

FROM STARS TO STUMPS:  
HOW RETIRED FLAG OFFICER POLITICAL ENDORSEMENTS AFFECT  
CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS

BY

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## APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation and expression.

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## DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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## ABSTRACT

While presidential office-seeking by retired flag officers has significantly declined over the past few decades, retired flag officer endorsements of presidential candidates have increased. This thesis examines whether it is appropriate for retired flag officers to endorse presidential candidates. In addressing this broader issue, the thesis seeks to identify the potential impact of retired flag officer political endorsements on US civil-military relations, particularly in terms of the level of trust between the military institution and its civilian leadership. The thesis conducts analysis through six different prominent endorsements of presidential candidates; for each, it seeks to determine whether the endorsement affected civil-military relations. Of the six endorsements, the thesis found one to have specifically undermined the trust of civilian leaders towards the military. As this case involved a situation in which the retired flag officer endorsed the opponent of the President under whom he had served, in contrast to most of the others that consisted of the flag officer backing either the incumbent seeking re-election or a candidate in an election in which the incumbent is not seeking to remain in office, the thesis finds that relationship factors can moderate the effects an endorsement will have on civil-military relations, and more specifically, create or exacerbate a breach of trust with civilian leadership. This finding builds upon and amends previous analysis that links effects to status factors, or that assesses the prominence of the endorser as the main factor determining how an endorsement affects civil-military relations. As such, the paper concludes that retired flag officers contemplating endorsing a presidential candidate should carefully consider relationship factors in making their decision.

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## Introduction

“We don’t talk to the military.”

– White House staffer’s response to Lt Gen Barry McCaffrey’s greeting, early 1993<sup>1</sup>

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton promised \$60 billion in cuts to the defense budget and an opening of the military to allow gays and lesbians to serve.<sup>2</sup> After the election, he doubled the amount of his proposed defense cuts, including the reduction of military pay by 10 percent, and formally announced he would change the policy on gays in the military. Unsurprisingly, Clinton proved unpopular with the military; a February 1993 survey of active duty members showed only 12 percent had a great deal of respect for the president. The White House staffer’s response to General McCaffery suggests the disapproval was mutual.

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Lawrence Korb recognized the particularly poor relations between the military and administration in a piece he wrote for the *Brookings Review* in the summer of 1993.<sup>3</sup> In the article, he notes the “legalized insubordination” military leaders displayed in letting their disapproval of the president be known by informing the media of their opposition to his social, foreign policy and budgetary proposals, actions which Korb argues implicitly questioned the president’s ability to serve as commander-in-chief. He concludes that strained relations “could lead to long-term problems for the American political system unless both military and the administration take steps to address the sources of the trouble.” The first recommendation Korb offers to reverse this trend is for military leaders, even retired ones, to keep out of partisan politics. Korb’s call for retired military members, flag officers in particular, to refrain from partisan politics is not unique, as such is a commonly recommended “fix” to civil-military relations.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas S. Langston, *Uneasy Balance: Civil-Military Relations in Peacetime America since 1783* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Korb, “The President and the Military at Odds,” *Brookings Review* 11, no 3 (Summer 1993): 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Korb, “The President and the Military at Odds,” 5.

<sup>4</sup> Prominent civil-military relations scholars Risa Brooks, Peter Feaver, Richard Kohn and Eliot Cohen have each made this argument. Risa A. Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 219; James Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver, “Military Campaigns: Veterans’ Endorsements and Presidential Elections” (Washington DC: Center for a New American), 6; Richard H. Kohn, “Military Endorsements Harm National Interest,” *The*



## Research Question

This thesis examines the role of retired military officers in partisan politics, and seeks to answer the question: *Should retired U.S. military flag officers endorse candidates for president?* While adamant supporters and opponents on both sides make strong arguments about the appropriateness of retired officer endorsements of office-seekers, one thing remains clear: retired officers are, and most certainly will continue to be, allowed to endorse political candidates. But should they do so? In addressing this broader question, the thesis hones in on two specific issues. First, what is the potential impact of retired officer political endorsements on US civil-military relations, particularly in terms of the level of trust between the military institution and its civilian leadership? And second, what types of endorsements (or endorsers) have the most significant impact on US civil-military relations?

## Background and Relevance

A number of general officers in the United States, both active and retired, have entered partisan politics by running for president.<sup>5</sup> Twelve have been elected, making general the second most common occupation, lawyer being the first, for those who served in the presidency.<sup>6</sup>

Since the general-turned-president Dwight Eisenhower departed office in 1960, however, retired generals seeking the presidency have proven unsuccessful in their endeavors. While some prior military members have met with success in presidential politics, the retired generals have not.<sup>7</sup> General Alexander Haig sought the Republican nomination in 1988 but attracted virtually no popular support.<sup>8</sup> General Wesley Clark also proved unsuccessful in 2004. Clark's candidacy for the Democratic nomination,

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*Washington Times*, 15 October 2000; Eliot A. Cohen, "General Malaise," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 August 2004.

<sup>5</sup> General Winfield Scott ran for president as the Whig nominee while still on active duty in 1852; General Leonard Wood unsuccessfully sought the Republican nomination in 1920 while still on active duty.

<sup>6</sup> The Globalist, "Generals and the U.S. Presidency," *The Globalist*, 27 January 2004, <http://www.theglobalist.com/generals-and-the-u-s-presidency/>

<sup>7</sup> Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush and W. Bush each had served in the military prior to their election as president, National Museum of American History "Military Service of the Presidents," <http://americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/5d5.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Weiner, Tim, "Alexander M. Haig Jr. Dies at 85," *New York Times*, 10 February 2010, [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/us/politics/21haig.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/us/politics/21haig.html?_r=0).

although generating much fanfare, resulted in limited electoral support; he garnered just over three percent of the combined primary vote while winning only one state.<sup>9</sup>

While presidential office-seeking by retired general officers has significantly declined over the past few decades, general officer endorsements in presidential politics have increased. Richard Kohn identifies Gen P.X. Kelley's 1988 co-chairmanship of the Veterans for Bush committee as the first modern endorsement of this kind.<sup>10</sup> These endorsements became increasingly prominent in the 1992 election with the candidacy of then-Governor Bill Clinton.<sup>11</sup> Having neither held federal office nor served in the military, Clinton was perceived to lack national security gravitas. This proved to be a particular weakness for Clinton, as the incumbent President George H.W. Bush was steeped in national security experience, having led the Central Intelligence Agency as director and the military as its commander-in-chief in a time of war. Clinton sought to shift the image of himself as a draft-dodger, which seemed to dominate in the media, to one of him as a likely capable commander in chief. Endorsements by retired military officers provided him a possible means to do so.

Endorsements have continued to grow, in both number of retired officers endorsing and prominence of the endorsements made. The 2000 election saw the urgent courting of retired officers by Governor George W. Bush to counter the narrative that he lacked security expertise—a similar charge to that levied against Clinton. Bush and his opponent Al Gore raced to capture as many high-level retired military endorsements as they could, with Bush winning the race by garnering more than 80.<sup>12</sup> The 2004 election saw an increase in the public nature in which retired generals expressed their support for the candidates; former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili endorsed John Kerry when addressing the Democratic National Convention, as did General Tommy Franks for President Bush at the Republican convention.<sup>13</sup> Twelve generals and admirals appeared on stage to endorse Kerry prior to the Shalikashvili

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<sup>9</sup> 2004 Presidential Democratic Primary Results, <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php?f=0&year=2004&elect=1>

<sup>10</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "Military Endorsements Harm National Interest," *The Washington Times*, 15 October 2000.

<sup>11</sup> James Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver, "Military Campaigns: Veterans' Endorsements and Presidential Elections" (Washington DC: *Center for a New American Security*), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 6.

<sup>13</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 7.

address. Both trends—the increased number of endorsers and the increased prominence of the endorsements when made—continued with both the 2008 and 2012 presidential elections.

### **Defining Political Activity**

This paper examines the *political* activities of the military. Mackubin Thomas Owens notes three meanings of “political” in the context of civil-military relations.<sup>14</sup> The first is seeking power at the expense of civil government institutions, which the military does by engaging in political activities through intervention at one of four levels: influence, blackmail, displacement and supplantment.<sup>15</sup> The term’s second meaning, according to Owens, is participation in the policy-making process. The military acts to influence Congress, the executive branch and/or the public in order to affect policy-making by appealing to the public, grandstanding through threat of or actual resignation in protest of policy, politicking, building of alliance with civilian interest groups, and/or “shoulder tapping.”<sup>16</sup>

The third definition offered by Owens is direct involvement in partisan activities.<sup>17</sup> Partisan activities here mean the alignment of military members with a political party. In contemporary terms, this takes one of two forms: the seeking of public office by a retired military member or the endorsement of a political candidate. While the other activities included in the other two definitions are undoubtedly important to civil-military relations, they do not necessarily constitute partisanship.

This thesis addresses political activity as defined by “involvement in partisan activities.” It does so for two reasons. First, partisan activities, unlike some activities covered under the other two definitions, tend to be overt; this enables outside

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<sup>14</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, “Military Officers: Political without Partisanship,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 89.

<sup>15</sup> To describe this meaning of “political,” Owens draws upon the work of Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 140.

<sup>16</sup> To describe this meaning of “political,” Owens draws upon the work of Risa A. Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed. Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 219; “shoulder tapping,” as explained by Brooks, involves instances where military leaders set an agenda by “bringing issues to attention of politicians and engaging in lobbying-like activities on behalf of those issues.”

<sup>17</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, “Military Officers: Political without Partisanship,” 89.

examination to a level that many of the other activities do not.<sup>18</sup> Second, a focus on partisan activities provides scope limitations necessary for this paper.

### Scope

This thesis will be scoped in three significant ways, to focus specifically on: *endorsements*, retired *flag officers* who make those endorsements, and endorsements of *presidential candidates*.

Within the broader domain of political activity, this paper will focus only on endorsements, and will do so for two reasons. First, as postulated by Peter Feaver, James Golby and Kyle Dropp in “Military Campaigns,” retired officers can reasonably be seen as departing one profession (military) to enter another (political) once they become candidates for office.<sup>19</sup> In contrast, when retired military officers endorse, they appear to be straddling the two arenas by “taking partisan action while also maintaining a foot in [the military], and therefore seeming to speak on behalf of an institution that must remain nonpartisan.” Second, retired officers endorsing candidates is a frequent occurrence; retired officers seeking the presidency is not, at least in the modern era. Only one retired flag officer has sought the presidency as a major party candidate in the past 25 years. In contrast, over 500 retired flag officers endorsed one candidate, Mitt Romney, in the 2012 presidential election alone.<sup>20</sup> Of the two actions, office-seeking and endorsing, it appears that due to its frequency, the act of endorsing has a greater potential effect on civil-military relations.

This paper is further focused on retired flag officers. Put simply, the flag officer level is where civil-military relations of real consequence happen; it is at this level where the military relates most directly with its civilian leaders. Flag officers advise the President, Secretary of Defense and service secretaries. Flag officers routinely testify before Congress. And flag officers predominantly serve as the filter for military issues flowing up from the ranks to civilian leadership. Although some interaction does exist between top civilian leadership and lesser military ranks, such as the Colonel/Chief

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<sup>18</sup> Influence, blackmail, building of alliance with civilian interest groups, and shoulder tapping are less visible to the public and, therefore, more difficult to examine.

<sup>19</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 22.

<sup>20</sup> Arthur Abercrombie + ~500 Flag Officers, “We, the undersigned, proudly support Governor Mitt Romney as our nation’s next President and Commander-In-Chief,” *Washington Times*, 5 November 2012.

Master Sergeant brief to the service secretary or testimony to Congress, the overwhelming majority of this interaction occurs at the flag officer level.

In addition, endorsements made by officers below the flag-officer level are rarely sought or publicized. From the candidate's perspective the intent of endorsements is to boost his or her national security credibility. To the public, flag officers represent national security expertise in a way that lower-ranking military members do not. For these reasons, the paper will focus specifically on the endorsements of flag officers.

Finally, this paper will examine endorsements specific to presidential candidates for two reasons. First, the presidential level is where retired military endorsements are most frequent and most important. The aspiring president seeks military endorsements with the intent of appearing capable of managing the nation's security. The fact that a presidential candidate must be seen as passing the "commander-in-chief test" makes the endorsements of retired flag officers important, as these endorsements are perceived as bestowing credibility on the candidate. Also, while endorsements of candidates seeking other office are occasionally publicized, such as General Stanley McChrystal's endorsement of a candidate for the US House in 2014, it is the presidential endorsements that generate the greatest amount of press.<sup>21</sup> Second, the endorsement of presidential candidates is likely to have a greater impact on civil-military relations. This assumption is based on the fact that more of the interactions within civil-military relations occur between the military and the elected/appointed leaders in the executive branch than between the military and leaders in the legislative branch. This is largely an outcome of the military's placement within the executive branch, a position from which military members report to the chief executive and look to him or her to receive their "marching orders."

### **Argument in Brief**

While many civilian scholars and prominent military figures have commented on the appropriateness of retired flag officer endorsements, few make distinctions between the factors surrounding an endorsement and the potential effect the endorsement might

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<sup>21</sup> Anna Mulrine, "General McChrystal: Does Endorsement Signal He May He May Get into Politics, Too," *Christian Science Monitor*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Military/2014/0807/General-McChrystal-Does-endorsement-signal-he-may-get-into-politics-too>.

have on civil-military relations.<sup>22</sup> In a sense, conventional thinking views these endorsements as monolithic; it holds that endorsements are indistinguishable in their potential effects regardless of the factors that may make some endorsements unique.

As an exception to such generalizations, Golby, Dropp and Feaver identify various status factors and call for senior veterans to avoid “prominent” endorsements.<sup>23</sup> They recognize that “all retired officers are not equal in terms of reputation or influence” and proceed to state that endorsements from four-star generals may carry more weight than those by less senior flag officers. They also recognize that “not all four-stars are equal,” arguing that those endorsers with a higher public profile “would probably matter more” than those with a lesser public profile.

This paper seeks to go further in distinguishing the types of endorsements that should matter more than others in terms of potential negative impact on civil-military relations. Beyond just looking at the rank and public profile of the endorsing flag officer, it examines the possible role of the retired flag officer’s relationship vis-a-vis the president. Relationship, as used here, is meant to convey the linkage between the endorsing flag officer and the endorsed presidential candidate. For example, during a re-election campaign, a retired flag officer could endorse the president under whom he or she previously served. Or the retired flag officer, having served in a key position under the president prior to the re-election bid, could endorse the president’s opponent. Otherwise, in cases of endorsement of a presidential candidate where the incumbent is not seeking re-election, neither relationship applies.

