presents is the authenticity of the leader. This factor is particularly important with the relationship to junior leaders since they are easily cynical on the rational for the dissent, and any lack of authenticity will call into question the motives of the dissent.<sup>22</sup>

## Case Studies

The rest of this paper will focus on what Samuel Huntington considered political dissent since many other distinguished authors have analyzed moral dissent. To frame the analysis, I will use Snider's model to analyze three cases of potential recent dissent, since the traditionalists see almost no rationale for dissent and Milburn's model is widely critiqued as intellectually flawed by the academic community.<sup>23</sup>

### General Ronald Fogleman

General Fogleman chose to retire early from his tour as Chief of Staff of the US Air Force (CSAF) in 1997. In his statement to the members of the Air Force, Gen Fogleman stated he felt he could no longer effectively represent the US Air Force.<sup>24</sup> In an interview with Richard Kohn four months after his retirement, Gen Fogleman stated he felt DoD senior leadership lost confidence in him and at the same time he lost confidence in their leadership. This erosion was not caused by one incident, rather was an accumulation of decisions that led him to feel his advice was not in synch with leadership, and led to his loss of confidence in the direction the leadership was taking the Air Force.<sup>25</sup> Kohn argues this retirement was not dissent, instead was the exercising of quiet retirement by an officer who earned this; and the mere fact that Gen Fogleman refused to comment on the reasoning removed the dissent. I believe this case is somewhat more complex, and merits an analysis using Snider's framework.

Gravity of the issue. As discussed previously, an issue must be extremely important to warrant dissent. In this case, an accumulation of issues signaled to Gen Fogleman a lack of confidence of the senior Air Force and Defense leadership in his abilities. With changes in F-22 and tactical air modernization in the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review, the Kelly Flinn resolution, and finally the denial of Brig Gen Schwalier's promotion, Gen Fogleman saw his

advice being ignored and out of step with his civilian leadership.<sup>26</sup> These issues are significant enough to question civil-military relations and how the American people perceived the Air Force. Civilian leader trust was definitely in question with these decisions, and went both ways-- both from the senior Air Force and Defense Department toward Gen Fogleman, and Gen Fogleman feeling he lacked confidence in the direction the Air Force was headed. Finally, the precedent these decisions could leave on junior leaders was significant, since accountability was in question--was Gen Fogleman leaving his post unguarded? The issues as a whole meet the gravity of the issue threshold.

Relevance to expertise. As Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen Fogleman certainly met the expertise threshold for the American people, civilian leaders, and junior leaders. As CSAF, Gen Fogleman was responsible for the good order and discipline of his force and organizing, training, and equipping Air Force members. More importantly, Gen Fogleman certainly felt these issues were within his expertise, "As the Chief of Staff for the Air Force, no matter where something happens within your institution, it's a personal blow for you."<sup>27</sup> The decisions that he disagreed with would have been within his advisory scope and both civilian and junior leaders would expect Gen Fogleman to have an opinion on these matters.

Degree of sacrifice. Some argue that an early retirement and early departure from the highest Air Force officer position would be a tremendous sacrifice. The trust with the American people, civilian leaders, and junior leaders would still be maintained as long as there was not an "ulterior motive". Even fourteen years after his retirement, no one has ever come forward with any other reasons for the potential dissent than have been previously discussed. One aspect that bears further discussion is the use of retirement versus resignation. If Gen Fogleman felt strongly enough that the actions of the senior civilian leaders were heading the Air Force in a

disastrous direction, some argue he should have resigned instead of taking early retirement. When asked about this option, Gen Fogleman did not view his actions as political in nature and instead did not want to stay a fourth year where his advice was not valued.<sup>28</sup> In Gen Fogleman mind, he wanted to place the institution and civil-military relations before his individual needs of finishing a term.<sup>29</sup>

Timing of dissent. Gen Fogleman specifically chose to retire prior to Secretary of Defense Cohen's final decision, "I decided I was going to preempt the decision on Khobar Towers so that my leaving would not be in response to the decision on General Schwalier."<sup>30</sup> The American people did not have visibility into the behind the scenes politics, so a possible civil-military divide was never exposed. By retiring before the decision was formally made, Gen Fogleman's civilian leaders were also allowed an opportunity to have one last chance to consider his advice, without a threat since his action was finalized.<sup>31</sup> By pre-empting their decision, Gen Fogleman maintained the civilian leader trust.