I hypothesize that the nature of this previous relationship between the endorser and the presidential candidate matters for how the endorsement affects subsequent civil-military relations. Specifically, I propose that a retired flag officer’s endorsement of the president’s opponent during a re-election campaign is most likely to negatively influence civil-military relations (assuming the president is re-elected), particularly in terms of a deterioration in the president’s trust of military leadership.

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<sup>22</sup> Risa A. Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 219; Richard H. Kohn, “Military Endorsements Harm National Interest,” *The Washington Times*, 15 October 2000; Eliot A. Cohen, “General Malaise,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 August 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 18.



### **Limitations**

To prove with full certainty that a retired officer breached the trust of an elected leader through endorsement poses a challenge. In this case, to do so would require the chief executive disclosing to someone or some group that he lacks trust in the military as a result of the flag officer's political activity. This is something any president is unlikely to do. Accordingly, this study draws inferences based on chief executives actions. Are the actions taken by any president, or words spoken in a private setting, indicative of a deterioration of trust with the military? The second challenge is directly linking this lack of trust in the military to an endorsement. Rather than attempting to make the connection that the endorsement directly led to a breach of trust, the study seeks to show that an endorsement preceded and more generally contributed to an environment where trust between the president and his military leaders was at times lacking.

### **Overview**

The first chapter of this paper will examine the effects of political activity by the military on civil-military relations. It will begin by examining what restrictions currently exist that limit the political activities of military members. The Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and Department of Defense regulations provide the foundation for this section. It is followed by a review of relevant civil-military relations theory. While the first section of the chapter seeks to answer the question "what restrictions exist?" the second strives to determine "to what end are these restrictions in place?" The chapter then examines the effects and implications of military involvement in politics. It concludes with the finding of seven possible effects: military coup; indirect control; alignment with a political party or interest; breach of trust with elected leaders; loss of credibility with the public; and influencing of military personnel's perceptions of government leaders and candidates.

The second chapter pivots to retired officer involvement in politics, specifically endorsements. It first examines the evolution of flag officer endorsements introduced above and provides arguments in favor of and opposed to the practice from both an academic and military perspective. It then seeks to identify which of the effects

identified in chapter 1 are most likely to occur when retired flag officers endorse presidential candidates.

The third chapter builds upon the previous chapters by looking at whether endorsements, as discussed in chapter two, actually had the effects on civil-military relations, as described in chapter one. It first analyzes endorsements in general to determine those most likely to affect civil-military relations. It then examines six historical cases of endorsements that meet the “most-likely” criteria to determine if effects actually occurred. By assessing endorsements most likely to affect civil-military relations, one can assume that if no effect exists in these cases it is unlikely to exist in others.





## Chapter 1

### The Effects of Military Involvement in Politics

This chapter provides the foundation for the remainder of the thesis by identifying the possible effects of military member involvement in political activities, to include making political endorsements, on US civil-military relations. It begins by examining the governing regulations that restrict these activities, first for active members, then for those retired. It then reviews the foundational theories for civil-military relations as put forward by Samuel Huntington in *The Soldier and the State* and Morris Janowitz in *The Professional Soldier*. The chapter draws upon these texts to understand the thought underlying restrictions on political activities by military members. This is followed by an examination of the possible effects, and the implications of these effects, if and when military members engage in political activities.

#### Guidelines

Active duty commissioned officers face a myriad of restrictions limiting their ability to engage in political activities. Section 973 of Title 10, U.S. Code prohibits officers on active duty from holding elected office at the federal and state level.<sup>1</sup> It further prohibits the election or appointment to any office at “any political subdivision” of a state. The sole elected office for which officers are permitted to seek and hold is that of a nonpartisan office on an independent school board, but only if the schools are located on a military installation.

While Section 973 limits the political activities of officers, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) limits officers’ political speech. Article 88 of the UCMJ prohibits officers from using contemptuous words against the President, Vice President, Congress, Secretary of Defense and military department Secretaries.<sup>2</sup> In addition, officers are prohibited from using contemptuous words against the Governor or legislature of any state in which they are on duty or present. The UCMJ dictates that violations be punished “as a court martial may direct.”

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<sup>1</sup> 10 US Code Section 973 – “Duties: officers on active duty; performance of official functions restricted,” <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/973>.

<sup>2</sup> Uniform Code of Military Justice, Section 888, Article 88 “Contempt Toward Officials,” <http://www.ucmj.us/sub-chapter-10-punitive-articles/888-article-88-contempt-toward-officials>.

Department of Defense (DoD) Directives further limit political activities of military members. The practice of limiting activities through department level directives dates back to 1948 when the first Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, established guidelines as a means to keep the military establishment out of partisan politics.<sup>3</sup> The current restrictions reside in DoD Directive 1344.10. It provides the guidelines to maintain “the traditional concept that members on active duty should not engage in partisan political activity, and that members not on active duty should avoid inferences that their political activities imply or appear to imply official sponsorship, approval, or endorsement.”<sup>4</sup> The myriad of banned activities includes a prohibition on endorsements, or any use of official authority or influence to affect the course or outcome of an election as well as the solicitation of votes for (or against) a partisan political party or candidate through public speech or the publishing of articles. Beyond specific prohibitions, the directive requests that members avoid any activity that is contrary to the spirit and intent of the 1344.10.

Restrictions on the political activities of retired military are more limited in nature. For example, the prohibition on office-seeking applies only to retirees who are recalled to active duty.<sup>5</sup> The UCMJ restriction on contemptuous speech, however, does apply to all retired officers. Article 2 details persons subject to the UCMJ; it includes retired members of a regular component who are entitled to pay.<sup>6</sup> Although retirees are subject to the prohibition on contemptuous speech found in Article 88, courts-martial leveled against retired military for violations are exceedingly rare. Only one reported court martial exists in which a retiree was tried for contemptuous speech; an Army musician was tried in 1918 for claiming that President Woodrow Wilson and the government were “subservient to capitalists and fools to think they can make a soldier out of a man in three months and an officer in six.”<sup>7</sup> He was acquitted.

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<sup>3</sup> Frank J. Morris, “The General or Admiral of Military Service: An Analysis of His Role as a Public Opinion Leader—Civil Military Relations,” (Master’s Thesis, Boston University, 1965), 194.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 1344.10, “Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces,” 19 February 2008.

<sup>5</sup> 10 US Code Section 973 restricts office-seeking specifically to those retirees under a call or order to active duty in excess of 270 days, or to those already service on active duty as a result of the recall.

<sup>6</sup> Uniform Code of Military Justice, Section 802, Article 2 “Persons Subject to This Chapter,” <http://www.ucmj.us/sub-chapter-1-general-provisions/802-article-2-persons-subject-to-this-chapter>.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Corbett and Michael J. Davidson, “The Role of the Military in Presidential Politics,” *Parameters* 39, no 4 (Winter 2009-2010): 70.

Although retired military members are allowed to seek office, they are governed by certain restrictions in their campaign activities. DoD Directive 1344.10 prohibits retired military candidates from using photographs of themselves in uniform as the primary graphic representation in any campaign media.<sup>8</sup> It further restricts retired members from depicting themselves in uniform in a manner that does not accurately reflect their actual performance of service. In addition, the directive requires that any mention or use of their military rank, grade or status must also include a clear indication of their retired status. Finally, the directive requires that when members use their military duty titles or photographs in uniform they prominently and clearly display disclaimers that such use does not imply endorsement by the Department of Defense or a particular Military Department.

The directives governing military member involvement in politics make explicit government leaders' desire for a separation of military service and politics. While retired members face relatively few restrictions on their political activities, active members face many. With both, however, a clear indication exists that government authorities desire that the military be buffered from partisan politics. One question naturally follows: why is this separation desired? The following section will seek to answer this question through an examination of the writings of two prominent civil-military relations theorists.

### **Theories of Civil-Military Relations**

#### **Huntington**

Samuel Huntington, a Harvard political science professor prior to his 2008 death, published *The Soldier and the State* in 1957. In this seminal work, Huntington seeks to define the military officer corps as a profession. In introducing the concept of the military officer as a professional, he draws a comparison with other professions to illustrate the professional nature of the officer. Huntington states, “while the primary responsibility of the physician is to his client, and the lawyer to his client, the principle responsibility of the military officer is to the state. His responsibility to the state is the responsibility of the expert advisor.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> DODD 1344.10.

<sup>9</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relation*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 16.

As a means to convey his beliefs on the need for a professional military, Huntington advocates a civil-military relationship which he calls “objective control.” He first defines its antithesis—subjective control. Subjective control of the military is the minimization of military power by maximizing the civilian power of one or more civilian groups. This is done with the intent of enhancing this group, or groups’, power at the expense of other civilian groups. This type of control shows itself when particular government institutions, social classes or constitutional forms maximize power, and exercise that power over the military. This is only possible, argues Huntington, in states that lack a professional officer corps; the lack of a professional military enables this group to impose its values and ideals on the military. In a professional officer corps military values would endure, thus making the imposition of outside group values and ideals impossible.<sup>10</sup>

Where subjective control minimizes military professionalism, objective control maximizes it. While subjective civilian control “civilianizes” the military by making it mirror the group, or groups, in charge, objective civilian control seeks to militarize the military. As Huntington describes, “the essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is the denial of an independent military sphere.” Objective control makes the military a tool of the state instead of a tool of the dominant group. Objective control further establishes a single standard of civilian control, one which is politically neutral and in which all groups can recognize. This prevents the alignment of the military with any one side, or its participation in politics, which Huntington sees as the antithesis of objective civilian control.<sup>11</sup>

Huntington emphasizes as a key component of objective control the minimization of military power within society. He sees this as being achieved through professionalization of the officer corps, which has the effect of making the military politically neutral. Professionalizing the military, argues Huntington, maximizes the likelihood of achieving military security for the nation. For individual officers, objective control dictates that officers surrender their professional outlook in order to play a

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<sup>10</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 80-81.

<sup>11</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 83-84.

dominant role in their government. As an example, Huntington points to Generals Charles de Gaulle, who through his involvement in politics acted in ways counter to the military profession, expressing “values stemming from nonmilitary sources.”<sup>12</sup>

Huntington sees historical precedent for objective control in the U.S., although he argues that this type of control was not adopted at the nation’s founding. Huntington emphasizes that the Constitution, contrary to popular belief, failed to provide the clear distinction between political and military spheres required for objective control. He credits a small corps of Civil War officers with pursuing professionalization of the military, thereby bringing the military under objective control. Specifically, Huntington identifies General William T. Sherman as deserving the credit for implementing objective control; it was Sherman’s time as commanding General of the Army that ushered in an era of political neutrality. Sherman believed deeply in a strict separation of military activities and politics, a belief which spread down to his troops. His officers displayed a near unanimous belief in separation by *not* voting—fewer than one in 500 ever cast a ballot.<sup>13</sup>

Huntington identifies three factors as coming to constitute objective control beginning in the Sherman years: the separation of the military from society, the ideas of officers as to the distance at which the military should keep politics, and these officers’ increasing sense of professional autonomy. Accordingly, Huntington credits the military rather than civilian leaders with creating and maintaining effective objective control. He argues that political neutrality of the officer corps, with the sole exception of General Leonard Wood in the early 1900s, was maintained through World War II.<sup>14</sup>

Huntington claims that a fusionist perspective was adopted following WWII and has prevailed since. This fusionism showed itself through the intertwining of the military and politics. An observer could no longer distinguish between military and political functions at high levels of government; categories of “political” and “military,” he argues, were rendered as obsolete, sterile and meaningless. Huntington saw this as a

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<sup>12</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 84-85, 96; although Huntington fails to explain why he cites De Gaulle as an example of “deviant nonmilitary men,” he is likely referring to the General’s assumption of the presidency in 1959 after having positioned himself for the post.

<sup>13</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 163, 230-231, 258.

<sup>14</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 231, 258, 261.

response to WWII. As war was now seen as total, the influence of the military in all aspects of government came to be perceived as acceptable and even beneficial. This political-military fusion manifested itself in two forms: first, through military leadership's incorporating political, social and economic factors into their thinking and, second, by military leadership assuming non-military responsibilities.<sup>15</sup>

Huntington identifies General Dwight D. Eisenhower and General Douglas MacArthur as exemplifying this acceptance of fusionism, arguing that neither remained bound to the professional military ethic. Their political involvement, he argues, made them “‘unmilitary’ military men—deviants from the professional standard.” He cites their involvement in politics as evidence that the U.S. had cut loose “from the safe grounds of objective control,” and argues that this tendency towards fusionism, which imposes what he calls the “liberal solution” onto military institutions, constitutes the gravest domestic threat to military security.<sup>16</sup>

Huntington calls for the U.S. to reject fusionism and instead embrace an intellectual climate that supports the existence of military professionalism and the achievement of objective civilian control. He argues that to achieve this requires a shift in American values from liberal to conservative, and that doing so would “reduce the danger of progressive deterioration in American officership.”<sup>17</sup>

Huntington further emphasizes the need for officers to remain apolitical. In his view elevating the needs of the military as an “interest group” or ends in themselves, apart from or in place of the national interest, proves problematic. He explains, “a political officer corps, rent with faction, subordinated to ulterior ends, lacking prestige but sensitive to the appeals of popularity, would endanger the security of the state. A strong, integrated, highly professional officer corps, on the other hand, immune to politics and respected for its military character, would be a steadying balance wheel in the conduct of policy.” Huntington calls upon military officers to “remain true to themselves, to serve with silence and courage in the military way.” He concludes that if military officers fail to do so, they “destroy themselves first and the nation ultimately.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 351.

<sup>16</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 351, 369.

<sup>17</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 457, 464.

<sup>18</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 464, 466.

## Janowitz

Morris Janowitz, a prominent University of Chicago professor of sociology, published *The Professional Soldier* in 1960. In this influential work, Janowitz examines the military as a political entity. He argues that the military, since it conforms to the pattern of a pressure group, is political.<sup>19</sup> He describes the military as being extremely powerful in this regard, a group whose power “protrudes into the political fabric of contemporary society.” Janowitz cites the considerable pressure the military exerts on military budgets as an example of its power. In spite of the “political-ness” of the military, Janowitz sees civilian control of the military as being intact. He does, however, recognize that imbalances exist in the military’s contribution to politico-military affairs.

In analyzing the military and its involvement in politics, Janowitz makes a distinction between those military members who practice the profession for personal rewards and those who use their skills to achieve political ends. It is this second group, one he calls the military elite, to which he attributes his analysis. Janowitz explains that as officers climb the career ladder and enter the elites, they develop a political consciousness. He sees the political beliefs that they adopt as being reflective of, rather than distinct from, civil society’s beliefs.<sup>20</sup>

Janowitz does not see the military elites as “above politics,” arguing that “there is no advantage in assuming that they could or should be unpolitical.” He offers the military elites’ attempts to influence legislation, beyond just that involving military budgets as noted above, and executive decisions about foreign affairs as examples of the depth of their political involvement. Janowitz, however, recognizes a growing strain on military honor caused by the change in the way military elites expressed their political beliefs. While in the early 1900s political beliefs were more often implicit, in the latter half of the 20th Century military elites had become more explicit in conveying their beliefs. Janowitz sees the growing ability of military officers to act as a pressure group as being a result of the high level of respect the military has garnered from the

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<sup>19</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait*. (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1960), lv.

<sup>20</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 7, 234-235.



population. The dogmas of their profession—public service and honor—have, however, predisposed the officer corps to refrain from partisan alignment.<sup>21</sup>

Among the military elite, Janowitz recognizes a near absence of political partisanship, noting that across democracies it remains uncommon for the military elite to attach themselves to political parties or display overt partisanship.<sup>22</sup> He sees the nonpartisan stance of the military elite as a result of their viewing nonpartisanship as being essential in order to influence the fortunes of their service. Janowitz credits this, along with the rules preventing military officers from influencing national electoral contests, with ensuring civilian supremacy. It is those officers at the top, who have succeeded under the system of civilian control, that are most bound to and supportive of the system.<sup>23</sup>

Still, Janowitz recognizes challenges to this system. He argues that rivalries between the President and Congress have increased opportunities for the military to influence them. As a result, military pressure group activities have expanded. According to Janowitz, the military seeks to develop new techniques for intervening in domestic politics.<sup>24</sup>

One of the most direct forms of political intervention for officers is to enter partisan politics by seeking public office. Janowitz sees this as contrary to the concept of military honor, but notes that the taboo against career officers entering politics upon retirement, with the exception of the presidency, has been largely effective. He believes this is due to the barriers they face in standing for election. First, a lifetime in a highly specialized and mobile career weakens geographic affiliation in addition to making access to local organized political parties difficult. Second, professional honor has created the norm of avoiding partisan politics in retirement. He notes General Omar Bradley's guidance of, "the best service a retired general can perform is to turn in his tongue along with his suit and mothball his opinions," as holding wide acceptance among military elites.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 235, 367.

<sup>22</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 234.

<sup>23</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 368.

<sup>24</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 369.

<sup>25</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 369, 373-374, 388.



In addition to these barriers, the involvement by officers in electoral politics has been further challenged by the opposition of politicians. Janowitz explains that politicians have historically opposed using military service as a means to build a reputation that could be used in politics. This has been hastened, in part, by the suspicions of each political party that the other may engage in the practice of using military office as a launching platform for potential candidates. Given the infrequency of office-seeking among retired officers, Janowitz perceives it to have little impact on civil-military relations. Instead, he sees the public relations of the military services, through organizations like the Air Force Association, as having the greatest potential to threaten the system of political balance in the long run, as this is where the military exerts the most influence in domestic politics as a pressure group.<sup>26</sup>

### **Evaluation of Theorists**

Both theorists define “political” in the broader sense, as incorporating not just involvement in partisan activities but the participation in the policy-making process as well. From there they diverge. Huntington views the officer corps as monolithic, while Janowitz distinguishes one group, elites, from the rest. Janowitz sees this group as the limited segment of officers who engage politically. In addition, Huntington sees a clear line delineating what is “military” from what is “political,” and advocates that these spheres remain separate for military professionals and statesmen. Janowitz does not accept this distinction, seeing the separation as neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, Janowitz perceives elite officers as being political and argues that they will remain political as they consistently exhibit pressure group behavior.

Huntington sees the military as not only being separate from politics, but from civil society as well. While Huntington perceives the military professionalism as being a part *from* civilian values, Janowitz sees it as being a part *of* those values. Janowitz argues that the political attitudes of military personnel reflect those held by civil society, unlike Huntington who sees those attitudes as uniquely military. Finally, where Huntington perceives civilian control of the military as being substantially challenged, Janowitz sees civilian control, in spite of a few “imbalances,” as being largely intact.

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<sup>26</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 395.

Although Huntington and Janowitz differ considerably over how they viewed civil-military relations, their perspectives on the military's role in partisan politics align. Both see it as contrary to the military ethic of service to the nation. Janowitz argues that an officer entering partisan politics constitutes "an action in opposition to the concept of military honor."<sup>27</sup> Huntington expresses his agreement with this belief in arguing that officers must remain politically neutral.<sup>28</sup> This area of agreement between the two theorists, one of opposition to the military professional engaging in partisan politics, provides the theoretical foundation for the restrictions addressed at the beginning of this chapter.

### Effects

Both Huntington and Janowitz argue against military involvement in partisan politics, but they fail to examine fully the specific effects, and the possible implications of those effects, when military members *do* involve themselves with partisan politics. This section attempts to fill that void.

The most severe effect of military involvement in politics is the assumption of complete political control by the military. This can occur through two methods. The first, what Finer calls "supplimentment," occurs when the military removes the civilian political leadership from office and establishes military control.<sup>29</sup> In a second method, the salami slice assumption of control, power is taken from the civilian government one slice at a time, instead of all at once, as in a traditional coup. Former Air Force Staff Judge Advocate Charles Dunlap describes this as "the result of accretion of power by the military;" asked to do more and more in the domestic arena, the military concludes that "it might as well run the government as a whole."<sup>30</sup> A possible implication of each form of military takeover is *praetorianism*. This form of military dominance is associated with the Praetorian Guard of the Roman Empire, which used erratic despotism to keep its

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<sup>27</sup> Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, 373.

<sup>28</sup> Huntington, *The Soldier and the State*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Samuel E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics*, 2nd ed (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), xviii.

<sup>30</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11: Renegotiating the Civil-Military Bargain* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011), 102.

subjects under control.<sup>31</sup> It is also reflected by the political role of the army in some Latin American countries in the mid to late 1900s.

Although today a coup occurring in the United States seems farfetched, this has not always been the case. Political crises can often provide ripe opportunities for militaries to assume power in order to “save the day.” This concerned some in government during the American Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln, in particular, seemed to recognize this when appointing General Joseph Hooker to command the Army of the Potomac. In a letter to General Hooker he wrote, “I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain success can set up dictators. What I ask now of you is military success, and *I will risk the dictatorship.*”<sup>32</sup> [emphasis added]

A second possible effect of the political involvement of the military is indirect control of the government. Unlike the coup, where the military assumes authority over government affairs, indirect control has civilian leadership of government. However, the civilian government is tightly constrained in its decision-making, as it is only able to exercise leadership within the bounds established by the military. Finer explains this as being accomplished through either blackmail or a lesser degree of pressure. In the case of blackmail, the military uses the threat of non-co-operation with or violence towards the civilian authorities to intimidate government leaders into making decisions in line with the military’s desires.<sup>33</sup> The military wields essentially a veto on government decisions, with the civilian government being “free” to take what actions it deems appropriate as long as the decisions remain within the bounds that the military deems as acceptable. Turkey, in its military’s relations with the civilian government in the second half of the twentieth century, exemplified this type of involvement. The military can also employ lesser degrees of pressure to constrain the decision space of civilian leaders. Unlike blackmail where the military uses the threat of force to attain its ends, in these cases more

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<sup>31</sup> Louis Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power: A Study of Civil Control of the Military Power in the United States* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 6.

<sup>32</sup> Phillip S. Meilinger, “Soldiers and Politics: Exposing Some Myths,” *Parameters* 40, no 2 (Summer 2010): 80.

<sup>33</sup> Finer, *The Man on Horseback*, 140.

subtle pressure is used to drive up the costs to civilian leaders of opposing the military to the point where they will choose to accommodate. Richard Kohn describes the civil-military relations of the Clinton administration in this way.<sup>34</sup> According to Kohn, Clinton attempted to avoid conflict with the military by deferring to it, not only on social issues such as women in combat, but also on issues related to force structure and the use of force. Clinton's battle to enable homosexuals to serve openly in the military, and that battle's outcome, exemplifies this deference and likely led to his accommodationist approach.

A third possible effect of the military's involvement in politics is the alignment of the military with a particular party or interest within government. This has a corrosive effect, as it gives one party or group the upper hand in political confrontations. This upper hand could be used by one party to influence the other—to pressure the other party to accommodate its desires or face the consequences of opposing the military. Although these consequences could theoretically involve the use of force, the consequences will most likely come in the form of threats of high political costs.

The Newburgh conspiracy of 1783 is one example of this type of implication.<sup>35</sup> Immediately following the Revolutionary War, Congress was locked in a battle over the scope of the federal government's powers. The nationalists sought to add power and authority to the central government; "anti-nationalists" sought to limit it. The nationalists sought an amendment giving Congress expanded power to tax in order to provide what they saw as a necessary system for acquiring additional funding; anti-nationalists opposed it. While this political battle in Philadelphia was underway, the officers of the Continental Army encamped at Newburgh petitioned Congress for compensation for their service. The petition carried a thinly veiled threat, stating that "any further experiments on their [the army's] patience may have fatal effects."<sup>36</sup> Upon receiving the petition, the federalists spread "rumors of the army's uneasiness and the dire prospects if Congress

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<sup>34</sup> Kohn as cited in Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1738-1802*. (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1975), 17-39.

<sup>36</sup> Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 19.

refused satisfaction.”<sup>37</sup> The nationalists parlayed the situation to attain the additional funding system they sought and appease, at least in part, the officers with additional pay.

A fourth possible effect of the political involvement of military leadership is that such involvement may influence the military vote. In an instance where military leaders are seen as acting in ways that appear to be favorable toward one candidate over another, they could be perceived as leveraging this influence for votes. If the influence is great enough in any given election, it could sway the results. The favored candidate, particularly if elected by a narrow margin, may feel beholden to the military. If elected, the un-favored candidate’s trust in the military as a professional institution would likely be low, thereby inhibiting military leaders’ ability to play an effective role in advising a new president on the formation and execution of strategy.

Chief Justice Warren Burger, in a 1976 opinion, warned of the need to avoid military partisanship based on the risk that “a military commander might attempt to ‘deliver’ his men’s votes for a major-party candidate.”<sup>38</sup> He cites the 1864 Presidential election as a cautionary example. As five states did not yet have absentee ballots, President Lincoln requested that General Sherman furlough his soldiers so they could return home to vote.<sup>39</sup> Sherman accommodated the request, issuing free railway passes to enable them to return. In addition, the President ensured that “soldiers were assessed a fraction of their pay for the support of the [Republican] party.” Some prominent officers were sent home for the specific purpose of campaigning for the president. Although the electoral push of military leaders in the 1864 election likely influenced neither the outcome nor the President, who died one month after his inauguration, it had the potential of impacting civil-military relations in a very significant way.

A fifth possible effect of the military leadership’s involvement in politics is that it could influence military members’ perceptions of government leaders. If senior military leaders send signals to peers and subordinates that the current President or Secretary of Defense are not “up to the job,” members may feel justified in challenging civilian leadership. This challenge could express itself in two ways.

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<sup>37</sup> Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 21.

<sup>38</sup> Diana H. Mazur, *A More Perfect Military: How the Constitution Can Make Our Military Stronger*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81.

<sup>39</sup> Meilinger, “Soldiers and Politics: Exposing Some Myths,” 76.

First, officers at the higher levels may seek to “insist” instead of simply “advise.” When officers advise, they offer their recommendation and expect the civilian leader to make the decision; when they insist, they seek to impose their own perspective on decisions and policies, and expect the civilian leader to follow suit. In his 1998-1999 study for the Triangle Institute for Security Studies, Ole Holsti found “many officers believe that they have the duty to force their own views on civilian decision makers when the United States is contemplating committing American forces abroad.”<sup>40</sup> Fifty percent of the officers surveyed for Holsti’s study responded that the proper role of the officer was to insist, rather than advise or advocate, when it came to setting rules of engagement; 63 percent stated it was proper for officers to insist as to what kinds of military units will be used. It is probable that the more civilian leaders are perceived as not up to the job, the more military members will see it as appropriate to insist instead of advise.

Second, military members may “shirk” instead of “work.” Peter Feaver addresses this dichotomy in his seminal work on civil-military relations, *Armed Servants*. He identifies shirking as when the military “deviates from its agreement with the civilians in order to pursue different preferences, for instance by not doing what the civilians have requested, or not in the way the civilians wanted, or in such a way as to undermine the ability of civilians to make future decisions.”<sup>41</sup> Feaver emphasizes that this rarely translates into open insubordination. Instead, he argues, it is most often expressed in one of three alternate ways: inflating estimates of what a military operation would cost with the intent of determining the outcome of a policy outcome; foot-dragging to stall, with the intent to prevent, the implementation of an undesirable policy; or leaks, unauthorized public protests or appeals to other political actors with the intent of determining the outcome of a policy. He argues that the decision as to whether the military works or shirks is shaped, in part, by how negatively those in the military view what civilians are asking them to do.<sup>42</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that the less likely military members are to accept its civilian leaders as up to the job, the more likely they are to shirk.

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<sup>40</sup> Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11*, 54.

<sup>41</sup> Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 68.

<sup>42</sup> Feaver, *Armed Servants*, 58.