Authenticity as a leader. Gen Fogleman stated, "As a service chief your primary responsibility is to advocate for your service, and when you sense that you have lost the confidence of the folks you're dealing with--almost to the extent where the service will be punished--that's one reason to leave."<sup>32</sup> By choosing to leave instead of making his political differences known, Gen Fogleman tried to preserve the Air Force and civil-military relations as seen by the American people.

Looking at all of these factors one can see Gen Fogleman took actions to preserve civil-military relations, but I depart from Kohn and Gen Fogleman, and believe he damaged the authentic trust of the junior leaders with his retirement. Many junior leaders felt Gen Fogleman abandoned them, since they identified with his core values. His departure created a gap between

the civilian leaders' values and those Fogleman espoused as part of military professionalism. General Ronald Fogleman's retirement can be seen by some as dissent for political reasons, and others as an early retirement for someone who lost touch with the civilian leaders he was supposed to serve. His actions created political problems for Secretary Cohen and President Clinton, particularly with junior leaders who sided with Gen Fogleman.

### **General Eric Shinseki**

To contrast Gen Fogleman, General Eric Shinseki's dissent should be analyzed as an alternative. GEN Shinseki was Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) during the planning and execution of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). As CSA, GEN Shinseki was also a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and had a legal obligation to provide military advice to the President and Congress. In OIF planning sessions, one key area where Shinseki disagreed with civilian leadership was with the necessary land force commitment in OIF.<sup>33</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld sought to demonstrate new ways to fight wars, and wanted to show a leaner, technological force could fight and win.<sup>34</sup> GEN Shinseki disagreed with civilian leadership, and when asked by Congress on the necessary ground forces to "secure Iraq after a successful ground offensive," he eventually responded with "several hundred thousand soldiers," a number that his civilian leaders determined was extremely high.<sup>35</sup> This act of public disagreement was met with immediate rebuke from Secretary Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz, and Vice President Cheney.<sup>36</sup>

Gravity of Issue. The issue of troop commitments is perhaps one of the most important decisions a military officer can make--since lives of Americans and mission success or failure is at stake. "He [GEN Shinseki] worried that the administration was sending his soldiers into war without a decisive capability to defeat the Iraqi forces and to control the defeated country

afterward, even though the Army possessed that capability and stood ready to provide.”<sup>37</sup> The American people (via Congress) and junior leaders trust the most senior military leaders will provide their honest opinions in these discussions, and if this advice is not wanted, the trust of these key constituencies is at risk. The trust to the American people must be balanced, in this instance, with the trust of and to civilian leadership. The discussions and decisions to commit lower levels of troops was handled in private and the civilian leadership must be able to ensure all are committed to ensuring policy execution to the best of everyone’s ability. By speaking out, GEN Shinseki did limit the maneuver room for civilian leaders in a case where this policy was the wrong choice.

Relevance to expertise. Shinseki has every right and duty as a service chief and member of the JCS to share his unvarnished opinion with Congress.<sup>38</sup> All of three of the trust relationships are strengthened by the expertise GEN Shinseki provided as CSA. One of the legal roles GEN Shinseki filled was to advise Congress and by honestly answering his question, the general gained respect from Congressional leaders. Despite the domineering civilian leadership presence, GEN Shinseki continued to advocate for the Army and exhibited exceptional military professionalism.

Degree of sacrifice. Unfortunately, most of the positive impact GEN Shinseki made on the Army was forgotten and instead his legacy became this dissent.<sup>39</sup> By upholding the civil-military process as outlined in law, the troop assessment damaged the trust of civilian leaders who named Shinseki’s replacement fourteen months prior to his retirement,<sup>40</sup> essentially freezing him out of all future decisions. On a positive note, junior leaders increased their respect for GEN Shinseki since he stood up for their protection and demonstrated integrity by standing by his opinion, even if this was not popular with Secretary Rumsfeld.

Timing of dissent. The timing of the event was not in GEN Shinseki's control since he was required by law to answer Congressional questions.

Authenticity of leader. With no other motives, GEN Shinseki's dissent was purely based on policy differences. The act was done with knowledge of the potential impact, but was also done to uphold the civil-military relationship. He stated, "We understand that leadership is not an exclusive function of uniformed service....So when some suggest that we in the Army don't understand the importance of civilian control of the military, well, that's just not helpful and it isn't true."<sup>41</sup>

Civil-military relations were the focus of GEN Shinseki's actions. If the relationship becomes unbalanced, neither party benefits and the American people as a whole suffer. The unique aspect of GEN Shinseki's dissent is the fact that he chose not to retire. He felt he had much more work to do within the Army and served his full term as CSA. By taking his dissent action and continuing to serve, GEN Shinseki showed the institution was larger than the individual (in a different way than Gen Fogleman).