Contemporary commentary offers two examples as to when the actions of military leaders likely affected military attitudes towards civilian leaders. Kohn argues that senior military leaders, in their clear dislike of President Clinton, sent the message to the military at large that Clinton was not acceptable. He cites the public insults that were levied against the President by service members, including a two-star general, in print and in speech as evidence that military members adopted the sentiment of Clinton's senior officer "opponents."<sup>43</sup> Owens links this perception of Clinton among the ranks as unfit for duty, with officers' willingness to accept insisting as the appropriate means to engage civilian leaders.<sup>44</sup> As a second example, Jason Dempsey notes the outspoken opposition to the Iraq war by some military members as a result of senior officer actions. Dempsey states, "It seems the actions of prominent generals, paired with institutional silence on the issue [of military involvement in partisan politics], have established a new norm whereby service members of all ranks feel freer to add their voices to the partisan fray."<sup>45</sup>

A sixth possible effect of military political involvement is that it may breach the trust with civilian leaders. If civilian leaders perceive officers to be political, they may begin to question the officers' motives. There are three possible implications to this breach of trust. First, an administration will be less likely to include military leaders in the decision-making process. The greater degree to which politicians perceive military advice as being politically motivated, the less likely they will be to seek or consider that advice. President Lyndon Johnson's distrust of military intentions with regard to Vietnam, exhibited when he told military leaders during an Oval Office meeting that he "did not care about their advice," is just one such example.<sup>46</sup>

Another possible implication is that even if military advice is sought, any dissenting opinion on the part of the military leader will be suspect if that leader is seen

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<sup>43</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "The Erosion of Civilian Control of the Military in the United States Today," *Naval War College Review* 55, no 3 (Summer 2002): 12.

<sup>44</sup> Owens, *US Civil-Military Relations after 9/11*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Jason A. Dempsey, *Our Army: Soldiers, Politics and American Civil-Military Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 193. Dempsey cites the "Appeal for Redress," a group of military officers that in 2007 appealed to Congress for the withdrawal of forces from Iraq, as an example.

<sup>46</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "Building Trust," in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 271.

as acting politically. Donald Snider argues that in order for civilian leadership to trust military leaders when they dissent, they must appear to be doing so out of a disinterested desire to serve the nation.<sup>47</sup> If an officer appears to have political motivations when dissenting, by attempting to appear to the public as being “right” on an issue while portraying the administration as “wrong,” her advice, even if sound, is likely to be discounted.

A lack of trust generated by officers’ political activities could also cause an administration to consider the political affiliation of officers when making appointments. If the senior officers are seen as political, civilian leaders may be hesitant to appoint those who are out-of-step with its political perspective. Eisenhower expressed this concern when explaining why he refused to be considered for the presidency in 1948: “The necessary and wise subordination of the military to civil power will be best sustained...when lifelong professional soldiers...abstain from seeking high political office...I would regard it as an unalloyed tragedy for our country if it should ever come to the day when military commanders might be selected with an eye to their future potentialities in the political field rather than exclusively upon judgment as to their military abilities.”<sup>48</sup>

Civil-military relations during the Mexican-American War reflect the breaching of trust between politicized officers and the administration under which they serve. During the war, President James K. Polk’s top two generals, Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott, sought to position themselves for a 1848 presidential run.<sup>49</sup> Both were known Whigs; both were seen by Polk, a Democrat, as politically unacceptable.<sup>50</sup> To limit the potential political capital his generals could garner through military successes in the war, Polk requested that an office of lieutenant general be created to lead the war, and more importantly, to oversee Major Generals Taylor and Scott. Polk sought to appoint the Democratic Senator Thomas Benton, a career politician with much less military

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<sup>47</sup> Don M. Snider, “Dissent and Strategic Leadership of the Military Profession,” *Orbis* 52, no 2 (Spring 2008): 269.

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *American Democracy and Military Power*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> John C. Pinheiro, *Manifest Ambition: James K. Polk and Civil-Military Relations during the Mexican War*. (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), 29.

<sup>50</sup> Pinheiro, *Manifest Ambition*, 59.



experience than the seasoned Taylor and Scott, to the position.<sup>51</sup> Although Polk ultimately failed in his endeavor to create the office, being stymied by an unsupportive Senate, the attempt serves as an example as to the effect a lack of trust in the military can have on political leaders.

A seventh possible effect of the military's involvement in politics is the potential loss of credibility with the public. As Andrew Bacevich argues, the more political the military becomes the more likely the "voters are to perceive its recommendations as part of a political agenda—rather than the considered judgment of disinterested professionals."<sup>52</sup> This has two possible implications for the military. First, it has the potential to decrease the military's effectiveness in advocating for legitimate military requirements. If the public sees the military as tied to a certain political agenda, the public could come to view every request made by the military skeptically; this could translate into the military being less able to attain the resources it feels it needs in order to maintain national security. Second, the politicization of the military could damage the popularity it enjoys among the public.<sup>53</sup> The loss of public support not only threatens the military's ability to get resources, it inhibits the military's ability to enlist an adequate number of volunteers and, ultimately, could lead to a loss of public will to engage in extended operations. The following chart summarizes the seven different ways in which the military's political involvement can affect civil-military relations.

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<sup>51</sup> Pinheiro, *Manifest Ambition*, 67-9.

<sup>52</sup> Risa A. Brooks, "Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies," in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 234.

<sup>53</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Military Officers: Political without Partisanship," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 9, no 3 (Fall 2015): 99.

Table 1: Effects of Military Involvement in Politics

<b>Effects</b>	<b>Possible Implications</b>	<b>Historical Examples</b>
Coup	Praetorianism	Lincoln's concern of coup during Civil War
Indirect Control	Veto power on gov't decisions	Turkey, late 20th Century
Alignment with Party/Interest	Influence outcomes in favor of that party/interest	Newburgh conspiracy
Influence Military Vote	May effect electoral outcomes; challenges credibility with public/trust with elected leaders	Lincoln and 1864 election
Influence Military Personnel's Perceptions of Government Leaders/Candidates	Increased likelihood to "shirk" & increased likelihood to "insist" instead of "advise"	Civil-Military Relations during Clinton presidency
Breach of Trust with Elected Leaders	Increased likelihood for effective leaders to either exclude military from decision-making process/discount dissent; officers vetted for key military positions based on political affiliation	Generals Winfield Scott and Zachary Taylor during Mexican-American War
Loss of Credibility with Public	Damage popular standing of military; decreased effectiveness in advocacy for military requirements	

Source: Author's Original Work

### Summary

This chapter examined the restrictions governing political activities of military members. It found a clear divide between the vast number of restrictions governing active duty military and the few which restrict retired members. The chapter then provided an overview of the foundational civil-military relations theories put forward by Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz. It sought to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the political restrictions on military members finding that while both theorists differed substantially in their perspectives on the appropriate role of the military in politics, they both agreed that military involvement in *partisan* politics was undesirable. The chapter concluded with an examination of possible effects of military member involvement in political activities. Where this chapter examined potential effects of *active* military partisan involvement, the next chapter will examine the potential effects of *retiree* partisan involvement.

## Chapter 2

### Potential Effects of Retired Officer Endorsements on Civil-Military Relations

This chapter examines retired officer endorsements of presidential candidates. It begins by providing a synopsis of endorsements over the past six presidential election cycles. The chapter then reviews academic and military sentiment regarding endorsements, as well as the recommended “fixes” provided by those who perceive these endorsements to be problematic. It then examines the effects of military endorsements: first, by reviewing existing arguments and findings and second, by analyzing the recent endorsement phenomenon to see which of the effects outlined in Chapter 1 may apply.

#### Endorsements

Although the recent wave of endorsements by retired general officers can be traced back to General P.X. Kelley’s support of George H.W. Bush in the 1988 presidential campaign, this type of activity did not garner significant attention until the 1992 presidential election.<sup>1</sup> The success of the Gulf War, combined with the establishment of 24-hour news networks and the heavy coverage of those leading the war, helped popularize the US military and bring military leaders into the public spotlight. At the same time, positive perceptions of the US military reached new heights; nearly two thirds of Americans expressed confidence in the military, almost double the number seen at the end of the Vietnam War.<sup>2</sup> These factors combined to make military endorsements very appealing to presidential candidates.

In the 1992 election, endorsements proved of particular importance to Governor Bill Clinton. Having neither held federal office nor served in the military, he was seen as lacking national security gravitas. This problem was compounded by the media attention on his lack of military service during the Vietnam War and allegations that he purposefully evaded the draft. Eager to change the “draft dodger” narrative, Clinton sought the support of retired senior military leaders. He proved successful, entering election day with 22 retired flag officer endorsements.<sup>3</sup> Most prominent among these

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<sup>1</sup> James Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver, “Military Campaigns: Veterans’ Endorsements and Presidential Elections” (Washington DC: Center for a New American), 6.

<sup>2</sup> National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago, “Confidence in Public Institutions, General Social Survey Cumulative File, 1973-2006.”

<sup>3</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 6.

endorsements was that of Admiral William Crowe, who had served as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) under President Bush. Golby, Dropp and Feaver specifically note the impact of Crowe's endorsement, concluding that "the enthusiastic endorsement by one of the highest-ranking officers to have served under Clinton's opponent, and the image of a large group of distinguished military officers seconding Crowe's endorsement, helped Clinton counter a storyline that portrayed him as a draft dodger during the Vietnam War."<sup>4</sup>

Endorsements played a less prominent role in the 1996 election, as both candidates were likely perceived as having at least the requisite amount of national security credentials.<sup>5</sup> However, Senator Bob Dole used military endorsements to help draw attention to his decorated military service and emphasize the anger of many veterans towards Clinton's military policies.<sup>6</sup> The campaign did see one of the most famous generals of the era, Colin Powell, enter the political arena when he endorsed Senator Dole.

The 2000 campaign saw another surge of retired flag officer endorsements. This campaign pitted Vice President Al Gore, who had served in Vietnam, against then-Texas Governor George W. Bush, who had not. As Clinton had done eight years earlier, Bush sought the endorsements of retired flag officers to buttress the perception he was prepared for the role of commander-in-chief. Bush proved successful in this endeavor, lining up so many military supporters that one Gore advisor compared it to "the kind of thing you see in the Third World—all these retired generals lining up behind the politicians."<sup>7</sup> Bush enjoyed the support of Powell, the recently retired commander of Central Command General Anthony Zinni, the past two Commandants of the Marine Corps and Air Force Chiefs of Staff, as well as the recently retired Chief of Naval Operations.<sup>8</sup> Gore garnered more muted support from retired flag officers, employing

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<sup>4</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 6.

<sup>5</sup> As a result of Clinton having served as Commander-in-Chief over the preceding four years, and his opponent, Bob Dole, having served during WWII.

<sup>6</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 6.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Lee Myers, "Military Backs Ex-Guard Pilot over Private Gore," *New York Times*, 21 September 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Civil-Military Relations: Should Retired Military Officers Stay out of Political Campaigns?" *Armed Forces Journal International* 138, no. 4 (November 2000): 10.

former CJCS General John Shalikashvili and Admiral William Owens, a former Vice Chairman, as his advisors.

Retired general officers were employed to a great extent during the 2004 election, with both candidates “reaching out to the uniformed services like never before.”<sup>9</sup> Given the wars taking place in Afghanistan and Iraq, and with the 9/11 attacks still a recent memory, national security played a prominent role in both campaigns. Both campaigns emphasized support amongst military leaders, with each publishing a list of hundreds of retired flag officers who backed their respective candidates.<sup>10</sup> Senator John Kerry went so far as to tout this backing during the first Presidential debate, stating “I’m proud that important military figures...are supporting me in this race: former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili; just yesterday, General Eisenhower’s son, General John Eisenhower, endorsed me; Admiral William Crowe; General Tony McPeak, who ran the Air Force war so effectively for [President George W. Bush’s] father -- all believe I would make a stronger commander in chief.”<sup>11</sup> Twelve retired flag officers voiced their support for Kerry at the Democratic National Convention, to include Shalikashvili and former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO General Wesley Clark.<sup>12</sup> McPeak played a prolific role in the campaign, announcing his change of support from Bush to Kerry in the Democrats’ weekly radio address, calling Bush’s foreign policy “a wall-to-wall disaster” during the Republican convention, and defending Kerry’s military service in television commercials.<sup>13</sup> Bush’s most notable endorsement came from General Tommy Franks, the recently retired commander of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Franks publicly endorsed the President and later spoke in support of him at the Republican National Convention.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Matthew B. Stannard, “Armed with the Ballot: Military Voters Increasingly Vocal with their Opinions,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Stannard, “Armed with the Ballot,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>11</sup> 2004 Presidential Debate Transcript, 30 September 2004.

<http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=september-30-2004-debate-transcript>

<sup>12</sup> Douglas Turner, “Enlisting Aid of Generals Looms Large as Bush, Kerry Battle over National Security,” *Buffalo News*, 1 August 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Steve Corbett and Michael J. Davidson, “The Role of the Military in Presidential Politics,” *Parameters* 39, no 4 (Winter 2009-2010): 58 and Stannard, “Armed with the Ballot,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Corbett, “The Role of the Military in Presidential Politics,” 58.

The 2008 election again witnessed a competition between one candidate who was perceived as having substantial national security gravitas and another who was perceived as having little.<sup>15</sup> While both sought endorsements, then-Senator Barack Obama aggressively recruited retired military officer support in hopes of negating Senator John McCain's national security experience advantage as perceived by the voting public. Obama's supporters proved remarkably aggressive in their attempts to discredit McCain. One supporter, General Clark, generated significant media attention for devaluing McCain's war record in Vietnam on national television, while another, General McPeak, gained attention for calling McCain fat.<sup>16</sup> Most remarkable among Obama's retired flag officer endorsers was the Republican General Powell, who endorsed Obama just three years after having resigned as President Bush's Secretary of State.

The 2012 campaign involved two major party candidates with no prior military experience. President Obama again played up his support among retired flag officers, including a speech at his party's convention by a retired Admiral flanked on stage by more than 30 other veterans.<sup>17</sup> Governor Mitt Romney sought to overcome his "commander-in-chief deficit" by showcasing the endorsement of over 500 retired military flag officers in a pre-election week advertisement in the *Washington Times*.<sup>18</sup>

### **Evaluating Endorsements**

A public debate has ensued over whether it is proper for retired military officers to endorse candidates seeking high office. While civil-military relations scholars voice nearly universal opposition to the practice, retired military officers themselves appear split on the issue. The prominent scholar Richard Kohn has led the charge in opposition, stating in op-eds during the 2000 presidential election cycle that the practice of endorsing "misuses the trust and respect the American people have for their professional soldiers."<sup>19</sup> In calling for an end to retired flag officer endorsements, Kohn surmises that

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<sup>15</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 7.

<sup>16</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 21.

<sup>17</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 8.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Abercrombie, Brigadier General and 500 Retired Flag Officers. "We, the Undersigned, Proudly Support Governor Mitt Romney as our Nation's next President and Commander-in-Chief." *Washington Times*, 5 Nov 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Richard H. Kohn, "Military Endorsements Harm National Interest," *Washington Times*, 15 October 2000.

“those in the know understand that four stars never really ‘retire’ but, like princes of the church, embody the core culture and collectively represent the military community as authoritatively as the active-duty leadership.”<sup>20</sup> He concluded that through harming civil-military cooperation and undermining the people’s trust in the military, the endorsements will ultimately endanger national security.<sup>21</sup>

Eliot Cohen, author of the influential civil-military relations work *Supreme Command*, also opposes the practice. In an op-ed published during the 2004 election cycle, Cohen echoes Kohn’s perspective that generals “never really retire.”<sup>22</sup> He observes that retired generals “carry weight because of their experience, and the expectation that they speak with the voice of disinterested patriotism...when they become openly political, endorsing one candidate or endorsing another, they create the notion that the military is a constituency rather than a neutral instrument of policy.” Cohen notes that the vast majority of retired flag officers refrain from endorsing candidates because they recognize the harm done by doing so, and called on all to “hold the line, to adhere to standards and conduct that civilians may not even understand” by not endorsing.

Political scientist Risa Brooks also cautions retired senior officers from endorsing. Brooks takes to task the pretext that retired officers’ expression of political preferences is just like that of any other citizen.<sup>23</sup> Brooks states, “To argue that the retired officer is just exercising his or her rights in campaigning for a candidate neglects the fact that those efforts particularly matter—are publicized and have extra influence—because the person served in the military.” She goes on to assert that these individuals may be perceived as speaking on behalf of a larger contingency within the active military—that in endorsing an individual candidate the retired senior officer may be giving the impression that the military, or some large sub-section of it, also favors the candidate. Brooks concludes that although these endorsements are allowed, “it would be inaccurate, at best, to deny at least

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<sup>20</sup> Richard H. Kohn, “Brass Shouldn’t Do Endorsements,” *Juneau Empire*, 9 October 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Kohn, “Military Endorsements Harm National Interest,” *Washington Times*, 15 October 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “General Malaise,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 August 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Risa A. Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” in *American-Civil Military Relations: The Soldier and the State in a New Era*, ed Suzanne C. Nelson and Don M. Snider. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 222.



their potential import as political activities that bear on the military organization as a whole.”<sup>24</sup>

Prominent scholar Peter Feaver draws the same conclusion as does Kohn, Cohen, and Brooks. In “Military Campaigns” Golby, Dropp and Feaver emphasize that it is the symbolic role of the retired senior leader, as spokesman for the military that gives his endorsement any significance, postulating that “no one, especially not the campaign team, is very interested in their roles as private citizens.”<sup>25</sup> He goes on to state the public has begun to see the military as a participant in partisan politics, possibly due to its prominence in presidential elections, and warns that endorsements may increase this perception and harm public confidence in the armed services in the process.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Kohn and Cohen, who call upon retired senior officers to refrain from endorsing, and Brooks who calls upon those same officers to “carefully weigh” whether an endorsement is appropriate based on the possible implications of the active force,<sup>27</sup> Feaver calls for the emergence of a strict taboo against the practice.<sup>28</sup> He calls for punishment against violators of the taboo in order to ostracize them, explaining that endorsers “could be excluded from private briefings, mentoring assignments, and other consulting opportunities that keep the senior-most military officers integrally linked to the active-duty force even years after retiring. Over time, this might reduce the supply of senior officers available for the endorsement competition.”<sup>29</sup>

Opposition to retired senior officer endorsements also exists from within the military, both among active and retired officers. As noted above, a vast majority of retired senior officers *do not* endorse, thereby signaling their disapproval of the practice by their silence.<sup>30</sup> In 2000, Kohn estimated that fewer than 20 of the 200 living retired four-stars decided to endorse a presidential candidate<sup>31</sup> Retired Marine Corps Major General Mike Myatt described his thoughts on endorsements, thoughts likely shared by

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<sup>24</sup> Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” 223.

<sup>25</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 15.

<sup>26</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 18.

<sup>27</sup> Brooks, “Militaries and Political Activities in Democracies,” 223.

<sup>28</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 18.

<sup>29</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 20.

<sup>30</sup> Cohen, “General Malaise,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 August 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Kohn, “Military Endorsements Harm National Interest,” *Washington Times*, 15 October 2000.



many other retired senior leaders, as “you’d have to be looking over my shoulder (when I fill out my ballot). It’s the only way you’ll ever know who I voted for.”<sup>32</sup> Another Marine Corps general officer stated his opposition differently, saying that “a senior officer should realize that by lending his name or title, he or she is being ‘used’ by a politician...[T]o lend one’s name and title to a political campaign is a form of prostitution.”<sup>33</sup> Following his retirement, but prior to his candidacy for president, General Wesley Clark stated that an endorsement “casts a shadow back into the institution. You have junior people still in the service who value what these people say.”<sup>34</sup>

Opposition to retired general officer endorsements has more recently been voiced by Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Admiral Michael Mullen, as Chairman in 2009, called for an end to the practice of senior officer endorsements during his commencement address to the students at National Defense University.<sup>35</sup> His replacement, General Martin Dempsey, expressed his opposition three years later. When asked during a question and answer session at the Atlantic Council for his thoughts on retired generals running for president, he responded: “if you want to get out of the military and run for office, I’m all for it. But don’t get out of the military...and become a political figure by throwing your support behind a particular candidate. If somebody asks me when I retire to support them in a political campaign, do you think they’re asking Marty Dempsey or are they asking Gen. Dempsey? I am a general for life and I should remain true to our professional ethos, which is to be apolitical for life; unless I run.”<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, some retired senior officers defend the appropriateness of endorsements. General Charles Krulak, the former commandant of the Marine Corps, justified his endorsement of George W. Bush in 2000, stating “to suggest that, having taken off our uniforms for the last time, we are somehow not entitled to the same right to

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<sup>32</sup> Stannard, “Armed with the Ballot: Military Voters Increasingly Vocal with their Opinions,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Corbett, “The Role of the Military in Presidential Politics,” 67.

<sup>34</sup> Owens, “Civil-Military Relations,” 10.

<sup>35</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 7.

<sup>36</sup> Marcus Weisengerber, “Dempsey to Retired Generals: Shut Up When it Comes to Politics,” *Defense News*, 19 May 2004. <http://intercepts.defensenews.com/2014/05/dempsey-to-retired-generals-shut-up-when-it-comes-to-politics/>

enjoy full and active participation in the selection of our elected officials as other citizens...is an injustice to our service.”<sup>37</sup> He adds that because “some achieved senior rank in the military does not mean they should lose a part of their patrimony.” General Shalikashvili went further in defending his endorsement of John Kerry in 2004, calling the participation of retired military officers in the political process not just a right but a responsibility.<sup>38</sup> Others agree with this assessment and note the benefit of endorsements to the general public, a public often perceived as lacking in its understanding of issues related to national security. Retired Army Brigadier General Keith Kerr argues, “They need to speak out and let the public know what their personal views are.”<sup>39</sup>

As a whole, it appears the officer corps is largely supportive of endorsements. In a survey conducted by Army War College student Lt Col William Becker, only 33 percent of the 195 Army War College faculty and student participants responded that retired general officers should refrain from endorsing candidates.<sup>40</sup> Even fewer flag officers expressed this sentiment. Of the 565 Army, Air Force and Marine Corps generals who responded to Becker’s survey, only 21 percent agreed that retired generals should refrain from making political endorsements.<sup>41</sup> In the study, Becker contemplates implementing a waiting period following retirement in order to prevent an endorsement from being tied too closely to the active military. This also proved unpopular with both Army War College and general officer participants.<sup>42</sup> He concludes his study by arguing that until civilian officials “spend a greater amount of time studying the military, understanding its challenges as a profession, and wrestling with the intricacies of its employment” the amount of partisan activity required by general officers will not be reduced, and that until civilians come to better understand the military “retired general officers have a duty to stand up for their profession.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Owens, “Civil-Military Relations, 10.

<sup>38</sup> Corbett, “The Role of the Military in Presidential Politics,” 67.

<sup>39</sup> Stannard, “Armed with the Ballot,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>40</sup> William R. Becker, “Retired Generals and Partisan Politics: Is a Time Out Required,” Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2001), 19.

<sup>41</sup> Becker, “Retired Generals and Partisan Politics,” 47.

<sup>42</sup> Becker, “Retired Generals and Partisan Politics,” 20, 48.

<sup>43</sup> Becker, “Retired Generals and Partisan Politics,” 56.

### The Effect of Endorsement on Voters

Despite all of the rhetoric, little is actually known about the actual effects of retired officer endorsements of presidential candidates. Research in this regard appears to be quite limited; however Golby, Dropp, and Feaver seek to identify the effect of these endorsements on the American public. In their 2012 survey, the authors asked participants “if the general election were held today, which of the following candidates would you support [Obama or Romney]?”<sup>44</sup> Two of the three groups were also provided a prompt before the question: “According to recent reports, most members of the military support,” Mitt Romney (for one group) and Barack Obama (for the other group). Golby attempted to find out if knowing that one candidate received a majority of military support influenced a participant’s likelihood to support that candidate.

The results, when examined in the aggregate, suggest that military endorsements have little effect on voter preference.<sup>45</sup> However, when the data was disaggregated by party identification, the group of independents told that the military supported Obama were found to support Obama more than the control group, swinging nine percent in his direction. This effect proved more pronounced among independents who reported not following foreign policy news closely; Obama garnered a 14 percent increase among this group when told he had the support of veterans. Romney garnered an increase in support among these groups as well, albeit a smaller one.<sup>46</sup> Endorsements do seem to affect voter preferences, but only for the smaller segment of voters who identify as independent.

The Golby study also attempted to identify what other effects military endorsements may have on the public. It sought to “compare whether respondents who were not told about military and veteran endorsements differed from those who were told” in order to answer the larger question of “whether such endorsements might change public perceptions of the military as an institution.”<sup>47</sup> Although the survey showed no difference in the overall “level of confidence in the military,” it did find slight but discernible differences in participants’ opinions as to: 1) whether “members of the

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<sup>44</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 9.

<sup>45</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 11.

<sup>46</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 12.

<sup>47</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 17.

military should be allowed to express political views just like any other citizens” and 2) “whether it is appropriate for the military to advocate publicly for military policies it believes are in the best interests of the United States.” Participants who were prompted with information regarding the military’s support of a candidate were four percent more likely to agree to the first statement, and five percent more likely to the second statement, than were those who were not prompted. Golby concludes that “perhaps telling the public about military endorsements convinces some that such norms are obsolete.” In addition, when asked questions regarding how they viewed the military, participants were three to five percent more likely to associate the military with one or more negative qualities (violent, homophobic, racist) if they were told that the military endorsed one candidate or the other.<sup>48</sup>

As a whole, Golby et al admit that the study does not provide a clear, significant linkage between military endorsements and the public’s trust or respect for the military. The authors do, however, note the potential long term effect of endorsements on public trust and confidence; they argue that “in part because of the military’s prominence in presidential elections, the public already sees the military as something of a participant in partisan politics. Moreover, endorsements may increase this perception, harming confidence in the military over the long term.”<sup>49</sup> Although inconclusive, the study succeeds in providing a good starting point for further research as to the effects of endorsements on public perceptions.

### **The Effect of Endorsements on Civil-Military Relations**

Golby, Dropp and Feaver’s thorough study provides solid but inconclusive analysis on how endorsements effect the public’s perception of the military. This section examines the potential for flag officer endorsements of presidential candidates to effect civil-military relations in other ways. Specifically, it investigates the likelihood of endorsements to contribute to a coup, indirect control, an alignment with party or interest, an influencing of military vote, an influencing of military personnel’s perceptions of government leaders and/or candidates, or breaching the trust between military and elected leaders.

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<sup>48</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 17.

<sup>49</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, “Military Campaigns,” 18.

Endorsements by flag officers are highly unlikely to generate a coup or more indirect military control of the government. U.S. military law and culture clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of retired officers from those of active officers. Unless called back by the administration to serve in an advisory capacity or as a bureaucratic leader, retired officers are clearly on the outside of the decision-making process in addition to no longer having any connection with the weapons at the military's disposal. The ability for these officers to challenge the authority of those in office is near non-existent. It is highly unlikely that retired officers could initiate a coup or challenge the control of civilian leaders, and the use of endorsements would in no way enhance their ability to do so.

Existing on the periphery of civil-military relations, with no actual authority to wield, retired flag officers are unlikely to be able to align the military with any political party or interest. Given their separation from the active military, any pressure they may attempt to exert in hopes of linking the military with one party or another is unlikely to be seen as credible. Furthermore, it is highly unlikely that general officer endorsements would align the military institution as an entity to any particular party or cause.

One of the cases made against endorsements is that they may influence military voters. This is often argued based on concerns with military tendencies to vote consistently with one party, accompanied with the belief that military members further down the chain "fall in line" with those "recommended" by senior retired officers.<sup>50</sup> Data fails to support this argument. For this argument to hold water, the party affiliation of those at lower ranks should reflect those of senior officers. One prominent study, the 2004 Citizenship and Service Survey, identified the opposite.<sup>51</sup> In surveying members of the Army, it found vastly different party affiliation rates with the Republican Party between higher and lower ranks. While 65 percent of colonels identified as Republican, only 36 percent of senior noncommissioned officers, 21 percent of noncommissioned officers and 18 percent of junior enlisted members identified likewise. While figures for

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<sup>50</sup> As is argued in Kohn, "Brass Shouldn't Do Endorsements," *Juneau Empire*, 9 October 2000

<sup>51</sup> Jason A. Dempsey, *Our Army: Soldiers, Politics and American Civil-Military Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 102.

general officers were not included in the study, it is reasonable to assume that their preferences would be reflected by those voiced by colonels.

The “fall in line” argument also assumes that members’ main identity is that of affiliation with the military. This appears to not be the case, as even with the officer corps, support for the Republican Party is strong *only* among *white* officers.<sup>52</sup> While 58 percent of white officers identify themselves as Republican, only 34 percent of Hispanic and 17 percent of black officers identify as Republican. In addition, a minority of female officers identify themselves as Republican. Dempsey finds that race, sex and income levels are significant drivers in how military members affiliate, with income and gender playing a larger role in determining party affiliation among military members than they do in the civilian population.<sup>53</sup>

Another counter is the relatively low percentage of the military that actually turn out to vote. Based on his analysis of voting data, Dempsey estimates that only 27 percent of the Army voted in 2000, well below the national voting rate of 50.5 percent.<sup>54</sup> The pull of other factors with which military members identify, combined with the low turnout of military members in elections, support the notion that retired officers, through endorsements, will be unlikely to influence the military vote.