### **General Stanley McChrystal**

A third case worth analyzing is that of General Stanley McChrystal. This case is unique in that the actions taken by McChrystal were not traditional military dissent over policy. In fact, from a policy standpoint GEN McChrystal got most of the decisions in his favor.<sup>42</sup> Where this case is unique is his disobedience was a pure fracture in military professionalism--outright disrespect for civilian leadership of the military. GEN McChrystal's transgressions became known with the publishing of a *Rolling Stone* article in June 2010. This article captured disrespectful remarks regarding "senior administration officials, including President Barack Obama."<sup>43</sup>



Gravity of Issue. There was not one issue of such significance that warranted the willful disobedience exhibited by GEN McChrystal and his staff. The transgressions certainly called into question the civil-military relationship--especially when military leaders hold senior civilian leaders in such low esteem. The relationship with civilian leadership, while previously strained from earlier gaffes and leaks by McChrystal and his team was injured even more. Finally the tone set by GEN McChrystal, damaged junior leaders' perception of civil-military relations and tolerated possible insubordinate behavior.

Relevance to expertise. As the Commander of Afghanistan Forces, GEN McChrystal definitely had the expertise and trust of the American people, his civilian leaders, and junior leaders to be the expert in fighting the war in Afghanistan. However, one also assumes with this expertise and trust, an amount of respect should be reciprocated toward civilian leaders. This was not demonstrated in the article, and calls into question the experience of GEN McChrystal. Authors such as Kitfield suggest McChrystal's Special Operations background did not adequately prepare him for his political duties. They argue the background of informality and testosterone may have set up GEN McChrystal for failure.<sup>44</sup>

Degree of sacrifice. By allowing an environment to exist where the civil-military relationship was so undervalued, GEN McChrystal sacrificed everything. Instead of blaming his subordinates for inappropriate actions, GEN McChrystal took responsibility for the entire incident. In this manner, GEN McChrystal lived by the special operators' ethos: "All of these men, I'd die for them. And they'd die for me."<sup>45</sup>

Timing of dissent. The timing of the disobedience was very poor. The US was in the middle of a war in Afghanistan, which was not going very well. Additionally, the US had just replaced GEN McKiernan, the first theater commander relieved in wartime since GEN

MacArthur.<sup>46</sup> This was a terrible time to call into question the US's civil-military relations.

Authenticity of leader. GEN McChrystal was very naïve to allow a reporter to have such access to the inner workings of his staff, but no one has ever doubted that these remarks were made as stated in the article.

The McChrystal case demonstrates a clear scenario of unnecessary and unjustified disobedience to civilian control of the military. What is important about this case is how it captures the current state leadership in the military and how tenuous the civil-military relationship currently is.

## **Recommendations**

An officer who threatens to -- or does -- resign over a policy decision commits a political act.” Richard Kohn<sup>47</sup>

By looking at these cases, we can see the impact senior military leader dissent and disobedience has on the American people, civilian leadership, and junior officers. If Lt Col Millburn is correct, today's junior military leaders have an experience of increased combat and are trending to be more politically active than previous generations. To cope with these societal changes, a dissent analytical framework is necessary. By looking at case studies and using Snider's model, a one can see how previous decisions to resign, retire, or stay in service affected civil-military relations. Based on these case studies a few lessons come forward.

The first lesson learned is the US cannot tolerate dissent or disobedience that damages the civil-military relationship. Kohn states, “Public dissent weakens civilian leadership in the public eye.”<sup>48</sup> In particular, the US must cherish and support the idea of subservience of the military to civilian authorities. Once this ideal is threatened, the US begins to lose one of tenets they are fighting to establish throughout the world. Many argue the President should have kept GEN McChrystal in his position to lead the US efforts in Afghanistan. These supporters feel no one

could effectively replace a wartime general. However, by not replacing him after his actions, the US may have lost one of the democratic tenets they were fighting for...civilian control of the military. By taking the relief action, President Obama sent a clear message that no one is above accountability. This action strengthened the trust relationship between the American people, civilian leaders, and even junior leaders by showing the system is more important than the individual.