Although the potential exists for endorsements to influence military personnel’s perception of candidates, endorsements are unlikely to do so in a way that impacts civil-military relations. In instances when non-incumbents who have had little to no interaction with the military seek office, a state governor or congressperson/senator who does not have a seat on the various armed services committees or subcommittees for example, retired officer endorsements may signal to others in the military that the endorsed candidate is “acceptable,” or that the non-endorsed candidate is not. Absent familiarity with the candidate, the active duty leadership may embrace the message if they see the endorser as someone whose opinion they respect.

However, if active duty leaders are familiar with the candidate, they are less likely to be influenced by the endorsement of a retired flag officer. This familiarity could exist

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<sup>52</sup> Dempsey, *Our Army*, 104.

<sup>53</sup> Dempsey, *Our Army*, 105.

<sup>54</sup> Dempsey, *Our Army*, 129.

if senior leaders have, or had counterparts who have, interacted with the office-seeker through the routine of their official duties. This familiarization could also come about once the candidate is elected president. Either way, messages of approval or disapproval are more likely to influence the active force if those messages are conveyed by *active* senior officers than they are if conveyed by retired senior officers.<sup>55</sup> As the active force becomes familiar with the president, as is bound to occur over time, retired officer influence in this regard becomes negligible. Accordingly, one can conclude that presidential endorsements by retired flag officers are unlikely to influence the military as to a president's competence, and therefore will have little to no effect on civil-military relations along these lines.

Many prominent civil-military relations scholars forcefully argue that military endorsements will cause a breach of trust with elected leaders. As winning election is foremost in the politician's mind, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that actions undertaken by retired military officers which attempt to undercut the politician's ability to win would affect the politician in some way. The next chapter examines this possibility further.

The breach of trust with elected leaders and the loss of credibility with the public appear to be the two most likely effects of general officer endorsement on civil-military relations. The next chapter assesses the specific types of endorsements with greatest potential to generate one or more of these effects.

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<sup>55</sup> Messages conveyed by active duty officers would most certainly *not* be conveyed in an overt manner, as this would violate a core military ethic.



Table 2: Likelihood of Effects on Civil-Military Relations

<b><u>Effects</u></b>	<b><u>Likelihood</u></b>
Coup	Highly Unlikely
Indirect Control	Highly Unlikely
Alignment with Party/Interest	Highly Unlikely
Influence Military Vote	Unlikely
Influence Military Personnel's Perceptions of Government Leaders/Candidates	Unlikely
Breach of Trust with Elected Leaders	Possible
Loss of Credibility with Public	Possible

*Source: Author's Original Work*



### Chapter 3

#### Case Studies

Where Chapter 2 sought to identify the likeliest effects of retired senior officer endorsements on civil-military relations, this chapter looks at what types of endorsements are most prone to affect civil-military relations. The chapter begins by establishing what makes an endorsement “prominent.” It then assesses how and the extent to which prominent endorsements impact civil-military relations. It concludes with an examination of key endorsements from the past 25 years to determine which, if any, caused a breach of trust with elected officials and/or damaged the credibility of the military with the American public.

#### **What Makes an Endorsement Prominent?**

In their “Military Campaigns” study, Golby, Dropp and Feaver call for senior veterans to avoid “prominent” endorsements. With a focus on relative status, they attempt to define what makes one endorsement prominent and another not. Recognizing that “all retired officers are not equal in terms of reputation or influence” they postulate that endorsements from four-star generals may carry more weight than those by less senior flag officers. They also argue that “not all four-stars are equal” in that those endorsers with a higher public profile “would probably matter more” than those with a lesser profile.<sup>1</sup>

While Golby et al’s definition of what makes an endorsement prominent is a good start, it is incomplete. In addition to failing to clearly define what makes an endorser prominent, they neglect other factors that make one endorsement more prominent than another. To clarify whether an endorser is prominent, one should examine the frequency of the general’s interaction with the president. Organizationally, two groups of officers are closest to the president: the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as the principal military advisor to the president, and Combatant Commanders, as the leaders of US operational forces worldwide. The closeness of the president and Chairman is obvious. Among the Combatant Commanders, however, it is reasonable to assume differences exist in that the president’s interactions are likely more frequent with those commanders

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<sup>1</sup> James Golby, Kyle Dropp and Peter Feaver, “Military Campaigns: Veterans’ Endorsements and Presidential Elections” (Washington DC: *Center for a New American Security*), 18.

overseeing war efforts than those who are not. The political and policy ramifications of a war dictate commander-in-chief level attention. One can then assume that Combatant Commanders undertaking combat operations are likely more prominent given their increased interactions with the president as compared to their non-war fighting counterparts. Service Chiefs, because of the Goldwater-Nichols Act, are limited in their access to the President, so likely lack the interaction with the president afforded to the other two groups.<sup>2</sup> In sum, this paper considers the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Combatant Commanders who led war efforts during their time of service as “prominent,” even upon retirement from service.

While the prominence of the endorser is a considerable factor in the overall prominence of the endorsement, it is not the only factor. In order for an endorsement to be prominent it must be recent. A Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’s endorsement is more significant soon after retirement than it is many years later. In addition, a general is less likely to be perceived as speaking on behalf of the military the longer after retirement he endorses; the general becomes further distanced from the military the longer he is retired. As somewhat of an arbitrary window, the remainder of this chapter focuses on endorsements during the first eight years, or effectively two presidential election cycles, following a flag officer’s retirement.

Another factor in the prominence of the endorsement is the population’s perception of the endorsing general’s partisan leanings. If a general is already perceived as being tied to one political party, his endorsement will carry less weight. A general who endorsed a Republican in his first post-retirement election cycle is unlikely to be seen as non-partisan thereafter. The subsequent endorsement of a Republican will have less significance in regard to civil-military relations than the first endorsement, as the general will be seen as speaking less for the military and more for a political party. Consequently, this paper only treats a first endorsement made by a retired flag officer as being prominent.

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<sup>2</sup> John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power*, (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007), 224.

### Prominent Endorsements, 1988-2012

As defined above, prominent endorsements are first endorsements made by retired general officers who have served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or as a Combatant Commander of a command engaged in a war effort, within eight years of leaving active duty. These endorsements are most likely to have an effect on civil-military relations. This section identifies endorsements that meet the above criteria.

Between the 1988 and 2012 presidential elections there have been 14 general officers who meet the “prominent” criteria as established above. Seven served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: Admiral William Crowe, who served under President George H.W. Bush, General Colin Powell, who served under George H.W. Bush and President Clinton, General John Shalikashvili, who served under Clinton, General Hugh Shelton, who served under Clinton and President George W. Bush, Generals Richard Myers and Peter Pace, who served under President George W. Bush, and Admiral Michael Mullen who served under Bush and President Obama. Seven more headed a Combatant Command engaged in a war effort: General Norman Schwarzkopf, who served as commander of Central Command (CENTCOM) during Operation Desert Storm, Generals George Joulwan and Wesley Clark, who commanded European Command during Operations Deliberate Force and Allied Force respectively, and Generals Tommy Franks, John Abizaid, David Petraeus and Admiral William Fallon, who commanded CENTCOM during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Of these 14 prominent retired flag officers, seven never made a public presidential endorsement: Generals Myers, Pace, Joulwan, Abizaid, and Petraeus and Admirals Mullen and Fallon. Of those who endorsed, only General Schwarzkopf made his first endorsement outside the two election-cycle window, endorsing Governor Bush in the 2000 election, 9 years after his retirement.<sup>3</sup> The remaining six, based on the criteria above, made prominent endorsements: Admiral Crowe endorsed Clinton in 1992, General Powell endorsed Senator Bob Dole in 1996, General Shalikashvili and General Clark both endorsed Senator John Kerry in 2004, General Franks endorsed President Bush in

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<sup>3</sup> Robert D. McFadden, “Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Commander in Gulf War, Dies at 78,” *New York Times*, 27 December 2012.

that same election, and General Shelton endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton in 2008. The brief case studies that follow examine each of these endorsements to determine the effect it had, if any, on civil-military relations. The case studies use available memoirs of and biographies on the Presidents and flag officers involved as well as historical accounts of the actual elections in which the endorsements took place in order to determine whether the endorsement affected the trust of civilian leaders. The study uses primary source accounts of each endorsement, to include newspaper opinion/editorial pieces, as well as web news posts and corresponding public commentary to identify whether the endorsement affected the military's credibility with the public.

### **Admiral Crowe**

The issue of prior military service played a central role in the 1992 election. Governor Clinton's lack of military service, as compared to that of his opponent, proved a major liability in his campaign for the presidency. Specifically, Clinton's avoidance of the draft became a significant matter of concern.

Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1985-1989, saw the media's emphasis on this issue as problematic. He desired to "shift the country's attention away from...Clinton's leanings during the Vietnam War some twenty-five years earlier."<sup>4</sup> Although Crowe was more than satisfied with the direction President George H.W. Bush had taken, he saw Clinton as better able to face the challenges of a post Cold War world and address the country's economic and social problems. Crowe began advising Clinton in mid-August 1992; impressed with the Governor's acumen, he agreed to endorse him the following month. Crowe decided to endorse not only because he saw Clinton as the best candidate, but also to send a message. Crowe explained, "It seemed to me that the conventional wisdom was that nobody in the American military was a Democrat; the uniformed leaders seemed so conservative that they were simply assumed to be Republicans. But that just wasn't true, and I thought that my

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<sup>4</sup> William J. Crowe, *The Line of Fire: From Washington to the Gulf, the Politics and Battles of the New Military*, (New York, NY, Simon and Schuster, 1993), 339-340.

endorsement might go some way toward exploding the myth.” His experience was that military members “pretty much mirrored” the general population in regard to their political beliefs, explaining that they “did not conform to the stereotype of the military as a caste discrete, separate, and distinct in its view.”<sup>5</sup>

Clinton’s chief campaign strategist for the election, Paul Begala, explained the impact of Crowe’s endorsement: “in the primaries and in the general election, Clinton was running against real war heroes in John Kerry and George Bush. And Gov Clinton didn’t have any military experience. Having the most important military figure in America getting up and saying Clinton could be an effective commander in chief...undermined the Republicans’ fundamental argument...basically, elections are won by dictating the terrain of the conflict. If you’re Clinton, you wanted the election to be about the economy, not about military issues.”<sup>6</sup> Crowe helped Clinton do just that. Even Crowe’s replacement, General Powell, recognized Crowe’s endorsement helped take “the curse off the draft-dodger charge and the character issue.”<sup>7</sup> Clinton was obviously pleased with Crowe’s endorsement, noting in his memoir that he was “extremely grateful that [Crowe] would stick his neck out for someone he barely knew but had come to believe in.”<sup>8</sup>

The Bush campaign perceived the endorsement as a threat to the President’s re-election. Bush dispatched Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater to negate any impact the endorsement of Crowe may have. Fitzwater explained, “Everybody got fired...now they’re signing up with Clinton. Bill Crowe, [General] Mike Dugan and [Vice Admiral Richard] Truly...all three basically had trouble with our administration and now they go to Clinton.”<sup>9</sup>

The endorsement also seemed to have a profound impact on President Bush, who Crowe served personally. The weekend following the election Powell met with Bush at Camp David and recalled the president as being in no mood to discuss the election. Bush did, however, express his thoughts on the Admiral Crowe endorsement, “I was

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<sup>5</sup> Crowe, *The Line of Fire*, 343.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Anderson, “An Admiral at the Court of St. James’s,” *Stanford Magazine*, (September/October 1997): [https://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article\\_id=42477](https://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=42477).

<sup>7</sup> Colin L. Powell, *My American Journey* (New York, NY: Random House, 1995), 561.

<sup>8</sup> William J. Clinton, *My Life*, (New York, NY: Knopf, 2004), 430.

<sup>9</sup> Edwin Chen, “Clinton Backed by 21 Former Military Leaders,” *Los Angeles Times*, 13 October 1992.

disappointed in Bill Crowe. Thought I treated him pretty well. Offered to let him stay on as chairman for another term.”<sup>10</sup> Bush’s Chief of Staff at the time, John Sununu, recalls believing that Crowe never bought into Bush’s agenda, concluding Sununu’s “suspicions proved to be correct when he came out and endorsed Bill Clinton in the 1992 election.”<sup>11</sup>

Since Bush was not re-elected, we are not able determine that the Crowe endorsement would have changed Bush’s relationship with the military. What one can surmise from Bush’s comments to Powell, comments made despite Bush’s lack of desire to discuss the election, and the responses from his Chief of Staff and press secretary is that a breach of trust occurred. It is apparent that each viewed Crowe’s act as displaying a lack of loyalty.

Although gauging the public sentiment of the endorsement is difficult given that the endorsement occurred in the pre-internet era, there appear to be two sentiments expressed by segments of the media.<sup>12</sup> Some seemed to perceive a quid pro quo, in that by endorsing Clinton, Crowe had lined himself up for a position in the administration. Leslie Gelb summarized this sentiment in a post-election article in the *New York Times*, stating that, “Admiral Crowe has an undeniable political claim to a top position, [as] his campaign endorsement gave Mr. Clinton critical protection from the right.”<sup>13</sup> Many construed Clinton’s subsequent appointment of Crowe as head of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board following the election, and then to Ambassador of Britain one year later as “a payoff for a political favor.”<sup>14</sup> One observer, David Evans of the *Chicago Tribune*, perceived more sinister motives behind Crowe’s endorsement. Evans argued that Crowe endorsed Clinton to avoid further probing by House and Senate

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<sup>10</sup> Powell, *My American Journey*, 561.

<sup>11</sup> John H. Sununu, *The Quiet Man: The Indispensable Presidency of George H.W. Bush*, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2015), 173.

<sup>12</sup> For this, and the Powell endorsement, newspaper articles provide the main source of material on public sentiment. While later endorsements were discussed in greater depth in the public domain as enabled by the internet (particularly in form of comments to postings on websites), the lack of availability of the internet to the mass public limits the ability to gauge public opinion.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie H. Gelb, “Who Gets What Job,” *New York Times*, 5 November 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Doug Crowder, “Now Hear This—Admirals (and Generals) for Life,” *Proceedings Magazine* 141, no. 11 (November 2015), 10.



armed services committee chairmen, both Democrats, who had previously promised further investigation of the Navy's Aegis cruiser shooting down of an Iranian airliner during Crowe's tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>15</sup>

Absent from media sources is any proposed link between Admiral Crowe's endorsement and the sentiment of the active duty force. While the media appeared to question Crowe's motives for endorsing, the active force was in no way implicated in that questioning. It appears the public perceived Crowe's support of Clinton as his own, and not reflective of broader military sentiment in any way. The weight of the evidence suggests Crowe's endorsement did not affect the credibility of the military in the public eye.

### **General Powell**

General Colin Powell played a prominent role in the 1996 presidential campaign. A highly popular officer who had served in key positions in the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations, no military member of his generation carried more weight politically than General Powell. President Clinton, in particular, perceived Powell as a political threat. A Clinton biographer described the mania for Powell as "driving Clinton to distraction." "The interest in Powell was an implicit rebuke to the incumbent...[who] thought his reputation was overblown. Powell was vexing for Clinton...There was envy: Powell was in many ways what Clinton wanted to be—a national unifier, respected across racial and partisan divides....Above all, there was fear: Powell's popularity made him perhaps the most formidable opponent to Clinton if he chose to seek the presidency as a Republican."<sup>16</sup> Clinton's co-chairman of his 1996 campaign admitted the same fear following the election, "the only [potential candidate] the President and I did talk about a lot—and he was very worried—was Colin Powell. People had convinced the President he was going to run."<sup>17</sup> Clinton's concerns seemed well founded, as Powell, following a

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<sup>15</sup> David Evans, "Crowe Endorsement of Clinton Raises More than Eyebrows," *Chicago Tribune*, 25 September 1992.

<sup>16</sup> John F. Harris, *The Survivor: Bill Clinton in the White House*, (New York, NY: Random House, 2005), 207.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Takiff, *A Complicated Man: The Life of Bill Clinton as Told by Those Who Knew Him Best*, (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 2010), 246.

national book tour of his autobiography that had many of the trappings of a presidential campaign, was polling 15 points ahead of Clinton in a head-to-head match-up.<sup>18</sup>

Clinton had tried to win Powell over with public praise and private offers his cabinet, but all to no avail.<sup>19</sup> On 9 November 1995, Powell held a press conference to announce his decision to not seek the presidency in 1996. During the conference, he announced that he would “speak out forcefully in the future on the issues of the day...as a member of the Republican Party.”<sup>20</sup> He explained party affiliation years later, stating, “I felt I should leave something out there as to what I believed in...I just didn’t want to hide any longer...I felt an obligation...to come out of the closet.”<sup>21</sup> Powell saw his political future in the party, and that his alignment with the Republicans provided him the best opening should he desire to seek the presidency in the future.

Absent at the press conference was endorsement for any particular candidate. When asked whether he would endorse, Powell stated that he would wait to, “see what’s out there, and not be in the endorsement business for awhile.”<sup>22</sup> By the end of March 1996, Senator Dole had locked up the Republican nomination. Privately, Powell stated that he respected Dole, but found him less than inspiring as a candidate and turned off by some of his political rhetoric.<sup>23</sup> Although hesitant to campaign publicly, Powell realized that he could not call himself a Republican while refusing to campaign for the party’s presidential nominee; he decided to do a couple campaign events, as he said, “just to show I wasn’t against Dole.” In addition, he played a prominent role at the Republican

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<sup>18</sup> Harold W. Stanley, “The Nominations: Republican Doldrums, Democratic Revival,” in *The Elections of 1996*, ed Michael Nelson, (Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Books, 1997), 15.

<sup>19</sup> Harris, *The Survivor*, 207 and Powell, *My American Journey*, 603.

<sup>20</sup> Colin L. Powell, “News Conference on Political Plans,” (address, press conference as recorded by *New York Times*, 9 November 1995).

<sup>21</sup> Karen DeYoung, *Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell*, (New York, NY: Knopf, 2006), 276.

<sup>22</sup> Powell, “News Conference on Political Plans.”

<sup>23</sup> DeYoung, *Soldier*, 279.

Convention, providing an “electrifying” keynote address on the convention’s opening night.<sup>24</sup>

Evaluating the effect that this endorsement had on civilian leader trust is challenging. First, it appears Clinton was more relieved at not having to face Powell in a Powell in a general election than he was concerned about his endorsement of the Republicans. When informed of Powell’s decision, Clinton reportedly responded “too bad for Al [Gore, who would likely have the unfortunate task of facing Powell in the 2000 election]”<sup>25</sup> Second, civilian leadership’s trust in the military appears to have been breached long before the endorsement took place. The “we don’t talk to the military” comment made to Gen McCaffrey by a member of the President’s staff, as addressed in the introduction to this paper, foretold the frosty state of civil-military relations that took place throughout Clinton’s first term.

The administration’s lack of trust in military officers due to political concerns showed itself through other occurrences. One retired Vice Admiral recalled an occasion when an Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) staffer was urging agreement for a particular course of action, the senior Joint Staff officer replied that the agreement would not be forthcoming from the Chairman. The OSD representative responded that “maybe it is time we got some Clinton generals in here.” When confronted by a military member who informed her that the military’s allegiance lay with the commander-in-chief no matter who he is, the representative responded, “I don’t know how you could change allegiances...I know I couldn’t.”<sup>26</sup> Probably most symbolic of the lack of trust was the political vetting of potential appointees; at least one general officer reported being asked his political affiliation by an administration political appointee when he was under consideration for an appointment.<sup>27</sup>

Although the political threat posed by Powell, and his endorsement of the President’s opposition, did not cause a breach of trust, the endorsement likely deepened an existing breach. The importance with which Clinton saw Powell’s political support

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<sup>24</sup> R.W. Apple Jr., “For Star Power, Democrats May Have Trouble Matching the G.O.P. Show,” *New York Times*, 25 August 1996.

<sup>25</sup> DeYoung, *Soldier*, 277.

<sup>26</sup> Crowder, “Now Hear This,” 10.

<sup>27</sup> Richard H. Kohn, “Brass Shouldn’t Do Endorsements,” *Juneau Empire*, 9 October 2000.

cannot be overstated. It influenced not only Clinton's political calculations but his policy calculations as well. His biographer noted the struggle the President faced in selecting a course of action in Haiti, as he was selecting an option with which he knew Powell would not agree. As the biographer describes, "President Clinton's nods gave way to disappointment, as though he had hoped to hear something new [on Haiti]. Already, on this one issue, he said he had forfeited any chance that Colin Powell would support him for re-election in 1996."<sup>28</sup> It appears that Clinton recognized the political costs of having senior officers oppose him after they retired.

As with Crowe, gauging public sentiment linked to Powell's endorsement is difficult. Reports tend to support the notion that Powell's endorsement helped boost Dole's standing, especially among moderates. One potential voter saw Powell's endorsement as a significant factor in his decision to support Dole, writing that Powell "is a man who has been an insider in the Clinton administration; General Powell selected Bob Dole and the Republican Party, and so will I."<sup>29</sup> Another prospective voter reported that Powell's message of inclusion nudged him from indecision toward the Dole ticket.<sup>30</sup> While some civil-military relations academics criticized the highly publicized endorsement, arguing that it sent the message that "Clinton, the erstwhile draft evader, was unfit to lead the country's armed forces,"<sup>31</sup> criticism from the public was largely absent. Based on a review of the limited commentary available, the public did not appear to connect the endorsement by Powell to the political sentiment of the military as a whole. Overall, the endorsement does not appear to have affected the public's perception of the military.

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor Branch, *The Clinton Tapes: Wrestling History with the President*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 187.

<sup>29</sup> Letter to the Editor, "Powell's Pick," *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 29 October 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Spichen, "GOP Convention '96: GOP Makes Pitch for Votes of Centrists in State's 'Heartland'; Convention: Moderates in the Fresno are liked Powell's Speech, but They're Not Ready to Pass Judgment," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 August 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich and Richard H. Kohn, "Grand Army of the Republicans," *The New Republic* 217, no. 23, (8 December 1997), 24.

## General Franks

General Tommy Franks served as President George W. Bush's commander of commander of CENTCOM, overseeing the contentious wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Afghanistan. Similar to Powell in 1995, Franks garnered a bit of the spotlight in the 2004 the 2004 election season due to his recently published memoir and subsequent book tour. book tour. Uncertainty existed as to whether Franks would endorse Bush. Asked on a on a morning talk show whether President Bush's opponent, John Kerry, was qualified to qualified to be commander-in-chief, Franks responded, "Absolutely!"<sup>32</sup> Asked directly whether he planned to endorse Bush, he responded, "I don't know yet...I'm a fiercely independent kind of guy."

It appears that Franks' endorsement had no effect on the trust between the military and its civilian leaders. Political leaders on both sides likely perceived Franks' endorsement as occurring in large part to defend his own legacy.<sup>33</sup> As Franks said in an interview, many were criticizing Bush for military decisions Franks had made. His endorsement signaled not only support for Bush, but support for the decisions made concerning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Given that Franks' endorsement, unlike those of Crowe and Powell, occurred in the internet age, gauging public sentiment regarding the endorsement poses less of a challenge. In examining the comments to website postings announcing the Franks endorsement, it becomes apparent that the endorsement had little-to-no effect on public sentiment toward the military. Of the 57 comments in response to the endorsement on two websites, none drew inferences from Franks' endorsement that it conveyed the opinions of the military as a whole.<sup>34</sup>

## General Clark

Franks was not the only "war general" to endorse in 2004; General Wesley Clark, who led Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, also endorsed. Clark's path to endorsing differed substantially from that of Franks.

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<sup>32</sup> Al Kamen, "Enter and Win: What Makes Alan Run?" *Washington Post*, 11 August 2004.

<sup>33</sup> Russakoff, "Retired General Endorses President."

<sup>34</sup> B. Bishop, "Franks Endorses Bush," *Taxidermy* (blog), 1 September 2004, <http://www.taxidermy.net/forums/IndustryArticles/04/i/046812A3AE.html>; Dog, "General Franks Endorses President Bush," *Free Republic* (blog), 31 August 2004, <http://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1204148/posts>; the 57 comments were produced by 39 different posters.

Having previously considered himself apolitical, Clark shifted his stance in 2000 as he grew disenchanted with Bush due to Bush's prescription for national security expressed during the presidential campaign.<sup>35</sup> Clark disagreed with what he construed as Bush's "isolationist" foreign policy, particularly Bush's critique of Operation Allied Force, which he used as an example of an inappropriate use of military force.<sup>36</sup> Clark's disapproval of Bush increased with the invasion of Iraq, a military action with which Clark disagreed.

As the 2004 election approached, Clark supporters undertook a "Draft Wesley Clark" campaign to entice the General into running for president.<sup>37</sup> Clark was an ideal challenger to the President given the problems experienced with the war in Iraq. Clark agreed to run, announcing his candidacy on 17 September 2003 and registering as a Democrat a few days after.<sup>38</sup> Clark finished third in the New Hampshire primary, won the Oklahoma primary, and finished second in three other states before dropping out of the race.<sup>39</sup> He endorsed the frontrunner, Senator Kerry, shortly after exiting the race. After the endorsement, Clark became a principle Kerry surrogate, travelling to all the battleground states in an effort to increase the Kerry vote.<sup>40</sup>

Given Clark's candidacy for the Democratic nomination, his endorsement of the likely nominee surprised no one. Golby, Dropp and Feaver's argument that retired officers can reasonably be seen as departing one profession (military) to enter another (political) once they become candidates for office likely applied in this instance, as by the time Clark endorsed, he was perceived as a political actor more so than a military actor.<sup>41</sup> Within available sources, there is little to suggest Clark's endorsement affected either civilian-military trust or military credibility with the public.

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<sup>35</sup> Antonio Felix, *Wesley K. Clark: A Biography*, (New York, NY: Newmarket Press, 2004), 189.

<sup>36</sup> Felix, *Wesley K. Clark*, 191.

<sup>37</sup> Felix, *Wesley K. Clark*, 191.

<sup>38</sup> Felix, *Wesley K. Clark*, 196, 200.

<sup>39</sup> Wesley K. Clark, *A Time to Lead: For Duty, Honor and Country*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 240.

<sup>40</sup> Clark, *A Time to Lead*, 241.

<sup>41</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 22.



## General Shalikashvili

General John Shalikashvili's endorsement of John Kerry in 2004 seemed to garner a collective yawn. There was no "roll out" of the endorsement as was common in previous prominent endorsements. The first mention of Shalikashvili's support for Kerry in major newspapers<sup>42</sup> came on 17 March, when *USA Today* reported that Shalikashvili would be campaigning with Kerry in West Virginia.<sup>43</sup> The timing of the appearance with Shalikashvili coincided with Vice President Cheney's questioning of Kerry's national security record.<sup>44</sup> Kerry desired to appear credible on national security matters, especially given the wars still underway in Afghanistan and Iraq, and likely perceived a strong upside to the general's presence. In addition to appearances with the candidate, Shalikashvili's support included a letter to the editor in support of Kerry's position on Base Realignment and Closure, an appearance in pro-Kerry campaign television ads, and an "impressive" primetime endorsement speech during the Democratic National Convention.<sup>45</sup>

General Shalikashvili provided his reasoning for endorsing during his convention speech, telling delegates, "I stand here before you this evening because I believe that no one will be more resolute in defending America or in pursuing terrorists than John Kerry. He knows from experience a commander's responsibility to his troops...He stands with our troops and with their families, and that is why I stand with John Kerry."<sup>46</sup>

There appears to be no impact on civilian leaders' trust of the military based on this endorsement. One analyst's response of, "well, I don't think the nation knows his name," when asked the impact of Shalikashvili's endorsement likely captures why. Given the minimization of the endorsement, it can be reasonably assumed that the

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<sup>42</sup> Major newspapers here meaning the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, USA Today, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post.

<sup>43</sup> Jill Lawrence, "Campaigns Trade Fire on Military; Bush Launches a Pre-Emptive Strike as Kerry Accuses Him of 'Shortchanging' USA's Veterans," *USA Today*, 17 March 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Glen Johnson, "Kerry, Cheney Trade Charges on Leadership," *Boston Globe*, 18 March 2004.

<sup>45</sup> John Shalikashvili, "Kerry Proceeds with Caution," *USA Today*, 30 March 2004; Nick Anderson, "The Race to the White House; Ad Watch," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 July 2004; Bryan Bender and Charlie Savage, "On Defense, A Democratic Offensive; Military Leaders Tout Kerry's Credentials," *Boston Globe*, 29 July 2004; Howell Raines, "Beginning to Believe Again; The Democrats Pump Life into Their Liberal Mojo," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 July 2004.