A second lesson learned is if senior leaders feel obligated to politically dissent, they should look toward the GEN Eric Shinseki model. This model emphasizes working within the system...no political actions warrant a resignation. The resulting political impact is too great for these leaders to use the resignation or retirement model. Even in the case where Gen Fogleman quietly retired, the junior leaders felt abandoned by their leader. This departure creates angst in the officer corps, which could affect civil-military relations--the very institution Gen Fogleman was trying to protect by retiring. Because of organizational position and importance of civil-military relations, senior military officers should only retire for personal reasons--not political ones. Any political action could be interpreted as a challenge to civil-military relations.

The result of political action is a degradation of military professionalism. This professionalism is what Huntington stated keeps the civil-military relationship in balance. If this professionalism erodes, through actions such those condoned by GEN McChrystal, the relationship between civilians and military can become very ugly and ultimately result in loss of the balance and professionalism necessary to maintain the US democratic system. All levels of military education must emphasize these impacts and the importance of the civil-military relationship. By expanding the dissent dialogue, the military can show the impact of civil-military fallouts and utilize models such as Don Snider's to illustrate a mental framework when

considering dissent. Rather than ignoring the increased politicization of the officer corps, the military should accept this and put processes in place to aid officers. By preparing today's military for the challenges they will face, we can ensure the US civil-military system endures.

A final lesson is the importance of the senior leader obligation to junior leaders. "Any officer who chooses to quit, abandons his or her troops and country, giving heart to enemies and shaking the morale of the armed forces."<sup>49</sup> The resignation or retirement for political purposes leaves behind those who must continue to execute policies. The political act will leave a bitter taste, either against the military leader who retired or against the civilian leaders who instigated the retirement. Even if the intent of a political statement does not exist...there is always someone left behind who must clean up the confusion.

## **Conclusion**

Nothing sends a shock to the troops, than to see a respected senior military leader abruptly retire. When these events occur, everyone is searching for details regarding this sudden change of leadership, usually with rumor and innuendo filling in gaps. The idea that today's senior military leaders can retire quietly is an unreasonable notion. If policy differences were the reasoning behind the retirement, these details will come forward quickly—and the civil-military relationship begins to crack. Political retirements are the ultimate form of dissent, and show a clear divide between civilian and military leaders. Through analysis of the current dissent literature and review of three recent cases, this paper evaluated political retirements as a dissent tool for senior military officers. If the US wants to maintain the rich civil-military relations tradition, senior military leaders should not resign for purely political reasons; rather they should focus on other forms of dissent.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Kohn, "The Early Retirement..." 7-8
- <sup>2</sup> U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec 8, and art. 4, sec. 2
- <sup>3</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 73.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid, 78.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid,
- <sup>6</sup> Cohen, *Supreme Command*, 5.
- <sup>7</sup> Desch, "Bush and the Generals," 106.
- <sup>8</sup> Kohn, "Salute and Disobey?" 1
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid, 1.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid, 1.
- <sup>11</sup> Milburn, "Breaking Ranks," 103.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid, 106.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 107.
- <sup>14</sup> Kohn, "The Best Defense," 1
- <sup>15</sup> Snider, *Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Professions*, 16.
- <sup>16</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 73.
- <sup>17</sup> Snider, *Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Professions*, 16-19.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid, 20-22.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 23-27.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, 27-28.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid, 27.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, 28-29.
- <sup>23</sup> Kohn, "The Best Defense," 1
- <sup>24</sup> Kohn, "The Early Retirement..." 7.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid, 21.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid, 13-19.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, 22.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid, 17.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid, 23.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid, 20.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid, 20.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid, 16.
- <sup>33</sup> Moten, "A Broken Dialogue," 42.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid, 55.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid, 42.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid, 55-56.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid, 55.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid, 55-56.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid, 58.
- <sup>40</sup> Herspring, *The Pentagon and the Presidency*, 394.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid, 395.
- <sup>42</sup> Ulrich, "The General Stanley McChrystal Affair," 91.



<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>44</sup> Kitfield, "McChrystal: A Warrior Undone," 3.

<sup>45</sup> Hastings, "The Runaway General," 94.

<sup>46</sup> Ulrich, "The General Stanley McChrystal Affair," 88.

<sup>47</sup> Kohn, "Always Salute, Never Resign," online (see Bibliography for website address).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