<sup>46</sup> Bender and Savage, "On Defense, A Democratic Offensive."



endorsement had little effect. In addition, no available sources suggest the endorsement affected the military's public credibility.

### **General Shelton**

General Hugh Shelton endorsed Hillary Clinton in the 2008 election on 1 March 2008 of that year.<sup>47</sup> In his endorsement, Shelton, who had advised Democratic candidate John Edwards during the 2004 election, noted his experience working with Clinton from his time as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concluding, "She is ready to be Commander-in-Chief." Much like Shalikhvili's endorsement, Shelton's also received little attention. The *Boston Globe* reported the Shelton endorsement in its "Campaign Notebook" on 2 March, after noting the endorsements of the "better known" Melanie Griffith and Eva Longoria.<sup>48</sup> Clinton, in the midst of an aggressive campaign against then-Senator Barack Obama, embraced the endorsement. In rolling out Shelton's endorsement, Clinton's campaign published the list of 27 other retired flag officers who had endorsed her.<sup>49</sup> She also campaigned with Shelton in North Carolina, his home state, the following month.<sup>50</sup>

Although Shelton offered no public explanation as to what brought him to endorse Clinton, his memoirs offer some insight. In *Without Hesitation*, Shelton recalls his conversation with Clinton in which she described her experience attempting to enlist in the Marines, concluding that, "it says a lot about her desire to serve."<sup>51</sup> The same warm feelings expressed towards Clinton were not felt towards Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee in 2008. Shelton wrote, "I knew a different man from the one who came across as so affable and sensible in public. Behind the scenes, the man I—and many others in those private rooms with us—knew revealed himself as volatile and demeaning to

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<sup>47</sup> Wandering I, "General Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton," *DailyKos* (blog), 1 March 2008, <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2008/3/1/448867/>.

<sup>48</sup> Sasha Issenberg, "Campaign Notebook: Clinton Steps up Obama Criticism," *Boston Globe*, 2 March 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Wandering I, "General Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton."

<sup>50</sup> Perry Bacon Jr., "Clinton's Hopes May Lie with N.C.; Loss Would Shake Her Big-State Claims," *Washington Post*, 25 April 2008.

<sup>51</sup> Hugh Shelton, *Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2010), 395.

those of us who did not share his views. The John McCain I knew was subject to wild mood swings and would break into erratic temper tantrums in the middle of a normal conversation...it was counterproductive.”<sup>52</sup>

Shelton’s endorsement appears to have had no effect on the trust of civilian leadership; absent in the review of literature is any mention of implications of this endorsement on civilian leadership. However, the endorsement did appear to garner more attention among the American public.

Given the recency of Shelton’s endorsement, reactive blog commentary was more prevalent and provides a useful gauge of public sentiment. Three websites that posted news of the endorsement still have such commentary available. The websites include 97 comments made by 58 different posters.<sup>53</sup> A vast majority of the comments center on Shelton the individual, not as a spokesman for the military as a whole. Some comments do appear to question retired flag officer motives, as one commenter notes “No one is forcing (retired generals to endorse)...but enticements galore no doubt, i.e. promises of jobs in a new Clinton administration, future defense contracts, etc.”<sup>54</sup> and another writes “their honor and their support is for sale to the highest bidder.”<sup>55</sup>

Three blog posters implicate the military as a whole. One wrote that, “payback is payback (in regard to Shelton’s appointment by President Clinton); everyone knows that any officer above the rank of Colonel is a politician.”<sup>56</sup> Another states, “More militarism is not what this country needs...we are sick and tired of the military playing an ever more blatant political role in the affairs of our country.”<sup>57</sup> Still another observes, “I always thought that general officers (active or retired) should refrain from making political

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<sup>52</sup> Shelton, *Without Hesitation*, 404.

<sup>53</sup> Wandering I, “General Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton;” The Soapbox, “Shelton Endorses Clinton,” *Professional Soldiers* (blog), 3 March 2008, <http://www.professionalsoldiers.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-17508.html>; Maddy McCall, “Retired General, Joint Chiefs Chair Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton,” *DemocraticUnderground.com* (blog), 1 March 2008, [http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view\\_all&address=132x4837332](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=132x4837332).

<sup>54</sup> George Gould, 1 March 2008 (4:25 p.m.), comment on Wandering I, “General Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton;”

<sup>55</sup> KClapp, 4 March 2008 (10:30 a.m.), comment on The Soapbox, “Shelton Endorses Clinton.”

<sup>56</sup> The Reaper, 11 March 2008 (4:52 p.m.), comment on The Soapbox, “Shelton Endorses Clinton.”

<sup>57</sup> RubyGal, 1 March 2008 (3:48 p.m.), comment on Wandering I, “General Hugh Shelton Endorses Hillary Clinton;”

comments, unless of course they are actually running for office. Something about generals getting involved in politics...just seems for a lack of better word...distasteful.”<sup>58</sup>

With three of the blog posters, it appears that General Shelton’s endorsement affected their perception of the military’s credibility. However, their comments are a minor subset of the comments made overall. This subset accounts for just five percent of the total.

### **Analysis**

In categorizing the endorsements of the six generals, one was in support of president under whom the general had served (Franks endorsement of Bush), and were endorsements of the opponents of the presidents under whom they had (Crowe’s endorsement of Clinton, Powell’s endorsement of Dole). The remaining were endorsements in campaigns where the incumbent was not seeking re-election (Clark, Shalikashvili, and Shelton’s endorsements). In the paper’s introduction, I hypothesized that an endorsement of the opponent of the president under which the general served is more likely to influence civil-military relations than the other two endorsement scenarios; and the most probable negative effect is a deterioration of trust the presidential administration has for the military. The case studies tentatively support this hypothesis. Only in the case of Crowe’s endorsement of Clinton, one where the flag officer endorsed the opponent of the president under whom he served, did there appear to be clear implications for the subsequent level of trust. Attributing a breach of trust between the Clinton administration and the military based on Powell’s endorsement of Dole is more problematic, as a significant breach of trust had already occurred by the time of Powell’s endorsement. As one prominent civil-military scholar noted, “It would [have been] hard to deepen the Clinton distrust of the military after the conflict over homosexual service.”<sup>59</sup> Still, Powell’s endorsement of Clinton’s opponent seems to have at least exacerbated or solidified an already rocky situation.

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<sup>58</sup> 504PIR, 4 March 2008 (9:58 a.m.), comment on The Soapbox, “Shelton Endorses Clinton.”

<sup>59</sup> Richard H. Kohn, Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, to the author, e-mail, 5 April 2016.

This suggests, albeit tentatively, that *relationship* factors can moderate the effects an endorsement will have on civil-military interactions, and more specifically, foster a breach of trust with civilian leaders. This relational focus provides an additional level of analysis to the issue of retired flag officer endorsements. Again, many critics treat flag officer endorsements as monolithic, suggesting these endorsements have similar effects on civil-military relations regardless of who endorsed. Golby, Dropp and Feaver add some nuance, arguing that the effects may depend on *status* factors. They see the status of the endorser in terms of rank and public profile as the main driver.<sup>60</sup> Given this emphasis on status, the Clark and Franks endorsements should have had a greater impact on civil-military relations than those made by less prominent endorsers like Crowe, Shalikashvili, and Shelton.<sup>61</sup>

But this does not appear to be the case. Crowe's endorsement of Clinton (and counter to President Bush), in particular, stands out as having had a greater effect than endorsements by Clark and Franks. Crowe's endorsement of Clinton appeared to have a serious impact on President Bush. Although Bush was defeated, it is reasonable to conclude that a breach of trust occurred and could have resulted in some changed behavior towards the military's top leaders if Bush had been re-elected. When examined through a domestic politics lens, the distinction makes sense, as a prominent flag officer's endorsement of a president's opponent is analogous to a threat to that president's political survival. Beyond the cold calculus of political survival, however, the relational aspect can also introduce more personal, emotive or affective elements to the mix. Again, in response to Crowe's endorsement of Clinton, Bush observed, "I was disappointed in Bill Crowe. Thought I treated him pretty well."

Determining the impact each endorsement had on the military's credibility with the public proved challenging. In order to conclude that an endorsement affected the public credibility of the military, one must find evidence that the public believes the endorser is speaking not only on his own behalf, or on behalf of retired flag officers, but

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<sup>60</sup> Golby, Dropp and Feaver, "Military Campaigns," 18.

<sup>61</sup> Prominence as determined by author based on two factors: Powell, Clark and Franks each played a visible, highly public role in a war, where the other three did not; Powell, Clark and Franks were more central characters to the presidential memoirs and biographies reviewed by the author than were Crowe, Shalikashvili and Shelton, who were mentioned in passing, if at all.

also on behalf of the military as a whole. Only in Shelton's endorsement was this belief apparent, and only among a small segment of those publically expressing their sentiment. Given the lack of information on public sentiment for the rest of the endorsements, one can conclude that a small percentage of the population may link the opinion of the prominent flag officer endorser with the wider military. Again though, this appears only to be the case in a small segment of the population; most of the public, it seems, was able to differentiate the retired general's endorsement from active military sentiment. This is in line with the findings in the Golby study, which also found that endorsements change public sentiment but only very slightly. It seems most Americans are able to distinguish between the individual and the organization.



## Conclusion

Retired general officer endorsements have generated both support and opposition among scholars and military leaders. Some argue that the negative effect of these endorsements on civil-military relations should be the primary consideration in whether endorsements are appropriate, and accordingly, that endorsements should be curtailed. Others argue that freedom of speech accorded to the retired officer should be the primary consideration, and, accordingly, argue that any effect an endorsement may have on civil-military relations is of less importance. This latter group sees endorsements as appropriate since the endorsements reflect the freedom of speech afforded to any private citizen, retired flag officers included.

This paper examined the potential impact of these endorsements on civil-military relations with the intent of providing a guide to retired officers contemplating endorsing. Specifically, this paper strove to answer the question: *Should retired U.S. military flag officers endorse candidates for president?*

To answer this question, this paper first analyzed the restrictions governing political activities of military members, finding a clear divide between the vast number of restrictions governing active duty military and the few that restrict retired members. The paper then examined the theoretical underpinnings of the political restrictions on military members, as put forward by Samuel Huntington and Morris Janowitz, finding agreement between their conclusions that military involvement in partisan politics is undesirable. It then examined the possible effects and implications of military leadership engagement in political activities.

The paper then examined the potential for retired officers to affect civil-military relations as a result of their endorsement of presidential candidates. Of the seven potential effects of military involvement in politics—coup, indirect control, alignment with party or interest, influencing of military vote, influencing of military personnel's perceptions of government leaders and/or candidates, breaching the trust with elected leaders, and damaging credibility with the public—the paper found only the last two as being relevant to the issue of retired flag officer endorsements.

Having identified which effects were most likely, the paper sought to identify those endorsements that were most likely to produce these effects. Toward this aim, it

established a more refined characterization of “prominent” endorsements: those coming from retired flag officers who had direct and regular interaction with the president, those occurring not too long after the flag officer’s retirement, and those considered a “first time” endorsement. Six endorsements from 1988-2012 can be categorized as prominent based on these criteria.

Of these six endorsements, the paper found one to have specifically undermined the trust of civilian leaders towards the military. This involved a situation in which the retired flag officer endorsed the *opponent* of the President under whom he had served. In this sense, the case differs from most of the other endorsements that consisted of the general officer backing either the incumbent seeking re-election or a candidate in an election in which the incumbent is not seeking to remain in office. Accordingly, the paper concludes that *relationship factors* can moderate the effects an endorsement will have on civil-military relations, and more specifically, create or exacerbate a breach of trust with civilian leadership. This conclusion builds upon and amends previous analysis that links effects to *status factors*, or that assesses the prominence of the endorser as the main factor determining how an endorsement affects civil-military relations.

Further, only in one of the six endorsements did the military’s credibility with the public appear damaged. Given the lack of indication of negative public sentiment stemming from the rest of the endorsements, the paper concludes that only a small percentage of the population is likely to link the opinion of the prominent flag officer endorser with the wider military. Most of the public, it appears, is able to differentiate a retired general’s endorsement from active military sentiment.

### **Counter-Argument**

As this study deals solely with the effects of an *individual* endorsement on civil-military relations, one could discount it by claiming that effects occur due to a *combination* of endorsements; one could argue that although no single endorsement on its own is likely to affect civil-military relations, the phenomenon of endorsements as a whole can and will have negative consequences. Such an argument centers on the belief that if endorsements align more significantly with one party, the public and elected leaders will perceive the military as being associated with only that party. This belief, in turn, rests upon two assumptions: that retired officer endorsements will at some point



align with one party and that the public views the military as a monolithic entity, in which the views of the few are accepted as reflecting the sentiment of the many.

Although additional research is needed to address this counter-argument fully, the author sees both of the associated assumptions as problematic. First, it is improbable that all of the retired flag officers in any election cycle will favor the same candidate. Even a candidate who had “dodged the draft,” promised steep cuts to military spending, and guaranteed to allow homosexuals to serve openly, each of which were hugely unpopular among the those in uniform, garnered the endorsement of retired flag officers.<sup>1</sup> Retired flag officers, just like the public at large, have varying political opinions; this will continue to be expressed through endorsements of candidates from different parties.

Second, the public is unlikely to perceive the military as monolithic based on the endorsements made by retired flag officers. Both this paper and the Golby study conclude that although a small segment of the population may believe that retired generals speak for the military as a whole, a large majority appears not to. It seems that most Americans are able to distinguish between the individual and the organization when it comes to endorsements.

### **Prescription**

Should retired U.S. military flag officers endorse candidates for president? It depends. For the vast majority of retired of retired flag officers, the answer is “yes;” if they desire to endorse a candidate, they should feel comfort in knowing that their endorsements are unlikely to have any significant negative effect on civil-military relations.

For those few who have either served the President directly as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or as a Combatant Commanders during a time of war, the answer is “possibly.” Given the close association with the President, these retired officers should refrain from endorsing *if* the president they served is seeking re-election. In particular, endorsing the president’s opponent under these circumstances could have serious ramifications for the bond of trust between the military and elected leadership, and thereby negatively impact civil-military relations. After the president under whom a retired flag officer served is no longer a candidate or potential candidate for re-election,

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<sup>1</sup> 22 retired flag officers endorsed Gov Bill Clinton in 1992

and hence the associated relational factors are no longer relevant, a retired flag officer should feel free to endorse as he or she desires.



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